



BOOK OF

MYTHS

ACHARYA PRASHANT

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MYTH OF POSITIVE THINKING

Forget positive thinking; reality is the highest positivity

Question: What is positive thinking?

Acharya Prashant: I write something on this blackboard in a language that you do not understand, and the positive thinker gets up and says, 'Surely, something wonderful about me has been written on the board'. The negative thinker gets up and says, 'Surely, it is written that tomorrow I am going to die.' Is it possible to determine which of these two is the bigger idiot? It is very difficult to say. The positive thinker is not concerned with the truth, neither is the negative thinker. Both are just speaking out what is already there in their minds, and this will keep both of them deluded.

What we commonly call as 'positive thinking' has no value. What we commonly call as 'positive thinking' is just a projection of our own thoughts upon the situation, and that does not help. It may create a make belief, a dream-like world, but dreams do not help. Reality helps. Clear understanding of what is there, that helps.

What would be better: If I do not know what is written on the board, should I think positively? Or should I just try to know, without thinking at all? What is the point of thinking about it when I do not know it? I must make all efforts to really understand, and that cannot happen if I keep sitting and thinking about it, because my thought is limited by my past, I cannot go beyond that. I will only think as much as I already know. Do you understand this?

Can you think beyond your knowledge? Can you think of things that are totally unknown to you? You cannot! If I ask you to think about the Spanish language, can you think? Your thinking is limited by your knowledge, your past, your experiences, that which you have already gathered. Even what you call as positive is again determined by where you stand. The same happening will be very, very positive for one person and very negative for another person, won't it be? So, let us say that we are going to have a India-South Korea Hockey match. On one hand there are Indian supporters and on the other hand, there are Korean supporters. India scores a goal, is it positive for

the Indian supporters?

L: Yes, Sir.

AP: Is it positive for the Korean supporters?

L: No, Sir.

AP: So, what is positive and what is negative? Your own mind is positive and your own mind is negative. It is your own make belief thing. Do not be trapped in positive or negative thinking, keep both of them apart and just try to know the reality. Just try to know the reality; that is the real positivity-to know the reality! The positives of life, the real positives of life have nothing to do with thinking. They have to do with things that do not really involve thought. What are they?

You are asking this question because you want to know. Right? And I have constantly been talking about knowing the reality. Knowing is one positive; if you want to call it a positive, if you want to give it a good name. Otherwise, I will just say that Knowing is real and that will suffice. But for your sake I am saying that Knowing is positive.

Knowing is positive; Joy is positive; Freedom is positive; Love is positive.

And all the so called positivity has been captured in all these three-four words. What is positive about life? Knowing is positive. We want to know, we always want to know. Right? That is why we are inquisitive, we are curious, we question and that is why we feel bad when someone lies to us, because you wanted to know but he did not help you know. He lied to you. So, Knowing is positive. Knowing what? Reality! Not being trapped in positive thinking, knowing the reality.

Joy is positive; Love is positive; Freedom is positive. These are the positives. Anything that leads towards these is a positive. And anything that takes you away from these is a negative. I could also call it real and unreal. In fact that is a better way of talking about these. Knowing is real because you want to know the reality. Joy is real because that is what you always want to go to. Does any of you feel good in sorrow, in misery? Anybody here who feels delighted in sorrow? Anybody here who says that I have not had a good beating over the last 10 days, so I am missing it?

Nobody. Right?

L: What is the difference between positive thinking and hope?

AP: They are the same.

L: But everyone says that the entire world is driven by hope.

AP: This world as we know, it is surely driven by hope. Wonderful, that you are able to connect positive thinking with hope. You are very right. This world as we know, it is surely running on hope and that is why such is the condition of the world. That is why there is so much of misery and suffering in this world, because it is resting on hope.

Do you know what hope means? Hope means that I am suffering right now and I *hope* to get better tomorrow. Hope is first of all an invalid statement, 'I am suffering.' The more hopeful you are, clearly the more you have told yourself that you are suffering right now. If I am already enjoying, do I need hope? If I am already full and complete, do I need hope for the future? Hope is needed only because the present is miserable. Hope is needed only when you are convinced that there is something wrong with you. So, I hope to correct it, I hope to improve, I hope to achieve. Understand where hope comes from. Hope is an escape. If I am suffering right now, it is within my powers to remove the suffering right now. Why should I think that something would happen in the future that will take care of my suffering? If I am sick today, should I take a medicine right now or should I say that something will happen after four years which will cure me? If I am sick today, should I be cured today or four years later?

L: Today.

AP: The sickness is today, so the cure must be today. But hope says, "No, when you will become something then you can feel good about yourself. Today you are miserable and you are bound to remain miserable till that great day comes." And you keep hoping that the great day will come. And what is that great day about? When you will have more money; when you will have a wonderful job; when you will have a lot of respect; when you will have a beautiful wife or husband. Keep hoping and the more you hope, the more miserable you feel right now. Hope arises from misery and leads to more and more misery.

Further, try to see that hope delays action. Hope helps you postpone what you can do right now. Hope helps you postpone what can be done right now. In fact hope helps you escape from the present moment itself. "My great day will come after 10 years." So, what is important? The day that will come after

10 years. This day that I am living in, right now, today, becomes unimportant. Hope is about the future. Right? Or do you ever hope about the present moment? All hope is about the future. Hope makes future very-very important, thereby reducing the present. But when do we live? How many of you are living in the future? How many of you are living in the past? We all live in the?

L: Present.

AP: But hope just takes your attention away from the present and it takes you, carries you to the future. So the sickness keeps festering, the wound remains untreated. Because you are hoping that it will be treated one day. It can be treated right now. All hope is of happiness. Fundamentally, all hope is of happiness. Do you see this? Fundamentally, all hope is, "I will be happy." I am asking you, why can't you be happy right now? Is happiness such an elusive, impossible thing that great efforts have to be made to attain it? Ultimately all hope is about attaining happiness but that happiness may already be available to you. Why hope? Just take it! Why hope?

Today, you all are sitting in front of me. Should I hope to speak to you or should I just speak to you? If something is available right now, should I do it right now or should I keep hoping? When all hope is of happiness, why should it be postponed to the future? Do you want to be happy right now or do you want to reserve it for the future? How many of you want to say, "No, no sir, for the next three years we cannot allow ourselves to be happy, we can be happy only after three years, five years or twenty five years or in the next birth."

But that is what hope does to you. Hope is suffering. You are very right, the world that we see runs on hope and that is why it keeps suffering. Everybody is obsessed about future. Hope! Nobody is looking at the present. Whereas life is in the present. In the present. But you are all the time hoping about the future. The wife may be sitting right next to you, but what is the husband doing? Planning for the future. What is he planning? "Once I will have enough money, we will go for a vacation and then we will have a loving time." The wife is sitting right next to him; have a loving time right now? But no, he is busy with his laptop, planning for the future, hoping that one day he will have money and then there will be an opportunity for love. Such blind people we are. She is there, right next to you, but you can't look at her. Both of you are suffering. She is bored, you are bored. She is dull, you are dull.

She is feeling miserable and you too are, but you are planning and hoping for the future. One great day, I will have one crore rupees in my account and then I will go to Mars, with her. You need Mars? For love?

We can need anything. “I will show my face only after I have a job.” Anything can happen with us. We are hopeful people, with a lot of positive thinking. We will not do it right now, we will think positively. We will think positively! If you are studying, what should you do? Just study or keep thinking positively? “One day there will be a question paper. One great day there will be a question paper, and I will crack that open!”

The book is lying there and the fellow is positively thinking. The book is there, read!. Why are you thinking? Positively or negatively, what is the point? It is there, in the present moment, right now; just read! Be immersed in it. Fall in love with the book, but no, he will think positively and he will have a great poster on the wall saying, ‘Be positive’. The book is lying there and he is looking at the poster and he is motivating himself that be positive, nothing bad can happen. It is the exam tomorrow. It will all be good. And he is listening to motivational speeches and great songs; ‘*Veer tum badhe chalo!*’ (*Keep charging ahead, O brave one!*)

What are you motivating yourself for? The book is there right now but you won’t do that, you won’t do that. You will be hopeful.

Perennially, we are hopeful. When we are 10 years old, we are hopeful and our parents are hopeful that after few years he will write the board exams, and he will do well. That happens at the age of 15. When you are 15, then you are hopeful that you will crack the JEE one day. When you entered your engineering, you are hopeful that you will get a job one day. When you get a job, you are hopeful that you will get a wife one day. When you get a wife, then you are hopeful that you will get a house and then, a few kids and then, a promotion and then, another house and then, the kids too have to be made engineers and then, you will keep hoping that they will get their job and one day, hoping and hoping and hoping, in middle of all your hopes, you are gone.

Why hope? Just live! Be fully present. Enjoy! You know our life is like a man who is standing outside the gate of a huge party, hoping to enter it one day. The gates are open; in fact the gates are welcoming. But he is hoping that one day he will enter. “I am not fully qualified today.” No qualification is needed, no condition is there. You can enter the party right now, but you will

keep hoping for the future. “When something great will happen then, I will join the party. I am not qualified right now. I am a mere insect. I do not have a job, how can I dance? I could not get into IIT, how dare I enjoy? It is not possible, so let me keep hoping. Let me hope a lot.”

What are you hoping? Are you still hoping?

L: No, Sir.

AP: Alright!

Positive thoughts and negative thoughts are one; live in understanding

Acharya Prashant: Nancy asks, “How to get rid of negative thoughts?” Nancy wants to keep all the positive thoughts and just get rid of the negative thoughts. “Let me please, please have all the positive ones and throw away all the negative ones.”

Positive and negative are two ends of duality, where there is one there would always be the other one. You want to get rid of the negative thoughts; you will have to get rid of all the thoughts. But I understand what you want. You want only positivity. Such things that are floating these days. Let there be a lot of positive energy. Now, any student of science should ask, “What is this thing called positive energy?” Ever read of anything like positive energy in your science books? But everyone is talking of it. “Too much of negative energy, lets only have positive energy.” “Let’s be very positive.”

Negative thoughts and positive thoughts. What do you mean by negative thought? This side and this side are having a match. (Pointing with his hand). This side is about to win, this is a positive thought for the winning team and the same fact that these people are winning, is a negative thought for the other team. What is positive and what is negative except a position that you have taken? What is positive in one religion is very-very negative in another religion. What is positive for the boy is negative for the girl. What is positive for one country is negative for another country. What is positive for you right now will be negative for you tomorrow. What is alright in one instance is not alright in another instance. What do you mean by a positive thought, what do you mean by a negative thought?

Your negative thoughts exist only because you want to sustain the positive ones. Negative thoughts cannot have a life of their own unless you stop giving energy to the so called positive thoughts. That is where we are losing it. People have told us about the power of positive thinking and those idiots do not understand that wherever there is positive thinking, negative thought will come as a shadow.

But they will say, “Be positive, think positive.” You cannot think positive without simultaneously bringing in its dual opposite. That is the law of the mind, inviolable law. You cannot have hope – which you call as a positive thought, don’t you? – You cannot hope without at the same time being afraid of the hope not being fulfilled. Whenever you wish for something to happen, simultaneously there is a fear that it may not happen. So, along with hope comes fear but these wise people have been telling you the virtues of hope, without telling you that hope is the greatest misery.

The moment you are hoping, you are opening yourself to suffering. After all, what do you hope? Give me an example of hope. And all of you are very hopeful. Right? About the future, obviously. All hope is about the future. Give me a hope statement. Quickly.

L: I hope that I will get a good job.

AP: The moment you say, “I will be employed,” aren’t you also not thinking of unemployment? And if you are not thinking of unemployment, can the thought of employment come to your mind? You cannot think of having a getting a good job without first thinking of not being employed. Hope is fear. As imaginary as fear. Because there is neither employment nor unemployment right now. First there is the fear of unemployment and then to counter that fear you have the hope of employment. You hope that your favorite team wins the match. Now, could there be this hope without the fear that your team might lose it. Could there be this hope? There has to be a lurking fear, a hidden fear that the team may lose and to counter that fear, you start hoping.

When you are not sure, when you don’t really know, when you are dealing with imaginations, when you are dealing with the future, only then there is fear, only then there is hope. Is two plus two four or do you hope it to be four? When you really ‘know’ then there is no reason to hope.

Is two plus two four right now or will it be four in the future? Yes Nancy? A bright day will come when justice will be done and on that day two plus two will be four. Right now it’s an evil word, so two plus two is only three. There is so much of corruption, one is being lost in bribery so two plus two is only three. Yes? Is that so?

Two plus two is four right now, so there is no hope and there is no fear. What is, is. Just is. Simple, flat, finished. No hope, no fear. “Hope, someday

something great will happen.” Why? Because you are afraid that right now everything is rotten.

Behind every thought of greatness lies a fear of rottenness. The one who does not have that fear, the one who does not live in imaginations, the one who is really sure, one who is living in this moment, has no reasons for anything of this kind. Understand. Don't have positive thoughts and there is no reason for negative thoughts, just understand what is happening and that is sufficient.

I am talking to you, and if you do not understand me, you may have a lot of negative thoughts. This other side again may not understand me and they may have a lot of positive thoughts. These are negative thinkers, those are positive thinkers. So, what are the negative thinkers thinking? “Whatever he is saying is bad for us,” or “He is saying that we are idiots.” And what are all the positive thinkers thinking? “Oh, he is talking beautifully, whatever he is saying is beneficial for us.” Neither of them understand what I am saying; what is the use of this negative and positive thinking? Is it not better to be just here and just understand simply by paying attention, right now?

Why imagine? Understand.

But to understand, you have to really come close to reality. If you are afraid, if you shy away, you maintain a distance, then you will not know the reality. Then you will have to think positively or negatively depending upon your condition.

Somebody casts a glance at you, looks over his shoulder, and looks at you. “Oh surely, he is in love with me, that's why he is looking at me this way” - Positive thinker. Negative thinker – “You know I only saw scorn in his eyes, he hates me.”

Go close! Talk to him and know the reality. But instead of that, for one week, you will keep thinking that why did he look like this? The positive thinker will celebrate for a week. The negative thinker will mourn for a week. For one week, she has not eaten, why? “He looked at me this way.”

Go, talk, speak, ask, and know the reality. Come in touch. But to do that you will have to be free from fear. You will not do that. Why will you not do that? The negative thinker is afraid that if he comes close then something worse may happen. The positive thinker is afraid that if he comes close, then all his hopes may be proven false.

He thinks, “Right now, I am alright. At least I have an illusion that he loves

me.” And the negative thinker, “It is already proven that he hates me. How can I go close to him? So, both will not come in touch with reality. Positive thinker, negative thinker.

Don’t think so much. Neither positive, nor negative. Just know, understand, and attend. Don’t keep away from life; come in contact, then there will be no space for any kind of thought.

Right now, are you thinking positively? Thinking negatively?

L: No sir.

AP: Thank God!

MYTH OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Self-improvement is a decoration of the disease

Question: If I want to improve, that means I am a certain person, means I have labelled myself to be a certain person, and I want to be like a certain person and this is also coming from...

Acharya Prashant: And this certain person that you want to be is chosen by the person that you are, or have imagined yourself to be.

Listener 1: Yes.

AP: Right. You're a drunkard, you are lying in a ditch and now you choose another destination for yourself. What would that destination be?

L: Next ditch.

AP: The next ditch. So self-improvement is therefore such a foolish thing. Who is the self that wants to improve? The same self that you do not like. If you do not like this self and if you want to change or improve then how can you select or trust a destination determined by this very self that you dislike?

L 2: To this point, my mind always counters by saying that I am two, I am many. One part of me is sick and the other part of me is smart enough to see that I am sick and project a non-sick other. But, you say that it is not the case...

AP: You are one, and the proof that you are sick is that you think of yourself as two; or twenty. Remember that there is only the Self that needs no improvement and the mind that can have no improvement. Who are you trying to improve exactly?

Who are you trying to improve exactly?

Exactly, who would improve?

For the mind, there can only be dissolution, not improvement. And the *Aatman* cannot improve anymore. It's already perfect. So who exactly are you trying to make better?

L 3: An improvement does not facilitate or leads to dissolution?

AP: Dissolution just is. It does not ride on the vehicle of improvement. Improvement will not make dissolution any easier. So, in fact the pretext of improvement keeps dissolution away and away and away. 'I am improving these days.' Dissolution is still far ahead. What are you doing? Improving! 'Well I am still improving.' Where are you? Have you ever called up somebody who is late and late, what answers do he keep giving? I am..?

L: Coming.

AP: What does 'I am coming' means?

L 4: Haven't arrived.

AP: You see, I call you up, your time to arrive at Bodh Sthal is 10:30. 11:30, I called you up, I don't know where you are, you don't say, "I am not at Bodh Sthal." Never do I receive the response, "I am not there." The response that I get is "I am coming." So, this 'I am coming' is an equivalent of..?

L 5: Not there.

AP: Not there. You just don't want to be honest. So, you are saying 'I am coming', and you keep coming. You are coming since centuries. When will you come? When exactly have you planned to come? In fact you have planned with great determination to..?

L 6: Not come.

AP: To not to come. Because you are not coming, so you say, "I am coming." Keep coming. Keep coming. Keep improving.

L 7: So, Sir, behind this dishonesty, there is certainly this fear of the pleasure coming to an end and also the false, I won't say 'false', because for me the security is very true, the security would come to an end.

AP: You don't have any pleasures, it is just that you have named some of your fears as pleasures. And, you have learned that those fears that are named as pleasures are something important, and you have learned that what is important must be conserved. Have you ever seen how much your pleasures make you suffer? You don't have any pleasure, all you have is suffering.

L 7: But, dishonesty is such that even after seeing it, I still run after them.

AP: No, you are not seeing it. It's not that you are seeing it.

L 7: How do I see it?

AP: Seeing is always then and there. **Seeing** is not an intellectual memory based exercise. ‘I screwed up yesterday and I am seeing now’ – now this is no seeing.

L 8: Seeing now means changing immediately.

AP: Immediately! The action would change. It’s like asking somebody a false question, and the question is ‘Why do I ask false questions?’ It’s like being dishonest about the question that you are asking, and the question is ‘How to be honest?’

What’s going on?

If seeing happens, it happens within the moment. There, the question will change. The life would change. Actions would change. You no more continue to act in the same groove.

Seeing is not introspection, “Later on, I closed my eyes and found out that I was wrong, so I am apologizing.” What is going on?

Only the ego wants to correct mistakes, the fundamental mistake is the ego itself

Question: Why is it that if we search for evil or bad things, we find that it is all our fault? What if we don't go out searching? Then will we have a hard time realizing our mistakes?

Acharya Prashant: This option to 'not to go out searching' is not really available. The nature of the ego is to not to search for anything beyond itself. While it does appear that the ego is restless and keeps searching, but its entire preference is to search within its own predetermined domain. It's a pseudo search, it's a fake search. The ego is very-very happy in this fake search, it keeps itself occupied and it also gets to say proudly that it is searching. After all, we all do have things to search for, right?

Everybody has goals, targets, something to accomplish. None of us is sitting idle, everyone is chasing something, and we can claim that there is something that we are going after, that you are not stagnant, that life has a meaning, a purpose. But if we look closely at all our meanings, purposes and targets, they are all within the domain of our conditioning.

No target is an unconditioned target. No meaning that we ascribe to life is a para-mental meaning. All of them are coming from within a preset domain. So it's a nice game, it's a nice pseudo act. We can console ourselves all the time that we are doing something when actually nothing is happening, when actually whatever is happening is just happening to ensure that the status quo is being maintained. So we display a lot of activity, we move around, we run after this and that and it's a good act. Just a pretension, just a display to fool the world and fool ourselves. The more we move the more we are ensuring that nothing really is changing. The more we run, the more we ensure that no reaching is happening.

So, that is the way the ego functions – a lot of sound and fury, a lot of movement, a lot of asking, searching, seeking but essentially just the maintenance of its own boundaries. "I will run a lot within the room. I will run a lot within the preset boundary."

So, had it been left to ourselves, we would have never really sought, we would have been happy just pretending to seek. So, when does one start looking for the Truth? It is not a choice, it is not an indulgence, it is never a pleasure, it is never out of great willingness. It is just that, part of the nature of the ego, or you can say, as a natural consequence of the nature of the ego, there is suffering. Just as it is the nature of the ego to not to know the Truth, to pretend a lot, to act as if it is genuinely curious but never really to know, just as this is the nature of ego, this too is the nature of ego that it will suffer. Nothing except the ego suffers. Nothing except the ego is deluded.

When it suffers and suffers, again and again and yet again, then it is forced to seek. Why? Again there is a reason there. Suffering might be the natural consequence of ego, suffering might be the habit of ego, but you are not only the ego. It is not your nature to suffer. The ego can get nothing except suffering and that's when you start feeling uneasy because it is not your nature to suffer.

You are essentially Joyful, and what the ego brings to you goes against your own grain. That is the reason why anybody ever steps out to seek. Nobody steps out to seek in great happiness. Nobody steps out to seek in order to feel better about himself, or because it is a thing of pride, never. Whenever seeking would happen because of a pleasure motive, it would always be within the room and hence, it would be a pseudo search. That is the reason why most seekers never actually learn anything, because theirs' is a fake, a pseudo search. They are searching within the room. The room itself is the domain, the preserve of the ego, how will you get anything within it? By being within the room, all that you are doing is that you are validating the room; you are confusing yourself all the more by convincing yourself that this is where you belong.

You must have heard that little anecdote about *Raabiya*. She lost her small pin, maybe a weaving needle or something, and she started searching for it in another place and she collected the entire village. "I am an old woman, I can't see, help me." Soon the entire village was searching with her. Then one man got a little frustrated and asked, "Old lady, where did you lose it?" she said "There, somewhere else."

They said "Why are you searching for it here then? Have you gone totally senile?"

She said "I might be senile but what else are you doing! You too are

searching. All your movements are a search. Wherever you go you are going with a purpose. All of us are after something in life. But are you searching at the right place? How will you find it where it is not?"

And there is nobody who is not after something. Anybody here who is not after anything? You too must be after something. That is the way our system operates, we are always after something. And don't delude yourself, whatever you are after is just the veneer and the proof of that is that whatever you are after never really satisfies you. You are after something else. Whatever you are after is just a pointer, you are after something else. That should be a good enough indicator to an intelligent mind, "I am not searching rightly. I am constantly searching but probably I am searching just to maintain the search and never to find. Just to maintain the search so that I can console myself and feel good about myself that I am not really idle, that I am really not good for nothing. So I am doing something."

(Silence)

Lucky are those, whose eyes open up even if to just see their own wounds. Lucky are those whose sensitivity awakens even if to just realize that they are badly hurt, because it is only then that you are forced to see the fallacy of your ways. Otherwise nothing would ever change. We would be very happy and continue in the way we have always continued.

See, we keep on saying, "We are totally conditioned," but that is just to drive home a point. The fact is that we can never be totally conditioned or let me put it this way – What is totally conditioned is not really the totality of me. I am vaster than that which gets totally conditioned. - Yes, the mind-machine does get totally conditioned but I am something beyond the mind-machine and therein lies the possibility of my redemption. The mind is just an apparatus that does get totally conditioned but I am something else, a little more. So, when the mind gets totally conditioned, that doesn't match or concur with what I am because it is not my nature to be conditioned.

The mind might get conditioned but my nature is not really to get conditioned. And then, you want to hit at the boundaries, to knock at the doors, to cross the limits. That's when you challenge your patterns. Because what you are doing and how you are living is not what you are. How long can you go on violating and contradicting yourself? A point comes when you just start feeling suffocated and then things happen on their own. Never say that you have a choice there. All your choices are within the room. You will never

choose to go outside it, never. Left to yourself, you will happily keep singing, dancing, eating, sleeping, and breeding inside the room. A part of you exists outside, it is that part which calls you, but you do not know that part.

It is funny, because that is the essential you that you do not know. That face of yourself that you know is a very superficial face, you may as well not know it and continue, no harm will be done. So, that which you know as yourself, is anyway valueless. It is another matter that you attach a lot of importance to it and you spend a lot of time and energy just trying to maintain, preserve and burnish it. It is like you have a diamond and you have a diamond case and you are spending all your time in preserving and polishing the case while forgetting the diamond which is lying somewhere else, unattended. Even if you forget all that you think yourself to be, no great harm will be done, but that which is really you and is lying unattended, unsought, that's a great loss.

Again, for whom is that a great loss? Only for the one who is within the room. For Itself it is never a loss because it is not something that can be lost, it is not something to which the words gaining or losing can even be applied. It is a strange kind of thing. Understand this. Whatever I am saying right now, I am not really addressing the real You because that doesn't need to be addressed. (*Smilingly*) Who can teach the Aatman? Is there anything apart from It to teach It? And what does It lack in to be taught? So I am not really talking to the essential you. There is no point talking to It and there is nobody else except 'It' to talk to It.

I am just addressing the ego, nothing else, just addressing the ego. And when you are addressing the ego, all that you can do is draw its attention to its own suffering. All you can point out to it is, "Little child, you have been continuously trying and trying and going around restlessly, attempting, seeking, finding, un-finding, picking, dropping, all the actions that can be done. You have been continuously doing all these things; there is nothing that you have left undone. You have seen so many colours of life, you have tried whatever experiments you could try and what have you got?

Except trying, and except an inflated sense of pride that - I have been trying - what did you get?" That is all that can be said to the ego, and then one can just wait for a bit of good luck. That is needed. Without that nothing can happen. People call it Grace. Because the ego is stubborn, you never know how much it can take. Quite resilient it is. It can suffer a lot. We have great

potential for suffering, and then denying that we are suffering.

So, you never know how much stamina is still left in your ego; it might still not be exhausted, it might still be rearing to go. “No, no, I still want to try a little more.” If that be the case then not much can be done. Then your time has not yet come. If you still have a very fit and muscular ego, throbbing, itching, running, eager, determined, then not much can be done. Your time has not come. You need a few more hits. Deep hits, bloody hits, and you will get them, for sure you will get them. It’s a matter of time, you may get them in 2 days or in 200 years, but you will get them and then you will see how lucky you are that ultimately you got those hits.

(Silence)

Then you really seek. Then you are forced to admit, “I am mistaken.” I am repeating these words – ‘You are forced to admit’. Nobody will admit out of his own sweet will that he is mistaken, never. It’s just that you will be battered so hard that you will be left option-less. You will be made mincemeat of. Have you heard the word ‘kachoomar’? You will be beaten so badly that you will have no option but to accept. Out of your own false sense of pride you will have to accept, “Now I can see that there is something wrong.”

If you come across people who very easily admit that they are mistaken, if you come across people who keep smiling sweetly and saying, “You know, I have so many habits, you know I am an idiot, you know I am a slave of the ego,” you must realize that all this is just another tactic of the ego. Pretending to be egoless is such a wonderful tactic of the ego. Those who admit very quickly that we are mistaken are the ones who have co-opted mistakes. It’s a nice fashionable thing to do. Right? It happens with some of us here as well. You write your reflections and what do you write there? “Oh my God, I am such an idiot, I again slipped.” “Oh! Today I again slipped, and I realize that I am an idiot.” And the next day you again slip, after realizing yesterday that you are an idiot. Great tactic! *Own up the mistake so that you can remain mistaken.* Wonderful! Nice!

You will never own up your mistakes, you will be brought to a point where you will have no option but to see that you have been an idiot. You will be left option-less. Till the time you have an option, you will exercise it. Till the time you have an option, you will only choose the ego because only the ego has options, what else will you choose? Willingly, it is never going to

happen, never, ever. And those for whom it is happening willingly, it is not really happening. If it is happening willingly for you, then it is not really happening. Then it means that it is a part of your internal conspiracy.

(Silence)

Know that it is really happening when the ego, breathing its last breath, bleeding profusely, is still resisting it.

Know that it is really happening when you are deeply attracted to it, while finding simultaneously that you experience an aversion to it. If it's good, nice, honey and sweets, then it is not happening. The very phrase, 'Realizing my mistakes', is a meaningless phrase.

The ego will never realize its mistakes because the fundamental mistake is the ego itself.

So how can it ever realize any mistake? But it's fashionable for us to say, "Oh, I realize my mistake." The more you say that you are realizing your mistakes, the more you are ensuring that you will not realize anything. In fact, more honest are those who say, "I am not realizing anything, I don't want to realize anything." You never 'make' a mistake, the mistake emanates from your very structure. The mistake is a representation of what you are. You never make a mistake, you are just doing what you 'can' do. Being what you are, what else could you have done? But morality has taught us that it's nice to admit mistakes.

It might be nice to admit mistakes in order to keep the whole system, social order running. It might be a generous thing to do, it might appear a gentle and nice thing to do, but it's a harmful thing to do. By saying, "I committed a mistake", you want to say that, right now you are not committing a mistake. You are always mistaken because a mistake is what you are.

What do you mean by realization? It's like a mad man saying, "You know, I realize I am mad." How does that help? I mean what has he realized? Being mad, how can he 'realize' that he is mad? And the day that he actually realizes that he is mad is the day when he is not mad anymore. So, don't admit your mistakes too easily. Don't just go around saying, "I slipped." You didn't slip, you have been slipping all along and you are still slipping. It is not an isolated, one of incidence; it is always happening.

Humbly, go to the root of the happening; if you are lucky enough, (Smilingly) if your time has come. Humbly, try to dig deep into it without

feeling ashamed, without feeling guilty or bad about yourself. The ego likes to maintain its sense of purity and decency. If it starts admitting that it has been always slipping, then it will find it difficult to look at itself in the mirror. That is another thing with the ego, it must feel good about itself.

(Silence)

So, whenever by chance you get a feeling that you made a mistake, don't stop there. See how the mistake is just a minor representation of your entire mental structure. Go into that. The mistake is not an isolated incident. I am repeating. The mistake is an opportunity to look into your wider self, if you really bother. If you do not bother then, alright, you are still quite muscular, you can still take a lot of beating, you still have a lot of stamina, you are huffing and puffing and saying, "You know, I still want to try a little more." Keep trying, it's alright. Without you how would Leela continue? Without you how would the show run? Every good show requires a few comedians whose entire role is to keep slipping and keep getting beaten up all the time. You are that comedian. Without you the entire drama will become so tasteless, there would be nothing in it. After all somebody has to slip on the road, somebody has to step on the banana peel, so that everybody else can have a good time. You are that one. So, don't think of yourself as worthless. (Smilingly) You are the one who provides spice to the great show that this existence is. Without you there would be nothing to laugh at. Without you what else is left to be written about?

The Core, the Center, the *Aatman* is very intelligent, but it is also beyond the grasp of any writer. Nothing can be written about it. All that can be said is, "Nothing can be said." About Intelligence, nothing can be said. About stupidity, a lot can be said. So, you are the one who provides employment to all the authors and writers. If you are not there then the world would be poorer, nothing would be left, nobody would be slipping on the road, nobody would be falling in the gutters, nobody would be creating a scene so that the neighbors can enjoy.

You are the colour of the world, and this is not merely a satire, **this is it**. When you see that you have been stupid all along, don't feel bad about yourself. You didn't do it, you have been made a fool of, and somebody else did it, right? Who chooses to step on a banana peel? There is no need to feel bad about yourself; there is no need to feel guilty. When by chance you find yourself making mistakes, then without any sense of remorse or self-

deprecation go deep into yourself. The deeper you will go, the more mistakes and more sufferings you will come across. So, go in boldly. Don't feel bad, don't stop, don't feel shy, and don't start crying that, "Oh my god! Am I such a fool?" Of course you are! What's there to feel bad about? Whenever this so-called realization starts coming, "I have been a fool", tell yourself that, "No, you have been a bigger fool than you can ever imagine, and it's alright." It's alright because you are not responsible for the show. Right?

I didn't choose to be a fool, I didn't even choose to be 'here' (in this world) in the first place. I am on the stage, I am playing a fool, and I am on a stage I never chose to be on. Who chose to be born? Anybody here who did? So, you have been thrown onto a stage, you are there on the stage unwillingly, and unwillingly everything else is happening. The great game of Maya. There is no need to take ownership of all this, you are not responsible. You do not own your mistakes.

Now, you can clearly look at yourself. Now, witnessing is possible. Now you can observe all that is happening. Don't feel bad. That is your problem, you feel so bad about yourself that you observe no more. You feel so bad about yourself that it becomes impossible for you to proceed. Just as the entire world laughs at you, you too laugh at yourself. In fact, when nobody else is laughing then you start laughing at yourself, because you are the first one to know how big an idiot you have been. It would be nice. Right? You are sitting in a bus and nobody else is laughing at you and you are laughing. People will say, "What is there to laugh at?" You will say, "Don't you see? I am there to laugh at. I am the joke of jokes!"

Keep laughing at yourself. There is nothing dishonourable about it. You are anyway so dishonourable. (*Laughingly*) What can be more dishonourable than you? Don't regret.

(*Silence*)

Then, you reach the mother mistake. Laughing at yourself you reach the mother mistake. Only when you look at it lightly, is it possible to drop it. That mother mistake thrives in seriousness. That mother mistake is seriousness itself. You take yourself so seriously. It's like somebody taking a used toilet paper seriously. That is the fundamental mistake. Drop it. Flush it. That's's better, now you are not serious. Witnessing is simple, natural. All that it requires is a bit of detachment and when you have a point to prove then you cannot be detached. When you have a face to maintain, an image to

maintain, then you cannot be detached. Then you will admit mistakes but never admit that you are the mistaken one. It is a clever ploy. It works - against you. It does work but against you. Don't work against yourself. Whenever you come across mistakes just realize that it is not even the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

It is more like you are driving upon the highway and there is a bit of a stink and it is arising from the entire sewer system of the city. The stink means nothing, it is nothing, it is a small thing. You will take a few steps ahead and the stink will disappear but the stink points out to a great accumulation of rubbish in the basement. Just below the surface lies collected heaps and heaps of rubbish. And you are not rubbish; so there is no shame in accepting that there is so much rubbish. Be supremely confident that you are not rubbish, feel free to disown it, feel free to laugh at it. How can you take rubbish seriously? When you don't take it seriously there is no way you can get identified with it. Do you want to get identified with all the shit? Do you want to do that? Then why don't you just call shit as shit? That's our problem – we will never call shit as shit. We will acknowledge the stink but act as if there is no shit. We will acknowledge the mistake but act as if there is no mistaken one. Yes, there is an entire ocean beneath the compost surface. That's from where the stinks sometimes arises. Disown that ocean. Laugh at it. You are not that. Nothing will be lessened from you, you only lose your heaviness, nothing else will be lost, no harm is going to come your way.

(Silence)

So, I've said enough, and that's all that can be said. The rest depends on your stamina. Maybe you still want to take a few more punches. It's alright. Somebody has to step on the banana peel. It's alright.

L 1: If I want to see the mother mistake, then again and again I will have to go into it (The rubbish).

AP: You are probably not feeling sure. Think of the man, who has to take rubbish seriously and identify with it. Surely he feels very poor, surely he feels that there is not much in his life, surely he feels that life will be so harsh upon him that if he leaves the rubbish then nothing else will be there. So better than being totally impoverished, let me at least latch on to the rubbish. See whether you can feel a little more certain that 'Things cannot be so bad.' See whether you can feel a little more confident that 'Even if I drop this, even if it goes away, it's alright, I'll live with it.' See if you can feel a little more

emboldened. Let it go. Anyway all that it is giving me is a lot of foul air. Let it go. 'I am prepared to take the consequences.' Feel a little more certain.

We hold on to all the rubbish in our life for the simple assumption that we have very little self-worth. We feel that if this goes away then nothing will be left. You feel, "Alright this might be defective, dead, soiled but at least I have something. What if even this goes away? What if I am left with nothing?"

You will have to Trust a little. You will have to just jump in. You will have to just hope that things will not be so bad. That things cannot be so bad. See whether that is possible.

L 2: Sir, towards the beginning of this question you said, "Probably your time has not yet come." Then you were saying, "You have a deep belief that you still have a lot of stamina in you and you want to work." So let's say that this is the case. There has been a phase in my life, in someone's life in which he or she decided, "Okay, I will do such and such things and after this only, I will do anything else." So there is an impasse. This is what I have been facing. There is a conflict. There is a strong feeling that I have a lot to do, there are a lot of things in which I have to be engaged in, and there is the other side where one realizes that all doing, all working is futile. So, what to do? Get rid of those things? And these things can be anything like physical pleasure, some sort of achievement, academic achievement.

AP: See, I also said in the beginning itself that you don't really have a choice in this matter. So, even if I suggest something and you decide to pick it up, it will be you who will be deciding and hence you would also have the luxury of dropping it at your own sweet will. That is the whole problem with taking somebody's advice. You are the one who went to take advice, you can also drop the advice. Have you not seen people taking 'second opinions?' Going from one doctor to the other? When you are taking a second opinion, ultimately it is your own opinion that prevails. You are the one who decide whether to consider the first opinion or the second opinion. Don't you see? There is really no choice in this. Don't ask, "What to do?" You are already doing a lot! Aren't you? Go into that, if you can.

Don't ask me "What to do?" Aren't you already doing a lot? And even if I suggest you a few more things to do, who will be doing that? The doer will remain the same, right? Now, if the doer is to be investigated then why take on a new doing? You are already doing a lot, start from there and go deeper, boldly, without fear or without any sense of shame. This 'going deeper' is not

another doing. It is not another action of the same doer. It has a different quality to it. You do ten things in a day, you cannot say that attention is the eleventh thing. There are already ten things that you are doing, be attentive towards them. And that is not an eleventh action, that is like a light falling on all those actions. Alright?

L 3: Sir, if I do ten things, what gives me this stupid power to do another ten things, succeeding in a few?

AP: The very concept of succeeding. The very hope that success is possible, that's what keeps us going.

L 3: Where does that hope comes from? If I fail in all, will that hope still retain?

AP: Chances are the hope will diminish. That is why failure is often such a blessing. But again you see, one has to 'admit' the failure. You may keep failing and keep labeling the failure as success. Have you not seen people celebrating diamond jubilees of their marriage?

Have you not seen that? So failure and success are just words, labels. That deep realization has to come and that comes only when its time has come. It requires that bit of luck. Pray, if you can.

L 2: Sir, this is what I was asking. What does it mean that the time has not come? The mind to get empty? There are a few things that I have decided that I must do and only then, the time will come, right? Unless I empty my mind of those things, those activities, those desires, the time won't come.

AP: No, you have not done any of those things. What are you doing? What is the fact? The fact is – You are deciding. That is the doing. You have decided to do a few things, right? Have you done any of those things? What have you really done?

L: Decide

AP: You have decided. Now, go into this decision and go into the decision maker. That is the real doing. "Where is this decision coming from?" Don't go into what you have decided to do and when and all that. You may as well never do all those things. You know the quality of your decisions. Right? You decide to go left and you end up going?

L: Right.

AP: Underground.

So, there is no point of thinking about what goes left or right but yes the 'decision' has been done. That is a fact and that is very much an action, a mental action that has been done. Go into that.

L 3: Sir, while going into that, in between this entire thing of accepting your mistake or not accepting it, the ego will continue to get strengthened. You said to 'go into the decision', but at the same time that part of the mind which is conditioned, which is following the patterns, is also continuing, right? So how to segregate? One part is giving strength to the ego and getting stronger somehow. Make mistake; do not accept. Accept and then keep doing; either way. And then you say, "Go deeper." How? That condition mind which is following the pattern is not stopping, it's still working.

AP: The more you believe in what you have believed so far the more you will stay in the same circles. You have believed in your fears, you have believed in your limitations, you carry an entire world inside your head. At the center of that world is your own self-image.

The more you keep believing it, the more you keep feeding it, the more you keep feeling sure about it, the more things will remain the same. So try to take a few baby steps. See whether it's possible - there is no guarantee - but see whether that is possible, maybe your time has come. See whether you can proceed without your self-image. See whether any harm really happens to you when you drop the rubbish. See whether you really lose something when you act in contradictions of your own assumptions. We imagine so much, see whether your imaginations actually materialize.

They won't. See whether your own self-worth or self-image is real at all. I assure you, we know very little of ourselves, very, very little. You are not at all what you think you are. Allow yourself to come across your new face. You will be surprised. It is just like exfoliation. You are a woman, you understand that, right? There is a beautiful face waiting to be discovered. Don't be ashamed of it.

You have already decided that you are the maximum that you can be; this 'can be' has no limits. You can keep trying and keep moving within this so-called maxima. Limitlessly you can keep moving after setting a boundary. And in this nonsensical movement you keep missing that which you really are. Now don't make images about it, just gather a little courage, don't think about it, "What is it that I really am? What is my real face like?" There is no need to think more. You already think so much. Just gather a little bit of

courage to move into an unknown land, but that's sounds scary so I am saying, "Take a few baby steps." One step? At least that much can be done? Test your assumptions.

But when one is testing her assumptions, it is not tested in order to maintain the assumptions. If your assumption is that your assumptions are valid then you are not really testing your assumptions. When you test your assumptions then it must be done without bias, then it must be done impartially. "Let me really test." We are so clever that in the name of testing we create situations that validate the assumptions. Don't do that. We play so many games with ourselves. Do not do that. First of all you tell yourself that the world is a bad place and then you say, "Okay, let me test this assumption." And then you go out and you bump into someone and he beats you up and then you say, "See I told you so, the world is actually a bad place." Are you testing your assumption or are you going out just to reinforce it? Don't do that.

L 3: Maybe we very well tend to do that because in every place that we feel light, we also finds reasons that will make us heavy. Just to ensure that the lightness does not prevail.

AP: Yes. You see we need to feel healthy and if we can't feel healthy we at least need to pretend healthy. Even if I have to slaughter somebody it is better to do that via the court so that I can maintain my self-image. "I am a justice-loving person, I follow the due process of law, you see I am not blindly believing in my assumptions, I tested them, so what I am saying is not an imagination, it is the fact sir!" People will come and say, "I am so experienced and what I am telling you about life is not just my thoughts, it is what I have experienced." Have you not heard this?

L: Yes.

AP: "This is my experience" and they are not really lying, it is actually their experience. The only shrewdness there is, they are the manufacturers of that experience. Yes, you did experience, but who is the experiencer? When your so-called experienced people come and tell you, "The world is a bad and wicked and ugly place and you need to protect yourself otherwise a lot of harm can happen to you." They are not really lying. For them the world has actually been bad and wicked and ugly. So, they are actually not lying. What they do not admit is that they made it this way. They are the creators of their experiences; that is something they will not admit. They will not admit that.

L 1: When somebody says very forcibly, “I have experienced this.” Then the implication is that there is something objective there.

AP: Yes! There is nothing objective about it. ‘You’ did that. We create situations that are conducive to our image of the world. You hate a person and that will show up in your entire being. Now why are you surprised when the person reciprocates hate? When you look at that man your eyes are radiating hate, your words are full of poison, now is it any surprise that that person too reflects the same hate? Then you will say, “See, I told you so. That fellow is evil.” Is that fellow evil or did you make him act in evil ways? The world is your self-image, nothing more than that. It’s an echo.

L 5: Sir, then experience is also a part of ego?

AP: All experience. Let experience never be a criteria. Let nobody claim that experience leads to Truth. Experience can only lead you to your own mind. That much, experience can help you. When you experience something go into the experience, not with an intention to know the world. Your experience will tell you nothing about the world because there is no objective world, but your experience will tell you something about yourself, your own structures.

When you hate somebody that tells nothing about the person you hate, but it tells a lot about you. So, do not make images about the person you hate, go into your hatred, it will tell you something about yourself. It will tell you how afraid you are, it will tell you about your own insecurities, it will take you to your own basement.

L 5: It will make me aware, a reflected awareness, what I am having, and my perceptions, looking at my own perceptions, that what it is that I am experiencing.

AP: It will take you to the mother of hatred.

L 1: Let’s say somebody is testing his assumptions, and quite validly at that. He is also seeing that those are flawed assumptions. But we have been powering those assumptions for a long time. So, they come back, this is very imbalanced, those assumptions have gathered a lot of powers. When we test them, we realize for a moment that “Oh,” and something new comes up, but the next moment...

AP: See that is why we are saying that there is no point in admitting mistakes or admitting that the assumptions are flawed because till the time that mother is there, she will keep producing more babies. *Assumptions are not flawed,*

assumptions are what you are, so go deeper. Whenever you say that these assumptions are wrong then tell me what is right? Is there another assumption that is right?

When you say, “I committed a mistake,” then tell me what not a mistake is? You must be having some image. Right? That image too is a mistake! So, it’s like a kid comes to you and says, “I have written $5+5$ equals 15” and you really scold him hard, you say, “How can you be such an idiot that $5+5$ is 15 and this and that, you didn’t even know this much, you are making so many mistakes,” and ultimately you tell him, “Now, write $5+5$ is 17.” When you are declaring something to be a mistake, also ask yourself what is it that I am declaring as not a mistake. You will be surprised that is a bigger mistake.

L 1: So, for example our assumption is that – Somebody doesn’t like me. And the assumption is based upon my own inferiority complex that I am paranoid all the time. So, the contrary of this would be that the person likes me. So, when I will check the assumption, the thing that will actually come up is “No, no, he actually likes me.” So you are saying that both are equally wrong?

AP: Well said! Both are equally wrong. Neither does he dislike you nor is there anything to like. What the reality is, that you will never know being yourself. The Truth is not the opposite of the false, the Truth is the absence of all that can be false. When I say that you have an assumption that ‘The world is a bad, bad place.’ Kindly do not use it to imply, “Oh my assumption was invalid, the world is not really a bad, bad place, and the world is actually a good, good place.” The moment you do this the mother mistake is smiling. Why? Because, this second assumption will be invalidated very soon, and you will have to come back to the first assumption. So, going to something’s opposite is actually a very clever way of returning to the first thing.

The world is neither good nor bad. Find out what the world is, why assume? Assumption 2 cannot correct assumption 1. So, never say, “I have known that this is a mistake.” When you say that you have known something as a mistake, you are pretending as if you know what is not a mistake. Because without having some concept, some notion, some idea of what is not a mistake, you can never say that this is a mistake. That idea too is equally wrong. Just say, “This is what I am and I am suffering.” Now you cannot go wrong.

Just say, “In my life $5+5$ is 15 and I am suffering.” Do not claim that you

know what 5+5 is. All you know is 5+5 is 15. Just say, “I am holding these ideas as sacred, I am assuming these things to be true, I am living by these concepts and what I am getting is suffering.” Now these two are facts, there is very little positing here. “This is what I think, which is a fact, yes you do think that way and I suffer, which is again a fact. Now, proceed downwards, now keep going into the depth.

L 5: Sir, like just now you said we think and we also think that we suffer. So, with me it happens that I assume there is a certain negative thinking process and because of these thoughts I suffer. If I don't let those thoughts come into my mind because they are certain old patterns, which I am still working on, but regarding these new thought, I can at least at that moment tell myself that they are useless and don't let them come. Don't entertain them further. So, is that also an assumption working? That those thoughts are negative and are not good for my well-being. So, I should go deeper into this assumption?

AP: Does that really happen that when you don't want thoughts to come, they don't come?

L 5: For example last time I was getting late for a class, just to pick an example. So, I was there on the red light and so much of traffic was there, I was about to reach on time, I got late by 1 or 2 minutes. On the signals those thoughts were coming, “What will happen?” I started imagining what Rahul Sir will say. What will be my impression on my team? But, I just stopped at that time and said that “Okay, don't let these thoughts come, go there and see what happens.” Yes it happens, otherwise I could have entertained them, I could have imagined and what not.

AP: If it is happening then there is nothing to worry about. If it does happen that when you ask your thoughts to shut up and they do fall quiet. Then, it's good, already good.

L 5: So, I don't need to get into this assumption that certain thoughts are not good for my well-being, nothing like that?

AP: No. Where is the thought left now?

L 5: That is the main thing.

AP: No. It's alright.

L 5: Okay, there are some certain old thoughts that gain momentum in some situations, they again come up. Similar kind of thoughts. So, at times like we

are reading reflections every day and are coming to the sessions, certain points come up parallelly. So when I get into those thoughts, they go away, but in certain situations they don't lose the momentum at all. So, what are the baby steps in those situations?

AP: Take the previous example: When thought refuses to subside in spite of your telling it to shut down, then there is anyway not much that you can do, then let it continue. Don't resist it. You feed thoughts in two ways: From the front and from the back. From the front you feed it by asking it to continue – it's a pleasure to think sometimes. You feed it from the back by resisting it – “It's a bad thought, how can I think this way?” The moment you say this, then the bad thought intensifies. Let it continue, after all how much can the imagination proceed on its own? How far will it go? You will assume that you will come late, alright, then? The gates will be closed, and then? And then? And then? Soon you will be bored. “Alright, let's stop.” What is the worst that can happen? He doesn't even have a gun license, your Rahul Sir.

What is the worst that can happen? Let it continue. It's alright. You want to think? Proceed.

L 5: Yes, then I started feeling guilty, “Why did I waste time thinking more and more for so long about an unnecessary thing.”

AP: Never be bothered about your actions. By being bothered about your actions you create a ploy to not to be bothered about the mother of the actions. You meet a small kid and the kid is behaving in all kinds of stupid ways and he has acquired so many habits at just three or four years of age. He is stealing, he is cursing, he is kicking and crying, he is doing all kinds of things that kids do not usually do if they are healthy, what do you say to the kid? “Who is your mother? What have your parents taught you?” Actions are like kids. They are poor kids. What is the point in beating up the kid? Go to the mother, she is the one who is training the kid. But we bash up the kid! “This action is bad, evil!” What is the point? You can even the kill the kid, but the mother is very fertile, she will produce more and more. Actions are kids, go the mother of that action.

L 2: Sir, but this requires subtlety of mind. Say, when we try to see things, usually this seeing with me happens via thoughts. Which means that the seeing is not deep enough. If it's happening via thoughts, it means it is not deep enough. So what you are saying that “Go to the mother root,” it will

require subtlety and I don't think it's there in me.

AP: At least stop blaming the kid. Can you remember this much? We have a great tendency to say, "Oh my god I did something bad today." Don't we have that tendency? And all concepts of correction and repentance are based on this concept: I did something bad. So what am I correcting? The mistake. What I am repenting for? My action. At least stop doing this? Remember that the action can never be corrected, it is coming from a particular actor who is the mother. At least stop saying that you did something bad today. At least stop writing in your daily reflections that "Oh my god, I forgot, I slipped!"

You are not forgetting, you are forgetfulness itself, personified. By saying that you forgot, you are pretending as if you otherwise remember. You never remember. Don't blame yourself too much, don't be harsh upon yourself. That's what I mean when I am saying that don't feel ashamed. By feeling ashamed you are pretending as if there is something honorable about you!

A spec falls off a lump of coal and coal is regretting, "Oh my god! It's so black." As if there is anything non-black about it. A particle falls off a lump of coal and the coal looks at that particle and says, "Oh my god! It is so dark, so black." Hello sir! Is there anything except blackness about you? So, what is the point in feeling ashamed? Just laugh it away. "Of course I am all black. But when I will burn, when I will turn into ash then I will no more be black." Have you seen that? How coal becomes almost white when it turns into ash? There is no point regretting at your own little spec, your own baby. "The baby is so black," the mother is an entire lump of blackness, the baby is bound to be black! Let the mother get burnt down, then things will change. Never regret your actions, never. Never feel ashamed of something you did, that's a clever ploy against yourself. Don't repent. Don't try to correct your mistakes, never. You will be allowing the mistaken one to happily continue. Don't do that.

L 6: Sir, do we give value to assumptions and other things just because we are always trying to analyze situations? Like we do in a math problem that if we don't have a value for anything, we assume it to be something, and then derive the whole formula, just for the sake of our analysis, so that it gets simplified.

AP: See, there you have no option. You will have to do that because it's a pattern. Mathematics doesn't breathe. It doesn't know by itself. So, if you don't make that assumption, you will not be able to proceed at all. Life is a

little different. Here, if you don't make assumptions, you reach the solution. Maths – you don't make the assumption, you can't even proceed to get the answer. Life – don't make assumptions and the solution would be obvious. That is the difference.

(Silence)

L 7: How do I even say that it is a mistake if I have no idea of what is not a mistake?

AP: Yes, that's what is being said. So, don't call it's a mistake. Just say, "This is what is happening and I am suffering." Only two things: "This is what is happening and I am suffering." No point calling it a mistake or anything. There is no benefit in naming.

L1: Sir, in this process as you have said that full acceptance brings liberation, or if we feel something fully, then we are free of it. Now, what stops me from accepting it fully is, when I enter into it, a feeling of inferiority or lack is there and at times it's almost death-like. So, in this process if I am a little confident of the real 'I' or if in this time I can be detached, or laugh at myself then it would become easier to take further steps. So, what I want to ask is that what is this game of inferiority? Is it the real tool which is not allowing me to enter in this process? Is it? So, if I have got this understanding then it genuinely gives me a power to be detached.

AP: And, it has to be a very subtle, very faint feeling. It cannot be a loud emotional declaration. It's a very subtle sureness. It is not the reiteration of some conceptual knowledge that when I'll feel afraid I will say, "I am the fearless Aatman," or something. It's a very subtle sureness; not the recitation of some old mantra.

L 4: Sir, isn't this like the activity which we have done, 'Mirror Identities'? If I am this, I am not that. And it helps me expand. If I am Goal-oriented then that means that I cannot be an aimless wanderer. That means both are identities and not me; that means I am something else entirely. So, being aware of this is a baby step for me?

AP: Yes, yes. You know when you are taking that step. You see we live in closed claustrophobic rooms. When you just open the gate a little and take half a step outside, you know it's new. The fresh gust of air hits your face; you know there is something new about it. You will realize that it is fresh, it is new, it doesn't happens within your circles.

L 5: Sir, you talked about not resisting the assumptions. But my resistance or non-resistance is via thoughts, and when I don't resist, the thoughts gain more power and at peaceful moments they leave me shaken up. So, what is this 'not resisting the assumption' which will make me feel light? That I am not able to understand.

AP: There is Udit sitting next to you. Shake him up!

You could shake him up right? Now shake up the space here. Shake it up! You can shake something only when it offers resistance. His weight is offering resistance that is why you can shake him up. You feel shaken up only because you offer resistance to thoughts. That resistance itself is the energy that shakes you up. Thought comes and says, "Some great harm is going to happen! And you say, "No, no, no, no great harm is going to happen! How can it happen?" Don't you see that in the process of resisting the thought you are supporting the thought?

Thought is saying, "Great harm is going to happen," and you are saying, "Great harm is not going to happen," but you too are admitting that great harm is 'possible'. Only that can happen or not happen which has a possibility of happening or not happening. When thought comes and says, and that's what this terrifying thought says, "Some great harm is possible." When thought comes and says, "Some great harm is possible." Say, "Go ahead. Let's see what great harm is possible." As I said your Rahul Sir doesn't even have a gun license. What great harm can be done?

Now thought is coming and saying, "Something bad is going to happen!" and you are getting all worked up, "No, no, no that bad thing cannot be allowed to happen! It cannot happen!" Thought is coming and saying, "You are dying! You are dying!" and you are saying, "No, no, no I am not dying yet!" Don't you see that you are supporting your thought by admitting that death is possible? When thought comes and says that you are going to die, say, "Fine, if that's what pleases you, if that's what makes you feel better, yes, I am going to die. Now, what next?" Remember? You feed it from the front, you feed it from the back. Don't feed it from the back. "Something bad is going to happen!" "Yeah something bad is going to happen."

L 2: Sometimes what happens is, this whole game of thinking gets exposed. How? Say, I am sitting and thinking, and I am thinking and thinking, and I forget what I was thinking about. Then later on I try to remember, "What was I thinking about?" And I am unable to recall it.

AP: Thought itself is such a stupid thing; you allow it to continue, it will get tangled within itself and will forget what it was all about. It is a monkey, it jumps from one place to another. Thought is saying, “You will die! You will die! You will die!” You say, “Fine, proceed,” and next thing it will be thinking about the wood in the funeral pyre and then it will be thinking about the Himalayas and the great weather.

(Laughs)

So, from death it will, like a monkey hop from one place to other. So, death will bring it to the wood; the wood will take it to the Himalayas, Himalayas means fine weather so now you are thinking of fine weather! It’s alright.

L 7: Sir, regarding the pleasurable thinking part which was discussed. I have observed that there is a certain feeling inside the body, which makes you continue it. So, after seeing this, you say that it’s not real, and it subsides. But when the anger, or the negative part comes, when there is an actual restlessness inside... I have felt this, when I am filling the tracker, I am sitting down, filling the tracker and there is this instant resistance like, “Why?” and that’s what you said that it’s a thought, remove it. And suddenly it is affecting the whole body and my hands are not typing, shaking, it’s like a let out; now you are sitting in a room, it’s more like scratching yourself. So, is this resistance or this is a next level thing?

AP: No, it is the resistance. So when the thought says, “Don’t fill the tracker!” Let thought say, “Don’t fill the tracker!” and you fill the tracker.

(Laughter)

What else can the poor thing do?

L 2: Yesterday Udit said one of your lines that “Knowing yourself, how can you take yourself seriously?”

L 2: Sir, thinking process also differs from person to person?

AP: Oh, of course!

L 2: Like not the thoughts but the process, sometime when I try to cut the thoughts...

AP: The tendency to think doesn’t differ. That is the *Mool Vritti (The fundamental tendency)*. Thoughts always differ. In fact thoughts make the person; that is why you are never the same person at two different points in time. But the tendency is the same everywhere. That’s where we are all one.

We all have the same latent tendencies. Same latent tendencies – fear, greed, lust, same latent tendencies. And at the root of those tendencies lies the ‘I’ tendency, Aham-vritti

L 7: Isn’t that Aham-Vritti coming out from the tendency to think? As in if we don’t think, the ‘I’ thought won’t come.

AP: Because of the ‘I’, the thought comes. At the center of the entire expanse of thought, sits the ‘I’. You cannot think without an ‘I’. Go into your thoughts, there would always be an ‘I’ present. So, the ‘I’ makes the thought possible.

MYTH OF SIXTH SENSE

The sixth sense is just the conditioned mind trying to take a more acceptable name

Acharya Prashant: There is fundamentally no difference between the five senses and the sixth sense. Just as the five senses constitute who we are, similarly the sixth sense too is but a product of the five senses. It is just that the ego sense is identified more with the mind than with the hands, or eyes, or tongue, or ears. Hence, it wants to give more weightage to the so-called sixth sense which is the mind.

We often hear people speaking in these terms, such as, “The sixth sense is intuitive; that the sixth sense is metaphysical.” We even hear of things such as women having a more advanced sixth sense. Just as the five senses are external and dualistic, similarly the sixth sense too is not what one is. We take things for granted.

You see we have a fascination for the paranormal. The eyes are so ordinary, you see how they are functioning. We have a fascination for the paranormal because we want to prove that we, as we are, are still something beyond the material. The body appears so limited, and so weak. So, one likes to claim and attribute those powers to the body, which the body doesn't have and cannot have. So we talk of things like intuition and conscience and sixth sense, as if they are coming from somewhere beyond the body-mind.

Don't you see people paying a lot of respect to what they call as their “intuition”? People relying a lot on their tendency about something, their inclination, proclivity towards something and calling it as sixth sense; or attributing their deep seated conditioning to what they call as their conscience.

If you say, “This is my decision,” it doesn't sound too grand, too much or very respectable because you are not respectable. If you go to someone and say, “I am withdrawing from you and it is my decision.” Then that person will fight you, contest you, argue with you because you have just said that it is your decision and you are known to be little and weak and prone to mistakes. But if you go to the same person and say, “You know, it is the call

of my conscience, it is not my decision, it is the call of my conscience.” Then, the same decision is given more respect, the fellow takes you more seriously. Because, now you have said that it is not coming from you, rather it is coming from some other center.

Don't we see that happening? Man wants to claim that his ego itself has two centers. The ego wants to claim that the True center lies within it and it tries to give the True center various deceptive names. Of course, it is the false True center that the ego is referring to. So, it gives it names like conscience, love, or understanding. Have you not heard people using these phrases? “You know it is my own personal understanding that what you are doing is wrong.” If the fellow just says that it is my opinion, then it won't be taken with any gravity. People would say, “Just as you are, so would be your opinion, why should we listen to you?” But when he says “It is my understanding,” then suddenly some kind of weightage is attracted to his statement.

If you just say, “What I am saying is what I have absorbed from my five senses. This is what I have seen in the T.V. and what I have seen and gathered from the T.V. has now become my mental stuff and now I am just recycling it, regurgitating it,” then this would appear so mean. So, you cannot attribute your statements to your five senses. You cannot say, “I just saw this. I just heard that two people were talking about this using one of my five senses.” You say, “It is coming from my sixth sense.” Brilliant! Now it's coming from the beyond; now, you have staked your claim to the transcendental. Now you are saying, “Take me seriously, it is coming from the beyond.”

Just as you cannot tell a woman that nothing but lust attracts you to her. If you just go and tell her, “You know it is your body, and especially your sexual organs that attract me to you, then the whole game will be spoiled.” So, what do you go and tell her? “Mine is divine love. When I look at you all the goodness and the divinity of the cosmos appears personified in your shape.”

You have heard so many songs. In any of these songs do you really hear the fact of a man-woman relationship? Is the man ever saying, “Nothing but your naked body is what I want”? He is talking of so many other things. At the most he will talk about her hair and her eyes – that is the limit. Whereas, the fact is he is that he is least interested in the eyes. The moment you say, “Love” you sound more mature, more deep, more sincere, isn't it? One

politician wants to switch sides and moves to the other party, he never says that he is doing it out of his greedy calculations. What does he say? "It is the voice of my conscience." And he will not admit that his conscience is nothing but a product of his conditioning.

The ego uses all means to be taken seriously. Deep within it has a deep inferiority complex. It knows that it doesn't deserve to be taken seriously. So, it masquerades as something else. It is only when you know that you have nothing that can be given any weightage that you want to disguise as somebody else. One of the first elements in spirituality is to have this honesty, to see black as black and white as white; to not to name deceptively.

If you have a doubt, you call it a doubt; you don't call it a submission. If you are taking sides you clearly mention that you are a partisan; you don't say that you want to understand the matter from a neutral perspective. You very well know there is nothing called neutral perspective; all perspectives are biased, this way or that way. But have you not seen the sophisticated ones, the ultra-civilized ones use this kind of language? "You know, I want to understand your statement from a neutral perspective." Why are you bullshitting? Come the point. Just say that you do not like what you hear from me. Just say that something within you cries out to oppose me.

Won't that be honest? Why does your morality prevent you from expressing the fact of your mind? And does it not? You hate somebody and what do you tell him? "You know I was just a little disappointed to hear what you said because I expected a little better from you." If situations allow you would gauge out that person's eyes; slash his face using the sharpest blade possible; and what are you saying? "I was a little disappointed because I thought you are capable of doing much better."

See things as they are. And don't feel guilty when you see your mind full of biases, or hatred, or patterns. What is the point in judging the judgment? In judging the judge? Especially too when the judge that you are judging, is the same judge that you are judging. Who is judging? The mind is judging itself.

MYTH OF HELP

In giving something more importance than the one, you are destroying that thing

Question: I feel that I am going on the right track in my life. But sometimes when I look at my family, it makes me distracted. When I think about this, there emerges a question mark. What to do?

Acharya Prashant: Be it family, or anything else that you consider important, there would be goodness and harmony, only when your priorities are in order. What do I mean by that?

If the family becomes your first priority, you can be assured that the family would come to ruin. If a person becomes your first priority, rest assured that you would destroy both – your relationship with that person and the person as well. If you go and mention to somebody that you keep remembering that person all the time, then it is guaranteed that you have a very unhealthy relationship with that person.

Those who make the family their first priority, would end up destroying the family. Those who make their work and career their first priority, would end up destroying their work and career. Those who make academics, and knowledge, and scholarship their first priority, would end up using that knowledge for destructive purposes.

The Truth has to be your first priority. When the Truth is your first priority, the Truth will set all your other priorities.

You cannot set your other priorities; you have no discretion to do that. Whenever you will try to accord importance to priorities, that importance will come from your conditioning, from your patterns. And that would be deeply destructive. So I said, “*The Truth has to be your first priority,*” and now I am adding, “*The Truth has to be your first and only priority.*”

You take care of the Truth, and the Truth will take care of all else. You remain steadfast in your first and only priority, and your first and only priority will take care of all your other priorities. It is a strange thing.

Those who say that, “Because of family, or work, or career I am rejecting the

Truth, only find destruction and devastation in both family and career.” It seems counter-intuitive. After all, these people wanted to give the highest priority to family and work, how can their family and work be destroyed? They are giving it the highest importance, how can it be destroyed? It will be destroyed, precisely because you gave it the highest importance. It will be destroyed, precisely because you gave it a position beyond its worth.

When the monkey is made to sit on the King’s throne, the empire is destroyed, or is it not? When the monkey is made to sit on the King’s throne, the empire is destroyed. When the family is made to sit on the throne reserved for the Truth, then the family is destroyed. When work and career are made to sit on the throne reserved for the Truth, then work and career are destroyed.

I am repeating: you take care of the One. And when I say, “You take care of the One,” it doesn’t mean that you have to ‘take care’ of the One. I mean, you take care of your devotion to the One. You take care of the devotion to the One, and then the rest will be taken care of. Are you getting it?

You see, today is a Sunday. And a while back, some of the students present here were having their examinations. Some students would not turn up saying, “We have examinations, so we cannot come,” some would still come. I want you to honestly reply, by not coming here did you actually do better in your examinations? And to those who came here, I am asking, by coming here, did you do any worse in your examinations?

The fact is, that if you are not coming here because of exam pressure, it has already been ascertained that, that exam is not going to go well. There are people who repeatedly miss the camps (Advait Bodh Camp), citing the importance of family and career. Is it not true that their family and career are already in shambles? The family is burning, and the career is destroyed, already. Is it not true?

And yes, when you go to a Learning Camp camp(Advait Bodh Camp), the family does object a few times. They will say, “There are these responsibilities to take care of. You will not be here for a week.” But ask yourself honestly, are you not more loving towards all when you return from the camp? In the real sense, don’t you serve your family better after the camp? Well, the impression may be different. It may not be so open. The family may say, “You are not quite the same person that you were, before you went to the camp.” So initially it may be a matter of dislike. But in the

real sense, are you not more useful to your family after the camp?

When the First priority is rightly taken care of, then the other priorities, by themselves fall in place. Take care of the First and the First will take care of the rest. And ignore the First, and the rest would be turned to ashes. That is the sad story of man today. He wants to take care of everything, except the First, except the First.

My advice is, whenever and wherever, it is a conflict, or a choice between the First and anything else, blindly, without thinking, without taking a second, go for the First. Don't even think, don't let calculations come into the picture. There must be something in your life, where thought must not be allowed.

There must be something in your life, which must be totally unconditional. You must be able to say, "The Truth has called, and I can't allow myself to think now. The Call has come, how can I think now? How can I ask, 'Sir, how many days? Sir, how long? Where to? When? With whom?' How can I even ask this petulant, disrespectful question? The Call has come. The Call has come, and I have to respond. I can't allow myself to think and decide. "

To think and decide in matters of the First is blasphemy. This is the definition, the real definition of blasphemy. When you allow yourself to be bigger than the Truth, this is blasphemous. "My mind is bigger than the Truth. I will decide what to do with the call of the Truth. I will decide. I will not let the Truth decide, I will decide." That is heresy.

Getting it?

Now this will make you feel a little scared, because you want security in thought. You feel secure, when thought assures you that everything is in place. It's a bad habit, that's all. But that habit has become deep with you. You want to think, you want to project, pre-meditate. You want to be assured of the results of your actions. You want to ask, "What will come out of it?" You want to ask, "What if?" You want to project scenarios, you want a guarantee of results and returns. So this will make you a little nervous.

"In matters of Truth, am I being told not to think? But how can I act without thinking?" Think, and you have spoiled it. When it comes to all the other priorities, you have all the luxury to think, think, and think and think; plan, plan and plan. Let your mind display all its ammunition, let your intellect put all its wares to use, in the miscellaneous matters of life, but not in the First matter, not in matters of Heart, not in matters of Truth, not in matters of

Love. There, thoughts have no place.

In other matters most welcome. Use memory, use comparison, use analytics, use whatever you want to use. Then no harm will be done, even if you are using thought and comparison and conclusion, because now thought would be acting as a servant to the Self. Thought now would just be a servant of the Truth. Now thought cannot harm you, it would be a useful servant. Now memory cannot harm you, it would be a useful servant. Getting it?

If you love your family then never gives it the first priority. Give first priority to Love. Are you getting it? Understand this very clearly. If you love your lover, never give lover the first priority. Give the first priority to Love. Whatever is important to 'you', must never get the first priority; never.

Don't let the monkey occupy the throne.

L 1: Sir, when we talk about 'priority', does it mean that one part of that mind which is occupied with Truth should be given the first priority? But, because it is said that Truth cannot be thought of, or cannot be pondered on, and if I have to make the Truth the priority, then how? And everything else has to be taken secondary to It? The mind does not stop, it has to be occupied with something or the other. What does it mean to have Truth as the first priority?

AP: It means that all the other priorities will be under the umbrella of Truth. It means that all the other priorities will be such that, they send me more and more towards the Truth. That is what is meant by – the Truth being the first priority. You are very right that the Truth cannot be thought of, or objectified. Consider it this way. Take the Truth, as a destination, far beyond. And take the Call of the Truth, as your very heartbeat. So Truth is both – far beyond, and deep within. From 'deep within', it calls you to reach the 'far beyond'. Now you have to reach a place, which is very-very distant. That is your first priority, and the only priority. Now, in the journey, you meet a lot of people. With whom do you want to keep company? – Who will help you reach that place?

There are a lot of choices. A lot of vehicles are standing, to which vehicle would you give priority?

L 1: The one that takes me towards the Truth.

AP: That is what is meant by – the Truth deciding all your other priorities.

The First priority, is taking care of all the other priorities. Two cars are standing, to which one can I give priority? To that car which will take me towards my First priority. All my other priorities have to be under the umbrella of the Truth. All my other priorities have to be subservient, and surrendered, to my First priority. What kind of friends will I make? – Those friends who keep me reminded of the First. If he reminds me of the First, he deserves to be my friend. But if he reminds me of something else, then he is not a friend.

A friend is not a friend, if he reminds you of himself. Then the friend is an enemy. A friend is a friend if he says, “Forget me, remember the Truth.” A wife is not a wife, if she draws attention towards herself; neither is a husband a husband, if he draws attention towards himself. A wife is a wife, and a husband is a husband, if they take you towards the Truth, and not towards themselves. The wife who says, “Come to me,” is your enemy. If she is really a Loving wife, she will say, “Go to the Truth, and I will come along. And in the movement towards Truth, let us be together.” If the husband says, “Come to me, my body,” the husband is an enemy.

All your other priorities have to be attuned to the First One. All your other priorities have to be like small streams, all flowing towards the Ganga, which is, in turn, flowing towards the ocean. Are you getting it? Is that clear? So obviously in your daily living, moment after moment, you will have miscellaneous priorities. You will have to decide which mail to reply to. You will have to decide what food to eat. You will have to decide whom to talk to. You will have to decide what work to do, what food to eat.

What food should have priority? That food which takes you towards Truth, by keeping the mind calm. Food that agitates the mind, is poison. When the Truth is your first priority, then you choose your food wisely. Then you say, “I will choose that food, which helps keep the mind and body calm.”

Do you understand this?

The First priority is deciding the food priority. When you know that the Truth is first priority, then which job to take, what work to do? Such work that will not agitate me or disturb me. Such work, which is not violent or divisive. If Truth is my first priority, then I’ll take up work which constantly takes me towards the Truth. All other works are not to be touched by me. I cannot do anything else, because if I do anything else, then it reminds me of so many other things. My mind gets filled up with miscellaneous stuff. How can I take

up other work then? I can take up only one work, the work that takes me towards Truth.

If Truth is my first priority, how do I choose my garments? Then I will say, “I will choose those garments which do not disturb my body, which do not fit the body very tightly, which do not unnecessarily call others’ attention.” Now the First priority is deciding what you will wear.

The First priority is deciding where you would work, the First priority is deciding what you would wear, and the First priority is deciding what you would eat, whom you would be with. The First priority is deciding everything, and every moment you are making a decision. The criteria of that decision is – the First. And that is the only criteria.

There is no other criterion that I have. You want me to give you company? I have only one question to ask you, will you remind me of the Truth or will you remind me of yourself and your body? If your presence reminds me of your body then you are dangerous, I should stay away. Let the first decide everything right up to the last. Getting it?

You see, referring to the family, in the camp you were reading the ‘Gospel of Ramakrishna’ and one of you had posted that excerpt from Ramakrishna’s talks. In that, one of the visitors asked him, “My wife threatens to commit suicide if I move on the religious path. She says, “If you go to the temple, if you pursue this path of Bhakti, then I will commit suicide.” Ramakrishna says, “Let her commit suicide. A wife, who prevents the husband from moving on the spiritual path, is a very ungodly and evil wife. She wants to commit suicide. Let her commit suicide. But you cannot allow her to usurp the First priority.”

Ramakrishna says, “God has to be your First priority. No wife can be allowed to change that. Whatever be the price, pay that.” Now does that mean that Ramakrishna is being cruel? No, he is not being cruel. This man will be able to cleanse his mind, his wife’s mind, only if, first of all, his own mind is in the proper place.

You see, this man is in a difficult situation. Destiny has given him a wife, who is very ungodly. But it is upon him, to help her now. How can he help her, if he himself is not firmly seated in the Truth? Ramakrishna is helping not only this man, but also his wife. By giving the right advice to this man, Ramakrishna is helping this man’s wife as well.

Ramakrishna is telling this man, “You remain with the Truth. And if you remain with the Truth, then through you, the Truth will reach your wife as well. Even if she resists or opposes, cries, or even tries to commit suicide.”

Now she may commit suicide, there may be a one percent chance, but then people die of several reasons. Life is anyway uncertain. You remain with the Truth. Through you, it has a way of reaching others. Even if your family opposes the First priority, you remain with the First priority. You will find that your family too is being helped. In fact, that is the only way you can help your family – by firmly and sincerely remaining with the Truth.

L 2: Sir, regarding work you said that first priority should be given to that kind of work that takes us to the Truth. Can you give some examples of that kind of work?

AP: What is the point in asking for examples of healthy food, when your mind, like a fly, is obsessed only with sugar and jaggery? First of all, I must be clear about what is not the kind of work to be done in life. I very well know that in my current occupation, the world becomes heavy on my mind.

Now the honest question in such a situation would be, “Do I really need to continue with what I am doing?” But no, I do not want to ask that question, because that question demands action. What do I ask? I ask, “Sir, can you give examples of works that take one towards the Truth?” Sitting securely in the untruthful work that you are doing, you want to know about the Truth?

If I really am serious, if my intentions are pure, then the first thing I will say is, “This is not right. I have to give this up. And after that, whatever happens, we will see.” If you are drinking poison, and somebody tells you that this is poison, would you ask him, “Can you then give me examples of non-poisons? Can you give me examples where nectar is found?”

It is enough to know, that what is in your hands and life right now, is poison. Give it up. And once you give it up, a space is created, a clean space is created, in which godly work descends on its own. When you have cleansed yourself of the impure, then a pure space is created on its own. Give up the rubbish that you have filled your life with.

Do not ask, “What would happen after that?” Do not ask, “What would the rubbish be substituted with?” It’s an improper and insecure question to ask. It shows Faithlessness. You are asking for a guarantee.

You are asking for an assurance that – you would be preserved. The demand

for this assurance, itself arises from the habits that you have filled yourself with. Truth is not for those who want to be secure. Purely on the basis of Faith, you have to take a step into the unknown. You have to leave yourself to the Will of Existence, where there is no security and no guarantee.

Do not ask about the future; do not ask about the others. Just look at yourself and enquire, “Am I in the right kind of job? Is this work taking me towards Truth? Or, does it fill my mind with all kinds of rubbish?” That is the right question to ask.

Only by seeing the falseness of otherness, you are able to help the other

*“By oneself indeed is evil done and by oneself is one defiled;
by oneself is evil not done and by oneself is one purified.*

Purity and impurity depend entirely on oneself; no one can purify another.”

“Your work is to find out what your work should be and not to neglect it for another’s. Clearly discover your work and attend to it with all your heart.”

~ Buddha | *Dhammapada*

Acharya Prashant: “No one purifies another. Never neglect your work for another’s, however great his need. Your work is to discover your work, and then with all your heart, to give yourself to it.”

So Anandita is asking, “Sir, how do I understand the importance of the work given to me? Usually I neglect my work for other works, and after that I repent.”

“No one purifies another. Never neglect your work for another’s however great his need. Your work is to discover your work and then with all your heart to give yourself to it.”

This is the great principle of Oneness being put into action. Too often we are misled into thinking that there are many Truths. That is the central mistake that the mind can make – thinking that there are many centres, including a centre of its own. And sometimes, just for the purpose of explanation, elaboration, it is necessary that teachers talk in terms of a True centre and many false centres.

The inattentive mind takes this to mean that there do exist many centres. What he forgets is that, the other centres are already being called as ‘the false centres’, which means that they don’t *really* exist. When you say, “There is a ‘True Centre’ and there is false centre,” how many centres are you talking of?

Listener: One

AP: One. The other centre is anyway the false centre. And there are many

such false centres, they change every moment. So ultimately there is just One. But man's cardinal mistake is to think that there are many. When there are many, then you look at the world as separate from 'you', then you start believing in diversities, distances – many-ness. A thousand things, all come into the picture and occupy your mind, and you look at those thousand things as things separate from you, not-you, "Not-me."

If those things are given importance, and they will be, because you are one of those things, you give yourself importance, you will have to give importance to those other things as well, because they are the things that give 'you' your definition, you exist in relationship with them. So to give yourself importance, you will have to give importance to those things as well. You will have to give importance to the world as well.

Do you see why you have come to give importance to the world? It is because you give importance to yourself as a separate entity, as a fragment. "Who am I?" "Important." And "Who am I?" "A fragment." Where does the fragment get its name and identities from? The world. So if 'I' am important, what becomes important? The world becomes important. That's the internal logic.

If the world becomes important, then the priorities of those in the world, also become important. I start catering to them.

"He wants this from me, so I have to oblige."

"She wants this from me, I have to oblige."

Do you see where this pressure to oblige comes from? – The very central mistake that there are many Truths.

Without believing in many Truths, you cannot have belief in the 'many'. Getting it? So what is the Buddha saying? He is saying, "Others really do not exist. The One Centre exists. Do not cater to the needs and priorities of others."

Is he saying that you must cater to your own needs and priorities? He is not at all saying this. When he is saying that only One Centre exists, you too are one of the false centres. In fact, you are the mother of all false centres.

If he is saying, "Stop giving importance to others," he is first and foremost saying, "Stop giving importance to yourself," otherwise anyway you cannot listen to his advice. You being what 'you' are, how will you stop giving

importance to others? You being what you are – a man running after money, how will you stop giving importance to the other man who brings you money?

You being what you are – the attached and lustful being, how will you stop giving importance to what your wife wants? It's impossible. To stop giving importance to the world, you have to firstly stop giving importance to yourself. Getting it?

So what the Buddha is saying should not be interpreted as a statement of self-interest or self-centredness. We often fall into that needless trap. When you are looking at the world, the world is you. Spirituality is not an exercise in selfishness. To be free of the 'other', you'll first have to be free of yourself, because the 'other' clings to you through you. The other has no way of clinging to you. When you are not what you are, the other cannot cling to you. You are the hook on which the other hangs his coat. Get rid of the hooks.

“Your work is to discover your work and with all your Heart to give yourself to it.”

What is your 'work'? How to discover it? Kindly do not interpret these lines to mean that Buddha by using the word 'work', is referring to some kind of social activity, or one of the socially approved vocations.

Work, according to the Buddha, is just One – To be what you are. That is your only work. The mind is so fond of working. It works and works, and comes afar from its centre. This is false work. This is the work that leads to suffering. The only Real 'work' is, to go back.

Go back!

When the Buddha says, “Your work is to discover your work,” he is not referring to applying to the right companies. He is referring to discovering a life in which all action is the right action. 'Discovering your work' means discovering your ability to be able to give the right response at all points in time. Response is work.

“Your work is to discover your work and then with all your Heart to give yourself to it.”

And have Faith, because you are conditioned to respond in a mechanical way, to respond in a way that the society has taught you. Unless you give your

Heart totally to it, it is impossible to enter into the right response. The right response will scare you. You need to have the backing of Faith. Right action, therefore, becomes so difficult for many of us.

Intellectually we know what the right thing to do is, but at the point of action, we develop cold feet. When it comes to the moment of action, we back away. We don't just show up.

Planning for action only requires intellect, actually acting requires Faith. Standing on a cliff, you can plan as much as you want to about jumping into the river; the cliff is overlooking the river. You can keep planning about jumping.

And the cliff is not terribly high, you can calculate everything. You can measure the exact height; you can calculate the exact time it will take to hit the water. You can even calculate how far you will go into the water. All that can be done by the intellect. Still, none of that necessarily enables you to plunge into the water. That requires another quality. You know that, right?

That requires another quality. Awaken that quality. That quality is what the essence of right response is: acting spontaneously and fearlessly. *Knowing everything, yet acting without knowledge.*

“Your work is to discover your work and then give yourself with all your Heart to it.”

Know the right action – that is *Jnana* (Knowledge), and then plunge into it, with all your Faith – that is *Bhakti* (Devotion). And to know it, and yet not plunge into it, is the worst hell. That is why the sages who expressed the scriptures made it clear that a certain quality, or set of qualities, must be there in anybody who approaches the scriptures.

They said, “If you don't have these qualities, kindly do not come, because if you read them, then one thing is guaranteed – that you will gain intellectual knowledge. Now you have intellectual knowledge, but you don't have Faith – that is torture.”

You are left standing at the edge of the cliff, without having the guts to plunge, without having the guts to jump. This is the worst torture that can be inflicted upon any human being.

You have been brought to the edge, and everything that can be told has been told, yet you don't have the guts to jump. What deeper torture can be there?

So the sages said, “Better than suffering this torture, you don’t even come to the cliff. If you don’t have Faith, don’t come to the cliff, because you will be stranded here. Everything will be told to you, and you will know that the right thing is to jump, yet you can’t jump. And nothing can be done about it.” Nothing can be done about it.

As they say, “Curiosity kills the cat.” Those of you who read the scriptures, just out of curiosity, or out of a desire to augment knowledge, are the ones who are suffering this fate. They have been brought to the edge of the cliff, and they are standing there. And they will keep standing there. Their fault is not that they are standing there, their fault is, “Why did you come to this point? Why did you start in the first place? When you didn’t have the right qualities, why did you touch the scripture?”

Touching the scripture, first of all, requires a mind free of shrewdness, cleverness, and full of innocent Faith. Why did you touch the scripture, when your hands were dirty? Now keep standing on the cliff.

Too bad. Can’t jump!

“Good girls don’t jump down cliffs. Who knows whether it is water or liquor?”

L: Sir, often we have no say in this. Life brings you to the Guru, or life brings these texts to you. So you read them and gain some knowledge. But there is always a distance, because you don’t have the courage.

AP: No. Life brings you to the Guru, but in the very first encounter with the Guru, He demands a certain cleanliness and innocence, or does he not? Why did you turn up the second time before cleansing yourself?

But you wanted to deceive. You said, “Who will come to know? My clothes are clean, who will come to know whether I have really take a bath internally. So, I can deceive the Guru. I can have my own plans and intentions, but outwardly I can display respect and abidance.”

First time, yes, life can accidentally bring you to the Guru. Second time, you come on your own, don’t you? Why did you come the second time, without having done your homework? Why? Why have you kept on deceiving the Guru?

He made it very clear – “These are the things that are required. This is the homework. Go and do this.”

Why did you copy it?

Why did you not do it yourself?

Sickness can be cured only by the touch of health

Question: What should be done in a situation when you approach someone who is sick, and who glorifies his or her sickness, and thinks that you are sick? How to make the right judgement, know who is really sick?

Acharya Prashant: You see, thinking of it, one can never be fully sure, never. And in terms of thought, it is not even advisable that one is just too sure, because that would be a kind of arrogance. So just as one has all the rights, rather the responsibility, to approach the other and say that the other might be sick - of course not in a way of accusing, but in a way of loving - similarly the other one too has a right to turn around and say, "Well I think there is a bug here, and a little bit of sickness might lie with you as well."

One has to accept it and enquire for the fact. There might be some fact in what the other is saying. And it is possible that the other is exaggerating, beyond the fact, that the other is not just stating a fact, rather turning around to attack you, because he does not like that you are calling his bluff. That is also possible.

Listener 1: That is the main critical situation.

AP: Yes, but before we come to that conclusion, it is first of all necessary to examine, without bias, without self-centered prejudice, the extent of factualness in what the other has to say about us, because we hardly have a right to go and declare the other sick, if we cannot tolerate the same thing being said by the other towards us.

So first of all, there has to be a healthy acceptance of what the other has to say. And after that, if it really, clearly comes out that the other is just trying to be vengeful, that the other is just trying to extract a kind of a petty revenge, then one has to test his own mettle. That is the test of Love. You have gone out and opened your heart, and you want to do good to the other.

L 1: The situation becomes gruesome when the other fellow uses it as a tool to impose his or her thinking on you.

AP: Or at least protect his own thinking.

L 1: Yes.

AP: Obviously. And that has to be expected. After all, you are attacking somebody's very foundations. To the other person, his ego is his world. To the other person, there is only one way that exists of looking at the world, which is his own, personal way. And you are attacking that way.

L 1: That is also what his sickness is.

AP: But remember, sickness can be healed only by the touch of Health.

Those who are interested in helping and healing others, must be extremely cautious about their own Health. Otherwise, in spite of all the good intentions, the sickness of the world would take possession of the healer as well.

The same thing that you want to dissolve, to attack, to get rid of, you would find that the same thing has dominated your mind. Now instead of one sick person, you have two sick persons. So it is a great motivation. In fact, it is his - in some sense - a kind of temptation, to be a do-gooder. "I am trying to help the world."

And yes we do require a lot of people who go out there, who can step beyond their limited self-interest. But the responsibility of such people is far greater than the responsibility of those, who are living within themselves. Now you have the responsibility of others, and the responsibility to protect your own Health also.

And sickness has its own ways. Rest assured, you attack sickness, and sickness will attack your Health. That is necessarily going to happen. And that is, just as we said, what is going to test your mettle – the depth of your Health.

L 1: Problem is, how to handle it?

AP: Only Health can handle it. Only Health can handle it. It is not a battle that is fought once and for all. It is an ongoing thing. You approach sickness, and sickness responds with a cruel lash, a backlash. It is only when you face that kind of backlash, or a retort, that you come to know the fact about your own Health, that how strong you really are.

If it does not destroy you, then stay put. Keep fighting. And if you feel that it has exposed a particular vulnerability within you, then recede. First take care

of your own vulnerability, your own sickness, and then go back again. It is an ongoing thing. One cannot make it an ego issue. One cannot say, “Now that I have jumped into the battle, how can I make a retreat?” You will have to retreat a thousand times. You will have to return to your own shelters, to nurse your wounds.

L 1: True.

AP: And wounds you will get aplenty, rest assured.

L 1: Even if one tries to accept it and move along with it, it becomes problematic again, because the other person has started treating you as a sick person. Again the situation comes back to square one.

AP: And the worst thing that can happen is, when the perceptions of the world, become your own perception. “I went out towards the world, thinking of myself as a Healthy Being, with all the noble intentions to help the world. And what happened instead? The world succeeded in convincing me that I am sick.”

And it happens very often, very frequently.

L 1: Very true.

L 2: Sir, in this situation, one can only live a life of conviction, because the moment I am trying to tell a person that he is doing something incorrectly, and almost trespassing the fact that probably I am larger than you, or I am bigger in my thoughts than what you are...

AP: Yes, yes.

L 2: There is no point, it is a vicious circle. I can't even blame the other person, because what they are a part of, they got it from someone who is considered a higher authority. And me, being no one to this person, he may say, “Who are you to stand against the society?” It does not serve a purpose.

AP: Yes, yes. You are very right. To the other person, it is like an interference in something that is very personal and intimate to him, especially if your advice comes unsolicited. And such advice has to come unsolicited. Nobody is ever going to say, “I need advice,” on the most central matters of living.

Nobody is ever going to say, “I do not know what Love is. I do not know what relationships are. I do not know what is the place of Joy and Compassion in life,” because it is such a shameful thing to accept.

L 2: They are oblivious to the fact that they have intermingled words together. They do not know - Joy, Happiness, Love, it is all the same to them. The problem is that it is getting interchangeably used, across.

AP: It is going to be used in some way or the other, because one has to continue with the business of living. Nobody can come to a point and just stop dead there saying, “How do I proceed with living? I do not know what Love is, how can I continue to live Lovelessly?” So people will continue living, and they have no option but to continue to tell themselves, that there is nothing terribly wrong with them.

Everybody feels that a little bit here and there is missing, in his or her life, right? To that, everybody agrees. And that is taken as the ‘spice of life’ – a two percent here, a five percent there, is missing. One says, “Well, perfection must not be there. Something must always be left to achieve.”

So two percent, five percent kind of a thing missing, everybody would admit and agree to. They would say, “Yes, a little bit is missing, otherwise I am alright.”

“Life is just perfect. You know, I am waiting for my next million.”

“I am waiting for my son to get his job.”

But nobody is ever going to be very agreeable to accepting that the fundamentals of life are missing. And when you go and say that, then do not expect kind words from anybody. Essentially you are telling them that they are wasting their life.

Hence, you have to have a deep humility in the heart when you approach somebody. And hence, there has to be great strength in your resolve and compassion. If you have an expectation that you are going to be felicitated, rewarded, that the world is going to raise temples in your honor, it is not going to happen.

MYTH OF EXPERIENCE

When life lacks the essential, it tries to compensate with exotic experiences

Question: Sir, suppose I go through an experience and I take that incidence into my stride, and I learn something from it. So then that learning becomes my experience. But, in one of your discourses you have said that the only thing that keeps us from forgetting our past is *trying* to forget the past. So, how does one do both the things simultaneously that is let go of the past and gain experience from it?

Acharya Prashant: We'll have to address the issues of 'experience' and 'learning', and see how and whether they are related to each other. Normally, what do you think learning is?

Listener: Sir, anything fruitful that we can extract from any incident.

AP: So what do you mean by extracting something from an incident?

L: That we know that if a similar situation happens to us in the future, then we can decide what to do and what not to do.

AP: So you mean committing it to memory?

L: Yes Sir

AP: So you have related memorisation to learning. Is that not so?

L: Yes Sir.

AP: Learning is the ability to respond afresh to something, to respond free of experience. Pay attention to this. Normally, the mind is clouded with all kinds of experiences, memories, thoughts, a sense of the self, all these together create a world, and the ego sits at the centre of that world. It is from this kind of a mind that we respond to the happenings around us.

Learning means the clearing away of this world. When you say that you are learning something, it must not mean that you are covering yourself with more layers of experience. Learning means that you are able to uncover your innate ability to know and respond. That is learning. Now this goes against what we usually call as learning, our usual sense of the word. When we say

learning, we mean gaining something, some data, information, knowledge, a method of responding.

Contrast it again. Learning means, “I went through a particular experience and in the light of Attention, by the grace of Truth, I was able to see the various kinds of falsenesses contained in the whole process of experiencing. I was able to see how what appears is just a game that the mind of the subject plays, and I was able to see how my own reactions are another game that the mind of the subject plays.”

So, experience cannot reveal to you anything new. The very idea that one gains from experience rests on the assumption that one is intrinsically poor, that one is intrinsically poor but experience will supply to him that which he is deficient in. Experience cannot teach you anything.

If you are not careful, experience will form a layer over your psyche. And what else is psyche? Layer upon layer of experience. But if you are careful - in the sense of being attentive - then the same experience will just reveal to you its own hollowness. That is the proper place of experience and attention in living. You would be undergoing some experience all the time. So you are talking to me, this is an experience. You came here, and that is an experience. You might have spoken to a few people around here – that was another experience. These experiences are not meant to provide or supply anything fundamental to you. But if you are going through these experiences wakefully, watchfully, attentively, then you will be able to see how each experience has the power to cloud your intellect. That is learning. You do not learn from experience, you learn about the experience.

And what do you learn about the experience? That it really means nothing. “It means nothing really, but it appears to mean a lot.” And therein lies its hollowness, and its deception. Being nothing, it promises so much. Being hollow, it appears so substantial. That is how the sharp eye looks at experience.

I am repeating – this whole assumption, the paradigm, that experience makes one richer, is inherently false. Experience does not bring any richness to your life. Richness of life is given to you by something very innate to you. Something that is your life-blood, it is already there with you. But when you are taught that experience will make you a bigger, a better man, that it will bring fulfilment to your life, then what do you do? Then you do that which this entire world around us is doing.

If you see, what is the common man doing? What is the entire life story of the common man? You will see that he is running after experience. He wants one experience after the other, and behind this 'want' is the premise that one experience, or a set of experiences, will be able to close that yawning gap in his heart. Is that not so?

L: Yes Sir.

AP: What are we doing, moment after moment, day after day, year after year? Gathering experiences and running after them, right? "Let me see how it feels to travel in that foreign country. Let me see how it feels to have dinner in that exquisite restaurant. Let me experience what it means to be physically close to that man or woman. Let me touch, let me smell, let me eat, let me travel, let me reach."

One job after the other, one relationship after the other, one house after the other. What is the common man doing all the time? He is just gathering experiences, assuming that ultimately some experience will be the Ultimate. But the very foundation of this running around is false. You can run all your life, and gather as many experiences as you want, and for as long as you want, yet if the mind is resting upon a flawed foundation, it will never gain Peace. Are you getting it?

L: Yes Sir.

AP: So, am I saying that one should avoid experiences? Am I saying that one should enclose himself in some kind of a silo and insulate himself from the world? No, I am not saying that. Experiences are anyway happening all the time. A while back, we said that since you have come here, you are having experiences. This discussion is an experience. Having tea with our friend here would have been an experience. Reaching up to this place would have been an experience. Life, every moment, anyway is an experience. And there is the experiencer.

The wise man does not expect too much from experiences. The wise man does not make experience the source of his learning. He knows that learning rests within. Experience has no positive role in enhancing learning. If anything, experience can obfuscate learning.

Pay attention to this because it runs contrary to conventional wisdom. Conventional wisdom says that experience can enhance learning. I am saying that experience cannot enhance learning, experience can only obfuscate

learning. It can cover it.

The Reality, the Truth of things, of Being, is very simple and direct, and within. One does not need an external agency to provide it to you. But what you call as 'external' surely has the power, in all its complexity, to not to give you something, but to surely take away that, which is already with you. Totally give up this notion that those who are more experienced have advanced in any way in terms of Intelligence.

Look at the people who have known much, are knowledgeable, experienced, of advanced age. Do you really see innocence and simplicity shining on their faces? Or do you see them rather bogged down under the weight of experience?

You look at most people who have crossed a particular age - forty, or sixty, or eighty - you look at their faces. Have they become more open to life, have they made themselves more vulnerable to life? When they look at the simple things around, do their eyes lit up with a wondrous question, an excitement, like a child when he sees an ordinary insect, like a moth or a kite? Do you see that happening with experienced people? Do you see that on their faces, in their eyes? Or do you see a dullness, a heaviness? Now with that dullness and heaviness, where is learning? Where is learning? How can you learn about anything if your experience is too much upon you?

Are you getting it?

Do not bother about experience. I am repeating – live simply and allow experiences to come to you. They are anyway coming to you. You hold no obligation or responsibility to run after experiences. Just don't block them and that is sufficient. And the experienced man, it is quiet amusing, blocks experiences. Because that is what experiences teach him – all kinds of morality, all kinds of precaution. Now he knows what to experience and what not to experience. It is quite paradoxical in that sense that the experienced man is the least open to experiences.

Life is eager to give you more experiences than you can ask for, you do not have to worry about running hither-thither and having experiences. You look at young people, they are worrying all the time.

“Will I get a job of that nature?”

“Will I get a social security of that kind?”

“What if I do not get a girlfriend and I die single?” Do you see, what is this anxiety?

“What will happen to me?”

“Will I get that particular experience or not?”

Now, why are you so anxious? Is there anything in the entire universe that has to worry about the next day? That has to worry about what existence will bring to it? Nothing worries, and everything gets what it ought to get. Man is the only one who is so worried about whether or not he would attain fulfilment. I am repeating – ‘experience’ blocks experience, and life showers experience upon you.

Let life flow through you. It will naturally, without your asking, bring to you so many and such diversity of experiences, which you could have never even thought of. You do not need to plan and you do not need to worry. Become one with life, have the Faith that whatever will happen, will not destroy you. Remain open, remain prepared to being wounded a little, and then see how you are left breathless with experience. And that [experience](#), which we are talking of, will be fresh.

When people commonly say that they want an experience of a particular kind, do they ever want a fresh experience? You can demand something from life, only if you have already heard about it. Have you not?

“My friend has been earning so much money, so I too want that much money.” Now is there anything fresh about your demand for this experience? No, not really. You are seeing this happening all around you, so you too want it. “My cousin has been smoking a particular exotic variety of weed, I too want it.” Now, what is new about your demand? Anything new? “I want to become the president of the world.” It’s a stale wish. “I want to receive the highest honours that man can give to man.” Millions of people have wanted the same. “I want the most beautiful woman on my bed.” Come on, demand something new.

But that’s the kind of ‘experience’ that one can demand, or can you demand any new experience? Can there be any newness in the experience that you demand? Ever? Think of it.

L: No, Sir.

AP: No? Fortunately, life has no respect for your demands. What life can

give to you, is brand new. What life can give to you, is really fresh. So fresh, that it knocks you down. You don't know what to do with what you have been given. At most, you can demand a kitten, or a pup, life can give you a baby serpent on your bed. Now what to do with it? You never wanted it. You wanted a cute kitten. What have you been given? You wake up and what do you find? A baby snake. That's what life can give you. Now that's experience - to the extent that one man can think of it, right? You can even have the egg of an extinct dinosaur on your bed – I mean, let imagination run.

But you will never ask for it really. Life can give it to you, without your asking. But life will not give it to you if you are hell-bent upon just pups and kittens. Pups and kittens are so boring. Your brother has them, your mother has them, everybody has them. Are you getting it?

You demand such boring and dull and ordinary things from life, and then you complain that life is not providing them to you. What you don't realise is that life has something really special in store for you, which is not coming to you because you are not open to it.

Life is knocking on your door with its wondrous gifts and like a sissy baby you are crying and wimping and complaining, "Why am I not being given the same thing that Tina in the neighbourhood has been given!" That is all that you know, your comparison with Tina. Life is little bigger than Tina and infinitely more wise. Are you getting it?

Stop this infatuation with experience. You see the advertisement of a new product in the market and you want it. Somebody wants to sell a resort to you and he will say, "Come over and we have some kind of an adventure store, you can have games and parties and pools." And you become excited. Some new food? "There are so many countries in the world, two hundred odd, have you tried all the exotic cuisines? With all their exotic names?" And you feel so small and jealous when you come to learn that somebody is having food from Rwanda or Chile. "I am so impoverished. See, all that I have ever had is food from my petty house. And that lucky fellow is having exotic meals from Azerbaijan."

When life lacks the Essential then it tries to compensate for it through exotic experience. When life is brimming with the Essential, overflowing with the Essential, then the craving for extraordinary experience is no more there. Because the Essential itself is the destination of all experience. Why do you demand experience? So that you can ultimately reach that point of supreme

Peace and Fulfilment. And if that supreme Peace and Fulfilment is anyway available, then what will you do with experience? And this ordinary availability, this simple abundance of life, to know it, to live in it is learning. Nothing else is learning. You make your brain a store house of information – that is not called learning. To learn is to learn about the hollowness of experience and the fullness of your Self. That is learning. Are you getting it?

That is the only thing that one can ever learn. Nothing else is there to be learnt. You go to some alien location and you memorise all the people that you met and all the places that you went to and all the food that you ate; and all the other pieces of data that can be had and you come back with it. You have no right to say that you have learnt anything. Yes, you have gained in knowledge. But knowledge itself is so poor, it never gains completion. Have you ever seen anybody gaining complete knowledge? Knowledge itself is condemned to remain incomplete and what is condemned to remain incomplete, how can it give completion to you? You are demanding health from sickness? You are demanding fulfilment from knowledge, which itself never becomes fulfilled?

So be very clear about what learning really is. Learning does not mean the acquisition of anything external. Learning means to see that whatever is external is just so hollow, just so needless. One learns about the only Truth that there is, and that is the Self. That is the only thing worth learning. That is the only substance that can be learnt about. All else is false.

L: Sir, correct me when I go wrong. So by understanding what is learning, we get to know that experiences are basically hollow. They will come anyway, you don't have to go chasing after them. So, learning with eventually uncover our true innate nature?

AP: When it strikes in the moment of experience that "There is no need to run after this." In the moment of experience, if you can remain un-tempted by experience - that is learning. In the very moment of experience. Remember you are not being hostile towards experience, you are not even being indifferent towards experience. It's just that you are not placing an unreasonable demand upon experience. You see, what do we do? Understand this. We all want a certain contentment, call it Peace, call it Joy, or call it Love. Because we have lost the understanding of where this real substance could actually be found, we try to find it in the wrong places.

We are trying to get from experience what experience can never give you.

For example, immortality. Nobody wants to die. One's nature is to be, and not be extinct. Be. Be present. But the nature of the world is to come and go. Since we do not know where really to find immortality, we try to find immortality in material. We somehow try to find immortality in the body, in relationships, in mental security, in concepts about rebirth. Are you getting it?

So experience is alright. I repeat that we are not trying to look down upon experience, we are just saying that we should not expect that from experience which experience can anyway not provide. With all the effort that you can put behind experience, experience will never give you wisdom. Experience will never give you wisdom. Similarly – see, we know that all experience is material is sensual – Similarly, you can go through the process of physical intimacy a million times, yet it will not give you Love.

Now to expect experience to give you that which is beyond experience, is foolishness. So go through experience but let experience stay in its place. You should know that the Essential will not be provided by experience. And remaining in this understanding is learning, is wisdom. So we are saying – Let life bring all kinds of experiences to us and we will happily and willingly go through them. We will not obstruct them. We will welcome them but we will not think that these experiences are in any way, a substitute, a complement or a proxy to the Essential.

Experience in no way can touch the Essential. Experience whatever life has to give you, but stay with the Essential and do not confuse these two. Experience is experience and Essential is Essential.

The false promise of fulfilment through experience

Question: Sir, does fulfillment come by experiencing everything completely?

Acharya Prashant: What is everything? Do you have to go somewhere and experience it, or is it anyway happening daily? Whenever somebody says, “I need to go out and experience,” then he is directly suggesting that, “Right now life is shorn of experiences, and I need to do something special. Experiences are there somewhere in the distance.”

I mean, whatever is happening right now, do you consider it a lesser experience? When you say ‘everything’ then what is everything? This is everything. Where else is everything? In the distance, in the future? But then that is what we mean?

What you mean by experiencing? What kind of experience do you want? And when you say, “I want to experience,” then ask yourself, are you not saying that you prefer one kind of experience over the other. When I say, “I want to experience something,” I am probably saying that I want to go and jump into a waterfall. Now, are you not already labeling that as an experience and this, right now as a non- experience? You have already decided. And this decision is an experience which you do not know to be an experience.

Are you getting it? What is the mind doing? The mind is saying, “Waterfall is an experience, and this right now, is not an experience.” And you are not realizing that the mind that is deciding this, is in itself an experience. Experience that.

Not getting it? There is something happening. What is happening? There is a judgment happening. And who will experience that judgment? To experience something, is to become one with it. Experience how the mind is in search of the far, and the illusive, that which cannot be obtained. And the mind is going after that.

When we say, “Be open to experience,” that does not mean that go and run to some far-off place, travel to the Mars, or jump into the Pacific Ocean. No,

that is not what is meant. Being open to experience means – to be open right now. Everything is an experience.

Listener 1: I had meant to ask about conditioning, does everything include conditioning? I get to hear that you don't experience sadness.

AP: Even conditioning - tell me when does it work? When is the work of conditioning happening?

L 1: Right now.

AP: Right now. Even if conditioning is to be experienced, all that experience has to be right now. Are you not seeing the game of conditioning right now? Is conditioning not at work right now?

I want to face my fears. Now will the fear pop up at some point in time? Are you not afraid right now? Have the fears gone to sleep right now? You are afraid even right now. Face it. Look at it. Live in it.

L 2: Why is man always in search of that adrenaline rush? Why do people always want to experience something like Bungee-Jumping, and this and that? They always want to experience something extra-ordinary.

AP: Because something extraordinary is there to be experienced. (Smilingly) It is waiting to be experienced. See it's like this. There are these two nostrils that you can breathe from, right? What happens when one of them is choked? How do you feel?

L 2: Hard breathing.

AP: But will you die?

L 2: No.

AP: But how will you keep feeling? How will you keep feeling? These are the two dimensions in which man must live: the dimension of duality, the dimension of non-duality. And they are simultaneous. If you start living only in one dimension, you will not die physically, but you will keep feeling choked and suffocated. So then there is a desperate attempt to do something about it. You take a stick and poke it into your nose. There are many kinds of things that you want to do. That's what people are doing.

The only problem is – one of them is choked. And you know which one. You very well know which one. Not only that one of them is choked, what happens when one nostril is choked? What effect does it have on the other?

The other one will be over-worked, and you cannot even enjoy the other one. Probably the other one will become inflamed after a few days, because of the extra work.

So there has to be this world, and in this world, a constant remembrance of what this world is. I am not using the word 'other world'. I am saying, 'this world' and a constant remembrance of what this world is. And in this remembrance there is the other.

L 3: Does this apply to rebellion also?

AP: All is part of this world, nothing is prohibited as such. And it is happening. You have no control over it. It is happening. It is just that when it is happening, know that it is happening. That is it.

The experiencer is a product of experience and hence cannot freely judge experience

Acharya Prashant: Not only do we give value to experience, we also give value to learning. And because the valuer is the same, so we put these two at the same level, experience and learning. We want to value everything. We want to attach some kind of a quantifiable assessment to everything, because the mind is limited. It seeks security in measurement. It wants to take the measure of everything it comes across.

Now, we give a lot of value to experience and we give a lot of value to learning. Both are false but, in very different ways. This must be understood. The value that we give to experience is false, because the value that is being given to experience, is provided by experience itself. The valuer himself is a product of experience.

How did you learn to value anything? From where did the valuer come? The valuer himself without knowing, without understanding, is just a coincidental aggregation of experiences. Now such a valuer has no independent yardstick through which to measure experience. Are you getting it?

Who are you? You are somebody who was born in a violence ridden family. You are part of a tribe that attaches great value to honor, dignity, and bloodshed. That's what *you* are. That's what the valuer is. And you have been made this way by your experiences. Now whatever you will value, will be according to..?

Listener: Values.

AP: Your values. And your values have been given to you by your?

L: Experiences.

AP: Experiences. Hence when you say that you are valuing a particular experience, that statement is nonsensical, but we want to value everything. Even as you are listening to me, some of you might be busy valuing me, trying to take a measure of me, without realizing that the entity that is trying to take a measure of me is itself a product of biological and social?

L: Conditioning.

AP: So that is the reason why valuing experience is meaningless, it doesn't make sense. Getting it?

At the same time, we want to value learning. Now learning too cannot be valued, but for a different reason. Learning cannot be valued because learning happens only when the one who is obsessed with valuing, falls silent for a while. You and I are together, and learning can happen only when your noisy valuer, becomes silent for a while. Otherwise you will not be learning, right? So learning and valuation do not go together. As long as you are valuing, learning cannot happen. As long as you are assessing, measuring, learning cannot happen. Learning is invaluable. Experience has zero value. So the process of valuation does not apply to both. It does not apply to experience because experience anyway has no value, *of its own*. Understand this. The value that you attach to experience is dependent on what experiences you already have had. So experience has no independent value of its own. Are you getting it?

Learning, again, the tendency of your mind to value it, even to attach respect to it, is absurd. Because, how can the limited even say that it respects the unlimited.

Anything that the limited does, will be a product of its limitation. The best that the limited can do is, cease to be attached to its limitation, cease to exist, cease to clammer, cease to have an obsession with its being.

See, you say that you respect Truth, or you respect God, or you value Love, but whatever you will do with these, would be coming from what you think of yourself. Would it really be an expression of respect or would you rather be soiling or spoiling in your own petty way, that which is totally beyond you.

Take a simple statement, "I respect God." Now can we see the arrogance contained in this statement? We are talking about valuing learning. In that context, I am saying, let's look at the statement – I respect God. Can we see how arrogant that statement is? Why is it an arrogant statement?

L 1: Because the 'I' thinks that it has some measure to evaluate to respect or not to respect.

AP: Even to respect anything, you must first have some idea of what that thing is. So you will have to bring it within the domain of ideation. The thing

may be a million times bigger than you, according to your proclaimed point, but still you are saying it is measurable. “I am two units and God is two trillion units,” still you are saying that God is measurable. Also look at the other things that you attach respect to. The tongue that is saying, “I respect God,” also respects the police, the army, the nation, the caste, the religion, the tradition, the boss, money, and so much else, right? With the same tongue, and with the same mind, you are saying that you respect God, right? “I respect money, I respect the army and I respect God.” So you’ve brought God down to the level of money.

It would be wonderful if you could say that I respect *only* God. But when you respect only God, then the word ‘respect’ is not at all needed. Because then, what you are saying is, that your respect is unconditional. The kind of respect that we offer is given *by* us and because it is given by us, it can be withdrawn also. I am offering respect based on a certain condition of my mind and if that condition changes, surely the same mind will withdraw that respect.

So, do not value learning, do not value the Truth, and do not value God. Just see what you currently value, and currently you value experience. See the hollowness of all that you value. In the spiritual domain, what usually happens is, I say, “I respect my life, my being, my styles, my habits, my family, my job and now because I am now also spiritual, hence I respect the Truth as well.” That is the most commonly followed approach and that is the approach that comes instinctively to us. We think that this is the way to go. We say, “I have a certain pattern. I have a certain house in a city in which I exist and my name, my meanings, my language, my patterns, all come from there. Now I have been told, that there is something missing in my life. So, just as I respect a lot of other things, spirituality implies that I will now also respect..?”

L: God.

AP: No, no. Wisdom or Spirituality is about seeing the hollowness of experience. It is not about bringing Truth down to the level of experience. It is not about saying that your city must exist and you must also now instate God in your city. “Your city is there, what it lacks is a temple.” So being spiritual means, that you must raise a beautiful temple in the city. Is that not what man has been doing? There are grand cities and because they look incomplete without a touch of the religious. So what do we do? We find a nice space in the city and then some temple is raised.

No, not that way.

Real spirituality is about seeing the hollowness of the city itself. It is not about bringing the temple down to the domain of the city. It is about seeing that the city itself is the cause of my suffering. Are you getting it? You don't need a temple. You need freedom from the city. When the city is your bane, then building a temple in the city is not going to heal your wounds. In fact what you've done is that you are closing the only possibility of redemption that was available to you. Truth could have redeemed you, but what have you done? You've brought Truth down to the city. Now the Truth is the city. The city is the problem, so how will the Truth now help you? Now the Truth is the city and the city is the problem, so the Truth too has become the part of the problem. The Truth that could have been your savior is now a part of the problem. Such a temple is never going to save you.

But we say we respect Truth, we say we value Truth. So, when we go to that temple, we bow our heads down, we stand up, we offer our respects. It doesn't help. It cannot help and man has been doing that and trying that since centuries.

Do not turn Truth and God into newer experiences, instead see the falseness of all that which you anyway are experiencing from morning till evening. The 'seeing' itself is God. You do not need to see God. Seeing itself is Godliness. Would you be able to see without God? So why this urge to see God? Why this urge to measure the Truth? All your measurements are happening because you are powered by the Truth. Because you can measure anything. It is proven that the Truth is energizing you. Otherwise, how could you measure anything? Now don't have this childish demand, that you must measure the Truth as well. That's what thought tries to do, right? When thought is told that you arise from beyond, that your origin is unthinkable, then immediately thought tries to *think* about the unthinkable.

Don't have a desire for something new, something exotic. Just be careful about that which already is.

Be very careful about what you are doing, meeting, what you are eating, what you are thinking and everything opens up there itself.

MYTH OF INNER VOICE

What is meant by inner voice?

Question: Sir, how can we define the 'inner voice'? We obviously talk to ourselves.

Acharya Prashant: There is no need to define 'the inner voice'. You just have to see that it too is only just a voice. As there are so many voices all around you, this inner voice too is just one of them. Since the day you were born, you have been listening to so many voices. These voices have accumulated over these years. This is how the mind has been formed. "There are so many voices everywhere and I call one of them as 'the inner voice'.

And that inner voice also keeps changing; it does it speak the same thing every time? It keeps changing. Have you ever observed in which language it speaks?

L 1: It speaks in a language that I understand.

AP: Right. Just as there are voices around us that are making noise, there is a voice from within that is making noise. There is no need to give any value to that voice. It is actually more dangerous as compared to other voices.

The other voices are still outside, but the inner voice is seated within you. It is as if your enemy has taken shelter in your own house. If the noise is coming from outside we call it 'noise'. If the noise is coming from within, we call it 'the divine voice.' We say, "My conscience is speaking."

Silence. Silence from the external voices and silence from this inner voice. God has no voice; he doesn't talk to you through any language.

When there is complete and clear silence, then wordlessly, language-lessly, there is a oneness. Not even communication, just oneness.

All these stories that there was a king who was sleeping and Lord Shiva came in his dream and said, "On that hill-top, you build my temple," all this is rubbish. All these stories that god came in my dreams and then god gave this instructions, all these must be openly declared too be rubbish.

God doesn't come in dreams. God doesn't talk in any language. God has no fascination for Sanskrit or Hebrew, or Arabic. God is not sitting anywhere.

God is not running anywhere. God has no reason to create anything. And God is also not busy with helping or dissolving. If you can keep all your concepts about God away, then you have a beautiful emptiness. If you want, you can call it God!

But first keep god away.

(Laughingly) The most Godless people that we have, are the ones, who have too much of god. They are full of god!

All internal voices are from fragments of the mind, the total calls only in silence

Question: How to find the right action when the mind is saying aloud, “You should not do this”, or “You have to do this.” One part of the mind is saying, “You have to do this?” Other part is saying, “It is okay, you can do that.” There always seems to be a choice and the voice of the Heart is faint.

Acharya Prashant: See, the right action has no voice. Maybe I said that the voice of the Heart is very faint. It is actually more faint than faint. It has no voice at all. Whenever there is a voice, it is the voice of the mind.

The right action happens voicelessly. It comes from nowhere, it goes into nowhere. You don’t even know that you have acted. In fact, if somebody tells you, “You have made a choice just now”, you would be a little surprised. You would say, “But was there a choice? Have I really made a choice?”

Whenever the mind is divided into two parts or ten parts and the parts are going in this direction or that direction, neither of the directions is your direction. It is the direction of that particular part. Right?

See, you are being pulled in ten directions, one of the pullers become strong enough to overpower the other nine, and carry you towards himself, drag you, pull you towards himself. Does that mean that, that puller is you? Does that mean that going in that one’s direction is your freedom? It does not mean that.

Similarly, if one of the forces pulling you is too weak, too faint, and it is not able to exercise any control over you, does it mean that, this really is the force of the Heart? As you said that the voice of the Heart is faint. So, that means, whenever there is a faint pull, that must be the real you. It’s not really so.

None of the divisions of the mind represent the essence of the mind. It can be a large force, it can be a small force. So, when you come to this dilemma, “What to do? The mind is being pulled in this direction and that direction,” it is not imperative for you to act. You have the freedom to not to go to either

direction. You have the freedom to just stay put. Why must you move? Let both the pullers tire down by themselves. Let them keep trying and become exhausted. And then you will spontaneously know which direction to go. The movement will happen on its own. You will not need to decide or choose.

Isn't it obvious? There is one entity that is pulling to the right. There is one entity that is pulling to the left. And then there is a third entity that is deciding whether to go to the right or go to the left. Even the third one is divided into two parts – one is biased towards the right, one is biased towards the left. Where are *you* in all this? And even the decision maker is under the influence of lobbying. This one is lobbying for his interest. The other force is lobbying for its own interest.

When all this circus is going on, whatever comes out from this circus will be a joke.

(Laughingly) So, let the joke stay as a joke. You don't need to become a character in all that. Let the forces play out. Let them get tired. Let their power come down a little. And then you can see when movement happens on its own.

MYTH OF FREEWILL

Individuality and Choices

Question: Sir, how can we differentiate between Individuality and choice?

Acharya Prashant: Usually, we say that our choices are an expression of our individuality. We want to choose. We say that the freedom of choice, the right to choose, is a very important part of my freedom. That is what we say, right? If today the right to choose, the freedom to make decisions is taken away from you, you will not feel good. You will say, “This is authoritarian.” You will say, “This is dictatorship! I am mature, I am an adult and I need to make my own choices.” You will call it your freewill, right?

So we have taken it for granted that our choices are an expression of our individuality. Let us examine this. Let us examine the choices. Let’s examine: Where do choices come from? Are they an expression of individuality or is it something else that is happening? Why are choices different, in different people? Let us assume that a lot of books are kept here, hundreds of books and you have to choose one out of them. Surely, there would be very diverse choices. Same with clothes, food, and any aspect of life. Why are choices different at all? Why do different people choose differently?

L: Because everyone has a different kind of mind and has come from a different kind of environment.

AP: Good. Our friend says that it is because there are different minds and they have come from different environments. Do we see this?

So, where do we reach? Choice comes from mind and mind is a product of?

L: Environment.

AP: So, choice is coming from?

L: Environment.

AP: Now, did you decide the environment? Did you decide the family in which you will be born? Did you decide your country? Did you decide your year of birth? But all your choices are coming from the environment. Now do not just accept it. Look at the factual nature of it. Is that really happening? Find it out for yourself. Is that really happening? Our choices are a result of

our environment. That is the reason why the choices are so radically different. One person, in one part of the world, chooses one thing and another person, in another part of the world, chooses something else. The Brazilian loves football, and the Indian loves cricket. The Jain likes vegetarian food, and the Muslim or the Christian loves non-vegetarian food. The North Indian has one kind of taste bud, and the South Indian loves something totally different. But if you ask them, they will say, "My choices are coming from my individuality." Now you tell me, are the choices coming from the individuality or are they coming from the environment?

L: Environment.

AP: But we attach great importance to choices. We had begun by saying that if somebody says that our choices are bogus, we will not feel good, is that not so? We say, "I will choose my representatives, I will choose my dress, I will choose my profession, I will choose my girlfriend, I will choose everything that happens in life. The more are the choices available to me, the freer I am." That is what we say? Right?

L: Yes.

AP: It is turning out to be quite strange. On one hand we are saying that our choices are an indication of our freedom, on the other hand we are seeing that our choices are all coming from the environment. Then how can there be freedom in choices? That is the game. When you are making a choice, it appears to you - mind you the word 'appear' - it appears to you, it is an illusion, that you are making a free choice. That is why we all like making choices, because choices give us the illusion of power. We feel that we are in control of our lives. While making a choice, it appears to us that our life is moving according to our will. Right? That is why we love choices. Because choices give us the feeling of being something. The ego likes it. "I have power." But it is only a feeling, it is only an illusion. In fact, we do not choose anything. The conditioning operates by itself like a machine, so there is no choice really. Let us say that there is a computer program, it has been programmed to return a 'smiley', when a positive value is entered, and it has been programmed to return a 'weeping face', when a negative value is entered. So, when you enter 5, what do you get?

L: A Smiley.

AP: When I insert minus 2, what do I get?

L: A weeping face.

AP: But what is the program thinking? “I am making a choice. You see, when -10 came, I felt like weeping.” Did the program feel like weeping, or has it been told to weep?

L: Told.

AP: Now let me ask you, when something positive happens, what do you have to do?

L: Smile

AP: W when something negative happens, what do you do?

L: Cry.

AP: Do you have a choice? We never have a choice, because a conditioned machine never has a choice. It will only do what its master has instructed it to do. And who is our master? The environment.

If the environment has told us that good boys behave in such and such way, we behave in that way. “Nice girls act in these manners,” and they will act in that manner. “To be a good son is to do this, this and this,” and you want to do all that, and when you cannot do all that, you feel guilty. “A good life is this, this and this,” so you choose this, this and this. The environment has already told all this to you. The environment has told you that when 1st January comes, make a new year resolution, so you will make a new year resolution. The environment has also told you that when 5th of January comes, forget the resolution, so you will forget the resolution. The environment has told you that when 14th of February comes, roam here and there, you will do that, and you will feel very mushy on that day. You have already been told. Now, I am asking you, you will see a lot of people around, who would be dealing in love very soon. When do we have that day?

L: Tomorrow.

AP: So, we will have a lot of ‘dealings’ in love tomorrow. The prices of roses will go up by 50 times. Now, if a thousand people are dealing in love on the 14th of February, would they still have dealt in love on 14th of February, if they had not been told that ‘14th of February’ is special? Would they still have done all that?

L: No, Sir.

AP: So, is it love or is it environment?

L: Environment.

AP: See how deeply our environment controls us, even in the most intimate matters of our life, but we say, "It's my choice." So, one thing is certain that choices are environment driven. You said 'Choices and Individuality'. We do not know about individuality, but one thing is certain, that choices are hardly mine and it is a great sense of relief to see that my choices are actually not my choices. When you hear this, you feel a little bad, but when you actually come to the fact of this, you will feel a relief that "Now I see that all these choices are anyway not mine." "Engineering is in the environment, so I entered engineering. Love is in the air, so I also became lovey-dovey." And when you find out, "Aah!....ReliefI cannot take myself seriously then, all this is just the effect of environment. There is something in the sky which is affecting me and which is affecting everybody."

What then is individuality? If choices do not come from individuality then what comes from individuality?

What does the environment do to your mind? A child is born more or less like a clean slate, clean slate, a little bit of conditioning is already there, but let us ignore it for the while. The child's mind is quite innocent and then layers and layers of influences keep settling upon the mind. Where do these influences come from?

L: Environment.

AP: Environment. So, one layer, second layer, third layer, fourth layer and all this keeps happening. Right? All these layers taken together become your personality. There is the basis of the clean, pure mind that the child is born with - pure like a crystal, untouched; uncorrupted - Upon this crystal have accumulated layers and layers of dust. Of course, the dust is worthless, but the environment is giving all this dust to you. The crystal, the mind, the pure, that is valuable, and that is there with the child, even at the time of birth.

Individuality is to regain that innocent mind. Individuality is to be able to clean the mind to such an extent that the crystal shines again. Pure, no dust, no stains; that is individuality. A very-very innocent mind. That is the individual. Lots of actions take place in individuality, but those actions are not driven by the environment, they are driven by the crystal itself; by the cleanliness of mind; by the pure understanding of that mind. When you act

from there, then you deserve to be called 'an individual'. When you do not act from there then you are just a slave of influences and environment, and then you are not an individual. Now, it is good news because individuality is not something that you have to get from somewhere. That pure crystal, the shining diamond is already available to you, it's been given to you, it is always yours. So, you don't have to get it from somewhere, you only have to clean it a little; that is all, simple. Just clean the rubbish, too much rubbish has accumulated, wipe it off.

Alright. Tell me then, what are the sources from where the rubbish comes? Because unless we know the sources, how will we clear the rubbish? I would require a few of you to just speak in one word each. From where does the rubbish come?

L 1: Friends.

L 2: Relatives.

L 3: Family.

L 4: Society.

AP: More, because if you don't recognize it, how will you guard yourself against it.

L 5: Teachers.

L 6: Media.

L 1: Films.

AP: Good and some more. Keep speaking. It comes from hundred other sources.

L 4: Literature.

L 6: Newspapers.

AP: Good! More.

L 7: Internet

L 7: All objects that we see around.

L 3: Social networking sites.

AP: So, it is coming from everywhere. Listen! A fundamental law- The more pure something is, the easier it is to stain it. If there is a wall that is already dirty and full of stains, it will be very difficult for you to put another stain on

it, because there are already so many stains on it. If you have a very nice, washed face, then if I put some dirt on your face, it is very clear that your face has been spoiled. Holi is coming, let's say your face already has colors and paint and little bit of cow-dung also and then, if I put a little bit of soil on your face, then nothing has happened really. The more pure something is, the easier it is to corrupt it. Your inner crystal is so pure that it can be very easily corrupted; but the story doesn't end here. It is so pure that in spite of all the corruption, it will never lose its fundamental quality. So that is good news. It can be corrupted easily, yes. Conditioning happens all the time, influences are there all the time, and environment is acting upon you all the time. So, you are continuously gathering dust. There is no doubt about it, but that dust cannot really harm you. It can be cleaned anytime, and when it will be cleaned, you will find that the crystal is shining as brightly as ever. Nothing has changed; that crystal is you. That is what is called individuality. Is that becoming clear?

So we talked of two things. One, choices; and we said that choices come from environment, they come from all the influences that you have had. So, choices are not really an expression of individuality. We also said that individuality is something very simple, already available to you. Just clear the dirt and individuality is there.

Your individuality is just a deceptive name given by the ego to itself

Question: On one hand the HIDP tells us to be individuals, on the other hand why are we being asked to read texts? Why we are not allowed to write what we think?

Acharya Prashant: What is the difference between an 'individual' and a 'person'? Let us understand this. Let us depict the mind of the individual by one circle, and the mind of the person by another circle. The word 'individual' is linked to 'indivisible' - that which is neither divided nor can be divided. There is no possibility. So there is this circle, the individual's circle, and it's an empty circle. Zero cannot be divided. There are only two entities that cannot be divided: zero and infinity. You can represent the individual by any of them. They both are indivisible. Zero and infinity.

We will just take zero for the sake of convenience. So there is the mind of the individual - blank, empty. Or let me say, clear and clean, containing no garbage, no influences work on it. And then there is the mind of the person. The mind of the person, you may visualize, is divided into hundreds of sectors. Hundreds of small sectors. Do you understand a 'sector'? I am talking of the sector of a circle. What is each of these sectors representing? It is representing a particular influence upon the mind. Every sector is dominated by some other influence. And the sectors keep fluctuating. Thousands of sectors keep mixing, mingling, changing, but they remain, they never go away. They never leave the mind clean.

One sector is dominated by family, other by education, third by friends, fourth by media, religion, and all kinds of influences. And these too have their own chemistries with each other. So in a particular environment I am influenced by this person, or that force, or that system and similarly in another environment and so on. And all these sectors are being pushed in different directions. So friends are pushing, or rather pulling the mind in one direction, and teachers are pulling it in another direction.

So what happens to an entity upon which two opposing forces are acting? It

remains stressed. Right? And if the stress increases beyond a point, then it is torn apart. That is the mind of the person, divided, stressed and torn apart by various forces. And we experience that daily. The biggest sign of that stress is confusion, indecision. We can't decide. And don't you see, don't you inquire? Why can't you be attentive enough? Whenever there is indecision there are always two or three options. These two or three options are actually two or three influences upon the mind. Each trying to go differently. That is the mind of a person; a slave to a thousand influences.

Now suppose three people are pulling me. (*The speaker uses his fingers to indicate three different directions: 'a', 'b', and 'c'*) One in this direction, 'a', one in this, 'b' and another in this direction 'c'. Now, this one, 'a', succeeds and pulls me towards himself. Is that direction mine?

Listeners: No, Sir.

AP: Alright. Then let's assume that this one, 'b', succeeds and pulls me towards himself. Is that direction mine?

L: No, Sir.

AP: Let's say this one succeeds 'c' and pulls me towards himself. Is that direction mine?

L: No, Sir.

AP: Let's say that none of them succeed and instead I am moving towards the resultant of these three forces. If there are three forces, then there ought to be a resultant. So I move towards a totally different direction from these three, which is a resultant of these three forces. Is that direction mine?

L: No, Sir.

AP: That's how our lives are. Whichever direction we go, that direction is not ours. That is the enslavement, the depth of enslavement of the person. And it is tragic, because that's not what it is meant to be.

Of all the influences on the mind, one of the influences is, "You are free." Of the thousand beliefs that have been embedded into the mind, one of the beliefs says, "You have a free power of opinion making." Now that's extremely dangerous because the best way to let a slave remain a slave is to tell him that he is already free. If you can convince a slave that he is already free then that is the best and most deceptive way of keeping him enslaved. Is that not so?

There is a prisoner in a jail. If he can be convinced, "This is not a jail at all, this is your personal palace, and these policemen are your personal guards, personal security guards, and you are a V.I.P., and these handcuffs, these chains are not chains, they are actually ornaments." Will the prisoner ever try to break free? Will he ever try to break free?

L: No, Sir.

AP: That is what happens to the person who starts thinking that she is an individual. "I am a prisoner but I have been convinced that this is freedom. This itself is freedom, there is no need to become free, because I am already free." You do not know what freedom is, you do not know what individuality is. You are just saying, "Be individual! Be individual!" What does 'being an individual' mean? Does 'being an individual' mean going as per your likes and dislikes? Does 'being an individual' mean, "I like pizza, so I will order pizza"? Is that what individuality is? Does 'being an individual' mean, "I am attracted towards a particular dress so I'll buy it"? Is that what individuality is?

What is your individuality? You have no notion of individuality, yet you are so deeply conditioned that you just stand up and say, "I am an individual, I'll not read this." Your situation is like that of a man outside the jail who is trying to shout aloud with all his energy, "Friend! Kindly see that this is a jail, kindly come out of it." And you are complaining. You are complaining, "You know that man is our enemy. We are in our personal palace and he is trying to tell us that we should come out. He is interfering in our freedom. We are individuals, and he is interfering in our individuality."

Do you know individuality? Do you have any taste of individuality? You must have heard that story, I have repeated it so many times but it is such a nice story, I never tire of repeating it. Have you heard that story of the bird in the cage? Even if you've heard it, hear it once again. It's worth hearing a thousand times.

There is the bird in the cage. Since childhood the bird is in the cage itself. It was born in the cage. It knows nothing but the cage. It is alright in the cage because its master feeds it. Morning and evening the bird is given a few things to eat. The bird has also been given a few toys inside the cage, so the bird can keep itself entertained. And the bird is safe and secure in the cage, because cats, dogs, eagles, cannot attack it as long as it is within the cage. The master is fond of telling the neighbours, "I teach my bird all kinds of

good things.” So he teaches the bird all kinds of nice things and one of the things that he teaches the bird is, “Say, ‘Freedom.’ Say, ‘Freedom is precious.’ Say, ‘Individuality.’ Say, ‘Truth.’ Say, ‘Joy!’”

So a young man is passing by that cage one day and there is nobody looking. The cage is kept a little outside the house. And he sees this bird. And the bird is constantly parroting, “Freedom! Freedom! Freedom! Truth! Flight! Joy! Freedom! Freedom!” Now the young man is young in the real sense of the word. He has real red-blood flowing in his veins. He says, “Oh my God! A bird is meant to fly free in the skies, not to be caged. Even if the cage is made of gold!” So he goes to the bird and opens the door of the cage. He says, “This bird is thirsty for freedom!” He opens the door of the cage, expecting that the bird will say, “Thank you Sir. I am so glad that you are opening my cage.” But the bird sits where it is sitting, and keeps parroting, “Freedom! Individuality! Freedom! Individuality!” It does not come out.

Now the young man is puzzled. He says, “What is this? Maybe there is some confusion in the mind.” So he goads the bird a little, but the bird still won’t come out. So he says, “Alright, if you are stubborn, you won’t come out. I am also stubborn. I’ll make you come out.” So he puts his hand inside the cage and tries to pull the bird out. He says, “Your place is not inside the cage. No bird is ever born to live inside a cage. Come out and fly high.”

So what does the bird do? The bird starts biting the finger of the man who wants to help her. The bird says, “This must be some enemy. It is trying to relieve me from my cage. And my cage is my precious home! How dare he try to set me free?” So the bird keeps nipping and biting the finger, and the blood starts flowing. But still the young man pulls the bird out and says, “Go! Now you will know what individuality is. [Individuality](#) is not a word, it’s a way of living. Now go and find out. Fly and know. Be, and know.”

And he is happy that he has done a nice job, and he goes away. After a few days he comes back. To his utter surprise what does he see? The bird is back in the cage. And in the cage what is the bird constantly singing? “Freedom! Freedom! Individuality! Individuality!”

That’s our story.

Language is such a mischievous thing. Slovenly language, confused thoughts. Just as you are saying, “Sir, we must be individuals,” similarly there must be people here who will say, “You know I just want to be myself.

I don't want any influences upon me. You know I don't want somebody to just come to me and brain-wash me." I am pretty sure that there are many like this here. "You know I'll find out on my own. You know life is the best teacher. I'll learn through my own experiences." Don't you see the obvious? What is this 'myself'? When you say, "Be yourself", what is 'yourself' in this? The same conditioned mind. I am repeating. For you, 'Be yourself' just means, "Want pizza, eat pizza." And this is your declaration of your divine [freedom](#). "Want girl, get girl," this is 'Be yourself'. "Want to bunk class, bunk class," this is 'Be yourself', without seeing where all your wants come from. All your wants come from here and there. Even if you fulfil those wants, are they your wants?

When you say, "Be yourself," Ask, "Be exactly what? What does 'yourself' mean? What is meant by 'be yourself'? Be what? Be a Hindu? A Muslim? A fashionable young man? A son? A daughter? A budding engineer? A professional? A husband? A wife? What?" Whatever you will say is the meaning of 'be yourself', it would be an imported meaning. You do not know yourself, how can you 'be yourself'?

I am asking you a very simple question. When you do not know yourself, how can you 'Be yourself'? All you know of yourself is some identity that the world has given you. Tell me of one statement corresponding to 'Be yourself' that has not come from the world? All you know of is wants and desires that are stimulated in you by external factors. Understand the mind. The mind is a system that not only takes its inputs from outside, but also takes the software that processes those inputs too from outside.

Everything is coming from outside. Where is the question of 'Be yourself'? Be what? But we are not sharp enough to move into that inquiry. We have the capability. Individuality is our nature. But it is covered by layers and layers of conditioning. Layers and layers of personalities. And those layers do not want to go away. Those layers want to remain. They want to defend themselves. So that is why whenever there is an attempt to clean those layers, those layers raise a defense. "We will not go away. We will not go away." And you too stand in support of those layers. Why? Because you have [identified](#) yourself with those layers. You think that you are those layers. You think that if those layers go away, then you will also disappear.

It is like a man who's had a headache since 30 years. He does not feel the headache anymore. If you have a headache since a very, very long time,

you'll stop feeling the headache. In fact you'll start feeling a little uneasy when the headache goes away. That's our situation. We start feeling uncomfortable. "How come I don't have a headache? How come somebody is telling me that it is possible to live with a light head?"

When you read the texts that we give you, just ask yourself, "Is this text giving me another belief or is it just helping me, asking me to enquire into those beliefs?" Is it giving you another kind of thought system? Is it saying that you go and you follow a new 'ism'? Is it saying that you become communists or socialists? Is it telling you that you must become Hindus, Vaishnavites? Is it telling you, "No, you should follow the Sufi order"? Is it telling you, "No, you should become atheists"? Is it giving you some kind of a system? Or is it just stating the obvious facts of life to you and asking you to consider them? Just like science. Just like science. Look at it and you will know.

In science you look at the pendulum, the flow of the water, the chemicals. Here you are just looking at the functioning of the mind. It's as scientific as that. But no we don't want to look at the mind, because that's where all our sickness lies. If we look at it, we will have to acknowledge it. If we acknowledge it, then the responsibility would be to clear the rubbish.

You are saying, "My individuality gets hampered when I read the texts." Does your individuality get hampered when you read a Physics book? Do you say, "Why are we reading the laws of Thermodynamics? Why can't we just write our own thoughts there?" Do you say that? If in Thermodynamics you must follow the laws of thermodynamics, then when you are reading a course on mind, why don't you just follow the laws of mind? And there are definite laws of the mind, inviolable. In a Maths exam will you go and say, "You know I've come to write my own poetry, my own opinions"? Will you say that? Will you challenge Maxwell's equations? Will you challenge Schrodinger?

What [HIDP](#) is saying to you is as factual and as verifiable as the laws of Physics. It is just that the laboratory there consists of objects, and the laboratory here consists of the subject and the object both. And out of these two, the subject happens to be more important, because the object is the mind of the subject.

When I was preparing for the J.E.E., I used to read a Physics book by a Russian author named I.E.Irodov. Heard of that book?

L: Yes, Sir.

AP: And another by authors Resnick and Halliday. By reading a Physics book by Resnick and Halliday, did I become slaves to Resnick & Halliday? Is physics important, or is the author important?

L: Physics.

AP: Why are you so scared? Why are you so scared by the name of the author? The author has just written a book that is the essence of all Physics that has been said since ages. And that particular book is being recommended to you because it is suitable to you. It has been written in a condensed and simplified way, so that a young man like you can easily understand.

And we are not insisting that you read that particular book. The same thing that you find in these texts, you can also find in the *Commentaries on living* by Jiddu Krishnamurti. But there you will have to read a lot more. Or in *Tao-Te-Ching*, written by Lao Tzu, but again there is a lot of abstraction. Or in the *Fragments of Heraclitus*, but there the context and the language are thousands of years old. Or in the works of Gurdjieff, but every single text that he has written is extremely long. Would you rather read something that long, or would you rather read the distilled essence of it, which comes to you in one single article? Physics simplified?

And if there is somebody who is indeed eager to go to the more essential and basic texts, he is welcome. We can give you a list and you can make a presentation on that. But we wonder, when you have to make a presentation on two pages of articles, then you find it too much to read. How will you make a presentation if we give you three hundred pages of *Commentaries on Living* to read?

It's for your help that this has been created. You ask, "Sir, where does action come from? Sir, why are we so worried about results, and why are we always so tensed about the results?" You want to understand. Now, we could as well say that go and read chapters three, four and five of the *Bhagavad Gita* and prepare a presentation on it, and you will get the answer to the question, "Why am I so tensed about the results?"

But that would be just too much for you. And if there is a group that wants to do that, we will be very, very glad. Instead of reading that one page article, you are most welcome to read three chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita*. How many of you know Sanskrit? How many of you can accurately make out what

Krishna is saying to Arjun without the help of translation? So even in translation you will have to depend on somebody else. Don't you have to depend on somebody else? And not only translation, you'll also then read the commentary on that text.

Now you must object and say, "I will not go to the *Bhagavad Gita* till I know Sanskrit to such an expert level that I don't even need a Hindi translation or an English translation." Or read the *Upanishads*? There are two hundred and fifty *Upanishads*. Or the *Bible*? Do you know how thick the Old Testament and the New Testament combined are? Or Freud or Nietzsche? Or hundreds of other philosophers? Or Neuroscience? How will you go and read a hundred volumes on Neuroscience? And so much of what we are saying comes from Modern Psychology, Neuroscience and also Modern Physics.

But the bird wants to bite the finger. The bird wants to bite the finger that wants to help it. Instead of saying a big thank you, there is only resistance. "Oh, a hand is coming towards me. Surely it must be coming to kill me." And I cannot blame you too much. In your eighteen-twenty years of life, whenever a hand has come towards you, it has mostly come to harm you. That is your experience. Right?

So it is understandable. You are afraid. You feel that whenever somebody comes to you, his intentions are self-centric. "His intentions are to take something away from me. He wants to exploit me." That's what your thoughts are. You feel, "This is another case of exploitation. This new hand that is coming towards me is again coming to exploit me."

Have some Faith. Not every hand that comes towards you, comes to harm you.

Whatever you choose for yourself will be poison

Question: While reading the various articles on your blog, I feel that the articles are like medicines for the mind. But despite reading many of them, I am still not able to cure the mind from its illness.

Acharya Prashant: You have several diseases, several illnesses, and what do you do? You go to a pharmacist. You go to a large pharmacy shop and thousands of medicines are there. Will you be cured by going to a pharmacy shop? Yes, the blog is full of medicines, just as a pharmacy shop is full of medicines. And you are full of illness. So you go to the pharmacy shop, the shop is wide open to you and you have all the choice to pick anything as per your convenience, as per your likes and dislikes.

And the medicines are there. These are complicated medicines. They have come after years of research. And you are standing there, all the medicines are there, and you start popping pills. “I want that one, the deep pink! Aah! This syrup looks nice, this smells of alcohol! Give it to me!” And what will all these medicines do to you? Which medicines do you like? Do you know how these cough syrups sell? The government actually had to regulate their sales. You know people with drug addiction, they just like to taste things like Iodex, even fevicol.

How can medicines help you when ‘you’ are choosing the medicines? All the medicines might be available, but which medicines will you choose? The one which has alcohol or the one which has the glossiest cover, or the one which is branded. That’s the one you will choose. So that is the reason our friend chooses to read what he chooses. That is the reason why *Anshu* would come here and then go back and send an article, explaining how spirituality is exploitation and how all the gurus have only exploited everybody, that too right on the day when he has been advised on nearness.

When you will choose the article to send on *Koham*, that is what you will choose, the medicine that suits you. And all the medicines are available.

I sometimes do feel that this is one of the worst injustices that can be done to

mankind- to give it a free hand in picking up their medicines. When you allow just anybody to pick up a copy of the Bhagavad Gita, then you are actually harming that person. He is not eligible to read the Gita, why is he being allowed to lay his dirty hands on Krishna?

You do not know a thing about spirituality, you do not know the Guru, but with great conviction and with great scholarly-ness, you are sending those mails. Pitiably, pathetic. Without a prescription, must you pick a medicine from the pharmacy? Then why do you just roam about picking up any book and reading it? You will be greatly harmed. In fact don't read at all, that is better. But to read the wrong book is like consuming poison. And I assure you that you will only choose poison for yourself. That's all that you can choose.

So I will advise you - your life is so dry, it has no movement, no liquidity, it is like a rock, a fossil - So I will advise you to sing and dance and go to the Saints. But you will not go to the Saint, you will go to J. Krishnamurti. And there might be a superstitious fellow who is steeped in belief and he is all the time only reading Ramayan by Tulsidaas, to him I would say, "Go to J. Krishnamurti." But he would not go to J. Krishnamurti. He would say, "No. My chowpais are enough. *Radhe radhe*. I only know Ayodhya and Vrindavan. No Krishnamurti for me." The one who must not read Krishnamurti is drawn towards Krishnamurti. The one who must read Krishnamurti is drawn towards some other rubbish. Because you are so clever, you want to choose your own medicine. That's what you do with the blog as well.

I have recently heard a very-very clever statement from one of you. "Sir, we don't need to come to the camp. After all, blog is there. Whatever you will say in the camp will ultimately be posted on the blog and the blog is available." Have you not heard that? "Sir, all the videos are there. Why do we need to come to the Clarity session?" There is no need. Why travel all the way from Lucknow, Kanpur or Moradabad? There is no need. After all whatever will be said, will sooner or later appear on the blog or the video channel. So there is no need.

And we will choose. We will decide what is important, what is not important. And there are others who say, "Alright. Let him prescribe the medicines. I will not take any medicines outside the list that he prescribes. But from within the list, I will choose. So, if he tells me to do three things, I will do

one, and I will choose which one to do. After all, I cannot be harmed. Had it been harmful, he wouldn't have prescribed."

You see, I take some methotrexate, which is a poison. But along with that, my doctor has given me something which is a remedy to the side effects of that poison. So he has given me two medicines together, and he has cautioned me to take both of these. One will treat your illness, but will also give you a side illness. The second medicine will treat the side illness. But I am so clever. What do I do? I take only the first one and I avoid the second one. What do I say? "After all this is the real medicine. This cures the illness, why do I need the second one?" So what will I get? I will get a new disease. I am so clever.

And there are some others as well. My doctor says, "Take both these medicines, but do not take alcohol." So, what do I do? I say, "See, I am not taking anything which he did not allow me to take. I am not going outside this list. Am I taking any medicine outside this list? No. And whatever is there in this list, I am taking. But why should I follow the other rules that he has set for me? I will take alcohol." So that's the kind of mind we have." Sir has given us certain books to read. We will read them. But why should we write daily reflections? That is not needed."

What you do not realize is that the entire thing works together. Even if you take all the medicines and yet do not take the precautions that the doctor has advised, it will not work. The entire thing has to work in totality. But you are so clever. "Why should I do it?" And then look at your face, then look at all the sickness that is there. I am so clever. In thirty different ways you apply your cleverness, and in three hundred ways you suffer. Don't you see?

Don't you see? You pick up a book. The book might be by a great master, by the so-called enlightened ones. But don't you see that you are the one who decides which chapter to read? And don't you see that those answers were given to somebody else? Are you sure that had you asked that same question that is there in the book, you would have received the same answer? Let's say that you are reading Krishnamurti. And there is a question and an answer. That is the format of the book. Is *Joydeep* asking that question?

Listener 1: No.

AP: Is the answer for *Joydeep* then?

L: No.

AP: Then how can you be so stupid? Is that answer for you? Look at this very venue, look at this occasion. If *Manjeet* asks me a question versus if *Anushka* asks me a question versus if *Rahul* asks me a question, will I give the same answer? But you record the answer that I gave to *Anushka* and play that answer to *Rahul*. What will happen? Will he be helped?

That's what a book does to you. You don't even realize that what Krishna is saying in Bhagavad Gita, is for Arjun. Are you Arjun? But you love the blog. "Blogs are good. I am a reader. I read so many other things as well. I am a very well-read person."

What do you get after reading so many other things? Concept is all that you get. You become a walking inventory of medicines. You smell and reek of medicines. When you talk, you only talk of medicines. In fact, the medicines talks, you are nowhere to be seen. And it can be pin-pointed that this statement is coming from this Upanishad. Yes speak more, "Yes! This is from the bible." Speak a little more, "Aah! That one was from Nisargdatta." So medicines are talking. Where are you?

Have you seen those patients who take many medicines daily? Now, only medicines are there, like a patient on ventilator. Only the ventilator is there, the man is long gone. The ventilator is breathing. The ventilator is pumping blood. Only the medicine is remaining, you are no more there. But books are such a consolation. "I will read."

I start feeling a little jittery when I see people who are very well-read. It is very difficult to talk to them, very-very difficult. That doesn't mean that they shouldn't read. I don't know what you will make out from these words. Next time I advise you to read, and you will say, "Yuck! Poison"

(Laughter)

"That day you said that never read. And now you are saying read!"

L 1: Sir, isn't the choice of book related to what is going on inside?

AP: Yes, yes. Obviously, always.

L 2: Sir, I am pursuing a particular course of study. So I have to read. I sometimes feel guilty that the knowledge given in that course is in a different light as compared to the discussions that we do here. Yesterday I was reading something, but I was not able to concentrate, because I felt guilty. Because I thought that this book will only substantiate my ego. What should one do in

that case?

AP: See, one does not go to a temple with the same mind that he has while bargaining in the market. You are not pursuing a spiritual course, you are pursuing a marketable course. When you are in a market, you should know that this is the market and this is knowledge. I must know what the rate of potatoes is. That is what your education teaches you. So you must know that these are potatoes, not a Shivalinga, just a potato. You cannot take it seriously. Alright, you are pursuing some academic course. Is that what you are saying? Which course is it?

L 2: English literature.

AP: So all these poets that you read in your English literature course, are they Kabir, or Jesus? You must know that this is something for livelihood, and there is the poet who is saying this and that. A poet is not a Rishi (*Sage*). Is he? So read the poet, it is alright.

Bhagavad Gita is about the mind, and so are the Upanishads. One of you is pursuing a psychology course, and that too is supposed to be about the mind. But will you pursue a psychology course assuming it to be Spiritual? There is nothing spiritual about it. It is like looking at the mind just as one looks at the shop. There is no self-observation there. It will never take you to the root of the mind. In fact, it will be very difficult for a psychologist to turn Spiritual.

And Bhagavad Gita too is just psychology, how the mind functions. But you cannot take these two, try to compare them and co-relate them and what not. These are just toys that man has made for his entertainment, this study, that study. Let them be there. It's alright. You must have a reason for pursuing that course. It's alright. Pursue it, pass it, and get that degree. Don't take the whole thing so seriously. There is no need to feel guilty about it.

There is this bread here and there is jam inside. The jam has a particular colour and I am feeling guilty about the colour. How can I take it so seriously? It's alright. I may eat it, I may not eat it. In fact, I don't want to eat it. So, it's alright. You eat it, it's alright. You do not eat it, it's alright.

You must know, what is to be taken seriously; that itself is called *Vivek*, discretion. What is *Vivek*? The art of knowing what to take seriously and what not to take seriously.

L 3: Then the question arises – Who is saying it?

AP: Okay, but at least in the moment of your seriousness, if this can arise, “Does it deserve it?” Then there is some possibility. “Does it deserve that seriousness?” When you are fighting and quarrelling with your wife, in that moment if this thought can arise, “Does she deserve this seriousness?” Then you will just shrug the whole thing off and maybe get out of the house, take a walk, sip nice tea somewhere and come back. “She doesn’t even deserve this much of seriousness. How can I even fight with her seriously? You want to shout, keep shouting. I don’t take you seriously enough to fight with you.” This is called discretion, *Vivek*. But obviously, it must arise at that moment, at that time.

L 3: How can this arise at that moment, because at that time emotions are very high?

AP: Nothing can be done at that moment, because your mind is a product of time. So everything depends on what you have been doing in time.

On Sunday afternoons it will be difficult for you to fight with your wife, assuming that Sunday mornings are being spent here. So, what you have been doing in time, how you have been spending your time, decides the quality of your time. Are you getting it?

Spend your time wisely and then your spontaneous response will shape up. We talk of ‘spontaneous’ response. But remember, that to have spontaneous response in that moment, you must first have gone through an entire process of cleansing; cleansing in time. A time drawn process, a long process. So the response is spontaneous, but to reach that spontaneity, you must first pass through a long period of time in which there has been an effort, a devoted effort, to take care of the mind. And then you become capable of spontaneity.

L 3: Sir, my looseness in this moment will welcome the trouble in the future.

AP: Yes, obviously. Wonderful. That is Karma, fruit of the action.

L 3: I am regularly reading Kabir. Chances are that I wouldn’t get into fight. On the other hand, if I am reading a magazine, I would get into fight.

AP: Yes. So there is a man who is attending the session right now. His chances of remaining peaceful in the afternoon and in the evening today are more as compared to a man who is reading a magazine right now, or to a man who is spending Sunday morning lazying in the bed. Evening depends on the morning.

L 2: Can that be sustained?

AP: Depends on how desperate you are. Depends on how much your wife has beaten you.

There can be no other answer. There can be no other motivation. You must see that you are suffering. You must clearly see, clearly realize that your ways are of blindness. That they are only giving you pain.

L 3: Sir, a few days back, I read a blog article on anxiety and fear because I was feeling anxious and fearful. Would reading that article harm me?

AP: (*Sarcastically*) you have already taken it. The medicine has gone in and done whatever it had to do. What is the point? It happens in families where there are small kids.

“Doctor, my son has taken in phenyl.”

“When?”

“Two days back.”

Now what had to happen has happened. Maybe it is because of reading that article that this anxiety is there.

You read something on anxiety and now you are anxious. “What will happen to me? I have read that!”

The medicine will show its effects.

MYTH OF HEAVEN AND HELL

What is heaven and what is hell?

*Heaven is the association with the holy.
Association with the worldly folk who are unholy alone is hell.*

~ Niralamba Upanishad

Acharya Prashant: ‘Heaven’ and ‘hell’ are obviously not geographies.

What is it that you call as ‘holy’? That which is untainted, un-corrupted. And obviously you call that as ‘holy’, because there something within you which gives you that definition. There is something within you which demands cleanliness, there is something within you which does not like tainted-ness, corruption, and conditioning.

So what you call as ‘holy’ is demanded by something which is of the same ‘holy’ nature and is already present in you. Had you not been holy at all, you could not have demanded the ‘holy’, you would have been satisfied with all the dirt and filth that comes along in life. But we dislike all that. It becomes a load on the mind. We do not like it, we remain dissatisfied. We want something clean, pristine, like this sheet of snow all around. That very urge, firstly means that the holy resides within us. Now this is a tricky situation then. If the holy resides within us, then why are we unclean? If our essence is holiness, from where does the unholy come?

There is a clear contradiction, there is a clear paradox. If essentially you are holy, how can life then be unholy? So when you meet a contradiction like this, obviously you have to reject one of the statements. If two statements contradict each other, both of them cannot be simultaneously true. One of them has to be rejected. You can either say, “Well there is nothing called ‘the essential’, that there is nothing called the ‘center’ or the ‘core’, and there is nothing holy about our existence. If there is, then show it to me. Can you demonstrate or display it to me?” And it will be very difficult to demonstrate, display or convince that essentially we are holy.

And so you have an easy option available, which is to discard the first statement itself and say, “Well there is nothing called ‘holy’ within. “This haphazard, random, frustrating life is all that we have. Life is nothing but a

spread of unholiness.” You can do that; you can reject the first statement. Or, you could say, “I have faith. Essentially I am divine, essentially I am clean, and that directly implies that all that appears unclean is just a myth, an illusion. It is to be rejected, falsified.” What do you do with a statement that is incorrect? You reject it. What do you do with a perception that is an illusion? You reject it. Are you getting it?

So there can be another type of mind which can then say, “I am not contented with this humdrum, with this unclean, stinking state of affairs. I reject them because essentially I am holy. If I am essentially holy, then how can life be like this? I reject it. I reject it.”

This rejection cannot happen if firstly you do not get a glimpse of the True. You are rejecting something by calling it false. Right? It is only the closeness to the True which gives you the power, the courage to reject the false. Otherwise, you will keep on accepting the false, helplessly, slavishly, without any possibility of redemption. You will keep on accepting it and you will call it ‘*surrendering to fate*’. You will say, “Well this is all that there is, what can we do? Life is like this for me and for everybody else. It has always been like this, it is like this and I do not foresee any possibility that something can change even in the future.” You will go on living in this falseness.

To reject the false, closeness of Truth is required. Now, Truth is by definition, the only element that there is! So what do we mean by ‘closeness of truth’? Does truth ever go far away? Yes, Truth does go far away from the one who is living in the false. For him, even though Truth is really close, but it becomes apparently very-very distant. Being close, it appears very distant.

What is then meant by ‘association with the holy’? ‘Association with the holy’ means that in this false life, there is a possibility of coming in contact with a situation, a person, a book, and anything else that the mind can sense, an environment, which reminds me of my essentially true nature. That is association with the holy. Association with something, someone, the presence of whom reminds you of your own internal Truth, whose presence is a proof, a validation that if it is possible in one case, then it is possible for me as well, that is what is meant by, ‘association with the holy’. That is what gives you courage to reject the false.

Otherwise, you are caught. There is the force of situations, home, family, office, society, education, earning a livelihood, and you are in the middle of all that. And then there is that occasional, faint Call from within, there is that

gnawing feeling of discontent, you do not know what to do, no other world exists, you are in the middle of your situations, you cannot go anywhere else, and in the middle of this situation, you also do not feel satisfied. You are stuck!

Most people will take the easy way out. They will say, “Instead of rejecting this and taking so much trouble, why not simply reject the first statement? Why not simply reject the possibility of ‘holiness’? Why not just say that this is life. Full stop! Eat, sleep, drink and be merry. This is life. There is nothing more to it, don’t even talk about it, it’s dangerous.” They take this route. Because we are stuck, and we are hopelessly stuck.

There is nothing around us which offers us any kind of help. And even if we try to rise a little from our own inner conviction and sense of motivation, there are a thousand forces outside that suppress this motivation. So we are caught. Nothing is there to help.

What is ‘association with the holy’ then? It’s a helping hand. And remember that this ‘helping hand’ does not take you away to another world or another land. It only helps you do what you have always wanted to do. It only helps you realize what your own deepest desire is. Your own deepest desire is of freedom. That is what ‘association with the holy’ is. Are you getting it? And that has been called as ‘heaven’.

‘Heaven’ and ‘hell’ are obviously for the mind, they do not have any existence elsewhere. So ‘heaven’ is a situation in which the mind gets what contends it deeply, a relaxation. That relaxation is not possible in our otherwise agitated life. Common life is sheer agitation. Right? Provocation, agitation, excitement, and the resultant frustration.

Heaven, the company that on one hand relaxes you, and on the other hand gives you the courage that it *can* happen. That it is not impossible, that the situation is not hopeless. “I can be free! My deepest dreams were not just nonsense. They were there to be realized. They can be realized!”

And what is your deepest dream? Not the dream that you start assimilating from here and there. Your deepest dream is to just be what you are, what you really are. And the world gives you a thousand dreams, but not this one. This is your own original dream. Heaven is the moment when you realize that this dream is possible. Heaven is the moment when you clearly see that in this hateful world, Love is possible! And not only is it possible theoretically, it is

possible for *you!* It's there!

It doesn't happen on its own, because you being what you are, you are just stuck. It happens when per-chance in the middle of your bonded world, just by chance you encounter a glimpse of Freedom, and you encounter the music of Love. That is heaven.

You are struggling, laboring, somehow carrying yourself on, trudging and taking life as trudgery. You had given up all hope, and then the hope is rekindled. That is heaven. And not only is it a hope that something can happen in the future, it is there for the taking. Extend your hand and take it! That is heaven.

And correspondingly now you know what 'hell' is. That is easier to appreciate. Right? That appears less of a concept. It appears more real. Hell! We know what hell is. Pretty close! It's sometimes our residential address.

All that convinces you that just this, humdrum, random state of affairs is life, the company of forces that tell you not to fly too high, the forces that tell you that compromise is the name of the game, that tell you to play safe and remain secure, that tell you that the world is a fearful place, that you must be afraid, that you must be concerned about yourself, that tell you that you are born to follow practices and patterns, the company of such voices is hell. That's it.

(Snow starts falling)

L 1: Holy!

Acharya Prashant: The false will never admit, "I am just a shadow." It will say, "Nothing but me is there." The world itself is heaven. When is the world heaven? When you realize that the world is like a door, a gateway to the beyond, now it is heaven! The beyond is not heaven. Remember! Because beyond, there is no mind, and heaven and hell are in the mind. The world is heaven, when it is a gateway to the beyond. The world itself is hell when the world becomes an objective reality in itself. "I am all!" When the world says, "I am all that there is," then the world is hell.

See, it's snowing and it's not comfortable here. Is it? But there is something in your heart which will bear all this. Had there been only snow, without 'That' thing in the Heart, the world is...?

L: Hell.

AP: And when there is the world plus ‘That’ thing in the heart, then it is...

L: Heaven.

AP: The world will always be hell, if it is just material. But ‘That’ thing, that...

L 2: That is the association with the holy.

AP: Yes. When you have someone in front of you, or a situation like this in front of you, which sparks that thing, it is heaven. That is the association of holy. (*Pointing at the environment around*) That is probably why the Indian sages built all their holy places on the Himalayas, so that there is more possibility of holiness like this.

L 2: Sir, you said that holiness is essentially there, then why is there a disconnect with it? Why is there an effort to connect to ‘That’? If it is essentially there, then why this disconnect?

AP: See, there is a ‘True’ and there is a ‘false’. The ‘false’ means ‘that which is not’. It is not! So the questions that, “Why did it arise, from where did it come?” have no significance. When it is not, how can it come from anywhere? From where does illusion come? From nowhere! Go and ask illusion. When you are deluded, bring the ‘illusion’ in front of you and ask, “From where did you come?” What will you find? You will find that there is no answer. In fact, the moment you ask this question, the illusion is...

L: Gone.

AP: So from where did the illusion come? In the moment of asking the question, the illusion is already gone. So from where did it come?

L 3: From not asking the question.

AP (*Laughs*): From not asking the question. What does the ‘question’ symbolize? Presence! Remembrance, presence or attention. That is it.

L 3: So it means, the ‘disconnect’ doesn’t really exist.

AP: The ‘disconnect’ doesn’t really exist. Had it really existed, you could have talked to it, dissected it, and done something about it. But the moment you want to talk to it, it is gone. It is not there at all. For you, the one who is asking the question, does any illusion exist? So, which illusion are you referring to?

L 2: The one that doesn’t exist.

AP: The one that doesn't exist!

L 4: But the presence of holiness will be realized in the situation that is holy.

AP: Even if the situation is not holy, you will realize it through your frustration. See, why are you frustrated? You are living in a Loveless world. Why are you frustrated? The world is Loveless. That's it. Now, why are you frustrated? It is because essentially...?

L: We are holy.

AP: That is the proof of the holy within you. Your frustration is the proof of the holy within you. Do not think that only a holy man, or a holy book or a holy situation, or a holy place is a proof of holiness. The stink that arises from within, all the frustration that we experience, all our tears of helplessness, they are the proof that holiness exists, and we are missing it. Had you not been missing it, how could you have been frustrated?

L 5: When you are totally hopeless and heaviness dawns upon you, and suddenly you find a gateway, that's when the heaviness goes away.

AP: And that thing within, that movement within is heavenly. "I was missing it since so long, and here it is." This is heaven.

L 6: Sir, is it that everything is holy, but my continuous attempt to bind it in a limit, that is hell?

AP: No, everything is neither heaven nor hell. Heaven exists for us because we are distant from the Truth. When you are far from something, only then it seems like heaven.

We said that the world is a gateway to the beyond. Beyond, there is no heaven or hell! There is just an empty stillness. Heaven is for the one who has lost his way and who suddenly gets a guide. Hell is when you have already lost your way, and there are voices around that say, "You cannot go back, there is no home."

A point comes where there is neither heaven nor hell. So, from hell to heaven... and beyond!

The very thing that was craving for heaven, the very thing that was suffering and for it, heaven was like a balm upon the suffering, that very thing is now very peacefully retired.

Gone. Beyond. Finished.

MYTH OF DESTINY

Destiny is not what you will be, destiny is what you really are

Acharya Prashant: The topic today is Destiny and Freewill. The mind has always been interested in knowing about these. The individual that we sometimes call as man, sometimes refer to as ego, sometimes as the self – the fragmented self – is always curious about this particular topic because it is related to his freedom. He wants to know whether he really does have any freewill, any choice, and any real power to determine things by himself, or is it a totally deterministic world. That's what makes everybody very curious in this topic.

The ego wants to know, to what extent things are destined, and to what extent does its own discretion, its own will and volition apply and matter. And when we look at it, at least superficially it appears that these two or a combination of these two are the only options that are available to us. It seems that man is either destined or he enjoys a freewill, or his predicament, his position lies somewhere in between, but on the same plane.

And the first glance also suggests as if these two are opposites of each other. As if those who talk about destiny are taking a position counter to those who talk about freewill. At least that is how psychologists look at it. So a *Skinner* for example would say that we are purely mechanical and had all of our past had been known, then our future could be predicted with absolute certainty – it is just that we do not have all the data of the past. So he says that everything is destiny, there is nothing called freewill. And then there are other intellectuals who take a counter position and say that man's consciousness has an important role to play, not everything is predestined.

That brings us to an important word – intellect. When we are talking of intellectuals – intellect. I ask you, are both of these – destiny and freewill – not concepts of the intellect? And in that sense are they really opposite to each other or are they the same thing? Concepts of intellect.

That might surprise us.

How can these two be same? Or even similar? Because these two are

supposed to be the two ends of the debate. 'Destiny *versus* Freewill', that is what we always say. How can these two have something in common between them? I want to assert that just like the two poles of duality, these two are not different at all. They are one and the same thing. They both are mental creations, mental concepts and imaginations. And like everything else that is mental, the ego wants to think about them because it seeks security and because it wants knowledge as a tool for contentment and fulfilment.

Let's see, when we say 'destiny' what is the mental model that we have? We mean that there are two entities: one, the self, the me, the ego; the other, is the universe with its whole history of evolution. And the other determines the 'me'. The universe with its entire vast systems, with its whole time and space, with its cause and effect chains is determining what I am and what I would be. So what am I doing in creating this mental model? Please see what I am doing. In talking of destiny, I am creating a 'me', a 'me' which is separate from the universe, even if it is controlled by the universe. I have played a very smart trick upon myself. I have said that even if I am at the mercy of circumstances, even if I am at the mercy of all players outside of me, even if I am just an evolutionary product, yet 'I am' – separate, individualized.

And this 'I am'-ness is not the same as what the Maharishi would call as the *Aatman*. This I am is the 'I am' of the ego. The ego that wants to retain its individuality. So in talking of destiny the mind has done what the mind always does: *it has preserved itself*. The world is acting upon me, so I am. We are so insecure that we somehow want to convince ourselves that we are. With death looming large around us, with everything being so ephemeral, there is always the threat of us not being at all. So, through a thousand means, the mind wants to convince itself that it is. That it really is. The *anitya* (ephemeral) trembles in fear and somehow wants to touch the *nitya* (eternal Truth).

At the other end are those who talk of freewill. Let us see what the mind is doing when it is talking of freewill. Again a mental model is being constructed in which the ego is there, and the ego has the power to determine, to act. And if the ego has the power to determine and act, certainly there has to be a substance upon which it will act. That substance then is the universe. Again the same division is being created. Again I am saying, "I am there, and outside of me something else is there, and I act upon it."

The mind really is a trickster. Superficially the debate is about determinism. But actually it is the same old strife, the ego somehow trying to assert itself and using intellect as a tool, using argumentation as a tool. To a Silent mind, I ask you all, where is destiny? And to a silent mind where is freewill? In your deepest moments of Joy are you thinking of destiny? Immersed in Freedom, are you conceptualizing about freewill? Submerged in Love would you get into this debate — destiny versus freewill? These questions arise only to the troubled mind and these questions give no Peace at all. Because there can be no Peace in a dualistic debate. There can be Peace only in Silence, beyond this debate.

Whether we take this position or that position, at either end of the duality, we are only fragmenting. We are only creating a self and the world outside of the self. We are only trying to violate the basic principle of duality that the two ends though seem opposite of each other, but are actually one. The contradiction between them is just superficial. They are not different at all. But the mind won't be satisfied by this much only. It still wants to know what is destiny, what is freewill. Just telling it that this debate is useless does not help it. We are basically restless beings. *Man is nothing but restlessness personified*. And if you tell restlessness that it is uselessly restless then it doesn't assuage it, that doesn't help it. So we'll have to come to the questions: What really then is destiny? What really then is Freedom? What really then is this thing called 'will'?

If you look at the etymology of the word destiny, destiny means something that is established, that *is* there. In that sense the word destiny is very-very close to the word Truth, *Sat* – That which Is. That which really exists is destiny. Usually we place destiny somewhere in the future, usually we act as if destiny lies in time and time brings us to it. That is not the real meaning of destiny; time doesn't bring us to destiny. Destiny is that which we really are *right now*, timelessly, spacelessly. Destiny is not what we will become. Destiny is 'What we *are*' – the Self, the *Aatman* – and time is a very inefficient way to come to it. Most of us want to use time to come to the timeless. It's a very circuitous route, very longwinded, unnecessarily tortuous. And it fails. After all that it takes and promises, it fails.

Even after hundreds of years and hundreds of births, time alone never brings anybody to timelessness. They are different dimensions. One can keep roaming on this floor for centuries, but that would not make him fly; the Sky

is a different dimension. You will never *come* to your destiny. When you drop all thoughts of coming and going and becoming, then you are what you are, and you have reached your destiny. Your destiny has been revealed to you That is a better way of saying it.

What is our destiny? The Non-dual Silence is our destiny. That is what we really are.

Nothing more can be said about it. In fact saying even this much is a transgression. But as we said, 'The mind is like a restless monkey, it needs some fruits to entertain itself.' So we have to give it some words, some concepts. But even when we are treating the mind with concepts, we must ensure that concepts are kept to a minimum. You see, concepts must be like *Om*, which is a word but the most minimal of words, a sound, but a sound that is quickly dissolving into silence. Only such minimal quantity of concepts must be given to the mind, and the mind must be of a nature that is able to sustain itself on only this much. That is the meaning of *austerity*. That is the real meaning of austerity. Austerity is not about eating less or consuming less, it is about having a mind that thinks less, and even without thinking it is at Peace with itself.

You know, that's what we do. We try to use our peaceless-ness to come to Peace. We try very complex ways to come to simplicity. Because that's the only tool available to the mind, the mind doesn't know simplicity, it knows complexity. So, mind will use violence to come to love.

"Why are we fighting?"

"Because we love each other so much."

"Why do you have such a large army?"

"Because it is a peace-keeping force."

And don't we give those names? After all, what is happening at the macro level is just a reflection of the micro. What nations are doing is just an aggregation of what the individual mind is.

Now, Freedom and will:

I want to ask, can there be Freedom when one system is acting upon the other? Can there be Freedom when there is the 'me' and there is the universe and the universe is not me? Which means by definition the universe is outside the control of my volition. That is the definition. There is 'me' and then there

is this 'not me'. Can there be Freedom in this framework? If by definition I have created a model in which there is something outside me, where is the question of Freedom? That which is outside me has a life of its own; that's how I have defined it.

Now, where is the question of Freedom? The other will always limit you and your Freedom. Sartre said, "The other is hell." He might not have said this in a deeply spiritual sense but I find it apt to quote him because the other will always limit your Freedom. Let me put it this way: *Otherness limits your Freedom*. The moment there is something that is conceived as outside of you, where is the question of Freedom? Would this wall correspond to my will? It is outside of me. But mind you, there is this wall outside of me only as long as *I am this body*.

And the moment you talk of freewill you are definitely thinking of yourself limited in space as a body. Now, this is quite amusing, on one hand you are defining yourself as a limited being whose contours are decided by the extent of his skin bag, whose flesh and blood decide his very expanse and on the other hand you are talking of Freedom! What Freedom? You do not even exist outside of your body! Where is the question of Freedom? Your first slavery is that you are limited by the dimensions of your body. Where is Freedom?

So, the first step for those who talk so much about Freedom is that they really inquire into their body-identification, they really inquire into their identification with anything. This is a world of opposites, this is the world of duality; the moment you identify with something you have left out its opposite and companion. You have reduced yourself to a half. Where then is Freedom?

Unfortunately, today, the only definition of freedom that we know is either the freedom to do something — gross or subtle, or freedom from something. We never ask the question: Freedom for whom? And we have intellectuals who are constantly talking about freedom, but they never ask in the first place — Freedom from what and for whom? Who is it who wants to be free? Who is it who is so particular about maintaining his freedom? They say there is something that they do not want to do, so freedom simply means freedom from that activity or freedom from that obligation.

I don't want to take a bath in the morning, so freedom *from* taking a bath. And I am crazy about pizza, so freedom *to* eat a pizza. That is the definition

of freedom that we have! Is this freedom? Freedom from something or freedom to do something without even asking whose freedom are we talking about? Can the ego ever have Freedom? But the ego is the one that rants the most about freedom. The Saint has hardly any problems even when slavery comes to him. For him even bondage is Sacred and Holy, but the egoistic man is deeply concerned about his freedom. He will say “No, this is a touchy subject, don’t talk about it.” And you see that there are so many codes and constitutions that are placing the highest value upon their idea of freedom. That is how the most profound words are misused.

See how words like Love, Freedom, Truth and Joy are misused. See how we have equated Joy with entertainment and pleasure. See how we have brought down the Truth to the level of facts. See how attachments masquerade as Love. And these words have gained great currency; we all use them so casually. Don’t we? They have entered our everyday parlance:

“I love the way you look!”

“Smoking is sheer joy!”

“Tell me the truth!”

And we keep on saying these things. Is it any wonder then that the destiny versus freewill debate becomes meaningful and so attractive? A mind that is attracted to such notions about Truth, Joy, Love and Silence, would also be attracted to knowing the extent to which it is controlled by a power outside of itself.

Only the Total can have Freedom and will. And that will is a Non-dualistic will because it does not operate upon anything. The Non-dual by definition has nothing outside of Itself, so there is nobody else to act upon. It laughs within Itself, It dances within Itself, It is Its own Joy, It Loves Itself. And sometimes in a jolly mood It divides Itself into an infinite variety. And sometimes in the mood of *Pralaya* (dissolution), It obfuscates all divisions again and then there is nothing but the singular Silence, all pervasive.

From *Prabhav* (creation) to *Pralaya*, one thing is common that there is no other, just the One.

In general, my submission is that debates must be left to intellectuals; they can do no better than debating. And they are proud that they can talk a lot. Let them talk. Spirituality is not the province of words. We all know how Maharishi loved *mauna* (Silence).

Whenever two things appear to be different, let us please remember that both of them are false because difference itself is the guarantee of falseness. If it appears as different to anything else, it cannot be. Only names and forms appear different, only limitations and boundaries can be used to say that 'This is this', and only then a thing can be compared to something else and said that it is, and it is different.

We have this wall here. And we would like to assert that this wall is different from this floor. Why and how can the mind even come to that assertion? It is because this wall has a boundary, it is because this wall is limited in space. Had this wall had no boundary, there was no way to claim that it is different or similar to anything else. Boundaries are false. What is the criteria of falseness? *The criteria of falseness is that it exists only in time.* It has come as a result of time and very soon time will obliterate it. It is not there.

There is neither destiny nor freewill. Such notions are projected by the ego just to sustain and entertain itself. There is only the great, wonderful, beautifully expressive Silence of the Truth. You can call that Silence as destiny, and only in that Silence is Freedom, and only there is will. Everything else is just conceptualization.

I would like to proceed further by having your questions. Yes, please.

Listener 1: Sir, how should we live because there are so many events happening in our lives. Some are positive and some are negative. So how should we live? Should we just live with the attitude that 'whatever happens, happens'?

AP: You see, when do you call something as positive? When do you call something as negative? When something pleases the ego, the ego calls it positive. When something goes against the grain of our conditioning, the ego calls it negative. Events are just events. They are happening. To label them as positive or negative is to create a false center from where you are looking at events. And this phrase has gained circulation these days: positivity, positive thinking, positive energy, positive action, positive attitude, and I keep wondering what this positive thing is all about? We all know *positive and negative are with respect to something.* You have to place the centre somewhere, and on one side of the zero you will have positive and the opposite side will be called as negative.

Who is determining where to place the zero? We don't enquire, we don't

enquire the fundamental question, “Who Am I?” *Koham* (Who am I?) is missing from our lives. ‘Positive’ with respect to what? That is the reason why what is positive for one is highly negative for the other. Don’t you see that? Two people are quarrelling; what is positive for one is negative for the other. There is a seller and a buyer. What is positive for the buyer is negative for the seller. What appears as positive thought one moment would become severely negative the next moment. But we want to talk so much about positivity. It is because we are living in an age of Faithlessness where the only center that remains is the center of the ego. We are not devoted or surrendered to the Real center. The Real One is missing, that is why there is so much talk of positivity. When the Real comes, the positives and negatives all dissolve into zeroness.

Kindly be cautious of stuff like ‘positive attitude’ and this and that. The scriptures never talk of positivity, never; neither have they talked of negativity. They talk of the Truth and the illusion, and nothing else matters.

How to live life?

You see even as we are talking, is life not being lived? Is the question ‘How to’ relevant at this moment? How many of us are thinking as to how to listen to me? Where is this ‘*how to*’ relevant at all? As you are listening to me are you deciding *how to* listen to me? Or are you just listening? Are you just present or do you have a method to listen? Is there a particular way you are approaching my words? You are here and things are happening; they are just happening without the intervention or support of thoughts. But thought wants to ask, ‘How to live life?’ What if we do not think? Will life stop? If yes, then *Samadhi* (Total relaxation) must be death because there nobody is really thinking, all is resolved, there is no ‘how to’ left.

Just being is sufficient. In great Faith leave everything else, because there is nothing else. Just *this*. Everything else that you think of is just that- a mere thought. You want to think of the future, you want to think of a method. Where is the future? And strangely enough, even as we are here, engaged with each other in a friendly way, in a loving way, the future is already taking care of itself. Have we not spent some 15-30 minutes already? Have we not? Has the future not been taken care of even without the thought? Have we really planned how to listen? I did not come here with a plan about how I am going to discuss and what I am going to say; neither are you sitting here with a plan, yet the future is taking care of itself, and taking care of itself so nicely,

so smoothly, so beautifully; nothing is amiss in this moment. In fact if we are really connected with each other, we are not even thinking of time. Aren't we? Are we thinking of time right now?

Existence has a way of taking care of things. Let's have a little Faith.

L 2: You said, 'If two things appear to be different, both are false'. A living body becomes a dead one someday. How do we understand this difference, this change?

AP: Life that can turn into death is surely false. You know here in India we have a beautiful world *Dvij*; it means 'Born for a second time.' I take it as 'really born.' When birth is equated with the coming of the body then it is not really birth because it is just the coming up of thoughts. It is not the body that is born; thoughts are born, time is born and just as time is born time will also lapse, go away. *Real birth is that which transcends death.*

We have said that you are really born only when you are no more in the risk of dying. If you are constantly inching towards death moment by moment, then you are not living at all. What you are calling as life is just the fear of death, and is that not so? If we look at our daily actions, is not every single action motivated by the fear of death and hence, the need for security and hence the need for self-preservation? Those who have known have said that this cannot be called life at all. You just call it death, you are already dead! Don't say that you are alive; if you are living in the fear and shadow of death then you are not alive at all. Death *will* not come, death has *already* come upon you.

To attain real life means to come in contact with something that cannot die, that is beyond time; that time has not given you and time will not take away. How to live then? We need to go into ourselves and enquire whether there is anything with us that time has not given. Time has given the body, thoughts, and the ideologies, the religion, the nationality, the possessions; and what time has given, time will take away. Yet, it is possible to have something which time doesn't give, which others do not give, and what others do not give, time cannot take away. That is when we call human life as realized; *sarthak*. That you can also call as Enlightenment. That you can also called as *Sahaj Yoga*: to come upon that which you cannot get from anywhere. You cannot get it from anywhere because it is what you *are*. You cannot get yourself from outside.

Life, and the purpose of life, is to come that aloneness, that untouched pure aloneness where there are no others. Where there is no movement or change, where there is complete security and fearlessness. Obviously, there is no death there, because death is just another name for change. And if we have not come to that point, then as we have just said, life is nothing but a trembling shadow of death.

You look at our daily actions for example: how we run after insurance, how we run after having a chain of successors, how we are particular about leaving a legacy behind us. We are in South-Delhi right now and we have so many monuments here, what is all that? That is nothing but a failed attempt at defeating death. “Can I have something that outlasts time? I know the body will be gone so, let me have a mausoleum.” Even that structure is of brick and mortar, time will bring it down, you will be defeated. Come up to something which the world has not given you, which society or tradition or knowledge has not given you.

L 2: Is time a reality?

AP: It depends on who is asking the question, for whom is time a reality? The one who thinks himself to be a product of time, for him time is surely a reality, in fact the only reality. If I ask this question as a man who is fifty years old, then for me time is surely a reality because my basic self-definition is, “I am fifty years old.” If I am so deeply identified with time, then for me time is of course a reality. Often somebody would introduce himself as “I am the father of an eight year old”—now obviously for this person time is a reality because that is his identity: ‘I am the father of an eight year old’.

“Let’s celebrate our marriage anniversary.” Now for this fellow time is a reality. If time is not a reality, from where does the ‘anniversary’ come? “Let’s celebrate our birthday.” By celebrating your birthday what are you establishing? You are establishing the dominance of time, nothing else. In a thousand ways we hypnotize ourselves and we convince ourselves that time is real. And when we have so thoroughly convince ourselves obviously time becomes a reality for us. That is the thing about *Maya*, it is even though it is not.

Yaa Maa Saa Maya: That which is, even without being, is called Maya.

L 2: So which was born first, thought or time?

AP: Is this a thought?

L 2: Sorry?

AP: Is this a thought? Or is this a realization in timelessness? There can be no thought that does not consume time. Only realization is instantaneous. Thought and time go together. Thinking always requires an object; no one can think objectlessly. Whenever you are thinking you are thinking *about* something, that something is an object. And all objects are in time and space, so thinking and time are two names for the same activity, for the same movement.

L 3: For a *Jnani* (Knower) there is no destiny and there is no freewill. For an *Ajnani* (Illusioned one), thoughts about destiny and freewill are always there. You are saying that these are all illusory. Then how to get rid of this illusion and move into the Truth?

AP: From where is this question coming?

You see, if I am a total *Ajnani*, will I ever ask how to get rid of my *Ajnana*?

Go sharply into this very moment, go very close to it! The question is: How does one move from the illusion to the Truth? I am asking: Is this very question not an action of the Truth? Had you been nothing but a bundle of illusions, would you have ever asked how to go beyond illusions? It is the memory of Truth that makes you search for the Truth, it is the Grace of Truth that makes you seek the Truth. So, when you declare that you are an *Ajnani* and you want *Jnana*, *Jnana* is already at work. Without the work of *Jnana* this question could not have arisen in you. Remember, left to itself, the ego will never want to seek the Truth. The ego would want to seek *concepts* about Truth, but not the Truth because the Truth is the death of the ego. Left to itself, the ego never wants the Truth. So, just as you asked this question, you are no more an *Ajnani*.

In the moment of asking this question you have transcended *Ajnana*. Let more of us ask this question again and again. But again, that cannot be freewill, Grace has to do that.

L 3: A fish swimming in water does not understand what water is because it is limited by its capacity and because it is floating on that medium. Similarly, we human beings are limited by our understanding of the cosmos because we are not built or equipped by the Creator to understand the creation. So, should not we stop analysing and just be? Because I have seen at many places, even scientists and so many people are obsessed with the existential questions. A

fish is at peace just swimming in water, and doesn't ask 'Who Am I?', or 'In which medium am I flowing?' Similarly, we human beings are limited in our capacity to understand the entire cosmos, there are things which humans cannot know. So, why not just enjoy being and just live? Why are we obsessed with analysing?

AP: Why must we enquire at all? Why must this question be asked at all? Why *Koham* must be asked at all? –that's your question.

L 3: Yes.

AP: You see, a fish never asks 'Who Am I?', but a fish never even tries to say that I am 'X'. If you can be totally like the fish- wonderful! But the thing is you are no more like the fish! Does a fish ever say that I belong to a particular religion? Or cult? Or path? Does a fish ever say that it has a name? Because the fish never says 'I am X' so it also does not have the need to ask 'Who Am I?' But you keep on insisting that 'I am somebody', 'I am X', so you definitely need to deeply enquire into the validity of your own assertion. It is because you keep saying that you are something, hence you must enquire into whether what you are saying is truthful at all. If you are already like a fish then it is alright. But a human being has to drop a lot to gain *fishness*. Otherwise our fishness is just a concept and hence, very fishy!

L 3: So my second point is that it is the society, the family, the education system which have told us to label ourselves in this way or the other...

AP: Yes, Well captured!

You know when you have been covered with so many identities, when you have been covered with so many statements saying 'I Am...', 'I am...', 'I am...', 'I am...', then obviously you will have to ask that whether any of these 'I am' has any substance to it. And you have captured it very nicely that the education system has a great role to play. Layers upon layers of identifications are imposed on us. So, you will have to ask *Koham*, you will have to ask this to come to your *prakriti* (A state involving just the biological conditioning, and no social conditioning). Coming to *prakriti*, the from the current state of *vikrati* (Layers of social conditioning imposed upon basic biological conditioning) is a great advancement.

Often when we want to address somebody in a derogatory way, we say "Don't behave like a dog." The fact is, the dog is far more advanced than a human being because it has only one layer of conditioning — the *prakratik*

layer. Man has two layers – *prakratik* and the *samajik* (social). So, to come the state of the fish you really have to be somebody special. In fact, the scriptures categorically say that the *Jnani* appears so much like an animal and a madman. What is common between the *Jnani* and the madman? Both do not live by the dictates of the society. The *Jnani* appears so much like an animal and a madman, of which the most classical example is the *Avadhuta*.

L 4: Sir, there are a few images: One is that of Arjuna where Krishna is charioteer. Krishna is commanding and Arjuna is just obeying. Another is that of a man who is just sitting on a boat and allowing himself to flow. So, who should we think we are? Do we have to strive or do we just let our boat flow?

AP: There is no difference actually. There is no difference at all. You see, the situation on the field of the Kurukshetra is often grossly misinterpreted. In fact, *all interpretations are misinterpretations*. We think that it is Arjuna who is not wanting to act and Krishna compels him and convinces him to act. The fact is otherwise.

Arjuna is greatly acting in his apparent non-action. What is the definition of acting? When you take upon yourself the role of the actor, then you are acting. So, one may just sit on this chair not budging an inch. But if he thinks that *he* is sitting, then he is greatly acting. The whole message of Krishna is, ‘Why do you think of yourself as an actor? Act without being the actor’. In that case the second instance that you quoted is just what Krishna is teaching Arjuna, “Sit on the boat and let the boat move with the river.” The movement of the boat is analogous to the movements of the bows and arrows. So, he is saying “Arjuna, let your hands operate, pull out the arrows and use your *Gaandeev*, you are not the actor, I am the actor.” Krishna is taking away the onus of doership from Arjuna. “Arjuna, you are not the doer, I am the doer; I am the mover of the universe, why do you think that you are the doer at all? You just flow in the river, you are in a battlefield, and what happens in a battlefield? Fighting. So fight. Just as water flows from a high level to a low level you must also shower your arrows. You are not doing anything, you are just flowing, Arjuna.”

These two situations are just the same; do not be deceived by appearances. A man may appear to be not doing anything and yet he may have a great deal of doership in him. And a man may appear to be doing a lot and yet he may be completely inactive from within. Don’t go by gross appearances! When

Arjuna is not fighting, in chapter one, *Vishadyoga*, then he is doing a lot. And when Arjuna has surrendered to Krishna and he is actually fighting then he is not doing anything, because whatever is being done is by Krishna. Arjuna is not doing anything. Only in chapter one of the Gita is Arjuna actually doing anything. As the chapters advance, Arjuna becomes more and more of a non-doer, his *karta-bhaav* (*Doership*) sublimates.

L 4: Sir, when one is in this spiritual zone, one doesn't feel like thinking about the future. Then others do not understand him and call him careless. Sometimes they even want to remind you that you are going astray.

AP: Even though they taunt you and tease you, yet they are fascinated by you. It's a very loving satire that they throw at you. Take it that way. Even though they may say that you are careless, yet their heart craves for the same carelessness which is actually just being *carefree*, *not careless*. They may say that you are irresponsible but deep within they are longing for the same Freedom from obligations. So let them mock you, let them jeer at you; you are actually serving as an inspiration for them. They may not admit it.

Even when Jesus is being crucified, Christianity is being born. Don't go by appearances. It appears that Jesus is being killed, but what is actually happening? He is converting people even in his death. Even though they are not only mocking him but actively killing him, yet the Rockstar is gaining fan following. That very moment.

Let this not terrify you. One requires to be a Jesus to be crucified, not everybody is crucified. (*Laughter*)

L 5: You worked very hard to get into IIT and IIM. So do you think there was no doership then? Or it just happened?

AP: You see a lot of people work really-really hard. Had it been about hard work then I could not have been there because I am so sure a lot of my friends worked way harder than me.

Somebody clears, let's say, the Civil Services exam. You read his interview, and the fellow has said that he worked really hard, 12 hours a day. And you feel it is hard work that has taken him to success. What you do not see is that there were lakhs of other aspirants who worked for an equal number of hours. Why then did they not succeed? Had it been about hard work, then they too should have succeeded. This is the faulty attribution process that the mind often engages in, it does not want to acknowledge something which is beyond

its own doership. We like to claim, “It was me who succeeded because of my personal hard work!” We like to claim that.

It is something more and a little beyond hard work, it is a little different. Though a lot of hard work does appear to be happening — I do not deny that.

L 5: So if it is our destiny, we should accept it?

AP: Whether or not we accept, we are it. We do not have a choice in accepting it. You see we again want to assert as if we have a role. Look at the ego! Even when you say that you will accept destiny, you are implying as if you have a choice to not accept it. Do you really have a choice?

L 5: When acting, should the mind not be used?

AP: Let the mind be used by another agency like a slave.

Action will happen through mind because action happens in this universe of space and time. So, there the mind and the intellect will all be used but like an intermediary, like a slave.

When I say ‘slave’, I do not mean bonded labor!

Rather, a willing servant. A surrendered lover. A surrendered lover.

L 5: The destiny versus freewill and chance versus choice debate, are they ultimately about *Aatmgyan* (Self-knowledge)?

AP: When we say *Aatmgyan*, we mean some kind of theory about the *Aatman*. A theory is just that, a theory. You can have a theory about this water bottle, you can have a theory about this electronic instrument, about this camera, about the bones in the body, but you cannot have a theory about the *Aatman*!

Aatmbodh (Self-realisation) is different. *Aatmbodh* means nothing. *Aatmbodh* really means nothingness.

L 5: So how will we perceive? It varies from person to person. Half of us are taking this perception, and the other half, that.

AP: As long as there is perception there is no realization.

So, don’t perceive.

L 5: So, there is no requirement of meaningful observation?

AP: *Observation is not perception*. The Buddhists have a beautiful word for it: *apperception*. They do not even call it as perception. As long as you are

perceiving, you will not observe because your eyes will be covered with your own prejudices. Observation is when you are not there; that is real objectivity.

L 5: So, when the object disappears the subject too disappears?

AP: Obviously, Obviously.

Listener 5: I want to quote an example that someone told me: Observe just like this camera. It just observes, purely. But in human beings, eyes observe, and brain processes the observation with its prejudices.

So, should we become a camera lens?

AP: No. Friend, we have a camera here and it does have a lens. Is anything happening to this camera? Many of you would have entered a certain Peace in the last one hour, but is this camera experiencing any Peace? Do not become a camera lens. Observation does not mean becoming mechanical. This camera is sitting so close to me, yet is it really listening? It is recording everything, but is it really listening? It has memory of everything, but does it have any understanding? Do not become a camera lens. *Observation is understanding without thoughts.* Please understand this - merely saying that you are thoughtless does not mean that you are observing. Understanding is without thinking. And you need to have Faith that you can understand without thinking. That you can listen without analysing.

L 5: To understand what you are saying, won't I need to analyse and conclude?

AP: We all like to conclude, because conclusion means end. Conclusion means a full stop. So the mind says, "Come to an end, why be constantly alert? Conclude and close the matter."

But conclusion does not mean understanding. Conclusion only means that you have come to a particular statement that you are now taking as the Truth.

Never conclude! Because conclusion, I repeat, means an ending. Truth never ends.

L 6: You said that the mind and the intellect can be used like slaves. Won't that require a lot of training and effort? Sweat, blood, and tears?

AP: No, I did not say that the mind and intellect could be used like slaves, because the moment you say that they can be used like slaves, you have also created a *user*, who is using them. This user is just another fragment of the

mind.

One fragment ruling the other has no spiritual value. The total mind must surrender. Then it does not even know that it is being used by the One to whom it has surrendered. That is the real meaning of surrendering; otherwise it is surrendering with calculations. If you know to whom you are surrendering, then it is no more a surrender, it is a bargain, it is a trade.

You are bowing down without even knowing to whom you are bowing –that is real surrender.

I am not saying use the mind as the slave! If you are using mind as slave then it is one part of the mind using the other parts of the mind. That is just self-hypnosis. As for blood, sweat, and tears, obviously they are a part of what we call as bodily existence. So that happens in either case, whether one is surrendered or not. Kabir calls these as *deh dhare ka dand* (The punishment of being a body).

Because you have a body, you have to experience blood, sweat and tears. And further he says that everybody has to go through this suffering that comes along with the body. It is just that, he says, “*Jnani bhugte Jnana se, moorakh bhugte roy.*” (The wise man bears the suffering in his wisdom, the ignorant one goes through the suffering resisting and complaining)

Both of them have to go through it, both of them have to experience it. The ignorant one resists, suffers, and weeps, but the realized one knows what it is. So, he just smoothly passes through it.

L 6: Why does all this illusion exist if it is so useless?

AP: It is not useless. It enables us to talk to each other, see. (*Laughter*)

L 7: When you use the word ‘Grace’, do you mean *Prarabdha*? Do you mean that some other power, some superpower is there?

AP: We are creatures of flesh and blood. If our body is taken and dissected there is nothing in this body that suggests that one can come to Peace. There is nothing in this body that suggests that Buddhahood is possible. There is nothing in the brain that suggests that there is something called non-duality. Everything about the brain is dualistic. Yet, it does happen that a bridge comes from somewhere that moves one from duality to non-duality. It does happen that the restlessness that is man, comes to a final relaxation. It cannot be explained by arguments; it is called Grace.

Nothing can be said about it, there is no way to explain how it happened: A man who is just a bundle of conditioning and hence, prone to temptations, pleasures, evasive actions, how did this man suddenly come to know that which was never taught to him!

This is Grace.

And even to say that this is Grace is to put a blemish upon Grace. It should be left untouched, not much should be said about it; like *Om*, as we said in the beginning. Not much should be said about it.

L 7: When I was coming here, my wife wanted me to take her shopping. But I told her, “I am free to go anywhere.” Now, ‘I am free to go anywhere,’ and free in many other ways - What do I actually mean by that?

AP: You mean that you think that you are free. When you say that you are free to go anywhere then it is obvious that you won’t go anywhere. It is obvious that you will not go even to the next room. It is obvious that you will not go even to the terrace or to the parking lot. But conceptually you want to tell yourself that you have a lot of power and you are free to go anywhere.

Are you really free? Is this freedom not just nominal? Is this freedom ever exercised except in imaginations?

You might be in a job and technically you are always free to leave the job. Technically you are free any moment to resign. Does that happen? We have soul-sapping, blood-sucking jobs and we keep regaling ourselves by saying, “You know, I am free to resign.” Are you really free? Had you been really free, would you be found there in the first place? It is not the question of resignation alone. Had you been free, what would you have been doing there in the first place? *Your very presence there is out of slavery, not due to freedom.*

MYTH OF KARMA

No action can correct another action; only in understanding do all actions dissolve

Question: Destruction of our world, which we find comfort in, is inevitable. We can only help ourselves understand this, and thus minimize our suffering. To a cozily sleeping mind though, this realization is a nightmare. We can only pull it out slowly from of its deep sleep.

Travelling without luxuries and comforts, forces the mind to be in the moment, and breaks years of patterns.

Can meaningful travelling be used as a technique to slowly awaken the mind?

Acharya Prashant: We often think that a particular action can bring the mind to awareness. We pit action against action. We think that there are good actions and bad actions, meaningful actions and meaningless actions.

Let me say something, ‘No action can ever obliterate another action.’ Actions do nothing to the quality of the mind. It is quality of the mind in which any action is done; which is the Real thing.

You can take a shower, a bath. Now, the bath doesn’t cleanse you. The real question is, what is the mind that is entering this action? Where is this action coming from? You said, “Meaningful travelling,” where is the meaning coming from? What kind of mind? Because after all, you will supply the meaning, right? And you will determine whether it is meaningful or meaningless. You are the judge, you are the advocate and you are standing in the dock.

You have to realize, that once I have labelled something as meaningful, who is anybody else to say that it is meaningless? And you are convinced that this particular action, be it travelling or anything, you are convinced that this particular action is meaningful. Now it’s meaningful, so meaningful. I am living in that.

So let’s forget actions for a while, and look at something else, because actions are numerous, actions are diverse. The same action gets done in a thousand situations. You may be riding your bike to reach a thousand

different destinations, and for a thousand different purposes. So how can the action of riding the bike be of any consequence?

Now, we were saying that no action cancels out another action. But that is our wish. We think that just as in mathematics plus one and minus one is zero, similarly, in the world of actions, one action and its opposite get together and nullify each other. That doesn't happen. In the world of actions, one action and another action, is just two actions.

In the world of actions, one action and its opposite action, is not zero. It is two actions. In mathematics, plus one and minus one is zero, but in the world of actions, one action and two actions, make you a double actor.

Not that your 'actor-ship' is taken away. It is not nullified, it is doubled. You are the one who first acted, the actor was there. And you are still there trying to cancel out the first action, so the actor is still there. The actor has actually been reinforced. So never try to correct your actions, please, never.

Moral science has always taught this to us – to look at our actions. No. Looking at our actions is one thing, but trying to modify actions is an absolutely different thing. You can *observe* the action. And observing the action helps you realize something. But you cannot look at action, with the intent of transforming it.

Are you getting it?

“I found that I was not paying adequate attention to my child, so what do I start doing? Earlier I was giving one hour a day to my child. Now what do I start doing? Three hours a day.” Now, has anything changed? Are these two actions cancelling each other out? They aren't. Because they are coming from the same centre. The actor is still the same. They aren't cancelling each other out. In fact, they are building upon each other. The actor is living on and on, and now it's a more proud actor, who thinks that he has improvised his actions, corrected his actions. It's a more proud actor.

So never deal in the realm of actions. Never. And never tell somebody, “These actions are not right.” The mind may not be at the right place, and the right place of the mind is the Heart, that is one thing to say. And that is a beautiful thing to say that the right place of the mind is the Heart, but it is a gross error to say, “This action is not alright.”

What do you mean by that? Every action is alright, and no action is alright. Because the term 'right' or 'wrong', cannot be applied to actions. Is this

becoming clear? What this means is tremendous. This means that you cannot judge a person by his actions. This also means that it is not possible to draw inferences only from looks and words.

What is meant by action? Action is something that the senses can perceive. What is action? Action includes thought, action includes words. These cannot be the yardstick. You have to go to sheer core of the person to see what is actually happening. Your language may be different from mine, I might move my left hand, and you might move your right hand to convey the same thing. Where is the whole thing coming from? Is it coming from the Source, or is it coming from another centre.

Is this clear?

I am not saying, “Do not watch actions.” Do watch actions, but actions by themselves mean nothing. So when you watch actions, watch to go and find out the Source of the action, not the action itself. Find out the Source.

From where is this action coming? Is it coming from the Real Centre? My Empty Source. Or is it coming from the centre of ego? Is it spontaneous, or is it arising from some identity? And the same action can come from both the sources. It's clear to us, right? The same action can come from both the sources, so please don't be judgmental about actions.

I can admonish you; from where am *I* acting? Do I hate you? Is it coming from the centre of hate? Or is it coming from somewhere else? If you will listen only to my words, you will not be able to get anything. That's why there has to be that quality of Silence, in which you hear words, and then you transcend the words, and then there is that connection of Love, in which you really see where that whole thing is coming from. In which there is that Core to Core connection. Now words are immaterial, and words are actions.

So words are immaterial, actions are immaterial. Getting it?

Sometimes the most pleasant looking, the nicest looking action, might actually be coming from a very vicious place, very vicious place. And sometimes, I dare say, most of the times, a very unpleasant action, might be coming from a very sacred spot. So be careful. Let these eyes not look only at the superficial. Have eyes that really look.

MYTH OF DESIRE

Do you know why you desire?

Question: Sir, a thought continuously revolves in my mind that things will work out somehow. Is it a good thing to think about?

Acharya Prashant: Of-course, every desire wants its fulfillment. 'Hope' is the substance of mind. Whenever there is a desire, of-course you want it to be materialized, that it should work out, something should happen. The question is not whether that thing will happen or not, because that is anyway the nature of desire; to ask for its fulfilment, completion.

If I have a desire, I want it somehow to be fulfilled. The more important question is: whose desire and where is the desire coming from? Yes, I want that I get what I desire. But, what do I desire? Whose desires are these actually? What does a terrorist desire? And remember, he is a terrorist for you. For some others, he is a freedom fighter. What does he desire? To kill. In your parlance, it would be called as a murder, a cold-blooded killing. In his language, it would be called as 'a war waged upon the sinister enemy.' And he will say, 'It is my own desire.' He will not even know that when he was just five years old, he was taken to a particular camp, where he was indoctrinated that people of such and such country or such and such religion are his fierce enemies.

You remember Ajmal Kasab? (*Referring one of the terrorists*) He was just seventeen when he did what he did. Just seventeen, younger than you people. Not even having full facial hair. Still a little bit of a kid; and he did what he did. And when people were interrogating him he said, 'I did just the right thing. This was my deepest desire: To bring havoc upon the enemy.'

Now, does he know what is meant by enemy? Does he know why he is killing? Does he know anything? Does he know the source of his desire? Does he know that it is not at all his desire; it is coming from somewhere else? Of course, once the desire is there, you want to complete it. He also completed it somehow. He took a risky mission, came here, fought, killed, and then was hanged. Do we know why we desire such and such things? Do we know? Once you start desiring, then of course you want that. But do we know why we desire? Did Kasab know? Does the man on the street know?

Do the great presidents and prime ministers know? Do we know? But there are some people who are cunning enough to know that nobody knows, and they exploit this fact.

The Man who sets up all these hoardings at your university gate, he knows that. But we are so ignorant about our desire. So he'll put up something on the billboards, and he knows that you will be swayed away. The man who consistently keeps showing you advertisements on T.V. and other media, he knows that desire can be provoked. Even the man selling the street food too knows that the desire can be provoked. So when you pass-by near his cart, he makes a few sounds on his utensils, and an extra splashing of pure ghee. The sound hits your ears, the smell hits your nose, and the desire is provoked. Even he knows how to provoke desire, but you do not know why you desire something. You will say, "It is my desire. I want to have street food." Is it really your desire?

That advertiser shows you an advertisement, day-in and day-out. Newspaper, media, hoardings, internet, wherever you go, the same model of the new mobile phone is in front of your eyes, and one day you say, "It is *my* desire to buy this mobile phone." Is it your desire? The entire society has told you that you must have such and such career and so much of money, and today, you are saying, it is *my* desire to pursue this career. Is it really *your* desire? Enquire. Like a scientist, enquire. "Is it really my desire? Where is it coming from? I come from a family where everybody is a doctor or everybody is in some white-collar job or everybody is a bureaucrat, and now I have a particular decision already made for my career. Is it really my desire? The entire world is pursuing a particular course; management, engineering, I too am there. Is it really my desire? If it is my desire, how come everybody is having the same desire? What is the meaning of individuality then?"

One particular company comes to your campus, and the entire campus runs after it. How can five hundred students have the same desire? Surely, it is not anybody's desire. It is some master's desire who is laughing at you, who has enslaved our mind, and we do not even know who that master is. The Hindu passes in front of a temple and he bows down. The Muslim passes in front of the same temple, and sees only brick and mortar. The Hindu says, 'It is my desire to bow down.' Is it really his desire? Really? His desire? Or is it the Hindus' desire? Is it the individual's desire or the Hindus' desire? Who made him a Hindu? Does he know that? He does not know that. India and Australia

have a cricket match and you have a great desire that India wins. Please, is it your desire? And Australia has a great desire that Australia wins.

Whom are we fooling? Where are our desires coming from? Do we even know, before we claim our individuality? And remember, individuality is not to have all these desires. Individuality is a different thing all together. It's an entirely different matter. Individuality is not about, 'my will, this is what I want to do.' That does not make you an individual. But again, you are living in a system where your desires are greatly respected. There is democracy, and you vote for the candidate that you desire, and it is respected. So, you think that your desire is something important. There is nothing important in your desire, because all desires are conditioned. But the society keeps asking you, 'What do you want?' You go to a restaurant, and the waiter says, "What do you want?" You go to a polling booth, and there they ask you, "Which candidate do you want?" You are being fooled. It's a very limited menu that they are showing you. Even when they are asking you, 'What do you want?' implicitly what they are telling you is that you can want anything, provided it is within this menu.

When Henry Ford started making his cars, there was a particular model of the car called Model 'T', which was greatly in demand, and it was so much in demand that the production capacity could not keep pace with the demand. His paint shop was inadequate to meet the growing demand. So he said, "I'll have just one color for all my cars - black." When his customers came to him and enquired about the choices in colors, he would say, "You can have any color, as long as it is black." That's the kind of choice you are living in. And the customer says, "See, my desire is being respected." "You can have any career, as long as it is socially approved. You can marry anybody, as long as parents approve. You can write anything in the exam, provided the teacher approves it." Great choice, great desire, great respect! And we claim that 'we think.'

The intelligent mind, before pursuing the desire, first pauses and looks carefully at that desire. 'What is the entire process of desiring? What stimulates desire? Where is desire located?' That's what an intelligent mind does. Are you getting it?

L 1: Sir, I want to ask you that is it not our desires that make us an individual? Won't we become like sheep if we do not have our own desires?

AP: Yes! Very good, wonderful. Let me tell you a story regarding sheep. It's

an interesting story. Good fun.

There was a fellow who had a lot of sheep, lot of sheep, and he would occasionally slaughter the sheep so that he could have meat. But the sheep would see that their sister sheep's were being killed. So sometimes they would try to escape. And since there are a large number of sheep, and they are always trying to run away, so it was difficult. One or the other sheep would always be missing. The sheep didn't want to be killed. So, what did their master do? He went to the sheep and he told the sheep, "You are not sheep at all, you are individuals. You are individual. You are not sheep at all, and only your own desires will be followed. You are not Sheep. You are human beings, and you are having your own desires," and the sheep were convinced. Now the sheep were fully convinced that they were not sheep at all. So, while one sheep would be slaughtered, the other would laugh. They would say, "Oh, that one was the sheep, so that is the reason, why she is being killed. I am not a sheep. I will never be killed." Now the sheep are willingly presenting themselves to be killed, believing that they are not sheep.

There are two ways in which you are made a sheep:

One is, when somebody explicitly conditions you. You are being explicitly conditioned and you know, "I am being conditioned." That is a very less dangerous form of conditioning, because you know that you are being conditioned. So sometime, quickly, you would get rid of the conditioning. That conditioning is not very dangerous. The more dangerous kind of conditioning is when the conditioning gets so deep into you, that you start thinking that this is my own desire, and this is not conditioning, this is my individuality. Individuality does not lead to any desire. All desires come out of conditioning, and it is a highly dangerous situation when you start thinking of conditioning as individuality.

There are two ways to control somebody. One, you sit there, and I control you with a remote control here, and you know that you are a slave. Now, you will be very restless then. You will want to become free. Right? Because you know that you are a slave. You can see the remote control in my hand. There is another way of making you a slave. I insert a chip in your brain, a chip called 'conscience', and I don't even need to use the remote control. You will keep feeling, "I am free," but the chip will control all your behavior. That is our condition. We do not even know that there is a chip fitted here, and that chip is controlling everything. All our desires are arising from that chip, and

somebody else is the master of this chip. Look into that.

Look into that. And the best way of looking into that is, whenever a thought arises, whenever motivation arises, whenever a desire arises enquire. Look into it, as you look into a problem of mathematics; deeply, objectively, without bias, honestly and the fact will become open. The fact will become very, very open. You need to ask yourself basic questions. “Was I always like this? Did I always have this desire? What is prompting it? Will this desire always be there? What has been the fate of my other desires all my life? They have come and they have gone. What has made come, and how have they gone away?”

There was a time when I was six years old, and I wanted to become a superman. I used to watch that serial on television, and I would love the way he would fly and do wonderful things, and wear his briefs upon his pants, and that was so fascinating. And where is that desire today? Gone. Why has it gone away? Whose desire was that? If it was really my desire, how can it disappear? As soon as the T.V. went away, the desire also went away.

I’m walking, and she is in front of me, and I’m watching her. Till the point, she is in front of me, there is nothing except her in my mind. One hour later, she is gone, and I find myself busy in other things. Was it really my desire? Was it really my desire? Gone the moment, gone the desire. I wanted to be a Barbie doll. Where is that Barbie doll today?

And believe me, if you look long enough, you will have a hundred other things to chase. Where are those chases today? And from where do they come into your life? I am talking of freedom because I believe that I have young people in front of me, and every young man and woman lives a free life, must live a free life! That’s why I am talking of freedom to you, and that is the first freedom - Freedom from conditioning. Before you declare it to be yours, ask, “Is it really mine? Is it really mine?”

L 1: Sir, how do we come to know that it is really our desire or something else?

AP: There is no great process involved there. You keep looking at it, and the things become clear. There is nothing special involved in it. You need not worry about the process, just inquiring is sufficient. There is nothing more to it. How will we come to know? Nothing. *How* are you listening to me? Just by listening! In fact, if you do something to listen, then you can’t listen. How

are you looking at me? By doing some kind of gymnastics? By pulling your legs over your forehead? You are simply looking, and that's sufficient. There is no 'How' involved. There is no method or technique involved. It is simple and direct. You look at it, and you know the reality. Just be honest. Just be honest in your looking.

Dropping desire is just another desire; knowing desire is fulfillment of desire

Question: As I listen to you, I understand that when you don't have a desire, you don't have hope, and when you don't have hope, you don't have anxiety, and that leads to a peaceful life. Correct?

Acharya Prashant: No.

We have constantly been saying that you *want* change. What you heard is what the religions and the traditions have been repeating always. So you have not really heard it here. You have been carrying it in your mind even before you entered this hall.

L 1: I am coming out of your statement on desire that – desire leads to hope, and hope leads to anxiety.

AP: No. I have constantly been saying that you are thirsty for change. Desire is something that you surely want. It is just that what you want cannot be given by hope, cannot be given by future, because hope is always in time. Getting it?

This line – don't desire, don't hope, and remain settled with what life has given you – that is a very beaten line. And the mind has found enough loopholes in this argument, to trash it long back. That is why we want to stick to this argument.

You understand, “*Santosham Parmam Sukham (Contentment is absolute happiness)*” we want to stick to this. Why? Because it is so hollow that we can easily trash it. Everybody wants a weak adversary. This adversary – “Do not desire, do not hope” – is so weak, that we all love it.

Let us have this argument come to us. Let us say, “All spirituality is about not desiring and not hoping.” Why? So that then we can say that spirituality is rubbish. There is no way I have said this. This is what one has been carrying in his mind, continuously, continuously. And whenever it comes to spiritual discourse, one feels like pre-deciding that because it is supposed to be spiritual, so he must be parroting the same old line again.

Unfortunately, I am not saying that.

Surely there is desire. It is evident in your eyes, it is written large on your face. 'You' are desire. How will you drop desire? I am saying, "Go to the root of your desire." I am not saying, "Drop it." I am saying, "Don't be so stupid that you don't even know what you are desiring." Please look carefully at your desire. Go close to it. Find out why you desire so much, and in that there is no condemnation of desire. We are not deciding in advance that desire has to be dropped and all that, because such a decision is impractical, cannot be implemented, and is also hypocritical.

We are products of desire and we are desiring not to desire. So there is a lot of hypocrisy in this.

L 3: It's again a desire to not to desire.

AP: Another desire. We are saying: Life is full of this and that. Please understand what 'this' and 'that' are.

Why do I work in a particular office? Why do I have such and such relationships? Not even 'why'. What are these relationships? Why do I speak in a particular way? Why do I avoid something? Why do I go to particular places? Why do I watch a particular program on the television? Why do I get nervous and defensive about a few things? Why must I be aggressive about other few things? Go to the root of all this. And everywhere as you proceed towards the root, you will encounter hope in the way.

Desire is a wonderful messenger. It is telling you, "Something ought to give. Something really needs to change." So when desire arises, do not treat it with kid gloves. Do not send it to the O.P.D, to some junior doctor, send it right to the I.C.U, because the desire might appear small but it is arising from your Heart. Go to the root of desire.

Somebody wants a new dress, somebody wants a baby, somebody wants a job, and somebody wants recognition. Somebody wants a luxury travel, somebody wants a yacht, and somebody wants food. What is this whole 'wanting' all about? Somebody wants to not to want. What is this whole 'wanting' all about?

When did the mind start wanting? What is wanting? What is its relation with becoming? What is its relation with time? What is its relation with our way of living, our social structure, and our celebrations? When exactly did it come to the mind, that it must want, that it must become something else?

Is it possible, that we keep wanting because what we are simply cannot be contained in this small body? Is it possible that you want because you are so big, and your envelope is so small, so you are always terribly dissatisfied? That's just a way of putting things. That's to me a nice way.

You have so much money and your wallet is so small. Now your problem is that you have so much. Now, that's a problem. A problem of Abundance, a problem of having the Immeasurable, a problem of Immensity. "I have so much that I have nowhere to keep it. May be that is the core problem, may be that is why the mind starts wanting in the first place. I am so big, and thoughts are so small. "Goodies here and goodies there, I don't know to keep where."

May be this wanting is contained in the very constitution of man. May be that is what Christianity calls as the original sin – being a man. You are being a man when you are not a man, so you remain dissatisfied. Yes? Why are you being a man? You are not a man. Don't you know that? The more you say that you are a man, the more dissatisfied you will remain, and then you will want something. What will you want? Maybe all wanting is about no more being a man. But you say, "I must remain a man and fulfill my wants." That won't happen. Because wanting starts with being a man.

You are a tremendous, infinite, bundle, which cannot be bundled. Nothing except Perfection, Totality, and an ocean-ness satisfies you. You keep wanting more and more. But look at your fingers, how small they are. Everything about you is measurable. Look at your nose. Such a tiny nose. Have you seen the trunk of an elephant? Oh, that too is very tiny. Look at everything that you have, it is all quite tiny. I respect the attachment you may have with the size of your biceps or other body parts. *Joydeep* here was intent on proving a point or two quite recently about his...but the fact remains that it is still quite tiny, pathetic.

In the laboratory of Existence, you will require a Vernier caliper to measure it. It is so small. In fact I am honoring you by saying you will require a Vernier caliper, you will actually require a microscope. You are so small. But in this little mind, oceans must be contained, otherwise you will not get Peace. That's the contradiction that man must overcome.

Being small, he must contain Infinities, otherwise he won't come to rest. Being man, he must transcend humanness. Otherwise he won't relax. That's the challenge, that's the invitation.

Enter so deeply into yourself, enter so deeply into your smallness, that you come to the beyond-ness that you so desperately crave.

L 2: Sir, that incompleteness inclines us to the wanting. That gap, that constant gap remains.

AP: You are destined to feel it. And you would not have been destined to feel that gap, that difference, that distance, had you also not been destined to close the gap. Close it. The ocean must be contained in the drop. The drop has to proudly and boldly come out and declare, “I will contain the Ocean. I *am* the Ocean.” That is what is called, ‘*Aham Brahmasmi*’. The drop is saying, “*Aham Brahmasmi*”

You all require the haughtiness of that drop. You all require the absurd sureness of that drop. You all require the Faith and Deep Confidence, bordering on arrogance.

“The Ocean is my birthright. I am the Ocean. Yes the body is small, yes everything about me is petty, but I am infinite. Thank you, and a happy new year!”

What is your ultimate desire?

I once had a thousand desires. But in my one desire to know you, all else melted away.

-Rumi

Acharya Prashant: “I once had a thousand desires.” We all have a thousand desires. We all have thousand desires, right? What does each desire say? Each desire says, “Fulfil me, and you will get satisfaction.” Now, what is this satisfaction? When you are satisfied, do you still have desire? Does the desire say, “Fulfil me and still I will remain?” No, what does the desire say? “Fulfil me and I will go.”

So what does each desire want? To be fulfilled. And to be fulfilled means that the desire gets vanished. So each desire wishes for its own disappearance. So the desire only desires the disappearance of itself. That is what every desire wants. That is the nature of desire.

So there are thousand desires, and what is each desire desiring?

L: Its own disappearance.

AP: Rumi is saying, “I once had a thousand desires, but in my one desire to know you, all else melted away.” So a thousand desires are there. But what is the common desire that each desire has? The disappearance of desire.

So now you know what is the one desire that we have, behind our thousands of desires?

L: The disappearance of itself.

AP: Can this desire please disappear? Because we do not know any other method of disappearance of desire, so we apply the only method we know. And what is the only method? To fulfil it. Had you known any other method to dissolve the desire, you would not have fulfilled the desire. Understand this.

You fulfil the desire because you don't know anything else. You do not know any other method. If you could be assured that even without fulfilling the

desire, the desire can vanish, won't you take the option very quickly?

Let us say, you are craving for a pizza. If you were told that even without eating the pizza, even without paying the bill, even without consuming these calories, the desire to eat pizza will go away, and you will feel exactly as desire-less, and as satisfied, would you still pay the money, travel to the shop and consume the calories? Would you still want to do that? You won't. You eat the pizza because you don't have any other option. You crave for pizza, and then, that desire asks for its completion, and you know only one way, to eat. So you eat. Right?

Desire actually does not ask for its fulfilment. It actually asks for its disappearance. And there is difference between dissolution of desire, and fulfilment of desire. The worldly man tries to beat the desire by fulfilling it. The spiritual man actually beats the desire, by dissolving it. This is the difference between the worldly man and the spiritual man. Do you understand this?

“I once had a thousand desires. But in my one desire to know You, all else melted away.”

Knowing ‘You’, is knowing your own state of desirelessness. That desirelessness is not just an empty state. When you say, “desirelessness”, the word indicates the absence of something, desire – lessness. But actually you cannot be desireless without having something very big, very bountiful, very worthy of desire. Do you get it?

When we just say, “Desirelessness,” the image that the mind gets is just of an absence. “I don't have desires.” What you have, that cannot be captured in an image, because that is too large to be contained in an image. What do you get? That which you do not have. And what do you not have? Desire.

It is like the richest man saying, “I am not poor.” He is not lying, but he is making a terrible understatement. He is not lying, he is right. He is not poor. But he is making a terrible understatement. So when you say that the highest state is of desirelessness, then you are right. But you are very humble. You are, in fact, too humble. You are making a great understatement.

Remember: To be desireless means to be with something which is so large that no more desires are needed. “I have something so big now that all these small tit-bits have become irrelevant.” That is desirelessness. Right?

The world is afraid of desirelessness. If you tell somebody, “I don't have any

desires,” he will taunt you. He will say, “Have you become a sadhu-sanyasi? Oh! You don’t have any desires.” He will think that you have lost something, and the word itself is in negativa. You have lost something.

I am repeating again: What remains obvious is what you have lost. What have you lost? Trivia, desire. But what remains hidden is the greatness that you are now situated in. It is so great that it does not have a limit. And because it does not have a limit, so you cannot name it, or indicate it.

To be desireless means to have fulfilled the climax of the desire.

The worldly man has been trying to fulfil it, and you have fulfilled it. Remember, in trying to fulfil, there is only trying and trying. But in dissolution of desire, there is the actual fulfilment. So those who keep trying to fulfil their desires, all that they get is trying. Those who dissolve the desire, get fulfilment.

But remember again, dissolving the desire is not the first thing. You will not be able to give up the desire without first having something that is much more worthy, precious, important and immense than all that you can desire. And then the desire drops on its own.

Even then it does not mean that you will not be desiring anything. It does not mean that you will be thirsty, and you will not ask for water. It only means that you will not be taking your trivial desires seriously. You will be happy with desires, and you will be equally contented without the fulfilment of desires. You will say, “Fine, small matters. I am so rich. I do not worry about small losses and gains.”

“In my one desire to know You, all else melted away.”

That ‘You’ is that immensity which is the climax of desires, that you is that which all your desires are chasing. When you ask for a pizza, you are not really asking for a pizza, you are asking for That. But because you have no way to come to That, so you take an ugly substitute, an ugly shortcut. So what do you order? A pizza. But what do you want? *Parmaatma*. (*The Absolute*)

But that is not being sold in any of these huts. So instead you go and say, “Pizza with extra cheese, seasoning and this and that.” That waiter is an idiot. Had he been a realized man, he would have said, “We don’t sell *Parmaatma*. And that is what you need.” You want That, but you are running after some woman or some man. You want That, but you are running after money, and

prestige, and recognition. All your desires are desires of That only, who is being referred to as 'You' by Rumi.

You have never wanted anything else. Anybody who has ever wanted, has wanted only That. Nothing else can be wanted. But we are ignorant, and we also don't have a way to reach there. So instead of asking for That directly, we keep asking for this and that.

So, you keep asking for more marks. Who wants marks? What will you do with these marks? You actually want that great contentment which marks unfortunately are never able to give. Such is our tragedy. We want something, and we keep asking for something else. And imagine your disappointment. Even when you get that something else, you are still defeated.

You need to shoot inwards, and you are shooting here and there. You need to shoot upwards, and you are shooting left and right. Now even if you hit the jackpot, what do you get? Just disappointment.

You don't hit the target, what do you get? Disappointment.

You hit the target, you get more disappointment.

"In my one desire to know You, all else melted away."

Hit the real jackpot, shoot upwards. And if you are really courageous, really, really courageous then shoot inwards. Stop shooting here and there. Just shoot yourself right in the mind. "Goli maar bheje mein" ("*Shoot your mind*", an excerpt from a Bollywood song), and you are done, jackpot.

L: This song can also be sung as a kind of *Bhajan*.

AP: Will you remember this? Stop shooting left and right. Stop targeting this and that. The real target is there (pointing upwards) and if you want to travel this distance really quickly, then shoot here (*Pointing inwards*).

L 1: Sir, Can you name that greatest thing, that immense thing, after having which all other desires become so small. Can you name that?

AP: Yes, you can name it. It is like drinking tea.

L 1: What is it?

AP: Everything. Everything is colored in that. It is not a separate desire. It is the essence of every desire. So why do you need to give it a separate name? You can't even give it a separate name. It's like your lover asking you, "Can

you tell me *when* you love me?” When do you love him or her? When exactly? If you are in love, when do you love? Twenty four hours. Or is there a specific time slot marked by alarm bells?

Similarly, that One in your own words, is immense. And what is immense, is boundary-less. You can't say, “It begins here and ends here.” So, you are feeling like eating papaya. And even while you are eating papaya, you are with Him. On the surface it appears that the desire is of eating papaya, and you *are* taking a piece of papaya and having it, but it's like eating papaya while sitting with your beloved. Don't you take breakfast with your beloved? When you have breakfast with your beloved, what is important, the breakfast or the beloved? On the surface if somebody sees you, he will say that you are having breakfast. But you know what you are doing? What are you doing?

(Laughter)

L: Sharing love.

AP: Yes! It is like that. You will keep doing everything else and you cannot even say, “Now, I have met the beloved. Now, I have been with him. Now, I am remembering him. Now, I have attained him.” When you put some salt in the sea, where do you find the salt? Nowhere and everywhere. The sea is always salty, no matter where you pick the water from.

The spiritual mind is always with Him whatever it is doing, or not doing: eating, running. And in fact it will never say, “This is the time that I have reserved for the beloved.” You will be surprised. You will actually accuse him. You will say, “This man never finds time for the beloved.”

“We have a separate time for chanting, we have reserved some time for reading, we have reserved some time for discussions. This man, he never goes to the temple, he never reads, he never does the rituals. Why does he never appear to be doing anything for the Beloved?” Because he is always with the Beloved.

You asked a name for That. (*Pointing at one of the listeners*) So, right now I am talking to *Ayush*, what is the name of the Beloved?

L: *Ayush*.

AP: *Ayush*. Right now I am reading these questions. What is the name of the Beloved?

L: Questions.

AP: Questions. (*Pointing at another listener*) I look at Ved, what name has the Beloved taken now?

L: Ved.

AP: Yes. You want to be possessive? You want to have only one name for the Beloved?

L 2: Sir, it is like thinking about something which I have never seen before. I can't even imagine about the thing which we are dealing with.

AP: But it is so simple.

L 2: It is not simple. It is so much complicated that I can't even think.

AP: You are *Ayush*. It is as simple as that.

L 2: I need more time to think.

L 2: There are these lines in the song, "Yahan dum-dum men hoti hae puja, sar jukane ki fursat nahi hai" (*My every move is prayerful, I don't wait to bow before someone*).

Sir, also we have seen that Muslims usually keep their name starting with Mohammad, like Mohammed *Azaz*. The name is *Azaz* but the Beloved is with you in the name as Mohammed. Is that the purpose?

AP: Yes, it wants to convey the same thing. That the Beloved should always be with you, always. In the same way in the *Sanatan Dharma*, the trees, the mountains, the rivers, the rocks are worshiped. They too signify the same – that whatsoever it is, it is That. Haven't you seen it? One sees a stone and starts Praying. One sees a tree and he would tie a string around it, put a statue on it, light a lamp, and start Praying? It is to signify, that whatsoever it is, it is That.

Whatsoever you find, start worshipping it. One sees a cow walking, he bows to it. But the problem is, one should then not only bow to a cow, but to a pig too. There is no problem in bowing to a cow, but the problem is in excluding a pig from being bowed to. One should bow to a pig too. And it has happened that in India there have been religious groups who have bowed to animals which you consider as untouchables. They have Prayed even to the dead. This only signifies, "जित देखूं तित तू" (Wherever I see, I see you).

"ज्योँ महंदी के पाट में लाली लखि न जाए।" [In the cauldron of henna (which is green in color) vermilion color cannot be seen]

Have you seen henna, it is green in color. Are you able to see the red color in it? It is because the red color is everywhere, hence we are not able to see it. The beloved is like the red color in henna, because it is everywhere, hence it is not visible.

“साहिब तेरी साहिबी, हर गठ रही समया” (God your Godliness is expressed in everything).

Godliness is expressed in all the things, but it is not visible through the senses.

L 3: This song means the same, “प्रभु आये हैं कूकर के लिबाज़ में।” (God has come in the form of dog).

AP: This is the mark of a spiritual mind. He is able to see anything, anywhere. You will be surprised how he could see This in this. And he would see, and he would also get immersed in it. As it happened with Guru Nanak that he was counting and counting, and he remembered That. Ramakrishna was going somewhere one day, he sees an animal being followed by its offsprings, and Ramakrishna right in the middle of the street starts singing, “Ma” (Mother, lovingly addressed to God).

Wherever one see, one sees That.

When your eyes start deceiving you, then you should believe that you have really seen. When what is being seen, is really not seen, rather something else is being seen. Then realize that you really Seeing.

MYTH OF LIBERATION

You are not diseased, you are the disease

Question: How can I be liberated from bondage?

Acharya Prashant: Let me start with the story of a monkey. There was a monkey who had been chained since birth. Some people even say that the monkey was born with a chain. We don't know about that. But what we know is, that the monkey had been chained since birth.

The monkey now says, "I want to get rid of the chain." But because the monkey had been chained since birth, it had developed a strong attachment to the chain. So strong is the attachment that he had started thinking that the chain is one of his hands. So he would say, "I have two hands, two legs, and I also have a third hand here, the one which is tied to my neck."

Now the monkey asks, "Why can't I go beyond this limited area?"

The monkey has grown young. The monkey says, "The world looks wide and big. I must be able to go everywhere. There are these trees, and there are these juicy fruits, and I can have them. Why must I be limited?" The monkey now says, "I must be free of bondage."

What is the monkey now trying to do? He says, "I must be free." And 'I' means 'me' which is my body,

L: And the chain...

AP: And my three hands. There is no chain. What chain are you talking about? There are only three hands. There is no chain. He says, 'I' have to be free of bondage. And what is this 'I'? The face, the abdomen, the legs, the tail and the three hands." All the three hands must be free of bondage. "Wherever I go, I must carry all my three hands." And the monkey says, "I must be free of bondage." What is the definition of 'I'? The body, which comprises of the three hands.

The monkey is trying to be free even today. The monkey is trying to be free, till this day. It's a very ancient monkey. Since millions of years, it is trying to be free. It is not succeeding. And now, because it is struggling since eons, it has become desperate. It is weeping all the time. This tragedy is unbearable for the monkey. It's even prepared to die, with all its three hands.

What is the mistake that the monkey is making?

L 1: He is considering that chain as his hand.

AP: He is considering the chain as his hand. His definition of 'I' includes the chain which he is thinking of as his hand.

Can this 'I' ever be liberated? Is there any way this 'I' can be free of bondage? This 'I' itself is the bondage. And you are asking, "How can 'I' be liberated from bondage?"

Look closely at what you consider yourself as. What does the monkey consider himself? An animal with three hands. You ask yourself, "What do 'I' consider myself as?" Till the time you are a budding engineer, a family member, a young man, or whatever, there is no way you can be free of bondage. Because this 'I' itself is the bondage.

Someone had said, "*You are not the diseased, you are the disease.*" *You are not sick, you are the sickness.* What's your own self-concept? Look at that. That self-concept itself is your bondage.

Usually when a young man like you says, "I want to be free", by this what you imply is, that you want freedom from parental authority, you want freedom from the authority of the college, the institution, you want freedom from the authority of the society. Right? That is what you usually mean.

L 2: I want freedom from tensions and worries.

AP: Yes, but you do not realize that all these tensions come to somebody. You are holding on to that identity very dearly. Who is tense? The son is tense. Who is tense? The class topper is tense. You want to retain that identity, but you want to get rid of the tension, without realizing that the identity itself is the tension.

Who is tense? The class topper is tense. Now if you are the class topper, you are under pressure to maintain your position. That is the reason why you are so tense. But you want to remain a class topper, and yet not be tense. Impossible. The monkey wants to have all the three hands, and yet be free. He will have to give up the third hand. The third hand is not him. The monkey had only three, you have thirty thousand. How can you be free?

On one hand you say, "I want to be a wonderful friend and have a good reputation in college." You want people to say, "He's the one who can do anything for his friends," and on the other hand you also don't want to take

tension. How is it possible? Is it possible, to protect both your reputation and also be tension free?

You want to be the ideal boyfriend. “I gift two bottles of deodorants to my girlfriend every week.” I don’t know how much she stinks. Now, you want to gift two expensive bottles of deodorant to your girlfriend every week, and yet don’t want to take the worry of earning. Is it possible? If you want to gift two bottles worth rupees two thousand, then you will also have to earn those two thousand rupees. So there will be tension! Or you may have to steal, or borrow, or beg.

All identities come at the cost of your freedom.

“I want to be a wonderful son.” And what does that mean? Fulfill all the expectations. You want to be called a wonderful son, you want to be called *Raja Ramchandra*, the son of *Dhashrath*, and yet you do not want to take the pressure of meeting expectations. Is that possible? To be called a wonderful son implies that you’ll have to do all that the parents’ wish.

So go to the jungle for fourteen years. And there are no resorts there. So you can’t go to hotel booking websites and do a booking for fourteen years!

“Jungle resort. Coming with my wife, and one kid brother, who can be given a separate room. And because it’s a long-term stay, so give us a lot of discount.”

(Laughter)

That’s not possible. You have taken it upon yourself that you will protect your identity of being a wonderful son. Now do then, what they want you to do. You are the monkey who is holding on to the third hand.

You are asking for the impossible. You are saying, “I want to be free, and yet I want to retain my identities.”

“I am the ideal father.” Now go and deposit twenty thousand rupees per month for your daughter’s dowry. Because in our mind, that is what being an ideal father mean. You want to be the ideal father and yet you don’t want to earn or deposit anything. Impossible!

Who is the ideal father? The one who has three fixed deposits in the bank, in the name of his daughter. And that is the expression we use for the daughter’s wedding, “I will marry her off.”

Such a degrading expression, ‘marry her off’ or ‘marry her away’. And you

say, "I love my daughter." Seriously?

"I am relentlessly searching for the Truth," and then you don't want to be tense. Is that possible?

"Who am I? A seeker of joy." Now, joy is not to be found. If you are a seeker of joy, the only thing that you will get is tension, because joy is very evasive. Here and there he hides. So there is only tension. Third hand, fourth hand, fifth hand, everywhere there is only tension.

You will get rid of tension only when you get rid of everything that you are not.

Till the time you have this attachment to 'this and that', you are attached not to 'this and that', but to tension. Do you think that you are attached to the deodorant? No you are not attached to the deodorant, you are attached to the tension.

What are you attached to? Tell us about your third and fourth hands.

L: (Silence)

See. The ancient monkey. He will not admit that he is attached. He will say, "I am not attached. They are just my three hands! Why are you saying that I am attached? I am not attached. I was born with three hands!"

MYTH OF MEDITATION

The best way to meditate

Question: How to meditate? Whenever I try to meditate, I get stuck with thoughts; relevant and irrelevant.

Acharya Prashant: Meditation is a huge myth. Given what you are, you will continue doing what you are, even when you are ‘meditating’. Your act of meditation will be as per what you are, because you are the one who decided to meditate. Meditation is your decision, so you are bigger than meditation. Even in the act of meditation, you will continue to be. You will continue to be, and the same patterns that exist otherwise, will exist, may be in changed forms, but will exist even during the process of meditation.

We often think that we have a choice. The ambitious man comes and asks, “Is it alright to be ambitious”? Now even if I say, “No,” will he be able to drop his ambition? Because ambition is what he is, ambition is the very structure of his mind. And the mind will not commit suicide. The mind will not drop itself or kill itself on its own. You do not really have a choice as long as you are the chooser. But you come and you ask a question assuming that you have a choice. You do not have a choice. Are you getting it?

L 1: Sir, do we really need to meditate?

AP: What is the final point that one wants to reach in meditation? What you want is Peace, right? What you want is Peace. Now Peace cannot be the outcome of a ten minutes or forty minutes daily process, because the process is decided by you and adhered to by you. So you are bigger than the process. And Peace is bigger than you.

Whatever you choose will never bring you to Peace. Only Peace can bring you to Peace.

When you adopt a method of meditation, what you are saying is, “I will reach Peace using *my* methods”. You are saying, “I am the smart enough to reach the Truth, using my own road.” You are not willing to surrender. You are not saying, “Let the truth decide, how I will reach the Truth. I will just surrender.”

Do you understand the arrogance contained in methods of meditation? You are saying, “I am choosing this method”, even if on the advice of somebody. “I am choosing this method. And this method will take me to Peace and Truth”. You are saying, “I am choosing this particular method, and this method will take me to Peace and Truth”.

Your methods cannot take you to Peace and Truth. The Truth comes first. And the Truth is eternal. The Truth is twenty-four hours. The Truth will continuously guide you about the Right action. This guidance is meditation, and the Right action is meditation.

You think that just sitting still for ten minutes is meditation? No. One has to be still for twenty-four hours – that is meditation. And if you have to be still for twenty-four hours, then you have to be surrendered to the Truth, twenty-four hours. This twenty-four hours surrender is meditation.

But this twenty-four hours surrender, again, cannot be a method. You cannot say, “Now I am just surrendered twenty-four hours”. The very structure of the mind must change. The arrogant mind must be able to look at its arrogance, and drop it – that is meditation. And for that, you need not do anything, because your doing itself is arrogance. You have to stop putting your energies into the doing. And you have to pray to get the inspiration to stop putting your energies in that foolish direction.

Meditation is nothing but a cessation, cessation of what you have been doing and who you are.

That is meditation. Meditation is not about sitting in a particular posture and trying to do something for ten, twenty, thirty minutes per day. All that is just an escape from the daily routine; all that just guarantees that you go back to your daily routine. In fact that is what you do, right? You say, “Let me meditate and now let me get on with my routine.” So you are saying that let the routine continue, along with the meditation. No, that is not meditation.

But because real meditation is so disruptive, hence we do not want to look at it. Hence there is an abundance of teachers who keep teaching all these shortcuts in the name of meditation.

Real meditation requires your complete surrender; complete and continuous. It is twenty-four hours surrender.

That is meditation.

The real meaning of meditation

You are now and forever free, luminous, transparent and still. The practice of meditation keeps one in bondage.

~ Ashtavakra Gita (Chapter-1, Verse-15)

Question: What is meditation? Why the practice of meditation keeps one in bondage?

Acharya Prashant: Meditativeness is simply our inner nature. To meditate is different from any kind of mental exertion or mental activity. To meditate is to be at a point where parallelly two non-events are happening. First, there is no need for mental activity. Because there is no need for any activity, so I am calling it a non-event. So there is no need to think or solve problems, or resist challenges or plan. No need is felt. Secondly, and parallelly, even though there is no need to gather knowledge, yet all is known.

Most of the knowledge that we have, comes to us because the insecure one within us needs to have information from the world. That is the reason why we seek knowledge, there is a feeling of incompleteness and the possibility of some loss, if that knowledge is not there. “Something would be reduced, something would be diminished within me if I do not have this knowledge,” that is the reason why we chase and store knowledge.

In meditativeness, there is *knowing* without the *need* to know. Obviously, this knowing is not about people, things, ideas, concepts or places, which themselves are products of insecurity. In the great security of meditativeness, there is a great realization. Of what? Surely not of that which itself is a product of insecurity.

You come to simply know a great deal in meditation, but what do you come to know? Do you come to know about the politics of the country, about the economic situation, about what is happening in the neighbor’s house, of all the things that man’s mind has erected? No. None of that. Because whatever man’s mind has erected, it has done so as a response to the various challenges, to the various threats to its body and ego. That is we have usually called as ‘advancement’. So that is not what you come to know of

in meditation.

Remember, in meditation, firstly there is no *need* to know. Secondly, all is known without the need to know it. Whenever there will be a need to know, all that you will know will be trash, inessential. Whatever knowledge will come to you out of your own will, your own desire and pursuit, will be worthless. Because who is chasing this? Think of that entity that is chasing this. What can that entity chase? The entity that is chasing this, is itself a product of a feeling of inferiority, which it seeks to treat through accumulation of knowledge. Surely such an entity is not going to be able to treat itself by accumulation of knowledge, because accumulation of knowledge will only prove that the assumption was correct.

One thinks himself to be sick and goes to buy a medicine. And if the medicines are given to him, if he is able to get medicines of 'his' choice, it is not going to rid him out of the assumption that he is sick. In fact, if a sick one comes to you and you tell him to take a few medicines, you have cemented the thought within him that he is indeed sick. This is not what happens in meditation. In meditation, you have no need to know. You are not sick.

It is very pertinent that we notice that how much of our need to know simply arises from the trivia, from the base rottenness accumulated inside us. We are always on a lookout to gather information. The senses are automatic accumulators of information, and the mind too is always on a hunt to know this, to know that. In fact, what we call as 'human progress', it is to a great extent the availability of quick and easy information. Whatever you want to know is available to be known.

At the same time, it becomes very important to know that from where the urge for that knowledge is coming, and what is hence, the scope, the domain of that knowledge. What will be that knowledge all about? Because the urge comes from thought, hence all the knowledge that can be gathered in the so-called normal thinking process will only be about the product of thought.

You can have lots of knowledge about what material is like, what the universe is like. Today you can go to the internet and come to know that where in a particular lane in Mexico, is a particular restaurant located. All these things can be very easily and very precisely known. But these things, even if they tell us a lot about the world, will never carry us to the underlying mystery of the world. That is not what normal accumulation of knowledge through senses, and through the analytical process of mind, can give us.

We will know the material, but never the subtle origin of the material. The very faculty that is asking for knowing, is itself a material faculty. Neither does it have any desire to know the Subtle nor does it have the capacity to realize the Subtle. So all that we will be filled with, is gross, gross and more grossness. What is 'gross' is not beautiful, what is 'gross' is devoid of its subtle root, its subtle origin. So it's not really True, neither Beautiful nor True. That is what our usual mental processes give us: information, knowledge and conclusions that are just material and gross. And they leave us craving for more.

No knowledge is ever sufficient, you want more knowledge. So there is grossness and there is craving for more of this grossness. No coming to a stop, no stillness and hence no peace. But surely these being the essentials of living without which the mind is going to go mad, these too must be found. Beauty, Truth, Stillness, Peace, there has to be something that validates them, that confirms their presence with such surety that you do not need to seek knowledge or certification anymore. A final stamp of their 'is'ness must be there, that they do exist.

Knowledge will never convince you that Peace exists. Accumulate as much knowledge as you can, about Peace, but that will not give you Peace. Read as much as you want to, about Beauty, but that will not fill your Heart up with the realization of Beauty. Keep reading, more and more reading will not bring you to an end of reading, and hence stillness.

Knowledge fails there. It so miserably fails that after a point all it can say is, "I have failed." Then how does and where does the doubtless certainty about all that which makes life worth living come from? That comes from your meditateness. And because that comes from meditateness, it is not at all external, unlike knowledge, which is always external. Always external, and hence always prone to doubt.

Whatever has been told to you by an external agency, will never become your life-blood. You will take it, store it, but yet there would be something foreign about it. You would never have complete Faith upon it, even if there is nothing to argue with. The knowledge may seem impeccable, the arguments that may have been presented to you, may seem perfect. The logic behind everything may seem inviolable, and yet you will find that your heart is not being stilled, that you are not so sure about anything. That sureness arises only in meditation.

Now let me put it this way. You attain to your nature of sureness only in meditation. And then, something magical happens there-knowledge-less knowing - which is so very difficult for a non-meditative mind to believe. You walk without legs, you fly without wings, and you speak without knowledge. Have you ever spoken without knowledge? Only in meditation does that happen. It is like flying without wings. It is the ultimate magic. You love without reason. You are joyful without looking for profit. Only this magic makes life worth it, otherwise there is no point dragging on and on.

The mind that lives only in theories, and concepts, and knowledge, and all of that, quickly becomes conditioned. That mind is somewhere just waiting and preparing for death, because life is then just a burden. You are carrying so much of load upon the head, without a moment of rest. It's like working so hard without even getting paid. There is only agony and more agony. Going on living, working hard to feed the body, thinking so much to protect yourself, and not getting even a drop of that divine nectar which can make you forget all your tiredness.

So tired day-in and tired day out, like a bonded labor, working without remuneration, always trying to get security without ever being secure, so, working so hard without ever getting that which you are working for, always desperate for love without ever getting love, so, always desperate and never contended. Running from one place to other like that proverbial deer in the mirage, always thirsty, always thirsty, and just running around till he dies.

Look at the agony, that's how the normal mind and the common man lives; like the thirsty deer hoping that the next promise of water will indeed materialize and quench his thirst. And it never materializes, you just keep on running from here to there without ever reaching anywhere. Stopping never happens. Life without that meditateness is surely torture. Only in meditateness do you actually reach there, where thought is *attempting* to reach all its life. And that is the difference between 'a thinking mind' and 'a meditative mind'.

The thinking mind is all the time *trying* and never reaching. The meditative mind is so sure that it has no need to try, and in its non-trying, it reaches a magical place where all is just known. How? Magically, reasonlessly, thoughtlessly, that cannot be explained. But you can have some taste of it if you are prepared to let go off your clinginess to security. And how much we

tolerate just to secure ourselves. And what do we secure? Nothing except our chains, only they are secured. When from head to toe we are nothing but chains, even if we do secure something, what is it that we would secure? The chains. How diligently do we secure our chains, we work so hard to maintain our fetters. The man has worked his entire life to build his own prison. They are some who save their entire life, only to dig their own graves, and ensure that the graves are gold-plated, or air-conditioned, you never know.

Have you heard of that story? There was a man walking on the highway, someone comes to him and says, "Give me all your money, otherwise I will shoot you." He says, "Let me think for a while." Even the robber is amazed. He says, "Please do think, I want to see you thinking. You are the first man who has given me this reply." So he thinks, and as happens with all the thinkers and as is the nature of the thought, the man comes up with the most brilliant response to the situation. He says, "Alright, shoot me." The robber says, "Shoot I surely will. But, tell me how did you come to this conclusion? What was the tremendous thought process?"

The man said, "See, this money that I have is for my security, it is tremendously important. I will use this in my old age, it is for my future. Now future and security are very important. You can shoot me right now, but how can I give upon security? Shoot me, but I can't give up my security. Kill me, but I can't give up on my future."

So that is the brilliance of thought. And remember that it is easy to laugh at it because it has been laid so bare in front of you, but this is exactly what thought does in every situation. It wants nothing except security and continuation in time. Future and security, except that no thinking process has no other objective. All thinking processes are towards only this objective, and if you are vigilant enough, if you bother to inquire, you will find that out.

Whatever you are thinking is ultimately about securing the thinker. Thought has just one function, to secure the thinker. The thinker, by definition is insecure. So thought has just one function, to secure the insecurity, and it does that perfectly. It secures your insecurity. It ensures that your insecurity continues.

Meditation is far beyond all this stupidity. You say, "I don't need to know what truth is. I am alright. Who bothers to know?" Meditation says, "I have no need to get the definition of Love. Don't explain to me what Joy and Peace are. It's okay. My memory is fairly poor. I don't need to load it. Even

if you tell me, I will forget very soon. So it's alright, I am okay. There are a lot of other things that we can do. The weather is nice, we can walk a little and if there is a thing else to do, we can just lay down and sleep. Why talk unnecessarily? What is this futile exchange of words, like armies exchanging bullets?"

Meditation says this, but when the moment comes, the meditative mind finds that even without knowing as 'knowledge', it knows all that is essential. It knows without knowledge, so much so, that it does not even have the knowledge that it knows.

Remember, not only is this knowing, knowledge-less in the sense that it has not come from outside, it is knowledge-less even in the sense that it itself has no knowledge that it knows. So deep is its courage that when the moment comes, the knowing just shows up only to the extent it is needed. And it will be perfectly matched to the moment. It will not show up any more than what is needed, and not an iota less than what is required.

It is like a magical pocket. You go to a shop without knowing how much there is in your pocket, and when the moment to pay comes, you put your hand in your pocket, and only as much will be there in the pocket as is needed to pay. But that pocket is only available to those who do not earn. All those who are great earners, and intent upon filling the pocket themselves, they do not get that magical pocket. Their pockets have only little bit of money. How much can you earn?

The magical pocket gives to you whatever you want, without even you knowing that this much exists in your pocket. But for that there are a few conditions. The first one has already been stated that- you should have not earned it. It should not have come from outside. Second, you will not decide to pick the challenges, you will be choice less.

You will not order the food depending on the money you have. You will not order a lot, thinking that you have a lot of money. And you will not hold yourself back from eating, assuming that you don't have much. You will order exactly as much as is needed. If you need a lot, order a lot and if you don't need a lot, don't order a lot. And then you will get a sumptuous meal, and you will eat to your heart's content. And then when you fearlessly put your hand in the pocket, you will get the money.

For this you require a lot of Faith. Otherwise you will keep wondering even

while having your dinner that you may have to wash these utensils after eating. “I am eating all this, but who knows that when I put my hand in the pocket, the required amount will be available or not?” You need to have an absolute Faith. You need to have an absolute Faith that the required amount will be there, and you cannot be greedy about it either. You cannot say that because it is going to be available anyway, so let me order twice the quantity that I need, and also have something packed to show-off elsewhere. Then if you put your hand in the pocket, you find nothing, and you will actually have to wash the utensils.

(Laughter)

So it is available. That Magic, that Blessing, that Grace is available only to those who do not ask for it, who really do not need it, who are not greedy about it, and at the same time who value it so much that they will never say that they can get it from elsewhere, or that they can earn it on their own.

All these are the functions of the thought. Thought acts exactly in these ways. “I can earn on my own. I can know. I can distribute it to others. I can get it from others. I can check what I know,” all these are typical characteristics of thought. When these are not there, then where you are is called ‘meditation’, and then greatness happens. It is difficult to share meditation in words. It is difficult to share the ‘beyond knowing’, the ‘beyond knowledge’, through the instrument of knowledge. So meditation cannot really be explained through words. Meditation can be shared, meditation can be explained only through meditation.

Ashtavakra is saying that the practice of meditation keeps one in bondage. Why is he saying that? Because the method or technique for meditation cannot come through knowledge. Meditation surely does require a technique, because it is the mind that ultimately relaxes, settles and disappears into meditation, and mind moves only on techniques, so techniques are needed. On one hand, techniques are needed. On the other hand, as *Ashtavakra* says, the practice of meditation keeps one in bondage. What is this contradiction? The contradiction is that the technique for meditation too can be known only in meditation.

It is your meditation, it is your meditativeness which will automatically, from nowhere, reasonlessly tell you the right technique suited to you and that technique cannot come from anywhere else. No book can tell it to you, no amount of thinking and planning and analyzing can tell it to you. You will

just 'know'.

When you are meditative, then you will also know how to live in a meditative way. And living in a meditative way, this itself is the technique for meditation. You will know whom to talk to, you will know what to read, you will know whom to avoid and whom to come close to, you will simply know. The technique itself opens up when you are there. Otherwise, the technique will not be known to you. Otherwise you will have all these borrowed practices of meditation which are of very little help.

Understand it this way. What is happening here right now? We are talking about meditation, but even these words about 'meditation' will be meaningful to you only if you are meditative. Only in your meditativeness can you understand these words about meditation. "What is the significance of these words if I already have to be meditative?" It is the words that are bringing you to meditation. "And where are these words coming from?" They are coming from meditation itself. "Then what is the source of all this?" Meditate and you will know.

It is not a crude and linear cause-effect diagram. Do not come up with your chicken and egg story- that what comes first, meditation or technique for meditation? Thought will not be able to understand all this. You understand what I say because you are meditative, and you are meditative because I say what I say. "What comes first?"

Meditate.

"What does meditation mean?" To throw away this stupid question. When you throw away this stupid question, then you realize that meditation is sufficient. The answer to this question anyway does not matter. What will you do with the answer to this question? You will try to capture it. You will try to do some kind of mischief with it. What else will you do?

Ashtavakra is very right in saying that practices are a great barrier towards meditation. He is saying, "You are now and forever free, luminous, transparent, still. The practice of meditation keeps one in bondage." 'Practice of meditation' means acquired knowledge about meditation. "What is meditation? How to go about doing it?" that will not help, because the acquirer of that knowledge itself is the bondage. Knowing a few more practices, he reinforces himself. Gathering that knowledge, he does not dissolve, he becomes all the more cemented. And that is the funniest game

that Maya plays with us. The very same knowledge that is intended to treat us, becomes an instrument of the disease.

It requires a bit of grace, it requires an ambrosial touch for words to be really successful. Otherwise, in most of the cases, words will be co-opted. I am not very sure whether a recording of this session will be of any use to you. It requires something beyond words, may be a particular presence for the words, to have any effect. And that is what is wrong with meditation practices. They are mere words, things, methods expressed in words. The touch of the special is missing; the aliveness is missing. The words are like corpses. You look at a corpse and you look at a living man, there is not much of a difference on the outside. But still everything is different: one is alive, one is dead.

Words are co-opted, and that is what I just said is the one of the funniest games of *Maya*, that the very same words that are said to take care of illusions, to dissolve them, become an agent of illusion itself. You gather knowledge, and that knowledge only makes you more cunning and clever. Instead of dissolving the cleverness, it makes you all the more sophisticated in your cleverness; nuanced cleverness, subtle cleverness. It is not the rough type of cleverness that can be easily seen, exposed and hence dissolved, but a very fine cleverness.

Ashtavakra is advising that the practice of meditation keeps one in bondage. Yes, any practice that is not arising from meditation itself, will keep you in bondage. And the practice that will arise from meditation will be a practice touched by life, it will not be a dead practice. The practices that we have are all dead practices. One takes up a practice and keeps on sticking to it. Whereas the practice that arises out of your meditateness is a dynamic practice. It changes every minute, because life is a fresh movement every minute. The flow is not the same as it was a few seconds back. So the right action is not the same this moment, as it was a few moments back.

Hence the meditation method for this moment, must be different from what it was.

Kindly understand two things in this regard. One, you need meditation every moment. Meditateness is not something that you practice for a fixed number of hours every day. Secondly, you need a different method of meditation every moment. Your so-called conventional wisdom and gurus go against both of these. First of all, they have confined

meditation to one of the activities of the day. Just like you have many other activities confined to their own time slots, similarly meditation too has become an activity confined to its own time slot. No, meditation cannot be that. It has to be continuous. It has to be like breathing, continuous.

So first, meditation has to be continuous.

Second, the meditation technique, the method, the practice has to be very-dynamic and flexible. You cannot keep employing the same method from morning till evening. It has to be so dynamic that nothing can be said about it. It has to be so flexible that it is a universal set, that it involves every possible action that there can be.

So walking is meditation, eating is meditation, talking is meditation, sleeping is meditation, running is meditation, anger is meditation. Meditation is the universal set of whatever you do. Constant meditation, unhindered, unflinching, a still and stable core. And then from that a lively flow of the right response to the moment arises. This right response itself is the meditation technique.

So you are sitting here, and you are just sitting, listening. This is your meditation technique right now. Do you think that my words are benefiting you? No, it is your sitting that is important. If you could sit like this, exactly like this, even without my words, then my words are simply not needed. Then I am redundant. It is your sitting that is important. I am repeating. I may not be there, you may find that this place is vacant, but even then if you care about yourselves, just sit like this. It may be a little difficult, may be my presence helps and facilitates this, but just sit like this, as you are sitting right now, and then the same effect will be there. It is your sitting that matters.

Conversely, if you are not sitting like this, then I may go on talking and talking, and yet there would be no meditateness. So what is happening? Your right response is the meditation technique. There is a particular moment, and you are doing what is right at that moment, and that is meditation. Someone knocks the door and attentively you open the door, which is the meditation technique for that moment. It is as simple as that. You are swimming in a river and you are swimming with all your presence; that is a meditation technique. But that meditation technique is not useful while sitting in a cinema hall. Sitting in a cinema hall, you require a different response to that moment, and that will be the right meditation technique for

that moment. And where does that technique come from? It comes from the meditation itself.

I am repeating this. The right meditation technique can come from no place other than meditation. And it is not somebody else's meditation, not some guru's meditation, it is your own meditation. That is why people keep struggling with meditation and it becomes such a puzzle for them. "Meditation?" And you have people teaching meditation, and how difficult it is to meditate, and this and that.

It is because you are eating a medicine that is not suited to you. The medicine that is suited to you can come only from your own inner doctor; that is the magic of this. You are the patient and you are the doctor, and only your own inner doctor can treat this patient. You go to an external doctor, he cannot help.

The inner doctor is so flexible, versatile and compassionate that he gives you dynamic prescriptions. Think of a doctor working so hard, he gives you a fresh prescription every moment. And his pharmacy is always open. Not only does he give you a prescription, he also tells you that the prescription is available there, free of cost. You only have to go and fetch it.

That is how this thing works- meditation, meditation technique. Do not be taken in by the complication of the word 'technique'. 'Technique' simply means the right response to the situation of life. Sitting in a cinema hall, is a situation of life. What to do there, is a meditation technique. Somebody comes and abuses you, it's a life situation. What response should come, is a meditation technique. It is as simple as this and as difficult for the ego as this. Because in all this, there is no place for any kind of planning, cleverness or manipulation.

You have to surrender to the doctor. There is no place for your own knowledge that - "I went somewhere and read this. I have read on the internet that these are the new medicines." The doctor will refuse to talk. You are so clever, you go and treat yourself. Only when you just sit silent and say, "I don't even need any medicine. Doctor you are so beautiful, your presence is enough", then the doctor starts treating you. It's a strange thing about meditation and about life. When you say that you don't want anything, then suddenly the immensity of the unknown opens up to you.

It's a little unjust, isn't it?

Those who don't want anything get everything, and those who are craving to get, just get the craving and more of it. Yes of course, you want more, you will get more. What? The craving.

"I don't need to know", and you know. "I am so complete, I don't feel lonely. I don't need a partner", and you find that the entire world is lovable. Searching for a special partner, you only get a special search. You get it when you are not demanding it, and of course you don't demand it when you have it. So what comes first, the chicken or the egg? Just meditate. Don't engage yourself in silly questions.

L: Is there any difference between attention and meditation?

AP: Essentially both are same, used in different contexts. When dealing with the world in a meditative state, you are said to be 'in attention'. But it's the same thing, just that it is used in a different context. In general, when you use the word 'meditation', you mean being centered. When you use the word 'attention', it means that you are dealing with the world with a particular quality of the mind. That quality is meditation.

MYTH OF SAINTS

You will never understand the mystic

Acharya Prashant: I will begin with the question, which itself is a quote. The question is such that it will dissolve a few other questions. This is from the *Japuji*. One of us has written this. *“One, who tries to describe the state of the Faithful, shall regret the attempt.”*

What do we think? We think we can lay our hands on anything. Do we have any understanding of the mystic? We think we can reason it out. We think we can nearly, neatly summarize that in words. We think everything is within our dirty, conditioned domains. Be it Faith, be it Mysticism or be it Truth, we just want to explain away everything, so that the petty mind can get an assurance that it knows, so that it can get a temporary relief from its stumbling.

The mystic will not attempt any such thing. Though he himself is there, it's his own life, but he will never try to put his mind, his inner world in words. It is just too large. Its load is so heavy that our normal man-made language: English, Hindi, any language, cannot bear that load. But even to understand that requires a lot of understanding. We simply ask questions which only indicates that... forget about entering the room, we are not even knocking on the door.

Nanak is telling you, ‘One who tries to describe the state of the Faithful shall regret the attempt.’ But had we not begun with this, had I just given a question to all of you, ‘Please, describe the state of the Faithful.’ I am pretty sure everybody would have been able to write, a lot. Those of us who are pretty learned, who pride themselves on the amount of literature they have read, the gurus that they have followed, they would have written even more. “This is the state of the faithful.”

And Nanak is saying to not even try that. You will regret. Or is it so that what we are writing is something that we understand, but Nanak doesn't? Is it so that our language, vocabulary is richer than that of Nanak? So, we are in a better position to explain? The only reason is that when you are utterly ignorant, then you do not even know how ignorant you are, and you can try attempting the impossible. You simply do not know what you are talking of.

It is so foolish that it only ends up becoming amusing.

How does a mystic know? Where does Faith come from? What is the state of the Faithful? Were it so easy for it to be dispensed in words, then wonderful! It cannot just be given away like this. Sorry. The mystic just knows.

Now this is impossible for the common mind to fathom - How can anybody just know? Whatever you know has always come from a source: a book, a conversation, an experience, that is how we know, and the mystic knows without the book. He hears without the ears; he has heard and he has not heard. He is talking of things he has never ever seen, yet he is actually more Truthful than you are with all your experience.

You will never come to know, from where does the Faith come? What is the mind of the mystic like? How can one just know? It's impossible, and it is great that it is impossible. Were it possible, then you would have purchased the state of the mystic using all of your might, resources, and cunningness and there would have been websites like mindofmystics.com. Go there! Learn it! What is the need to Surrender? Read it from somewhere. What is the need to dissolve in Love? Just read. Hear it from a guru. Remember the words and reproduce them when the need comes, you all know to do that.

The mystic, the unfathomable, the beyond mind will always stand in front of the mind like an insurmountable challenge, it will keep teasing the mind. Let the mind keep trying its old strategies, its old ways; it will never realize anything. The mind can only become frustrated in all its attempts to know Faith, let it just keep trying. Love will always be a mystery for the mind. Always. Let it try in whatsoever ways it can try. It will be frustrated, to no end. I am repeating, it is wonderful that it will be frustrated, because out of this frustration there is a possibility that Surrender can come. When you will be defeated a thousand times, then you will be broken. At least the possibility is there. After a thousand defeats, you might be broken. But what I can surely assure you is that you cannot win. You cannot win.

Everything that you have: all your faculties, all your resources, all your money, are absolutely useless when it comes to the Truth. It will not help you know that. Not only will it not help you to know That, it will also not help you how to know That. Yes, you may find a dirty way out. You may just convince yourself with rotten answers, "I know." You may just tell yourself, "This is this, this is this, and I have captured it in this way and I have started believing in it." But you will know the hollowness of your beliefs. You will

believe this and that about the world, Truth, God. Keep believing!

Every second day your beliefs would be shaken, you will be teased, frustrated. And isn't that already happening? I mean you have beliefs about everything and every day your beliefs are shaken. In that shaking up, in that suffering lies the possibility of redemption. That in your daily defeats, daily frustrations, you might see that you are missing that great, that immeasurable.

You ask, "How is that different from being full of knowledge? The one who just knows, and the one who is full of knowledge?" I can't really give away the answer. I won't give away the answer even if I could. All our questions are just an attempt to avoid meditation. The answers will come only from there, until then, keep wondering, "How does it happen?" Or keep doubting, "Does it really happen? Does he know anything? Only that we have been made a fool. Maybe there is nothing called mysticism. Maybe there is nothing beyond mind. Oh, we are surely being fooled, it's a trick!" Convince yourself that you know the answers and feel frustrated again after two hours. You will never know that place where all this happens, you will never know. By way of description, you will never know. By way of thought, you will never know. By way of logic and reasoning, you will never know.

You want a way of knowing? The way of knowing is to look at what you are doing, which is preventing you from knowing. That is all that you can look into. Look at your daily conduct; look at the mechanisms of the mind; look at the daily dishonesty, look at your priorities; when they are set right, then something just happens. When you prepare the right kind of place, the Divine descends. You have not prepared that place. The Divine cannot enter your dirty house. It does not like to sit in filthy places.

But, you will not clean up your house. You will say, "My house will remain in this way, yet I want to drag the Truth in." You cannot do that. I am assuring you, every single moment that you spend in dishonesty, every single action that you do that must not have been done, pushes you further and further away, and deeper and deeper into ignorance. Your possibilities are reduced further. Every single word.

Keep wondering, "Why don't we come to know? How does the mystic know? Why have I no Faith?" The answer cannot be direct. The answer will only be indirect. Look at your scheming mind and you will understand why it is not happening. But the tragedy is, instead of realizing that the corrupted mind is itself the barrier, you use that same corrupted mind more and more,

you trust it so much. You will think, without realizing that all your thinking is already soiled. You have assume that there is a substance in thought. You have a great trust upon yourself.

When you look at the mystic, you do not want to be the mystic. You want to analyze him, you want to know his secret; that's what you want. You will never know. Your deepest desire is, "Let me be what I am and then remaining what I am, let me also have the secret key; so that I may use those great riches for the benefit of this petty mind." You come here to hear me, you read all these books, but have you ever bothered to observe that what do you do with what you hear or what you read? You say, "I may read anything, but it has to pass through my scanner. I am the judge."

So you write big names here. You write Ramana Maharishi, you write Kabir, you write Lao Tzu, you write Nanak. What do you take from them? That which you agree to. So, what is the need of reading them? You already agree to it. But you will not look at the absurdity of the ways of the mind. The mind is saying, "I am bigger than Kabir, I know more than Nanak, because even they must pass through my scrutiny. I will decide what to accept and what to reject." Now with this kind of a mind, would you ever understand from where do Kabir's words come? Never. Impossible.

You just want to kill, you just want to sink your teeth in everything, like an animal who looks at the most beautiful flower, and wants to eat it. That's what our minds are like. You want to lay your hands on everything; you want to sink your teeth in everything. You want to cut and dissect everything with your dirty nails; that is our revenge upon existence!

If a mystic comes to a scientist, you know what the scientist will do? The scientist will cut open his brain; that is the only method he has. What else can he do? He will say, "There must be surely something in his body which is making him special. So cut open his brain and try to see what is there." That is the only method you have, of violence, of encroachment. You do not know Surrender. You do not even know the basic etiquette of *Bhakti*. And there is an etiquette involved there. Surely, there is an etiquette involved there. There is a great etiquette involve there. Not this kind of your regular worldly etiquette, but Love has its own discipline, Surrender has its own discipline. You do not know that. All you know is the ways of the world.

Have you really ever bowed to a book? I am asking you questions from your daily life. You have written the names of all these books here. Do you really

know what to do with them? How do you read them? Like you read your fiction novels? Yes, that is the way you approach Kabir as well? That's the way you would approach Krishna as well. You do not know the difference. Do you know what is it to really worship? You do not know that. Do you know with what kind of mind must one touch the *Japuji*? You do not know that. You think with all your diseased mind you can just go and have a look at the *Japuji* and you will understand. Is it any wonder that you will never understand anything?

What do you think? That unfathomable is your playmate? What do you think? He is just another character in your world? You will go and you will put arms on his shoulders and say, "Hey friend! So, how are you doing?" But that's what you want. That pleases your ego. "We can do that." That pleases your ego. It requires a Nanak to say, and he says that in *Japuji*, "I cannot even be a sacrifice to you; even that is not my worth." But you! Do you ever feel that worthlessness of the ways of living? I am pretty sure that if right now I introduce to you, "Hello friends, today we have the Buddha amongst us. Here is the Buddha." What would you do? You would say, "Hi Buddha, hey, nice to meet you! Here's my card!" That's the way you would approach a Buddha! Now go to hell! You think you can know the Buddha? Seriously?

If one were to exchange his entire life to live just two moments of the life of the mystic, it would be a great deal. A great exchange. That is how rich his life is. And that's how absolutely poor we are. But we have not been struck by that realization. Ask yourselves honestly: Here, if there sits a Buddha and he says, "Alright! Let's swap lives. You have been talking about me since so long in this room. I have been watching it, since four years, five years. You have been constantly, daily yelling, "Buddha! Buddha!" So, I have come here and here is an offer, take my life, live it." You will not take the bargain. You will say, "Eww! Poor deal!" Is that not so? How many of you would immediately take the deal? You will not take it. Is that not so? Now is it any wonder that you will never come to know? Because somewhere you feel that you have something.

You have a deep conviction in your ways of living. You ask me, "Why is that we slip? Why does it happen that the moment we go out of this room we become the same old person? It is because you have a great belief in that person. It is not happening incidentally. You want to be that person; and you are greatly resistant to any change. It is not out of chance when you say, "Oh!

I forgot again!” You have not forgotten. It is that you want to forget! Even right now as these words are falling on your ears, you are already planning how to forget these words or how to cut them apart. How to create another argument. How to convince yourself that all this is nothing. The mind is already at work, consciously, and subconsciously.

Do you understand what is the state of the Bhakt (Devotee) is like? Do you understand where Nanak is coming from? Every breath of his is full of such deep respect and then he enters that zone. He does not look at the Truth with suspicious eyes. Let’s have a mirror here, actually. Look at your eyes. And see whether you see suspicion there or surrender. I am not talking about this particular incident when you are in this room. In general, look at your eyes. How full of suspicion they are! Deeply suspicious eyes! What can you know with these eyes? Your eyes have no innocence. The cunning mind is popping out of these eyes. What can you know? The calculative-ness is written large upon the face.

What will you see with these eyes? These are not the eyes that are moist with separation. These are not the eyes that are restless with expectation. These are eyes that are more like spears and you want to push these spears into the heart of Truth. Do you think these eyes will ever be able to look at the Truth? You are talking of Nanak? Look at the eyes of Nanak and then look at your eyes. Have you ever looked at the eyes of Nanak? And then look at your eyes! You are talking of Buddha. Look at the eyes of Buddha and then look at your eyes.

Your eyes are good if you want to purchase vegetables; that’s all your eyes are good for. You will quickly spot the worm and save seventy-five paisa. Because that’s what your eyes are always looking for. The Worm! Where’s the worm? Where’s the worm? You will remove that particular pea-pod and you have saved seventy- five paisa. Where is the worm? So, keep doing that.

We are absolutely very, very distant from There! Very, very, very distant!

You do not know how to listen. You do not know how to see. Even at this moment, some of you are looking here and there. How can you look at people’s faces at this time! How stupid can you be? One feels pity. Your eyes don’t close. Your eyes don’t go within. Even at this moment some of us are looking at each other’s’ faces! How stupid can we be! What’s wrong? What evil power has taken control of you? What stinking, obnoxious, rigid ego is this that does something or the other to resist, all the time? Look at your face,

look at what you are doing right now! How can you fidget? How can you stare at this and that? How can you look at the wall? What bad fortune has struck you? How unfortunate can you be? There are some of us who have wrinkles on the forehead even right now. Your mind is still calculating. Is there any hope for you? What has made you so afraid? There is nothing but fear written large on your face. You will do something or the other to escape. Either your mind will move or your pen will move, but you will not just stop and drop dead!

I am asking you to just stop and drop dead! What is all this escape? Whatever you are doing is just an escape from dropping dead! How cunning can you be? How deeply cunning? Who do you think you are hurting? Whom have you hurt all your life except yourself? Look at your condition! Is it incidental that you are like this?

What are you noting down? What are you noting down? How stupid can you be? You stand by the shore of the Ganges and you take notes? Is that what you do when you stand by the side of Ganges? Or do you plunge into the river? What are you noting down? Whom are you deceiving? But you will not plunge into the river. All this is just so that you don't have to get wet. You don't have to dissolve! You don't have to surrender! The fellow who takes notes by the sides of Ganges has just one purpose in mind. He doesn't want to get wet. That is his only objective. Nothing else.

Do you know the fire of attention? When you deeply, honestly want it, the body cannot move, you can't even breathe! Even breath slows down. How is your body moving? How are you fidgeting? It strikes you. You can't even move. You don't even bat an eyelid. You are just struck. But No. With you, everything is moving. Such a stupid mind.

I am assuring you, you can't even breathe when the Truth stares at you. Even that much of movement stops itself. You are just stupefied, as if you are dead! You are gone! You don't scratch your ear! And when you are scratching your ears, you cannot hear the Truth. It doesn't happen that way. It requires a particular etiquette. Nothing of you is permitted there. No movement, no thought, nothing of you. You are thinking, you can't enter. You are moving, you can't enter. You can enter only if you are dead. Absolutely dead. But you will not allow yourself to die. This or that and all your movements are mechanisms to keep the mind alive, keep it going. What conspiracy is this? And a conspiracy against yourself. Can there be any other

enemy except yourself? Your face is the story of your life.

Look at your sorry faces. Look at it. For once, look at it. Look at yourself in the mirror. Not as others look at you. “Am I looking pretty?” No. Look at yourself and ask yourself, “What is this? What have I made of myself? Why are these eyes like this? What has happened to these eyes?” Look at yourself in the mirror, just your face, and then if you want to cry, cry! Cry at your condition. There is nothing but despair. There is nothing but fear. Nothing but suspicion.

Have you looked at the face of a Saint, even a good picture of a Saint? Then why must you look like this? And you think you look good? You look awful. You look pitiable. Look at your face. Why have you brought yourself to this condition? And then with this face, with these eyes, with this mind, you are asking, “How can I know the Truth?” Will you know the Truth with this kind of a mind?

You invite an ordinary guest in your house, you clean your house, and you prepare a proper place for him. And here you are inviting the most extraordinary guest, with this mind? Will He sit there? When you look at your ordinary elders and you want to offer them your ordinary respect, you do not stare at them. That’s a part of your ordinary etiquette. Even there the eyes must know a particular way, even in the world the eyes must know the particular way of dealing. If someone looks at you in a particular way, you will say, “Why are you staring?” And what kind of eyes you would need with that extraordinary?

Do you have those eyes? With these eyes can you look at Him? Even in the world, you require some training, some basic decency. But There you think that you can move with all your rubbish, all your indecency? Even when you are having one of your regular, trivial, petty conversations, it requires some attention. Even your petty friends will feel bad if you do not attend to them. But you think you can listen to the Truth without any attention? What illusions? Grand illusions!

Even your basic ordinary text books that you used to clear your exams, even they required that you read them five times, ten times. Just to get some ordinary marks. But here you come and say, “I have read two pages of Krishnamurti’s book,” the entire week! Whom are you fooling? Your history book, you read ten times, so that somebody may give you a certificate that you have passed. But you think you can just glance over the *Japuji* and you

will pass. You will cross the bridge. Huh? Fifty times you have solved your problems in mathematics and physics just to get a passing percentage.

And here you think, just by having a cursory look at some paper, you can cross over. How will you cross over? When even this world requires a certain effort, a certain training, a certain dedication, do you understand what kind of dedication and effort you require There? Two pages a week; that's what you have to offer and you want to buy the Immeasurable, with this much of effort?

Your ordinary, rupees five hundred a month tuition, even that you would attend three days a week. Would you not? Would you not? And you would rush in the evenings and in the early mornings, even that you would do three days, four days a week. And here you cannot come four days a month. And then you ask me what the inner world of a mystic is like. How does the mystic just know? What is Faith? What is the state of the Faithful?

And this is what you have to offer. Not even four days a month. One small finger will have some problem, and the doctor will tell you to come for physiotherapy, three days a week and you will rush to the physiotherapist. Three days a week you will rush to the physiotherapist. One small finger. And what about your entire being that is rotten? Which physiotherapist will cure you? Suffering is dripping from your face.

Why don't you take care of yourself for your own sake?

The eyes. Seriously, the eyes. You don't look, it appears you want to penetrate. Sharp instruments that want to tear the object apart. These are not the eyes of a Lover. How will you know Love? Dirty eyes. These are the eyes of a butcher. The way he would look at a goat.

The saint is not obliged to conform to your expectations

‘In what direction am I going, how shall I find that road?
I hope they will send me a map before it’s too late,
or it is all over for me. My breath all gone to
waste.’

~ Laleshwari

Question: Lalla had surrendered all her life to That. Now, why this confusion? Why is she saying that a road is still to be found? Why is she asking for a map? Why is she saying that it might be too late? Why is she afraid that her breath might all be gone to waste?

Acharya Prashant: The mind will go where it has to go. A surrendered mind is still mind. There is a beautiful line from the scripture ‘Drig Drishya Viveka’. It says, “यत्र यत्र मनोयाति तत्र तत्र समाधयः” (Wherever the mind goes, there is the Samadhi). It does not say that the mind goes nowhere, that the mind is not wandering at all. It is saying, “यत्र यत्र मनोयाति तत्र तत्र समाधयः”

Mind is still going. What else the mind will do? Thoughts are still there. Will you change the mental apparatus, the brain, the cells, the way you are physically configured? No, that continues. But all that continues in peace. States of mind keep changing, yet you are in peace. To realize does not mean that the mind will now be in some constant, ideal state. The states of mind will keep changing, they have to, and they must. That’s the fun of life, *Leela*.

Sometimes you will be angry, sometimes you will be sad, sometimes you will be happy, sometimes you will sleep, sometimes you will wake up, sometimes you will be tired, sometimes you will be energetic and refreshed, yet there would be something within which would be untouched by all the changing states of mind. Sometimes you might be worried as well, which is alright.

Something very subtle changes. It is not as if you develop giant shoulders or big thigh muscles after liberation. It is not gross. It is not a thing of display.

It is something very-very internal, very subtle. Yes, its fragrance spreads. But on the surface things might remain just the same.

Somebody once asked a master, “What did you do before liberation?” He said, “Well, I used to get up in the morning, chop some wood, take the wood to the market, sell it, bring some food, eat it and sleep.” The questioner said, “Right, right, right! That was a very ordinary life before realization. Now tell us, what do you do after liberation?”

The master said, “Things have totally changed. Nothing is the same. Nothing is the way it used to be.” The questioner said, “I am very curious to know this. Now tell us that what you do?” He said, “Now I get up in the morning, I go to the jungle, I chop some wood, take it to the market, sell it, get some food, eat it and sleep. And I tell you that everything has changed.” Now, obviously the one who is asking the question does not understand. He is at a loss. What has changed?

That which has changed is very, very subtle. The master is right. Everything has changed. But nothing has changed. Do not indulge in image formation. Do not think that enlightened women like Lalla look differently, or behaves differently. You will never get it that way. And that is the reason why you will never realize realization, because you have images about it. You keep demanding the fulfilment of those images.

You say, “Unless somebody looks like this or behaves like this, how can he be enlightened? There are certain things that a realized man must do, and there are certain things that a realized man must not do.” And you have very nicely set up all those images. Existence is not there to conform to your images. Enlightenment will not agree to your patterns.

You will see a common man selling wood in the market, buying some food, and peacefully eating and sleeping. It will simply not occur to you that he might be totally at peace, because that is not the image you carry. The image that you carry is of some grand man, with probably a halo, a nice multicolored aura around his head, and there is an army of worshippers behind him which also includes all the animals.

Don't you carry images? Don't you think that this is how a realized man should look? And you wonder a lot. “Why is Kabir saying that he is sad?” Kabir repeatedly says that he is very sad, and Bulleh *Shah* repeatedly says that he is crying, and here is Lalla, who is asking if her life is going to waste?

Why the map is not coming? And all such things. And you say, “These are such ordinary things. It is for ordinary mortals to wonder whether they would be shown the way. Why is a realized Saint like Lalla saying this?”

Lalla is Lalla. Lalla is not the Lalla of your images, and if your images clash with her words, then you should know what is false. The words are there. What is false? Images. Drop your images. You think realization is some kind of a grand event, after which the man starts walking differently, and great gods come to bless him, and he becomes capable of miracles. If he will touch the dead, they will come alive. And you have read fantastic stories like these, so that’s what you think. It is so difficult for you to accept that realization only makes you more ordinary, very-very ordinary, and so ordinary that you can’t even be noticed.

That is the most unacceptable part about the great. They often say very ordinary things, and if we come to know of their life-facts, they are filled with instances of their ordinariness. So what do we do? We delete those instances. Or we do what we are doing right now. We question them, “Why is this woman behaving so ordinarily? How can she say that she is feeling lost, sad, and wondering whether anything is happening or not?” And if we come to know that a holy man was doing things that only ordinary people do, we take great care that these things should not reach the public, otherwise the entire image is in danger.

“Oh my god! He was involved with a woman? How is it possible?” What do you think he should be involved with? Trees, rivers, animals. What exactly do you want? “Oh my god! He was consuming alcohol?” Why, only you can consume alcohol? “Oh my god! He forgot?” Why not? Does he carry a five TB hard disk inside his brain? We have even gone to the extent of claiming that our great men didn’t even have blood in their veins. “Blood is for ordinary people.” Jains say that milk used to circulate in the body of their holy men. You cut their skin and milk would come out. Hindus say that their holy men chose the time of their death. “Only ordinary people die randomly, circumstantially. If one is holy, he must be in complete control of the entire existence.” Drop these images.

The flower is holy. So ordinary. Whatever you come across as extraordinary, is unholy. Everything around is holy because it is just the way it is, ordinary. The Sun is so holy. It is a dance of ordinariness, very ordinary, very-very ordinary. Do you understand what ordinariness means? Ordinariness means

being just that which you are, your nature finding expression. And it finds expression in the various elements. It finds expression in the way you talk, breathe, eat, and live. There is no need to try to be special, or look for somebody special, or look for signs of specialty. None of that means anything.

L 1: Sir, can a realized one know whether someone in front of him is realized or not? Because as you said, we have images about the realized one, but the realized he can observe who is realized?

AP: How does this information help you?

L 1: Maybe the realized one is not bothered about anything. He is just observing whether he is realized or not, but he is not bothered about it.

AP: He is not observing even all that. What you are saying is alright as an aphorism, that only a realized eye can identify another realized one. It is alright. But how does it help us? Does it help us in realizing anything?

L 1: It helps us in a way that what we call as ‘realization’ is obviously not realization now, because what we will observe will not be ‘realization’ as claimed by others.

AP: There are a thousand ways in which we have tried to bring the holy man in the purview of our ego. There are some religious traditions that say that the last holy man has already come, and no one can come after him. There are some who say that the next one who will come, will carry certain signs. In a thousand and one ways we have tried to identify the special marks and characteristics of the holy man. Some say that when the holy man will come, his mother will die. And if his mother is yet alive, then he is not holy.

I do not know what it means to some ambitious man, who is pretending to be holy. Mothers should be a little more cautious. But because at some point we are deeply aware of our impotency when it comes to finding out the real from the fake, we try to act on formula. We try to act on some kind of heuristics that if these signs are there, then this man or the woman is realized.

The search for these signs only shows that we do not know. Had you known, why would you need signs? And it is a great method to say that the last prophet has already come, and after him god is not going to send anyone. Who is a prophet? A messenger of god. So, the last one has come, and after him god says, “I’m done. I have dispatched the last letter.”

Love letters are always coming. If it is the last letter, it would probably a breakup letter. I am sure that a prophet cannot be a breakup letter. God is always sending them. You say that god loves you, then why would he ever send a last letter? Times are changing, and times are changing because he wants the time to change. Right? So he would also send a new man who is more suited to the time, with a revised edition of the book, in a new language. Why would god say that the last man and the last book have already been sent? If god really loves you, he will keep on sending you more and more gifts, more suited to you, more suited to the times.

But because we are unable to identify the next one, so what do we say, “The next one is never going to come.” Or we say, “If the next one comes, then he must carry these signs.” And when you do not find these signs, then you are heartbroken. “Oh my god! The world is such a bad place.” Or if you find something like this, then again you are befuddled. “How can Lalla behave in this way?”

Lalla behaves in ten more ways that will be difficult for you to accept. She does not have any obligation to meet your expectations. I repeat, if she clashes with your expectations, then you must know what is false.

Lalla, or your expectations?

MYTH OF SELF-ENQUIRY

The Myth of Self- Enquiry

Acharya Prashant: Strange is the mind of man. It fears nothing more than that which it loves the most. Every movement, every desire, just everything about the mind is an attempt towards freedom. And how the mind wants to escape away, when really confronted with freedom.

On one hand, we devise a thousand ways and desperate methods to somehow come to the Truth and then we ensure that none of those methods succeed. We spend an entire lifetime chasing that which is so easily available, and to ensure that the chase continues, we deny and defy its instant availability. Those who have Loved, those who had Compassion, wanted to help us. A thousand hints they gave to us. Nothing more than hints can anyway be given. Truth or Freedom are not objects that can be transferred from one hand to the other; what they are can only be a matter of very subtle gesturing. The method of Self-Enquiry is one such hint. The Upanishads say that ‘Koham’ (Who am I?) is a most important question, probably the only question of importance.

The Upanishads speak from their Silence, from where the Rishi is sitting and we hear from our noises, from where we are sitting. It must be, first of all, very obvious that we are bound to misinterpret and misunderstand. It has become fashionable in spiritual circles these days, to keep talking of ‘Who am I?’ ‘Koham?’ And variously it is said that the mind experiences a certain peace on asking this question, that there can be no answer to this question, or that the only right answer to this question is that I am Brahm, or Atman or that one can remain only silent when this question is asked. A lot of such things are said, but tell me, who can ever ask, “Who am I?” Does the universe ever say, “Who?” Does the flowing river say, “Am?” Do Earth and sky say, “I”? The moment one says, “Who am I?” or even “Who?” one is already established in his particular identity. Is it possible to ask any question when one is not in a particular state of consciousness? Would this question remain, for example, in deep sleep, or even when the questioner changes – just a fickle change of mood?

If self-enquiry becomes a method, then asking, “Who am I?” only reinforces the ‘I’, because he is the enquirer, he is the questioner. The more you ask,

“Who am I?” the more you are standing on your ‘I’ position. And standing on your ‘I’ position, whatever you ask will not take you away from that position. Going away from that position is not a matter of acting from that position. It is just a matter of instantaneous dropping.

Continuing with all my identities, what do I mean by asking, “Who am I?” and people come up and say that when the question, “Who am I?” is asked, then I have no answer. Really so? When you are asking, “Who am I?” at that moment if somebody calls out your name, won’t you respond? You are deeply engrossed in any method, any method, and in that moment, somebody touches you... You are engaged in methods of meditation, you are engaged in methods of self-enquiry, a thousand methods are in circulation these days; somebody comes to you and touches you, don’t you immediately respond? Somebody calls out your name, don’t you react? What does that show? It shows that you already know who you are. And who are you? You are the body that has been touched. You are the name that has been called. Now this is quite strange, in fact, this is hypocritical! I already know who I am, I am quite convinced about it, and yet I am enquiring, “Who am I? Who am I?”, and not only am I enquiring, ‘Who am I?’, I also have a pre-set answer with me, which is that there can be no answer to this. So I convince myself that to this question, I should write, ‘no answer’ and that is the right answer. Such are the deceptive games of the mind.

I would again like to ask the practitioners of this so-called method, “Do you have any right to ask, ‘Who am I?’ when you are firmly entrenched in your I-identities? I already know who I am, the proof of that is if I am given a sheet of paper and asked to write fifty statements beginning with ‘I am...’, I will be able to write fifty-one. “I am a father, I am a son, I am angry, I am an Indian, I am going somewhere, I am six feet tall, I am a diabetic, I am wonderful, I am Atman, I am the vigyanmaykosh.”

Whatever you want to write, you may write. But would there be anybody who would leave that sheet blank? Oh, I am assuming a bit of honesty. You can indeed leave that sheet blank if it has been fed into you that you must leave that sheet blank. And a lot of such things have indeed been fed into us. The fellow would then say, “I am so smart that I am not going to fill this sheet. I am so smart that I am not going to fill this sheet because I can have no identity! I am wise and the wise one can have no identity.”

What is this whole deceptive game? You ask yourself a question which is not

your question at all. Do you have any confusion or doubt regarding who you are? Aren't we all fully convinced about who we are? Are we or are we not? And don't give theoretical answers, look into your lives. When your wife calls you as her husband, do you have any doubt about your identity? Yes? When there is a headache, do you ever say, "The ache is not unto me, for I am not the head." Does it ever happen? We are fully sure about where we stand, and then comes a question to us which is not at all a question arising from an honest observation of facts, from seeing that what I think is not squaring up with what I observe.

Comes a question to us, which is not our question and along with the question comes an answer to us which is not our answer and it is such a nice entertainment.

Ask yourself: "Who am I?"

Answer yourself: "I do not know."

Result: "Proven that I am spiritual."

Ask yourself again: "Who am I?"

Answer: "I am the infinite Silence."

Proven: "You are wise."

First of all, have we come to a point where there is such desperation and dismay in the mind that we are brought to question the fundamentals? And that kind of fundamental desperation in which the mind can question even its own foundations is possible only when one is firstly enquiring into the facts of living. Solid, hard, obvious, visible, and present facts. Asking imaginary and hypothetical questions is no substitute to honest observation.

You have to ask, "Why am I not in a good mood right now?" And when I say you have to ask this, I am not proposing this as a method. I am saying, you do not like your mood right now, so you are in any way not alright with it. There are very few people who are alright in their skins. We are uncomfortable, restless and that restlessness is the only method. From there must one begin because except for that, there is no reality.

If you begin from anywhere else, you are beginning from an imaginary point. You are beginning from a false centre and when you are beginning from a false point, it will be very difficult to come to the Truth. You must begin only and exactly from where you are, for there can be no other place to begin

from. And where are you? You are here. Forget all the spiritual tenets. You are here. And here is this place, this time. And when I am speaking to you, I am speaking to you, the mortal body. Forget all about Atman and Brahm. You are here, sitting upon these chairs, wearing clothes. Hearing, using aids called ears. Watching, using stuff of flesh called eyes. Experiencing, using a mass called brain. And this the only fact, the only reality. And apart from this if you are talking of anything, you are just deluding yourself.

Unfortunately, in the name of spirituality, only this is avoided. All so-called spirituality is just a ploy to escape the fact of your living. You are a grandmother now and you too want your share of entertainment, and it is nice entertainment to pick up your yoga mat and escape to some point, a little away from the humdrum, from the chaos of family life and do something physical. Now, this were wonderful had it come from a clear realisation of one's situation. Had the grandmother said, "I am frustrated with the way I live, I do not, at all, like this mundane routine. So I want to get up and hop away in the morning, try some girlish outfits, do something that will keep my body fit and make me feel alive." Then it would have been wonderful. Now the morning jaunt is coming from a clear realisation that life is not alright. But instead of that, the stuff in the morning, the meditation and the yoga mats and all, they come as a spiritual pursuit. Now, that's not quite honest. And what begins from dishonesty cannot take you to the Truth.

Do not ask, "Who am I?" See that you already are a lot. You are a thousand and one identities, what is this surprising thing about asking, "Who am I?" Who does not know who he is? Except in settings like this, is there any place where you do not know who you are? The postman comes, don't you know who you are? Yes? The doctor calls out your name, don't you know who you are? You are encashing a cheque, don't you know who you are? Or would you take a cheque in somebody else's name? At every moment in daily living you very well know who you are. But when you reach a meditation hall, a shrine, then you suddenly forget who you are. Then you start asking, "Who am I? Who am I?" Whom are we deceiving? Whom are we deceiving?

Begin from what you know yourself to be. And there is no obligation to begin. Do not begin at all if you are alright with what you think yourself to be. Spirituality is not a divine mandate. You don't have to be spiritual. You don't have to ask profound questions. If you are alright with the way that you are living then why waste your time here? And I'm serious about this. Go

have fun. It's March, and the flowers are blooming, go have fun! But we are not alright with the way we are. Begin from there. No one likes to be not-alright. Do you like to be not feeling well? Do you like it when something appears to be amiss? Do you like it when there is something buzzing at the back here (indicating the mind)? Do you like it when something feels a little hollow here (indicating the mind) or here (indicating the heart)? And I'm talking body, I am not talking Paramaatma. Do you like it? Do you like it when you do not want to get up from the bed in the morning? Do you like it when you are not able to do what you know to be right?

That's the fact of our living. The incessant struggles, the conflicts, the contradiction, the betrayals, the hopes, the resolutions, and the desires; that's living – direct and simple. And you do not need a teacher, a guru, or a granth (Scripture) to tell you that. You are alive and when you are alive, you are alive in experiences. Aren't you already experiencing a lot? And I repeat: If you are alright with the experience, if the experiencer is okay, and I'm not even saying blissful, I am saying 'okay', If the experiencer is okay, then trudge on! Keep hopping merrily!

If the experiencer is not okay, if the experiencer feels inhibited, unexpressed, suffocated, stressed, then without a method directly look into your condition. And I repeat: Even that does not require the support of any teacher or any scripture. Yours is the restlessness, and yours is the eye that can see what you are experiencing. Just simple honesty. First of all, you will have to accept that you are restless and the moment you say you are restless, the question 'Who am I?' is answered.

Who am I?

Audience: Restless.

AP: I am restless. Now that question has no value. Who am I? I am restless. And when you accept that you are restless, when you acknowledge it, when you name it rightly... We live in names, so when you name it rightly then the next step, by itself, opens up. You don't have to go into some esoteric realms of consciousness. You don't have to close your eyes. You don't have to experience blue lights or inner vibrations. People do all of that. Things start vibrating in different parts of the body. Some reptile starts rising up the spine. Various things start happening. Mostly it is gastric trouble.

Just see where you stand, and only you can see where you stand. Only you.

The other can only encourage you. The other can only stand as an affirmation, as a proof. The other can only keep saying, "If I can know, then my being is a validation of the Truth." You too can know. But the other cannot do it for you. And when I am saying, "do it for you," even that is an over-statement because nothing needs to be done. You only have to know what you are already doing. Nothing extra need to be done. No method is needed. When it is said that no method is needed, what is implied is that there is no task to be done. Had there been anything left to be accomplished, had any extra measure been required, then you would have needed to travel a distance, exert yourself, and do something. Now what do you want to do? You are already doing so much. Just know what you are doing and the doer is always, always in a position to know what he is doing. And except for the doer nobody is in that position.

It's your life, you'll have to have your answerers. It's another matter that the answers that you will get upon honest observation are the answers of entire mankind. They will be very-very general answers. Yet very peculiar, specific and unique to you. You may get common cold, you may get flu. Now the flu virus is a very general virus. The same virus affects everybody, the whole mankind, even the animal kingdom. But when you get flu, is your suffering general or personal?

Audience: Personal.

AP: Personal, right? Are you getting this? So even though the mind of mankind is one, but because you know yourself to be a 'person', which is very much alright – we know ourselves as persons and we cannot just leap out of the person. When 'you' experience flu then your experience of suffering is a very personal experience. Yes, when you go to the doctor, he looks at you and he knows that he has looked at two thousand such cases but to you the two thousand cases do not matter, and they must not matter; why must they matter to you?

To you what must be important is your own situation. Talk only about that. Do not talk about this and that. Do not talk about what happens after death, do not talk about the Love between Krishna and Radha, do not talk about why Jesus was crucified, do not talk about whether this or that was enlightened. A fellow comes, so very restless, and at the end of the session he says, "Sir, can you speak on Osho?" I said, "Sir, can you speak on yourself?" Why must you be so bothered about the world, are you own travails not

enough?

When you honestly acknowledge where you stand, without mincing words, without the need for duplicity, without the need to prove yourself right, without the need to prove yourself wise or spiritual, then you do not see, what you suspected you would see. You know that is why we close our eyes, we already believe, we believe that we already know what we would see if the eyes are opened. No. Open your eyes. I assure you, you would not see what you think you are going to see.

Open your eyes. Live in the immediate. The immediate. Do you know what is immediate? Your face is immediate. Why do you want to know the face of God? Look at your face. I am talking of something as ordinary as your face. Do you ever look at your face? Do you know what is immediate? Your clothes are immediate. Why are you wearing these clothes? Your body is immediate. The thoughts, they too. Your relationship with the hawker is immediate, your relationship with your housemate is immediate. The way you negotiate at the grocery store – that is immediate. Have you looked at yourself when you are so absorbed in those TV serials? That is immediate.

Spirituality is not a method to shield your ways of living. You cannot say that you have meditated for half an hour in the morning and now you can ‘carry-on’ with life. Meditation is not life. What you call as ‘meditation’ is some kind of a suspension of life. You have kept life aside, you are saying, “I am stealing half an hour from life.” Now this is too bad. Instead of twenty-four hours, now you are saying that your day is twenty three and a half hours. Half an hour you have created a different environment, almost an artificial one, which is not life at all. In your daily living do you otherwise keep your eyes closed? Then what is all this business of sitting with your eyes closed? Your eyes are not even open! And you want to close them down. Is that spirituality?

In the ‘Who am I’ method, you are looking for an answer - not even looking for an answer, you are definite about an answer - when you don’t even have the question. In meditation you are closing your eyes when your eyes are not even open. What is going on?

And the remaining twenty-three and a half hours you continue to be who you are. In fact, you take that half an hour out so that you can be more efficient, more dedicated, more composed in your pursuits during the twenty-three and a half hours. You say, “I want to be a better shopkeeper.” Of course, you

don't enter into meditation to question the whole business about being in that shop. You don't enter into meditation to ask yourself how you feel sitting in that shop and why you have to push yourself, every morning, to go into that shop. That is not the intention. The intention is that your shop must do better. You want to continue that which has been continuing since centuries. You don't want to disrupt it, you don't want to break out of the cycle. Instead of sitting in the shop and closing your eyes, open your eyes and see, "What is this whole thing? What am I doing here? Is this what I was born for? Is this where I want to die? Is this how I want to have lived?" And I am not pushing these questions into your mind. All I am saying is, "Friend, you already have these questions. Acknowledge them." And if you don't have these questions, I have said it thrice, I say it again. If you don't have these questions then don't bother yourself. If you don't have these questions, don't bother yourself. If you feel alright, comfortable, nice, settled, then continue feeling settled. Nothing better than that. Most of us do not feel settled. Most of us feel uprooted. And if you are feeling uprooted then that feeling is there with you, in front of you. Live with that feeling, know it rightly. Don't shy away from it. Say that it exists. Don't pretend as if everything is hunky-dory.

This basic honesty is the question, 'Who am I?' It is not asked. It is the subtlest of witnessing. It is not asked because the moment it is asked, you will be the questioner and you have no right to question because you already know the answer. If you ask the question then it is a dishonest question because you have no questions, you only have well-settled answers and conclusions. The shopkeeper must not ask, "Who am I?" He has no right to ask. He must just know what it means to be a shopkeeper and this knowing is Koham. This knowing is extremely subtle. The Rishi felt the need to communicate it. Communication happened through words. Some word was given, the word that was used was Koham – Who am I? Now, don't take it literally. He did not mean that you have to ask, "Who am I?" It is so vulgar.

'Who am I?' only means: Know what is going on. And I repeat that even knowing is not required because you already know, there is nobody here who does not know his real situation. You can pretend that you do not know, but everybody knows. You are afraid and the proof of that is that your heart starts beating when you do not receive that particular phone call for four hours. You are already afraid, aren't you? Your child has not called you since four hours. And see the palpitations that you get. Now, have you been informed

that some harm has come to the child? No, no such information. Yet you are anxious. And what does that prove? That anxiety is already sitting in you, it does not have to depend upon the arrival of some news. That anxiety is not contingent upon a fact. No fact, just that the child hasn't called and you start expecting the worst.

So 'Who am I?' is akin to knowing what is happening. Just know what is happening, that is 'Who am I' and that has to go on continuously, and I take back my words because it is already going on continuously. Spirituality involves no practices, no compulsions, and no dogmas. Otherwise it is just bigotry. Spirituality, essentially, is about telling you that whatever is to be known is already known. Wherever you were to reach, you are already there. The Highest is already in your pocket. The Truth is where you are already standing. You already are that which you have always wanted to be. Hence there can be no question of spiritual achievement, there can be no question of reaching somewhere. Had you not known what I am saying, I would not have been able to say this. Actually what I'm saying is quite strange, yet you very well know that it is acceptable. How am I able to talk to you? I am able to talk to you because you know what I am saying and you do not know it because I have told it to you, you know it without anybody having ever told it to you. This is uncaused knowledge. This the essence of our Being. This is the Truth. Truth that nobody needs to tell you. Truth that is seated in your heart. I am only reiterating. I am only bringing the news again to you. I am only reconfirming to you what you already know. And if you do not know what I am saying then I have no way to tell it.

Do you get this? It is that simple. If you are sweating then know that you are sweating. If love swells up in your heart, know that you are overflowing. And when you look at that overflow, when you look at that joyous exuberance, then you cannot suppress it. You can suppress something only when you maintain a distance from it. Suppression is so unfair. Have you seen, how people who want to cheat you, avoid coming in contact with you? Or even if they are standing in front of you, they would often avoid eye contact. You can be unfair to something, you can deny something its natural and proper place only if you are away from it. So look at yourself in the eye. When fear arises, when pain arises, when jealousy or insecurity arises, look at it. And when I'm saying, "Look at it," I mean look at it with love. Do not look at it with rejection. You have no right to suppress yourself. Because you cannot

suppress yourself. You are the only reality that you know. How can you get rid of that? Even if you are getting rid of that, you will have to start from what you are. You are your only instrument. Without yourself, where would be this session, where would be all the knowledge, where would be all the Upanishads? Are you getting it?

The way does not go through a book, a scripture, or a master. The way goes through you, only through you. And you know the way. Nobody needs to tell you the way, you know the way. Yes, if you feel a little apprehensive, if you feel a need for support and encouragement, then you can go to a friend, who could be a Teacher, and he could just say, "Go ahead." That's his only role, to say, "Go ahead." But he cannot tell you, "Go ahead in that particular direction."

Are you getting it?

And it's a funny thing, because when you go to the Teacher, you would often already know the answer, you go to him only for validation and that's his only role, to do nothing. To just say, "Yes." The Teacher is just a big 'Yes'. Mr. Yes. Oh, or Miss Yes. One has to be careful about such things.

There is a lot that the Teacher would say no to, but he would not ever say no because when you are doing something that needs to be met with a no, then you will not go to the Teacher. So the opportunity where the Teacher can say no actually never arises. Whenever you want to continue with your mischief, have you seen how you avoid the Teacher? And if you are going to the Teacher, obviously there is very little mischief left. So he won't have to take any corrective measures. You are going to him, sitting in front of him, you already know all your answers, that is why you are sitting in front of him. You are already honest and you are already acknowledging, you are not afraid, you have nothing to hide that is why you are sitting in front of him. When you have a lot to hide, then you don't go to the Teacher. So how will he then say no? Then he can keep saying no from a distance and you can keep running away so that you don't hear the no. You'll say, "Did he say no?" No, no.

It is an embarrassment, it is ridiculously simple. It is really an embarrassment why we have met here. It is so awkward. All this, camera, this mic, this setting, this Kurta, this gathering, all the mantras, its pure embarrassment.

A fellow must know his heartbeat. A fellow must know his face. As a so-

called teacher, my job is not to tell you the Truth. Who am I to tell the Truth to the Truth? My job is just to hit you hard when you are obsessed with the false. My job is just to hit you hard when you talk 'big' stuff.

Look at how you squirm, look at the immature restlessness, look at the root of all your questions and then you ask big questions. Only rarely have I encountered honest questions, do you know what honest questions are like? "Sir, why am I an idiot?" Now, that is an honest question. That is probably the only honest question. Instead you ask for the difference between *Karmyog* and *Karmsanyas*, and there is an entire video dedicated to that. And some people actually go and watch that video. You are the one who thinks three times before leaving twenty rupees for the waiter in the restaurant, you are that one and what are you taking of? *Kamsanyas*. You are the one, who pinched hundred rupees from the housemaids salary last month and you are asking, "What all kinds of Samadhi are there?" I just need to wave a hundred rupee note at you, that's the answer. You are the one who would not let his daughter go to study in some distant college in some distant city and you are asking, "What is the meaning of equanimity?" Equanimity? Sometimes *Zen* is the only answer. Pick up the glass of water and throw it at your face. This is the answer. This is the only spiritual answer that there can be. Wife beaters, neighbor haters, animal eaters, all kinds of specimens gather and then they start quoting Ashtavakra.

There was one fellow from a university, occupying a top position, a Vice Chancellor. Now a man from a university - that too a V.C. - he comes and shows me his card and the card is full of all kinds of stuff, this, that, a thousand degrees, half of which I suspect were fake. And after showing me that card, which contained his entire kundali, he said, "I have come to ask." I said, "What?" He said, "Who am I?"

What is that card for? Don't you know who you are? BRCS, DCK, NPO, LRCD. But he asks, "Who am I?"

I repeat, 'Who am I' is not a question. Self-enquiry is not a process. Kindly do not abuse the Upanishads. Never take the words of a wise one *literally*. He has an impossible task to do. He is expressing his Silence through words, the words must be read in that regard.

By saying ten times, "Who am I? Who am I?" you will not forget who you are. You very well know who you are and there is nothing wrong with that. Start from there itself. Starting from there itself is the real 'Who am I'. I

would really be cautious of someone who says, “I asked, ‘Who am I?’ and did not get an answer.” A Ramana Maharishi has the right to say that. We don’t have the right to say that. When you ask, “Who am I?” you must get an answer. In fact, you must get more answers than you can handle because you, in fact, do have more identities and personalities than you can handle.

Don’t ask, just know. Know. You are living in them, as them. Know. And even saying, ‘know’ is redundant because you already know. There is nobody here who does not know his mischief. There is nobody here who does not know what he is hiding and suppressing. Now, will you come out of the closet?

Will you show your real face? And that is spirituality. Or will you keep pretending. Of course, you can keep pretending, if pretending gives you some spiritual bliss.

MYTH OF GOD

The real meaning of 'God helps those who help themselves'

Question: 'God helps those who help themselves.' Is there something that I can do? Do I have any responsibility towards helping myself? Is not the act of helping myself against surrender?

Acharya Prashant: A few things need to be clear in this regard. It says, 'God helps those who help themselves.' What is coming first here, your attempt to help yourself or the help of God?

L 1: Your attempt to help yourself.

AP: That is the misconception. It is usually construed that when we will help ourselves then God will come to help us. We have then put the action of God in a cause-effect limit. Effectively, we have built a handle upon God. We have said, "I know how to switch-on the act of God. I know how to make Him help me." How to switch Him on? Start helping yourself, and then He will come to help you. Now that makes it very easy it is programmed and mechanical.

This is exactly how the ego operates. It thinks, it seriously thinks, that it can have a handle upon God as well. It seriously thinks that the beyond will operate as per its wishes. "I will help myself and thereby I will make Him help me." Now read this whole thing again.

'God helps those who help themselves.' Can it be read in a different light? The whole game of wisdom statements, spiritual statements is that, you are required to read them right, otherwise everything gets inverted. Not only misplaced, or displaced, or removed a little, but it takes a meaning that is totally opposite of the intended meaning. That is what we have done to all the wisdom sayings and Holy Scriptures, throughout the centuries. We have read them via the ego. We do not know any other means of operating. After all we cannot be suddenly a changed mind.

When I go to a holy book, after all I am the same man who went to the market, who went to the office, who went to the brothel. Or am I a different

one? My underlying tendencies are the same, and I am carrying them everywhere, and with those same tendencies I approach the holy book as well. I may pretend to be clean. I may say, “No, this is a very important moment and a very auspicious occasion, and I must read this book with full attention.” But in spite of all my claims and intentions, I am the same.

Man has put his dirty hands upon all the holy sayings, all the scriptures and all the words of wisdom. This is a perfect example. ‘God helps those who help themselves.’ It means that all your attempts to help yourself are powered by God. First comes God’s help and only then you can help yourself, because it is only through God’s help that you can know the real meaning of helping. Now understand this very carefully.

There would be then two types of help. The first type is- when you are helping yourself first, without accounting for God’s help, without caring for God’s help, without surrendering to God’s help, without even knowing the meaning of help. And that is what the entire world is doing.

We all have good intentions, at least toward ourselves. Right? No one deliberately wants to harm himself. We do want to help ourselves. But the more we want to help ourselves, the more we move towards devastation and destruction. It is because our help originates from ‘us’, and not from God. Not only does it originate from us, we are arrogant enough to claim that when we will try to help ourselves, God will be moved- in a way mandated to help me. As if I have cleared a qualification exam, as if I have passed an entry criteria, as if now I can go and stake a claim that now I am eligible for your help. “Why do you not give it to me?” As if God is a service provider. This is the first type of help.

This is how we all try to help ourselves, like a drunkard tries to help the world, like parents try to help their kids, like husband and wife try to help each other. They only end up devastating and killing each other. Like we move on certain paths thinking that these are good for us and we will be helped, and to our utter dismay, frustration, and surprise, we do not know what has happened. ‘I tried the best, I moved on seemingly the best path available to me, there was nothing missing in my intention or efforts, and yet I am suffering.’ You are suffering exactly because you tried to help yourself.

Not only did you try to help yourself, you also summoned God. “Now I am trying to help myself, you come and join me. It’s my car that I am pushing, you also push it from behind. It’s your duty. After all some wise man has said

that God helps those who help themselves. I am helping myself, you too come now. How can you violate this saying? My interpretation of this saying is bigger than God. So you come.” This is the first kind of help that we give ourselves.

Then there is another kind of help which starts from God and moves you. Here action doesn't come first, Grace comes first. And the mark of His Grace is that he never tells you what to do. This is one test that you can use. If ever God will speak to you, He will never tell you what to do. He will only tell you what it is like. He will only tell you what is. He will never tell you what to do. What to do, He always leaves upon you. Go and do what you want to do. I will only tell you what it 'is', because what 'is', is God. That is the only thing He can ever tell.

If ever you come across somebody who says, “God has commanded me to do this,” he knows nothing. God never commands you to do something, never, in fact God never commands you. The only way God ever helps you is by showing Himself to you, and He does not have a particular shape or appearance. He shows himself to you in the form of understanding. That is why the Upanishads say, 'Pragyanam Braham' (Understanding itself is God).

There is no God except 'understanding'. Or put it this way that God reveals himself to you in the form of understanding. Now you know, and whosoever knows can never tell what he has known, for the simple reason that only God can be known, and God cannot be described. That is the reason why those who know always fail in their attempt to describe, explain, articulate what they have known. They sing, they dance, it radiates from their being in a thousand ways, but still they are never able to express it fully.

Expression is always incomplete. So you want to express it more, and more, and more, and you want to sing more, and more, and more, it's never complete. That is the way God helps you. Now you know and once you know, whatever you do will be in the direction of your help, whatever you do will help you. His help has come, now you go ahead and do whatever you want to do, everything else is secondary. The biggest help has arrived, the entire caravan loaded with help has arrived. You want to gather a few things here and there, you are free to do that, go ahead.

It is because of His help that you can really help yourself.

So when you come to a situation when you are doing whatever you are doing,

and realizing that you are not the doer of it, and realizing that you cannot take the credit for it, then that is the moment when you also realize that the first mover is somebody else, that the first help came from somewhere else.

You asked, 'What is my responsibility towards myself? What is it that 'I' can do?' You do whatever you can do, remembering that you are not doing it. That is self-help. If you think that you are helping yourself, it becomes the first kind of help. Then instead of helping yourself, only harm will come to you.

Do whatever you want to do, but first understand what the meaning of 'self' is, and what the meaning of 'help' is, and then proceed, dance, the world is your stage. Is this clear? Understand what 'self' is and what 'help' is. In understanding this, you will dissolve. In understanding this, you will no more remain the doer of the action of help. Are you getting this?

Instead of running blindly with the intention to achieve something, with the objective of betterment or progress, pause and ask, 'In 'self-help', what is the 'self' and what is it that wants to be helped. How can He be helped? How can It be helped?' This pausing itself is God. This pausing won't happen without the help of God. This pausing is 'understanding', this pausing is 'freedom'. In this pausing lies unlimited opportunity to act in the appropriate way. In this pausing and in this freedom, whichever way you choose to act, is the appropriate way.

I am repeating this. God's help does not arrive to you in the form of an advisory: 'Go ahead son and do this.' Never, never, never. There is only one way God has to help you. God himself is the way. What is the way of God to help you? God. God has no other way. If God has a way, understand this, then there has to be a way other than God.

If a car is moving on a way, then 'the car' and 'the way' have to be separate. How can God have a 'way'? All of God's ways are God Himself. So the only way God will ever help you is by revealing Himself to you. And when he reveals Himself to you, can you be outside of Him? And if you are outside of God when God has revealed Himself to you, is it really God? An incomplete God you mean?

Will you remain yourself when the radiance of God shines in front of you? You are gone. There is nothing outside of God. The only way God helps you is by bringing you into Godliness. Now you are God. That is why

‘Pragyanam Braham’ (Understanding is God) and ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ (I am God) are so interrelated.

With understanding, you cannot remain what you are. If you say, “I am still what I used to be but I understand.” then you are lying. Understanding is total transformation and it is not a transformation from A to B. Understanding is transformation from A to nothingness. Understanding means, “Only understanding remains. I am no more. I am gone. When I am gone, how can I help myself? Now all that I am doing to help myself, all that seems to be happening to help me, is surely not my action, surely not my action.” Are you getting this?

Let the first be first. ‘You’ won’t come first. You cannot say that I will help myself, then God will help me. Let the first be first, He will help you. Getting this? That is your responsibility towards yourself. What? To allow yourself to be helped, that is your only responsibility towards yourself. Allow yourself to be helped. Till the time you are too eager to help yourself, God has fun. He says, “Fine you help yourself.”

Till the time you come up with such brilliant interpretation of sayings like these, God has a good time. He says, “Fine! He wants to help himself, let him help himself.” When you stop helping yourself is the moment you pause. You stopped helping yourself. All your movement is to help yourself. Just pause for a while. Just pause! The moment you pause, He reveals himself, and then proceed. Now whatever you are doing to help yourself is the action of God, it is powered by God. It will be fun. “Powered by God, I am helping myself.” Very good fun. Why? Because now you don’t need to help yourself.

Do you still need help? But it will be good fun. “I am trying to do this. I am trying to do that. You know there are important tasks to be done. I need to achieve my goals.” Good fun! The help has already come. The final point has already been reached. The race has been won. If you still want to do a sprint or a jog, then is okay.

Have you seen those runners who after winning still want to run a little more, here and there? It’s not running anymore. It’s dancing, it’s a celebration. Are they running anymore? The race has been won already, the help has arrived already. But because you are a runner, it doesn’t befit you to stop. So keep running. A little more hop, and a leap and a sprint. Something has to be done, so keep doing. But really, you require no more help. Really, your own intervention is no more required.

You are already doing the most that you can do to help yourself, but that is the first kind of help. Now pause. Now pause and pray that He helps you pause because even pausing cannot happen with your will. Left to you, you will say, "I will pause when I reach there. Alright let's pause at the thirty-second milestone. Now, the thirty-second milestone is gone. Fine, the next one, the next one." You never pause. Have you seen people like these? "Alright let's pause when we reach there." Targets are like Dhabaas and tea shops upon highways. You always feel like stopping at the next one.

Stop wherever you are. You are always moving in God. Wherever you are, He is. Stop wherever you are. Just pausing will be required, and you will see.

God neither judges nor can be judged

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

~ King James Bible (Mathew 7:1)

Acharya Prashant: *“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”*

Do not judge others so that you may not be judged.

Often these words from the Bible are interpreted to mean that if you judge others, then you too will be judged and that too, probably harshly, by God. That is not what these words mean.

See, that which we call as ‘I’, is not different from the world; it is an accumulation of the influences from the world. There is no way you look at yourself any differently from how you look at the world. Very simply these words mean that if you have a tendency to judge - which is to label - if you have a tendency to judge, then not only will you judge the world and others, you will also judge yourself.

God has not arranged a day of judgment. In fact God is not fond of judging you at all. God does not believe in time itself. How can he arrange some particular day in the future? As far as God is there, there is no future. So please get rid of the notion that judgment in any sense applies to the relationship between God and man. God never judges. In fact, the one who doesn’t judge is called God.

Judging is the prerogative of man, only man judges. God is beyond all judgments. Neither can he be judged, nor does he judge. He has no concern with these petty things: keep record, then initiate proceedings, then listen to the prosecution, then listen to the defense, then come to a judgment. God is not interested in all this. He is not at all a record keeper. He believes not in history, not in time, nothing.

It is just that the eye with which you look at others, you use the same eye to look at yourself. This also means that you are a part of your own world. You have created a dream world, of which you are a character.

Have you seen yourself dreaming? You dream and there are a hundred characters in your dream. And out of the hundred characters, you too are one of the characters. Has that not happened? Such is the world. We say, “The world consists of me and others.” No. The world consists only of others. You too are an ‘other’. The real one, you have no familiarity with.

You know just others. The one whom you call as ‘yourself’, he is too is just an ‘other’. He is not you. You are not what you think you are. You are grossly mistaken about yourself. Just as you do not know the world, just as you do not know others, you also do not know yourself.

Just as you keep judging, and keep judging wrongly, the others, you also keep judging, and keep judging wrongly, yourself.

Further it is said:

“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

That only exemplifies what we have just said. “The same eye with which you will look at others, you will also look at yourself.”

Remove God from all this. This is an excellent quotation on the functioning of the mind. Just do not bring God into the picture. You can pray to God that he helps you understand the mind, but do not make God an object of the mind. Pray to God that he helps you understand what is being said here. But remember what is being said here, is not being said about God. It is being said about your mind.

This notion that the God will judge, that too in the future, is a deeply flawed notion and is responsible for so much of human suffering. The results of your action are now. Out of ignorance you are unable to see them now. The wiser you are, the more you are able to reduce the gap between cause and effect. The wiser you are, the more clearly you are able to see that ‘karmfal (result of action)’ is right now. It does not hit you sometime in the future, it hits you right now. But because we are dumb and ignorant, so we realize it later. We realize it later.

A particular mosquito bites you, let’s say the dengue mosquito. Now you have been already struck by the disease. But you realize it only after your temperature rises and your platelet count drops and the doctor certifies that your platelet count has dropped. Then you say, “Oh my God! Now I am suffering.” The fact is that it all happened right in the moment of the bite. It is

just that you could not know it then.

It's useless to distinguish between cause and effect. Seen clearly, the cause and effect are simultaneous. But by creating a gap of time between cause and effect we allow ourselves the liberty of languishing. We say, "Whatever I am doing is today and the judgment will happen sometime in the future." The gap allows us a particular relaxation, a liberty.

The cunning mind says, "Well, you know, results are still some distance away. So why not enjoy till then? Why not have a little more pleasure? We will see when the result will come. Right now is the time to have a little more pleasure. We will see on the 'Day of Judgment'. Maybe a few tears will do. Maybe I can turn God a little sentimental. My husband never punishes me at least, whenever I cry. And God too is traditionally a male. Maybe I can really weep my heart out and make God a little lenient towards me."

The mind comes up with all these stupid ideas, just because we have separated cause and effect, just because we have postponed the judgment to the future. The judgment is never in the future, the judgment is right now and that too by yourself. God has left you to yourself. You keep judging yourself. You determine your own suffering. And when you are fed up of your suffering, then God says, "I was always available."

You determine what you want to do. God has no interest in judging you.

You cannot guess the ways of God

When your Lord said to the angels, “Indeed, I will make upon the Earth a successive authority.”

They said, “Will You place upon it one who will cause corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?”

God answered, “Indeed, I know that which you do not know.”

– Quran

Acharya Prashant: The ways of the Divine are mysterious. ‘Good’ and ‘bad’ are not the right words to be associated with them. When God says ‘Earth’ and when God says ‘successor’ it has to be understood that what is meant by these.

Earth, the entire universe, the whole creation, the entire existence is the work of God, is the expression of God. You could simply say that it is Godliness. God exists in the form of all this. But all this *prima facie*, does not look like God.

Now look at the contradiction. God exists in no ‘form’, other than the ‘form’ of the total alone. There is no particular ‘form’ that God can take, that is the reason why wise men have often and repeatedly said, “Do not try to give any form to God.” It is useless and foolish because his form is ‘total’. And the total cannot be represented. So whatever you will represent will be a botched up thing. It will mislead. Don’t do that.

But that is the only way God exists! God exists in a way that cannot be represented, and we as human beings, are beings of representation. Our senses operate in a way that we want the limited. The eyes look at the limited, the ears hear the limited, and we touch the limited.

Are you getting it?

This contradiction is variously called as the primal illusion or Satan or Maya. Maya is nothing but the name of this contradiction. What is the contradiction? I hope you are clearly understanding this.

We as beings of limitation, with our methods of cognition, cannot cognate

God; whereas all is God. In spite of being 'in God', we cannot know or see God, this is Maya. So we will call God by very-very different names, like the bed sheet, the fan, the wall, the bird. But the bird, in spite of being God, is not really God. Because the bird has a boundary. If you say the bird is God, then what is outside the boundary?

So the bird is God, and is not God.

Do you understand what the problem is in calling any limited being as God, and what the problem is in not calling it as God? "Is the bird not God?" Sorry Sir, everything is God. So the bird is God. "Alright. So the bird is God?" Sorry Sir, if the bird is God then what is outside the bird? This contradiction is Maya. We are born into this contradiction. Human beings are cursed and blessed with this contradiction.

Are you getting this?

Remember, this contradiction doesn't exist on its own. Even this contradiction is the very expression of God. "I will be everywhere, and yet I will not be seen." Don't you love to sing that one?

Listener: "हो भी नहीं और हर ज़ा हो, तुम एक गोरखधंधा हो" (*You are not anywhere, yet everywhere. You are a tricky business*)

AP: Not anywhere, yet everywhere. Then, there is that which understands this contradiction.

Remain fully with the first thing that we said. We said that the contradiction too comes from God. Now, we are moving into the second part. There is that which understands that contradiction. There is that which enjoys that contradiction. This too comes from God. It is not outside of God. It is easy for us to say that prophets come from God, but we often conveniently ignore or do not want to remember that Maya too comes from Him. It is His sweet will. From nowhere else has it come. In fact prophets have a definite lifetime. You say, 'Prophets'. There are no 'Mayas'! Because 'Maya' is immortal. You would have never heard the word 'Satans'. One 'Satan' is enough!

Satan is as immortal and as primitive as the existence itself. Avatars, saints, prophets have come and gone, that one Satan is still there, because he is coming directly from God. From nowhere else is he coming. You cannot fight with him.

Our entire problem is that we are limited beings that operate in the domain of

duality. So we must have a positive side and a negative side. We must have a black and a white. We must have a good and a bad. So very conveniently we start saying that the Avatar is good, and the Satan is bad. That the messenger brings us good news. That is how the Bible was written: "We are spreading the good news." That the messenger brings us good news whereas everything else is bad news. This is puerile.

There is no good news or bad news, all news is his news. All news is his news, how can there be anything good or bad about it? First of all accept that all news is his news, then you will realise that there can be nothing bad about it. The moment you say that there can be nothing bad about it, good is also gone. Good is also gone.

Now, a successor is being sent to Earth. This is a myth. These are not facts. These are pointers towards the Truth. These are higher than facts. When you listen to these small stories, do not argue with them because, in a sense, they never happened. You cannot argue with that which never happened.

When you say, "Something happened," you want to point towards a point in time. This never really happened at a point in time, this is the happening itself! This is the Truth which is always happening. It is there, it never happened. So don't try to verify it. Don't say 'Oh, did this really happen? Did God really send a messenger or a prophet?' Actually he never sent. Why? Because that was not in the past. God is not in time. Kindly do not forget the fundamentals. Time is in God. So how can you put a date on God's words? That fifty or hundred years back, God decided, "I need to send a messenger."

Will God operate in time? But that is the way the ignorant mind looks at these statements, these stories, these beautiful myths. And we say, "Once upon a time." It never happened in time! It is the happening. It is 'the happening'. That is the difference between fact and Truth. Facts happened. Truth is happening. Facts happen and are gone. Truth is always happening. Understand this.

So, God is sending a successor to Earth and the angels are asking, "Will You send someone who causes corruption, and who sheds blood?"

The angels are specialists. The angels specialize in only one thing. What is that? Sing the glory of God. The angels are limited, like all of us. Now don't come up and say, "But they are God's angels." They may be God's angels, we are also God's men! Same to same. We are all flowers of the same

garden. Don't discriminate.

So the specialized angels know only one thing, to sing the glory of God. "God is merciful, God is compassionate." But whenever anyone will sing the glory of God, he will only present a limited picture. Now, the angels are worried. "Are you sending someone who will cause bloodshed? We have always told all these ignorant people on Earth that God is loving and merciful. Now will you send someone who wages a war? Who is prepared to fight and even spill blood?"

God simply says, "I know what you do not know."

"You only know the limited. Only the limited can be 'known'. Do not try to guess me. Do not try to classify me. Do not divide my work. Whatever is there, is there. Whatever is there, is me. Do not look at it through the lens of morality. Do not think that one side is good, and the other side is bad."

I do not know whether the story stops here. I do not know what happened to the angels. Surely they would have been very confused. "What kind of people is God sending to Earth? They will spoil all the P.R. work that we have done. We have gone about preaching that God is nice, lovely, and beautiful and see what kind of people he is sending? Bad publicity!"

And that is what we also do. We first of all create images of God and when the work of God does not conform to those images, we hide the work itself. We protect the image and hide the fact. Ego is more important, because the ego has imagined.

Getting it?

In a thousand ways, He makes His presence felt. Whatever you see is a sign of his presence. Just that you have given it a different name, so you do not see the fingerprints of God there. You do not see the name of the painter there. When you are hell-bent upon saying, "The wall is wall," then how you will ever see God? And you must call the wall as wall because you must call yourself as yourself.

Till the time you are you, the wall will be just a wall. Now there is no place for God, there is you and the wall. Where is God? Nowhere. Till the time you stick to your identities, only identities are there, there is no God. (*Pointing at some listeners in the audience*) Till the time this is Shubhankar, and this is Rohit and there is Asad, how can there be God?

I read this beautiful story just a few days back. Somebody told Ramakrishna, “Now it is time for you to get married.” Now, Ramakrishna was a mystic; he looked half-mad all the time. So people thought that he will refuse. Such people don’t usually want to marry. But he became very eager. He said, “Where is the girl? Yes marriage! Right! Nice idea! Bring the girl!” They said, “See, we knew. Such people are always in search of only one thing. Everything else is just a disguise.”

So now he is married, and what does he do one day? There is the place where Goddess Kali’s statue was kept. He asks his wife to go and sit there, all naked, and he starts worshipping. He starts calling his wife, “Maa (the Mother).”

But there is a great problem with us. The wife is just a wife, how can she be Kali? So people ran after him, they advised him, scolded him. What are you doing? Wife cannot be mother! This is no way to address the wife. You cannot call her Maa. And to call her Kali, and make her sit there is an offence, it is blasphemy. What are you doing?

He did not budge.

When the wife is not the wife, when the kid is not the kid, when the world is not world, and most importantly, when you are not you, then there is only God.

Ignorance is the freedom of truth

Acharya Prashant: Ignorance is the freedom of Truth. The Source obviously is free. When it is said that it is free, it means it is free to express itself and free to not to express, and there can be no speculation or determination of its nature by the mind; causeless freedom and causeless cessation of freedom, at least apparent cessation of freedom; free in all aspects, all dimensions. It is very easy for us to believe when it is said that the Ultimate is merciful, all powerful, illuminated, remover of suffering, good, virtuous; and that is the way it has been conceived in religion and in man's mind. That the Ultimate is a wonderful entity. But rarely do we want to see that the Ultimate, the Source is also free to be nasty, to be mean, to be absolutely merciless, to be very un-virtuous, and to be Satan itself.

And because the human mind does not want to look at that aspect of the Ultimate, it creates an unnecessary duality. It takes a Satan, and juxtaposes it against a God. Sometimes it takes a Maya. So then Shankaracharya will come and say, "*Brahm* is the Truth and jagat (World) is *mithya* (Illusion)." Why is jagat *mithya*? "Because it is the work of Maya, because it is *Avidya* (False Knowledge), because it is ignorance; so the world is false." But then very few people pause to raise this question: If God is the Source, then from where does the Satan come? Why are you unnecessarily creating a parallel authority? If *Brahm* is the Source, then from where does Maya come? Or are we accepting two Gods? Or are we accepting two Sources? Then what is the Source of these two sources?

Because man likes to live in pleasure, so he has divided the God as well. He has taken the Source and attributed all the nice things to it, without bothering to inquire that where all the pain and suffering come from. God removes the suffering, but who gives the suffering? God removes the ignorance, but who causes the ignorance? God is the grace that comes and helps you in your moments of crisis. But who caused those moments of crisis? When there is grace, you will immediately attribute it to God. But what about the sudden catastrophes that befall us? What about a sudden Tsunami, an earthquake? Where do these come from? You are being attacked by a mad murderer, and

out of nowhere a gentleman comes and saves you, and you will say, “It is an avatar of God that has come to save me. God himself came to save me!” And who was that murderer?

Because we like to live in ways of pleasure, we have divided Godhood as well. God is that murderer as well. So not only is ignorance the freedom of Truth, murder is the freedom of Truth, chaos is the freedom of Truth, suffering is the freedom of Truth, violence is the freedom of Truth, rape is the freedom of Truth, Satan is the freedom of Truth, and Maya is the freedom of Truth.

L 1: “Source is free, free to express itself and free to not to express itself?” Isn’t it a desire? And then does the Source also have a desire?

AP: You see, when there is a desire, it is towards some end, towards a particular perfection. Desire arises only in imperfection, only when there is something left to be attained. The Source, which is everything, the Source which is the root of everything, how can it desire for anything? At the best it can have some fun with itself, because there is nothing else. So all this Maya can at the best, in human terms, be described as the Source having fun with itself. Not a desire, just fun. When it becomes possible for a mind to see the Truth or the Source or God, or the Self in even the most abhor-able, the most despicable, only then the mind is a religious mind. It is very easy to praise God in your moments of pleasure; in moments when you feel that you have been gifted something. But a really aware mind is the one that sees that even when everything is being robbed away, when things are just not going as per your desire and plan, even then, it is same Source having fun. When one comes to that equanimity where not only the expressions of deep consciousness, but also all kinds of darkness and ignorance are simply apparent as one – as the functioning of the Ultimate – then, you know that you know something.

It is a very clichéd example, but still... There are all these flowers on the terrace, you go near them, and most people would appreciate the flowers. And we have these rose plants and some of those rose plants have been infected by a particular type of insect, so they are not doing too well. To be able to appreciate not only the rose flower and the rose plant, but also that apparently ugly insect, as the manifestation of the Source - that is religiosity. That is a man who has woken up. So, go to that insect and tell it...

L 2: You cannot deceive me so easily.

AP: It's a deep corruption when we take the Source to be some kind of a godfather of ours. A very benevolent kind of uncle who will grant all our wishes, or a Santa Claus who comes with a huge truck load of goodies. And religions have done that. All religions will say that He is the one who forgives and does this and that. Very few of them bother to tell us that He punishes as well, and He punishes brutally, remorselessly. You act stupidly and the punishment is swift, harsh and not in installments, or may be in installments, as per His wish.

Do you all remember that we talked about that word 'Tremendum'? That's the word for God – 'Tremendous', something that causes tremors. And that is one of His forms. When He decides that it is time, then you shiver, then there are tremors; the earth quakes, the body trembles, and the mind does not find a place to hide. And it is good if you also remember that side of the Source, that He is free to be tremendous as well. He is not only the creator; He is also the annihilator; the terminator, the ultimate terminator. What we create in our movies are toy terminators. He is the ultimate terminator. So when there is dance of Shiva, then everything just disappears; goes back to the source,. None of your nice doll houses will remain, none of your dreams will be left intact.

He is not only a saint, He is worse than a Satan too. He is not only the one who does justice, He perpetrates the most severe kind of injustices as well.

MYTH OF GURU

The real Guru

Question: Sir, a very famous preacher I know of, is a renowned spiritual Guru, rather Sadhguru of contemporary times. I am quite influenced by him.

Does it help one more, to have two Gurus instead of one?

Acharya Prashant: So, one Guru he has already decided upon, it is some Sadhguru. The second we do not know, he might yet be contemplating, might yet be in the process of finalizing, choosing. But his core question is, “I can have one Guru there and the second one could be somebody else. Does it help?”

We hardly ever want to look at the fundamentals. We are in such an arrogant hurry to proceed, that we forget the very foundation upon which all the processes stand. Before you ask, “Is it worth it to have two Gurus or five Gurus?” Or whatever. It does not occur to you to ask, “What is a Guru?” Quickly you jump to the question of “How many Gurus?” Without ever trying to understand firstly, what is this whole thing about a Guru? What is a Guru? And if we can understand what is a Guru, then the answer about the number of Gurus and all, will easily open up.

There is Truth. There is only the Truth. All that there is, that is called by the name of Truth. And then there is that, which is only an appearance. A dependent appearance which shows up as shallow upon inquiry. It changes with the passage of time, and appears different to different subjects. There is that appearance alone. The mind lives only in all that which appears; hence it suffers. The mind is configured to know only appearances. Do you know anything which does not appear? All that you know always has an appearance. All that you know always has a boundary. It has a start point and an end point.

That is the stuff of the mind. That is what the mind knows. And that, which is just an appearance, starts and ends, has no real sustainability, and is deceptive, in the sense that it changes as the observer changes, and does not satisfy, in the sense that it is always limited; hence the mind that lives in appearances, craves for something beyond the apparent. This something

beyond the apparent, this something that does not change, that does not rise and fall, that will never let you down and that will not pass away, 'this' something is called the Truth.

Truth does not appear in the same way as the different appearances that come to the mind appear. Because whatever comes to the mind has a name, form, shape, beginning, end, dimensions, color and all other material properties. Truth cannot have these. It is too subtle to have limited properties. Now, the mind craves for Truth and the Truth is something that is imperceptible to the mind as an appearance. So, this becomes a situation of impossibility and suffering. You are the mind, you live in appearances, but appearances do not really give you contentment. So you are looking for something that transcends appearances, but that which you are looking for, you are simply incapable of perceiving because you can perceive only appearances.

So what does that mean? Does that mean that we are destined to live in sorrow and suffering? No, it does not mean that. Yes, your eyes can look only at objects and objects mean, things, places, people, books, and all kinds of objects that can be seen and heard and touched. And all objects are limited, all objects are mere appearances. But occasionally you come across an object whose appearance reminds you of something beyond appearances. Occasionally you come across something or somebody whose appearance, whose presence, takes you beyond the material.

And material is thought. So there is a particular presence in which you feel so assured that you do not need thoughts. The One Truth is called the Guru. The Guru is not a person. The Guru is not quantifiable. You cannot count Gurus. It is supreme ignorance to talk of one, three or five Gurus. There is the one Guru which is the Truth and there is only the Truth and hence, there is only the Guru. That one Truth is however, reminded of to you by several books and several people. How will you know which of these people or which of these books are reminding you of the One Truth?

These several books are Guru. That is why Sikhs call their holy book as their Guru - Guru Granth Sahib. Why? Because the book reminds them of the Truth, which is the Real Guru. The utility of a book or a person is just that it reminds you of the Real Guru; that is the function of the physical Guru, of the man. Remember the man himself cannot really be the Guru. The man can only be a reminder of the Real Guru. The Real Guru rests within you. Outside there can only be helpers, indicators, who take you within yourself, who take

you to the Real internal Truth that resides in your heart. That is the function of the external helper. And that is also the test through which you can determine, whether an external book or situation or man, is really helping you or not.

This is the only test through which you can determine whether the people that you are looking at, the people that you are feeling inspired by, are really taking you to the internal Guru. The internal Guru is Truth and Silence. Truth is not thoughts, Truth is not ideas. The fellow you are listening to, does he take you to a Silence where you can see the falseness of all appearances or does he create an illusion in which these appearances become more significant to you?

Does he show up the falseness of the world or does he advice you to become more comfortably and deeply settled in the world? The real Guru will take you to your Self. The false one will take you towards the society. The real Guru will not give you consolations. The false Guru will have a thousand consolations to give to you. If you have people who are talking of how to run corporate systems better and which politician can be a better prime minister, this itself is a good enough proof that this man is too deeply engrossed in the world. He has a lot of stakes in the world. Such a fellow, who has a lot of stakes in the world, cannot take you beyond the world. And that is the only real function of the Guru; to take you beyond the world, beyond the material.

He will tell you, how to do your 9 to 5 job in a more relaxed way, but he will never tell you to have the guts to quit your job. And you will feel happy because that is what you want, a pain-killer. And you go and ask, "I am facing so much of stress. What do I do?" He will give you some kind of stress reliever. He will say, "Next time you feel stressed out, perform this *kriya* (method), breathe in and breathe out, or recite this mantra." But he will not tell you to have Faith in Truth and hence the guts to simply quit, which you know to be false.

I am repeating, the real helper will take you to the Guru within. He will not take you to the *sansaar* (world), to society. The false Guru will stand and support the society. In fact, he is very much an agent of the society. Because whatever he says or does, actually comes from the society and not from the Truth. The presence of the false Guru is the presence of the society. He will support all the social institutions. He will do all the things that the society likes and approves of.

That is why the Real Guru can never be very likable. And a good proof of the false Guru is that he will most probably have millions of followers. Is there anything that millions and billions of people can do rightly? Look at the history of mankind. Do you really think that the Truth is so cheap? Look at the world around you; do you really think that the millions know of anything? And if these millions are flocking to somewhere to somebody, they surely could not be flocking to the Truth. Millions flock to the markets, millions flock to the malls, millions flock to next blockbuster movie. Do millions flock to the Truth? If millions are flocking to somebody, that somebody is surely giving them something like a blockbuster movie. If millions flock to somebody, that somebody is surely giving them something like a shopping mall; excitement, greed, a promise of fulfillment of desires.

The Real Guru takes away your illusions and ambitions. You will not like him. His very presence is a threat to all your falsenesses. You cannot flock to him and sing his praises. You will avoid him. That is the test. You will avoid him and you will know that you cannot do without him.

Yesterday, you were singing, "*Milon na tum toh hum ghabrayein, milon toh aankh churayein. Humein kya ho gaya hain*" (If you do not meet me, I get afraid. But when you meet, I run from you. What is happening to me?) This is that. You will stay away but in staying away you are only showing that you remember to stay away. So, you remember. Occasionally you will be compelled to come close. In being compelled to come close you are only showing the intensity of your own inner compulsion.

It is very-very easy to determine whether a book is helpful or not, whether a man is helpful or not, whether anything is really helpful or not; very easy. You go to a book store; you have to pick up a title. How do you determine whether it is really helpful? You are talking to somebody, how do you determine whether the presence of this person is good for you or not? How? It is very simple.

Does that man or book reinforce your patterns or does he break them? Does he give you new thoughts and new ideas or does he brings you to Silence? Does he tell you how you can continue with your pattern-based life, with your conditioned life, a little less painfully, or does he tell you to have Faith and simply jump into the unknown? Does he tell you that by doing a few physical exercises you get some transformation or does he tell you that till the time you are you, all exercises will be co-opted by you?

In most of these cases, remember, the chances are, that which is prima facie likable will just be like all the other things that are prima facie likable. Have you seen what is it that you get attracted to in the first glance itself? Have you seen? Have you seen how the smell of delicious food enters your nostrils and you are attracted, and you do not even have to think. Have you seen that? Have you seen how anything glitzy appears so attractive to the eyes and you do not even have to think? Immediately your head turns towards it. Have you seen how you would walk past an attractive girl and your head will be tilted towards her, without even the need of thought.

You very well know what your tendencies are. And those are the tendencies of mankind. Those are the tendencies of the conditioned mind. Anything that appears immediately attractive will just be like the aroma of that pizza, the sight of that alluring woman, the glitz of that new bike, will just be like that. Truth is not a matter of appearances. Truth simply cannot be immediately attractive to the conditioned mind.

One has to go deep, deep, deep; very deep. Now you are asking, “Can one have two Gurus?” No. Just as there cannot be two Truths, and there cannot be two hearts, and there cannot be two Gods, similarly, there cannot be two Gurus. But if you know the one Guru, the entire existence becomes the Guru. So, you will have infinite number of Gurus. This is strange. If you have one Guru then you have thousands of Gurus, but if you have two Gurus then you have no Guru. Because when you are saying, “Can I have two Gurus?”, then you are talking numbers.

If you are saying, “Out of these two, one is the Real Guru and the other one is the false one,” it is not possible. Why? Because if one of these is the Real Guru he will ensure that the false one is dropped. So, two is not possible. Two is possible only in one case that both of these two are false. Now these two will happily co-exist. In fact, one will support the other. He will say, “You can do twelve hours with me and twelve hours with my neighbour, go to the next ashram. Right now it is my sleeping time, so go to Swami Bhoganand now”.

Two is possible only if both of them are false. Otherwise day and night cannot co-exist. Otherwise you cannot be awake and asleep at the same time. Two is not possible. And if both of them are false then you may as well collect two hundred, which people often do. There are professional guru hoppers, who keep on going from one website to the other. They search on

Google, “Looking for a suitable Guru; should not be too inconvenient, should adhere to my timings, should not challenge my beliefs and should say nothing about my girlfriend. I do not want any interference in my personal matters. You just give me some kind of limited professional advice; I will pay you of course. Do not exceed your mandate.”

You can have two hundred, you can have two thousand and all these will be false, because your heart is yet not active. Does this sound confusing to you?

You are choosing from the wrong centre. You are choosing from your calculative mind. So, you can pick up two hundred situations, two hundred books, two hundred friends and all of them will have one quality in common: All of them will be false. But if your heart is in the right place, then the entire existence will become a friend. If your heart is with the Real Guru, which is the Truth itself then all your choices will be pure and helpful choices, then every friend will be a right friend. All your false friends will get dropped.

If your heart is with the right Guru, then you will be able to learn even from leaves and twigs and insects and animals. You will find that an ordinary dog is a teacher. You will find that everyday situation of life are now teaching you. But to come to a point, where you can see divinity in everything, where even walls become sacred scriptures, where even the breeze is singing the Upanishads, where you look at the sky and it appears as if the Gita is written in the form of stars; to come to that point you first need to have your heart at the right place.

With the right Guru, existence itself becomes the teacher. So not two, but you have two million teachers. You are learning from everything, every single observation is teaching you. You look at life and you are taught. Again and again. But remember these same eyes that can teach you so much, can also deceive you so much if your heart is not in the right place. With the right Guru, everything becomes helpful; life becomes Joy. The same things that were a source of suffering and complaints, now appear tremendously beautiful. The same events that used to shake you up, are now your play things.

That is, if you have been directed towards the Truth, with your heart seated in the Truth, the existence is your teacher. And that Truth alone is the one Guru, I am repeating. But when your heart is not sitting in the Truth, then you will have a thousand external Gurus and all of them will only deepen your misery, because you will be choosing only the wrong ones. You will be choosing

through your conditioned mind and not one but all your choices will further your wretched state. Not one, but all choices. You will choose the wrong job, the wrong friends, the wrong house, the wrong companion, wrong wife. Every single choice that you will make will push you deeper into sorrow.

Are you getting it?

So, to the fundamentals again, there is only one Guru and that Guru is not a person. That is the Truth itself. The Truth alone is the Guru. When the heart is in the Truth - and how does heart get seated in the Truth? Because the Truth is very helpful, because the Truth itself wants you to come to it, because your mind does not really feel contended with anything except that one Truth; so there is a constant call of the Truth.

When the heart is seated in the Truth then even physical persons appear on the outside to teach you. That physical person or book is just a helper, a guide or you could say an expression of the inner Truth. Your own inner Truth has taken the form of a person and is sitting in front of you. What is sitting in front of you, remember is not really a person but your own Truth, that is calling you. Sometimes it calls from within and sometimes it pushes you within from outside. When it calls from within, obviously it cannot have an appearance. When it pushes you within from outside, yes, it does have an appearance. But when it pushes you within from outside, remember, you do not really feel good. You feel like revolting and a thousand doubts come to you. The only way you can stay with this external person in spite of all your doubts, is if your mind is firstly somewhat near the right place. Otherwise you will go away.

So you see how cyclical it is? You see how you cannot enforce it? The inner Truth alone can produce the outer Guru. Otherwise you will not stay with the outer Guru, right? And the outer Guru is the one who pushes you within. So, what comes first, the inner or the outer? Well, nothing. They both are together.

They both are together.

Are you getting it?

Your own essence is the Guru, the essence of everything

Acharya Prashant: Essentially all words are just the same; be it the crying of the toddler, the ranting of the madman, or the utterances of the wisest man ever, they are all the same. To credit a man with the ability to cause a change in another man's mental condition, is to say that there surely exists a benevolent ego. There is something that happens between two human beings. Here is Priya, and she says that there was a dog she recently met who acted as her Guru. Now what great words is the dog uttering? Ask her. I didn't say that. What great words is the dog uttering?

It is just Grace. Neither is there anything in the dog, nor is there anything in the Guru. That same, for his own reasons, unfathomable to you, sometimes presents himself in the form of a man, and sometimes in the form of a dog. Could the Guru do anything, we would have had a ready-made recipe in our hands. Bring the Guru in front of ten people per day, he will create ten more, and in no time will there be a transformation in the world. The Guru himself is helpless; what can he do? Without Grace shining on the disciple, what can the Guru do? And is the Guru, a Guru, if there is no Grace shining on him? And with Grace, the dog is a great Guru. The greatest Guru!

L: Sir, but this is not out of the world, the dog is still a body. It is the intellect that I am talking about.

AP: The intellect is worthless. The intellect accounts for nothing. There have been so many intellectuals, and the world is just too full of intellectuals. An intellectual is not at all a mystic.

L: Wisdom?

AP: No, wisdom is not intellect. Wisdom is not called intellect. And to think that just because somebody can speak well, has read a few books, appears confident... none of that. There is only one Guru. The Super Boss, I have said that to you earlier as well, go to That. And that Super Boss does not tolerate middlemen. He can only be approached directly. That is one of His commandments – “middlemen not tolerated.” You must have your own

unique, personal relationship with the Super Boss. Is that clear? No middleman is needed, not at all. Or, are you saying that you are less worthy? Or are you saying that Grace is selective? Yes of course, Guru is wonderful, Guru is divine, and Guru is God! Simple. The Guru is the Source itself. What else is the Guru? Why do you need another Guru? The Source itself is the Guru; always present, always ready, always knocking, closer than closest.

L: Sir, you said middleman. So, any way, any method, any discussions, any studying that is used to reach the Source, don't they become the middlemen?

AP: You do not use methods to reach the Source. You do things situated in the Source. Is the Source somewhere else that you will reach it? What do you mean by reaching the Source? Is it located somewhere that you reach it? You can be in it, you can play in it, you can have fun in it, you can exist in it, you can dive in it, you can swim in it, you can breathe in it, but you cannot reach it! How can you reach it?

L: Sir, what capability does a blind man possess so that he can identify a man who can see? Let's say there is man who can see, and there is a man who is blind; now the blind can never identify the one who can see, it is the one who can see that holds the blind man's hand and helps him.

AP: This analogy is alright in affairs of matter. When you say that a man is blind, all you mean is that he cannot see matter. So, in affairs of matter you are very right. But here, are we talking of affairs of matter? Nobody is blind. Forget about a human being, even a blade of grass is not blind. What do you mean by blindness? There is no blindness. Nobody is blind. To think that the Source creates imperfection is an insult to the Source. What you mean by blindness is imperfection. There is nobody blind. Nobody is blind. There is only the illusion, "I am blind." And that illusion is there, when you are separate from That, and the more you search for a Guru, the more you will be separated from the real Guru. Do you know those people who never meet the real Guru? Who never get the Joy of submergence in the Source? Who are those people?

L: Those who are in search of a guru.

AP: Those who are always in search of a guru! And that is there punishment. Because you are always searching for a guru, you will always be separated from the real Guru, which was always present but you never cared for it. All your illusion is because all your life you have been hunting for a guru. The

Guru is there; closer than the closest.

L: He is in everybody!

AP: What do you mean by everybody?

L: In this organization, or any other organization, the facilitators, in the training program, or in the classes, have to go to the student to guide, to give the light.

AP: You don't give light! We don't show any way! No-no! No, nobody who ever conducted a session will say that we show a way. None of our activities contain anything that shows any way.

L: We take the student from one conditioning to another conditioning.

AP: We don't do that! There is no way to be shown. Every way is a particular way. If you look closely at any of our activity, all it says is "Boss! Open your eyes." Simple. That's all it says, "Open your eyes." What else is attention? What else is understanding? What else is intelligence? "Open your eyes."

L: Who says?

AP: We say that!

L: We are then the Guru!

AP: We are not the Guru!

L: You say this and guide.

AP: A man is driving a truck and he is feeling asleep. There are two ways he can wake up. One is, he meets an accident - let us say a small accident, or let us say that the truck falls in a pot hole and comes out, and the man wakes up. "What a shock! What a jerk!" The other is, there is somebody sitting by his side and says, "Sardarji! Neend aarahi tusi!," and he wakes up. He has woken up! The other man is just as much of a Guru as the pot hole. Life anyway does a lot of things to everybody, which helps them wake up.

We are just one of those things. We are no special. That fellow may fail in his semester exams and wake up. That fellow may have a break up with his girlfriend, and wake up. The girl friend is a Guru! The exam is a Guru. We are only as much of a Guru. If you want to call us a Guru, then the exam is also a Guru, then a girlfriend is also a Guru. Because, life itself is presenting situations, which are present in front of everybody. Buddha woke up by

looking at a corpse, a dead body! Life is giving you opportunities all the time. Life is the Guru! We are a part of life. When we stand in front of the student, what are we? Something that life has brought in front of them. Yes, we are Guru. Of course, why not? Because when the Source itself is the Guru, everything in life is Guru. So we are Guru. But that does not mean, that the piece of chair, the wood, is not the Guru. Wood is also Guru! All is Guru. It is just incidental, how the light of the divine will shine upon someone.

Some get it through dancing, some get it through singing, some get it just through serving somebody, and some get it through listening to a man. But that does not mean that the man is somebody special. If the man is somebody special, then the ornaments of dancing are also equally special. Then the dead man that the Buddha saw is also equally special. *Uddhav Gita* lists 24 Gurus of an *Avadhoota*. What kind of gurus are they? What kind of Gurus? A Snake!

L: Pigeon.

AP: Pigeon! Prostitute! All Gurus, life is Guru! Life is a Guru. Do you want to know, what is it to be a Guru? To be a Guru, is to be That. Because the Source itself is the Guru. When the mind is immersed in the source, you are the Guru. Wonderful. Only then, you are the Guru. So, do you want to know who the Guru is in this room? Anybody who is immersed.

Guru is not a qualification; Guru is a state of mind!

An immersed mind is the Guru. It may be quite possible that I, as a speaker, might be speaking from a state of disturbance, somebody over here might be totally immersed. Who is a Guru? Me or that person? That person. Just because somebody appears to be speaking a lot, he doesn't become the Guru. The Guru is one who is in the Guru. And what is the Guru?

L: The Source.

AP: The one, who abides in the Source, is the Guru.

L: In this state of mind, what all powers does the Guru have?

AP: Why are you bothered about this?

L: That's what it is all about – What can the Guru do? What powers does he have? – The power to give Grace Etc... it all comes back to this.

AP: You are still personalizing the whole thing! “What can the Guru do?”

What do you mean by, “What can the Guru do?”

L: But we experience that the Guru is doing something.

AP: Guru never does anything, everything is done by situations. Guru has never anything to do. He has no agenda. Whatever is done, is done by situations, because ‘doing’ itself is a metaphor applicable only to the world. Guru is the Source. There is no world there. So what can he do? No one does anything.

L: But there is an effect.

AP: The effect is felt. Yes, of course! But not because he wants to do anything. It’s the presence; simple and direct. And that presence is not a personalized presence. This is a very important thing to understand. The moment you utter the word, “Guru,” the image that comes to your mind is that of a person. Please get rid of that notion. I mean this is a personality cult. You are running after personalities. You have personified the Guru.

MYTH OF PRAYER

What is Prayer?

O humble servant of the Lord, O true Guru, O true primal being, I offer my
humble prayer to you, O Guru!

~ *Guru Granth Sahib*

Question: What is prayer? Is there a need for another thing or another body separate from you for praying?

Acharya Prashant : The word ‘praying’ is beautifully understood when you also take its counterpart in Sanskrit- प्रार्थना (Pra - art h- na)

अर्थ (Arth) means desire. Whenever you usually pray - and we all keep praying - our prayers are to the world, our prayers are to people, to situations. Whenever we normally pray, there is a desire behind it - ‘ अर्थ (A rth) ’. The desire is obviously a product of conditioning, it is obviously material, as all desires are bound to be. It is about a thing, a person or an idea.

प्रार्थना (Pra - arth - naa) means that अर्थ (desire) is being surpassed. प्रा - अर्थ (Pra-arth) – beyond desire. So now I cannot ask for a thought, a thing or a person. What is left to ask then? Because the world is only these, thought and object. Going beyond these, there is no world at all. If you do not ask for anything material, then actually you cannot ask for anything, because anything you would ask for would be material. So surely it means that प्रार्थना (Pra - art h- na) or prayer is not about asking, because whenever you would ask, there would be an object of asking. Two things are bound to be there whenever you would ask for something, one, there will be somebody to whom you will ask, and two, there will be something that you will ask for. That is your normal अर्थ (desire) . Between desire and prayer is the same difference that is there between अर्थ (Arth) and प्रार्थ (Pra-arth) or अर्थना (Arth-na) and प्रार्थना (Pra-arth-na) . In real prayer, both the characteristics of desiring are absent, and they are simultaneously absent. One cannot be absent without the other being absent too.

One , there is nobody to whom you are asking. Do you know what that means? Neither the entity to whom you usually ask is there, nor ‘you’ are there, and nor is asking there. Because if there is nobody to ask to and there is

no asker either, then asking too is not happening - that is प्रार्थना (Pra-artha-na). You must understand this.

The normal function of the mind is to desire. In desiring there is somebody to whom you are making a desire, expressing a desire, and there is an object of desire as well.

In prayer there is nobody that you are prayer to, there is nothing that you are praying for and there is nobody who is praying. So what is praying? Well nothing. Neither is there anybody to pray to, nor is there anything to pray for, nor is there anybody who is praying, that is prayer. If 'you' are still there, then it is not a prayer, it is just desire. If there is something to ask for, it is again not prayer, it is just desire. And if you know to whom you are praying, it is again not prayer, it is again just desire.

What does that mean? It means prayer cannot be an activity. It means that you cannot call any of your actions as prayer. All the stupidity that you do in the name of praying becomes invalid. You cannot say that you are going to the temple to pray. You cannot say that you are praying to the lord. You cannot even say, "I am praying." Understand these three things.

You cannot say, "I am going to temple to pray for a son." You cannot say, "I am praying to the Lord," and you cannot even say, "I am praying." Prayer cannot be an activity. Prayer is your very being. Prayer is the very-very silent call of the [mind](#). The deeper the silence, the truer the prayer. The noisier the call of the mind, the more it is just desire, and not prayer. The more you are able to say, "Lord bless me with a son or give me a promotion, or whatever," the more clearly you are able to express and articulate it, the farther you are from praying. The more you stand, carrying all your personality and all your concepts and the mind - the more 'you' are present, the less is praying. So you cannot pray, you can only be full of prayer. Understand the difference.

You can only be prayerful, you cannot pray. In every movement of the mind must there be prayer, and only that prayer is responded to, only that prayer is heard. When you are calling, day-in and day-out, you might be eating, sleeping, walking, running, talking, you are just praying, you are prayerful, then that prayer will be surely answered; because you are asking for nothing. There is no way that somebody cannot answer you. You are asking for nothing, so how can he deprive you of what you are asking for? What are you asking for?

L: Nothing.

AP: So you get what you are asking for. Now your prayers are answered. Now you also know why 'your' prayers are never answered. Because you never ask for nothing. Whenever you will ask for something, then that prayer will remain unanswered, and you will come back saying, "You know I prayed so much and yet the Lord is not listening."

The Lord listens only when you don't ask anything.

The Lord listens only when you don't ask the Lord.

The Lord listens when you forget the Lord. The Lord listens when there is no Lord.

"Lord, where is the lord? I don't know any Lord. I am just praying."

To whom?

"Well to nobody in particular."

L 1: Sir, if I ask for something in prayer and say that I have surrendered, then how will that state be?

AP: When you say, "I have surrendered," you have very cleverly left the option of 'not surrendering' open. If you have surrendered, then you can also withdraw from surrendering. Are you getting it? If I am surrendering, I may also decide to not to surrender. I am still there. Surrendering is smaller than me. Who has decided to surrender?

L: 'I'.

AP: Then 'I' may as well decide to not to surrender. Even after surrendering, who remains?

L: 'I'.

AP: 'I' remains. Because 'I' decided to surrender.

You go and you bow your [head](#) in front of a barber. Is that surrender? You have decided to bow your head, and after sometime you will again raise your head. The option is open. And you have bowed as per your convenience. The barber is a service provider. And that is what you take God as, the service provider. You go to God and bow your head and say, "Please, do something." And once it is done, you pay the fee and you come back.

So, kindly don't surrender. In surrender you make [God](#) a barber, and the

whole thing becomes very barbaric.

MYTH OF REPENTANCE

What is Sin and what is repentance?

Question: The Bible says, “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” What is my sin? And what is the meaning of glory of God?

Acharya Prashant: Concept of sin has a very central place in Christianity. The Bible repeatedly refers to it, and it is supposed to be a pious Christian’s duty to repent for the sins. This repentance is interpreted in several ways, and there are several ways in which it is advised that the atonement can take place. But obviously, any question of repentance is meaningless, without first understanding what the sin is. Otherwise, there is the absurd situation of a man trying to correct a mistake without knowing at all what the mistake is.

‘For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of [God](#).’

“What is my sin?” There is nothing called ‘your’ sin. The simple fact is that you are the sin. You are not a sinner, you are the sin itself. You are not mistaken, you are the [mistake](#) itself.

The moment this ‘my’ comes into picture, is the moment of the beginning of sin. It is the point of beginning of all moments. Without this ‘my’ there is no moment, and no beginning either. All that begin is this ‘my’, and this ‘my’ itself is the sin. This has to be understood.

In what sense is it the sin? In the ultimate sense there can be only one sin, which is to be dissociated from God, which is to be separated from the One [Truth](#). Now, what do you say - the moment you say, “I?” Do you say, “*I am God*”? Have you ever heard anybody saying that? The moment you utter this ‘I’, you declare yourself to be somebody short of God. You declare yourself to be somebody other than God.

The moment this ‘I’ comes into picture, is the moment of the birth of duality. And duality implies that an alternate reality, other than God, other than Truth exists. You start talking of yourself, and you do not refer to yourself as God. And it is not merely a question of verbal reference; it is the question of your entire feeling. When you refer yourself as ‘I’, you surely do not refer to the Total, to the One, to the Absolute. Instead you start referring to a fragment, to the limited.

Now, what are you doing? You are saying that you exist. By uttering 'I', you are saying that you exist. And you are also saying that the world exists, and you also probably do not mean to deny that God or Truth exists. So what have you done? You have created parallel and multiple realities. You are saying, "I exist, the world exist, and God also exists." Now, is the Truth many? Then how can there be many realities? How can there be these three – you, others and God? To believe in many Gods is sin. To believe in yourself is sin. To have an identity separate from God is sin. This 'my' itself is sin. Do you get this?

It is impossible for you to 'be' and not be a sinner. Now, what does this imply? Does this imply that as a human being, you have to live a life mired in the guilt of sinning? And this is what religious men, sometimes end up implying and advocating. And Christianity has done a lot of this. They talk of sinning so much, that repentance becomes a standalone virtue in itself.

Now, repentance is no dissolution of sin. Repentance is just the dual opposite of sin. Repentance always goes along with sin. Repentance arises from a feeling of guilt. You cannot ask somebody to repent, without first declaring him guilty. So, what is the implication? Are we to spend this human life in guilt? Feeling bad? Feeling small? "Oh! We have sinned? Just to be born is sin?"

If you be a little attentive, you will see that there is only one way out, which is to not to believe in any identity except the God identity. You acquire any identity and you have sinned. Because acquiring an [identity](#) implies, I am repeating, a belief in many truths, and a belief in the separation from the One Truth. And both of these are surely sins.

You take on any identity - it is as good or as bad as the previous one. You believe that you are a sinner, you are believing that you are a sinner. You [believe](#) that you are a repentor, and you are just believing that you are the one who is repenting. In either case, you are still maintaining an identity, apart from the Truth. Repentance does not mean that your central sin has been dissolved. It only means that you have moved from one type of sin to another type of sin. To feel guilty is sin, and to repent is sin reinforced. That's why I said it is the dual opposite and companion of sinning. Repentance is simply the [dualistic](#) companion of sinning. It does not absolve you of your sins. It only gives you a new type of sin. If sinning is sin, then repentance is just a new type of sin. I am repeating this, because religion has

been making this mistake - of advocating repentance.

What really then is repentance? There is only one real repentance possible. I have just talked of it. It is to live in the *God identity*. That is the only real repentance possible. If you say that you are a sinner, then you are only extending and deepening your sin. If you say you are repenting, you are again only extending and deepening your sin. The only way to get rid of sin is to get rid of the sinner itself.

You will have to very clearly live in the deep Faith that because Truth is one, hence, you cannot be separate from God. After all, this too is just a belief that you are separate, the world is separate. If you can be misled into cultivating and nourishing this belief, then with a clear mind, you can also clear away this belief. This belief is not innate, not really natural. It has been given to you by circumstances, by body, by society, by books. If it has been given to you, it can also be cleared away. This clearing away of this 'I' belief, this clearing away of this 'I' identity, is the only real repentance. That is the only way to get rid of both the sin and the sinner.

I am repeating this, there is no way to get rid of your sins, except by coming very-very close to God. You have to come so close to God that you are left with no individual identity of your own. That is the reason why the *Upanishadic Mahavakya*, 'Aham Brahmasmi' (*I am Brahma*) is the heart of all spirituality. Without that utterance there is no redemption possible for man. You may say a thousand things about yourself, about Truth, and about God, and about the world. Yet nothing will absolve you, nothing will give you peace. There is only one declaration, one article of Faith, which will bring you to rest, and that is, 'I am That and That am I'.

Everything else is sin. You may say you are a Son of God. It is a statement of sin, because the son after all, is separate from the Father. He may be quite close to the Father, yet he is not the Father himself. So, even to say that you are a Son of God is sin. And obviously, it is a great sin to say, "I am a creation of God," unless you also say that the creator himself is the creation; then it is alright. If you say that you are a creation of God, you will have to simultaneously say, that the creator himself is the creation. Only then is this a proper statement. But if you say that the creator is somebody else, and his creation is separate from him, and you are a part of that creation, then it is a statement of sin. Are you getting it?

Kindly see that all your suffering, and sorrow, and misery, arises from your

fragmented identities. Sin is something that leads to sorrow. See, where your sorrow comes from. It comes from your identities. It comes from your belief in your individuality. Till the time you keep believing that you are 'you', a bundle of identities, your sorrow will continue. Dissolution of your identities is just the same, as a return to the identity-less identity, and that is the God identity. To not to have any identities is to have the Ultimate identity. And that is the God identity. Are you getting this?

This is not merely a [concept](#). This is what we all are living daily. See that not even one of your problems is there without you being attached to some or the other identity. See that you cannot suffer, without a belief in your limitations. You will have to be attached to some sense of limited being for you to suffer.

What does it mean to say, "I am God"? It is not to declare that I am grand and big. On the contrary, to declare that I am not separate from God is just to declare that I am not going to be attached with anything that is petty, limited, small and trivial. It does not mean that there is something big called God, and I can declare myself to be that. No, because whatever you will declare to be big, will actually be very small. The biggest that you can think of, will just be as big as your mind is, and that is very small. How big can your mind think of? The biggest that you can think of is nothing compared to the immensity of infinity. And your mind cannot conceptualize infinity. So, even your biggest identity is shallow and petty.

So, to have God identity, is not to have a big identity. It is to have no identity. Many people are apprehensive of this statement 'Aham Brahmasmi'. They say that if man declares himself to be God, it is just ego. They say it is a proof of your arrogance, if you say, "I am God." They are mistaken. And mistaken are those, who utter 'I am God', in the wrong sense. If you have a concept of God, and then you say you are God, then surely you are committing a heresy. If you have a concept of God, and then you say, "I am God," then this is surely blasphemy. Because then to say, "I am God," would be similar to saying, "I am a husband, I am a Hindu or I am a Christian." All concepts. You had ten conceptual identities, now you have an eleventh conceptual identity also. What is that eleventh conceptual identity? Of God.

No, it is not really a statement of [ego](#), because the man who honestly says, "I am God," is actually saying, "I am nothing." It is a statement, hence, of great humility. Only a greatly humble man can say, "I am God." It is not at all a work of ego. So, there is no need to be apprehensive of the man who honestly

declares himself to be God. Because, this man is actually saying, “I am nobody.”

It is statement of great humility, along with great boldness. “I am nobody.” And if somehow, you dislike say that you are God - it happens, in some religions, for example, it is prohibited, and you cannot say that you are God. Then no issue, simply say, “I am nobody.” No religion prohibits this statement. There are religions which prohibit man to declare identity with God. They say that you cannot say, “I am God.”

But no religion prohibits man to utter “I am nobody.” So, there is no need for unnecessary confrontation. Simply say, “I am nobody.” That is just the same as saying, “I am God.” Because when you are nobody, then you are the closest to God, actually one with God. Just say, “I am nobody.”

Your humility, your deep humility is identical to saying ‘Aham Brahmasmi’. ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ and ‘Naham’ are the same statements. Aham Brahmasmi says, “I am the Truth, I am God, I am Brahma.” And ‘Naham’ says, “I am not.” And both of these are same. Just say ‘Naham’, “I am not.” I am not. Both these statements are one and both of them absolve you of your sin.

You are the sin. Get rid of yourself and you have fully repented. This is the only repentance possible.

Guilt is a great method to not to change

Questioner: I was reading the book by an existentialist author, Albert Camus, and the book is titled 'The Outsider'. In the book, the protagonist somehow ends up murdering a man, and at the end of the book, he is at his trial, and there is no sense of regret within him. So the jury, and the judges find this extremely troublesome that the man does not regret what he has done. So instead of the trial being about whether the murder was premeditated or was it under self-defense, the trial becomes about the man being a monster. That he is not human, that he does not have any sense of guilt. They deemed him as a murderer because there was no sense of guilt within this man.

So I am bringing out this topic of guilt. What does it create within us? When I see a man who does not feel guilty or does not regret any of his actions, what does that do to me? To such an extent where I would not look at the objective picture as a whole, but just look at the fact, "Oh my god, the man does not feel guilty, what kind of a man is this?"

Acharya Prashant: Superficially, what is guilt supposed to be? Guilt is supposed to be both a driver and an instrument of correction, self-correction. So there is something that is wrong with me – in the sense that it is not as per the standards, benchmarks, and internal expectations that I have set for myself. It does not conform to my self-concept, does not agree with my self-image. So, I am troubled, I think myself to be one man, but my thoughts or actions are revealing that I am not quite the man I imagine myself to be. So I am troubled, because in my eyes, who am I? My own concept - What I think of myself. What I think of myself is not just a thought to me. To me, it is the reality and the truth. But then my actions do not add up to my imaginations, there is a gap, a dissonance. This is guilt.

"Why could I not be what I think myself to be?" This is guilt. What does then guilt seek to protect? What is it that guilt takes as an absolute?

Q: My thought about myself.

AP: yes. Guilt says, "My thought about myself is an absolute. The problem

lies in the fact that my actions could not keep up with my thought.” Guilt never says, “Maybe I am not the man I think myself to be.” It does not say that. It says, “I am what I think myself to be – respectable, honorable, strong, worthy, moral, pious, and patient.” Whatever I think of myself to be – “caring, loving. But my deeds betray something else.” The guilty man never says, “The fact has emerged, so the self-concept must be adjusted in the light of the fact.” The guilty mind instead says, “I am, and I will continue to be what I think I am. Let the facts keep yelling. Let my actions keep exposing my real worth, yet I will just keep blaming actions, situation, and something outside of me; what I steadfastly hold on to, is my self-concept. That is not going to change.” It’ll say, “No, no! I am honorable, it is just the heat of the moment that did it; No, no! I am very composed, it was just the pressure of the situation that did it; I am extremely loving, it was just the frustration at the end of the day that broke my patience.”

So this has to be understood. The whole purpose of guilt is to protect your self-concept. Is this clear?

Q: Yes.

AP: Now, guilt is trying to protect something. Where does this ‘thing’ come from? What is it that guilt is trying to protect? We have guilt which is a thought, a feeling, and then thought is trying to protect another thought. It’s like a bodyguard. Now the thing that is being protected, where does that thing come from? Where does that self-concept come from?

Q: My background. Whatever people have told me about me.

AP: So if you look around objectively, you will find very few instances where one really, really knows himself. The proof of that is, there are very few people who do not feel guilty. If you really know yourself, then there will be no dissonance between what you know yourself to be, and what your actions are. And hence there would be no case of guilt. But there are cases of guilt with everybody.

Everybody ends up saying, “My bad luck! Why couldn’t I do better?” Such things, all of these are expressions of guilt. Even motivation is so clearly related to guilt. Sorrow; the whole feeling behind self-improvement; the whole drive to succeed, all of these are related to an existential guilt. The whole energy that goes into becoming, all of these are related to guilt. The whole urge to look better and be praised, and be acceptable, all of these are

related to guilt.

And you see that everybody is experiencing that. So that is a clear proof that people really, really do not know themselves. Yet they have an idea about themselves. Now this is very interesting. They do not know themselves, which is proven in the fact that we see everybody wallowing in guilt, multiple times a day. So we do not know ourselves. Had we known ourselves, there would have been no dissonance, and hence no guilt.

We do not know ourselves, which is established. Yet we all have a fairly good idea about ourselves. If somebody asks you to describe yourself, you won't really be tongue tied. You will have a lot of things to say. "I am this, I am that." But your life proves that you hardly know a thing about who you are. Then how come you have so much to say about yourself? From where did all this come?

Surely it could not be an internal, factual, and meditative knowledge. It could not be the Truth looked at with the clear eyes of Truth Itself. It is something else. Whatever you think about yourself is not really your own self, looked at with your own eyes. It is coming to you, but not from within. So then there is only one place from where it can come to you, from the without, from the external.

So, putting things in perspective, we are discussing that guilt is trying to protect our self-concept, and where this self-concept is coming from. We have ruled out that it arises from within. So it arises from here and there. You may think you are pretty, but prettiness is no absolute. Who are you to decide whether one goat is prettier than the other? What benchmark can be there? You may think you are virtuous, who are you to decide what the standards of virtue are?

You may think that you are a depraved beast no fit to live, who are you to condemn yourself with that judgment? But you do that, right? From where is this judgment coming? Who is making you feel nice, or horrible; good or bad; high or low; this way or that way about yourself? You have to figure that out very clearly. We all live, looking at these pictures (Pointing at pictures of certain people in the room) in our rooms, imagining them to be mirrors. We think that we are looking at mirrors. We think that the fellow staring back at us is our own reflection.

It is not really a reflection. You are not looking at a mirror. You are looking

at a rigid painting. Painted by god knows who. The eyes that are looking back at you are not yours. The face that you see all around is not really your face. It is somebody else's, it is fiction. It has been showed to you as your face. Who's doing the showing? Go sort that out. Find out. Whatever you think about yourself, the highest and the lowest, is not who you are. You are simply not who you think yourself to be. So whosoever gave you this concept about yourself, is surely the agent who has also given you guilt.

Guilt is trying to protect your self-concept. The self-concept is coming from somewhere. The source from where the self-concept is coming is also the source from where guilt arises. Those who give you your self-measure are also those who give you guilt along with it. Otherwise, you will drop these fanciful ideas. Guilt is there to protect them. We just said a while back that it is a bodyguard. So you are given an idea about yourself, and along with that, you are given guilt, so that you may keep holding on to that idea.

Q: So that you may avoid even those facts which are clearly visible to you.

AP: Yes, yes. So that when facts hit you, when you stumble upon facts, even then you do not drop that self-concept. Guilt prevents you, it scares you back. Guilt wants you to ignore the facts and retain the idea.

Q: So you can just feel guilty about it and stay as you are.

AP: Yes. The fact is not sacrosanct; the feeling about yourself is. That is the purpose of guilt. So guilt defeats its own definition. In the beginning, we said that prima facie, superficially, guilt is supposed to be an instrument of self-correction. Instead, guilt prevents any kind of correction. Because what does guilt protect?

Q: Your self-image.

AP: Which itself is the problem. So guilt is not going to result in any kind of improvement. Guilt is not going to result in any kind of liberation from suffering. Guilt is only going to perpetuate it. That is the only purpose of guilt. Many people think that by making somebody feel guilty, they will be able to induce a corrective feeling within him, which cannot happen, because when you are making somebody feel guilty, what you are saying is, "Why are you not acting as per your own high standards?"

The fact is, the fellow has no high standards, and that is his problem. Instead of exposing the patterns of his mind to him, what you are telling him is, "You are already alright, it's just that your actions somehow failed you this time."

And remember that you are not saying this to the Great Untainted Self; you are saying this to the ego. You are telling the ego, “You are alright. It is only accidental that you failed in this instance.” Now, will the ego then want to change, sublimate or dissolve? Guilt is a sure shot way of maintaining status quo. It will not cause the ego- the problem, that which causes all mistakes to be dissolved.

Guilt does not put the blame in the right place. You see how you talk to a person when you want to strike guilt in him. You say, “How could you do this? Look at what you have done! Look at the results you have got!” So you are always pointing a figure at his actions. You are saying, “Look at what you have done.” See what you have been doing. You are saying that the action is to be blamed. Now the action is the actor. But guilt blames the action and protects the actor.

You are not telling him what kind of a being he is. You are not telling him, “Look at the entire structure of your mind. This one instance in which you have caused disorder or chaos, is just a representation of how you are spending every moment of the day.”— You are not saying this. You are saying, “Look at what you have done right now. Now remove this instance and everything else is alright.” That is what you are telling him. Or at least that is how he is inclined to hear what you are saying. He will say, “Everything else is alright, only in this instance did I do something totally woeful.” Is everything alright? The action has only exposed who you are, the actor. Nothing else is alright. But guilt protects the actor.

What brings about real improvement?

Guilt cannot bring about any improvement. Real improvement comes when you are honestly prepared to look at what is going on.

You may have created a great mess around you, turning your face away won't clear up the mess. Improvement comes from really standing in front of the mess, standing in the middle of the mess, looking at it, really looking at it, without regret. Without any feeling of superiority or without being condescending towards yourself.

Just looking at it and seeing, “This is me, this is my life.” And that's it, full stop. “I'm not even saying that I want it to change.” I am saying, “This is it. This is my life. This is me. I am not even desiring a change. I just want to know what it is like to be me. For the first time, I really want to honestly

experience being myself. This is me, and I don't want to change. Not that I want to resist change, it is just that I have no desire to bring about a change."

Q: Because that will anyway reflect.

AP: Yes, and it would only add to the mess. This is me, whatever I desire is reflected here, so I stand in the middle of this garbage. And when I say garbage, I am not spitting on it, because this garbage is me. So we say, 'garbage' with a kind of self-respect.

"This is me."

And that moment is really not of motivation or planned improvement. In fact, the change that would spring from that moment cannot really be called improvement because improvement is always incremental. Improvement always takes something as a base. Improvement means that I stand at two and I want to be three. Improvement means that I am staying in a particular city and I want to move to another city. Improvement always takes something as the background. So, from two to three. Same plane, same dimension.

This cannot really be called improvement. When you really look at what you are, then what happens is not really change in the sense that we use the word change. You could call it a transformation, or you could simply call it real change. But it is not usual kind of change that we see, "Go change your clothes", not that. But when you do that – standing in the middle of your mess and looking at it – your face would be not that of a moral being. You would not be repentant. You would not be begging forgiveness from god. Stone faced, you would just be looking at your life.

Not demanding an answer like, "Why did this happen?" Not craving for a change, "Can all this go away?" You are looking at it as one looks at a painting, or as one looks at a hillside, or as one looks at a pile of rubbish – objectively.

Q: So, in a way, standing apart from it.

AP: Standing apart from it in the middle of it. You know, this is a mistake that man has made, religions have made. They have tried to use repentance as a tool for improvement. Let me assert – this tool cannot succeed. The intention might be good but this tool is bound to fail.

Q: Jails are actually built on this concept. That if you keep somebody in a place for a long duration of time, you make him think about what he did, that

he might come out of it a transformed man. So in a way what you are saying is, 'Jails won't work?'

AP: There is no way that jails are going to cause the transformation. And if it ever happens in a jail, it would be purely incidental. Firstly, I doubt that the real intention is to bring about a transformation in the prisoner. The real intention is revenge. Jails are not really places of compassion. You don't jail somebody because you love him so much that you want him to transform. You jail him because you want to extract your pound of flesh.

Those who gave you your self-concept, will just not like that you do not feel guilty. That is why the jury and the judge in your story about Camus, must have been furious – that story by Camus rather – they would have been furious. Now, why were they furious? Let's investigate that.

You have been told that you are pretty. You have been told that your prettiness is an absolute. If your prettiness is an absolute, then it must be the center around which everybody else's looks would be measured.

That's the meaning of absolute. The absolute cannot change. So if you are pretty, then I have to be something relative to your prettiness. If you are ten, and you are absolutely sure that you are ten, then I have to be something relative to that ten. Ten plus something or ten minus something. For you to keep believing that you are ten, I must keep believing that I am eight or twelve. Because your self-concept is relative to my self-concept. At the same time, you are depending so heavily on your self-concept that you need it to be an absolute. You cannot afford it to be shaky, you want it to be firm. And firmness means an absolute, something unchanging.

So you need that ten to be unchanging. For your ten to be unchanging my eight must also be unchanging.

AP: But if I come up in my own jolly way, and I say, "Two hoots to it!" Then that is an assault on your self-concept. If I do not feel guilty, then I am challenging my idea about myself. And my challenge to my idea about myself is a violation of your idea about yourself. Think of this. We say, or let there be a society which says, "Man is petty, man is limited, and man is a weakling." And I am a man. So who am I?

Q: Petty, small, weak.

AP: That's what I am. And because it is my self-concept so it has to be an absolute. Now if there is one person in that society who opts out of this idea

and demonstrated a hitherto unseen strength. He demonstrates a measure of himself which has an immensity, then what has he done?

He has shaken up the self-concept of the entire community. He may not have touched you at all, in a personal way, yet he has caused a grievous assault upon you. Your heart would weep, because, in your eyes, you are what you think you are. And if somebody shows that to be false, it is a kind of a death. It is a murderous attempt upon you. I am my idea, and if my idea is being shaken, then I am being killed! I would retaliate, I would furiously retaliate. Furiously. That is why very few societies are able to accept marginal groups or outliers. Because the outliers prove that the majority is an idiot.

You may have taught crowds of your young boys and girls, "Life has to be lived in a particular way. You have to have this kind of formal education. Then you have to have the support of the opposite gender. Then you have to have an organized marriage. Then a house. Respectable job. A place in the society." And other associated things. And you have taught thousands of them in the same way. And then there comes up somebody, just one man, who proves that whatever you have been teaching is nonsense.

And he doesn't prove that by standing at a crossing and proclaiming it aloud. He proves it through his life. Through his life, he disproves whatever you have been teaching to your young ones. Just one man. You won't be able to stand that man. You'd really want to kill him. So the judge and the jury could have forgiven the protagonist of the story for the murder but they cannot forgive him for being guiltless.

Murders are not very serious, because in the self-concept that has been given to us, we have been told that man is a bundle of mistakes. Evil, sin, Shaitan, Maya, anything can overpower us. So murders may happen. "Son, you made a mistake, but it's alright. Just ten years of jail and then you can come back." Murders may happen, they are not so uncommon. But to be guilt free! That's a real rebellion. "I do not believe in what you tell me. I have eyes of my own." And that is such a humiliation to those who refuse to see. It's an absolute insult. They cannot tolerate it.

And when you look at all the violence that is happening against minorities of every kind, ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender-based, anything can make you a minority, you just have to choose a basis for separation. So in some sense, each one of us here is a minority on some basis or the other. The smallest

minority is the Individual. And the Individual is under attack. Not because the individual is going to proliferate and harm the others, it's just that the very existence of the minority proves that one can live without being in the majority.

Understand this. If there is one man living on mars, what is he proving? That Mars is habitable. Go there, colonize it, it is possible. One man living on mars proves that it is possible. You cannot forgive that man. One step on the moon – it was the sixties, Neil Armstrong, when he stepped on the moon, he said, “It’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” – So many religious enthusiasts and authorities averred that what has been displayed to us are false images. “Nobody can step on the moon. All of this is false.” Some of them, I’m afraid, still hold on to this view that man never really stepped on the moon, all that was just propaganda of atheists.

Because the sun and moon are supposed to be sacred things given by God to his special creation, ‘man’, who lives on the special planet ‘earth’. The moon is not supposed to be man’s territory. How can man step on that territory? If a man can do one thing that violates our concept of god, it proves that the whole concept of god might be wrong! Who knows! We said twenty things about god, and if one thing is disproved, then the other nineteen are also threatened!

So you don’t want anything to be proven wrong. So if people from a particular community say that the whole life began just a few thousand years back – the way we see man, he came just a few thousand years back – then they have to really create a history to suit their assertion.

So if one thing loses sanctity, then the entire edifice might come crumbling down.

Q: Hence so many people are against evolution. There is even a museum that has dinosaurs and man walking together.

AP: “We have been told that god created man out of his own hands. We have never been told that god first created monkeys and monkeys were then supposed to evolve into men. So we do not believe all this evolutionary nonsense.” Again, go back to the basics, what is at stake is your ego, your idea about yourself. My idea about myself, to a great extent, comes from what my religious scriptures tell me. Not that I am particularly protective about those scriptures. It is just that my ego comes from them. To protect my

ego, I have to defend the scriptures. Not that I am a particularly religious man. “It is my country so I have to defend it.” What comes first, the country or me?

Q: Me.

AP: Me. To protect my self-concept, my idea, I have to then defend a lot of other things. So I need to defend all the medieval thought that has been running down for generations. I need to protect all the institutions that I am a part of. Not that I have anything in my heart for those institutions, but those institutions give me my identity. My identity is what I am protecting.

Whenever you stand for something outside of you, please check, what stake do you have? Surely that thing that you think to be outside of you, is something inside of you. That is the reason why you want to protect it. And when you want to denounce something outside of you, again the same urge is at work.

Q: Because the opposite is my identity, so I will not agree.

AP: Yes.

Q: I was also reading about Mansoor, the Sufi mystic. In the story that I was reading, it was said that because he proclaimed ‘An-al-hak’ (I am the Truth), he was sentenced to death for it. The story also said that the people who cared for him or people who were around him said, “If you take your words back, then after a few years you will be freed.” So this sense of apology, this taking back of words...

AP: You see, they are not asking Mansoor to become a reformed man. They are not saying, “Mansoor, prove that you have really had a change of heart.” They are saying, “Just write an apology. Just say sorry. We are not bothered by what is there in your heart, what you are really thinking, what your real convictions are.”

Q: Just say sorry.

AP: Just say sorry so that our structures are maintained. That’s how superficial guilt is. Just say sorry from the tongue and let your inner disease, your inner condensed, solid mass remain. Nobody wants to really challenge that. Let that remain.

Q: So guilt can never be used as a way of transformation.

AP: There is no way. Fact is; guilt protects. Guilt is a defence against

transformation. The guiltier you feel, the lesser are your chances of really changing.

Q: Okay, so if I am using guilt as a method because my conditioning has been such, then I am actually protecting their falseness. I am giving them a stronger defense against not changing.

AP: Yes.

Q: So when we talk about Advait as a movement towards a new humanity, when you are pointing out facts to people, it is not to make them feel guilty about what they are, but to show them what they are.

AP: You aren't any better than this. There is this important and subtle difference that must be understood. When you are trying to make someone feel guilty, you tell them, "See what you have done, and how bad it is. This is what you have come to? How can you do something so bad?" What has to be remembered is that when you are saying that something is bad, in a manner of disparaging somebody, you are obviously saying that you can do better than this.

And it seems such a nice thing to say. "Guys, can't you do better than this?" It seems so motivational. And it also seems so full of respect towards the other one. "You know, you have caused all this nonsense, garbage, but surely you can do better than this." Everything about this statement seems alright. Alright, nice, humane.

Q: Respectful to other.

AP: Respectful. It is dangerous. Because what he has done, is not an accident. He is not better than what he has done. That what he has done is a representation of what he is. A clear, direct, honest representation. Why do you want to tell him that he could have done anything, any differently? Yes, do show him what he has done. But that should be like showing somebody a mirror. Not really like showing somebody a role model.

Guilt tries to make you your own role model. Guilt says, "You are better than your own work, so be your own role model." Have you not heard phrases like this – "Be your best self!" – As if there are multiple selves and as if you have multiple options. But one thing all these slogans do is that they really make you feel good about yourself. They give you a false sense of empowerment.

Q: That you are better than this.

AP: And next time, if I try hard, and if really want, then I can improve.

Q: That even if you would have gone back, you would have done this thing differently.

AP: The funny part is, often we do see improvement happening as a result of induced guilt. Now from where does that improvement come? The fact is, what you call as improvement is just another kind of mess. It is quite likely that if you make somebody feel guilty again and again, if you challenge his ego, if you tell him that he could have done better, and all the other related nonsense, he might actually change his actions.

The actions are changing for sure, but is the actor changing? The actor remaining the same, the actions changing, which only means that the actions are superficially changing. So an 'improvement' will come, but that would be just another kind of mess. Trouble is most of us are satisfied with the new mess. Maybe that prevents boredom. We are so utterly bored with our old mess, that even if what we get is a new mess, we are okay with it.

Q: At least for a while

AP: At least for a while. Then we can again strike guilt in him, "How can you do this!" So then he can come up with a fresh mass of rubbish. Getting it? Real change requires saying, "This is what you are." And this is not being said to you because we want you to change. This is it.

You are just showing him a mirror. "See, how you look." It is not even about saying how you look. "See, this is your face. Greet yourself, say Hi." It is not even question of judging yourself as you look at the reflection, just say hi, and then something miraculous might happen.

Q: But as a teacher, I would first have to completely look at my mess in order to get the message across to the other person to look at their mess. So first I must be, can I say 'okay', okay with the mess?

AP: Yes. That is very important. Because you really don't have an option. You must be totally okay with the mess. That is the beauty of the whole thing. You know, when you are okay with it, you get something wider and broader and more beautiful than it. You get the most when you are not wanting anything. You have to be okay.

Q: Because until the time that I am guilty and I have that image in my head, I will only try to induce guilt in the student. So I have to first be okay with the

mess.

AP: Yes, but the danger there is – the student might be so habituated to being made to feel guilty that even if you just demonstrate the fact, he might take it as a showing down. “My Teacher is trying to show me down.” Though the Teacher is just trying to show who you are. So you just have to be a little cautious and ensure that he is not taking you for what you are not. And imagine the power of that moment. When you are demonstrating without anger, without reprisal, just demonstrating.

And without an expectation that they would do any better. That is the role of the Teacher you know. To bring them to the fact. The Teacher cannot take the responsibility of bringing a change. Change does not come from somebody’s desire. And if change comes from somebody’s desire, then it would be a very planned and channelled change.

If I say that I want you to change, then I don’t really want you to change. I want you to be conditioned differently according to my wishes. That is what people mean. When somebody says, “Look at your position, can’t things change?” Now, am I leaving him free to change in free space? What I am saying is, change in a particular direction that I desire. So that is just another kind of conditioning. The Teacher really cannot have a thought or an idea about how she wants the student to come up.

Change will happen on its own if it has to happen. The Teacher’s job is to demonstrate where they are, who they are, and what they are doing. In that sense, a Teacher’s job is much more related to just to dispelling of illusion. “You have a false idea about yourself, let me show that the idea is false. Let me show that you actions do not stand up to your ideas.”

Q: That it is not a mistake.

AP: And that is not a mistake, it’s alright.

Q: So there is no role of morality in this.

AP: Nothing.

Q: That would be imposing another type of conditioning?

AP: Yes. Do you know why mankind has not really changed? We have now the load...alright, the guidance, of so much of morality available to us, rather imposed on us, yet nothing has really changed. Man is what he always has been. The child is still crying though the toys are new. The child was crying

yesterday and the child is crying today. Today he has newer toys. Today he has fancy toys, like inter-continental ballistic missiles. But the child is still crying.

The reason is, you are trying to quieten the child through wrong means. You are telling the child, “How can you cry? You being you! A manifestation of godhood itself! You, carrying the seed of the Buddha, how can you cry?” That doesn’t really help the child. He is crying.

Come face to face with the fact of your being. Grand notions, or petty notions, any notions, will not work. They are not evil, they are just useless. It is just that in my dictionary, the useless is the evil. There is no other evil. That is the definition of evil. That which is not needed is evil. That which you are needlessly carrying is the evil.

Q: So for a student who is used to guilt, and feels that his Teacher is still inducing guilt, would time in a way take away... So are we even aware that much, that over time, I will be able to see that the Teacher is not inducing guilt but is making me see what is.

AP: Yes, you do require a certain time. These things don’t really happen overnight. We would want to see them happen overnight. We have heard stories, that there are instantaneous transformations. They say the very glance of the Teacher can bring about a complete annihilation of the personality of the student. We have heard stories like these. But these things take time. A period, sometimes a long period of remaining in touch with the Teacher is needed.

A student kind of needs to get attuned to nothingness. I am talking about a real Teacher. Not one of those information providers. When the student comes in touch with the Teacher, just as the student has a self-concept, he tries to build a concept of the Teacher according to his own concept.

Depending on who I am, I build a kind of image of the Teacher. Again and again that image must be falsified. The student must be brought to a point where he is able to see that the Teacher is saying none of what he thinks Him to be saying. So that is what I mean by getting attuned to nothingness.

Otherwise, the student will rebel against the Teacher. The student does do that, often. The thing is, what he is rebelling against is his own concept. The Teacher, if He is really a Teacher, stands for nothing. He is nobody. So how can you rebel against nobody? So there has to be some kind of a providential

support. The student has to be lucky enough to remain in touch.

And when the student has no real guidance from the Teacher, when the Teacher is not providing him with an alternate vision, when the Teacher is not trying to act as a role model, when the Teacher is not trying to give him a fresh self-concept, then the student has no choice than to turn inwards. Because outwards there is no home. The Teacher is useless.

Q: The Teacher is not providing him any material to hold on to.

AP: Though he is demolishing all my existing material. He is demolishing all that I have, but parallelly he is not giving me anything new. So Emptiness is what I will be left with. Empty of guilt.

You know, there are certain things that are unique to man. In the entire existence, tell me where do you see guilt? So is it not obvious that man has given guilt to man? And there are studies that show that man is so contagious a disease that he can give guilt even to animals. He can train animals to feel guilty about themselves.

Actually, whenever you train anybody for anything, you are also training him for guilt. If you train your dog to not to litter within the house, and if he cannot manage his movements, you will see a feeling of guilt in the dog's eyes. Ask dog owners, they will aver to this. So you train somebody, then you are training him simultaneously for guilt.

Guilt is an accompaniment of conditioning.

Q: One that perpetuates conditioning.

AP: Yes. So there are certain things that are very specific to man: Joylessness, boredom, guilt, morality, destruction, foolishness, a feeling of superiority.

Q: With guilt comes this feeling, "I am not allowed to exist. There is something wrong in my own existence."

AP: Yes, of course. Look at the whole concept. You have been told, "Here are some manmade benchmarks and those benchmarks are better than what you otherwise would have been. So you are born inferior, the social benchmarks are meant to raise you higher." That is the presumption. "And you better live up to these benchmarks. Otherwise, you are as fallen as these animals."

Look at the presumptuousness. 'As low as an animal.'

Q: So both are definitions, you are low also and then that higher standard. Both definitions are made by man. And it always requires somebody outside of the system to point it out?

AP: Your Heart is always pointing it out to you. That is the reason that even though man keeps dying of guilt, yet he keeps repeating the so-called sins. Deep within him, he knows that all of it means nothing. So let me breach the code once again.

Look at all the guilty souls. Is guilt even an effective instrument of modifying behavior? You may keep feeling guilty and at the same time, you may be repeating the things for which you feel guilty. And at the same time you would be writing beautiful poetry based on your guilt. “You know I am such a coward. I know that drinking is bad, but what else can I do when look into your beautiful eyes?”

Don’t you see what is happening? And we call this creativity. It is just an expression of disease. On one hand the fellow is feeling guilty, on the other hand he also knows that this guilt is nothing. So the interaction of these two gives rise to this funny thing that you call as “Literature.”

Guilt is known to be nonsense by everybody. That is why you keep going against your own sense of guilt. That is why all the hidden pleasures are all the more pleasurable. Are they not? There is that Hindi song which says, “Chori me hi hai maza.” (Only in theft is there pleasure) Don’t you see what is happening? Guilt is a pleasure multiplier.

That is why adultery is such an intoxicant. Your own wife means nothing, the others wife! Because guilt carries so much passion in it. You love it when a love story has crime and sensuousness and breach of morality and adultery and a couple of murders thrown in.

Q: So we want it to be breached but not completely, you play within the comfort.

AP: It’s like scratching your itch. You know later on it is going to hurt, but in the moment of scratching it, it is quite a pleasure.

Q: But you don’t get rid of the habit.

AP: Yes. So there are these sins, see how mankind has decorated the sins. See how your eyes twinkle when you mention gluttony. It is supposed to be a sin. Vices have such a grip over us. That’s what the phrase is right, “The

thing has a vice like grip over him.” We never say, “Virtue like grip over him.” So morality has its uses. It gives you pleasures that otherwise won’t be pleasurable. Forbid something and you make it pleasurable.

Q: Make a rule and you want to break it.

AP: Forbid something and it becomes so attractive. Tell someone, “If you do this then you are a depraved soul!” And you have induced a deep desire in him to do it. It is just that he will now do it behind closed doors. Guilt is an invitation, is it not? Guilt makes you feel, that your otherwise worthless life is worth something.

“I could challenge a command! I could defeat an authority! I could resist subjugation! I had been told that such and such thing must not be done, but I did it! Nobody else might know, but I know I did it.” If you really want to get rid of the so-called sins, take the glamor away from them. People are attracted to these things because you have attached glamor to them by attaching guilt to them. Till the time war remains heroic, there will be wars. Till the time alcohol remains condemned, people would be drawn towards alcohol. Till the time you keep people feeling guilty about their body, there would be an undue attraction to the body.

Remove the feeling of guilt and you have also removed the motivation to indulge in nonsense. We do so many nonsensical things just because we have told that they are forbidden. That is the reason why everything that has been forbidden is so very prevalent. And everything that has been touted to be virtuous is nowhere to be seen.

Greed is forbidden and that makes greed sexy. Why do you forbid greed? Let the greedy one be shown the real face of greed. That is it. There is no point in forbidding it. Violence is forbidden and you have violence all around. And violence becomes related to valor, to heroism, to courage – things to which it has absolutely no relationship. Let people learn what violence really is. Do not condemn violence. Know what violence is.

And these are two absolutely different things. Understand this. Know what violence is, don’t condemn it. Don’t make people feel guilty because they acted violently, let them know what violence really means. You see, we have this WhatsApp group, and here we have a few people who are especially devoted to non-violence. A couple of people from the Jain community. One of them has, this evening, posted a story there, the story says... it’s a long

story where somebody has hurt someone and then that someone did not retaliate, and then this fellow who had hurt that fellow got his punishment, the retaliation and the retribution from somewhere else. And the story ends by saying, “If somebody causes harm to you then you should not be worried. Because anyway he is going to be harmed one way or the other.” Now this is supposed to be a story promoting non-violence.

Please pay attention to what the story is saying. The story is saying, “If somebody is harming you, then you leave the matter there, you do not need to retaliate because you must know that if he has harmed you then somebody else will harm him.” This is such a violent thought. It is thought full of both cowardice and violence. It is saying, “Even if the right action is to resist, do not resist; let cowardice prevail over you.” And why must you not resist? “Because that fellow would anyway be taken care of by something else.” This is being touted as non-violence.

For such people, what is violence really? For them violence is just about beating somebody up, hurting somebody’s physical form or shouting at somebody. They think this is violence. And then they attach a lot of guilt and morality to violence. So if they see someone shouting at somebody, they will say that is violence. If they will see somebody slapping somebody, they will say that it is violence. They have no eyes to see that the biggest violence is what they are espousing. They are so full of violence themselves. How will morality help you?

Do not teach non-violence. Violence is a disease, non-violence is your nature. Just show what violence is. Show the true face of violence. And that is all around us and within us. That can be shown so easily. Instead of being shown what violence is, what we have in our textbooks are chapters on non-violence. This is stupid. Instead of exposing violence, you are teaching non-violence. Non-violence cannot be taught. Are you getting it?

Q: So teaching is non-violence is like a solution that is being portrayed. Which is not really a solution because you can’t teach non-violence to a violent man.

AP: Yes. He will start having an ideal of non-violence. That is all that he will have. And that is what all the so called “non-violent” people have – the ideal of non-violence. Do they know what violence really is? Even the ideal of non-violence is extremely violent. Any ideal is violent.

Q: So any study that aims at sensitizing people should just show the facts.

AP: Yes, of course. This is it.

Q: And not, “This is what it means to be sensitive.”

AP: No, no. Because sensitivity is there in your heart. And if it is not there in your heart, what hope is there, what is the point in putting in any effort? It is there. And that is why any education makes sense. That is why one must not commit suicide. That is why life is beautiful. Because all that is important is already there. You have it. Education is not about bringing in the important from the outside. It is about just seeing what you have accumulated from outside. And then once you have seen it, you can wait for the magic to happen. It happens.

Once you have seen the violence that one is mired in, then you need not talk about Love. Then you need not talk about Detachment. It happens. Like it happened with King Ashoka. No Buddhist was there to teach him Detachment. All he saw was utter bloodshed around him. That moment of encountering violence in all its severity, in all its ugliness, that is enough. And after that what you have is Detachment and Love, Compassion.

And do you think Ashoka would have felt guilty about all that? But that is what your textbooks say. That he felt very bad that he caused all this damage. But I am assuring you, he felt nothing. He couldn't have felt bad, he couldn't have felt good. That is a moment when you are not feeling anything. You are realizing. And realization is not a feeling. Even if you are moved to tears, those tears are not of repentance, those tears are of realization.

Ashoka did not further the cause of the Buddha all his life, out of repentance. “I brought death upon so many people, hence let me repent.” That is not what he was doing. Though it is often portrayed this way. Ashoka was expressing his own Buddha nature. He was not repenting. And there is a great difference between these two: Expressing your own Buddha nature, versus living by the ideals given by an external Buddha. These two are extremely different things. Are you getting it?

Looking at these things, awakened the Buddha within him, just as Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha was awakened at looking at another instance of suffering, of old age, of disease. The same thing happened with Ashoka; a direct encounter with your reality. With no guilt, no repentance associated with it, direct encounter.

Q: Then you don't have to wait for an action.

AP: Yes, you don't have to be guided. What Ashoka did was fresh. Nobody was telling him to cross the seas and take Buddhism to other Islands and nations. Nobody was telling him that. From that encounter, from that witnessing, arises creativity. Arises what you can call as your own action. And that is the real individuality.

We need a totally different model of education. And when I say 'education' I don't only mean the formal organized education delivered in schools and colleges. I also mean the way parents relate to kids, society relates to individuals. The way people talk to each other in restaurants, and over a cup of tea. We all are educating each other all the time. So we need a totally different paradigm of education.

We need not really educate each other. Because the word education has become loaded with giving something. With connotations of knowledge. When I say, "I am educating you." It often simply means that I am delivering certain concepts, ideals, knowledge, and theory to you. I am in a way making you more of an intellectual. The word education needs to be stripped of this meaning. It needs to be given a totally naked, new, and fresh meaning. Which need not be given to it, which is actually its real meaning.

It is just that it is shorn of the fake thing. So education should just mean, 'Showing a mirror.' Ah, and not with an intention. Not with an intention. When you have an intention with respect to your student, it is just domination of the student.

Q: Power struggle.

AP: It's a power struggle then. He wants to become something else and you want him to become something else, and both are just the process of becoming. None of them is a process of returning. By the way, the etymology of the word education has a relation to returning, emptying.

Q: Not being taken further away, not being glued in.

AP: Yes, not wearing another set of clothes.

Q: Which is what we see happening.

AP: Yes, of course. And don't you see how it is happening? You have a name, and then one degree gets added to it, then another degree. So you are wearing one body of knowledge after the other. And ultimately what happens

is, it's quite funny, in India what happens is, even your name is dropped, but the education remains. So you are just "Doctor Sahib." That is how we address Ph.D.'s in this country. You have become so loaded with your clothes that even the body no longer matter. It doesn't matter what your name is. Finally the highest and the latest and the final robe that you took on, only that matters. "Doctor Sahib." That is scary.

"Mr. President" Scary, quite scary.

Q: It is like a walking conditioning. So in my head, the image is of going back, from college back to the first grade. So you are returning to that childhood, where you are just so innocent, where you haven't been trained.

AP: Yes. So you should actually be born a post-doctorate. Which you actually are. You have so many tendencies within you, so much of stored knowledge. Education should be about progressively liberating you. And when you finally emerge from the gates of the university, you should be a baby, with tender skin. The old men entered the system and the baby emerged from it.

What we have seen born in hospitals are actually very old men. Very, very old men, we are born. Evolutionary products, we contain all the history of the universe. That is how old we are at the point of being born. Everybody is born very-very old. We are born so very old that we are born dead old. That is why it is said that when Lao Tzu was born, he was already eighty-four years of age. That is an understatement. We all are born eighty-four million years old already, and then the counter starts.

You think your age starts from zero? No. When you say, "I am one year old." You are eighty-four million and one years old. You get this? So the sim of education should be to take away your chronological age from you. "You are born so old, can I take away some of your time? All this load that you are carrying, can it be taken away? Can you be made to feel a little lighter?"

And how should we measure progress in education? The progress in education should be measured in, "How man millennia lost:" So the topper has lost 18 centuries, which is why he is a topper. This one is not doing so well, he is not prepared to lose much.

Q: So the lighter you get the better you are.

AP: In the most advanced sections, in the highest classes, you should have baby sitters. Very-very mature babies, like the Buddha.

Q: An education that takes away from you all that you have accumulated. Not give you more on top of what you have already come with.

AP: And what you have accumulated is anyway so worthless, that you will anyway drop it the moment you can face it honestly. It will be dropped. Dropping it is no big deal. You only have to be given a situation in which you can face it.

Actually, those situations are always there all around us. We are always in the middle of those situations.

Q: So why are we not able to, if the situation is there?

AP: No, you able to see the situation, but guilt tell you, “Oh, this just happened. You are better than this situation. You might be in the gutter, but it is just an accident.”

Q: They always tell you, “You can always look at the stars.”

AP: You can always look at the stars; so you are worth the stars. The situations always have a way of exposing your patterns reality worth to you. But guilt and morality defend your rubbish and the dream of achievement and becoming, “I can become somebody!”

Q: Or I already am somebody.

AP: I already am somebody who has a lot of potential to improve. “The potential to improve is already there within me.” Have you not heard all of this?

Q: Yes.

AP: And this is supposed to be very nice nonsense. Very popular nonsense. And you are supposed to be somebody’s well-wisher, if you utter these things in front of him. “You know sir, I think you have it in you, all you require is some growing, and then the sky is the limit.”

“I’ll provide the launch pad. I think you belong to the skies.” The fellow no wonder is now going to fire you. It doesn’t feel really good right? To be fired from behind, even if that makes you rise up.

Q: And then there is no end to it.

AP: No, there is an end to it. Sooner or later the balloon bursts. Somebody can put a fire engine, but it will run out. And what happens to the balloon? It comes down. But it looks spectacular when it rises, yes? And great

motivational stories are crafted out of the rise. You see them on the covers of all the business magazines. You see them on the pages of history. Nobody really talks about the crash.

And even if you have to talk about the crash, that is taken as a beautiful irony. “The king looking at the Taj Mahal, that he made – His own creation – From behind the prison walls. Oh!” The king being deported to Burma, and being buried there. And the king is a poet and he is writing, “I couldn’t get even two yards of earth to be buried in my motherland.” This is taken as poetic, ironical, and even motivational.

You know how attractive it feels when you hear, ‘The fall of the Titans.’ “Huh! The Titan has fallen? The Titan has fallen!” Even his fall is spectacular. It becomes headlines. “Oh! another one falls. Another one is caught in an affair. Another one is caught in some kind of a scandal.” And you become motivated, even their imprisonment is news. Even their trial is headlines. So you feel like, “This is nice.”

Q: All the while you should have just opened your eyes to the gutter.

AP: Extremely easy, theoretically, but it doesn’t seem to happen very frequently, it happens rarely. Though it can happen very easily.

MYTH OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Don't chase the truth just stop running away from it

Question: Is there any spiritual journey that leads to enlightenment like with Buddha or is every movement a journey and destination like with Krishna? Is there a journey that leads to enlightenment or is it instantaneous, right now?

Acharya Prashant: What makes you say that with Buddha there was a journey? Why?

Listener 1: We know his struggle. He changed a hundred masters and then finally he got enlightened.

AP: You are right. He did all that.

L 1: But there was no such thing with Krishna.

AP: Let's first stay with Buddha. Somebody roams around for ten years, twenty years, thirty years, somebody goes to ten masters, twenty masters, and then we are told that there is an event called 'enlightenment'. That's what your story is? Yes? How do you know that what you call as 'enlightenment' was the effect of the cause called 'wandering', 'seeking', or 'searching'? How do you know that there is a cause-effect relationship there?

I am walking, I suddenly collapse. How do you know that my collapse is the effect of my walking? How do you know that? Is there a way to know that? But because our mind is trained to think that everything must have a cause, we would relate the two events.

L 1: But he was intentionally seeking enlightenment.

AP: I might be doing something intentionally, yet does that guarantee a cause-effect relationship? And could he be doing it intentionally? Did he really know what enlightenment is? If I don't know what I am seeking, how can there be any intention to seek for it? You go to a market to buy vegetables, you can have that intention because you know what a vegetable is. Before the enlightenment, did Buddha know what enlightenment is? So how can he have the intention to be enlightened?

L 1: But he knew he had to search for something.

AP: How did he even know that search yields That something? Did he know anything about That something? Is it possible to have partial enlightenment? Is it possible to have partial knowledge of the Truth? So the Buddha knew nothing, right? How did he then know that his search will yield enlightenment? How does he know that?

L 1: He did not have any other way. He had to try out everything.

AP: He is doing something. Let's just say that. When you don't know anything about enlightenment, when enlightenment is something that by its definition cannot be thought of, cannot be conceptualized, cannot be put in images, then how can the Buddha be searching for it? But that is the way we are bound to interpret the whole event, because we think that everything must have a cause, because we are so ego-bound that we think that whatever happens, happens out of human effort. So, it pleases us to think that ten-twelve years of effort, and what you get as a reward is, enlightenment.

It pleases us greatly; there is deep [ego](#) in this assumption, and mankind will hold this assumption close to itself, "God is within my reach. It was not due to His grace, but due to my effort. My effort yields enlightenment. And if Buddha can do something for ten-twelve years and get it, I too can get it. Maybe he took twelve years, I will take twenty-four, but still, I, as I am, am eligible for enlightenment. It is just that twenty-four years of work is needed. I being what I am, I can still get enlightenment with twenty-four years of input, which is alright. It's like a long-term fixed deposit, it will mature someday."

That's the way we are prone to think - get up and invest these many years, just as you invest these many years in your career. You work in a company for some twenty years and then you say that I have now risen to the top most position, similarly you are saying that if you work in a jungle for twenty years, you will rise to God; same line of thought.

I am so glad that what Buddha calls as his moment of enlightenment came when he was just sitting under a tree. So we just venerated the tree and the posture in which he was sitting and all that. What if he was taking a bath at that moment? Then we would have said, "Taking bath leads to enlightenment." What if he had been involved in other activities of the body? It's morning time and the Buddha is going towards the jungle - he is already in a jungle - and he is going towards some bush and he gets enlightenment

behind the bush. Then you will find all spiritual seekers behind the bushes with their pants down, seeking enlightenment behind bushes. “That’s how Buddha got it! There must be a cause-effect relationship. Sacred bush! There must be a cause-effect relationship. This bush leads to enlightenment!” What stupidity is this?

Enlightenment is returning to the Source, and the Source is outside all cause-effect.

You do not get there by doing something, you do not get there as the result of some *Saadhana*. Twelve years or twelve thousand years, nothing will suffice. How can time lead to the timeless? How can wandering in space, in a jungle or all over the earth, lead to that which is beyond space? But no, we want - the mind wants - to keep God within its reach. Within the ambit of its small circumference.

You do not attain God, you dissolve and all that remains is God. Buddha did not attain enlightenment. Buddha dissolved and all that remained was enlightenment. That dissolution can happen in a fraction of a second, it is instantaneous; or it may never happen. It depends on you, and because it depends on you hence it is different for everybody, because you are different from your neighbour.

The Buddha had a certain configuration - I am talking of Siddhartha Gautama, the prince. He had a certain configuration, a certain past, a certain store of experiences and a certain attachment with all of that. That has to drop and that is unique to him. You do not share that with him. Right? Yashodhara is not your wife, is she?

Buddha is unique in his store, and so are you. The Buddha has to empty his inventory and it has to be done in his own way, and you too have to do it in your own way. That way may take time or it may not take time. It depends upon your resolve, and it depends upon your wisdom.

You go to an Ashtavakra, he will say, “Time? How is time a factor? Just see right now.” A Krishnamurti would say the same thing. “Just see right now, what do you mean by twelve years? Right now, available, there. It cannot take time.” And there have been other masters, you go to them and they will say, “No.” You go to a Patanjali and he will say, “No. There are these ways that will help you loosen your bondages, try these ways out.” And if you pay attention to your own life, then you will say, “Alright, this is my unique

pattern, and so this is my unique way of liberation.”

But always remember that even the urge to be liberated is not yours. Left to yourself, you would never want to be liberated. Even the urge to be liberated is coming from That which you want to attain after liberation. Are you getting this?

Buddha did not attain enlightenment, enlightenment attained Buddha. Buddha did not attain enlightenment, enlightenment was searching for Buddha for twelve years and attained him. Had Buddha been ready, [enlightenment](#) would have happened in the first instance. What happened for those twelve years then?

Enlightenment was running after Buddha, and Buddha was escaping enlightenment. Ultimately after twelve years, enlightenment attained Buddha. And it is the same with each one of us. Enlightenment is running after you. And what are you doing? You are running here and there. And what is your excuse? “I am chasing enlightenment.”

Hello! You just stop, enlightenment will chase you! You just stop, enlightenment will take hold of you! You just stop. When enlightenment itself is so eager to get you, why are you wasting your time and energy? Why? God is more eager to have you than all your eagerness to have him. Even your eagerness to reach him is coming from him. Do not forget that. He is so eager to get you that within you he raises a desire to get Him. So who gets enlightenment? Buddha gets enlightenment or enlightenment gets Buddha?

Buddha can never get enlightenment on his own, because he will never want enlightenment. All that the Buddha can do would always be a cause, whose effect he would want or imagine. Enlightenment is outside your efforts. Are you getting it? Don't chase the Truth, just stop running away from the Truth. Can you remember this? Don't chase the Truth, just stop running away from it.

It's there, it will get you in no time. Then the question that remains is, what is the role of all so-called spiritual practices? Are they of no worth at all? Practices do not lead to enlightenment. Techniques do not lead to meditateness. Techniques arise from meditateness. How will you know what is the right technique? How will you know? Only in meditateness will you know the right technique. So you start on your journey only after you

have already reached the destination.

Buddha's enlightenment is not a particular point in time. The enlightenment is already there within, and that is why he is wandering all over. It is already there within him. It is the game of That which is already there. But because it is so difficult to comprehend, we put it in a nice time chain, a nice series.

“A prince gets married and then sees the [miseries](#) of life. He then leaves his home, and then he goes to various masters. He struggles and roams about, and one fine day sitting under the Bodhi Tree something happens.” Nice story, very nice story. Nice story to keep the ego of mankind inflated. But this is not what it is. The enlightenment that Buddha is searching for is already there in him, and in you. It is that same enlightenment that is making Buddha compassionate to the old man and the sick man that he saw from his chariot. It is the same enlightenment that is making him leave his home. Enlightenment is making him leave his home. It is the same enlightenment that is making him run from master to master. It is always there with him.

Who else is guiding him? Who else is giving him the energy to quit his empire and the throne? Who else is his source? Who is telling him that this master is not proper for you? Who is it? Who is it? So the Buddha is always enlightened; as are you.

Buddha goes to one master. Who is telling the Buddha that now it's the time to move on? Who is telling Buddha? Buddha's own enlightenment. Who else will tell him? So all that the Buddha may learn is that he is already enlightened.

The Buddha doesn't get enlightened, all that he finally admits to himself is, “I am already enlightened. I was already enlightened. Why was I running for so long?” Or, “It was because I was already enlightened hence I was running for so long.” Same thing.

You want to make this as a part of the existing story? You won't be able to do that. This is a different narrative altogether. It would not fit in, the dimension is different.

Enlightenment is to be shamelessly unenlightened

Question: My spiritual path is taking me very long and I sometimes feel stuck and I am a bit discouraged. If you can give me some inspiration at this point to, as they say, 'drop the self'. How actually to drop it? It's not happening it seems, so far.

Acharya Prashant: Let's begin with the basics. When you say 'spiritual path' and when you say that it is taking too long, you surely have some idea of where you want to reach, and that is why you are able to say that you probably have not reached there and that it is taking too long a time. Now, let me say, I am standing at a point A, and standing at point A, I imagine point B as a point of [Peace](#) or [enlightenment](#). I imagine B, standing at A. I am not very satisfied with A, so that is why I imagine some other point to be the point of Peace. But B is imagined by A. Are we together?

Q: Yes

AP: Point B is imagined by A. You know what A is? A is the state of [mind](#) one is in. So B is a function of A. One imagines B only because one is at A, which means that even though B, ostensibly, is a different point, a point of apparent satisfaction yet B is a point imagined from a state of dissatisfaction. The one who imagines B is a dissatisfied one. That is why he imagines B. So standing at A, I imagine some distant point B, I also imagine a path to B and my idea then is to reach B through that path. I can also dream up a few other alternative paths also. But the idea is to reach somewhere and that somewhere, where I want to reach is a function of where I am standing. Now in a dissatisfied state, whatever I imagine or think of or target, will that not be a product of dissatisfaction? – I'm not at peace with myself, I feel some [fear](#), I feel unsettled. Now, in this mental situation whatever I will dream of, whatever I will want to achieve, will be a product of dissatisfaction. And satisfaction can never be a product of dissatisfaction. Peace can never be a product of noise. Which means that whenever someone will think of God or Truth or Peace as a distant goal and want to move towards it, he will

necessarily fail and the result will be frustration. Which means that whenever there would be a spiritual path, a spiritual journey and a spiritual goal, the result would necessarily be frustration.

Listener: That's what my experience has been. Actually, 25 years ago, I did not have these concepts. But when I came to India, in 1989 - since then I live in India - by grace, I experienced a state of satisfaction and peace and contentment and detachment. For some time, it was truly by Grace because I had done nothing and I had no concepts and after that I started searching and now at this moment I am very-very frustrated. And actually, sometimes I even have this impression that I am going backwards, that I am getting worse rather than better on this journey.

AP: You are in India since 1989, Mostly in Rishikesh?

Listener: No, at different places – I spent time in Tiruvannamalai, in Bodhgaya, in the Himalayas too. But every year I also come to Rishikesh.

AP: You have worked really hard. I really respect your commitment. In fact, I am deeply touched by the kind of dedication you have shown to the Truth. Very few people have that. Now it is your time to stop chasing the Truth and simply reach. You have chased for long enough, you have strived, you have tried, you have wandered here and there, you have paid a lot of price. Having tried so hard, now just stop trying. Just get rid of the [belief](#) that God is a goal, outside somewhere. All the effort that one makes to reach the Truth, that itself is the barrier against the Truth.

Q: It's like, one knows this somehow, because as long as the effort is there, the seeker is there, the ego is there; it's just that I can't drop it. Also now, I'm in Rishikesh. Normally, when I am in Tiruvannamalai, I don't go to Satsangs and all these things, but in a place like Rishikesh, with all these posters around. One side of me feels that I should not go anywhere, just sit by the Ganga and be at peace. Still something pulls me, "Maybe you miss something if you don't go and listen to this one and that one." So I get more restless, more solidified, more un-peaceful and more grasping.

AP: The search intensifies, the search is renewed. Just have a deep confidence that you have a very-very intimate relationship with God, which requires no middleman. Even if there was no guru, no teacher to tell you of the Truth, still you would be firmly established in the Truth because the Truth is your nature. Even if there were no scriptures to say even a single word

about the Truth, yet you would be in the Truth like the fish is in the water. The fish does not have to read of the ocean from somewhere. Nobody comes to educate her. She does not go to a Satsang to learn about the ocean. And even if all the masters of the world tell you that you have lost the Truth, you cannot lose it. Inside, outside, up, down, right, left, you are already in the Truth. Already.

Q: I have this intellectual conviction but experientially I feel so thrown out, so disconnected.

AP: Every experience that happens is just an experience and there is no experience of the Truth. Experiences are experiences. There is no experience of the Truth, but you can pass through experiences in Truth. Situated in Truth, you can pass through all the experiences and that would mean that experiences would remain just experiences and not penetrate you, not shake you up. Some untouched point would remain within. See, realisation does not mean that you will have some special experience of Truth. There is no special experience of Truth.

Q: I imagine realisation to be a complete relaxation where I am free of anxiety, free of identification with 'me' and 'mine', that finally I can relax and I can live.

AP: Conceptually what you are saying is correct. [Realisation](#) is a complete relaxation. But it is a complete relaxation in the middle of all movement, in the middle of various experiences including the experience of tiredness. So realisation is relaxation in the middle of tiredness. Which means that you will experience tiredness. The relaxation that is associated with realisation is not a superficial relaxation. Superficially you will experience tiredness, just as any other person does.

Q: And also anxiety?

AP: Anxiety too you will experience. Let me assure you that it is not as if the natural one, the centred one, the realised one does not experience tiredness, or anxiety or worry, it is not as if he is free of these experiences. He too has all these experiences. Thoughts are there, and when thoughts are there, then surely [future](#) is there, [hope](#) is there, memories are there, anxiety too is there, [anger](#) too might be there. What distinguishes the realised one is that in the middle of all of this, he still has an untouched point. So while he is angry, even then, there is that small-small thing, within him, which is not angry.

Every bit of him is angry, shaking with anger yet there is something very small, very little, very subtle which is not angry.

Q: I recognise this.

AP: So you are already enlightened. Now why are you chasing it? What do you think that Truth is so rude and merciless and loveless that you will go after it for 20 years, 30 years, and it would still elude you? The Truth has no intention of staying away from you. Maybe it is already with you but you don't look at it because you are chasing it; elsewhere.

You may already be enlightened, maybe you are not just acknowledging it. Maybe this state that you are in is already a state of enlightenment. It is just that this state is not matching with your ideas and imaginations of enlightenment. So many books and gurus have created a very wonderful image of the enlightened one and it is a totally unrealistic image. And seekers then chase that image, trying to mould themselves in the shape and form and similarity to that image. That image is just a hollow ideal, there is no substance in that image.

Q: But why does it come up in Scriptures, in books, or in descriptions of sages?

AP: It does not really come up. It comes up not in the Scriptures but in our *interpretation* of the scriptures. There is no scripture worth the name which gives any image of enlightenment; I assure you. In fact, I have repeatedly been saying that show me one scripture which gives some kind of a *blueprint* of enlightenment.

Q: I was just reading Sita Rameshwar and he definitely says something about the signs of realisation is that you are completely free of anxiety.

AP: He is right that you are completely free of anxiety. What does that mean? Which means that anxiety will be there but you will be free of it. Did he say that anxiety is not there? What is he saying? He is saying that you will be free of anxiety which means that anxiety will not trouble you. So now you can be anxious, without being anxious, now you can be afraid without being afraid, now you can be excited without being excited, now you can be lazy without being lazy, now you can be the actor without being the actor. And that is enlightenment.

Q: To always recognise that point.

AP: No, not recognise anything. Not recognise anything. That point is beyond recognition. You don't have to *do* anything with enlightenment. Enlightenment is not something that you can hold in your hands. You only live in your daily small experiences and enlightenment means that now you do not demand anything beyond these experiences.

Q: That I don't demand anything to be different?

AP: You don't demand anything to be different - you are always in touch with something so fulfilling that even when life outside becomes demanding, even terrible, yet you are not very deeply upset. You would be upset, superficially. In the depths, you would be [silent](#), tranquil, untouched.

The realised one lives a very ordinary life, simply in the facts. Simply in the facts. Which means that there is very little space in his mind for imagination, which means he would think very little of tomorrow or depend very little on the past. Which means that he is a very common person, a very ordinary person.

Q: Like I said, 25 years ago, I have had a small experience, because of going through some mental or psychological hardship let's say, just like a few days of going through an intense sense of loneliness, due to circumstances coming together, after which I got into a state where I really experienced a deep sense of "Whatever happens, it's fine." I felt much more detachment from events. In the last 5 years, I feel that more anxiety has come into my life.

AP: That anxiety is not something outside of enlightenment. You can be enlightened even with anxiety. In fact, if there are mental states that you have not allowed yourself, then please stop resisting them. If there are actions or thoughts that you have barred, or prohibited thinking that they do not befit a spiritual seeker, kindly lift the bar. I repeat: You have worked really hard. You have already proven yourself a worthy one. All that is now required of you is that you relax and [surrender](#).

Q: Surrender

AP: Surrender means that you drop the search. Surrender means that you simply say that...

Q: Okay, I give it up.

AP: I give it up. And this giving up is enlightenment. Giving up is not a defeat, it is the highest victory.

Q: Sometimes I really wish to give it up.

AP: Just give it up. Just give it up. Drop this idea that you are a spiritual seeker. Right now your whole personality in your mind is that of a spiritual seeker.

Q: Yes, but involuntarily. It happens involuntarily.

AP: Involuntarily it keeps happening? It keeps happening only as a thought and thoughts find space only when you are not living in the daily facts. So, right now as you are speaking to me, where is space for thoughts? See how attentively you are listening. There is very little space for thoughts. Similarly, when you would be doing other things like walking, or reading, or eating, sitting, sleeping – just be so fully relaxed that there is no need for too much thinking. Thought arises only when a goal, target, ambition or problem is there. Enlightenment itself is such a big problem. One says, “I am not able to attain enlightenment after so many years,” so it is a big target, big problem.

Q: Yes, for e.g., since coming to Rishikesh, here there are so many Gurus that I find it difficult to sleep at night – thinking that I have not reached.

AP: You see, let me give you an example, you say that you are a spiritual seeker. There are businessmen in the big cities. You are chasing enlightenment, they are chasing their monetary profits, seeking to expand their business, earn more money - they too cannot sleep at nights. Now, what is the difference between you and them? Don't you see that it is very much the same thing? They are chasing satisfaction through money; which is just an ideal, just imaginary. They won't get it and you are chasing satisfaction through some kind of a personality, which is imaginary, which won't give you any satisfaction.

Q: It is not even that I am seeking satisfaction for myself, it feels like there is a duty. It feels that it is shameful that after so much time I have failed.

AP: No, you don't have any obligation, any duty. Please get rid of this notion. You are not born with any duty. One is born free and that basic freedom is enlightenment. You have no obligation to become enlightened because you are enlightened. Nobody has any obligation to chase God. God himself is the one who expresses himself through you, through me, through this world. How can the world have an obligation, then, to chase God? So there is no spiritual or religious duty as such to become enlightened. No, not at all. You can be shamelessly unenlightened and that is enlightenment.

Enlightenment is to be shamelessly unenlightened.

Q: So this sense of failure, this is actually...

AP: Rejoice in this failure. When you can laugh at this failure, you will know you are enlightened. Enlightenment is to remain enlightened even in the middle of failure. In the middle of your worst failure, you are still enlightened.

Q: So I have to convince myself that I am enlightened?

AP: No, you have to drop all ideas regarding enlightenment or unenlightenment. Just have a certain deep [Faith](#) that you are within the Truth, that there is nothing wrong with you. That there is nothing in you that needs to be corrected or improved.

Even when all is going wrong, even when all is crumbling about you, even when you see that you are failing or committing mistakes, still retain that deep Faith, that deep sureness, that mystical confidence. Retain that. Never feel small or bad about yourself. Never. And never allow any Guru to tell you that you need to be enlightened. If someone is saying that you need to be enlightened, then, first of all, he is not in touch with his own enlightenment.

So simply walk the streets of Rishikesh, the weather is pleasant these days, the Ganga is beautiful, the mountains are so nice. Live the food, the weather, the streets; roam about purposelessly, feed the fish, and that is enlightenment. Simple, direct and straight. Ordinary. And do not try to live as per an enlightened code of conduct. There is no divine commandment that an enlightened one has to live in this framework. There is no such framework, you can do whatever you want to do. You can walk madly, you can dance, you can even abuse, you can stumble, you can fall, you can sleep, you can act lazy, you can act in the most stupid way.

Q: I recognise this. I stayed at a Buddhist monastery in the High Himalayas and there was no teacher there. These monks, they are very-very simple. They just lead their lives simply, they would just hang around. In the morning, they would do their chanting and that's it. And when I was there I felt so much less stress there as compared to when I come to Rishikesh, in this environment of so-called spirituality.

AP: Isn't it simple? Nothing in existence goes wilfully to an environment which makes him stressed. If this so-called spirituality makes you stressed and anxious, then why do you go to it?

Q: I asked myself the same question, even before coming here.

AP: The answer is simple, you have been convinced that you lack something. So you are inflicting a torture upon yourself. Now, why must you condemn yourself to this punishment? If going to spiritual places does not make you feel nice, you have no responsibility, no obligation to go. You are alright. You are alright.

See, you and God are very close, it is a very intimate love affair. No spiritual place or special teacher is needed.

Q: As a child I felt quite an intimate relation, communion with God and felt Gratitude. I had no conception of God as a form, I never believed of God in a cloud, or Jesus Christ, it was a formless God which was always with me.

AP: So you were better off as a child. Right? Can you return to your childlike state? Carefree, flowing, unobstructed, uninhibited.

Remove all the great ideas. You are already great. When I look at you, I am seeing nothing but enlightenment, why are you not able to look at yourself and see God?

Q: But all these mind states are superimposed.

AP: Yes of course, but they will be there. Don't fight them. They will be there. Even in the middle of all the doubt and all these mind states just stand firm in the deep conviction that you are still alright. Even when somebody tries to tell you, "No, you are not enlightened, you need to do this, you need to climb that hill, you need to go to that master, you need to read that scripture, you need to perform those ceremonies." Even when somebody is trying to convince you of all this, listen to him but have this firmness in the heart that God will not come to you through methods and techniques.

He is not a goal, a target, an object. He is You. Already You. And he laughs a lot when he finds you searching for him. You are God's joke. He looks at you and keeps laughing. It is like you are looking for your own eyes. You are fervently looking out and trying to find your eyes.

Q: I'm just looking to be myself.

AP: You already are. You don't have to be yourself. You already are. This is what it is. This. This. Exactly this. With no change, no improvement required. This exactly as it is. Not even one percent change needed.

Q: So if I am in an unhappy mind state.

AP: Remain unhappy. Just remain unhappy. Remain unhappy. Now you are *unhappily enlightened*. Now you are unhappily enlightened. When you are anxious, then you are *anxiously enlightened*. When you are excited, then you are *excitedly enlightened*. In whichever state you are, you never lose enlightenment. Enlightenment is your heartbeat, enlightenment is your breath; how can you lose it? It is only in thoughts that you lose enlightenment. Don't give energy to those thoughts.

Listener: So, I just let it be?

AP: Oh yes! Have a nice cup of tea. Relax, walk around. And I repeat, do not allow this so called spiritual world to dominate you. Let them not tell you that you lack something. Never listen to them. Whenever somebody tries to tell you that there is something inherently wrong with you, don't listen. Yes, superficial improvements can be made. We listen to people when they tell us that we are not driving properly or such things. But if somebody tells you that there is something wrong with your soul, with your heart, with your very essence, then don't listen.

Q: With identifications?

AP: Identifications will continue. In the middle of identifications, you remain unidentified. In the middle of all the identifications, you remain enlightened. I assure you, you will remain identified till your last breath. If you are aiming to drop all identifications then you are too identified with the dropper. Identification will remain.

Q: So, okay...(Smiles)

AP: That's it, nothing left to do. No goal left to achieve. Just play around. Have fun.

Q: It happens to be that there is a heaviness that is sticking to me, then?

AP: Live through that heaviness. There is nothing wrong with that heaviness. Live through it. Don't resist it, don't try to do something about it. One is sometimes heavy, one is sometimes light. All these are moods of the mind. They keep swinging. Why do you want to interfere? Let the mind do what it wants to do. Sometimes it will be happy, sometimes it will be needlessly gloomy. It is like the weather, it keeps changing.

Q: What is then the difference with you?

AP: For me? No difference. I'm just like you.

Q: But what is the..?

AP: There is no difference, actually there is no difference. It is just that you don't want to accept that you are alright and I have refused resisting, long back.

Q: Resisting?

AP: Resisting anything. Whatever is there, is there.

Q: So you just completely accept?

AP: I don't accept. I just don't resist. And even when resistance is there, I don't even resist the resistance.

Q: Has there been a point in your life? Like a point in your life when this started happening?

AP: No, no. No fancy points, no moment of awakening, no waking up to the radiant Truth. None of those fancy stories, none of those fancy stories. No renunciation of home. No visiting a great master. No effulgence of some divine energy. Nothing of that kind. Simple ordinary human being.

Q: But the giving up of all resistance, that is something.

AP: I will simply say – “I am alright with whatever is happening.” Even when I'm trying really hard, I'm still alright with the way things are. I might be involved in a passionate attempt to change things, yet I am alright.

Q: Yes.

AP: Remain alright.

Q: Yes. Just not to load the mind.

AP: Never be ashamed of yourself. Never feel incomplete, don't feel guilty, and don't feel too responsible. You are not here to strive, you are here to have fun.

Q: Okay. Okay. I will go out and I will.

AP: And when one of those serious gurus – when they try to tell you that you need to do this or that, then you can shamelessly show them your thumb. Have you seen kids rolling out their tongues?

Q: (Laughs)

AP: Thank you.

Q: Thank you.

MYTH OF SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality is science turned inwards, it looks at the subject and object both

Question: What is the definition of spirituality?

Acharya Prashant: First of all the definitions that pre-exists in the mind must be cleared. Spirituality has nothing to do with religious customs, religious observations, or anything that pertains to a sect, a cult, a particular path, a particular group of people, a particular book, or a particular person.

Spirituality is simply the search for Truth. And it is very rigorous in the sense that in the language of spirituality, Truth is that which is not only unchanging within time, but is actually beyond time.

The word spirit means *essence*; that which is real, that which actually is. Man has to go to spirituality because everything that he perceives to *be*, keeps changing, and in that way keeps deceiving him. Whatever you come across, whatever you get attached to, whatever you think to be real, it is no more there the next moment. Yes, the next moment can come a year later or thousands of years later; but there surely comes a moment when what you thought to be real is shown to be false. False in the sense that it is no more there. And that is the definition of falseness. Falseness is that which presented itself as being, but in due course of time, moved into non-being. That is false.

Spirituality is the search for that which is beyond being and non-being and hence that which will not deceive you by turning into the false when you believed it to be true.

If you exist, you exist as something. It is nonsensical to say, “I am, but I am nothing.” When man says that “*he is*”, in parallel he says that “*he is something*”. What is this something? Whatever man postulates this something to be, turns out to be ephemeral. Now, this ever-changing world no more remains an impersonal problem. Because whatever I think myself to be, comes from the world and if what the world is, keeps changing, then it immediately means that I too keep changing. So, the transitory nature of the world now becomes a personal problem - provided you are thoughtful enough

and attentive enough to see that all that you think yourself to be comes from the world. Hence, if the world is constantly a flux, constantly changing, then you too are constantly a flux, constantly changing.

Now, this is pretty strange! [Who am I?](#) – Something that is not fixed at all. But, if I am not fixed at all, I simply do not feel good about it. My innermost being thirsts for something that won't fall apart. My deepest yearning is for a particular stability. So, this dry fact that all my identities come from the world and hence are subject to change simply cannot satisfy me. This deep discontentment makes man move towards something that will not come to an end, something that is beyond the vagaries of time. This is Spirituality.

Spirituality is very much like science, in the sense that it looks very closely at the world. Spirituality is extremely scientific because it wants to examine the world and its nature, just like the scientist. It wants to look at the world, it wants to observe the world, and see what the world really is. Where does the world come from? What happens to it? How does one perceive it? How does it change? How does it end? All its processes, its dissolution, its making, everything. Spirituality is very scientific. And then spirituality goes beyond science. How? [Science](#) stops at the world. Spirituality looks at the world, then looks at the self, then sees the direct relation between the world and the self and hence, sees the two as one. Then it goes further beyond! When the spiritual eye sees that the self, the normal ego-self, is nothing but coming from worldly influences, it does not feel contended.

It cries out, "There has to be something beyond." This deep belief, which for want of a better word, we can even call just a postulation or a conviction, is in the language of spirituality, called as Faith. So, these are the two aspects of spirituality. The first is a very-very scientific observation of the world. If the mind is not scientific enough, it cannot be spiritual. If the mind does not know the world, it cannot move to something beyond the world. Knowing the world - its movements, its games, its suffering and its cunningness is very important. The spiritual mind must deeply [understand](#) the world. That is one aspect of Spirituality. The second aspect is Faith. I understand the world. I see that I am made of worldly influences but I also have faith that there has to be something beyond these influences. Influences which give me nothing but [suffering](#).

This is Spirituality - attention and [faith](#). And both are just helping you to go

towards something that is of the beyond. Something that is not merely a mental apparition, a sensory deception. And when you mention the senses then that is one example to indicate how spirituality goes beyond science. For science, something that cannot be detected, does not exist. If something can just not be detected, if it is absolutely undetectable, then science will say, "It does not exist." Spirituality says, "My instruments for detection are very limited. I detect using my senses and my intellect which are quite limited. Something that cannot be thus detected may also exist. In fact it may be more real than what the senses announce as real." Spirituality thus lacks the arrogance of science.

Science says if my eyes can see it, look at it, only then it exist. Spirituality says, "But first of all am I sure that my eyes are an instrument capable enough to tell me the Truth?" Spirituality is an [honest](#), brutally honest search for the truth. And kindly do not think that it precludes science. To go beyond something is not the same as rejecting it. Spirituality is deeply scientific and so very scientific that it transcends science. You could even say that it is more scientific than science.

Science stops at one particular superstition. What is the fundamental superstition of science? That my eyes will tell me the truth. My intellect can tell me the Truth. That is the fundamental superstition of science. Spirituality does not accept even that superstition. Spirituality says, "No! What the mind says is just that - the words of the [mind](#). I want to look at the mind itself! And that looking at the mind cannot happen while remaining in the province of mind. Hence, there has to be something beyond the mind."

And the spiritual man does merely remain at the level of positing this; he actually tastes this. This something of the beyond, this unreasonable sureness, he lives in it, he breathes it. His being has a different color all together.

So, it is not merely a belief system. Spirituality is not a cult. Spirituality is not a particular way of thinking. Spirituality is deep immersion into the Truth. It is not something of the mind; it is something of your entire being. You breathe it, you live in it.

Spirituality is the intimacy of the immediate, not the blaze of the beyond

Acharya Prashant: So, here we are, sitting in a spiritual city. Everything here, the whole context is spiritual. Some of us are not from India, and they have come here for spiritual reasons. So, what is [spirituality](#)? There is that which is visible, which appears substantial, is perceptible, we call that as the material. And then we use the word 'spirit'. If there is a need to have a separate word, then surely spirit can be nothing, just nothing like what material is. Otherwise, another form of the word 'material' would have sufficed. Or another form may not even have been needed. So, when we say 'Spiritual' or 'spirit', by definition, it can have no elements of that which is sensory, sensual, mental, material, carrying a name or form or that which we call as existence. The Spiritual can be none of these. If we can put our finger on it, it is material. If we can hear it, it is again material. If we can touch it, lift it, keep it in our pocket, wear it or even think of it, it is material.

What is material? That which we see, that which forms our universe, that which is space-time, is material. Then, by definition, the spiritual has to be beyond space-time. That's a nice point we have come to. Whatever then is in space, is spatial, cannot really be spiritual. If that be so, then would it be fair to call a place as spiritual? A place is surely a geographical location, space. Is it really prudent to say that a particular temple, a particular thing is spiritual? It is important to enquire about this because several of us take great pains and cover large distances to come to spiritual places.

My question is – Can a place be spiritual?

Similarly we must look at time. Whatever is in time is material. Time means change, time means evolution, time means coming from the past and flowing into the future, time means mental activity. If this be so, then can a promise of redemption be called spiritual? If time is just material and Spirituality is surely something beyond material, then if so-called spirituality offer a great transformation in the future – some kind of a heaven, some kind of a superman – is it really Spirituality or is it just another worldly hope? A so-

called great man tells you, “You are evolving, and then you must reach the climax of your evolution. You must achieve greatness. You must become something.” Is this a spiritual statement or is this a statement as worldly as saying, “My son must become the CEO of a big firm.” What is the difference between the aspiration to become a divine superman and the aspiration to become the richest man in the world? Both are just dealings in [time](#).

Similarly, if you are being told of some great spiritual traditions, then surely you are being told of the past. All traditions flow from the past and hence are in time. If you are being told of great spiritual traditions and are encouraged to follow them, is it any different from being asked to tow the family tradition? Is it really any different from being asked to do what your country or community have always been doing? It is time, past. So, surely the material, be it a temple or be it a T-shirt, can have nothing to do with Spirituality. And there can be no spiritual stream coming from a glorious past. Now, what do we see here? As I went around the city, there was a lot of merchandise on sale – necklaces, bracelets, anklets, kurtas; you name it – Now, kindly do not answer in a hurry – A T-shirt that is printed with an “ॐ” (Om), does it not immediately appear as spiritual? And in that, does not its whole appeal lie? Would it sell if the printed images were not carrying a connotation? And not only is that the intention of the seller, even the buyer starts feeling a little different, probably a little holier, probably a little more pious, after wearing that T-shirt.

A few days back I was at a place where they take a particular hill as very sacred. I entered into a discussion with one of the leading spiritual personalities - whatever is meant by ‘spiritual personality’ - and a world-renowned author, and I asked him, “Do you really believe in things like time and space, a particular place, a particular image?” And I kept asking. The result wasn’t quite pleasant. But I still want to keep asking and I want to ask you as well, “Are we not taking forward the material in the name of Spirituality?” Also, in asking this question, I am not condemning the material at all. Material is material, and what is material, has its own place in the material domain. Material is wonderful. But when we say spiritual, then surely we must have something which is transcending the material. My issue is with the blurring of this distinction; my issue is with this sometimes deliberate deception.

You see, we all are in search of the essence, the spirit. The spirit means the

essence – the truth of something. We all are desperately in search of that. That is why we come to the so-called spiritual places. That is why we take great pains to reach masters, to interpret the Scriptures. People from outside India come, having quit their jobs, having left their families behind, having invested a lot. This shows that surely they are searching for something. But if you just wanted the material, there was enough material at your home. What was the need to travel so far? Your thirst is real, but the medium that you are choosing to quench your thirst, is a false medium. And if you keep taking the false as true, then the true will always elude you. In spite of being present and easily available, you would keep missing it. You would keep missing it precisely because you are searching for it in the wrong place. Or let me put it this way, you are searching for it in a ‘place’. Every ‘place’ where you search for it, is a wrong place.

There is a whole ‘*tamasha*’ (Drama show) going on. It’s a market place. It is a spiritual mall. You visit any of the holy cities, the situation is the same. And it is quite pitiable because those who are coming to the shops are coming with a true requirement. It is not that they want to waste themselves, that they are intent upon investing themselves falsely. They are feeling a certain call, their mind is experiencing a certain restlessness. Therefore they are coming to the market, and they cannot be blamed, because all their lives, whatever they have wanted, they have only obtained it from a market. So, it is kind of understandable if one feels that even the spiritual need will be met in some market, maybe a different kind of market, may be some spiritual market.

No, that cannot happen. The spiritual, by definition, is totally, totally different. The rules of the material world do not apply there at all. In the material world, to get something, you have to move. In the spiritual world, to get the Real, you have to stop. In the material world, when you gain something, the amount, the number, the weight of your possessions increases. In the spiritual world, when you have really achieved, then you become lighter, you lose. That is the reason why, in spite of the thirst being real, the thirst continues. The thirst continues because the false is assumed to be true.

You may then ask that is there no importance, no significance of the material expressions of the spiritual? Of the *mantras*? Of the temples? Of the holy rivers? Of the sacred mountains? Do they hold no significance at all?” They hold a great significance. They hold a great significance only when the *mantra*, which is a word and hence material, arises from a spiritual centre.

When the material is directly a manifestation of the spiritual, only then the material is a symbol of the Divine, only then the material points at non-material.

If the envelope is carrying a love letter, then the envelope too gets some of the [love](#) that the letter is entitled to receive. But what if we start worshipping empty envelopes? The envelope may have once carried a love letter. But the letter is long lost. Now there is only the word, now there is only the material. And you are sticking to it, and you are worshipping it, and you are thinking that you have received something valuable. You would be disappointed. And we all are continuously receiving only disappointments.

A temple is wonderful when it arises as an expression of a devoted Heart. The Heart comes first. The temple rises as an expression of the Heart. But if the Heart is shrouded by a thick mind, then of what use would it be to just go and touch stones? In fact then it would be dangerous because your disease would exist as before and you would be complacent that some kind of treatment is taking place. Your mind will continue to remain complacent, conditioned, deluded and arrogant. But because now you are wearing a sacred thread, or have visited sacred places, pilgrimages, read a few holy books, now you would feel as if the divine has descended upon you. Now treatment would be doubly difficult.

You see, as I was going around this place this morning, I was pointing it to Kunal about people carrying a particular hair style or beard. When a Saint becomes One with existence, when he finds no reason to resist or control the happening, then a beard is beautiful. The beard has no significance by itself. It is beautiful as a manifestation of a [surrendered](#) mind. That is what a beard represents. “I do not want to fight it. I do not want to cut it. I do not want to resist the body.” But if you go to the holy places, you find any number of people carrying a beard. The beard is a material thing. You will not become spiritual by carrying a beard. You will not become spiritual by reciting ‘Om’ a million times. These are all material endeavours. But is it not very easy for us always to detect the spiritual? And please pay attention to this, if it is possible for us to detect the spiritual, it means that we are surely carrying an image of the spiritual.

So, the moment something comes before our eyes which match that ‘image’, we say, “Oh! This is something spiritual.” So, the moment someone wearing the saffron colour comes in front of your eyes, you immediately say, “Oh!

Someone spiritual!” Now surely the spiritual is material. Now surely you have an image. And the image can only be of something material. Now you are saying that you already know what Spirituality is. No, you can never know what Spirituality is. Spirituality is something totally dynamic. The expressions will keep changing, always changing. And if you are obsessed with the expressions, then you will keep missing the Real.

You see, you look at buildings, and if you are shown the pictures of ten buildings, and asked to detect which one of these is holy or spiritual or religious, you would not waste a second in putting your finger. All you need is a dome or a minaret or a spire. And you are very clear that this one must be a holy building. Now, how do you know? But you know. And because you know, you do not *Know* anything.

If you are shown the picture of an ordinary man, wearing ordinary, contemporary clothes, even wearing a neck-tie and sunglasses, it would be very difficult for you to say that this is a spiritual man. On the other hand, if you are shown the picture of someone with a shaven head and a long beard, and beads in the palm, you would be quick to say, “Ahh! Something spiritual there!” Is that not so?

So then, we are not looking for the ‘spirit’. Now we are saying that we are looking for something which looks like our pre-set image. Now we are not looking for the Truth. Now we are looking for an affirmation of our mental concepts. So, you are saying, “That which I am already carrying in my mind, I am looking for a confirmation, a reinforcement of that.” And that will happen. Your own concepts will be strengthened. You would become more and more confident about your own dogmas. You will say, “Yes, yes. I know. That particular river is holy, and that river is ordinary.” Such a silly thing to say. Are you getting it?

The True, the Real, is not something to be sought. It is our nature. It is never going away. Getting it doesn’t require special practice or effort or ‘sadhana’. It rather requires honest attentiveness; when you can be honest towards yourself, when you can acknowledge all your follies, when you can be attentive to the daily mistakes, that is Spirituality. Spirituality is nothing special. It is very simple, ordinary. The man who lives in himself, in his simple nature, is a spiritual man. Spirituality is simple wisdom. You could even say that to not to be foolish, is to be Spiritual. As simple a definition as that.

But you will not like this definition if your mind is besotted with the great, with the extraordinary, that fanciful image of godhood. “God, the dazzling! God, the awesome! The bewilderment that is divinity!” Now you will not accept this. Now you will say, “No, I wanted something that will overwhelm me. I wanted something that will make me feel like belonging to another world!”

Spirituality is not about reaching another world.

Spirituality, mind you, is about knowing this world.

The majority of mankind has no [understanding](#) of what this world is, and lives dreaming of some other world. Spirituality is not another world, but this world. If you can understand what I am saying, if you can go to the Silence behind these words, that is Spiritual. If you can look at the bird on the tree, if you can look at the traffic on the road, if you can listen to the noises coming from the kitchen, and know what they are, what they really are, that is Spirituality. Spirituality is not about knowing the Scriptures. Spirituality is about knowing why you are restless. Spirituality is about knowing why you resist change, why you like something, why you dislike something, why you run towards something, what you are scared of. Spirituality is about living your daily, ordinary life, wakefully.

This ‘*waking up*’ which manifests itself in your every action, in your daily life, is Spirituality. It will manifest itself in various forms. You too will make temples, just that those temples will not look like temples of the past. And if you have firmly believed that a temple is a temple only when it looks like the temple of the past, then you will never really be able to enter your own temple. And only your own temple is real. All other temples, for you, cannot be temples. *Spirituality is about letting your own temple come up.*

As you visit India, and the various holy cities, temple after temple, priest after priest, river after river, ashram after ashram, I want to ask you, where is your own priesthood? Why can’t your own house be your ashram? When will that come up? Where is your own Scripture that is waiting to manifest itself? And it is so close, if only you stop blocking its way. Why do you feel incapable, small, impotent? Why do you think that there can be only ‘*n*’ number of Upanishads? Where is your Upanishad? Where is your Gita? Where is your Bible? Why must you travel afar? Do you really think that you are any different from the Rishi who gave us the Sacred Sutras? It is a mistake if you think so.

You and the Rishi are one. Just that the Rishi knows that, and you do not accept that. That is the only difference. And that is a difference created by you; that is a difference sustained by you. Nothing in existence is trying to show you down. Only you are insistent upon believing that you are small, sick, incapable, and in need of support from the world, from the material. Unfortunately, there are several others like you who are equally sick but want to exploit your sickness. Then you become customers and they become sellers.

Why must you visit the so-called spiritual shops? Did the author of the Bible read another Bible to come up with the Bible? Did the Rishi of the Upanishads read the Upanishads in advance so that he can announce the Upanishads? What if you are the first man or the first woman? Who would tell you what is holy and what is not? How would you then know that you need to take a visa and a flight to India? Surely these things have been put into your head by the [society](#). Had you been the first man, nobody would have been there to tell you all these things. And then you would not have done these stupidities.

You are the First man, and knowing this is Spirituality.

Not only are you the First man, you are the only one. The entire world is you. Only you are. And if only you are, why do you roam here and there like a deluded deer? Wherever you will go, you will be moving only in your own expanse, then what is the need to feel so desperate about reaching? It never occurs to us that the greatest possibility lies within us. It never occurs to us that by terming something else as great, we have correspondingly termed ourselves as relatively small. That is the greatest danger of creating a God outside of yourself. God represents everything that is the highest about you. And if you have put your highest representation as something outside of yourself, then you have condemned yourself to littleness. Spirituality is about realising that you need not live in pettiness. It is an inner sureness based on nothing. The spiritual man, the spiritual mind, lives in the spirit, in the essence. He is not deceived by symbols.

So, this afternoon, my request is, kindly know the material as material. Kindly know the envelope as an envelope. Kindly know the symbol as a symbol. The envelope is not even the love letter, and you have assumed the envelope to be the Beloved. Can we get more foolish than that? Somebody is so enamoured with the envelope that he forgot the letter. And another one has

taken the envelope to her bosom and the Beloved is waiting and waiting. But the envelope has so captivated you that you will not look at the Beloved. Occasionally your heart will cry out. It will say, "Something is missing. Please, something is wrong." But then you will look around and find other like you, all just carrying envelopes, embracing envelopes, sleeping with envelopes, kissing envelopes, putting envelopes on the forehead, worshipping envelopes. And then you will say, "If the whole world is doing this, then this must be right. Look at the crowds! Look at the queues! Surely not everybody can be foolish!" Do not discount that possibility. Everybody just might be foolish. You need not be.

Foolishness is not your nature. Simple wisdom is our essential nature. And that will not come as a result of some teaching; that will not come as a result of travelling hither and thither. That comes when you stop doing what you have always been doing. That comes when you start seeing the absurdity of continuing with your ways and not by doing something extra, not by booking one more flight, but by perhaps cancelling a few tickets. You know what happens when the false dominates you? The True will stand right in front of you, right within you, at an arm's reach, and you will walk past it as if you have seen nothing, as if you have heard nothing. The Beloved will keep knocking your door and you will not answer, because you are hugging the envelope.

I have no issues at all with shops. Shops must sell. But they must be honest about what they are selling. If there is a shop that is selling enlightenment, then it is a fraud. A shop can sell shoes, oil, bread, cement, ideas and knowledge; such things a shop can surely sell. But a shop cannot sell Love and Freedom and Truth and God. When a shop makes such claims, then I will resist, then I will speak. When a shop says that, "Come, I will show you the great," and it shows you the great by pointing at some structure, then this is an injustice. If someone calls you to show you the great, then he must ask you to look at your own Heart. Greatness lies there. Greatness does not lie in some special structure. Greatness does not lie in the life of some special man or woman. And if you are continuously being told that a man or a woman or both, were great and special, then what about you? Who are you? A dwarf? A pigmy? All the greatness has been taken away by them. And what have you been left with!

Don't you see that? Why do you allow yourself to be exploited? Why must

you go and bow in front of the great buildings, and the great buildings, the great portraits and statues? Those who have known have always said that. *Avadhuta Gita* of Dattatreya beautifully says, “To whom can I bow now? To whom can I offer obeisance? It’s me, me and me. How to offer salutation now?” And that is the greatest salutation that you can offer to the Truth.

When you know that now you cannot bow down to the false, then you have surrendered to the Truth. And only when you have surrendered to the Truth, you will get the courage to not to prostrate in front of the false. But if you keep prostrating in front of all the shops, then how will you ever bow to the Holy? How? *Spirituality is Surrender. But before surrender, it is rebellion.* Rebel against all that which is false. Rebel against all that which is material but claims to be spiritual. When you have rebelled against the false, that is surrender to the Truth.

Do not allow your mind to be colonized. [Enquire](#), ask questions. Faith is not blind belief. Faith is not following the crowd. God does not live in a special place. You will not meet God in some heaven in future. Enlightenment will not *come*. These *are there*. And only *these* are there. Why are you trying?

I might have said something which may cause momentary disappointment to you, especially if you have invested a lot in your travels and in your beliefs. The hurt that is being caused is intentional. I am speaking as a friend. Nothing must be beyond your questioning, nothing at all. Do not take anything to be so sacred that you cannot enquire. Enquire like a child. Enquire without inhibitions. Enquire without already declaring that this is Holy or pious. Ask – “Why must this be so?”

Spirituality is not the renunciation of life; it is the art of living fully

Question: I am not sure about what to do in life. Whether I should go for a spiritual path, and leave all material desires, or do what everyone is doing. Divergence is always there in my mind. I am practicing meditations regularly, but it won't clear my path. Secondly, how can only knowledge bring a change in me? Surely no one changes just by listening to talks?

Acharya Prashant: Why is it so, that what you call as the '[spiritual](#) path' must be equated with *leaving* something? Do you find any renunciation in existence? Do you find anything in existence that is bent upon giving up something, or dropping something?

Listener 1: But you one cannot have all the things at once.

AP: If life were meant for dropping, then that whom you call as 'God' should have first of all dropped the universe. When he is running the universe, not dropping it, in spite of the world being as silly, as pointless and as rotten as it is, then why must you think of leaving all the desires behind, and going to the [spiritual](#) life, leaving all material behind, and doing something else?

Is the flower ever on the path of renunciation? Are animals, mountains, planets and stars, giving up, renouncing, rejecting, negating? Each is there, fully there, located at its own center. You too find your center. It's not about giving up, it's about finding. Yes, in that finding you discover, that the useless does not appeal, and the useless never appeals, unless the useless appears useful.

We all often claim that we want to drop this and that: desires, tensions, sorrows, attachments. Drop! If you want to drop, drop! What you stops you? You don't want to drop. You don't want to drop because you see something important there, because you still perceive that they are of some use, some value. Your mind senses some attraction there.

The day you realize that there is nothing in them, they would automatically get dropped. But that realization is what is to be gained. *Dropping happens*

after gaining. And that is one mistake that man has made through centuries and centuries of religious practice. We have emphasized so much on ‘giving up’, without realizing that ‘giving up’ is not possible to a mind that has not yet achieved. Achieved what? Achieved the climax, achieved the real, achieved its center.

Yes infrequently, rarely, there have been people who have talked of achieving, who have said, “Gain it fully, and then there would be no need to drop.” Because dropping would then happen as a ripe fruit drops from the tree. It is a celebration, it is the climax of maturity - dropping. Have you seen a ripe fruit? How it drop from a tree? Is there any violence and pain involved? No, it’s an auspicious event. A ripe, bright, yellow mango dropping from a tree. Would you say, “It is *sanyaas*. He is renouncing”? No. It’s a Mango! A ripe, full, delicious mango.

Compare that to the image that you have of *sanyaas* – emaciated, life-less man, with no juice in him. Compare his face to that of a ripe mango. Do you see any similarity? This is real dropping - “I was connected to my Source.” The mango ripens only when it is connected to its roots. Of course it is connected to the twig, and the twig is connected to the trunk. But ultimately the mango must be connected to the roots, the center - the origin. And the roots are obviously connected to the center of the earth, and the earth is connected to the center of the universe, and so on and so forth. This connectedness to the center has a particular lusciousness, a juiciness, a fullness in it.

Life is about having this lusciousness. That is why the *Upanishads* say, “*Rasovaisa.*” Dropping is not like unnecessarily clipping leaves, and fruits, and twigs, and raw shoots. When it happens, it happens on its own. It is the result, a climax of your life journey. You have found something so very beautiful, so complete and valuable, that everything else simply does not appeal. Because there is no else-ness left. Everything else is just an image of that central valuable.

Imagine you are standing in a room that has a thousand mirrors. Your beloved too is there in the room. All the mirrors are full with the image of your beloved. That’s all that they are radiating, the image of the beloved. There are thousand different mirrors. Obviously you can look at the differences. You can say that this is mirror number one, mirror two, mirror three, four, thousand. But in every mirror, what do you see? Your beloved. In

every single mirror only the beloved appears. Now will you go and embrace the mirror? Though the mirror is reflecting just the beloved, but would you embrace the mirror?

L: No.

AP: Whom would you embrace?

L: The beloved.

AP:: Are you getting this? This is renunciation. “The entire universe appears to me as the image of the beloved. Now why should I go and be attached to the images? The beloved is here. Why should I look at this and that?” So you have to first attain. And in that attainment lies dropping. Remember, attain - not the world. Do not misinterpret. That too has been done. That attainment means that you must have twenty thousand mirrors. We have had people who have said, “To go beyond sex, you should get more, and more, and more sex, and ultimately then you will go beyond sex.” What rubbish. It is bullshit. This never happens.

You can keep indulging in desires and satiation of all your complexes all your life, yet you will never go beyond them. So those who say, “Unless you lead the life of a householder, how can you enter the next phase?” They are talking rubbish. They do not know life. They are searching for an escape. By leading the life of a householder has anybody ever moved beyond the house? Look at all the old men in all your houses. They are more interested in gossips, and what is going on, and in petty calculations, than the rest of the members of the house. Is that not so? Has age given them any ripeness? No, ripeness does not come from the passage of time. It comes from being rooted, like the mango. Are you getting it?

So yes, the false must be rejected as false, but for that you must first surrender to the Truth. If you are told that the first step is to see the false as the false, then there is a problem. Because who will see the false as false? The false? How can the false see the false as false? First of all you have to surrender to the Truth. Surrender to the Truth - and that is so simple. Surrender to the Truth and then you will see the false as the false. It will become very simple. And remember that every mirror ultimately shows the image of the beloved. So there cannot be an attitude that the world is a place fit to be rejected, that the world is a disease, or that the world is not worth living in or considering. A large mirror is an image of the beloved. A small

mirror too is an image of the beloved! A soiled mirror is still an image of the beloved! So the world is not there so that you may abuse it. Don't have a condescending attitude towards the world. Your so-called spiritual practitioners often have it. They abuse and curse the world. How can you abuse and curse the world?

Every grain of sand is That. In vice is That, in virtue is That. In the holiest of men is That, in the most fallen of men, is That. Whom to reject? Whenever you reject something, you are rejecting the image of the beloved. So, how to reject? How to drop? How to renounce? The world is not there to be renounced, but at the same time you won't go and embrace the mirrors. You will embrace only the One beloved, not the mirrors. Remember, you will not curse and abuse the mirrors, at the same time you will not embrace the mirrors. You have already embraced the beloved; that is why he is the beloved. Otherwise who will call the beloved as the beloved? This is the art of living – neither of the world, nor something separate from it.

“I am not running away from the world. Neither denouncing it, nor renouncing it. How can I chop the tree down?” What is the tree? That. And what is axe? That. So there is no point in differentiating. There is no point in accepting something, and rejecting something. There is no point in any kind of discernment. It's all that. But even though it is all that, yet only That is That. “I see my beloved everywhere, but my beloved sits really in my heart.” That is how the realized one lives. Do you understand this?

“I see Him everywhere and everywhere, but he sits really in my heart. And that is also why I see Him everywhere.” Two mistakes can be made in this. One is, saying, “He sits in my heart and that is why he cannot be anywhere else.” And this mistake has often been made. This is why people need to run away from here and there. They say, “He sits in my heart, and he is not in the world.” Sorry that's a mistake. Another mistake is, saying, “He is somewhere outside of me, and not within me. I have to reach somewhere to attain Him.”

The first is the attitude of the renouncer. The second is the attitude of the achiever. Please be very cautious of both these attitudes. What does the renouncer say? “He sits in my heart, and he sits nowhere else. So the world then is a despicable place.” What does the achiever say? “I have nothing within me! I am hollow, contemptible, incomplete, unworthy! He is somewhere outside and I must achieve Him.”

Of course what he wants to achieve can be given various names: success, joy,

respect, whatever. But he wants to achieve something outside of him - the achiever. Both of these are only fallacies. Both of these only give you suffering. He sits within you, and he is all around you. There is nothing but Him. Within and outside is He. So, I don't have to renounce, and I also don't have to achieve. The renouncer is every bit as much mistaken, as the achiever.

The second part of the question that you asked was, "How can only knowledge bring a change in me? Surely no one changes just by listening to talks." Who are you? Who is asking this question? You are a bundle of knowledge. You are nothing except knowledge - belief, imagination, trust – What is that? You are anyway knowledge, and hence what has to change? Knowledge! That doesn't mean that you are carrying bad knowledge, and someone should give you good knowledge. All knowledge is bad knowledge. It's not that the world gives you bad knowledge, and Satsang will give you good knowledge.

What is knowledge? Knowledge is that which sits on the mind, anything that fills up the mind. That is knowledge. And anything that fills up the mind will make the mind heavy, and that is your curse – a heavy mind. So then what is the place of knowledge in getting rid of suffering? Why must one listen to anybody, if at all? One does not come to a gathering like this to collect more knowledge. One comes so that one may see the futility of knowledge. And that is the only legitimate use of knowledge. That it brings you to its own futility. Not more knowledge, but the dissolution of knowledge.

Remember, so far you have collected knowledge, and you have also collected a layer of knowledge which tells you that all your knowledge is important. Let us call these two types of knowledge as 'K1' and 'K2'. K1 is knowledge about the world, and K2 is the knowledge that K1 is important. You come here to get rid of K2. You were made to believe that knowledge is important. This was another knowledge. A knowledge that went in so deeply, that you started believing in it. You were made to believe that the world lives out of ideas, and images. So, how does K2 go away? Not by having a K3, not by having another knowledge which says, "K2 was bad. K1 is not important." No. When you come here, when you sit here, behind the words, you enter a Silence, which gives you that, which is immensely valuable. You get a glimpse of that, which is your real nature. Depending upon the depth of your attention, you come to that which is the destination of all your search. And

immediately you come to know that K2 is false. Because what does K2 say? “K1 is important.”

You come to know – “What I just entered, that was important. Very-very important. I can vouch for it. It is my first-hand, original realization. You don’t need to tell me, I know.” So you know that the claim of K2 was misplaced. K1 is not important. How do you know that? Because you have come upon something far more important than K1. So when you ask that one does not change just by listening to talks, you are both right and wrong. Yes just by listening to talks, surely no one changes. But if that talk can take you to some other point, then you come upon that, which never changes. But it depends on you. This is not a mechanical workshop, where you can just enter and undergo some kind of a metamorphosis.

The Islamic tradition has a very nice story. It says that one day the Prophet met the Satan. The Prophet said to the Satan, “Do you know how powerless you are?” Satan said, “Yes, I know that I am very powerless. Because had I been powerful, I would have already made everybody forget Allah’s name.” The Satan then turned around and asked the Prophet, “Do you know how powerless you are?” To this the Prophet said, “I too know how powerless I am. Because had I had any power, I would have by this time brought everyone to Allah’s name.”

So whatever anyone may do, he is powerless. It all depends on you. Had this gathering had any power, then everybody would have been transformed by now. This gathering has very little power. Your freedom has all the power. So you are right, surely no one [changes](#) just by listening to talks. One changes because of his own determination, one changes because of the solid resolution, “Enough!” And if you don’t have that resolution, you won’t even come here. Have you seen that even to come here, it requires some determination? Otherwise it is so easy to slip. There are a thousand things that are always pressing upon your mind. You can always give them more weightage.

So it’s your own inner decision that changes you, not the talk. But yes, when you have decided, then the talk becomes the vehicle. But even when the talk becomes the vehicle, I am re-emphasizing, the talk doesn’t change you by giving you more knowledge. The talk changes you by taking you to a point that is beyond knowledge. So that you realize the futility of knowledge.

“Knowledge is futile. I have just seen that. I am just returning from a country

where there is no knowledge, and it is such a beautiful country. I felt so relaxed there. It was wonderful.” This is what changes you. Then you apply for a permanent citizenship of that country, and it takes time. They don’t allow people easily. They have only a very few residents there, and they are very choosy, and then there is a long time duration involved, and then you get the colorless card.

But again, it all depends on *you*.

About the Author

Prashant Tripathi, known as ACHARYA PRASHANT, was born on March 7, 1978 at Agra, India. Eldest of three siblings, his father was a bureaucrat and mother a homemaker. His childhood was spent mostly in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

Parents and teachers found in him a child who could often be quite mischievous, and then suddenly, deeply contemplative. Friends too recall him as having an unfathomable temperament, often not really sure whether he was joking or serious. A brilliant student, he consistently topped his class, and received the highest commendations and prizes possible to a student. His mother fondly remembers how she was honored several times as “Mother Queen” for the academic performance of her child. Teachers would say that never before had they seen a student who was as brilliant in Science as in Humanities, as adept in Mathematics as in Languages, and as proficient in English as in Hindi.

The prodigal student was a voracious reader since he was five years of age. His father’s extensive home library consisted of some of the world’s best literature, including spiritual texts like the Upanishads. For long hours, the child would be tucked away in the most silent corners of the house, immersed in stuff that was meant to be understood only by men of advanced age and maturity. He would skip meals and even hours of sleep, and would be lost in reading. Before he had turned ten, Prashant had read everything that was there in the father’s collection, and was asking for more. The first signs of the mystical appeared when he started writing poetry at the age of eleven. His poems were imbued in shades of the mysterious, and were asking questions that most grown-ups could not grasp.

At the age of fifteen, after being in the city of Lucknow for many years, he found himself in the city of Ghaziabad near Delhi, owing to his father’s transferable job. The particular age and the change of city accelerated the process that had already taken deep roots. He took to waking at night, and

besides studying, would often be staring silently at the night sky. His poems grew in depth, a lot of them devoted to the night and the moon. Rather than academics, his attention started flowing more and more towards the mystical.

He had been sensing since long that there is something fundamentally amiss in the way most people perceive the world, the way our minds are conditioned to operate, and hence something amiss in the way the relationships between people are, the way the worldly institutions are designed, the way we relate to each other – basically the very way we live. He had started seeing that this faulty perception was at the root of human suffering. He was deeply disturbed by man's ignorance and cultivated inferiority, the evils of poverty, the evils of consumption, violence towards man, animals and environment, and exploitation based on narrow ideology and self-interest. His entire being was raring to challenge the all-pervasive suffering, and as a young man, he guessed that the Indian Civil Services or the Management route might be an apt one to take.

At the age of twenty-eight, he bid goodbye to corporate life and founded Advait Life-Education for '**Creation of a new humanity through Intelligent Spirituality**'. The method was to bring a deep transformation in human consciousness. The initial audience chosen was college students who were offered self-development courses. Wisdom from ancient literature was taken to students in form of simplified texts and engaging activities.

Around the age of 30, Acharya Prashant started speaking in his *Shabd-yoga* sessions, *Samvaad*, or clarity sessions. These were in the form of open discussions, essentially pure *satsang*. Soon it started becoming clear that these sessions were deeply meditative, brought the mind to a strange peace, and had a miraculously curative effect upon the psyche. Acharya Prashant's voice and videos would be recorded and uploaded on the internet. And soon his blog, 'Words Into Silence' too was developed to publish his writings and the transcriptions of his talks.

Around the same time, he started organising Self-awareness camps or *Aatm-smaran shivir*. He would take true seekers with him to the Himalayas, in groups of around 30 each, for periods of around a week. These camps turned

out to be deeply transformational events and the frequency of the camps increased. Scores of camps have been organised so far providing immense clarity and peace in relatively short spans of time.

Acharya Prashant's unique spiritual literature is at par with the highest words that mankind has ever known. He remains engaged sharing himself in the form of *shabd yoga* sessions, *shoonya-smaran* activities, self-awareness camps, and one-to-one meetings with the many seekers who visit him, from all parts of the world. He attacks the mind so vigorously, and simultaneously becalms it with such love and compassion. There is a clarity that radiates from his presence and a soothing effect from his being. His style is forthright, clear, mystical and compassionate. The ego and the falsenesses of the mind do not find a place to hide in front of his innocent and simple questions. He plays with his audiences – taking them to the very depths of meditative silence, laughing, joking, attacking, explaining. On one hand, he appears as somebody very close and approachable, and on the other hand, it is obvious that the words coming through him are from somewhere beyond.

The thousands of videos and articles uploaded by him on the internet are precious spiritual resources, available to all those who seek them. Personally too, he is ever open to meeting sincere seekers of Truth. Today, the Advait movement has touched the lives of more than a million individuals. Through his direct contact with people, and through various internet based channels, he continues to bring clarity, peace and love to all.

Ways to Connect

[Acharya Prashant's Facebook Page](#)

(Latest Updates and Frequent Reminders from Acharya's Account)

[PrashantAdvait Foundation's Facebook Page](#)

*(Know about Latest Events and Initiatives by Foundation
and Get your copy of books here)*

[Acharya Prashant's YouTube Channel 1](#)

*(More than 1000 discourses of Acharya addressing
Students, International Audiences and Speaking Tours)*

[Acharya Prashant's YouTube Channel 2](#)

*(More than 800 discourses of Acharya's
Shabda-Yoga Sessions)*

[Acharya Prashant's Pinterest](#)

*(More than 10,000 posters on spiritual sayings of Acharya
and Saints from all times and places)*

[Acharya Prashant's SlideShare](#)

(Presentations on Professional and Spiritual Topics)

[Acharya Prashant's Audio Discourses](#)

(More than 800 audio discourses of Acharya)

[Acharya Prashant's Instagram](#)

(Lastest Images of Acharya from his Speaking Tours

while travelling around the world)

(and much more, to explore, visit: prashantadvait.com)

OTHER GEMS BY ACHARYA PRASHANT

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Acharya Prashant with Students

Personality: The Real Hero Within

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उक्तियाँ मौन की

बोध बिंदु

डर (भाग-१)

Books are available on Amazon (tinyurl.com/Acharya-Prashant) and

Advait's Official Website (advait.org.in)