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KRIYA MEDITATION AFFIRMATION

Oh Infinite Lord of the Universe,
In all our thoughts, words, and actions, guide us,
That we may attune to Your Wisdom, Peace, and
Compassion; manifest it in our lives.
May we direct it toward all sentient-forms.

Oh Infinite Lord,
Thou knowest better than we, the world=s needs.
It is for this, and this alone that we meditate.
We beseech You: manifest it surely, swiftly, gently,
and most, most harmoniously.

Oh Infinite Lord,
Thou knowest better than I, my needs.
It is for this and this alone that I meditate.
I beseech You: bring it surely, swiftly, gently,
and most, most harmoniously.

OM SHANTI, SHANTI, SHANTI

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FORWARD

Dear Reader,

The fact that you are beginning this home study course suggests that you are ready to transform your relationship with life. You may have a Guru, you may be seeking a Guru; undoubtedly, you are on the Path. If you are like many modern seekers your ideas regarding the Guru and discipleship are a strange mixture of fantasy, hope, fear, doubt and curiosity. Little wonder given the examples of the most conspicuous modern gurus. This home study, besides allaying your fears, presents you with a vision of the Guru-disciple relationship that is both eminently sane and ultimately transformative. As you will discover, through this text, the Guru-disciple relationship changes you forever (and for the better).

Guru means dispeller of darkness. Ironically, there is great darkness and confusion surrounding the meaning of the word, the function of the Guru, and the nature of discipleship. One purpose of this text is to dispel this darkness and to illuminate the true nature of the Guru-disciple relationship.

The term *Guru* is now in common parlance. We read of computer gurus, sports gurus and financial gurus. Such use typically indicates someone who is an expert in their field, someone to whom one looks for guidance. At other times *Guru* is used to negatively suggest deception, self-aggrandizement or worse, iron-fisted authoritarianism. Many modern spiritual teachers, to distance themselves from any implication of special privilege, emphasize "I am not a Guru."

These homegrown connotations of the term do not add depth to our understanding of the real meaning, intention and significance of the Guru-disciple relationship. Such meanings are more reflections of our own spiritual ignorance regarding the Guru and highlight our general confusion over relationships, dependency and autonomy.

The image of the Guru as an unbending authority is an outgrowth of the neurotic tendency to define all relationships in terms of power equations; who has more, who has less. Such relationships, based as they are on struggle, will always be characterized by insecurity and persistent dissatisfaction. To understand and balance the source of this power struggle opens one to the affirmative nature of a true Guru-disciple relationship.

There is a difference between authoritarianism and what has been called "legitimate authority." The one is based on power and control, while the other is based on awareness and Wisdom. Music students attending a master class with a renowned

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maestro invest the maestro with legitimate authority. They recognize that the maestro has touched, through his own practice, the heart of music. They perceive magic in his performance -- a magic that they sense within themselves and within all music. Their awareness invests the maestro with legitimate authority.

Clearly, the maestro's instructions are not orders to be obeyed. The student does not have to even consider them. But if the student is wise, and if he wishes to be transformed by the magic in the maestro's music, he will accept all instructions with an attitude of enthusiastic inquiry. He will apply those instructions to his own instrument, watching and listening for the results.

In much the same way, the Guru is invested with legitimate authority by the disciple. It is the disciple, like the music student, who opens the door to a transformative relationship. The disciple sees, hears and feels a magic within the Guru. The disciple realizes that this magic is not solely an individual characteristic, peculiar to the Guru. It is part and parcel of the ecstasy of life. This recognition (which is truly re-cognition, *becoming aware of again*) inspires the disciple to invest the Guru with legitimate authority. Within such a relationship there is no imposition, no dominance, no external control.

Having recognized the Guru's legitimate authority, what is next? Sri Patanjali, in the Yoga Sutras, enjoins us to practice *spiritual attentiveness to the Guru*. Spiritual attentiveness is not subservience, faith or blind obedience. Spiritual attentiveness, a hallmark of discipleship, requires alertness, openness and honesty. And so, in this text Goswami Kriyananda emphasizes the requirement for self awareness, reflection and clarity at all times in the Guru-disciple relationship. A deep understanding of spiritual attentiveness is critical to the development of a healthy, and authentically spiritual, Guru-disciple relationship. Without spiritual attentiveness this sacred relationship can degenerate into hero worship, opening the door to harmful impulses and emotional projections.

Like any important relationship the Guru-disciple relationship has psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. For this relationship to fulfill its purpose, enlightenment, clarity in all these dimensions is essential.

In the East there are centuries old social patterns and psychological attitudes that support the institution of the Guru-disciple relationship. Unfortunately, when these social and psychological structures lose their creative vitality they become mechanical forms without the required spiritual attentiveness that brings the relationship alive.

In the West our social patterns and psychological attitudes present a radically different cultural problem. The nature of the Guru-disciple relationship in the West is grossly misunderstood in terms of centuries-old religious hierarchy.

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This is why Goswami Kriyananda's text is so welcome at this time. He looks beyond the social and psychological trappings of *both* East and West to the essential nature of the Guru-disciple relationship. Truly, the sacred Guru-disciple bond transcends the limits of social devices and personal psychology. And yet, as the text makes abundantly clear, this spiritual relationship is in no way otherworldly, vague or undefined. Having clarified the heart of the Guru-disciple connection, Goswami Kriyananda provides clear guidelines for building healthy psychological and social structures to nurture our spiritual search.

As always, the Path is a razor's edge. The labyrinth of the mind is complex. Our dependency needs run deep, and our desire for power is intimately linked to those very needs. To invest the Guru with legitimate authority is not a sacrifice of one's self-awareness. Becoming a disciple does not absolve one from putting forth effort to grow. Quite the contrary!

As Goswami Kriyananda points out, everyone on the earth plane has karma, self-limiting emotional blindspots. Recognizing the truth of karma calls for clarity and compassion regarding oneself and others. Of course, acknowledging karma in no way excuses ignorance, nor expressions of negative emotionality. We in the West have witnessed a rash of inappropriate, violent actions from those with the Guru title in recent years. Without blame or denial, let us acknowledge the facts of our karma. And then, as spiritual seekers let each of us examine our own emotional blindness, roasting the seeds of violence in the fire of spiritual honesty and self awareness. In this way we can reconnect to the generative values that guide a healthy search for Enlightenment. The author repeatedly reminds us that Wisdom is the ultimate guide; and that Wisdom lies within.

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This text illuminates the true value of the Guru-disciple relationship. A careful study can dissolve the psychological confusion that breeds damaging behavior. From a base of psychological clarity we can correct imbalances in our social sphere and open internal doorways to the deeper realms of spiritual awakening wherein the Guru-disciple relationship reaches fulfillment.

It is our hope that reading and studying this text will help you remove the obstacles to your Enlightenment and that you will open to the true intimacy that is at the heart of Life.

Swami Tejasananda

*Please note that the use of masculine pronouns in the text is a stylistic choice. Gurus are men and women, as are disciples.

Chapter One

THE GURU-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

In this home study course, I wish to share with you the greatest human love you can ever know---the love of your Guru for you. It is a special love. It is a lasting love. How much you partake of that love depends on your understanding of who and what a Guru is, what a disciple is, and the nature of the eternal relationship that exists between the two.

The Guru-disciple relationship is often described in the following manner: The duty of the disciple is to care for the body of the Guru; and the duty of the Guru is to care for the soul of the disciple. "The body of the Guru" is his spiritual Teachings.

To activate the dynamics of the disciple-Guru relationship requires a great deal of work on the part of the disciple. (But don't think the Guru is resting with his spiritual feet up all day!) The relationship is activated through the process of spiritual initiation.

Initiation means exactly what the word implies: A beginning; the beginning of a new and fuller stage in your spiritual unfoldment. In initiation (as well as in other aspects of the Guru-disciple relationship), spiritual giving comes naturally to Guru. Receiving often requires great conscious effort on the part of the disciple. Your Guru may bear the living spiritual flame to your soul but you have the obligation to work hard and to continually receive that flame. Your spiritual unfoldment is your responsibility.

This spiritual kinship is special. It is no cold, sterile, formalized bond. Recall the expression, *kith and kin*. Kith are friends and kin are blood relatives. One way or another, the whole human race (friend and foe), is related by blood. In the Guru-disciple relationship, the disciple and Guru are linked by strong spiritual "blood." The Guru-disciple relationship awakens in the disciple the realization that the universe is a family of God, and all are intimately linked together.

The key to any kinship lies in sharing. Isn't that, after all, what family is all about? "Family" means more than people who live in a given house, or on a given side of the city. Real family is the kinship of spiritual rapport. The spiritual realization of universal oneness, rapport with life, comes as you unfold in your Guru-disciple relationship.

The Sanskrit word Guru means *dispeller of darkness*. The function of a Guru is to dispel the darkness of ignorance from those who truly seek the Light of Eternal Dawn. The disciple must truly want and must be ready to have ignorance dispelled. The Guru-disciple relationship will never be forced upon you. It will never be re-forced upon you. It is a voluntary relationship entered into with full knowledge and awareness.

We are here on the earth plane in a body, along with its emotions, thoughts, actions and reactions. We carry in our souls (memory tracks), other needs and inclinations. Bodies and souls play an important role in any relationship and the Guru-disciple relationship is no exception. Interaction with the Guru involves more soul than with most. So much so, that when one speaks of *feeding the body of the Guru*, one is referencing the Guru's soul, the body of spiritual truth he (or she), embodies. It is this "body" which he is transmitting to his spiritual family so they might attain Enlightenment, simply called Happiness.

Plato taught that all learning is but a remembering. The soul is the memory track of things past. Your soul is composed of all it has experienced, felt and reflected upon throughout all the past. The responsibility of your Guru is to nurture and care for your soul until you remember the Eternal Dawn of Yesteryear; until you remember who and what you are; until you remember your true kinship with all life.

Because the Guru-disciple relationship it is based on soul-contact, it is exquisitely personal. It is keenly intimate. Because the two souls are linked from the moment of initiation until the disciple attains enlightenment, this relationship is focused on a great undertaking and may take more than one lifetime to fully blossom. When this is the case, in each successive lifetime the disciple will automatically and subconsciously seek out and find afresh his ancient spiritual preceptor. When the disciple is enlightened, the quality of the relationship shifts, becoming less one of guidance and more one of mutually exchanged

wisdom, humor and understanding. Always, the feeling remains highly personal for the love and respect between these two individuals is profoundly deep.

For 12,000 years, Indian tradition has held that within the Guru the flame of spirituality is consciously alive. During initiation there is transference of the Flame of the Spirit, the Living Spark of Consciousness. This is referred to as Adhi-kara. Adhi-kara is what happens when a spiritual match touches a spiritual candle. The Adhi-kara is not the product of the Guru's conscious effort. It is not a conscious intellectual, volitional act. From the disciple's viewpoint, Adhi-kara is what happens when, having prepared your mind and consciousness, your spiritual tinder is ignited by the living spiritual flame.

The Guru lives in spiritual awareness. In a sense, this awareness is what distinguishes a Guru or spiritual preceptor from a mere teacher. A teacher can have tremendous power to teach and to influence people's minds but he does not have the power nor the ability to enlighten souls.

Awareness of one's spirituality is not to be confused with self-conscious egotism. There are many people who play the "holiness-humbleness" game. They put great effort into proclaiming how humble they are. But a true saint doesn't go through life thinking, "Oh, I'm such a saint!" Indeed, he probably is the last person in the world who thinks so.

Initiation is central to discipleship. There are two basic types: Hindu and Egyptian. In the Hindu initiation, you come to the Guru and ask to become a disciple. If he agrees, he initiates you on the spot and you begin the process of discipline and study that leads, over 20 years (symbolically), to your unfolding enlightenment. In the Egyptian system, you ask to become a disciple and the teacher says, "Stay and study with me." After 20 years of discipline and study, when he perceives you are about to be enlightened, he then initiates you, causing enlightenment to break forth.

Paramahansa Yogananda, in his book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, points out that the spiritual flame of the Guru is ignited forever. Each and every day, it burns with the brilliance of illumination. It is the disciple's

responsibility to become mind-prepared. That preparedness involves the process of transmuting your being from a rock that cannot burn, into a wick that invites the flame. You must be capable of being ignited with the flame of wisdom. Once this spark has been transferred, the flame will continue to burn. This job done, the Guru is free to take on another role in your life.

While preparing yourself to receive the flame, in effect you set ablaze the cosmic fire of the Guru, assisting in the transference of the divine spark. How does this happen? It happens automatically. The flame is ignited by something deeply subconscious. Therefore it is said that Adhi-kara is the gift of the Spirit, and not of the Guru. If you watch some Gurus, you will see that when asked certain questions, in a given way, their eyes light up, and their voice quickens. You can see they are ablaze. The Guru quickens at the devotional impulse of the disciple.

During preparation, the disciple has many things to learn.

1. One must develop some degree of mastery of this material plane. In other words, one must learn to be self-sufficient financially. This does not mean being a millionaire.

However, one should be able to function harmoniously in the material world so as not to be spiritually distracted.

2. The disciple must improve his bodily health. Not because the body is all-important, but so that one can turn attention away from the body without harming it.
3. Women have special spiritual challenges to overcome. From the age of six months onward, society primps and preens their bodies, urging lipstick, rouge, padding and plastic surgery until eventually the woman moves from a conscious urge, "I should care for my body" to a subconscious thought, "I am the body".
4. Men have special spiritual challenges to overcome. From the age of six months onward, society tells them they are here to conquer the world. Usually as businessmen.

Eventually men move from the conscious urge, "I should conquer the world," to a subconscious thought of, "I will forget that I should control myself."

One way or another, we must all break the strong sense of body attachment, without harming or hurting to the physical body in any way.

Physical health is a delicate topic. Many people try to lure me into arguments about what foods should be eaten, what should not be eaten, and so forth. We have all known people who go into marathon monologues about what they ate, how it was cooked, who cooked it, and the philosophy underlying their eating. This is particularly true in the arena of vegetarianism vs. meat-eating. In my opinion, these discussions are pointless. As a matter of fact, they are very dangerous spiritually, because they hold the mind to body awareness.

Healthful physical and economic conditions are meaningful and vital because the disciple must not be dragged down by, or waste energy in relatively unimportant areas. The disciple must become free so that more time and energy can be directed toward the balancing of the spiritual life. All worldly things are subordinate to the ultimate gift, the Adhi-kara of the Guru. Of next greatest value is Wisdom, followed by knowledge.

Many teachers, especially Hindu teachers, feel one can only be a Guru if he or she is connected with some historically recognized lineage of teachers. Yet there are many people, not linked to any lineage, who are great spiritual preceptors. Spiritual authority comes when a man or woman has a profound realization regarding the nature of things. He has deep within, an insight, a feeling, an awareness that gives the ability to unerringly instruct the disciple in things spiritual.

The concept of *unerring instruction* can prompt a real battle. This is exemplified by the Catholic Church's concept of the infallibility of the Pope. Historically speaking, the Pope's infallibility only has to do with things spiritual. In almost 2,000 years, no Pope has ever spoken ex-cathedra - invoking his absolute papal authority. Certainly, if only once a Pope, having spoken ex-cathedra were proven wrong, a cornerstone of

the Catholic Church would crumble. The Guru is supposed to provide unerring instructions for his disciple, which is quite different from being infallible.

There is another essential difference between most institutional bonds and the disciple-guru relationship. The Guru insists that his disciples think for themselves, and begin doing so as rapidly as possible! Any Guru who does not do this, who does not emphasize this principle, is not a Guru! Essential to the Guru-disciple relationship is the requirement that the Guru only give guidance when asked. The disciple's asking is crucial and indispensable. Yet even more essential is the freedom to follow or not follow that guidance according to the disciple's own inner insight.

In *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Yoganandaji tells how he spent many years as a young man searching for his Guru. When he finally found the Guru, his soul soared. Joyously he realized, "I have found my Guru!" But not five seconds later, what was he doing? He was arguing with the Guru! In the early years in the Ashram, he argued continuously. So much so that one of the younger disciples came to the Guru, Sri Yukteswarji, and said, "You should get rid of Yogananda. He's always fighting with you in front of all the other disciples. You're the Guru. You're unerring. Yet he continuously argues with you. He is a terrible example of a disciple. You should ask him to leave the ashram."

Sri Yukteswarji replied, "He is indeed a very good example of a disciple because he has learned to think! Yes. His youth causes him to argue without tact. As he matures the rough edges will dissolve but the his ability to think for himself will remain. He argues because he understands human frailty. He argues because he knows my tongue may not communicate as clear as it should. He argues because he realizes that his ears have wax in them. He argues because he wants to be sure that he understands. He argues that he might more fully understand that the precept of the Guru, which is not a law of command, but an act of insight."

The Guru's words are acts of insight. Of all relationships, of all the kinships on the face of this earth, the concern of Guru for his disciple is the deepest and most permanent. It is stronger than a blood pact. The

bond is still there and will remain until that disciple attains his or her illumination.

The overriding purpose of the spiritual kinship allows great leeway for differences in personality. Yet, as with any kinship, tact matters. Questioning is good, but it should be done respectfully and tactfully. It should not be done in arrogance, but with the sense of authentically striving to understand.

A true Guru is a soul whose love is genuinely unselfish, and he steadfastly encourages self-strength, not dependency. From the moment you meet him, his message is, "You do not need me." That's very important. If he is a true guide, if he is adhering sincerely to tradition, he will not confine you in any way. Rather, he will urge you to accelerate your spiritual unfoldment so you no longer need to lean upon him. Within the soul of each person, including you, there is the Transcendental Guru, the inner Guru, the spark of God. This is what a true Guru is trying to point out to every searcher.

I am often asked whether Jesus Christ had a Guru. Yes, he very definitely did. He was initiated by his Guru, John the Baptist. As you know, Jesus wandered for some time, studying, meditating, praying and then wandering some more. He really didn't recognize his purpose in life until he was initiated (baptized). It was then that he had the vision, and the realization of his destiny. It was then that his spiritual purpose in life broke open. This was no accident. It symbolized Jesus' recognition of the need for initiation. (But it also symbolizes something far greater.)

Another common question is whether a disciple can become greater than the Guru? The temptation is to say, "Of course not, Guru is the greatest." But if that were so, each generation of disciples would be of lesser quality than the preceding one until eventually nobody would be Enlightened! Therefore, there are two answers to this question:

1. As far as the world is concerned, a disciple certainly can outshine the Guru.
2. More mystically: Illumination is a circle, a circle of light. Every circle of light is perfect and complete, and no circle of light can be more circular than any other.

Each Guru can teach only according to his talent. One may write great books, another may have public speaking skills, still another may have great personal presence. In other words, the gifts of each Guru, like the gifts of each disciple, are unique and will have greater or lesser value and prominence in world history. Whatever your Guru's special talents, I invite you to accept my personal challenge: Do outshine him in love, wisdom and insight. Be a great joy to his spiritual life!

Another common question is, "Can a person have more than one Guru?" Traditionally the answer is, "Absolutely not." Your Guru is the pathway you must follow. There is a powerful Karma link by which your spiritual preceptor becomes the ultimate person who is supposed to guide your life spiritually. One may have any number of Upa-gurus, to learn other things such as Sanskrit, Astrology, etc. But when it comes to your spiritual unfoldment and well-being, there is only one Guru.

Some very sincere people do not realize they belong with one Guru and one Guru alone, so they eagerly go through several initiations. Perhaps one day they will discover their error. Which one of those initiations is real? In general terms, the first one.

Occasionally, someone will come to me asking for initiation. Upon a moment's meditation I realize this person has already been initiated. So I answer, "I can't. You've already been initiated." They then say something like, "But he's mad at me. He told me to go away, that I'm no longer his disciple."

Now, a true Guru cannot do that. No matter what the Guru-as-a-personality may say, he can not dissolve the relationship. The disciple comes to the Guru, and only the disciple can break the bond, which is, in truth, a bond with God and a commitment to unfold daily.

The question of blind obedience crops up in connection with the Dharma insights, the spiritual teachings, of the Guru. My firm opinion is that one should never blindly submit to the word of anyone. Anybody who says, "You must think as I think, do as I do," is not a Guru. The true Guru urges his disciples to think for themselves and to grow by and for themselves, for self-freedom is what Illumination is all about.

It is important not to confuse loyalty with blind obedience. The karma link is that you belong *with*, not *to* your Guru. Some disciples think, most erroneously, the Guru owns them, that he possesses them, that they must do absolutely everything he says without question. That is not what the spiritual path is all about. Self realization and thinking for oneself is what it's all about.

Tradition holds that the Guru gets the disciples he or she deserves and the disciple gets the Guru he or she deserves. If ever you find yourself in the position of wanting to break from your Guru, I implore you first to deeply ask of yourself, "Am I really his disciple? Is he really my Guru?" Bear in mind that in the Guru-disciple relationship, you as disciple choose the Guru, you as disciple have the right and the ability to break that link if you so choose. One reason that the link should not be broken, is if your ego has been bent.

There exist teachers who urge people to become their disciples, but this practice absolutely is not spiritually acceptable. A Guru does not select his disciples. The student picks the Guru. The Guru, however, has the right to refuse a student. Once accepted, the Guru cannot break the link until the student is Enlightened.

When a disciple approaches a Guru regarding initiation and the Guru declines the request, this in no way means the disciple is unready or unworthy. It frequently means Guru recognizes that spiritually the disciple belongs with another Guru or another lineage.

Another reason the Guru may hesitate to accept someone as a disciple is that he knows that he cannot truly help that disciple. Any teacher who says, "I will not teach you because you are not worthy of me," is not to be considered a spiritual preceptor. When you ask somebody to be your Guru, in essence you are requesting to be taken to the Throne of God. That is a sacred request; the greatest spiritual statement a human being can make; the highest aspiration one can express. No spiritual preceptor would ever respond with contempt or condescension.

The happy and successful Guru-disciple relationship involves transference. Pretend you are a carpenter. If you want grow in carpentry, you do not go to a musician and say, "Teach me carpentry."

You need another carpenter to transfer the feeling of wood to you, just as the person with the soul of a musician will need another musician to transfer the feeling for tone and melody.

When the day comes that you know in your heart you have met your Guru, be persistent. Ask to be initiated. Being human, some Gurus are reluctant to say, "Yes" because they know the Guru-disciple relationship is like a marriage, except you can't get a spiritual divorce that easily! They are hesitant to enter into it, not for their sake but for the student's sake. Do not interpret their hesitancy in terms of your worthiness. Be persistent, be wise, and try again!

In the Guru-disciple relationship, personality matters. Within his personality, the Guru has an intellectual and spiritual repertoire of soul-data that uniquely meets the particular emotional and spiritual needs of his disciples. Honor and respect are given to the Guru not necessarily as an individual per se, but because through attunement the disciple taps the wellspring of wisdom within the Guru. In turn, the Guru honors and respects all disciples because he sincerely feels they are greater than he is. There is a mutual appreciation, reciprocity of feeling that is very important, spiritually as well as humanly.

Each disciple needs to say, within his soul: "Though I love Guru, more dearly do I love the teaching. I will love the teaching, not the teacher."

This is the one thing that will protect you from your own foolishness and the foolishness that exists in all people, including Gurus. It was the overriding love of the teaching that brought Sri Yukteswarji and Yogananda so closely together. Externally they had what appeared to be a difficult relationship, but actually they had a perfect relationship because both loved the teaching more than any other thing. The teaching is not an abstract concept. It is the very spirit of the Search.

Some people maintain the Guru is the teaching. You hear this most commonly from would-be Gurus. The Guru is the embodiment of the truth, the Guru is the embodiment of the Dharma, but he is a human embodiment, and in that humanness lies the ever-present danger of imperfection. Upon my departing from the monastery, my Guru said, "Kriyananda, the Law is perfect, absolutely perfect, and the Law has

been transferred into me perfectly and intact by my Guru. But, you know, when I speak it doesn't always come out all that perfectly." My beloved, learn from a wise soul.

All of us, Gurus included, are limited by our emotions, by our devotions, by our hopes and dreams and aspirations, as well as our biological and mental apparatus. How accurately and how purely will what our heart knows travel from heart to tongue? There is a gap between the two. Who can say what meaning is lost in that gap?

Some decades ago, the Temple of Kriya Yoga was located in the Fine Arts Building in Chicago. This structure was bursting with talented music teachers. And while all of them should have been (and probably wanted to be) in Carnegie Hall, they weren't. For some reason, each one had an artistic nemesis, something they could not master. If you watched and listened to them, however, you could not miss that all of them had the feeling of music. All you had to do was whisper "music" and their souls lit up! They changed from heavy and dull personalities, to light, enthusiastic and vibrant personalities. They became music, for a few moments. As teachers, they were trying to communicate not merely the notes but that magic called "music."

Seeing them always reminded me of a day at the ashram when my Guru said to me, "I would like to take you to visit one of my other disciples." So we left the ashram (the first time I had been out of the ashram for about nine months) and went to the nearby home of that disciple, who happened to be a concert pianist. She had studied for many years in Europe. When we came in, one of the disciple's students was practicing music. His fingers were running all across the keyboard and every note was correct. We could see his pride. I remember him beaming up at his teacher expectantly, only to hear her exclaim, "What are you doing?" The student stopped, his eyes wide open, and remarked defensively, "But I played every note just as it is on the paper."

"Right," the teacher said to her student, "Now play it as the composer felt the music when he put it on the paper!" That is Guru-ship. That is stepping from the imperfection of mere imitation, to the perfection of the feeling that inspired the composition: a feeling that most likely cannot be put on paper. The Guru-disciple relationship is not letter-perfect,

although it is the living spirit of the law. To some people this looks imperfect, indeed faulty, however, the Guru-disciple relationship is about what the divine Composer felt.

Pick up any book, even scripture, and interpret it to the letter of the law, and your Guru will come along and say, "No, what the sage meant, what he felt when he wrote that, is to be found in this direction..." You, as disciple, must walk in that direction until a light goes on in your head and you realize that the sage's words came from a human soul, a living, feeling creature, and they can only hint at what he felt. At that moment, you will have your first glimmering of the totality, the void, the truth, which is not to be contained in words.

Think of a love relationship you have experienced in the past. Feel the feeling of love and then try to communicate it in words. See the difference. Feel the difference. In the same way, though the world's scriptures are marvelous and inspiring, they are as pieces of dust on a cracked-off grain of sand. We are looking for all the ocean shores of all the galactic universes, in this physical cosmos, beyond to the astral, further beyond to the causal, and further to unnamed planes of awareness. Words simply do not, can not convey the totality of the heart's feeling.

The heart, the spirit, is touched by truths greater than the mind can find words for. One deep truth is the tie of karmic responsibility between disciple and Guru. If it has not happened already, someday, whether in this life or a future life, you will find your Guru and the two of you will agree you are to be initiated. That initiation is vital. That initiation, which will vary from teacher to teacher, is the way the disciple expresses the wish: "You may enter my life, and you have my permission to disturb my dream so that I might awaken unto Reality." (This is only partly what initiation is all about, which will be dealt with in greater detail in another chapter).

Because the Guru is also seeking moksha he understands karmic gentleness, and does everything he can not to disturb the dream of another or interfere with another person's freedom. The exception is when a disciple comes forth saying, "My dream has become a nightmare, please help me!" Then the Guru is free to enter that disciple's life and

guide him to Happiness. His participation having been requested, the Guru is not disturbing that person's dream; rather, he is assisting in helping the individual attain his spiritual goal.

Must one have a Guru to attain enlightenment? I say no, because the first soul to attain enlightenment did not have a Guru. Divine inspiration does occur. However, it is far, far easier and better to be guided by a soul that has attained what we wish to attain.

Om...

Chapter Two

GURUS, DISCIPLES, AND OBSTACLES

The Guru-disciple relationship is the tale of a quest, a quest that has an eternal beginning, a devoted middle, a glorious end and yet still a newer beginning.

Life is a long journey, and if you are traveling the superhighway and your transmission fails, you have a serious problem. Now, transmissions are tricky mechanisms. In order to repair a faulty one, you need knowledge, skill, experience and time. How do you get these things? You can have somebody teach you. Or you can learn the principles from a book and then apply that knowledge to your real-life problems. If you already have a spiritual preceptor who is guiding you on the Path, you are blessed. If you have not yet found your Guru, what I have to say may be of great help. This chapter explores different aspects of the spiritual transmission, the concepts you should understand in order to prevent transmission problem and what to know in case you have a breakdown on the spiritual highway of Life.

Sensory impulses determine the processes and experiences of most living beings, as most are dominated by the senses. This means that most of us are imprisoned by powerful instincts, not realizing that the confines of the physical world become the parameters of the mental world. If we are ever to know our real limitedness, we must first master not so much the sensations as the impulses that propel us ever more deeply into the sensory world. We must first master the sensory impulses so that we can then control the mental impulses and move into higher universes. Only when we have transcended the sensory and mental planes, can we stand within a world of the Spirit in which we encounter our essence.

One basic concept of yoga states that to ignore our physical instincts is the surest way to remain within their power. Any attempt to master these instincts triggers resistance because our continued existence as biological social beings is based on enslavement to these very sensory impulses. At the same time, the real strength and complexity of the

instincts will be known, understood, and mastered only through use of a powerful method. Yoga is just such a method.

Our vital physical instincts can be gently controlled by gradually mastering the techniques of yoga. Yoga provides shelter and direction, as well as a technical process for super-human self-realization. Yoga frees you from emotional and sentimental actions and reactions. With the Guru's guidance, you can become a master yogi: a master of yourself.

Most knowledge is based upon experience. This concept is a foundation of modern science. An idea uncorroborated by experience remains only an idea, only speculation, and one can never be certain of its validity until tested. The limits of our knowledge, within this framework, is constrained by the extent of our perceptions. But if we extend our field of perceptions, we extend our knowledge.

Both perception and perceiver affect the balance of our reality. For example, an image is reflected on the eyes of a corpse but there is no consciousness to grasp it. Or, somebody who has not yet learned how to interpret mind-encountered visions may not recognize or understand what they see. The object has been sensorially perceived and mentally registered but not comprehended. Accurate perception lies not in the physical or mental organs but in the consciousness. The combination of sensory and mental organs, plus consciousness, constitutes knowledge. Yoga places great emphasis on consciousness as the key to experience, and to gathering meaningful knowledge from experience. It is absolutely possible to transcend sensory dependence. The Vedas state that while there may be many ways to perceive, there is only one way to know:

Experience your self! When you experience your self, you will discover there is no separation between the perceiver and the perceived, between you and life.

There are two ways of looking at the non-separation of you and Life:

1. As a transcendence of separation, or
2. As an acceptance of union.

However stated, this realization of supra-human consciousness, the supra-sensory perception of non-separation is one of the goals of Kriya yoga. Kriya yoga aims at the direct experience of all things through union with them. This is called samyama. Kriya yoga blends physical and mental techniques into one method by which consciousness is moved and ascended gently through the various planes, from the physical to the astral, and then through the mental to the spiritual. This is done without damage to the mental or physical bodies.

Today, there appears to be a renaissance for mysticism. But for centuries, Kriya yoga has stood as the timeless guardian of the Law. For without this proven method of re-unification, only surface knowledge would be attainable. Wisdom, and thus spiritual realization, would be impossible.

Life is confusing; knowledge conflicts with Knowledge, facts conflict with facts, and philosophies conflict with philosophies. So how does Kriya yoga cope with life's inevitable dichotomies? Easily. It embraces all knowledge, all wisdom and every experience. It embraces all that exists, all that will exist, all that has existed.

Yoga is often spoken of as "union," but the power behind the yoga of unification is the Union itself. The successful Kriya yogi first masters union within himself, and then union of the self with the Over-self. The union of the self with everything is what yoga is about. Yoga has been defined in other ways.

- To silence the mind and to transcend all mental activity into consciousness is yoga.
- That particular inclination of the mind which leads to union with the Ultimate Principle is yoga.
- One should remain in action yet keep an even mind, whether or not one's actions bear fruit. It is this equanimity of heart which is yoga.
- Yoga is the reunion of the living self with the Supreme Self.

My goal here is not to become mired in philosophical terminology and polemics but to share concepts that will pull you out of any spiritual

confusions. Nonetheless, there are certain areas we must venture into, if we are to understand the overall context in which the Guru-disciple relationship fits. One of these areas is the very nature of existence.

From the moment the supreme Unity differentiated, existence appeared. Manifestation occurred. The further manifestation proceeds from its Source, the more complexity exists. Increasingly expanding differentiation takes place in six or seven stages. Thus, our lives often seem hopelessly complicated and convoluted. The aim of yoga is to reverse the complexity and confusion of evolution and return, by means of involution, to that First Cause, the supreme Unity.

Instead of expanding outward, we expand inward. Thus, the first step in yoga is to gain control over the vital prana, the fundamental animating energy of life. This is done by bringing under control all sensory and emotive actions and reactions. Having done this, you become absorbed in your mental energies, thereby achieving the power to leap into supra-mental consciousness. After conquering the mental energies and dissolving into the supra-mental, you then follow a pathway quite contrary to the pathway of science (in which experiences confirms experiences, producing an increasingly **horizontal** line of inquiry.) Your pathway is now **vertical**, and leads inward and upward. Your consciousness, your attention and your observation are turned inward.

You then silence the mind and turn your whole being upwards, symbolically starting at the base of the spine and moving towards the top of the spine. In Doing so, you experience all the various stages of re-unification ranging from multiplicity toward unity, even unto Unity itself. In other words, you practice meditation.

There are seven stages of re-unification, and to each of these seven stages there corresponds a subtle center. Each subtle center is called a chakra, a lotus or wheel, and appears as a flower with a specified number of petals. These chakras are also associated with numbers, colors, sounds, forms and symbols, which are the maps of consciousness in the inner spiritual journey to Truth and Unity. Each of the seven stages of re-unification, or self-realization, are related to and correspond to one of the seven Chakras. There are different ways to go about mastering these seven stages of self-realization. In Kriya yoga, as in all

yogas, the various disciplines as well as how they are practiced will necessarily vary according to the nature and the development of the seeker. Yoga is approached differently according to the yoga system of the Guru. However, there are three basic stages of yogahood and also three levels of qualifications:

1. Low: This is not a value judgment but indicates the person merely desires to ascend, and reunite.
2. Medium: Here the individual has moved past desires, and is currently practicing one or more yoga techniques.
3. High: Here the person has passed beyond the practicing of one or more techniques, and has attained inward peace and Insight.
 - a. For those least qualified or developed, the training passes through the standard eight stages of practices: abstinences, observances, postures, breath control, sense withdrawal, concentration, meditation and identification. We will look at these later in this chapter.
 - b. For the student who is of average qualifications, the mode of yoga is through practicing austerities, study and the surrender to the highest Reality.
 - c. For the disciple who is most highly qualified the practice of eternal detachment is recommended. He takes all that has been learned in specific disciplines and applies it to his daily life. This yoga practice is invisible to an unconcerned eye.

The pursuit of unity with the supreme Reality is no small task. It demands a great deal of dedication and patience. Yet, from time immemorial, wise souls have happily pursued the path, finding the joys at the end are priceless, worth infinitely more than the effort it has cost. But effort is effort, and humans are human, and one fact endures: for the successful practice of yoga, a spiritual Guru is needed. Alone, we too easily fall victim to illusions and darkness. "Gu" means darkness, "ru" means dispeller. Thus your Guru is the means to dispel your illusion and darkness.

The Guru is the giver of initiation, that spark which changes the wick and the oil of the seeker into a living spiritual flame. The term, "initiation" is bandied about mystical circles so often and so loosely that many people think they know what it means. However, most do not understand the word nor the concept. Since initiation is pivotal to the Guru-disciple relationship, it is valuable to be aware of traditional definitions of the Initiator.

The Shiva Samhita (3, 11) states, "Only that knowledge which issues from the lips of the Guru is alive, all others are barren, powerless and the cause of suffering." The Shiva Samhita also says, "The Guru is one's father, one's mother, one's deity, of this there is no doubt. Nothing worthwhile can be gained by any other means."

The Adviya Taraka Upanishad defines the Guru as, "The teacher who knows the Eternal Wisdom, who is devoted to the all-pervading Lord, who knows not arrogance, who knows the method of yoga, even stands upon yoga and has become yoga itself; who is pure, who is devoted to his lineage, and who has witnessed the Supreme Person."

In addition to scriptural definitions, your own experience and readings probably have helped you form your own idea as to what a Guru is. By exploring the disciple-Guru bond, you will more deeply understand your Guru's role in the equation of your spiritual unfoldment. Your understanding will allow the two of you to work together for the supreme goal. You will find that your Guru is your greatest help in your spiritual quest. But the path entails more than a dynamic between two kindred souls. There is a rhythm and a pattern. The rhythm of the search reflects directly the various obstacles that exist on the path.

The primary and absolute aim of yoga is unification. An obstacle is anything which binds, holds or distracts the mind from this main goal (obstacles can also inhibit the attainment of lesser goals, be they moral, intellectual, worldly or religious). An obstacle deflects one's energies from the primary purpose, Enlightenment. Attachments are considered the primal form of bondage. Therefore, the spiritual obstacles fall into three main categories of attachments. The Shiva Samhita sets forth the main spiritual obstacles as follows:

Enjoyment

Enjoyment is not to be confused with happiness. Enjoyment distracts spiritually. Enjoyment commonly presents itself in such things as women (or men), comfortable furnishings, wealth, cars, gold, silver, jewels, theological discussions, dancing, songs, etc.

Religion

Religion is not spirituality. Religious obstacles are ritual purifications, mystical ecstasy, prolonged fasts, charities, fame, building of temples, long periods of penance, mortifications, pilgrimages.

Knowledge

Knowledge is different than wisdom, and the temptations of knowledge are great. Knowledge as a spiritual obstacle comes in the form of the desire for the society of saints, attempts to avoid the painful, causing the life-breath to penetrate where it does not normally enter, counting the long or short timings of breathing exercises, thinking of the shape which dwells in the body and, further, that in the shapeless dwells the Absolute.

In the practice of Kriya yoga there are nine major, concrete obstacles:

1. Ill Health.

When the body or mind is in ill health, the main forces of the body create a correlative mental or psychic imbalance which detracts from the mental and physical forces being fully oriented towards the aim of yoga.

2. Material Difficulties.

Many people sincerely want to practice yoga but prevent themselves from doing so because they worry about the possibility that the time and place are not suitable.

3. Lack of Conviction.

This obstacle causes the individual doubt. He or she is uncertain as to whether the claims of Kriya yoga are justified and whether yoga practices lead to Enlightenment.

4. Laziness.

Laziness is when the body and/or mind is made heavy by excess phlegm (a mystical term) or is weighed down by the descending current. Under these conditions the student does not feel like practicing yoga.

5. Lack of Enthusiasm.

Lack of enthusiasm results from contact with objects of the senses causing a diminishing of spiritual enthusiasm. The student has forgotten the negative qualities of objects, so he renews or continues his attraction to them. This propels him toward pleasure and enjoyment and away from re-unification.

6. Irregular Life.

This means practicing Kriya yoga without paying proper attention to the rules. The physical and mental life must be regulated so as to avoid careless practice and/or irregular times for proper study, meditation and yoga practice.

7. Wrong Ideas.

Wrong ideas, and thus wrong knowledge, arise when one begins to think the method and the means taught by the Guru and/or the texts of yoga are not correct for him.

Wrong ideas differ from doubt, in that wrong ideas do not relate to the yoga concepts, in themselves, but to their perceived applicability to the self.

8. Lack of Success.

Lack of success is when the student is not able to succeed in reaching a given state or stage of yoga despite apparently doing the proper practice. Generally this means that the student needs to soften much of his karma. He is progressing, but is discouraged because his goals have not been attained. Some people must work much longer before they reach success!

9. Lack of Stability.

Lack of stability is when a student has reached and obtained a certain stage of unfoldment, but then fails to *maintain* himself there. There are various reasons for this instability: ignorance, inadvertence, forgetfulness and major changes in his life.

Of these nine obstacles, the three most crucial are:

- a. laziness
- b. the irregular life
- c. wrong ideas

The implications are clear: remove laziness, regulate your life, recognize and correct any false ideas.

In addition to the nine primary obstacles, there are five secondary ones, which are the companion obstacles to self-realization. These are pain, melancholy, unsteady limbs, irregular inhalation and irregular exhalation.

There are nine additional hindrances arising from the above obstacles that present further sources of difficulty. They are unregulated eating, unregulated sleeping, the breaking of vows, having an imposter as a guide, disregarding one's Guru, desiring spiritual attainments, believing few attainments mean full realization, the pretension of guiding others before being ready, the pretension of guiding one's own self.

Please do not be discouraged by this litany of problems. I present it only to alert you to the dangers that lurk within our natures. Life is full of temptations and it takes discipline to walk the spiritual path. However, suffering is not your destiny! If you can identify even one obstacle or hindrance as your weak area, you will save yourself years and years of pain and discouragement. Be aware of the pitfalls along the path and that are active in the hidden side of your personality. Should you find yourself slipping into destructive habits, be aware of it, for then you will be in a position to correct them. If you have difficulty knowing when that is happening, find a Guru or teacher and ask for assistance.

Just as Guru offers personal guidance, Kriya yoga provides specific wisdom. The Vedas are one of mankind's oldest spiritual writings, ante-dating almost all other works. Veda means "knowledge." There are four Vedic books, each written in Sanskrit. The oldest - the fountainhead of Eastern thought and spirituality - is the Rig Veda, meaning "the knowledge of Bliss." It teaches that Bliss is the aim and the end of existence. By searching through the glorious hymns that comprise the Rig Veda, we find hints regarding the attitudes and practices that engender this Bliss. A word of caution, Bliss can be a misleading term in our modern world, easily confused with value systems that can seduce us into a great deal of pain. In your search, remember that Bliss refers to a spiritual state and does not mean "pleasure."

The Rig Veda originated in the ancient Aryan culture in what is now northern India, but it is not certain exactly when it was written, probably between 3000 B.C. and 1500 B.C. Of course, the Vedic philosophy had been taught, and orally handed down from teacher to disciple for many thousands of years before it was ever committed to writing. Thus, the teaching is much older than the texts. Oral transmission involved the memorization of each verse, each word, each syllable and the counting of each letter in order to prevent misquoting of the text. Such scrupulous transmission has enabled us to study the wisdom of sages who lived at least 7,000 years ago.

Their wisdom is expressed in grand, lyric beauty:

Death was not known, nor yet immortal life.
Night was not born, and day was not yet seen,

Airless, he breathed in primevally,
The one beyond whom naught hath ever been.

Whence sprang this universe! Who gave it form?
What eye hath seen its birth? Its source who knows?
Before the world was made the gods were not.
Who then shall tell us whence these things arose?

He who hath molded and called forth the world,
Whether he hath created it or not.
Who gazeth down on it from heaven's height?
He knoweth it; Or doth he know it not?

Written in a language of glory and majesty, such are the eternal questions we are still asking, regarding life itself. Such are the questions that man shall continue to ask, for each soul must find afresh the answers for himself.

Out of the Vedas grew the Upanishads, treatises designed for the mystic who is exploring firsthand the mysteries of life. Upanishad means "sitting together," suggesting the intimacy between Guru and disciple. The central theme is the pure pursuit of Reality, a pursuit symbolized by the Upanishadic saying,

Lead us from the unreal to the Real.
Lead us from darkness to Light.
Lead us from death to Conscious Immortality.

In this exploration of the Spirit of Life, several key Sanskrit terms are used, which should be understood by the student. These are:

Kriya or Kundalini

These terms mean the same thing - The life-force by which the body, the mind and the astral body function; The process by which the Life force awakens and ascends to Cosmic Consciousness.

Chakras

Centers that lie on the astral spinal column and hold the life-force until needed. Chakra means wheel. A chakra is alternatively called a padma, or a lotus.

Nadi

Best translated as "astral Prana pathway" along which the Kriya life-force travels through the mental and astral bodies. There are many Nadis in our bodies.

Ida

One of three major Prana pathways, often called the Moon channel. This pathway leads to and lies in the subjective (dream or astral) states. It is located to the left of the astral spine.

Pingala

The second major pathway which leads to the objective world. It is also called the Solar channel. It is located to the right of the astral spine.

Sushumna

The third and most important Prana pathway. It is the balanced, middle pathway which leads to the Casual world, the most basic of all planes of existence. Sushumna runs through the center of the astral spine.

Yoga theory states that we have another body other than the physical. It is known as the subtle or the astral body. It is much like the physical (though not visible to the physical eye) and in Sanskrit is called Linga Sharira. Within the astral or subtle body are the 72,000 Nadis and the seven major Chakras, each linked to a corresponding physical plexus.

The life-force, Prana, runs back and forth over the Nadis, causing the physical and astral bodies to act and react. Most people, because of various emotional and physical imbalances, have "blockages" in their Nadis resulting in sickness of a mental or physical nature.

To the degree the Kriya currents are scattered throughout the body, the mind cannot concentrate. Thus, few people are aware of these subtle forces. Through the practice of yoga, the Nadis are purified and thus the Kriya currents are gathered and brought under control. The Kriya life-force is then lifted up the astral spine to the brain where the concentrated currents give greater self-awareness, readying the mystic to enter into the world of the Causal.

Your Guru will not deal superficially with you. He perceives you as a dynamic interconnection of energy forces and will interact with you on all levels. Therefore, in order to make great progress, attunement to the Teaching is essential. It sometimes happens that you say something to your Guru and his response is so unexpected as to seem odd, impertinent and confusing. This is because he is interacting with you as a complex, multi-leveled mechanism.

In daily life, the Kriya energies are active throughout your total body. Consciously or not, when you center and lift your Kriya from the base to the top of your astral spine, your energy is passing through seven force-centers:

1. Muladhara chakra, often called the Saturn center and known as the Root Support Wheel. It has its physiological bases in the pelvic or sacro-coccygeal plexus. This is the center where the Kriya-Kundalini lies latent.
2. Svadisthana chakra, or the Jupiter center, is the next force-center. It is known as the Wheel of One's Own Place. It lies at the area of the genital organs and corresponds to the hypogastric plexus in the physical body.
3. Manipura chakra, or the Mars center, is next. It is in the navel area, and has correspondence to the solar plexus. It is known as the Many Rayed Wheel, the City of Gems and also the Lotus of Joy. When the Kriya force moves totally unobstructed through this center, many powers come to the yogi.

4. Anahata chakra, or the Venus center is the next center on the astral spine and is known as the Soundless-Sound Wheel. It has relation to the cardiac plexus. As the Kriya flows unobstructed through this center the power of clairvoyance is obtained.
5. Visuddha chakra, the Mercury center, is known as the Wheel of Purity. It lies in the center of the throat area and corresponds to the pharyngeal plexus.

When Kriya moves into this center and held there, the yogi cannot die (cannot become unconscious).

6. Ajna chakra is the Sun center, the Krishna or Christ center. It is also called the Eye of Shiva, or the Third Eye. This center is where the Great Light is seen. It corresponds to the cavernous plexus, and exists at the eyebrow level.
7. Chandra chakra is known as the Moon center. The medulla oblongata is its corresponding physical center. The Moon center is, like the Sun center, at the level of the eyebrows.

Above these seven Chakras lies Sahasrara, the Thousand-Petaled Lotus, symbol of God-consciousness. It must be remembered that each center is not a mere conjunction of nerve endings, not a mere physical plexus. Each has a life of its own, beyond the body. Each chakra is both independent and inter-dependent with the other subtle centers, much like the relationship between the physical organs of the brain, heart, liver or kidney, which can be kept alive apart from the rest of the physical body.

The Kriya energy, the Kundalini, is like an electrical current which we can send along wires, the Nadis. The Ida and Pingala Nadis are like sensory and motor fibers running along the spinal cord. These are the two main channels through which afferent (inward-moving) and efferent (outward-moving) Kriya currents travel. Please notice that the

transmission of these currents are in-and-out, as well as up-and-down. This is part of the energy radiation and conversion activity of the chakras. It is also part of the wonderful complexity that is you. This action of the Kriya implies that we need no longer be entrapped and weighted down by the mechanisms of the physical body. Is this true? If so, how can it be done? If you move the life-force through the Sushumna, you will have solved this problem (among many others) for you will have found your Enlightenment.

Here are three other terms you should know:

Prana

Often called the Breath of Life, Prana is the universal cosmic energy. It is the infinite, omnipresent power of the universe. It enters the body chiefly through breathing. Prana is commonly confused with air, or oxygen, which it is not.

Atma or Atman

Atma is the true Self; it is the universal cosmic being, now encased within the body-mind mechanism.

Samadhi

Samadhi is the yogic trance in which the individual ego is absorbed into the Supreme Spirit of Life.

Most, if not all, people share common instincts and impulses. Thus, progress on the Path is generally assisted by the application of certain universal principles. In addition, the relevant use of these principles follows an orderly pattern of eight stages which leads from confused living to self-mastery. The last stage being Samahi itself.

1. *Yama* begins with recognition of the need for mind control. Thus, yamas deal with abstinences, those things a yogi should abstain from doing, psychologically. When the practice of yama is established as a primary attitude, the mind is no longer agitated by nagging conflicts, such as, "Is this act proper?" You naturally flow toward proper action. There are five main abstinences: violence, stealing, lying, loose sex and possessiveness.

Among these five, to abstain from violence is by far the most important. It is one thing to restrain oneself and not to act violently; it is quite another thing to be actively non-violent. Yogic non-violence goes further than mere passivity. In time, non-violence, also known as Ahimsa, becomes creative. When non-violence becomes creative, you naturally generate only harmonious events.

The practice of yama brings about an attitude of unselfishness. Socially, ethically and morally, it may be very commendable to be unselfish, but the goal of yoga is far higher. The spiritual benefit of Ahimsa and the other Yamas is a mind less cluttered and encumbered a mind much easier to balance and master. Yama leads to natural renunciation of all irrelevancies. The yogi's mind lets go of the world, becoming free. Being established in Yama, nothing external can stand in the way of meditation.

2. *Niyama* deals with those things that a yogi ought to do psychologically. On the surface *niyama* sounds moralistic. This is not so. An action is done or not done in order to bring peace to the mind and to assist in the balancing of the Kriya-kundalini energy at the various levels of the mind. Yama and *niyama* assist in bringing peace and stillness to the mind. Together they form the first steps to mind-control.

Yama and *niyama* work hand-in-hand, and the experience of them is usually commingled as one. The purpose of *niyama* is to break down the mind's of attachment to things. As *niyama* becomes established, the heart becomes quiet. If something disturbing happens, you are not injured or thrown out of balance by it. You still care, but you are not affected. This sounds cold, but it is not cold. It is detachment. *Niyama* leads to a deeper detachment, which is quite distinct from indifference. A yogi practicing *niyama* practices

purity,
contentment,
austerity,
self-development,
and constant thought of the supreme goal.

Purity refers to physical habits of eating, thinking and breathing, and also to the place and direction of meditation. Contentment means understanding and accepting all that takes place in your life, pain and pleasure, and a recognizing the fundamental simplicity of your life's needs. Self-development always means spiritual self-development and constant thought of the goal alludes to the deep and fervent, unconscious and unemotional concentration on the Path. Among the Niyamas the practice of contentment is the most important. Just as all the yamas leads to non-violence, ahimsa; all niyamas lead to contentment, santosha. A person who is content is non-violent, and the person who is malcontent is always violent.

Yamas deal to an extent with our outward relationship with the world as we learn to avoid behaviors that will obstruct spiritual progress. Niyamas bring our attention more to our inner behavior and habitual ways of reacting to the world.

3. *Asana* refers to the bodily postures, exercises, and Hatha yoga techniques that produce longevity and health. They assist in bringing about body stillness, which further helps quiet the mind.

Asana focuses attention inward through bodily postures and bodily disciplines. Many people practice hatha yoga for the physical benefits. They don't always know that the purpose of hatha yoga is to still the body so as to make meditation possible. In fact, hatha yoga affects not just the physical body but our other bodies as well. Asana is of tremendous value and benefit to both the casual and serious spiritual seeker, even to those people with no interest in anything beyond producing a beautiful physical body. But you, as a seeker, must be aware that Asan is an

indispensable tool for you to greatly increase your inner awareness and inner balance.

4. *Pranayama* is control of the life force and is directly related to calming the emotions. Pranayama activates the Kriya currents which awaken the Kundalini. Pranayama practice is very important for successful mantra control, the transformation of consciousness through the use of sound.

Pranayama is commonly called "breath control," and is the fourth step to yoga mastery. Pranayama is not a superficial manipulation of breathing patterns. It is the ordered development and control (yama) of the Life Force (Prana). Prana comes to us by way of oxygen, food, water and sunlight. We may eat or drink only a few times a day and the sun shines only so many hours, but we are breathing all the time. Clearly, the easiest way to increase our exposure to and absorption of the Universal Energy force is through controlled breathing patterns directly, or indirectly through mantra. Breath control becomes the easiest, most accessible way to bring in and properly direct prana. Over time, the yogi develops a sense of the location and movements of prana within his vehicle. He then can learn to direct its movement, predetermining its flow through the various chakras. So important is pranayama that it has been said that yama, niyama and asana are but preparation stages for pranayama, for mantra and for Kriya-kundalini techniques.

5. *Pratyahara* is sense withdrawal. The discipline of pratyahara involves exercises or techniques that strengthen the mind and intellect through developing control of the senses.

Pratyahara is the "withdrawal of the senses" from the external field, so they may be directed toward the inner thought-processes. In this stage, the senses are withdrawn from external objects and fixed upon the modes of consciousness. Withdrawal consists in disentangling the five senses from the natural perception and "stilling" them completely. Control of the mind is gained through

sense-withdrawal. Although there are other methods of sense-withdrawal, one of the best techniques is to practice breath control in association with mental ritual. Some examples of mental ritual are to:

1. Sit or lie without any motion.
2. Fix the mind on an internal object.
3. Concentrate on that point where the in-breath and out-breath arises and dissolves.
4. Use mantra to focus the concentration.

Mantra deserves special mention. When meaningful sound is added to the breath control, the result is mantra. Quite aside from the suggestive qualities of language, the power of mantra is based on the creative power of sound. If this concept seems odd, think of a rock concert and its effect on your body, your mind, your thoughts and impulses. Now imagine fragments from Debussy's music drifting through willow trees at sunset. Do you feel the difference? Mantra is word-music, functioning on a level that transcends ordinary linguistic distinctions.

6. *Dharana* is concentration, and refers to the various disciplines yogis practice in order to focus their mind inward, away from the outward distractions that constantly press upon and scatter the mind. Mantra is also a well-known and highly effective dharana technique.

Dharana is concentration. Concentration is a fixed, effortful focusing of the mind. Once our life has been put in order, through yama niyama, our body stilled through asana, and our energy patterns calm by pranayama, the next step is to focus the mind, concentrating on that which lies within the mind itself. Interestingly, at this stage the nature of the object of concentration matters little. It may be anything---gross or subtle. More important is the quality of concentration. Mantra and certain pranayamas are very effective in getting the mind to center and remain centered. This is concentration.

7. Dhyana is meditation whereby the yogi takes the focused mind and lifts it, raising one's state of awareness and setting the stage for the experience of samadhi.

Up to this point, we have learned to concentrate on one thing. Now we must learn to release the effort and remain focused *effortlessly*. This effortless quality is both surprisingly difficult and surprisingly easy. The difficulty lies in our stubborn belief that the mind must always be "chewing" on something. We go to a great deal of trouble to make sure the mind is always busy. In fact, if there is nothing in our minds, we consciously or unconsciously go about looking for things to occupy it. During meditation, you empty your mind of all extraneous objects, release your concentration and effortlessly hold to a given spiritual focus. Spiritually speaking, in the strictest sense, all objects in the mind are extraneous. The yogi wants to go past the mind of objects and enter into consciousness itself. In all types of meditation, one looks with detachment upon the inward and outward manifestations of the mind. They are all just thoughts and feelings flowing through that mind. With this open state of detachment we become more aware of the "processes" of consciousness. Later, as mastery is developed, the yogi is only aware of the processes of consciousness.

One of the paths of meditation is called the "Seven Rays of Discernment." The Rays are: who, what, why, when, where, which and how. By *holding the awareness of these Rays*, while meditating on an event or an object, the yogi derives knowledge and wisdom regarding these. He does *not ask questions* using these Rays. He *holds* the awareness of these Rays in his meditation, and thus derives greater knowledge and wisdom regarding life and the process of creation.

8. *Samadhi* is conscious trance or unification - It is your goal. There are four basic stages in samadhi:
 - a. Unconscious trance
 - b. Conscious trance
 - c. Conscious and uncontrolled trance
 - d. Conscious and controlled trance

To reach the first trance stage takes only a few months of intense practice. At first, samadhi is simply a light state of sleep-like trance. As in sleep, one may be unaware in samadhi, unconscious of what is transpiring. But with a little practice this trance becomes deeper, more meaningful and conscious. It is possible to utilize inner-mantra to refine your samadhi and to produce consciousness. In three to 12 years, one can reach the major step, true samadhi, conscious and controlled trance.

Why, then, the long years of yoga practice? Because there is a difference between consciousness-in-trance and controlled-conscious-trance. Again, it is like sleeping. Sometimes we are unaware or unconscious of doing anything while sleeping. At other times we are aware while dreaming. Rarely, though, do we control the dream itself. A yogi pays attention to the quality of his sleep state, for sleep is a form of trance and therefore related to samadhi. In truth, both these states of awareness should be regarded as equally valuable doors to the beyond, as gateways to the higher planes of consciousness.

Just as there are degrees of wealth and degrees of intelligence, so likewise, there are degrees of self-conscious awareness. The many years the yogi devotes to mystical practices perfect the controlled self-conscious trance. But even more importantly, these years of practice are spent in exploring and experimenting with the laws of self-conscious awareness.

Through experimentation the yogi answers the question: Who am I? What are the dimensions and limits of consciousness? What is the power of the self? What are the limits and the power of consciousness? What are secondary personalities? What are the limitations of time? The yogi becomes a living experiment as perceived and interpreted in terms of self-conscious awareness.

Samadhi is the final step. Samadhi is super-conscious trance. Sages, teachers and a few saints have presented humanity with testimony regarding the nature of samadhi. One of the problems in discussing samadhi is that after the mind has been washed clean, one enters into a realm of no -words. Then, when one returns from samadhi to The world-of-words, it becomes difficult to discuss what has been experienced. Hence one often hears the oft-repeated terms "ineffable" or

"inexpressible." One may not be able to express this experience to the satisfaction of another, or one may even deny it in an attempt to protect the sanctity of the experience. Whether spoken or not, all will know that he or she has experienced samadhi because the soul is joyous, and the mind very happy. Samadhi is the union of self to all life. It is Illumination. It is balanced Self-conscious awareness. It is the balanced awareness of balanced awareness beholding balanced awareness, and knowing that it is beholding Itself. This perception is non-dual. There is no seer versus the seen. The act of seeing, the seer and the object seen are one.

The Guru sees the Truth. He sees your real Self clearly. He also sees the beauty of your soul, and loves and respects you for yourself alone. He does not love you for what you have, nor for what you have accomplished; he loves you as you are. Of course, he will encourage you to unfold from beauty to greater beauty. It is his second nature to do everything he can to give you the knowledge and the experiences needed so that you can clearly see the cosmos, yourself, and Life's Pathway.

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Chapter Three

THE SPIRITUAL PROMISE OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD

The tradition of the Guru has thrived in Indian culture, but the concept of "Guru" surpasses historical or cultural constraints. This is due to the nature of the true Guru. The true Guru is an inner Guru, a flame that is transferred from the living, immortal Guru, encased in a mortal body, to you, a flame which remains alive in your heart forever.

No teacher's body is immortal, yet Truth must be sustained. Therefore it is critical that Truth be passed on through initiated disciples. It is through initiation that the wick of truth is ignited by the flame eternal. The flame lives on, while the wick changes as it is passed from soul to soul.

Truth is passed on through individual souls and not through organizations, no matter how well motivated. No formal religious organization or structure is the same as a living disciple, and in our search for Enlightenment we must not become seduced by any organization.

Yogananda had a dream. His dream was to build an internationally recognized religious university from which students received degrees, while at the same time were taught to be yogis. He wanted to teach religious and spiritual philosophies so that graduating students could help improve civilization, not by force but by being living examples of the cultured, informed, spiritual life. A dream of this scale and scope demands great dedication, and Yoganandaji worked exceedingly hard toward it. When questioned regarding any similarity between a spiritual institution and a business, he responded, "There are two things to remember: One should never make a business of religion. However, religion should function on business principles."

In our idealism we must never be sloppy. Yoganandaji, as a personality, was an expert at the use of promotion, but he never lost sight of the deep truth that the organization, per se, was not the goal. All too easily, an organization can become its own goal. Before you know it, you and

everybody else are running uphill, keeping very busy doing things. But this "doing" has no spiritual value for you or the world. The value of any religious organization is that it offers the student an opportunity to serve, for in service one can grow spiritually. Be ever alert for the central meaning, in whatever cause you pursue, and remember that while you can learn many things through formal organizations, in matters spiritual the Guru must be an incarnated human being.

Yoga tradition holds that the Guru must be alive to perform the initiation. Through his own incarnation the Guru understands the reality of pain and limitations assumed by each of us upon taking on the flesh body. He knows directly how difficult life and learning can be. This is one of the teachings he imparts by his own compassion.

No matter how extraordinary your Guru may be, don't get the idea that once you have found him your troubles are over! It is just the beginning of effort. By initiation, you exchanged your general karma for the karma of the Path. It is still karma, and there is still much, much work to be done. Some disciples say, "Now that I have a Guru, I'll just sit here. God will take care of me. I'll pray today and God will take care of me tomorrow." Such is human nature. Wow! Do these souls have a shock coming! Life doesn't work that way, let alone discipleship! Sometimes it takes a saint to say, "Life is a row boat: Pray as if everything depends on God, but row as if everything depends on you!"

Your spiritual life depends on you! Your spiritual life does not depend on organizations, nor on religion, nor on theology, nor on the Guru; your spiritual life depends on you, whether or not you gain assistance through all these avenues.

To unfold spiritually, along with spiritual disciplines, you must live life at its most concrete level. At some point, you will realize that even though you are limited and constricted, the successful spiritual life lies in how you handle that limitation and constriction! Life-success comes not by denying limitations, but by learning to handle them. This is easy to say, but hard to do. This is where the Guru comes in. You will find your Guru's Teachings relevant to leading a meaningful **earth life**. He has the duty of telling you how life should be lived. It is the Guru's duty to point out the earth way, and the spiritual way, not just by words, but

by living. The Master leads the Way by walking the Path, not by talking about how it should be walked. Watch him... Watch him walk the Path! Learn from his walking, always remembering that personalities differ. Not all things should be done in the same way, except the gaining of wisdom.

Once, in Kita Kamakura, Japan, I asked a Sensei, "How should I walk in this world?"

He answered, "Walk gently, my son."

I retorted, "I am walking gently."

He answered, "Walk more softly."

"Sensei," I continued, "How should I treat a stranger?"

"With trust," was his reply.

"Sensei, how should I treat the stranger who would harm me?"

"Firmly, my son," was his answer.

The spiritual battle is fought on the field of daily living, and it demands both courage and *grace*. While our ultimate spiritual goal is Moksha, total freedom, each of us has a birthright of happiness, love, joy, knowledge and wisdom. Your Guru, through his life and teaching, is showing you that these are your birthright; these blessings not given to you by any man, woman, teacher or preceptor. They are gifts from Life alone, from God alone. Through your Guru, God is saying, "These belong to you. You have a right to these, as long as you realize that they are not for yourself alone. They are for all others. Thus, walk through this world with dignity and with love."

When one looks at this world, one can't help but think, "This world is so extreme! How can I find my way through it?" The Guru-disciple relationship reveals the right Path for you: the middle Path, the golden Path, the Path of wisdom, the Path of no extremes. With your Guru's guidance, you can learn to obtain and maintain perspective and proportion in the earth life. With his guidance, you will realize that the earth life is the spiritual life.

It is extremely important to recognize that there should be no conflict between the esteem you hold for your Guru, and the worship of God, in the form of your Ishta Devata.

One way to eliminate conflict between Ishta Devata and Guru, is to understand how each functions. Your Ishta Devata is your chosen symbol of the Divine, a form embodying your concept of God and that which is sacred in life. This symbol, in a sense, represents your vision of how life "should be." Your Ishta Devata reflects your deepest spiritual propensities. It is a starting point, and as you mature, so does your Ishta. Or, is it the other way around?

Your Guru is the person from whom you learn how to attune to your Ishta. Of course, when it comes right down to it, you don't need Guru; all you need is God. A Guru may make walking the Path much easier, more personal, and more fun. If, however, you feel your Ishta pulling you to one direction, and your Guru pulling you in another direction, do not be afraid to end this needless conflict. God, after all, is the ultimate Guru!

Guru-love actually is very like mother-love. It tries to illuminate you, so that you can break free from him. The yogi honors the Ishta-Devata of each person, for in yoga the greatest thing we can do for our fellow man, is not to show our treasures to him, but to reveal to him his own treasures. The true Guru will help you reunite with your Ishta-Devata.

The strength of the Guru-disciple relationship is based on the maturity of the two souls. As with any human relationship, constant evaluation and reevaluation is needed. Disciple and Guru must constantly reaffirm and re-understand their duties and responsibilities, not in words...but by kind actions.

One of the greatest misconceptions people have about spirituality is that it's other-worldly. Some religions may be, but, spirituality never is! The spiritual person's attention is firmly rooted in this earth, and the law of Self-conscious awareness that can be learned here. Mystics and spiritual souls are in harmony with this earth life. They do not eschew the things of this world as evil.

Also, spirituality is not this-worldly. Spirituality is a realization that there is no "this world" or "other world." The spiritual focus is on consciousness, not on worlds. All is within you (your consciousness). Finding truth involves opening up and realizing that separate and

divided universes do not exist. There is only the one (multifarious and multileveled) world that exists within your consciousness.

One of the functions of the Guru is to reveal to you, as quickly as possible, what is happening in your consciousness so you can see how to pass through the various subrealms into Spirit Itself. Another function of the Guru is to reveal to you how consciousness creates events and objects. In short, you realize how unawareness creates karma, how self awareness softens karma, and how balanced self-awareness dissolves karma.

For some reason, many people confuse yoga with spiritualism and the supernatural. I am frequently asked, "Where can I find good medium?" "Why do you want a psychic medium?" I ask. "I'd like to contact my Guru," they reply.

No Guru, living or dead, will manifest through a psychic, or as they are called today, a channeler. The spiritual Path, the communion between disciple and Guru, does not ever involve a third-party. It is a direct communication.

Once a man came to my Guru saying, "I'd like to ask you something but I don't think you will answer it."

"Certainly, I'll answer the question," the Guru replied.

"Absolutely any question? You promise?" was the retort.

The Guru stated, "I promise to answer absolutely any question".

"And you won't lie to me," the young man pressed.

"I promise," the Guru said patiently.

"I want a mantra to become very wealthy".

"Oh! that's simple," the Guru said quietly. Taking a sheet of paper, he wrote out a wealth mantra and gave it to the man, who promptly headed for the door.

"Is that all you wanted to know?" the Guru asked.

"Yes, thanks. I just wanted the mantra."

"Well, then, I think I should say one thing to you," the Guru said. "You can sit down and chant that mantra and I guarantee it will make you at least a million dollars. **But**, if you really want to make a million dollars, I suggest you go out and work for it. It will be a lot easier that way!"

The young man was very, very disappointed, for he, like most people, felt that the mantra just needed to be said once for wealth to appear. It is not so. It can take many years to bring the wealth into your life. Through dedicated chanting you realize that to produce wealth requires action. Thus, the mantra fulfills its promise as you get up and start doing what is required to manifest your dream.

It is just plain easier to do physical things physically. Occult, metaphysical laws are of greatest value when you want to accomplish something that cannot be done physically. "Do things the easiest way, the most uncomplicated way" is the advice of my Guru!

Disciples often wonder how long they should stay in the physical presence of their Guru. The answer is that once initiation has occurred, the disciple need not stay at all. Once the flame is lit, the disciple can walk away. The flame will continue to glow. The physical presence of the Guru is needed only long enough for him to touch you at your Sun center, the Ajna Chakra. According to tradition, the purpose of staying with the Guru is to accelerate the Flame's glow.

This might leave a disciple asking, "OK, so the flame is aglow. But, what do I do in the meantime? What do I do until realization?" In the meantime, be happy. In the meantime, do something that is important to the world. In the meantime, improve your mind.

Prolonged exposure to your Guru does have advantages. Either during initiation or shortly thereafter, the spiritual preceptor usually passes on, unaltered, at least one mystical technique he has found especially valuable. This technique may be a meditation or a mantra or a pranayama. The special value of this technique to you lies in the guru's experience of Cosmic Consciousness as attained through that method. The technique, passed from Guru to disciple transmits, in encoded form, the preceptor's Illumination. There is a strong karma link between the two of you, so generally any technique harmonious to him will be very harmonious to you. Your Guru has used it for many years, often decades, and knows firsthand how to balance the obstacles and difficulties associated with the practice. He has worked through these challenges himself and can be of invaluable assistance in telling you

what to expect, what does not work, and what he has found to be meaningful, and why.

Living a spiritual life and practicing the technique given to you by your Guru calls for skill and discipline. Every spiritual tool involves an inturning, a pulling of the vital currents away from the physical senses, so that they are not being stimulated. In this state of inturning you will continue to hear, see, touch, etc. This "sensing" takes place in the chitta (the mind-stuff), an inner element with no relationship to the body. Having turned inward through the practice of a mystical technique, the disciple will often encounter powerful inner forces.

Nearness to the Guru can be particularly helpful as the Kriya-Kundalini begins to awaken. Some disciples experience this energy as a fountain rushing upward, others as an electric spark or electric current. Some experience it as a lightening bolt; others have a quiet peaceful awareness. Again, the Guru comes in handy because his personality relates to your personality, and he can help you break through threshold after threshold of awareness.

The awareness of the Kundalini has nothing to do with controlling it. "Perceiving" is not the same as "controlling." As you become aware of your Kriya currents, you will sense that certain things activate it. With my Guru, for example, aesthetic experiences make his currents flow. When he looks at what he considers a great piece of art, e.g., painting, architecture, or listens to a great musician perform, he feels the currents. I am radically different. I used to feel the currents move any time I saw two people in a boxing ring on television. (There is an old Zen adage stating that one should never look too far into the past of a woman or a teacher!) Now, I feel the currents move when I hear a great thought or idea. We are all human.

Kriya Kundalini plays an important part in the Guru-disciple relationship. All Gurus have two work arenas, the outer plane and the inner plane. The inner plane work most often relates to four major tasks:

1. Balancing the disciple's self-awareness, so that the disciple does not get too far out of balance.

2. Eternally trying to raise the disciple's level of consciousness.
3. Frequently assessing the "tone" of the disciple's awareness by "tuning in" on the spinal axis of that disciple.
4. Washing the heart center, anahata chakra. The heart center accumulates and holds emotions, so that negative forces cannot enter into the higher chakras. It is important for the Guru (and also for you) to cleanse or wash this chakra weekly. Perchance you will gain a deeper insight, by recognizing the Westerner saying, "It helps to get it off my chest."

For example, as a conscientious Guru, every day Yoganandaji would "track the sun," entering into the soul of each disciple, ascending and descending the astral sun through the spinal column. He was spinning the Kriya currents, assisting in breaking up the karma obstacles. In so doing, he opened the Sushumna channel, spiritually helping the disciple.

If this strikes you as an invasion of privacy, remember that by accepting Initiation, each disciple gave Yoganandaji the right to enter his soul and improve their dream. Either we struggle along on our own, or we accept the Guru's presence and guidance. The limitation here is that we can never dictate how the Guru will accomplish his inner work.

The Guru-disciple relationship involves actions and interactions on many planes at once and, while it may be easier to do physical work physically, the mind can get rid of Karma much faster than the body. The long, gentle, steady, unending task of neutralizing the disciple's Karma is undertaken willingly, both consciously and unconsciously, by the Guru and disciple.

People often ask, "Does the Guru take on the karma of the disciple?"

Some answer "Yes" and some answer "No."

About two decades ago, my Guru asked me, "Kriyananda, how many disciples have you taken now?" I thought for a moment and then told him.

He gasped, "That's a lot of work---slow down!" That was a strong statement, and I immediately suspended giving initiations for many years. The motivation behind my Guru's statement was the enormity of dealing with the Kriya currents of many souls. Not only the Guru, but the entire lineage participates in balancing a disciple's karma. He and the lineage needed more time to "digest" the karma of my disciples.

How much karma your Guru is willing to take on is an individual matter. No exact proportion has ever been revealed, nor is it important to determine. It is more important to understand the dynamics of the shared task that binds a disciple to the Guru, and that disciple to his Lineage, enabling them to share and dilute karma.

Each disciple must bear in mind that because of initiation, he is no longer alone. This means that any karma you generate now directly affects your fellow disciples, the Guru, the lineage. Thus, for their sake, if not yours, you should strive very hard to generate more good than bad karma. Do not make the mistake of being lazy.

When the disciple clearly says, "I'm trying to find..." The Guru points and says, "This way..."

If he is a good teacher, he'll probably give you a technique, and say to you, "You no longer need me," trying to shake you off. There are some people who seek their Guru, become initiated and then for the rest of their life neglect the Search. They do absolutely nothing. They rely on the Guru to illuminate them, knowing he will go through their chakras daily, weekly or monthly. This approach is not only lazy but inefficient.

The work you do for yourself will benefit you more than work done for you. The work you do for others will benefit far, far more than work done for yourself alone.

A Guru may not leave this earth plane permanently until each and every one of his disciples is enlightened. So every time a Guru accepts a new disciple, he ties himself more tightly to this physical world, until that

disciple either breaks the disciple-Guru vow or becomes enlightened. This is why my Guru said to me, "Breathe your Kriya. Live a good life, and don't tie me down too much!" His statement carries no resentment, only a knowledge of his personal limitations. Each disciple should understand the responsibility and limitations of the Guru, for in time, each disciple will become a Guru.

A true Guru never would reject a prospective disciple because of that person's heavy karma, if that soul was ready to learn. Aware of the transfer of karma, some people decline to take a Guru, fearing their karma burden will be too great.

I have one disciple who absolutely refuses to allow me to take on any of his karma. He has articulated this many times with intense conviction. In fact, he is so well defended that I cannot reach his currents. The question then arises: should I double my efforts and insist on sharing and balancing his karma? After all, he gave me that right by virtue of his initiation. The answer is, "No." We should not enter where we are not invited. Keep in mind that every time the Guru helps somebody, no matter how slightly, the Guru gains significant good karma and increased freedom.

Once I went through a period of uncomfortable physical illness, and a disciple came to me saying, "Oh, dear, I've given you my bad karma!" **Never** give yourself needless guilt feelings regarding your Guru's working toward the neutralization of your Karma! In my opinion, Gurus do not work off disciples' karma by becoming sick, sad or experiencing tragedies! He works the disciple's karma off on the inner planes. Whatever karma you see expressing itself outwardly in this physical plane is his karma. We can only experience what is our karma.

Many years ago in India, a young man came to a Guru and said, "I want to be Initiated into your form of yoga. I want to find God." Without hesitation, without any questioning, the Guru instantly put his hand upon the disciple's head, saying, "You are at this moment initiated!"

"Just a minute," the young man said, "I think you should know that I've killed four people."

The teacher looked at him thoughtfully and responded, "My son, in the sum total of all your incarnations, you have killed over fifty million people, mostly as a soldier. The important thing to consider is not how many people you have hurt, but that you recognize your atrocities, and are now seeking a way to be more kindhearted."

There is no sin in the Guru's view of the world; there is only the violence caused by ignorance. We have all been foolish. A Guru is not as concerned with what you *have done*, as with where you are trying *to go*. By consciously reducing the disharmony on any plane, you still the pendulum swings of your own internal imbalances until finally you come to rest at Cosmic Consciousness.

One of the most direct paths to illumination lies in helping others, which actually is helping Life to balance itself. After all, if we do not help the world, who will? Mankind must learn to consciously dream the dream of God. Meditation will bring deeper insight into this matter.

Yogis and mystics speak in symbols. One of the most common and effective sets of symbols is found in astrology, and I strongly urge you to study that ancient system of symbols.

Following an astrological example, let's assume a person has Mars squared Uranus and Mars squared Saturn active in his life. These aspects manifest as his karma. People may pick on him, beat him physically, shoot at him, run over him with cars, maybe ignore him in a hostile manner. The violent forces that underlie these experiences are truly in his inner soul. While all this violent karma activated, he comes to ask you a favor. Even before he opens his mouth, you sense his inner vibration and get angry with him. The poor fellow hasn't said a word and you're mad at him! However, somehow you manage to center and stay quiet as he asks for your help. In your soul you feel him thinking, "I don't deserve kindness. Punish me, deny me." As a spiritual seeker your response must be to help. *You must be capable of overcoming his negative karma*, saying, "John, here's the money you need." If John then goes out and loses the money before doing what he was supposed to with it, that deserves your care and concern, but it is not your responsibility. His karma will continue, but you will have upheld your responsibility. In

one brief minute you overcame the negative forces and helped, even when that soul was saying to you, on the inner planes, "Please! Don't help me!"

Another person may have a "hate me" aspect. When he comes before you, you feel yourself backing away both physically and psychologically. But because of self-awareness you think, "What am I doing? This person needs help!" By this inner reversal, you overcome his heavy Saturn influence emphasizing love and good humor in your interactions with him. That your love can soften his heavy aspect is important. However, more important, is the fact that you faced the negative Saturn and Mars vibration, and *overcame it in your inner soul*. That is true spiritual victory.

Your spirituality must prevent you from colluding with and responding to others' negative karma! Within yourself, within your inner soul, you must overcome their karma. In so doing you master the basic laws of your own being! When the time comes in your own life, that these negative Saturn or Mars vibrations manifest, you will realize that you do not want to limit yourself. You will think, "What am I doing, not wanting to be helped or loved? That's really stupid. I want to be helped!"

Each time you overcome negative karma coming at you from another person, you develop a greater capacity to master the same vibration when it manifests within your own soul. If you cannot overcome Saturn when it is expressed by another soul, you most likely will not be able to master Saturn when it manifests in your own soul. If you do nothing else in life to balance your karma, cultivate loving kindness or compassion for other people's suffering.

It is just as important to recognize your positive karma. Some abundant benefic karma will be revealed in a person's astrological chart. Thus when a needy person comes by, the person with abundance has reached into his pocket to give money even before being asked. And a half-block later, the benefactor has forgotten the whole thing. Be aware of your inner tendencies, whether expansive or constrictive. Awareness is the road to spiritual unfoldment.

Have you ever gone into a store and the owner said, "You're my first customer today. I've been open for an hour and you're the first person to come in," Before you leave, five customers show up. Ask leaders in any field of endeavor, they will agree: Once you break through the initial barrier, others will follow. The first one through neutralizes the karma and makes it possible for the others to follow easily. One of my dear disciples used to look for the grand openings of stores and restaurants so she could run in and be sure they had a customer early on opening Day. This is deeply spiritual and not easy. Breaking through a karmic barrier gives you mastery over negative vibrations, and represents compassion from the wisdom heart at the highest level.

We must not look at the struggles of our brothers and sisters and say, "Oh well, it's their time to be hurt. It's their karma," and walk away.

Instead, a miracle must occur within that other soul whereby he can feel, "Things are tough right now, but they will get better, because I deserve better." Your compassion can create that miracle. Of course, he must then do things to receive better things of this earth of the spiritual life.

While the rest of the world shouts, "Destroy!" -- through your awareness you say, "Just a minute, world ... No!" Be wise. Learn from the experiences of those around you, and do not be afraid to confront their emotions, giving them what they truly need: compassion, loving kindness. That is true free will. Your spiritual challenge and your spiritual duty as a disciple is to develop free will! Your challenge and duty is to help give this free will to all those who would seek it. As you learn to read, between the lines of the soul, the messages coming from other people's karma, and as you become more adept at hearing the inner voice of your Guru, you come closer to fulfilling your own spiritual destiny.

The Guru-disciple relationship does not always run in perfect harmony. Conflicts do arise. These conflicts are not of the Spirit, but are of the personality caused by miscommunication and misunderstanding. The strength of the Guru-disciple relationship is based on the maturity of the

two souls. As with any human relationship, constant evaluation and re-evaluation is needed. Disciple and Guru must constantly reaffirm and recognize their duties and responsibilities, not in words... but by kind actions.

Among the responsibilities of the Guru are showing, explaining and removing obstacles from the disciple's spiritual Path. Clearly, the disciple doesn't just sit there passively, letting the Guru do all the work. Among the responsibilities of the disciple are helping the Guru have more time to meditate, supplying him with his earth needs, searching, and actively working to remove obstacles in his own spine. The disciple must strive to attain ever greater balancing of his self-awareness, thus finding moksha, the highest freedom. He must attune his mind to the message of his Guru.

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Chapter Four

PREPARING FOR INITIATION

Initiation involves more than just disciple and Guru. It involves the relationship between disciple, Guru and God. Intertwined among these three is a celestial message. During initiation this message is given of God, via the Guru to the disciple, whereupon it may be given freely by the disciple to whoever in this universe desires it.

When you and the Guru agree you are ready for initiation, there will be a ritual. It may be short or long, depending on tradition and individual needs, but some things are common in all initiations.

Many great religions call Initiation the second birth. Initiation signals the beginning of your spiritual life, a process involving the remembrance of things past, allowing you to recall your spiritual essence, your divine and immortal nature. The rite of initiation is more than symbolic. It is a triggering mechanism that detonates the discharge of your expanding spiritual awareness.

Surely, you have experienced working intensely on a busy day, and upon seeing something you suddenly remember, "I dreamt about that last night!"... and a whole dream comes flooding back. In initiation, something similar happens within your soul on a very, very subtle level of pure feeling. Your soul becomes alert to the remembrance of the *feeling* of your spiritual dream. Gradually (or suddenly, in some cases) you make contact with your immortal spiritual nature, including remembering that you and Guru are distinct but not different, just as Guru and God are distinct but not different.

Initiation brings you in touch with divinity. Oddly enough, one can encounter unexpected problems in expressing that divine inner beauty. Godliness frequently is greeted with fear, resentment, antagonism and even open hostility. One does not have to be a saint to understand this problem. If you are wealthy, many of the less wealthy envy you. If you are intelligent, you will threaten much of the world. Followers of the spiritual path are not exempt from the foibles of human nature.

If you should encounter such responses, do not be alarmed or overly saddened. As you become less easily deceived by social role-playing, you will increasingly gravitate, without effort, to those individuals more in harmony with your spiritual being; or in some cases become a happy, healthy recluse.

Initiation helps you move beyond the crowded ranks of spiritually less fortunate souls, freeing you from envy and resentment. You remember the beauty of your own soul and thus, you see the beauty within others, thereby transcending the more destructive patterns of human behavior. You do not condemn others for their weakness; you simply do not participate in that weakness.

It is essential that your strength be expressed in a balanced manner, so that you learn how to live gracefully. This means you do not offend people, walk on them, nor allow the world to walk all over you. You develop a pattern of thought and action that assists you in offending no person, not even yourself. Guidance, regarding your path in life, comes from within and is not limited to just spiritual matters. You become wise. The Guru will impart wisdom and insight as to how to live so that you better understand this world so that its insanity cannot destroy your spirituality, and you understand that this world is not in conflict with the spiritual search.

Central to initiation is the experience of having your angular (emotional) energies brought into balance. For many disciples, this is the high point of the initiation ritual. That one short instant of balance provides everything your spiritual soul needs. That memory becomes an internal North Star by which to guide yourself. Hold the feeling of that memory in your soul. Learn to compare your *today* feeling with your *initiation* feeling. If the two are close, you are living wisely. If there is great discrepancy between the two, something is wrong with the way you are living today, and you need to make adjustments in your everyday living. By comparison and adjustment you develop wise intent, wise thought, and wise action.

First-level wisdom is knowing what to keep, and what to let go of in life. One of the first things we need to release is the common, but false, conviction that people are pressuring us to do things (in a given way, at

a given time). Most of these pressures originate and flourish only within us. We radiate our own expectations, transferring their powerful strength on to somebody else. We live our days thinking, "Oh, I want so much to do this *but my spouse won't let me.*" or "I would love do that *but my family won't approve,*" As we are generating these projections, everybody else is shaking their heads and saying, "Gee, I wish he would just do that."

The hard, cold truth is that the forces that dictate our karma lie within us. The trick is to balance these forces within ourselves. Initiation involves re-contacting your spiritual self, re-balancing your individual forces, and then learning how to manifest that spiritual balance, harmoniously.

According to yoga tradition, an individual does not pursue initiation their first time around on this earth. More commonly, this occurs only after a person has tasted a lot of life. At a certain point there occurs a kind of existential yawn and the thought, "Is this all there is?" Thus comes the decision to go deeper. At first there is a generalized yearning, "I need God. I want God." Such a yearning is noble, it is religious, but like any other desire, it is not spiritual. Like any other desire, it is the cause of much anguish and misery. Even the desire for God must be held in balance.

Initiation momentarily fulfills all our spiritual desires. What the soul has sought, the soul has found. For a moment, one feels fully the divine principle of Shanti (quietude, peace, harmony). Having experienced it, the mind can return to that Shanti principle, through the memory, and re-establish the state of no-cravings.

The rite of initiation customarily involves passing on to the disciple a proven technique to assist in re-balancing the desire patterns. In initiation, you actually encounter the Way of Life and the Laws of Life. These laws are biological, psychological, occult, mystical, mental, and causal. A good teacher will pass them on to you. A good Guru will make you aware of where to find them. (This will not be in any library, I assure you!)

Finally, initiation awakens your intuition. Initiation differs from other human rituals in that it is more than a tribal sharing. Initiation is a completion (which it can take years for the disciple to fully recognize) in which the spiritual intuition is awakened so that someday the initiate can say, "I don't need the Guru anymore." At that moment, the Guru smiles and says, "Well done!" Initiation gives to a person the Flame by which a person completes himself.

Having created your karma, it's not about to go away. One way or another, you must keep the karma forces from dominating your life. There are infinite ways you may try to master the karma forces, but sooner or later you will have the impulse toward initiation - The Supreme Way.

Initiation awakens your intuitive understanding of how best to deal with and soften your karma. While there is no need to be afraid of your karma, no matter what it is, you do need to know how to dissolve away negative karma. You have been in this world quite a few times now, and a lot of past hopes and dreams (usually based on ignorant foolishness) remain unfulfilled. These result in unfulfilled desires, i.e., karma. The goal of initiation is to learn to live without creating through desire. Goals can be attained through wisdom, without all that craving, hoping and desiring. However, wisdom does not come suddenly. Gradually, gradually, your wisdom-nature will bloom.

How do you know if you are exercising wisdom? The answer is, as you grow in wisdom, you will develop greater gentleness with the world, greater patience and love. You will stop fighting Life and begin serving it. Your feelings will move from combative to constructive. In this way, you will transcend your karma.

Another benefit of initiation is the realization that pleasure and knowledge are not the goals of life. It is not that pleasure or knowledge are bad things. All Gurus will urge you to acquire knowledge and education. They suggest, in moderation, to have fun in this earth life. But the goal is neither knowledge nor pleasure. The goal is God-realization.

For decades, people have asked me to define God-realization. My response has consistently been that God-realization is the attainment of

wisdom, for wisdom is God. This wisdom is no sterile abstraction, but is filled with loving kindness and comradeship.

Sometimes a mystically oriented individual will confide to me, "I spoke with God and God said everything is going to be OK." Such an individual has not yet recognized that his OK-ness is not restricted to the future because everything already is OK. Having made contact with God, all his negative karma has been massively softened.

Some people misperceive the connection between balanced karma and God-Consciousness, assuming: "I have found God therefore I have no more bad karma." If such ego-distortion grows, pretty soon they are into a game where "If I'm really spiritual, I'll always find a parking spot." It just isn't so. This distorted thinking is so common, though, that many priests (of all religions) manipulate it very successfully. But money and parking spots do not necessarily reflect spiritual attainment.

Even though someone says, "I've found God," if that person has no wisdom, then he has not found God. Sometimes wisdom is nothing more complicated than driving into the heart of a crowded city and realizing there is absolutely no chance of finding a parking place and therefore paying to have the car parked.

Even a life filled with what passes for love may not reflect spiritual attainment, for there's love and then there's Love. To one person, an X-rated movie symbolizes love. To another, a diamond ring symbolizes love. The term *love* conveys a multitude of emotions, ranging from selfishness to insecurity, to destructive ego-forces ... or totally selfless devotion. What is needed much more than love, is Wisdom. If we are to equate wisdom with love, it must be unselfish love. This unselfishness does not imply a martyr complex. It means that the other person's life comes before your life. This does not imply an evangelical attempt to impose "my wisdom" upon you. The most important thing you can share with another is gentleness.

Initiation is an important step on the Path, and one must be prepared. But how does one prepare for initiation? First, you prepare yourself for initiation by studying scriptures, mystical texts and metaphysical philosophies on life. You prepare yourself by purifying the body

(fasting) and the mind (thinking thoughts of unselfish love, then lifting them to make them gentler thoughts of wisdom). Don't expect preparation for initiation to follow a consistent, steady, unwavering pattern. Because we are human, we almost invariably fall into selfishness, then pull ourselves back up, only to fall again, flowing back and forth between varying degrees of wisdom and foolishness. Watch yourself. Observe yourself. The beginnings of wisdom will be revealed to you as you realize that such fluctuation is the nature of the surface mind. Wisdom reveals:

1. We do not have to be controlled by our surface mind. We can go deep inside and see a different vision, hear a different voice.
2. Wisdom is not disturbed when the mind "minds," when the stomach "stomachs," or your heart "hearts," Wisdom persists and endures.

In addition to the development of unselfish love and wisdom, you prepare yourself for initiation by seeking out and understanding the Laws of Life: the Dharma. You prepare for initiation by seeking to understand and live in accordance to the laws of self-conscious awareness. Wisdom says, "Listen to your soul. Listen to the laws of your own being." Unless you start from where your current level of awareness and experience, accepting yourself and law of your own being on a mundane level, you will never find yourself at a deeply spiritual level.

If you become an accepted part of a group whose purpose, law and nature are not in tune with the law of your being, that group is not for you. Wonderful as it may be to feel a part of it, participation in such a group will not further your spiritual unfoldment. The group's law may be a marvelous law, but it is valuable only if it is in accordance with the law of your own being. This truth applies to all societal units, including religious ones. If in this life you can find one soul or a group that is in harmony with the law of your being, you are indeed fortunate.

Wisdom requires that you discover the law of your own being C and then live according to that law. You prepare yourself for initiation by

entering into an attitude of ever-vigilant awareness, living the deepest law of your being.

To identify, understand and bring into actuality the law of your own being, be alert to those things that increase your self-conscious awareness. Increase, emphasize and intensify those experiences which bring greater balanced self-conscious awareness. Avoid or modify those things which decrease your self-conscious awareness. Admittedly, these instructions are sweeping generalities. They must be, for only you know the law of your own being. It is up to you to grasp the meaning and promise of these precepts and apply them to your life. Wisdom demands that if you want to live by the law of your being, you must allow another to live by the law of his own being.

You prepare yourself for initiation by distinguishing between your feelings and thoughts. At first, this can be difficult, especially if your thoughts are emotionally motivated. Learn to distinguish between the cooler, more neutral feelings that accompany cerebral actions, and the bodily involvement of an emotional impulse. Become more aware of your feelings and your thoughts, consciously strive to bring them into one harmonious, contented whole.

You prepare for initiation by understanding you should not be in a hurry to find a Guru. This is so important that it deserves repetition: *You prepare for Initiation by understanding you should not be in a hurry to find a Guru!* The urge to rush to find one's Guru is a manifestation of anguish-causing religious desires. Any feeling of pressure and hurry is a signal that you are being propelled by desire, not wisdom. Breathe! Slow down! Recognize that *when the student is ready, the Guru will appear.*

Too many good people feel this earthly world is a terrible place; that we must deny ourselves all its blessings as if it were an enemy. You prepare yourself for initiation by realizing you have a right to live a full earth life. This means that in your spiritual search you need not deny yourself the beauty of the clouds, the stars, the blue sky or the sunlight. You needn't be afraid to touch and love the flowers. You need not fear this world as a place of temptation and damnation. It isn't. It is a school of learning. Learn from the flower. Learn from the sun. Learn from the seeds, from the seaweed, from the young and the old, from the cats,

your spouse, and the mosquito. Learn from everyone, from everything. You are a dewdrop of Life, and who is to say that one dewdrop is so different from another? Everything and everybody is a reflection of the Life of which you are a part.

Loving life does not mean you obey your every whim. Life is to be loved, not raped. The law of the Path is a law of self-discipline and self-control. Self-discipline is central to discipleship, and the greatest self-discipline involves the removal of ignorance and fear. It works like this: women and men are beautiful; but if you are unwise, they can be deadly. The world is like sugar. Its pleasures are sweet and a little bit is enjoyable, but too much will kill you. What kills is not the woman, the man or the sugar. It's your ignorance, your lack of self-discipline in relating to these things.

You prepare yourself for initiation by seeking wisdom in each experience, pleasant or unpleasant. Watch other people and you shall learn wisdom. You prepare for initiation by realizing that the earth life and spiritual life are not in conflict. There is no such thing as *the Spiritual versus the Mundane* life. All things and actions are divine.

The Guru-disciple relationship matures you even before initiation. You will have studied and purified your mind and body, found a deeper understanding of the laws of Life, and the law of your own being; you have increased and intensified those things that enhance your balanced Self-conscious awareness, established a loving relationship with this earth life, and distinguished between wisdom and foolishness.

You prepare for initiation by developing the kind of concentration and discipline needed to practice mystical techniques. In the sequestered setting of an ashram, a mystical technique is taught to the disciple right after initiation. In the public or open temples, the technique is usually given a few days, a week or even a month afterward. This technique, through devoted practice, will rapidly intensify the Divine Spark transferred at initiation. If you don't practice your technique, you will still become enlightened---it will just take a great deal longer. All in all, be at peace, knowing that in time you shall attain your spiritual goal.

Half a century ago, when I asked my beloved Guru for initiation, he said, "What do you want that for?"

"I want to find God," I replied.

"Well," he said with a twinkle in his eyes, "You're going to find God a million years from now anyway, so what's your rush?"

I retorted, "But don't you remember---ten thousand years ago you promised me!"

What he did not say directly was that we all need to slow down and find joy in the realization that is re-awakened through initiation.

Allow me to say it slightly differently. A person is initiated by Swami X. Two months later you find him being re-initiated by Swami Y. And two years after that he is studying with Swami Z. But, if indeed the first initiation is a true initiation, nothing else needs to be done---other than to be at peace. Be quiet and be happy in the knowledge that the flame within is blazing.

That does not mean you cannot or should not study. You definitely should study with everybody you deem wise. Over and above this, there should be no clamor, no ranting and raving, no thinking, "I need to get this next piece of knowledge." Such excessive desire is counter productive, and even destructive. Aim instead for this thought, "There's really nothing I need to learn, but I think I'd like to know about subject X. Yes, that's what I'll do. I'll study subject X, and have a lot of fun doing it, too!"

There is a spiritual difference between desperate learning and pleasurable learning. Knowledge is a great gift and certainly we should study, finding great joy in that studying. Learn languages. Master the sciences. Keep your mind open and look for meaningful connections. You may find that the mathematical laws of physics and chemistry and sub-atomic particles agree with the mystical laws of the nature of your own self-conscious awareness. Connect concepts, connect realities. Seek out and find the universal rhythms. And if you don't find happiness in these studies, study something else! Above all, find joy in learning. Find meaning. Find peace.

In preparing for initiation, never forget that a spiritual preceptor is not mandatory. After all, where did the first Guru get his teacher? His teacher was God, and if I were to speak my heart I would tell you that He is the true teacher you are really looking for. Get hold of Him! Try! If you aren't able to make communion on your first try, don't be upset. Don't feel pressured. One way or another, in time, you will get there. At some point in our lifetimes, that communion shall be made.

You prepare for initiation by relating to the spiritual essence residing within your Guru and all sentient beings. The Guru's humanity, personality, or style of teaching may deflect your attention from this primary attunement, activating mind states of judgment, projections, and emotions. At such times, simply re-center your mind on the elusive-but-real spiritual quality that is at the heart of your relationship.

One prepares for initiation by paying attention to feelings and intuition. You and Guru, you and God, must have a compatibility of feeling-state in order to establish the Guru-disciple bond. If your Guru is a Bhakti following the path of devotional love, then your inner soul will be moved by that state of consciousness. Your soul will sense whether in your teacher's soul there resides that which you consider the essence, and quintessence, of spirituality. If you don't feel it, don't link! Do not become a disciple of that person, if this is what you feel. If you do, you might be asking for serious difficulties because your inner nature will be strained in that attempt to find harmony with the Guru's inner nature.

The spiritual relationship between disciple and Guru is cemented with initiation. The flow of spiritual energy continues from that moment forward. During initiation, many Gurus point out that the kinship bond is one of loyalty existing in the disciple's mind. Others allude to the bond of unselfish love in the disciple's consciousness, the need to seek and find wisdom, or the necessity to practice the technique given at initiation.

Upon initiation, the supreme blessing of the Guru is given: it is called Adhi-kara, After this, the Guru serves in a secondary, though vitally important capacity: to instruct, assist, challenge, encourage and inspire. This role is imposed upon him by the disciple's human need and the disciple's desire for continuing guidance. New energies are developing

within the newly initiated disciple, and by virtue of the humanity of both, there can arise the father image, or the mother image. This can be a blessing or a damnation, depending upon the disciple's subconscious attitude towards these authority figures.

It is easy to fall into the trap of passive dependency when the Guru's guidance is available. Don't! The Guru isn't there to make you feel comfortable. His function is to prod you and to shout, "MOVE!"

You prepare for Initiation by using your mind as well as your feelings. Think, examine, question; honor the sacredness of the Guru-disciple relationship by spiritually examining all teachers and teachings.

Now that you have a clearer idea what discipleship entails and what initiation means, you will be able to be more discriminating in your perceptions of the Guru.

Part of spiritual kinship lies in shared lessons to be learned. Your karma blends well, and your underlying spiritual predisposition will fall into similar spiritual patterning. Whether he is a charlatan or a Guru, it is because there is a corresponding need in his soul and yours to learn the same lesson. You will find yourself drawn to a particular ideology that facilitates your meeting the Guru again. Geography presents no problem. Occasionally he will come to you but more often you will travel to him. You will find him lifetime after lifetime. There may be an occasional lifetime or two without your Guru because of some especially difficult spiritual lesson one of you need to learn. But usually you will re-link with reassuring regularity.

Until you find your Guru you may experience the same nagging doubts all young people have about love: "How will I know it's real? How will I know recognize my Guru?" Stop thinking and feel. There is no measurable way to describe how you will know. But you can be confident that the Guru you anticipate will embody a special quality that you will feel and this will have an undeniable effect on your consciousness. There will be a feeling, over and above all the intellectual, quantifiable aspects we have explored. Sometimes this feeling will take a while to seep through your unconscious mind into consciousness. However, in time you will know. He or she will possess what, to you, is

true spirituality, the type of spirituality you would like to have, that you feel you need.

Initiation is often a reawakening of a kinship from a previous life, reactivating your joint vow to seek and continue your joint Illumination.

I have described the Guru-disciple relationship within the context of yoga. But the religious denomination within which the relationship is expressed, can vary from lifetime to lifetime. You may discover your Guru closer to home than you expect. One does not have to harken from India to qualify as a Guru!

Once you have found your Guru, you prepare for your initiation by firmly establishing in your mind the habit of continuing to think, examine and question. The Guru-disciple relationship is intense, and it is easy to slip into counterproductive emotions. Your spiritual unfoldment must never depend upon any one personality, no matter how beloved. Thus, I continually exhort my disciples to "love the Teaching, not the teacher!"

It is essential that you prepare for initiation with the clear understanding that you are not entering a relationship of dependency! You become a disciple not to escape responsibility, but to escape from ignorance and pain.

Perhaps one best prepares for initiation by developing a sort of inner peripheral vision. Oddly, by focusing within, the world external is seen more clearly. Some people see this world as a prison. They function in it, but they are always trying to find an escape. One common attempt is to escape by an obsession with God. Such people talk, non-stop, about God, about beauty and spirituality and spiritual freedom. But real spirituality is not a talk-talk affair. Spiritual dedication is quite different from religious fanaticism. Live gently. Walk gently. Think, speak and feel gently. Life can be a very intense business, so in all your doing, do what brings you fulfillment.

Somewhere in this process, it is hoped that you will have found your Guru. You are now ready to establish rapport with him. You are now ready to consider being initiated. The timing of the event is not as

important as the attitude you bring to that union. Everything discussed here revolves around a special attitude called, *being a disciple*.

While you have been going through this difficult and often lengthy preparation, your Guru has been busy, too. He has been meditating, harmonizing and balancing his own inner awareness. He has been in preparation for the moment both of you come face-to-face, disciple and Guru, and attune your souls so that the Adhi-kara, the flame of God, may be transferred from God, through Guru, to you.

Again and again, I must stress that initiation is a gift of God, not Guru.

In the passing of the flame, the Guru as an ego-personality does nothing. He is just an old, dried-up piece of wood. Light is contained in the flame, not the fuel. When the flame leaves the wood, who values the ash (save the sage who places it upon his body)? What is important is the combination of the spark of God and the kindling of your soul.

Initiation is a turning toward the Divine Being. In the search for wisdom and happiness, initiation is a pivotal event by which all other external and internal actions will be measured and modified. Outwardly, it may be a very simple ritual but inwardly it acts as a spiritual stimulus to awaken, deeper insights into your life---not just your mundane life but your galactic, cosmic, eternal existence.

What, exactly, happens during an initiation? What does it look like? The symbolism will vary from Guru to Guru, but usually he will give something to the disciple---a flower, a mala, oil, or a tap on the Ajna chakra (third eye), etc. Not only is this a pleasant custom, but the gift symbolizes a giving that is essential for the spiritual unfoldment of each and every soul. In addition to the giving, the Guru confirms the disciple's understanding that while he may have only one spiritual preceptor, all teachings and all teachers are available to him. Many teachers boldly claim, "If you are my student, you may study with no one but me." All Gurus state, "If you are my disciple, you may study with everyone, you may study everything." Every seeker of freedom should have the freedom to seek, do, be, say and study whatever he or she desires.

It is customary during initiation that the right hand of the Guru be placed on the disciple's head. Some Gurus tap the Sun center (third eye) two or three times. Others may place their hands on the area of the disciple's temples to awaken, speed up, and lift the Kriya or Kundalini. The touching permits the flame to pass from one human vehicle to the other. The manner of the touching will relate to the nature of the two souls and the dynamic that will best enhance the attunement needed for the Adhi-kara, the passing of the flame of God.

Once the flame has been passed, the disciple is Initiated. If you are this fortunate being, your journey on the Path has been furthered most graciously and harmoniously. Your hard work has brought you to this point, and more hard work will be expected of you in order to take you to your goal. From your Initiation forward you, as a disciple, begin to unfold into balanced God-realization. Even if you have no further contact with your Guru, you will continue to grow in spiritual awareness. After initiation, all the Guru's scoldings and prompting merely fan that flame.

After transference of the Divine spark, most people experience a waiting period of between three and 12 years before the Flame is large enough to be truly seen. During the waiting period, it is natural to be eager for progress. This interval must be addressed. What to do? Many Gurus advise their disciples, "The flame has been transferred. Now, occupy your life with something. Work, amuse yourself, but make your work or amusement meaningful. Find something valuable to do, and then do it."

Some disciples are looking for a person to tell them what to do in life. They don't like to hear the Guru say something as open-ended as, "Find something valuable to do, and then do it." But during this waiting period, your job is to become more and more aware of the Inner Light, and to be directed by it. The injunction to do something constructive and stay out of trouble may seem coarse and non-specific, but it is loving and perceptive guidance.

As your Inner Light unfolds, your self-awareness will expand and it will be increasingly important to be fulfilled and happy. It is increasingly difficult to hide in hollow social roles. You will see through such things. The happy, productive life will become more and more important.

Happiness is critically important! Happiness is not personal indulgence.

True happiness is constructive for you and those around you.

We need to understand what true happiness is. I once had a conversation with a wise yogi. As I was bemoaning all the pain and misery in the world, he cocked his head and said, "What pain? I don't see any pain in the world, but I see an awful lot of pain in you." It was true. If you are sensing pain anywhere in life, you might ask, "Where is that pain actually located?" It is within you. Balance your awareness and your world becomes balanced.

Every week, I hear people saying, "When I get more money, then I'll study. When I get my promotion, then I will meditate." I have found that people either do it now and find joy in doing it, or don't do it now, and they do not do it later in life. Find joy in doing spiritual things. If you find no joy, don't do them. But always take the time to find out why you do not find joy in these things. Do not be so fast with your answer. It is vital to understand why there is no joy. Joy is closer to the path of wisdom than the logic underlying one's excuses. Martyrdom accomplishes nothing, so don't be a martyr. It's just not the wise thing to be. Let go of artificial, needless guilts and find beauty in the things you are doing. In short, do those things which bring you joy. All else will take care of itself, spiritually.

We need to be honest, and admit that we always have time to do what we want to do. If you are not doing something, it is because you don't want to do it. Something else is more important. Part of being spiritual is doing those things that are of real importance to you. Be happy and realize that, at the level of your soul, you are doing exactly what you want.

If you examine your life and know you are doing the wrong things, you will be faced with making a change. This can be difficult. The social treadmill is hard to stop. It is hard to change patterns. Your Guru can be very helpful in this area because you will find (probably to your unending consternation!) that he relentlessly urges you to unfold. One's nature is one's nature. Finding your dharma, your true and right role in the unfolding dream of God, forces you to find the law of your own

being. And if you have difficulty in knowing what your dharma is, what do you do? The same thing: let go, relax and be happy! In finding your true happiness, you will find the law of your being. Failing this, ask your Guru.

Listen to yourself talk. You will usually discover that what you are doing is what you really want to do. All I would ask is that you question whether your life is giving you happiness---right now, today.

Ultimately you will discover detachment and come to the realization you need no external objects. While the flame of Life continues to unfold within you, your detachment will also be unfolding and you will meet life with increasing happiness. However, although one realizes that they are not attached to external things, and that they do not need emotionally these things, spiritually speaking, things are spiritual tools to be used to increase one's spiritual unfoldment.

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Chapter Five
THE PATH: THE HAZE AND THE MAZE

The spiritual life is a search for the Self and also for a method by which the Self can create, in time-space relationships, that which it needs. This search takes place right here on this material earth plane, and is referred to as the Path.

In the context of Self-realization, we need to understand how to get from where we are, to where we need to be. Once embarked upon, the Path is a movement through the haze and into the maze.

Think of sitting down and saying to yourself, "I'd like to create an elegant painting." You sit down with that intent, and three days or three years later you have your painting. You have moved from where you were, to where you wanted to be (not in the sense of desire, but in the sense of an unfolding realization). This movement didn't just happen. You worked at it. You worked in specific and effective ways. Similarly, there are ways to further your journey on the Path, called spiritual techniques.

The Path has two aspects. First, the Path is a body of techniques to move you from one state of consciousness to another, higher, subtler state of consciousness. Secondly, it is an ongoing reflection: "Where am I now? How did I get here? Where ought I go now? Which is the best way to get there? Has there been any unbalancing of my self-awareness in moving from where I was to where I am now? Will there be any danger of unbalancing my self-awareness by moving from where I am, to where I ought to go?"

One underlying premise in walking the Path is to realize that if you can understand how you got to your current reality, then you should be able to figure out how to get out of here, and move forward, unfolding, in balanced self-conscious awareness. The Path is both a breaking free from where one is, and the resultant conscious movement forward and upward.

The difference between being on the Path, and not being on the Path, has nothing to do with being brilliant or being stupid, holy or unholy. The

difference is that those upon the Path are walking *consciously* through life. Those who are not consciously walking through life, are not upon the Path. It's that simple.

Externally, the person who is on the Path may do exactly the same things as the person not on the Path. Internally, the vital factor is consciousness and self-awareness.

The Path is an internal quest externally lived. Actions and deeds are important, but not more important than the conceiving of them. The value of right-action is honored, but greater significance is placed on the original attitude and impulse. Intent matters! Motivation matters! Attitude matters! Indeed, attitude is all! The Path is primarily internal (although, naturally, it manifests externally).

Kriya yoga emphasizes the ability to think a thought you have never before thought, to mentally go where you have never before gone, to understand what you have not yet understood, and to experience experiences not yet experienced. Value is placed on consciously moving your awareness from one *place* to another *place*, to bring about significant spiritual movement.

The universe is a universe of love, and if there is any enemy lurking within it, it is our own karma: the unchecked desires that thrive and grow within the levels of our consciousness. Desire, in the context of the Path, refers to much more than yearning or coveting. Desire covers the whole range of excessive and/or extreme emotionality that pulls us from the center of awareness.

My father, bless his memory, would bellow at my mother, "Who's mad!" and not even be aware that he was angry! I love my father to this day but that image of him will always stand in my mind as a symbol of our common obstacle - unawareness. There is a direct relationship between unawareness and desire. The object of the desire may differ, from person to person; the quality may differ from person to person; however, for all of us, our desires are directly related to our unawareness of some part of life. Desire is a universal dynamic. What varies is the timing, placement, intensity and object of desire. My father's anger would explode at different times, in different situations and upon differing stimuli, but it

always exploded. but what was always the same is that he was completely unaware of what was happening within him.

Awareness, I repeat, is critical. You are trying to move along a path as an aspirant, which sets you apart from the rest of the world. The Path is not easy. It has its haze. We are constantly being confused and befuddled by our inability to see how to get from here (the present stage of our spiritual growth), to there (the next stage). The degree of haziness is directly related to our desires. The more cravings, the more desires we have, the hazier is our perception of the Path.

Desire finds expression in many different ways. There are so many things to desire! It is said, "There is no end to the things of the heart." Some people want to be famous, others want to be anonymous. Some want to be sensuous, others stoical. Some people are gluttonous, others ascetic. I, myself, confess to a glaring desire: I used to avidly collect books, which was a sure symptom of attachment to knowledge. Thus, I gave my book collection away. My library was once flooded. While the losses did not bother me, I think that, subconsciously, the attachment remains. At the very sight of a bookstore, I used to become completely oblivious to everything else in this world. The fact that book collecting may be considered benign or even, in some circles, respectable does not exonerate my desire. Every single one of us has, at least, one area of desire we need to be aware of, so that we can correct it, and remove the source of spiritual haziness.

I am not suggesting we need to eliminate desire, only that we strive to modify it, soften it, lessen it, and reduce its intensity. Why? So that we can see more clearly. The Path is more psychological and spiritual, than it is moral. That does not mean the Path is immoral. The Path is amoral. The Path is related to the realm of the spiritual and is thus understood in terms that are unchanging and eternal, whereas morality is relative and changing all the time.

My mother once showed me a photograph taken of her at the beach when she was young. At that time, at the turn of the century, a woman at the beach always wore black. If she wore a beach costume of any color other than black, she was a sinner going straight to hell. In addition to this ensemble, which included sleeves and a skirt, a young lady of that

time wore long black stockings that came up to the hips, even though her bloomers went clear down to the ankles. My mother wore shoes laced up to her calves, gloves and a big hat that swept down over her back. Only her face was exposed to the sun and to men. As my mother showed me this photograph, her eyes twinkled with some delicious secret, remarking at how sinfully daring she had been that day. I looked at the picture and said, "It must have been fun to be daring, but I sure don't see it." She laughed delightedly and said, "I didn't have my parasol that day!"

All those garments notwithstanding, one had to have an umbrella which, considering the attire, surely was not meant to ward off the sun. What she had done had taken a lot of nerve, and gumption. She was improperly dressed, and she knew it. She was very daring that day. She was sinning. Go to France today and they won't be holding parasols or wearing much of anything, but they don't feel they are sinning. Recognize morality for what it is - sociological and highly relative.

Many decades ago, I went to China. On the way, I stopped in Japan where I was requested to take off my shoes before entering the house. Wishing to respect the customs of the Orient, when I went from Japan to China, the first thing I did upon entering a house was remove my shoes. Well, I nearly started a riot in that Chinese village. I later learned that one could undress and still be quite proper, as long your feet remained shod. The moment I took off my shoes, I branded myself as a wild creature, a barbarian with loose morals. Again, sociology. Again, relative.

Look carefully at different societies. Study sociology and anthropology, and you will see that the concept of "sin" varies greatly from culture to culture and, over time, even within the same culture. Because of this relativity, I think it is sound to conclude that "morality" is not a good foundation on which to build viable and meaningful personal standards. I realize that at face value, without thought and discernment, any rejection of conventional morality might sound irresponsible, and even anarchical. Conventional Morality builds high loyalties and deep prejudices. Loyalties and prejudices are powerful emotional forces, and powerful emotional forces generate powerful desires---usually to attack and take things from people, resulting in war.

A major function of being spiritual and walking the Path is striving to soften and lessen the intensities of desires and emotions. Your Guru will make you aware at a *gut level* if your desires or emotions are out of balance. If so, there is never any implication or accusation that you are a sinner or a bad person. You are just in a haze.

Ironically, the strong desire for God contributes to spiritual haziness, perchance more than any other desire. This is because the intense emotionality that can accompany the desire for God is most blinding. It can be more counterproductive than an uncontrolled craving for wealth or power; or for that matter, a hot fudge sundae, since the object of one's desire matters far less than the *intensity* of desire for that object. The sincere seeker utilizes many spiritual techniques to reduce and prevent excessive desiring. But he uses his primary technique to dissolve all desire. Any number of effective techniques may be found in the spiritual literature. However, the most effective technique, for you, will be the one primary technique transmitted to you by your Guru. If you have not found your Guru yet, the most effective technique for you to practice will be unselfish love with Wisdom.

Let's assume you have advanced along the Path and have removed desire. The haze has disappeared. Your head and heart are clear, detached, aware and purposeful. You are now ready to place your foot confidently on the next step of the Path, which is to enter the maze. At this stage, what is needed? What do you do? How do you move forward and upward without your old desires to propel you? You enter into a lifestyle in which desire gives way to free will.

Whereas in the past you focused on the quality of your consciousness, you must now deal with the question of progress. If you choose your direction strictly on the basis of external concepts, movement may not be in harmony with the law of your own being. It may be movement, but not progress. If you refuse to move forward, through fear of making an error, you forfeit much of the value of your hard-earned unfoldment. If you move forward, blindly, you also forfeit much of the value of your hard-earned unfoldment. Are you beginning to get a feeling for why this stage on the Path is called a maze? Clearly you must advance, but you must be very careful not to confuse the speed of the advancement with

its value. It matters not how fast or how far you go. What matters is that you progress through the maze, of your own free will, and that you come out the other side.

There are two stages in the experience of free will: conception and action.

1. Conceiving a course of action; thinking about what you need to do requires imagination. Any creative person will tell you that imagination can be fickle. It may be innovative and productive, or it may be peevish and recalcitrant. Small children are especially skilled at using their imagination. But, as we age, we lose our skill with this tool. Few people are aware of the curious, but heartening fact that using your imagination in an area in which you have confidence, can strengthen it in all other areas. Skill in calling upon the imagination is learnable.
2. More difficult for most people is the second stage of free will: action. Doing it. Following through. It is much easier to decide to go on a diet, than it is to turn away from unhealthy eating.

Now, if you are at Point "A" and are trying to get to Point "B," it's a good guess that somebody who has been to Point "B" probably knows something you have not yet learned. Here is yet another reason to have a Guru. Your Guru is not more holy than you, nor is he necessarily more intelligent. However, he has been where you are trying to go. The Path is not traversed in one quantum leap. It is a continuum. Some traditions allege that there are souls who have walked from "A" to "Z" and know all points on the way. Other traditions disagree. All traditions, however, agree that the Path must be walked one step at a time, one challenge at a time.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the Path does not run in a straight line. It doesn't go from point A to point B to point C, etc. It may start, speaking symbolically, at your heart and move to the palm of your hand, and then move to your stomach, and then to your left big toe. The Path, truly, is a maze. To find our way through the maze, we need special "eyes." We

need to be keenly observant, thus we must see with more than our physical eyes in order to understand the very nature of our existence.

Most people experience living as an interaction between two very separate elements, "life out there" and "me in here." Some genius somewhere (probably a woman), once made the insightful observation that if we are separate and different from the rest of the universe, we can never have any meaningful understanding of it. If this alleged separateness dictates our experiencing no insight into the nature of the cosmos, and our place and role within it, why don't we just forget the whole thing and go make love? That's one approach. However, let's look at the problem from a different angle.

If, by our nature, we are separate, that means there must be an unbridgeable gap, a sort of existential moat, surrounding our essence. An alligator, symbolically, will never be able to get from point A (of alligator-hood) to point B (of hummingbird-hood) by remaining in the condition known as alligator. To accomplish the change, the alligator must transmute himself into a hummingbird. In the same way, we must perform magic whereby we are transmuted into whatever *form* or *consciousness* that will enable us to move our life from where is to where we wish to be.

Moreover, if by our nature, we were separate, without the possibility of connection with any other state of awareness, we would be unable to make meaningful contact with any point other than our own. But this cannot be true, for we can love.

If there is a way for us to go from point A to point Z, from one state of awareness to another, more evolved state of awareness, that in itself suggests we are part of the universe, not separate from it. No existential moats needs be hopped across. We are part of the universe, not apart from it. (This may sound tautological but tautology is one of the occasional by-products of the unity of life.)

Being a part of nature and not apart from nature, we are immediately able to enter into other states of awareness, to personally and directly experience all states of awareness. The implication is momentous! The

implication is that we are quite able to understand the universe.

We do this by walking through the maze, one step at a time. As for the intimidating size of the universe, that will present little problem, for if one can understand one drop of water, one has understood all water, everywhere. By entering directly into each state of awareness, each point along the Path, we directly experience that state's essence. The mystical experience reduces life to a comprehensible scale without altering its qualities. There is no need to cope with life's magnitude, only with its nature. Without falling into the intellectual and emotional temptation of anthropomorphizing the universe, we can humanize the universe. The universe that exists *out there* also exists *inside* each of us. The universe is the One Entirety residing both within and without. A great Babylonian teaching says, "As above, so below; as within, so external." This symbolism of the Babylonians resonates through many other mystical traditions and is referred to as the Concept of the Cosmic Man.

To you as a spiritual seeker, the value of this unity of the universe is the realization that rather than looking out into an immense and intimidating cosmos to find the next step on the Path (from here to Saturn... from here to Uranus...), you can close our eyes, look inside, and find the answers. Everything that exists, exists within. The maze becomes accessible; the riddle of the maze is solved.

The maze is not random. It has order. And it is human nature to try to discover and understand that order. Over time, across cultures and despite the obstacles of language and history, this order has been perceived and described innumerable times, in innumerable ways by mystics of all cultures. In the end, these descriptions rely on symbols and numbers.

Since it first occurred to humankind to look within, the human body (both literally and as metaphor) has been important. For example, we find that the ancient teachers set forth twenty named parts of the body (plus two not named) and twenty-two became a mystically sacred number. Today Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, yogis and certain Native American cultures claim the body has twenty-two sacred parts, twenty which are named and two which are not.

By walking the Path in the context of any one of these traditions, one can be assisted greatly by a knowledge and understanding of these twenty-two parts and how they interrelate. Diligent study of a special kind is called for in order to mastery this occult body of knowledge.

Sadly, the term *occult* has fallen upon hard times. The original meaning was "that which is hidden." That is all it means, nothing more and nothing less. Even today astronomers will say, "The moon is occulted" or "The sun is occulted." You and I would translate this into a planet being eclipsed. Occult secrets merely signifies that which is not seen by the average eye, the average mentality. Whatever is occulted, whatever is hidden, can be perceived by an inner eye, the Third Eye.

As we develop our skills in occult studies, we develop our Third Eye; as we develop the Third Eye, our occult skills develop. When it functions--this occult organ of inner perception--what results is seeing by intuition, an understanding that is not accompanied by intellectual explanation. We have physical eyes to help us understand the physical world. The inner vision needed to walk the Path, however, involves the seeing done by the Third Eye while meditating and holding a state of introspection.

Introspection is the key that unlocks this Third Eye. Every living soul, regardless of level of spiritual evolution, needs and benefits by introspection. To walk the Path, you must turn your attention inward, not inward upon your ego-self, but upon your essential nature. With practice, you can see directly through the haze, and answer the riddle of the maze. This enables you to more quickly erode desire and break attachments, and evolve toward detachment, and thus, Cosmic Consciousness.

A spiritually oriented Guru or teacher will expound the need to develop detachment. He will pinpoint greed, avarice and other emotional negativities that you need to work on. The Guru can be uncomfortably specific in his teachings. Expect to hear things like, "You want to progress on the Path? Well, beloved disciple, you're going to have a real problem unless you correct the following emotional imbalances ..." There generally follows a long list in detailed living color. He must, and therefore he will, communicate to you, in the way appropriate to you as an individual, the areas in which you improve your ego-self.

As your third eye becomes clearer and stronger, you become less blindly loyal, less emotional, less prejudiced, and as you become more detached, you will see the Path more clearly. The haze will dissipate. You will see life more clearly and the twenty-two "points" of your sacred being will become relevant and meaningful.

Most, if not all, humans exist with their awareness centered on the Mars Chakra. This point on the Path takes its name from the Roman God of War. Take a look at the front page of any newspaper and you will know what that martian force is, and how greatly humanity identifies with it. And if you look at your own personality with honesty, you will no doubt see abundant martian energies. The war the yogi is primarily concerned with, is not a physical war (although certainly it can manifest as such), It is the war internal. Mars exemplifies passion, especially bodily passion, and includes sexuality, anger, greed.

Every journey begins with a single step. Every journey ends with a single step. If the martian point is where the awareness is now focused, the martian feeling becomes the start of your journey. Mars-like feelings must be mastered, i.e., softened. Existence in a symbolic body of twenty-two parts means we must pass through twenty-two stages to reach the goal. That goal is enlightenment. The goal is awareness of the most primary force of your being. Note the term *primary force*. Primary means first, so point 1 represents the total refinement of our energies. It would appear there has been some great mistake and the numbers are backwards. The stages of unfoldment are represented as moving backwards from point 22 to point 1: the center. Picture a round target with a bulls-eye at its center. As human beings, we are existing far out on the periphery of our being, and are trying to zero in on that bulls-eye. We are trying to return to the center. The martian state is point 22, and it is from there that we will work inward and upward to point 1, the center and primary force of cosmic existence. To become enlightened, we must walk backward through the maze of life, from point 22 to point 1. And in all our walking, we must walk carefully, gently.

A person is on the 22nd story of a skyscraper. He shouts out the window, "Hey, John! Do you want some ice cream?" John, who is at ground level, yells back, "Sure would!" The young man on the 22nd

floor tosses down a five-gallon container of ice cream. Now, when that ice cream left his hands, it was neatly packaged. It was a gift of friendship. But you know perfectly well that when it reaches the ground, 22 stages distant from its source, it is a deadly vehicle. Somehow, in moving from the 22nd floor to ground level, the container of ice cream won't be the same as when it started. The human experience is like that ice cream. Our awareness is everywhere except where it should be. We have lost our oneness, our connection to the center, and have become fragmented. The spiritual goal is to put it all back together again.

Walking backward and upward through the maze means that, like Humpty Dumpty, we are striving to put ourselves back together again. The fragments we face are our desires (karma), big and small from the past and the present. The smaller fragments will not give us a great deal of problems, but the larger and more intensely jagged pieces may cause real difficulties. Serious or trivial, these problems represent the fragmentation of our wholeness and we have to put ourselves back together again in *harmonious* unity.

The image of "the Fall" is not restricted to ice cream or Humpty Dumpty. It is a universal image. Many traditions, not just religious traditions, refer to our going through life, feeling as if we have lost something. What has been lost has many names. In yoga, it is known as point 1. It is a tag of purity, and is called Go-loka. *Loka* means location, place, level or universe. *Go* has the meaning of cow. Not cow as a farm animal, but as a symbolic, organic *source* of life-giving nourishment. Go-loka is the place of the sacred cow, the place of inexhaustible wisdom nourishment. Regardless of how the fall from Go-loka came about, we need to return to that primordial, unified, non-fragmented Self.

You will meet the challenge of discipleship by walking inward through the haze, and upward through the maze, thus fulfilling the promise of the Path.

Om...

Chapter Six

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL DISCIPLESHIP?

The Guru-disciple relationship is a spiritual marriage. This concept has existed since the beginning of time. It hints at spiritual intimacy, which calls for maturity, wisdom and good judgment. The rules of this marriage are simple and the Guru, male or female, makes them! As with any marriage, each party must bring certain qualities to the relationship if it is to be a success. In this marriage, the disciple must be able to think, have a deep yearning for Reality, and realize that his Guru is human.

The Guru needs special qualities also:

- Insightful information regarding personalities.
- Compassion concerning other people's problems.
- Worldly wisdom.
- Spiritual Wisdom.
- Insights with respect to the Path.
- Comprehensive Occult Knowledge.
- General knowledge.
- Expansive self-awareness.
- Philosophical Insights.
- Problem-solving abilities.
- Balanced self-awareness.

The Guru has had an "experience" and has the ability to communicate that experience to others. I would prefer to say the Guru needs to have had a series of experiences, but the tradition states "an experience." In addition to profound experience, the Guru has the ability to pass along specific ideas, and concepts, not just ineffable feelings. He or she has music or poetry in his soul.

Poets, musicians, artists cause us to be aware of a feeling that perhaps we have not yet experienced. Their art lifts us up toward the state of beauty. We hold that beauty in our consciousness and our soul is moved. So likewise, the Guru should be able to use words inspiring us to realize there is "something more" in life than we what have yet

experienced. Hearing the call, we awaken and respond, "Yes, yes!" lifting ourselves up to that something beyond the circumference of our habits.

Practices are as important as qualities, and for the spiritual marriage to promote meaningful unfoldment of the disciple, there must be skilled and sincere interaction.

The disciple must be aware that at times he is dull. Not uninteresting but unsharp. Minds are capable of being astonishingly dull, and we should ever turn inward to monitor the mind's sharpness. If it is moving toward dullness, the time has come to practice mantra. This will restore the mind's sharpness and intensity.

The Guru's constant probing forces the disciple to examine his own mind. If the mind is distracted, it is time to practice pranayama, the breath methods for directing life energies. Such disciplines bring the mind from distractedness to one-pointedness.

Another function of your Guru is to help you become aware of your attachments. Therefore, the Guru teaches each disciple to look inward continually, asking, "What's happening in my head?" Thus, the disciple is alert to whether the mind is dull or sharp, concentrated or distracted, attached or detached. He will, also, teach you to practice discernment and dispassion, thus guiding you to spiritual Freedom. These three things--a dull mind, distraction and attachment--cause unhappiness and serious trouble. One of the most important techniques to learn is called, "Neti, neti, neti." Neti means "not this." Imagine that you realize your mind has become dull. Thus, the *Neti* affirmation means two things:

1. I'm not *that* thought; nor *this* thought, thinking I am not that thought. I'm not the thinking process.
2. I am not this body. I am not this brain. I am not this mind.

Regular practice of spiritual techniques is called sadhana. Continuous sadhana will give you a sharp, concentrated and detached mind, allowing movement from the lower planes to the higher planes. Sadhana will cause your life to improve. What's more, you will improve; you will move from childhood to manhood or womanhood. Maturity brings a

much easier life! Discipleship is one way to mature. Unfortunately, most people want to be taken care of. They do not want to mature, for as one matures, one matures into greater responsibility.

Discipleship means consciously walking the Path. Apart from the haze and the maze, there are three main ways to walk the Path:

1. Bhakti Marga (the way of devotion)
2. Karma Marga (the way of work)
3. Jnana Marga (the way of knowledge).

These margas or paths are the three main external yogas. They can unify you with the Divine, and these manifest in varying degrees in all religions.

While quite different from one another, the three margas are of equal value. All mystical traditions use one or a combination of them, though each teacher may emphasize one over the others. Yoganandaji, for instance, stressed the devotional aspect of yoga. Thus, he was a teacher of Bhakti yoga. His Guru, Sri Yukteswarji, was a powerful Jnana yogi, and Yukteswar's Guru stressed Karma yoga. So, you see, there is a living, dynamic different pattern of variation even within one given tradition. This is healthy.

In addition to patterns within evolving traditions, there are patterns within evolving societies and individuals. The concept of the Gunas (the three Qualities) reveals that individuals tend to unfold in three distinct stages.

The first stage is *inertia*. No activity; just passivity.

In the second stage we blossom into *passionate* activity.

At the third stage we evolve to *compassionate* activity.

The first stage, no activity, registers as laziness. "I don't want to do anything." This is not the petulance of a sulky child, but a listlessness, a lethargy. Much of humanity is at this stage. In time, individuals (and cultures) take on more energy and attain the second stage, becoming engulfed by passionate activity: "I want! You owe me! Gimme!" If we don't destroy ourselves and everybody around us, we can move beyond

this to the third stage: "I really don't need anything. In fact, I don't even want anything. But, I am willing to work anyway."

It is the Guru's job to move us into this third stage of compassionate activity. To do so, he must motivate us to move from dullness to some sort of passionate activity, be that devotional, work-oriented or intellectual. This is a dangerous part of the Path. Many souls have stopped at the second stage of passionate activity, forgetting that the goal is compassionate activity.

The direction of spiritual discipleship is becoming aware that you are part of life, not apart from life. In helping others, you help yourself, although helping yourself must not be your motivation. Anything you give to life, you give more so to yourself.

What holds us back from spiritual unfoldment and maturity is emotional dullness caused by self-centeredness. When we are sharp, we realize that whatever we do affects the whole universe. If I lift weights, I benefit. If I pick up wood and stack it for a little old lady who needs wood for her furnace, I still benefit. The idea is to recognize that while nobody can give us anything, we should strive to give everything to everybody. The doctrine of karma states that nothing is free. Everything we own has been earned.

When you come into the presence of someone who has negative karma, you as a spiritual disciple must not be the fulfiller of that karma! When they have karma to be hollered at, do not holler at them. When they have karma to be hit, do not strike! When you fulfill another soul's bad karma, you intensify the more negative aspects of your own soul. When you refuse to respond to another's negative karma, you intensify the more positive aspects of your own soul! Clearly, a certain level of detachment on your part is imperative.

Discipleship means mastering karma's domination over our consciousness. The term *Saturn* is central to the doctrine of karma. Saturn symbolizes that which confines and constricts us or, interestingly, that upon which a foundation can be built. At one time or another, we all have embodied and manifest these two sides of Saturn. As an example, a judge runs the risk of stimulating the confining aspect of

Saturn in his own astral spinal axis. Eventually, due to the cyclical nature of the laws of the universe, Saturn's confinement will gain prominence in his own soul. He will experience heavy confinement, not necessarily in a jail, but perhaps in an emotional prison. The problem this judge faces is that he has spent his whole life restraining and confining people. Because he has devoted a great deal of energy to furthering the principal of confinement (and has had little experience overcoming this negative aspect of Saturn), coping with Saturn's confinement will call for a tremendous amounts of energy and free will on his part.

If that same judge were to have deliberately and consciously exercised compassion within the framework of his legal task, he would have amassed some experience at overcoming the Saturn force. Time and time again, some soul presents himself to this judge, mentally crying for the fulfillment of his own confinement karma. Psychically, the criminal is saying, "Lock me up, execute me!" If this judge can say, "No, I will find a better way to deal with you," he will improve and balance the defendant (and his own) Saturn.

Life is interesting. Watch it at work. You will see that everybody we meet in life comes only when the karmas are somewhat yoked together. People (and things) can only stay together as long as the karma is somewhat similar. As soon as the karmas begin to change, you will sense their life-situation about to change. There might be a divorce, a separation, a death, etc.

In the constant movement upward to escape the earth plane, there are those in pain and those in joy. I should stress that we should never, ever be the fulfiller of bad karma. We should ever be (and try to be) the fulfiller of good karma. We should consciously strive to fulfill karma vibrating at a higher level. This goes beyond doing good deeds, for while our kinder impulses may prompt us to try to fulfill the good Karma of others, our true task as disciples is to transcend, expand and neutralize all karma, not just our own.

Jupiter is another symbol prominent in discipleship. Jupiter is the more positive aspect of Karma and, in Sanskrit, means *Guru*, referring to that which expands and through that expansion, neutralizes that which is

constrictive. We must give our soul the permission, the freedom and the energy to expand and to lift, Developing our own and others' positive karma. Jupiter force is central to being a spiritual soul.

There is a constant tug-of-war between constriction and expansion, between Saturn and Jupiter. At the same time that we are pushing our consciousness up, our body and emotionally confining aspects are pulling us down. Perhaps the most challenging arena in which to develop one's Jupiter nature is the physical body. Just tell your body to fast for a day or a week, and you will see how strong the animal nature is. Decide to give up sexual activity for six months, and your body's objection will resound through the ethers! Then go a step further and tell yourself, "Independent of any question of fasting or abstinence, I think I will quit desiring."

Through the years, many men and women have said to me, "But if you take all my desires away, how am I going to accomplish anything? Everything I do, I do because I have the desire to do it." My response remains the same, "No, everything you do, you do because of karma." To paraphrase the philosopher Spinoza, "Men think themselves free because they are conscious of their volitions and desires. But they are ignorant of the causes by which they are led to wish and desire."

Most of the time it is not the real you, the Spirit, that acts. It's your body and mind propelled by karma. As a disciple, your goal is to slow down and stop the flow of the body's desires and the body's karma.

You should do something; don't let your body do it. *You* should do something; don't let you mind do it. Acting through your *You-ness* does not come suddenly. It is done through extensive sadhana. But, when you do act from this level, you will act from within *You-the-Reality*, not *you-the-instruments*. You will then discover you are unfettered, free from heavy physical confinement.

As we grope our way toward freedom, we must understand that Saturn and body-confinement are neither bad nor evil. It's just that our bodies are severely limiting and most of us cannot step outside of them. As a spiritual disciple, at some point your Jupiter must override your Saturn so you can step out of the material plane into (at least) the astral world.

A real benefit to having a Guru is that he can help you find the way to lift up, out of body consciousness, and have a transcendental, out-of-the-body experience, a Kriya-projection. The Guru helps his disciples experience worlds other than the earth plane. This is important because most people have only faith, belief or hearsay to fall back upon. Faith is good. But, sooner or later, that faith must be set aside for the transcendental experience that frees us from bodily imprisonment.

The astral world works on a different time-space arrangement than ours. Things are seen and understood more clearly and more easily. That in itself can be a joy, but there is more. From the astral, you can move beyond and up into the celestial worlds, the divine realms, where still another dimension of yourself is found. The expansion and evolution of your consciousness is like the wave that returns to the ocean and exclaims, "All this time I thought I was a wave, but now I see I am ocean!"

The movement of discipleship is much like that of the wave. There is a returning to essence, a returning to Being. The returning-impulse is difficult to communicate, and frequently much more difficult to motivate. Therefore, in guiding his disciples toward the transcendental experience, the Guru has the problem of communicating that which really cannot be communicated by means of words. You probably know the standard example, "How do you explain the color red to a person who has been blind since birth?" How do you explain Reality to a person who has been spiritually blind since birth?

Language is important because how we speak both dictates and reflects how we think. Standard English has few words relating to snow. Skiers have a few more: corn snow, sleet, hail, powder. Yet there are something like 72 words in the language of the Eskimos for snow. Of course, Eskimos have few expressions relating to grid layout of cities. Language, and notably English, is not well-suited to the communication of mystical realities. We have a couple of terms (God-consciousness, cosmic-consciousness) but their meanings are subject to endless debate. In contrast, Sanskrit has thousands of words relating to God-consciousness. Cultures develop concepts and vocabularies that relate to their survival. The sad truth is that throughout known history, relatively few cultures have considered spirituality a valued priority.

So here you are trying to survive spiritually and learn about God-consciousness while your Guru doesn't have the words to guide you. And he is trying to communicate the non-communicable to a person who does not understand to begin with. The whole experience is absurd! Thus, in order to communicate, mystics and Gurus frequently end up creating their own words, and using symbolism.

Many individuals come to the Path with the added burden of inaccurate ideas. One of these is that spirituality is the same as being a "goody-goody." Not so. The further you move along in your spiritual discipleship, the more clearly you will recognize that "goody-goodyness" is not what discipleship is about. Trying to be holy accomplishes nothing. One must become wise. Discipleship is striving to learn not to become a saint, but to become a sage! Somewhere along the Path there is a shift from love and faith, to devotion and wisdom.

Discipleship means learning to assess and understand what we know and what we do not know. Think for a moment. What do you really know? You may be conversant in any number of intricate and profound intellectual abstractions. You may be a walking databank of facts, figures and trends. But logical abstractions and mental data, however valuable, are irrelevant to your spiritual discipleship. The Path calls for a different type of knowledge. On the Path, you do not know something until it has been absorbed into your life-experience. If you say, for instance, "One should not eat meat," but you eat it, you do not have knowledge of this fact.

Look around you and study individual lifestyles. Do not just consider the behavior of today or even this month. Twelve years is the basic time unit revealing a person's lifestyle. Foremost, examine your own life style unrelentingly. What you see may be discouraging. Now, most people want to be patted on the head and told they are good. The truth is that they usually need to get a lot better! Seldom will your Guru say, "Well done." Instead he will say, "You're still doing it too slowly! You're not working hard enough!" Or, "That's great but you are capable of much more." He is always pushing. He is always demanding more of your energy, of your time and talent. This can be extremely frustrating (for both) but the Path is not some place to park yourself and watch the

world go by. All his pushing will eventually take you to the inner Guru, the transcendental Guru, the real You.

Part of discipleship is learning how to learn. One can learn on more than one level and certainly a Guru teaches on many levels at the same time. However, the two that are primary are *the outer and the inner*.

On the outer level, he may write books, scold, lecture, etc. These teachings are verbal and physical. You can see and hear them. They come to you through your physical senses. With persistence, the sincere disciple will use and internalize his Guru's teachings to the point he begins to find greater satisfaction inside than outside. At first, a disciple comes to every lecture, sits at the feet of his Guru and hears every word. When he goes away the words are ringing in his ears but not his heart. After a while the teachings penetrate his heart, and a lifting-up occurs.

On the inner level, the Guru teaches and instructs astrally. The disciple learns to deliberately get out of the body so the two can meet on the astral plane for a different type of teaching. By mastering the teachings received in the outer plane the disciple becomes able to move toward a much more mystical process in which the teaching is received on the inner planes.

Warning! The inner teaching does not come, if the outer teaching has not been mastered.

On the astral level, the discipleship becomes more vigorous. Neither is better, but the inner teaching is considered more advanced. Realistically and more commonly, the shift from outer to inner learning alone can take an entire lifetime. I feel that this concept of receiving inner teachings is dangerous because it opens the door to subjective thinking and self-deception. One of the key values of the Guru is to keep the disciple objective!

Spiritual discipleship is a multiple-lifetimes commitment, and this commitment tends to fall into a pattern. There is a popular notion that enlightenment is possible within three years. This is true! As a matter of fact enlightenment can manifest in three seconds. However, for most of us, it will take commitment in several lifetimes. (Don't be discouraged,

though. Remember, you have been working hard and long for many, many lifetimes already!)

There are four stages in discipleship.

1. The first stage is just learning. You close your mouth and keep your ears open. You listen, hear and store, always alert for mistakes and contradictions.
2. Next comes sharing. You will want to share what you have learned and found meaningful. Your sharing will be more than just verbal. It will be in your lifestyle, your life patterning. For example, you might find yourself teaching alternative healing techniques to another person, who in turn will find these techniques most meaningful and pass them on. Or you might directly use these techniques to help others. What you share and how you share will be an expression of this second stage.
3. The third stage is a pulling away from the external Guru. Often there is a period of isolation, when you ask yourself, "What, of all I have learned, is lasting?" You now begin asking the deep questions about life, because you are learning to communicate with the inner Guru, this stage holds immense promise. The *I Ching* would proclaim of this stage, "Great indeed is the time of isolation."
4. The fourth and final phase of discipleship is preparation for physical death. It involves:
 - a. Intense meditation, contemplation and inturning in preparation for the later earth years.
 - b. Penetration into the astral plane with tremendous acuteness of consciousness, detachment and balanced awareness.
 - c. Working ardently to soften all karma.
 - d. Forcefully asking to be forgiven for all the hurt you have caused during your teaching, knowingly or unknowingly.

e. Perfecting the process of maha-samadhi.

This last stage is not mere exercise. It is exceedingly beneficial to prepare for physical death wisely and properly, for at the moment of death, your greatest love or greatest regrets grab hold of your soul and takes you up or down (not to heaven or hell). Your consciousness is moved simply up or down. What your mind is focused on at the time of physical death will provide the energy to catapult you into the realm that holds-what-you-are, and what as an individual soul, you need to learn. Your greatest regret or your greatest delight will drive you into the inner planes, and that feeling will also establish the new cycle of rebirth. Therefore, find *Joy* in learning; find *joy* in teaching! If you have made a spiritual mistake, your rebirth pattern will provide the opportunity to correct it. Reincarnation means a second chance!

This fourth stage is not a morbid absorption with dying and a forsaking of life's joys. By consciously meditating and moving forward into the astral realm, you insure that when you die this lifetime, you will have in your heart the awareness of what is spiritually meaningful. Death can be a glorious comfort.

What we typically call individuality is little more than egocentricity. In truth, your soul is individual (non-divisible) even as it breaks free from its encasements. Each soul is individual and always stays intact. As it emerges from the body, it actually becomes more individual. The soul is never lost or dissolved into non-existence. Death does not mean the ending of you. In fact, there is no such thing as spiritual death. There is only unfoldment and greater joy.

Spiritual discipleship is a lifelong event. Parts of it are easily communicated while other parts are not. But standing as a pillar, in the storms of time, will be your relationship with your Guru, and the quality of the Guru's love will be a blessing that dissolves and transcends all boundaries.

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Chapter Seven

THE TWELVE BLESSINGS OF THE GURU

Your guru is a blessing. Why? Because he causes you to unfold into the spiritual Light. He activates your thinking processes. He forces you to mature. In fact, if you don't want to become mature, Gurus are good people to stay away from! It's as simple as that.

From your first exposure to your Guru, it will be impossible not to notice that constant chiding, directing, enticing, prodding, requesting and demanding force from your Guru. It only takes a few minutes to learn that discipleship is hard on the ego because the most immediate blessing of the Guru is that he is cultivating your ego so that it will mature rapidly. This is the first blessing of your Guru. Generally he does this without embarrassment, for rarely will he discipline in public ... but don't depend upon it.

The second blessing is that he will insist you put your financial house in order. At issue is the mastery of the material world. We all need to understand this earth plane in such a way that we can make a living without being harassed. No one is saying you need to be a millionaire, but you should be able to effectively direct your energies toward mastering your finances.

The third blessing is the magic of his hands, the healing hands. For example, if they touch your Mercury chakra, there is a psychological release, and two things happen: you begin to think, and you begin to communicate with yourself.

The touch may be physical but its effects are psychologically profound. Even more joyful than communication with your real Self is the subsequent ability to communicate with others. At first it may only be "Good morning." But there is a flow of energy through that chakra and suddenly you can speak. You are communicating more effectively and more easily. And since other people now understand you better, there are fewer misunderstandings and you are better able to understand them. The result of this is a wonderful emotional release as you feel yourself communing not only with other human beings but with all of life.

The fourth blessing of having a Guru is that he instills, slowly but undeniably, a personal sense of security. He makes you aware that you have probably been working at your spiritual goal for many incarnations, so there's no need to get upset and aim at becoming enlightened by Thursday of next week. If you have not yet reached God-consciousness, there is no need for you to feel insecure or inadequate. He instills in you the quietness needed to realize that while something is to be done, there is plenty of time in which to do it. This deep security is reminiscent of when you were very young and your mother or father would say, "There, there, everything's going to be OK." and it was! You experience the same kind of inner sigh and release of apprehension.

Guru and disciple are not in competition, though oftentimes the disciple may make it seem so. A true teacher can neutralize these competition patterns, exposing a fundamental harmony as he continues to increase the disciple's sense of security. Your Guru is trying to get you to do as good a job as you can, at whatever your soul needs to do. All his disciplining notwithstanding, he is doing everything he can to enhance the inner security needed to free you for your spiritual work.

Your Guru has another reason to eliminate competition: his goal is to help you to become so elevated that one day you will spiritually supersede and surpass him, for only in this way can his (and your) lineage sustain itself and evolve. He knows that a lineage comprising spiritually older and wiser beings is merely a foundation to be built upon.

This brings us to the fifth blessing of the Guru, who looks at his disciple, asking, "Where will this disciple's energies manifest most creatively and most meaningfully?" Creativity need not be limited to the fine arts. The old Zen Buddhist idea is that every monk is supposed to be an artist. However, the fact is that not everyone is an artist, in the sense of being a painter or a poet, etc. But every single one of us does have creative energy. The Guru will try to encourage all forms of artistic expression, including the greatest creative expression of all: the artistic creation of your life. And if your creative energies are weak and not developed enough to create a happy, joy-filled life, he will concentrate on encouraging you to unfold.

Don't limit yourself when it comes to your creativity. Too many people go through life thinking, "But I'm only me, and I have no talent." Nonsense! Use your creativity to solve business problems. Use your creativity to improve your home life. Use your creativity in your love life. Use your creativity to improve your walking the Path. True creativity is not limited to the fine arts. Besides, what good is it if you paint a mediocre picture and are miserable doing it?

Through your Guru, you will finally learn that in whatever you do, in whatever creative expressions you manifest, you must find joy. The word is *ananda*, or bliss. That is your criterion. There must be ananda. There must be bliss, joy, ecstasy and happiness. Do what you are spiritually inspired to do and you become a spiritual millionaire. Your greatest gift is your creative imagination. Many people can think marvelous things, but can not express them. Others are unable to express their intense feelings. They lack the security and psychological freedom to communicate. Often the reason they hold themselves back is socially learned, which has nothing to do with the law of their own being.

The Guru helps you do what you are spiritually inspired to do, not necessarily what you have been told, by the world, to do. One of the difficulties of being a disciple, especially if you are young, immature or insecure, is a tendency to imitate the Guru in all things. Try not to do this! It is not easy to be a Kriyananda, nor should anybody ever want to be a Kriyananda. It is not easy to be a Yogananda, nor should one want to be a Yogananda. A true Guru will quietly urge, "Don't be like me---it will make you miserable. Rather, recognize what you can be, and be that." Again, he is trying to encourage you to find joy in expressing yourself. Be yourself. Just be yourself. You may have to learn how all over again. But once you do, your life will be much happier and easier. How do you learn to be yourself? Watch your Guru.

One day you will recognize that you must be who and what you are, nothing more and nothing less. Occasionally this realization comes as something of a shock and results in a spiritual mid-life crisis. This usually signals a shift in your manifesting karma pattern. When that pattern changes, the new limits you experience yield clues about the

new pieces of karma. For example, upon sending her youngest child off on the first day of school, a mother finds the shape of her world suddenly changed. The morning after his retirement, a powerful business executive finds his world has suddenly changed. He now is facing a radically different life-pattern than the one he has known for 40 years. The new limits, the new possibilities, for both people, are different.

In times of change, you need to know who you are. You need to be secure in who you are, and recognize that you have to be yourself. *Your* life must express *your* particular creative energy, for you will find joy only in that which is consistent with your inner nature. You must know, "This is what I am". Within this acceptance and awareness, you should always work to improve the expression of that essence.

The sixth blessing, and one of the most controversial areas for any Guru, is his or her healing power. A true Guru can heal a true disciple, a fact backed up by centuries and centuries of testimony. But the reality of this physical or mental healing brings up an important question: "Is the disciple his body?" That is, is a healed body the same as a healed person? Is there not more to us than our bodies? Whereas most Gurus recognize disease as a karmic condition to be worked through, there are some disciples who claim to have been cured by their Guru. The Guru precipitates a healing that addresses the mind and touches the soul, bringing the energies to balance, and thus in time, positively affecting the physical body.

My own position is that Guru is healing each disciple's mind by loving, caring, encouraging, conferring security, opening the mind, furthering the disciple's creative expression, and by pouring into the astral body balanced Kriya currents. He also does this by saying, through his actions, "You are what you are and I accept you as you are." Yet, he is at the same time saying, "Unfold. Unfold and blossom into your full maturity." The Guru is forever instilling into the disciple's mind a state of consciousness and lifestyle productive of mental, spiritual and physical health.

The seventh blessing of the Guru is the opportunity for you to dream his dream with him. Different Gurus have different external dreams. I

believe, however, that every Guru has the same intention, the same primary dream: to assist all sentient life forms to unfold their primordial wings of Wisdom! To those disciples who are truly worthy and who have the physical strength, mental capacity and spiritual awareness, the Guru gives the opportunity to help dream that dream. This prospect may stir the imagination to lofty ideals and noble impulses, but what it boils down to is plain, old-fashioned hard work. Spiritually, this work is an honor. A Guru does not say to just anybody, "Help me carry this load." Only to those who are spiritually qualified will he give the opportunity to help complete the dream of easing the pain and ignorance in this world. There is no room for egotism or laziness in this work. The work is not easy. But the opportunity to share the dream is indeed a profound blessing.

By virtue of your kinship with your Guru, you are part of his dream. You share a great intimacy, perhaps greater than any other bond between two souls. It transcends all intellectual differences and plunges deeper into the psyche than an emotional love. Nevertheless, occasionally you will be hit with the realization, "My God, he's only human!"

The eighth blessing is best illustrated by the familiar image of a marriage. When you marry someone, you love him or her, sharing joys and victories. You, also share pain, anguish and failures, and are at the spouse's side during the wretched times. You feel the spouse's wretchedness. Thus, your presence is more than physical.

A marriage is made up of two very human individuals. Some disciples feel that their Guru is more than human. To them Shakespeare understood when he wrote, "If you prick me, do I not bleed?" Yes, your Guru is human. If the Guru-disciple relationship teaches you nothing else, it must teach you that the struggle for divinity is not about becoming divine. The struggle for divinity is about becoming human! Too many of us have lost our humanness. Your Guru, his teaching and his lifestyle, will remind you what life is about, here on the earth plane. Whether your Guru lives in Chicago, or the northernmost caves of the Himalayas, his function is to help the universe evolve. It is a function that deals with mankind but is not exclusively for mankind.

Since he is teaching you, your Guru most likely is not a cave Guru, living alone and working only on the inner planes. He is one of the brave and dedicated worldly Gurus who venture into this world of human folly to become a dispeller of darkness. As soon as he joins the ranks of the foolish, the Guru exposes his own divine nature and his folly. What sets him apart from the world, is that he realizes the world needs help, and in spite of his own humanity, he works to bring that help.

The bond between you and him is a conduit that feeds you spiritually until eventually you come to feel a truth central to your spiritual quest: you can only do what you can do. You can only light a light with whatever flame you have. This bond will teach you that regardless of how large or how small your insight may be, you must attempt to enflame the Light. Truly, it is through this process that your insight becomes fuller.

On the whole, the blessings discussed above might occur without a disciple's knowledge, but there is no doubt that many students deliberately seek the *ninth* blessing, the blessing of yoga siddhi. Through exploration and sadhana, the Guru has learned the patterning of existence. Because you are a part of life you, too, have a pattern. When an individual slips his pattern into the pattern of Life, he releases energy and that energy-release is called yoga-siddhi or divine potency. Your Guru, knowing both your particular pattern and the pattern of Life, is able to help you slip into the pattern and release energy. This means your Guru has the ability to markedly change your karma.

An example is the early Catholic priest saying to his parishioners, "Peace be with you; your sin is absolved." The priest has loosened the sin from the parishioner's soul and passed it along to an ever-absorbing lineage for softening and neutralization.

Many people desire the power of yogi-siddhi. Sometimes their motivations are pure, most of the time they are not. Frequently, they come to the Guru and ask to be taught the secret of yoga-siddhi. They know he is a repository, a living library of mystical and occult teachings. The ancient secrets are held in his consciousness, usually because of a vow of secrecy. What the disciple seldom understands is, if and when these secrets are passed on, they are taught only to those disciples

capable of using this occult knowledge for the benefit of all sentient creatures. Occult knowledge is not withheld because the Guru likes or does not like you. Occult knowledge is shared because, and only because, you have earned it!

No amount of personal charm will extract these secrets, for readiness is not a question of externals but of internal. If the disciple is ready, these techniques are given. If the disciple is not ready, they are not given. In the late 1940s, a man used to come to see my Guru. I thought this fellow had a decidedly abrasive personality. Well, one day he asked a question that I had asked a number of times before without receiving an answer. When this man asked, my Guru answered without any hesitation. He just rattled off the secret to that soul.

Now, I was puzzled and a little indignant. But the first thing I did was run to another part of the ashram and write the answer down. When the man left I asked, "You know, that man has been coming here for only a few weeks, aggravating you, me and everybody else. I'm amazed you would give him that secret."

The Guru answered that he was not aggravated by the man; as a matter of fact, he found that type of personality very interesting. He further added, "What difference does it make whether his personality is easy or hard to get along with? He has been visiting for a few weeks now, and certainly he is seeking. Thus, when he asked, my soul opened and the secret merely flowed out." Those are the magic words: "my soul opened and the secret merely flowed out." His soul was opened. Never think you can manipulate your Guru. You cannot. He is absolutely non-manipulatable. The section of his soul in which the mystical wisdom is stored is closed off, guarded by forgetfulness. Should you inspire him, that part of his soul will open and the fragments and flakes of Golden Wisdom will flow out. You will release his energy, which he will relish greatly, making the Yoga-siddhi of the Guru-disciple relationship a mutual blessing.

I think back to the very first letter I ever wrote to my Guru. It went something like this:

"Dear Shelliji,
I do not wish to impose upon you, however I would like to know about the pathway to God. Do you know anything about the yoga pathway to God?
Yours truly."

I can remember to this day, some 47 years later, his reply:

Dear Kriyananda,
The only thing I know of yoga, is what I have learned while sitting at the feet of a Himalayan Master. Whatever you want to know, if God allows me to give it to you, I shall give to you freely. However, you must prove yourself worthy, for this is the Way. It is never an imposition, it is always a joy. It is indeed a great honor when any soul attempts to unfurl his primordial wings of wisdom.
I remain, As always,

His soul was opened.

Some decades later, My Guru and I were talking and laughing, and he said, "You know, Kriyananda, I really like you! You ask really strange questions! I never know what you are going to ask, and I'm always curious to discover what I know, but don't know I know." Which is to say that occasionally a disciple will ask a question and the Guru's forehead will wrinkle and suddenly a light flows into his forehead, touches the tongue, and out flows great wisdom. The Guru thinks, "Interesting. I didn't know that five minutes ago! Thank you, disciple!"

The tenth blessing of the Guru is fun and interesting. It is the blessing of religious and spiritual knowledge. No matter what tradition he represents, the Guru is a teacher of almost anything: of theology, philosophy, knowledge of the inner or outer worlds, of the nature of angels, Devas, archangels and divinity. He is an enormous font of spiritual material, readily available to anybody who can open the inner door to his consciousness. Press gently your Guru for information. Both of you will be amazed at how much he knows!

The eleventh blessing is his gently, but steadily helping hand, assisting you to remember your true dream. This blessing unfolds over time and it may be many, many years later that you even suspect how, and how much, your Guru has been of service to you. He will give you the yoga-siddhi so that your dream may manifest in such a way as to not harm your spiritual growth. How he does this is a function of time, circumstances and the law of your own nature.

Finally, the twelfth blessing. Despite everything I have said, ultimately your Guru is not concerned with your personality, your spiritual wealth, whether or not you share his dream, whether you are creative or not, etc. These things are important but secondary. He is concerned primarily with one and only thing alone: *The spiritual unfoldment of your primordial Wings of Wisdom...*

If he has to step on your toes to cause you to unfold (because you left him no other way), he will not hesitate to step on your toes. He would much rather pat you on the back and praise you to move you forwards, but if a good toe-stomping is what you need, he'll do it.

A blessing is a gift, and these twelve gifts relate to the nature and function of a Guru. They will manifest regardless of his or her personality or circumstances. Guru asks nothing in return except that you make right efforts toward your spiritual unfoldment--which is a gift you give yourself.

Steadily and always, your Guru's primary motivation and purpose is to cause you to enhance your spiritual nature. In this area, he is a monomaniac. No force will stop him or deflect him. No matter what you do or don't do, his single purpose remains to help you to know the Reality within yourself; to know the Reality that you are, so that you might have eternal bliss and joy now! And pass it along, if it be in your nature.

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Chapter Eight

WHY BE A DISCIPLE?

Why tread the Path? Why bother with a Guru? After all, doesn't life provide all the instruction we need? Life is a fine teacher. The problem is time. It takes too much time for us to be propelled out of our inertia, ignorance and pain to learn life's lessons. The School of Hard Knocks is effective but not efficient when it comes to time.

Ultimately, your soul will long for a faster, better way to learn. Discipleship is not easy, but in the long run it's easier than trial-and-error and the habitual cycles of pain and confusion into which living through desires hurl us.

Trivial as it may sound, one of the Guru's greatest values is as a friend. When you are a disciple, you are involved intimately with another ego whose perspective is different from your own; a person functioning on an entirely different wavelength who gently moves you into a state of objectivity, as well as a state of tremendous irritation. So many of us never begin to think until we are goaded and challenged to a point of irritation. Anger and perplexity cause us to think, forcing us to ask, "What's going on? What is happening?" It's very easy to become confused. Human nature has a built-in herd instinct. It protects us when someone shouts "Fire!" But it can also get us terribly lost. We might follow the wrong people for the wrong reasons. For example, most people are irresistibly compelled to follow others when their ego is properly stroked. People go through life titillating and pleasing each other's egos so that everybody gets along with everybody else. This is well and good for social equilibrium. I don't think this is what growing up and maturing is all about.

You or your spiritual problems rub against your Guru, and might result in interpersonal friction. When that happens, you will probably react with, "What is the matter with him?" In time this will change to, "What is the matter with me?"; and finally to "What is out of kilter in my soul? What needs to be balanced?" How long it takes to reach this more constructive stage will depend on your personality. But you are fortunate. In your Guru you have a friend who is not easily influenced by the emotional patterns of your personality.

Linking with a Guru makes you part of an inner circle, a group of other disciples who, as a rule, are similar to you in spiritual needs and much common karma. Thus, sharing with these souls comes easily. As the Initiation works its wonders, there will be times when you are very comfortable with your Guru, and almost always comfortable with your fellow disciples. This group holds a wealth of experiences for you to tap. For instance, a young woman with a small baby may be having difficulty handling her new responsibilities while staying on the Path with sustained commitment and energy. Only another woman can understand this situation. This disciple can go to a fellow disciple and ask, "Mary Jane, you've been a disciple for three years and you have a baby---how did you handle marriage and motherhood and the spiritual life?" Thus she gains the womanly wisdom of the mother who has remained on the Path, as opposed to those who have lost their way.

A male disciple may think: "Well, Jim got married and he is still on the Path. Maybe I should talk to him and see what problems I might expect if I get married. Did marriage help or hurt? What were the dangers? What were the benefits?"

Your fellow disciples will help you put yourself back into perspective. The ego, the sense of self, can be a dreadful enemy because it constricts our awareness regarding our true self. On one hand, we feel the world revolves around us, yet on the other, we feel very alone. We feel somehow that life owes us something, that we should be entertained and provided for. If there is anything that is going to get us spiritually into trouble, it is that attitude.

It becomes difficult, as John Andrew Holmes advised, to remember that "the entire population of the universe, with one trifling exception, is composed of others." Discipleship forces you out of egocentric thinking.

Discipleship also brings a lovely benefit, one exceptionally difficult to describe. It happens on an exceedingly intimate level. As you look into the eyes of your Guru, you see a love there which cannot be described. There is something that radiates from him, something akin to compassion, understanding or non-judgment. Psychiatrists might call it unconditional love. He looks at you and you find yourself knowing that

he honestly cares. You may not like what he says or the way he says it, but in your quiet moments, you know his life is dedicated to you. He's tough, but everything he does is for your spiritual benefit.

We often allow our happiness to be spoiled, either by the people who say they love us, or by people who really do. Most people spend most of their lives assiduously manipulating one another to get what they want. Along comes your Guru with his direct, face-to-face teaching, forcing upon you what nobody wants: the realization that you are responsible for yourself! You are totally responsible for your own economic and psychological security, and also for your own spiritual unfoldment. There is nothing delicate in how he does this. Ingenious, yes, but delicate, no. With a diplomat's skill, he sets up situations which, consciously and unconsciously, require your further realizing, "I'm not here only to secure my life. I'm here to assist in securing the lives of other people, too." If you are to progress on the Path, the social aspects of life must not be allowed to dominate you. Whether you enter discipleship during your teens, or your 50s, it affords the transition between social babyhood and social maturity. Discipleship brings an unavoidable imperative to deal effectively with your world, your society. You don't live in the astral; you don't live on the causal. You live here in this cultural framework, and you must not only live in it, but must also extract the best of its civilization. Dealing with the world and its people calls for enormous maturity, and the Guru will push and guide you to it.

Symbolically, he is constantly saying, "Quit eating the food of the world and start growing food for the world." Feed life. He is not talking about going out and buying a farm. He is talking about feeding the spiritual hunger of this earth. According to the Kriya tradition, discipleship implies that no matter what your level spiritually, culturally, economically or artistically, you must donate time, effort and wealth of every kind toward the benefit of all sentient creatures.

This is exactly what most of us don't want to do, and when anybody mentions *giving*, people tend to hear the word *money*. The Guru helps you realize that while the money is needed, even more is the giving of it that is needed. God doesn't need the giving, but you need to give.

Giving isn't writing a check. Giving is a feeling, and with it comes a realization.

It is relatively easy for most people to give of their money, for they are conditioned to do so. However, they are not generous with their time. You hear them saying, "I'm too busy, I can't come in but here's some money." As a disciple, you will realize you must go, personally, and help. As a disciple, you will realize that with each and every action you perform, either you create karma or you neutralize and discharge it.

There is a difference between giving grudgingly, and opening your soul, saying, "This is part of my sweat, and this I give to assist all life-forms." You have opened your soul. You have opened one little door to the world. Now, through that opened door, the whole universe can and does flow into you.

Our financial habits mirror our spiritual habits. Financially, the average person is years in debt. If today he were to stop buying anything on credit, it would take him over 30 months to pay off the debt already incurred. This does not include payments on his house. (Some folks are worse off, some are better off.) Their lives can be read like a giant ledger book. At the top is the heading, *karma*, and beneath it are a lot of figures (most of them in red). The typical human being is rapidly spending all his "good" karma with all the craving and desires he generates daily. He is spending his good karma: past, present and future, at a very high rate. The problem is that he has become indebted to life. One day that person will be forced to wake up and realize, "I owe a debt and, what's more, the interest has been compounding for many years at a high percentage!" Just as income and outflow must balance, so the karma ledger must be brought into balance with the merit ledger.

You and I have been around many thousands of lifetimes on this earth alone. In all that much time we *must* have been good and kind occasionally, so that an enormous amount of good merit has been accumulated. Nonetheless, most people are calling upon that good karma, cashing it in, using it up. Therefore, sooner or later, there will be no more good karma left. (This is a fact, not a threat.) Sooner than later, we will wind up with this ledger of only karma that hurts. We need to be reminded to live a slightly more austere life. Deny yourself a little. *Be*

a little less selfish. Over time this disciplining will prove to be an important benefit. We need a Guru because discipleship will give us the courage and the wisdom to start putting into the karma-bank more good deeds. By adopting a little austerity, a little simplicity, you become better able to deal with the more difficult karma that inevitably flows in.

No matter how many earnest and sincere resolutions we may make, it helps to be reminded to become more stoic (a wonderful word from the Western world). The Guru will help you to become more stoic. The benefits are two-fold:

1. You will more readily develop self-discipline, and
2. You will do it consciously.

We have to work and put money away to buy a house or a car or offset medical expenses, and in exactly the same manner, we must work to put away good karma. This is called, *kriya-mana karma* or, the Karma that you are now building by conscious intent.

Humankind is by nature good. The consciousness of the earth plane is structured so that we rarely go out and intentionally hurt others. Few people do deliberate harm. Karma is more insidious than that. We sit back and do nothing. Most of our so-called sins are of omission, not commission. A function of discipleship is to turn this habit around so that you assist life with intentionality. Instead of passively harming, you actively and knowingly help.

One of the central purposes of discipleship is to develop the ability to see how best you can help, and finding the willingness to accomplish it. Much helping is done on the inner, mental planes. Nonetheless, a certain amount of help can be done on the outer planes. You must learn to discern which is spiritually wiser.

Here is a true story that greatly affected my own life. I was walking down Rush Street in Chicago behind two elderly women well-dressed in their Sunday finery. As we turned a corner, there was a man lying halfway into the gutter. He was bleeding from the mouth. He was obviously an alcoholic and was in serious trouble. One of the women turned to her friend and said, "Oh! Gertrude, look!"

"Oh! my," replied Gertrude. "We must pray for him!" They then kept right on walking.

I think most of us would have felt the need to stop and do something. Such situations are most inconvenient for those who think, "This is my time and I don't want anybody disturbing me." But it's not your time; it's God's time. Or, if you prefer, it is your time to fill with actions reflecting your conscious intent to help life. Discipleship teaches you that the Guru is not here to spoon-feed you.

Often I hear, "But when I asked my Guru a question, he didn't give me an answer." His job is to get that disciple to think, and to give him the tools to think with. Only if you can think will you become free. Freedom is hard. Our old herd instinct persists and endures. Being a disciple teaches you that belonging to a herd, any herd, is not what life is about. Life is about your evolution and your happiness. No true Guru will try to make a puppet of you. He will not try to mold you in his own image. If he is a spiritual preceptor, he is primarily trying to get you to think. You must learn to think about your true Self, your nature, your life, and about what is good for you and the universe.

Then, think about your thoughts, and whether they are healthy or unhealthy. The Guru will give you tools with which to think, but you must use them. Then you will be able to find the beginning of your freedom. Your freedom may be different from his freedom. Your freedom may be discovered in a different way, or have a different expression than his, but you will be free. Yoga calls this Moksha---ultimate freedom.

Moksha can only come when you are awake and dare to face the challenge of becoming yourself. It all rests with you. It all comes down to you. Discipleship is a state relatively easy to attained, but maintaining it is very difficult. It calls and tests one's inner strength. This is because we are living life, not just watching it. Every life is unique. If you are an artist, for instance, you may feel your value is in your art. Your art may indeed be valuable, but your value as an artist is in what your art can convey. Your value is in how your art can improve yourself and the world.

As a disciple, you must move away from egocentricity and realize that not only are you a part of life, not apart from life, you are, also, a tiller in the Garden of God! That's your job, and that's why you came here to earth. Until you happily and deliberately do your job, there can be no freedom. Your personal world is but a tiny astral realm that is very subjective and distorted. I believe it is impossible for anyone to obtain enlightenment for the self alone. Each of us has the spiritual responsibility and opportunity to seek out those who seek maturity, and in some sense to encourage and support them. In so doing, you nurture yourself.

Why be a disciple? To experience the infinite inner joys of becoming mature and fulfilled. Why be a disciple? To till the Garden of God, for therein lies your spiritual destiny.

OM...

Chapter Nine

ODDS AND ENDS

The Body of the Guru

Texts from the old days tell us that the function of the disciple is to *feed and warm the body of the Guru*. The function of the Guru is to *feed and warm the soul of the disciple*. In those days, disciples would bring fruit for the Guru's body, and wood for the fire. In return the Guru gave nourishing warmth of spiritual knowledge and insight to the disciple. Times have changed, so today disciples leave fruits and money instead, but the principle remains the same.

What happens if the disciple attains the rank of swami? He or she continues to feed the body of the Guru; the Guru continues to feed the soul of the disciple. This person differs from other disciples, in that he has a deeper understanding of the function of the Guru. He knows the Guru isn't here to feed himself. Anybody who strives to become a priest of any tradition, recognizes that there is a priestly calling and a priestly task. He senses the world is out of kilter and realizes that somebody has to do something about it.

One of the responsibilities of the Guru is to tap off part of the disciple's karma. I used to think this happened via conscious effort. However, I soon discovered this was not so. Like most spiritual phenomena, the neutralizing of the disciple's karma is mostly a natural and automatic unconscious process within the Guru's mind.

There is, for all Gurus, periods when they have declined additional disciples into initiation. Their reluctance relates to this neutralizing process. It is a matter of their inability to handle added karma (at that time in their life). Any one person, regardless of his or her spiritual attainment, can neutralize only so much karma at a given time. After the spiritual indigestion resolves, the Guru can again assimilate more karma from the disciples.

Interestingly, during these times of digestion and rebalancing, disciples with weaker links will loosen their tie even more and from the physical

presence, out of the aura of the Guru. These individuals are still very much on the Path. They have been initiated, so their relationship with the Lineage remains. What has changed is the intensity of the relationship with the Guru.

The life of a mystical teacher moves in waves. A Guru may be actively teaching three disciples, and the wave of bliss will caress him and there will be 30 or 300 who he will be actively teaching. Later, 20 or 200 leave, and become inactive. Thus, we find the Guru actively teaching 13 disciples.

Each student comes into a Guru's life at a time when he is emphasizing a particular doctrine, philosophy or feeling. The student comes for what he needs. Few remain for the whole Teaching, because few are ready for or need it. And if any one, strong piece of karma becomes divergent, Guru and disciple will go their separate ways. Like a marriage, if the relationship breaks up, neither party should be considered lacking or bad. There is no fault, no blame.

As a disciple, your commitment to your Guru is a commitment to your unfolding spiritually; it is a commitment to yourself. By linking, through initiation, you are vowing you want to unfold and will continue to progress in this lifetime. What does this vow mean? It means, "I promise in this lifetime to *consciously* strive to discipline my mind and body in such a way that I will attain that which is worth attaining. I will strive every day in every way to become happier and happier; wiser and wiser."

Breaking Up

Imagine that one day you and your Guru have a major misunderstanding. You slam your fist on a desk and yell, "I don't belong here!" and storm out, never to set eyes on him again. Despite your emotional break, you keep striving to find wisdom and Happiness. If you are still striving to find wisdom and happiness, you are still fulfilling your vow to yourself. However, you may ask, "What if the commitment is not being fulfilled?" What if you storm out and don't continue to work toward your spiritual maturity, your spiritual fulfillment? Relax. Don't worry about it. No one is going to condemn

you. It's perfectly OK to lie down and go to sleep until you feel you need to pick up the vow again. My Guru's opinion is that a true disciple can never break that vow. He can only take long vacations.

There come times when we must rest. The tide cannot always flow. It must ebb, also. Over and above all this remember: *always love the Teaching, not the teacher! Be, always loyal to the Teaching, for it will never fail you.* There can be human disappointments, human differences, human emotions, as in any human relationship. We are, after all, human. Thus, even more so, always remember: love the Teaching; be loyal to the Teaching!

If you feel the need to distance yourself from your Guru (which is quite distinct from laziness), God is not going to be incensed and punish you. Nor, will the Guru be upset with you. Problems arise only if you fail to remember that sleep and rest are a needed part of the discipline.

Tradition holds that if a disciple is truly a disciple and has taken the vow of spiritual enhancement under the guidance of a spiritual preceptor, and if the teacher and the lineage have accepted that vow, the vow can never, ever be broken by that Guru. You alone, as disciple, can break the link between you and the Guru. You have a right to do so. As my Guru said to me when I asked to join his Ashram and study with him, "Freely you came, and freely you can leave." Anything which glues you to your Guru, in your consciousness, can be unglued through your consciousness.

There is a great difference between releasing a disciple and a disciple producing a separation. Some decades ago, one of my disciples had his ego offended and he came to me saying, "I don't want to be your disciple anymore. I want to be released from my vow." Sadly, but without hesitation, I proceeded to perform the ritual of release: "To the degree that I can release you, I release you. I release you with love. Thou art released." My own position was and remains the same. The traditional view may indeed be correct. Whether he is still bound or not, is not for me to say. But if he is, it is not I that does the binding! No Guru ever binds any disciple.

Let me put it another way. Once upon a time, a mature women fell in love with a man, and they were married. They were married for a short time, and the man said, "I don't love you any more. I'm leaving you." She replied, "You don't love me, and you may be leaving me, but I still love you." He kicked her, abused her and walked out. The next day her girlfriend came over and said, "Oh, that guy! He's a terrible person!"

"Don't talk to me that way about my husband," the wife said.

"How can you defend that monster?" retorted the girlfriend.

"I defend him for two reasons," she responded, "Because he's my husband, and because I love him."

A year went by and they got divorced. The girlfriend dropped by again and said, "Boy, you're lucky to be rid of him---he's so awful!"

"Don't talk that way about him!" exclaimed the woman.

"But how can you defend him?" her girlfriend asked, incredulously.

"Because I love him."

"But he hates you! He kicked you, he cheated on you and then he divorced you!"

"All that is true," replied the woman, "He was immature when we got married. I was more mature and I knew what I was doing. I married him because I loved him, and on no condition can I negate that love, no matter what he does, or does not do."

Do you understand this symbolism?

Guru is supposed to be wiser, more galactic in consciousness. It is the student, after all, who said, "I want help and I believe you can give it to me." If that student is immature, the Guru will be wise to stall for time, discouraging him and fending him off, giving him time to grow so that there might be a more mature attunement and clarity when and if the vow is taken. Once the link is established, I honestly don't think the Guru can deny that spiritual love. The relationship can be broken off, but only by the disciple, and only in his mind; not in the consciousness of the Guru...

Teacher Vs. Guru

A spiritual preceptor is different than a teacher. The teacher imparts information; the Guru inspires insight, and generates for the disciple Cosmic Consciousness.

Technically speaking, neither discipleship nor swamihood per se bequeaths the right to become a Guru. One does not wake up one morning and say, "I think I'll become a Guru today." It just doesn't work that way. (I do insist, however, that any human being at any stage of any lifetime has the right, if not the duty, to offer help to anyone who wants it.)

The Guru is supposed to have had an experience, to know Reality. Thus, upon meeting another person, he is supposed to know intuitively what is right or wrong, good or bad, for that person, spiritually. This perception has nothing to do with logic or education. It is an intuitive insight, an accurate sensing of what that individual's soul needs at any given moment. Every Guru knows he does not have the power to fulfill the needs of all souls.

How can he make people aware that they need to be more self-disciplined in a particular area? Or that something they are doing is very self-destructive spiritually? A teacher would expound and convey ideas and facts. But the Guru has the intuitive insight and somehow brings that insight into the disciple's heart. Often, however, the Guru realizes that he cannot help a given soul, even though that soul is seeking discipleship from him.

If the Guru Says No

If you go to a Guru asking to be accepted as his initiated disciple, he might say "No." This does not mean that you are spiritually unworthy. He might realize that he cannot truly help you. As stated before, he cannot ameliorate and enhance all the souls in this universe. The limit of his power to help lies within the Pathway he has taken and the problems that he has solved in the inner realm. Different people have different

problems. A master of art can help people with art problems. But this master most likely will not be able to help people with advanced math problems.

When the Guru says, "No," what is he really saying? He may be saying a number of things including:

- At this stage of your development you are not yet mature enough to be a disciple.
- Some spiritual reason exists within him that leads him to decide not to take you as his disciple (at this time). The shortcoming, if any, is his.
- He currently has too many disciples.
- You belong with somebody else; You had a different Guru in a past life, and you should wait for him to appear in this life. meanwhile, practice and master Yoga.
- His philosophy and your philosophy at this time are incompatible.
- You have major faults that must be corrected before you will be ready to study with him.
- Your inner soul is just not ready for a complete spiritual commitment.
- "No" is a means of testing you, to see what you will do or say.

Surprising, at least to me, the student often says, "Oh," and walks away. Now, if I were really thirsty and needed a glass of water, and asked someone, "Could I have a glass of water?" and they said, "No." I would ask a second time, adding a, "Please." What would you do?

From the Guru's standpoint, the inability to ask a second time reveals a person with too much pride. Perchance the Guru thinks the individual needs to humble himself. Not to the Guru, and not for the Guru; simply, he needs to humble himself.

Superiority

Many people think the Guru is "better" than the disciple. Still others think a male Guru is better than a female Guru. Such hierarchies are stupid, and only serve to limit us, and therefore, we never get higher than the limitations.

Transference During Initiation

In discussions regarding the transference of karma from disciple to Guru, questions often come up as to the timing. For example: does this transference take place during initiation and, if so, does it continue?

There is no transference of karma from the disciple to the Guru during the initiation itself. If anything, the opposite is true, for at initiation the Guru sends forth his Adhi-kara to the disciple. Adhi-kara is spiritual merit as well as yoga-shiddhi. Whether the disciple consciously feels this or not is secondary. What is primary, is that from that moment on, the Kriya energy flows into the disciple's astral mind, causing an ever greater awareness, and an every deeper balancing of that awareness.

The Adhi-kara can neither be received nor sustained unless it is welcomed by the disciple. The disciple must learn to hold on to the Adhi-kara and sustain it. It cannot be received unless the disciple is attuned to the Guru; it cannot be sustained unless the disciple is attuned to the Teaching.

At a given future time, there begins a sweeping, continuous siphoning off of the heavier pieces of mind karma so that the disciple remains ever aware even when heavy physical Karma manifests.

Neutralizing Karma

According to tradition, the Guru takes as much karma as you will allow him to take, which allows you to re-establish balance of your self conscious awareness in your own soul.

Often this is assisted by verbally encouraging you to stay away from certain things, certain experiences. Occasionally he might shock you,

verbally or otherwise. Essentially, he uses the technique which he feels will be wisest and most effective in helping a disciple's soul at that time.

Of all the methods at his disposal, perhaps one of the greatest exoteric, powerful methods, is that of love. He absorbs your karma by opening his soul and loving you completely. The heart resides wherever we attune ourselves. If we attune and hold our heart on another soul, we will of necessity share those feelings. That is what love is, an attunement.

Your Guru may also neutralize (not transfer) your karma through the conscious use of specific esoteric techniques. This neutralization is automatic. The example given in India is that of a stove. If you, the disciple, come close to a stove, you will become automatically warm. In the same sense, if one comes close to a Guru, the Kriya currents will automatically begin to balance. This is only one of the many blessings of the Guru-disciple relationship.

Linking with a lineage is like a drop of water merging into a pond. If even the small amount of dye (karma) enters into that one drop of water, that drop is heavily colored. However, when that drop merges with the pond, the coloration is lost because that color spreads throughout the pond. If you have negative karma, part of it will sweep into the Guru's vehicle, simultaneously sweeping out of his vehicle and into his Guru's vehicle. This dilution of karma is carried throughout the total lineage, and then back to God, where it is neutralized. The value of a lineage is that it causes the karma to be diluted, and thus nobody is unduly burdened. I need to *strongly* point out here that the disciple has the realistic responsibility to do something with his newfound state of reduced karma. He must strive and work to attain higher states of consciousness, and help the universe unselfishly.

Again, think of a marriage. When your spouse is upset, some of the karma will come across to you. Now, some mature or wise spouses are able to absorb and cope with that Karma; some cannot.

Staying With the Guru

Students often wonder whether they should remain near their Guru. One of the requirements of transferring the Adhi-kara is that this link

must be made while he is alive, not after the death of his physical body. Physical proximity is not mandatory in the Guru-disciple relationship, but is needed for the initial transfer of the Adhi-kara.

Yoganandaji once remarked that he had a disciple who was bullheaded and rebellious. This young man was destructive to himself and others, and would not listen. Therefore, Yogananda decided he would pick him up in another life. He told him, "I can no longer be responsible for you in this lifetime," and waved him away. This was not a breaking of the link but a breaking of the physical presence. Hopefully, after in the next lifetime, the disciple would realize, "Now I really do want to grow. Now I really to become self-disciplined." Hopefully, in the next lifetime, the Guru will have found other methods to reach and teach that disciple. I should point out that Yoganandaji remained committed to that disciple's illumination, and meditated for him each and every day.

Answers That Don't Answer

Disciples frequently become upset with their Guru because his answers are ambiguous. They become resentful and accuse him of speaking in circles or of evading the question.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna, as symbolic earthling, is having an argument with Lord Krishna, the symbolic Oversoul. Arjuna says, in effect, "Lord, there is something wrong with the way you speak to me. Frankly it's making me think that you are lying to me!"

"I lie not!" was Lord Krishna's retort.

Arjuna says, "Well, You speak strangely. Sometimes what you say contradicts what you said before. Sometimes, what you say can be taken this way, or maybe that way, or then again, maybe another way."

Sri Krishna looks at him thoughtfully and answers, "While there may be many dimensions to what I say, at any one time your consciousness hears only one. In fact, if you would ponder and not argue, you will see there are many levels to Truth. I must speak in such a galactic manner that whatever is true in one area of life is true in all other areas of life. It

must be true of your body life, your astral life, your causal life and your spiritual life. It is not that I speak in a confused manner, but that you hear with confused ears."

I have had this problem with my Guru. I would ask him a vital question, and he would give me a very vague answer. So I said to him, "That was such a vital question, why didn't you give me a concrete answer?"

He replied, "Because it *is* such a very vital question!" He then added, as he did many, many times thereafter, "One must be a 'Philadelphia lawyer' to understand the Occult and the spiritual Pathway."

We must hear the Guru's answers, and reflect upon them because more often than not, Truth has many levels. Over and above that, his function is to get you to think for yourself.

What seems to be vagueness is openness. Gods and good Gurus speak a universal, cosmic language. They speak in symbols. A statement like, "The crown is no longer needed by the king," may seem nonsense, but it bespeaks a deep, deep secret. The secret is there and has been spoken. If it has not been understood, that is because we have not heard it---not because it is veiled. The task is now to meditate, meditate, meditate.

Who Do We Believe?

Often a disciple will insist that the Guru teach him in a particular way and manner. However, every Guru knows that if the disciple dictates what he is taught and the way it is to be taught, that disciple will never open or expand his soul beyond where he is at present. In short, he will not learn what needs to be learned.

According to Yoga tradition, the teacher continually nurtures disciples according to their needs. This nurturing is not spoon-feeding. Often a disciple must first learn to eat, to take the nourishment being proffered.

He needs to learn how to learn; to absorb what it is he needs to unfold.

Once the Guru and I were talking about God and the Devil. He explained to me a principle that sounded pretty good, so I applied it to

my own life. Some time later I fell solidly on my face. "Son of a gun," I thought, "My Guru was wrong! But how could that be? Wasn't he supposed to be extremely wise?" So I took a plane and went directly to him. Now, face to face, I got ready to complain to him. However, I had no more than two words out of my mouth before he was rolling on the floor, laughing! When he had calmed down, he said, "Well, if you were so stupid to unthinkingly believe what I say, of course you will fall on your face!"

"But for all that time..." I thundered, incredulously.

He looked at me gently and said, "Now you really know the Truth, don't you. You not only know it, but you *know* that you know it."

"But, Guru..." I began. He retorted: "Kriyananda! Where was your awareness when I was talking? My job is to get you to think..."

"But, Guru, if I can't trust you, whom can I trust?"

"Your self awareness," was his wonderful answer.

The true teacher, a Guru, is the soul who teaches us to be free---even from his love. This is so difficult, because we do not want to be free from his love and the trust we have in him. We want to be possessed. There is the danger. And there is his greatness. He won't possess us. The Guru-disciple relationship is not a movement of possession or indulgence.

What Is It Like To Be a Guru?

This home study course is not intended as a Guru Manual. Every Guru follows his or her own inner prompting. However, it is natural for the sincere student to wonder what it's like to be a Guru.

One becomes a Guru in a very simple but difficult way: detachment and enlightenment. As Guru, you rapidly realize that other souls should not dictate the direction of the Teaching. As Guru, you quickly learn that it is necessary to put a heavier aura around yourself, compared with what other people have around themselves.

One of your first challenges will be knowing how to recognize a disciple and then knowing what to do next, and what not to do.

Candidates for discipleship will come to you in three ways:

First, somebody comes and says, "I want to study with you." Straightforward enough. You say, "Fine," and proceed to teach them what they need to know. There does not have to be initiation. They asked to be taught, not to be initiated.

Second, a novice comes and says, "I want you to be my Guru," but there is no feeling in his soul; no response in your soul. So you meditate on them, examining their chakras, the Kriya flow pattern (or lack of it) and determine what is out of kilter, and what they can do to adjust it. Again, no initiation is called for at this time, because your soul felt no response to his soul.

Third, a neophyte comes and says to you, "I want to be your disciple." When these words are spoken, your soul responds! Your soul soars! You well know that this person is ready, and that you and he should walk the Path, allowing the primordial Wings of Wisdom to unfold.

In all instances, it is usually wise to hold back the initiation, indicating what qualifications must first be attained. You should explain clearly what is expected of them. You should clearly find out what their expectations of you are. When they will be initiated is ascertained through your intellectual, spiritual and intuitive faculties. My personal inclination is to wait as long as possible to see if they change their mind. Give them time to realize the commitment they face. Also, once you have initiated your first disciple, many other disciples will follow. Be sure you are physically, emotionally, and spiritually ready for them. They are wonderful, but they are a challenge.

Never forget that you are under no obligation to initiate anybody! Remember, you have the right to set the rules. However, you must be fair and realistic. You cannot change the rules in the middle of the game. Prospective disciples must prove they have earned the right to initiation by their spiritual vibration.

A Guru should give the disciple some idea when initiation might happen. Do not leave them hanging. They need to know, if only roughly, when their initiation will be, and what they should be working on. Never initiate anybody because you want to initiate them. Use your feelings, not your emotions. When in doubt, meditate! Check the person's astrological chart. Assign spiritual and emotional tasks. Disciples must be committed souls, so if they get nervous, let them get nervous. When in doubt, test them. Test them gently and wisely.

Again, I stress, ask them what they need. Assess their needs, and honestly as yourself whether or not you can truly help them. If you can't, tell them that the fault is yours as you truly do not feel you can help them. If they insist, give the relationship a trial run, without initiation. One approach might be, "Ordinarily I do not initiate disciples upon request. I will expect you to take on all the responsibilities of discipleship and I will take on all the responsibilities of Guruship, but I will not initiate you until we both are absolutely sure it is appropriate for both of us."

If your intuition says you should refuse initiation, then refuse. But, give them clear, good reasons rather than just saying no. It would be wiser to say, "Later, after you have mastered a given set of lessons."

Start your disciples on a discipline program immediately. The ones I allowed too much relaxation didn't form good habits and have not grown as rapidly nor as harmonious as those that were put on a program immediately.

Do not accept or collude with their emotionality. Tell them they can come back and talk when they've calmed down. Whenever they get emotional, protect yourself and strengthen your aura by putting your tongue up against the inside of the upper teeth.

Being a Guru is like baking 20 kinds of cakes in 20 different ovens. Each must bake in its proper time and unique way. Your burden will grow heavier as you take on more disciples so it is imperative that you have become detached before taking on disciples. If you are to complete your karma of being a Guru, you have no alternative: be detached. You must give them up to God. This means that you must know and believe, deep in your heart, that while your duty to them is sacred, their link with God

is far more sacred. Your job is to teach them, to warn them, to nudge them and to inspire them, but the responsibility for their unfoldment and progress, ultimately, is theirs.

Being a Guru may sound impressive but in truth it's a lot of trouble and grief! It's a tough job. If your karma is to be a Guru, it means that at the very depths of your soul, you are a problem-solver. Be on guard for ego, and human vanity, your disciples' and your own. There are specific circumstances when you should be alert to the possibility of being seduced by your ego. Many souls find it impossible to separate sex, love and spiritual enthusiasm. Don't let your disciples manipulate you. They will find your weak ego-spot and press it with great skill. You cannot and must not allow yourself to respond. Bless them for showing you your weakness and correct it. Correct it immediately.

Be concerned, be logical and be fair. However, be more intuitive. In the long run you will be like the mother who strictly disciplines her children. They may wail and complain, but in the long run they will love and respect you. Many children do not honor their mothers because the mother was always giving in to them. That situation must never be allowed to occur.

I wish to repeat something that applies to all endeavors, not just being a Guru: *Whatever you do, find great joy in doing it--Or don't do it!*

That is my ultimate injunction for anybody becoming a Guru. If you don't find joy, you are spiritually doing something wrong. Certainly being a Guru is not easy, and occasionally it is anything but fun. Do what you find joy in. Teach what brings you joy. The spirit of joy bubbling up from within you will be transferred to the disciple. Joy is one of the switches that activates the Kriya currents. The Kriya currents activate the Kundalini. Kundalini brings cosmic consciousness which is Joy, which is Bliss, which is Ananda.

Always remember that you are not to remodel your soul to conform to their souls. Their souls should learn to be patterned after your soul (memory track). They come to you because their inner mind, the deepest part of their subconscious mind and soul, needs what you are. You are not a man, you are not a woman. You are the answer, for them. And you

are always just a disciple of your Guru.

Teach unselfish love. Teach compassion. Teach from the heart. Live unselfish love. Live compassion. Live from the heart.

OM...

Chapter Ten

ARE YOU READY?

When the student is ready, the Guru appears. Nonetheless, how do you know if you are ready for the Guru-disciple relationship? A popular and very misleading conception surrounds the idea of being "ready." It implies that the student must be advanced enough to deserve a Guru. The truth is that for every disciple there is a Guru. Levels of advancement are irrelevant, and there is no such as thing as not deserving a Guru. Whether you study the Upanishads, master Sanskrit and meditate 24 hours a day, or are charging around a battlefield gleefully serving your country, a seeker is a seeker, and for every seeker there is a Guide.

If you have not yet found your Guru, that does not mean you are bad, or undeserving. It means you are so heavily involved with other pieces of karma that the appropriate feelings and attitudes are not manifesting. When you are ready, believe me, your Guru will appear! But how do you know if you are ready? If you are not ready, how do you get prepared?

One way is to locate the spiritual preceptor is to ask. Just pray, "Oh! Lord of Life, send me a Teacher. Teach me to ready myself." Another way is to carefully study this chapter. This short chapter is not intended to be assimilated quickly or as easily as the other chapters. I recommend you take all the time you need to understand the concepts here. It is not easy to describe the qualifications of a disciple. There are some who would read this chapter or think about this matter in the same way you and I might read a novel. This attitude reveals great ignorance. There is the need to pause and consider one's spiritual qualities and one's direction. Understanding the qualifications of a disciple demands a deeper, more penetrating mind-set.

Above all, when approaching mysticism, think. Question and think. Too many people come to mysticism and spirituality with an attitude of utter faith. Faith is for religion. Knowing is for spirituality. Accomplishing is for mysticism. Religionists demand unquestioning faith. Unquestioning faith is a blind faith. If your faith is blind, how can you move out and

beyond conceptual errors? Only by doubting and moving forth to resolve that doubt can you move from everyday ignorance to greater awareness of Truth. Religion demands faith. Mysticism demands thinking and knowing. It is helpful if, deep within, you have a yearning for freedom, a desire for release from all bondage, including that of your own mind. (Hopefully, I need not remind the reader that this yearning for freedom has nothing to do with worldly politics.) At the basis, at the foundation of your soul, there should be an eagerness to remove the encumbrances of any and every kind of Ignorance.

This yearning heightens your awareness of the need to find peace and freedom from the tyranny of objects (including thoughts and emotions.) However, your need must not be of such intensity that you can not be happy now. If the need for spiritual freedom produces more pain than it prompts you to remove, you will win the battle but lose the war. In this case, you need more balance, more balance, much more balance!

There must be a shining realization that true and lasting freedom is not found in any societal structure. True freedom is liberation from the vicious vortex of Ignorance. True freedom is spiritual, not physical nor social. You must understand, without bitterness or anger, that your true identity does not reside in anything in this worldly life.

Keep in mind the saying, *when the student is ready, the Teacher will appear*. This will be as a beacon in the fog, reminding you of the rock-solid promise that if you do not yet have the gift of sitting at the spiritual feet of your Guru, that time will come. It will come, if you so choose, and if you prepare for it through study and self-discipline. When it does, just as a person whose clothing has caught fire rushes into water to douse the flames, so should you, scorched with the inner pains of desire, rush to your Guru's feet to find peace, wisdom and happiness.

Once you have found your Guru, how should you approach him? You should come ready to listen. I repeat: *be ready to listen*. Be prepared to set aside your ego. Empty your cup of data, so that it can be filled with wisdom.

Here are some insights for your becoming ready to draw forth your Guru into your life. They apply to every seeker, regardless of whether the Guru has been found or not:

1. Abstain from rituals aimed at bringing about the fulfillment of worldly desires.
2. Abstain from causing injury to others---mentally, verbally, physically or spiritually.
3. Meditate at the same time and place each and every day.
4. Study the teachings of the sages of all cultures and times.
5. Look upon all experience as signposts to the gaining of wisdom, which is the sole goal of the mystical Path.
6. See beyond each worldly experience and pattern; witness the blissful experience of the higher planes. Gently ease past the illusory nature of all existence.
7. Search for the Higher Will as it manifests through you. Become ready to find and manifest that Will.
8. Discern between the permanent and the transient.
9. Discern between the valuable and the valueless.
10. Understand that while this world is an apparition, it is orderly.
11. Renounce the fruits of spiritual actions. This does not mean abandoning spiritual activity. It means you must find peace and wisdom in the actions themselves, not in what the actions bring.
12. Establish mental quietness, and the pacification of the passions. Objects (including psychological-emotional objects) must not have the power to trouble your mind.

13. Realize you are different than the Guru, that what the Guru says comes directly from his experiences along his own pathway. Try to understand, therefore, the intent and direction of his words, hearing not so much their literal meaning as their symbolic meaning.
14. Work at bringing your heart, mind and tongue together.
15. Develop the attitudes that encourage personal unfoldment and enhancement, such as the removal of ego, a good memory and the power to interrelate with people.
16. Learn to be patient. This is perhaps the supreme qualification for discipleship.

You must understand that your every experience is leading you directly to the goal of life. You must endure and move forward according to your own insight. By following and fulfilling these precepts, a soul is qualified to be a disciple upon the Path. May your primordial Wings of Wisdom unfold...

OM...

Chapter Eleven

LOVE AND WISDOM

To live and thrive, your body needs food and water, air and sleep. To live and thrive, your soul needs love and wisdom.

No book on the Guru-disciple relationship would be complete if it lacked a discussion of love, for love is the core of this relationship. Everyone needs the fulfillment and security of loving and being loved. It is appalling how little we know about love---where it is, or even how to seek it. Seldom are we told and rarely do we see what real love is. Yet somehow we sense that love is indispensable to life.

There are three kinds of love, and in a very real way your happiness depends on which kind of love you seek, which kind you find and, most significantly, which kind you accept.

The first type of love is selfish love. There is no caring here; basically it is "me" oriented. I call it "if-love." Love will be given *if* the other person meets your requirements. Mother will love you if you are good. Wife will love you if you get a raise. Husband will love you if you are quiet. I will love if you marry me. I will love you if you come up to my expectations. If-love is the most common type of love. It is so common that most people have no idea there might be any other kind. They have only known selfish, conditional, if-love---love with strings attached whereby the lover offers love in exchange for something he or she wants. The motivation of if-love is selfish and centers upon a conscious or unconscious goal of gaining something. It is a crude form of emotional barter. If-love cannot build a satisfying relationship.

If-love is so selfish that it rapidly turns into emotionality, dislike, negativity and even hatred. Most broken marriages finally crack because they were founded on if-love. In these relationships, the young woman or man is not in love with a real person but with some sort of glorified romantic image. As daily life grinds away at this image, their love breaks down and disillusionment and disenchantment set in. Expectations have not been met and if-love turns into negativity, hatred and separation. What is especially sad is that this separation may not be

the fault of either party. They simply may not have known there was any other way to love.

This pattern does not apply only to young lovers but also to parents, although we tend to idealize parental love (especially mother-love) as the highest form of human love. Frequently parental love is no more than selfish, conditional, if-love. Mommy won't love you if you don't do what she says. Mommy will love you if you graduate first in your class. Daddy will love you if you hit a home run. We grow up feeling love is little more than a bargaining chip. In our pain we reject all love, often producing heavy guilt feelings within our soul, causing difficulties in our important relationships.

In our soul we might sense there is something better. Most of us are looking for something deeper and more sustaining than if-love. Knowing there is a higher type of love can mean the difference between giving up and living life fully. Ironically, our instinct toward light and freedom can propel us beyond if-love into because-love.

In because-love, the individual is loved *because* of something he or she is, or has. *He loves you because you are rich and powerful. She loves you because you are good to her. I love you because you make me laugh.* Do any of these sound familiar? Many people love another person based on some quality or attribute. Clearly, because-love is not perfect. It is not the ultimate kind of love, but it is a step closer. If-love has yet to be earned and its attainment can become a major burden that binds us rather than frees us. Because-love is based on something we have already attained, something we already are. But as time passes, because-love can become little better than if-love.

It's nice when people love us for what we are. However, the temptation to make even more people love us for what we are or what we have done is an insidious, self-destructive trap. We strive to lengthen our list of things that we can do or have done so that we can have more admirers and lovers. In so doing, we become increasingly manipulative. We fall into the pattern of trying to improve our image in order to get people to love us. We work at increasing and improving the qualities that appear to make us lovable, often to the detriment or neglect of other more important psychological, sociological or spiritual qualities.

Spiritual qualities aside, the problem is this: what if someone else should come along who has more of the loved quality than we do? The people who love us might very well love this newcomer more. Thus a competition begins, an open-ended battle to win and to hold love. The well-known neurotic insecurity of movie stars is based on their accurate insight that whatever quality they may have, sooner or later will be eclipsed by someone with that same quality in greater abundance. It is like the little child resenting the coming of a new baby. Or the popular girl being threatened by her prettier classmate. A young man resents his colleague with a flashier sports car. The wife is threatened by her husband's efficient secretary. You can add countless examples from your own experience.

Where is the security in this type of love? Where is the lasting fulfillment? As life brings its inevitable changes of circumstance and feelings, either the lover's expectation or the beloved's qualities must change. The balance almost certainly is disrupted, resulting in emotional disaster for one or both individuals.

Independent of emotional loss through changing circumstances or competition, at some level, you, as the beloved, will be haunted by the fear that you are not loved for yourself, that in truth, you may not be a likable or lovable person. There are two sides to every personality. There is a darker side, and we try to hide this darker side in the belief that if our lover sees it, he or she may become disillusioned and reject us. We thus fence off and constrict a major part of ourselves, losing contact with our whole self, our larger self. We depend more and more on role-playing to guarantee our relationships. In our heart, we know our love relationships are not built on firm foundations, so we grow more and more insecure.

Another potent source of increasing insecurity is the apprehension that sometime in the future we may change. We all know that life is change. What if we lose the quality that makes us lovable. Beauty queens age. Politicians lose elections. The most incisive mind can grow dull.

Many decades ago I worked in a chemical factory. One day a very beautiful young woman accidentally dropped a large bottle of sulfuric

acid, causing painful burns which badly scarred her arm, face and chest. It so disfigured her that her fiancé broke off their engagement. His love was because-love. "I loved you because you were beautiful." His love was based on her appearance, and the moment her physical beauty left, so did he.

Far too often, all we know of human love is either if-love or because-love. If you could have your dream, though, wouldn't you want to be loved simply for yourself alone? Does your heart not long for a love that accepts you, as you are, with an unchanging and unchangeable love? Could such a love exist? It does, and it comes with a smile, the smile of the most sacred of loves. What's more, it comes in spite of what you are, or what you have. Please notice the wording carefully: in spite of, Not regardless of, but *in spite of*. It is one thing to be loved in spite of ourselves and another to be loved regardless of who you are. A regardless-love wouldn't care who we are. Implicit in *regardless* is a not-caring, a coolness that excludes that fulfillment we seek. Regardless-love would be like a diamond, beautiful but impersonal. To be loved with no regard for who we are would be secure, but that security would be the lifeless security of a rock. Love, to reach and touch the human heart, cannot be aloof; it must be felt! That's where *in-spite-of-love* becomes manifests.

In-spite-of-love has no strings attached. It expects nothing in return. In-spite-of-love is not based on any transient quality in the beloved. With in spite-of-love, you are loved unselfishly without trying to get anything from you. In this true, real and delightful love, you are loved in spite of yourself! In spite of whatever you are. In spite of whatever you have been. In spite of what you may or may not have accomplished or be. In-spite-of-love looks at our foibles and smiles in tender, bold, forgiving, unconditional love.

Think of a tiny kitten. In spite of its vulnerability (not because of it and certainly not regardless of it) our hearts reach out to envelope the kitten in a sweet and understanding love. We know it will grow up to be a bothersome, potentially cruel creature and we love it anyway. We know it can give us nothing that will enhance our self-image and we love it anyway. We know it must act, feel and exist within the boundaries of its cat-nature, and we love it anyway. We expect nothing of this little kitten

other than it be true to its kitten-nature. Many lonely (and wise) souls gravitate toward animals instead of people because they enjoy this close cousin of in-spite-of-love that pours through their hearts toward their pets. Their love is akin to the in-spite-of-love I hope to introduce to you.

You may be the ugliest creature in the world; you will be loved when you meet in-spite-of-love. You may be the most wretched of souls but you will be loved when you meet in-spite-of-love. You do not have to be anything at all in order to receive it. You may feel absolutely worthless but you will be loved as though you were of infinite worth. You will be loved in spite of *any flaws or faults or habits*. You will be loved as you are---not regardless of what you are but in spite of what you are!

You do not have to deserve or earn in-spite-of-love, and you will be loved independent of any *ifs or because*s. This love is real. It is yours.

Warning: by reading this book you risk changing your life, for once you realize there exists such a love, attaining it can become more vital than food or family. This warning statement may sound a bit cavalier, but look into your heart and ask yourself this question: if you believed, deep within your soul, that no one in this world cared for or about you, and would never care for or about you, if you honestly believed you would never, ever be loved, might you not possibly lose your interest in living? Might you not lose interest in family, friends, even food? Would you not feel the uselessness of living? Would you have the enthusiasm to live out the rest of your long life? I don't think so.

In our culture, in-spite-of-love is in short supply. At best, we get only enough to whet our appetite, only enough to show us how much we need it. Why? Because everybody wants to get this love and few are willing to give it! We are looking to those near and dear to us to bring love into our life, but they're busy seeking it for themselves. The greatest scarcity in this world is not oil or energy or even knowledge; it is in-spite-of-love. Unconditional, unselfish love. How ironic it is that while most folks run around trying to get a share of in-spite-of-love, the happiest people are the wise and lucky few who give it! Your Guru loves you with in-spite-of-love. The only question is: Are you ready to receive it? Are you ready to just be yourself, and not try to manipulate him to get more, or to keep getting it?

Look at our planet's sad history. One would think we were dead-set on limping along without Guru's or God's love. In fact, it is impressive how hard we work at it. All the *whys* and *why nots* surrounding our reluctance or inability to accept in-spite-of-love could tempt us into a rambling analysis of the origins and implications of human psychology. The topic may deserve the countless detailed treatments it receives in the professional journals and tomes, but frankly I don't want to yield to that temptation. The question being addressed here is not: "Given that in-spite-of-love exists, why are we reluctant to accept it?" The question is: "When faced with in-spite-of-love, can you accept it?" I am not trying to convince your mind of Guru's love: I am offering it to your soul.

We tend to be self-centered and self-seeking. Look at yourself and the quality of the love you give. Are you giving if-love or because-love? If so, don't stop loving, even if these are lesser types of love. They are steps on the ladder leading from an unloving nature to a compassionate heart. So keep on loving! Don't let immature motivations prevent you from loving as best you can. Our lonely world needs all the love it can get, and lower love is better than no love at all! Do, however, know thyself. Be aware of your own style of loving, and remember that it is absolutely possible for unselfish love slowly to grow within, strengthening the life of the spiritual person, the holy person, the disciple. But before you can water the flowers, the watering-can needs to be filled.

Many religious traditions teach that the only source of in-spite-of-love is God Himself. In the spiritual tradition of Yoga, God is found through the Guru. Yoga teaches that we humans cannot know this love until and unless we first make communion with Guru. Absorbed in the compassion of His sacred love qualifies us as a source of in-spite-of-love. There is a fixed sequence to this:

1. Find Guru,
2. Make communion,
3. Have Guru's love bestowed upon you
4. Love all life-forms with compassion.

This is no easy task! Step one alone, finding God through Guru, is universally agreed to be the most arduous and onerous quest of all. The

argument goes that every person is limited or incomplete until he or she makes contact with the Unlimited and Complete. Once that communion has been made, a spark of unselfish love arises within, and despite our own needs, wants or lacks, compassionate in-spite-of-love manifests. Ever so slightly at first, however, it slowly grows into the fulfillment of God's love.

In Kriya yoga, we have the tradition of the living, human Guru. Through the Guru comes the message of unselfish love, which is Wisdom. The Guru's message isn't a formal statement in spoken or written words so much as it is the unspoken message embodied in his way of life. The Guru's life is a life of in-spite-of-love, or unselfish love. The Guru lives in the awareness of unselfish love, becoming a natural and automatic vehicle that makes such love available in all its sweet fullness and majesty. You might recall our discussion of the concept of the Lineage, and how the source of any true Guru's spirituality resides ultimately in God. Well, the same dynamic applies to love. In truth, unselfish love is to be found in God Himself. God has sent forth a Lineage of Gurus into the world to bring to each person the living message of unselfish love. As disciples, you and I are able to see the unselfish love in action and to feel it as it penetrates into our personal lives. Thanks to Guru, you can experience unselfish love pouring directly into you through his human heart. With Guru, you need no longer just hunger and speculate about love. It's yours.

Guru's love is from God, is of God, and is not conditioned with any *if*, *because* or *regardless* types of love. God does not say, "I will love you if you worship me." God does not say, "I will love you if you give my church your money." God cares very much who you are! God smiles and says, "I love you in spite of yourself!" That's God's nature. That's what He does. He loves, unselfishly.

Thus He loves you. Unqualifiedly, unselfishly, unconditionally, exactly as you are. He will love you just as much if you are better or if you are worse. As with the little kitten, as time passes and you grow and change, no matter what you grow or change into, you are and will be loved.

How can you believe these statements if your life experience has led you to settle for *if* and *because* love? Find your a True Guru! Watch him.

Study him. The selfless service of your Guru will be your proof. Love God with him. Loving God for the Guru means increasing Knowledge, increasing Love, and increasing unselfish service.

Gurus come into the world and live out their very human lives with an unselfish love toward all of life (not just toward humankind). In spite of all his faults and inconsistencies, the life of the Guru teaches Life's love--not as theory, doctrine or speculation, but in concrete and immediate demonstration of the unselfish love available to each and every person, including you. There is a catch, however. You must accept it.

Ask yourself what kind of love you want. If-love puts endless strain and demands on the beloved. Because-love is more comfortable because it addresses ones self-esteem in a more positive way. It's a lot more flattering to be loved for what we are or think we are. Accepting the greatly superior in-spite-of-love is difficult because it's embarrassing, almost humiliating, to be reminded of all we are not.

Guru loves each and every disciple with the self-same love ceaselessly flowing to us from God. The quality of his love is identical, for it is the same love. But, there is a difference, in that coming through another human being makes this love more accessible and more readily accepted. It is expressed through a vehicle we can understand. It is far easier to experience in-spite-of-love through another human being than it is to climb spiritual mountains seeking the Holy of Holies. We feel safer, because we are on familiar ground. We can allow ourselves to be angry at Guru. In spite of ourselves we find ourselves rekindling our own capacity to share this love.

In-spite-of-love is ours for no other reason than we are a part of life, and we have requested it. When modern man discovered the thrill of manipulating his external physical world, the excitement went to his head and he declared himself separate and different from the rest of life. The result has been the ego-pleasure of individuality and the soul-pain of separation. We live with a self-created obstacle to receiving God's love and feel profoundly isolated. The longing for union need not be considered an existential condition. In truth we are a part of life, not apart from life. We are not separated from God, save to the degree we wish to be.

It is exceedingly difficult to change the habits of many lifetimes. I am not asking you to do that. I only suggest you open your heart, just a crack, and allow the feeling of unselfish love to trickle in. You might find it more easy to just watch it manifest through the Guru. Then make up your own mind. If your soul hungers for the Divine waters that penetrate and soften the hardest stone, be courageous and open wider. Be brave and your heart will find deep joy. This journey demands profound courage, not because God is fearsome but because it takes a brave soul to face up to the silliness of unnecessary, counter-productive, self-imposed, stony ego-walls.

Accepting God's love involves a journey and, like any journey, the first step is the hardest, the one involving the greatest hesitation. This journey is different than any other, however. It is your journey Home. Begin with a simple meditation. Perchance the meditative feeling would be something like this:

“Oh Lord of Life, Lord of Love, Lord of Laughter, I thank you for the awakening awareness and understanding that unconditional, unselfish love flows through all of life and to all of life's creatures.

I accept your love. I accept your love just as I am. I accept the love of life from you; I accept Life's love.

I feel the door of my heart opening as the love of life flows in. I see more clearly the levels of love in all God's creatures. I am bathed in the sunlight of the beauty and ecstasy of life itself and of its Creator.”

By regularly repeating this meditation, you open the flood-gates of your being. You become increasingly confident you are loved. Actually, you have been loved all along. The difference is that now you know it, and you accept it. Now your life will be built increasingly upon the wisdom-premise of loving totally and unconditionally. Truly good things will flow in, in ever greater abundance, allowing you to move from love to greater love, from happiness to greater happiness, from wisdom to greater wisdom. Through the realization that you are completely accepted, you will see the great secret of life, the life-pattern, in which nothing is denied any creature, save what which is denied by itself.

Life works in patterns. The moment you initiate the pattern of acceptance-love/love-acceptance, you change your total pattern. Sustain that pattern and you change your life. You will come to rightfully trust your welfare to the cosmic stream of God's dream and move toward thinking more and more of helping others. Proof that you have changed will be your unfolding ability to love others, in spite of themselves. Now you forgive those whom you never forgave. You understand the evolving needs of individuals capable only of if-love or because-love, and you will not be hurt. You will not hurt.

Every now and then, test your progress. Think of someone you know and mentally feel God's love. Happily give in-spite-of-love to that person. In spite of yourself, send love to that soul to heal and lift, to shatter their fetters of negativity and open their heart. Doing this---not just thinking about it---elevates you to the rank of disciple. Thus, in spite of your imperfections and incompleteness, the divine power of spirituality is radiating to you and over you.

You are attaining your life Divine by opening your heart unconditionally to life and all of its creatures. You are strengthening your cosmic love-relationship with life by offering loving service to all sentient creatures. Your love and your life are becoming fuller and more satisfying. What most people can not even dream of, you have encompassed. You, truly, are a disciple! May all the Yoga-shiddhi of all Gurus, and all Lineages, now at this moment bless and guide you to the full and complete unfolding of your Primordial Wings of Wisdom.

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