

A letter responding to some of the questions raised by a Sadhak

*By Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj,
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Guruji responds to some of the questions raised by a Sadhak

May God's blessings be on you.

You recollect that there was only one Christ but you have now got 100's of denominations of Christianity like the Catholics, the Protestants, the Methodists, the Benedictine, etc. The God when he gave any religion to us, like the Moses or the prophet, etc., it was absolutely pure. It is we who divided it over small issues like the Immaculate Conception. So long as your goal is the Ultimate Reality, who is a living and loving one [we may call him Christ or Krishna or Rama] the Ultimate Lord will lead you in the right path. It doesn't matter what cult you follow. It is the determination of the goal, loving it and to have absolute faith in it – these are the three sine qua non for getting our final salvation.

If you do not feel easy in meditating, it is absolutely okay in remembering Krishna through service and chanting. Here, the service is not a real service. The real service to the Lord is to ultimately to merge with Him. In the ultimate love, the lover and the beloved cannot be separate. They have to be one. This is also the principle of surrender. There is no harm in doing service in the earlier days. But what we do in kindergarten should not be extended upto degree class. The chanting of the Lord's name, whether Krishna or Rama or Shiva or Ganesha – it is all one and the same. As the Lord has got infinite aspects, the various Gods of the various religions have been given so that people may worship the Lord of their choice.

Actually speaking, there is only one Lord as avowed in Christianity. It cannot be when we all die and go there will be a PRO sitting there and directing the Krishna devotees in room no. 325 and the Christians to room no. 285 and devotees of Lord Shiva to 195. A man cannot conceive of the inconceivable Lord and so he conceives Him in his own image as sitting on a throne and keeping the various souls by his side and conversing with them or ordering them. If you ask a buffalo, as to what is its concept of God, it will only say that the God is a very big buffalo weighing 3000 kilos and with 20 horns as it cannot conceive beyond its own conditioning of the mind. At the same time as we all consider our various gods as omnipotent, he can definitely take the form of Jesus, the form of Raam, Krishna, etc. as the devotee conceives. You may be aware of the 5th gospel of Christianity written by Thomas whose manuscripts were obtained somewhere in 1945, in its pristine condition when they were digging a grave beyond Egypt. There is one logos which is something like, "He is all. All has come out from Him. Split the wood, He is there. Break the stone, He is there." What a beautiful statement which belongs to all the religions.

Meditation is not the only way. The various names of Gods like Krishna, Rama, Jesus, have not been given by you and me. These have come to us from divine inspiration from above and they are all sound effects which go inside purifies and reconditions us in order to merge with the Supreme Being. Chanting of one of the Holy Names continuously and alone [group chanting by 100 persons is not intended because there is no collective sadhana for the various people at various stages of spiritual evolution] will be able to lead us to the same place where meditation does.

You have put the question regarding ego as to how to eliminate it and to dedicate oneself to the Supreme Lord's will. Why have you put the cart before the horse? Actually if you go on loving the Lord and surrendering yourself unconditionally to the Lord's will, the ego will disappear by itself. Let us dedicate ourselves with our entire ego to the Lord. Just as a collectors peon, in his ego claims that he is a collectors peon and not an ordinary one, in the same way, you claim that you are the always the servant of the Lord so that the ego will be subservient to the Supreme Lord's will. Then you love Him with all heart and soul where is the time and occasion for the ego to operate by itself.

Dualism vs non-dualism

When we love God, whether considering Him as separate from us or as a whole of which we are a small part, what does it matter? When once we do the sadhana, at the end we will know what is the truth. Let us not be caught in the verbal jugglery of the words like dualism, etc. These words are meant as a delight for the philosophers who love to argue. What is important is to love the Supreme Lord even without knowing who He is or how He is; whether He is our master who is separate from us or He is that one entity of which the entire world is a part will be revealed to us in due course.

The Drama of Incarnation

The wordings you have used they contain the answer themselves. When this entire incarnation is only a drama, the author of the cosmic drama has got the full freedom to write the script in anyway as he likes, whether with or without contradictions, whether believable or unbelievable, and whether you are liking or not. Who are we to question the author of a drama? Remember that we should only ask those questions which have a direct relationship with our salvation. The rest of the questions we may note down in a diary and remember to ask the Lord when we meet Him face to face.

I do not understand the word “my tradition”. I am always after the universal totality which applies to all traditions. Anyway, the goal of human incarnation of everybody is to find out the path to be free from unhappiness, trials and tribulations and sufferings by getting merged with the cosmic director of the whole drama. You have asked, “where does the soul go after death?” – you only please tell me when a bulb dies, i.e. gets fused, where does the electricity go. While the mother conceives we are only a gel in the fallopian tubes and we descend slowly into the womb. At that time, there is no heart beat and no vital élan [the power of prana] which energises us into seeing, talking, walking, etc. This vital energy which is really called Swami Shantananda, comes into the womb into the mass of flesh which has come into it only in the fourth week after conception according to the latest medical science. So a similar energy has come to all who have been born from an infinite source. When a man dies, the soul which is actually the energy mentioned above, it has to go back to its source, the infinite energy which may be called as God.

In the Vaishnava tradition, it is told that everybody should be considered as Vasudeva i.e. Lord Krishna. If the entire world is Lord Krishna, what about you – you are also Lord Krishna only. But you have forgotten it. Hence, to re-establish the relationship with the divine, while chanting His name or chanting mantras or both, it is real service to the divine and we become one with the cosmic director so that we may also be partner with in the lila [sport] of Godhead.

Yes at the time of death, if you remember God or Guru, we might get our salvation. But do you think it is so easy to wipe away all your life in earning money and enjoying and to remember the Lord only in the last moment? Unless we have been chanting His name all your lifetime, the attention of the dying man will be on his body and relatives around him and he will not be able to take the name of God or Guru.

The teachings of Christian tradition are absolutely okay. When once you try to lead an absolutely noble life, which includes a life of detachment from all temptations of worldly objects and complete surrender to the Lord, you will come face to face with the Ultimate entity which you may call as Krishna or Rama or Jesus. Whether it is a dualistic path or not,

the Lord comes into your heart and you will be embraced by God's love and transformed to divinity.

I am afraid many of the doubts arise because we are not ourselves fully knowledgeable about our own tradition. In the Bolshevik regime in Russia, the Orthodox Church's members ran away to the desert beyond Egypt and after doing a lot of austerities, they had written a text called "Philokalia" in about 6 or 7 volumes. There were many authors who were all almost saints. They had all written about the infallible effects of prayers to the Lord. Hence, the prayers themselves can carry one to the desired goal.

The question of service or helping others is meant to purify our hearts of envy, greed, anger, desire and such like major defects. Only when those defects are removed, the Lord or Jesus can come into our hearts. Hence, after doing some service in the early days, our entire life should be dedicated to the chanting of the Lord and remembering Him for 24 hours to the extent possible.

I cannot claim to be a teacher or spirituality; I have only tried to share my views on the points raised by you.

All my blessings and I invoke the Lord's blessings on you. The very desire to reach the Lord will somehow guide you to the goal.

With all love and Om
Swami Shantananda

* * HARI OM * *

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