

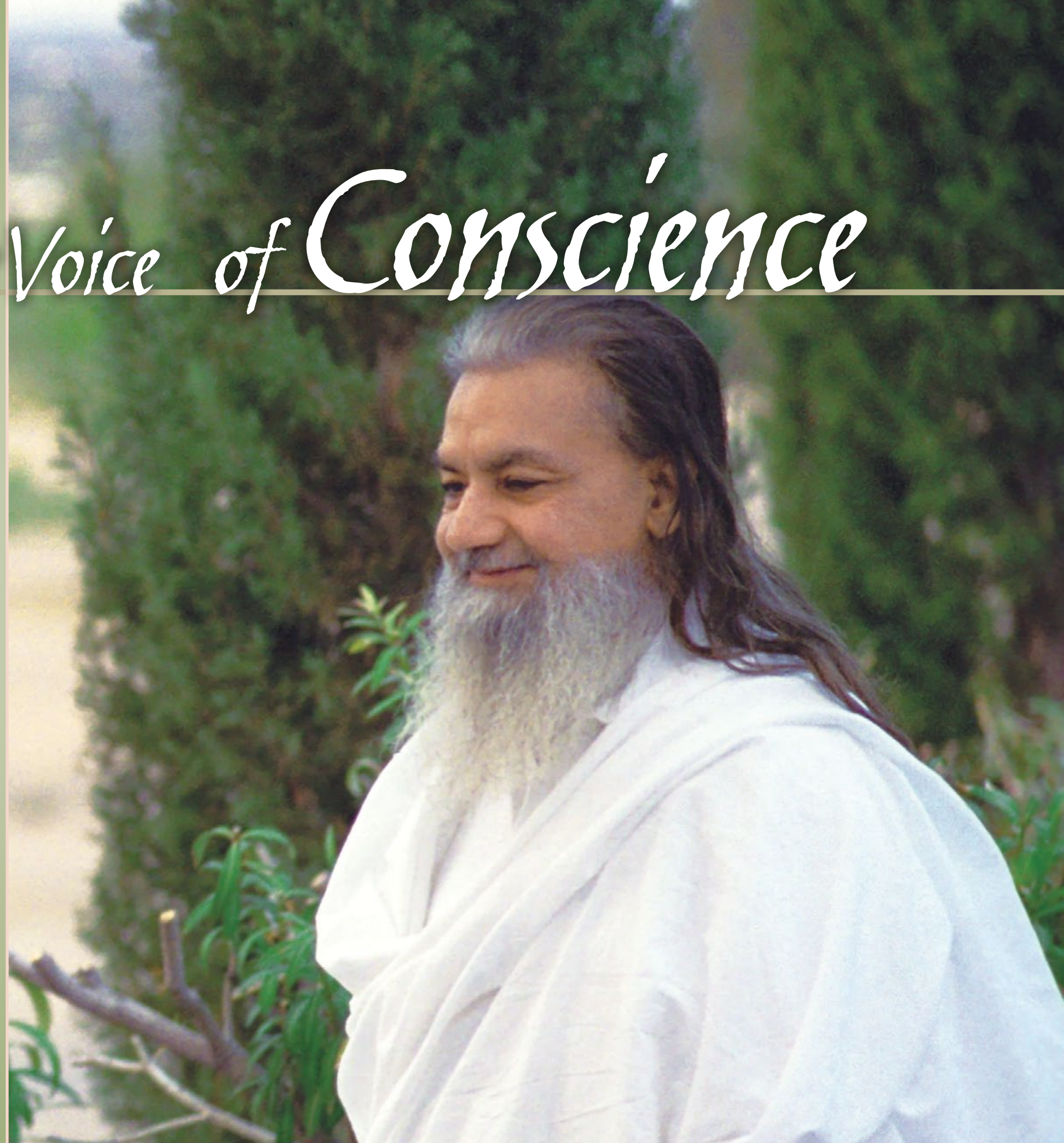
Satsang by Swami Amar Jyoti

KARMA and the Voice of Conscience

Conscience always speaks to us—whether we hear it depends upon our perspective, the color of glasses we wear.

THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE rings in you all the time. You just have to listen to it. For example, let us say I am your conscience and I am saying many things to you. It is up to you how much you listen. You may listen thoroughly; you may listen half-heartedly; you may listen but your thoughts may be elsewhere; you may listen but your resistance may be such that not much is going in; your attitude may be negative so that you are just thrusting it away, or you may be listening positively and taking it in nicely. You see, the reactions are different. Conscience always speaks to us—whether we hear it depends upon our perspective, the color of glasses we wear.

It reminds me of a story long ago from Persia. In that country there was orthodox Islam but at that time there was no liberal Sufism. When Sufism first started it was diametrically against orthodox teachings. Orthodox Islam declared that Allah is God, you are a man, and you cannot be perfect. Sufis said, "I am That, I am God," which became "Hum Allah," and as in early Christianity, those who declared themselves to be one with God were often martyred.



In a certain kingdom there was a great Sufi named Mansur who was fearless and very courageous. He had realized his oneness with the Supreme and he taught commonly, "I am That." Many went to discuss with him and he would openly say what he had realized. He was not just intellectually asserting, "I am God." It came out naturally from him because he was a Realized Soul. The clergy were the last ones to tolerate this, not only because they were orthodox, not only because they were not Realized, but also because underneath there was the fear that such a one might take away their business. Eventually the news of Mansur went to king, who was supposed to protect their religion.

Here came a priest, high and mighty against Mansur, complaining, "He says he is God," and in those days that was a great blasphemy. At first the king did not believe this; he thought they were making an unnecessary fuss about this young man. But eventually the news became more and more heated, so the king said, "Bring him, I'll ask him myself." Mansur was brought to the king's court in chains. He was in his ecstasy; they had to drag him in. He was not even conscious of his surroundings, he was intoxicated in his love of God. When they brought him into the court the king spoke to him, "Mansur, you are a good man. I want to ask you about what I have been hearing and I will believe what you say. Is it true that you are saying you are God?" Mansur replied, "There is no other truth but this."

The king had no choice but to condemn him to death. He unwillingly ordered this sentence, and looked at Mansur feeling that he might plead for his life and take back what he had said. But Mansur simply said, "That's fine." He did not murmur or grumble or complain. He was already Realized and did not mind what was happening to his body. He could have saved his body if he had wanted to, just as Jesus could have saved himself. So Mansur was brought to a public place and tied up. He even told them, "Why are you tying me up? I won't run away. I will just sit down where you want me." All the citizens of the city were ordered by the king to throw stones or whatever they had at him until he was dead.

Now Mansur had his own disciples and they feared for their lives. They did not want to throw stones at their Master but they had no choice unless they also accepted death, and they were not ready for that. One among his near and dear disciples thought of a trick. He took a flower and when his turn came, threw that at his Master

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as if an offering. He thought he was proving himself a great disciple. Mansur, bleeding all over, all this time had his head bowed and was laughing, accepting whatever was happening. Suddenly one flower fell in his lap and he looked up. As he saw his dear disciple, Mansur had tears in his eyes. The disciple got really confused. He said, "Master, others were throwing stones at you and filth and you were laughing. And I threw a flower and you are weeping." Mansur told him, "Others did not know who am I. You know. Your flower is more heavy than stones."

Why am I telling this story? We take our own wrongs too lightly thinking, "This is a minor thing." We may underestimate something, taking it as nothing, but in God's eyes it could be major. And when His decision comes, He knows best, right? But your conscience could also have told you. Now look back on the same story. This near disciple of Mansur knew, though unconsciously, that he was saving his skin by throwing a flower at his Master. He knew that his flower was not an offering; he was throwing it under the king's orders. His conscience was telling him not to do this but he was not ready to give his life for his Master. That was the truth. He walked away safely but in great agony.

Now, if we judge ourselves against this, how many more sins might we have done? I am not judging; judge yourselves. How many times have you been glad that you went scot free? In God's eyes, in his Master's eyes, in his own eyes, this disciple was throwing something at the Master to save himself, not to save his spirit but to save his flesh. He was rejecting the whole principle of the Master and disciple. That is why the term spiritual materialism is so often used: so that we open our eyes to what we do in the name of dead religion, dead rituals, formalities. We may believe we are religious when we are not. In Jesus' day, money changers were sitting outside the temple to earn money. They were not there





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for God or for religion. They might say, "We are sitting outside the temple exchanging money in the name of God." That is spiritual materialism and Jesus did not like it. Seeing the truth applies everywhere, in every field.

It is simple: when you see the truth as it is, your conscience opens up. It says something to you. You might cover it up, escape it, not heed it or suppress it, or you may listen to it. That is your free choice, but free choice is not given to use any way you like. As long as you are listening to the voice of God or conscience, the responsibility is His. But if you choose your free will, you assume the responsibility thereafter and the results are binding on you. Then whether you want it or do not want it, whether you wish it or not, whether you like it or not, it is done. "As you sow, so shall you reap."

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Whereas Mansur might have forgiven the stone throwers, he might not have forgiven the flower-throwing disciple. We do not know how judgment comes. In your own life, in any relationship or situation, if you are knowingly telling untruth, you are a greater culprit than if you do it unconsciously. So our judgment could be very faulty, and mostly it is. Therefore the commandment: *Judge ye not*. Most of us will not be able to judge properly unless we come to act according to the voice of conscience. If we listen to conscience

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When you are looking at the past, first see as it is or was. Do not magnify or underplay it. When you truly see it, then it will tell you. If it is a minor matter, forget about it; it's gone. If it is major, now start paying for it. If you do not, you are keeping it pending for the future. I am not for undue self martyrdom, but neither am I for escapism. Whereas self martyrdom punishes you unnecessarily, it does not send you into further ignorance. Escapism sends you more deeply into ignorance and that is how we become worse people. There is a definite way, a law. In traditional language, if you want to enter the kingdom of God, be truthful, honest and simple. That holds good today, even though

we use psychological, intellectual, learned language. Modern mystical thinkers might say: *See as it is*. Open your eyes. See with your conscience.

There is a story that I saw in a movie called *The Bible*. In the beginning, Adam and Eve suddenly came to a strange place, so different from the Garden of Eden they hardly knew what to do. Up to this point, sin had not happened on earth. Their two sons, Cain and Abel, shared agriculture land and at one point they began to fight. Eventually Cain struck and killed Abel. Nobody had taught Cain that this was sin, a crime. There were no written books, no aphorisms, no elders of the society telling them what was right and wrong. The crux is that Cain was watching what he had never witnessed before. He could not analyze, he was ignorant of the whole situation, and his brother soon died. Now Cain did not fully comprehend what happened, but after some seconds something happened in his heart. Today we would call it confusion, guilty conscience or self remorse. He became so uneasy in his heart, a kind of suffocation in his remorse, that he could not contain it. He grew more and more disturbed and restless with every moment that passed. A natural phenomenon was taking place and cosmically this was the reaction. He could not stay there and he began to walk away from the situation. Then he began to run. He did not know what to do. He did not know anything about guilt or repentance. He did not know that he should pay the price for his sin but it was gnawing at him, his guilty conscience was biting him. In the end he was so distraught, he came to a mountainside and tried to smash himself against the rock. He was paying the price.

He was not thinking, "Oh, I am such a sinner. I killed my own brother." He did not know this morality, but he was reaping the fruit of his actions. None of us can avoid this law of cause and effect. You may avoid it for the time being. You may suppress it or try to escape it, but feel sure, it is bound to happen even if you do not know anything. I am not saying we are sinners and we should repent. That language has lost its efficacy. I am simply saying in a very scientific way: we cannot avoid the reaction of our actions. Even if we try to escape or suppress or undo or run away from our thoughts and actions, we cannot. And even if we do not see our thoughts and actions for what they are, we have to pay for them. As long as we are trying to avoid anything, we are delaying. But that delay also troubles us: the more the delay, the more severe the results.

An analogy might be a loan from a bank. If you pay in due time, you may not be charged interest. The more you delay, the more the interest. It is the same with the karmas. There is no use in underplaying or overplaying what you did. In God's kingdom there is always mercy and grace, but do not think that everyone who asks receives. There are norms for that too: where mercy is due, where grace is due, where forgiveness is due. How many chances might you have lost and you are still asking for grace and forgiveness? It is not punishment, but you cannot avoid the effect of your actions. You cannot say, "God, I have told you what I did, now it is your responsibility." In order to avoid authority, egotistical modern man also rejects genuine authority. If authority is imperfect, without wisdom, selfish, exploiting, it should be rejected. But not if the authority is the Most High.

Truth is truth. It applies to all of us. Whether you accept it with your heart or your mind, both instruments are there. If your heart tells you something, listen to it. Or use reason, intellect and analysis, but use them honestly, not to suit your whims. When we reason to suit our whims, that does not mean we are reasonable. Sensibility has to use the senses, not insensibility. Use rationality honestly and it will give you the right reply. Only because we use reason does not mean it is reasonable. Used in a righteous, honest manner, reason can give you conviction, but it cannot give you Realization. Where philosophy ends, Realization begins.

You can justify anything unsocial, immoral, permissive or wrong with the power of speech or intellect. I am not against reason except that it is a limited faculty. Reason is an instrument. It gives you conviction and determination, but beyond that it cannot give you anything. I would sooner hug a blind believer than an unreasonable thinker. Blind belief will one day bring you to the threshold of faith, whereas irrationality in the name of rationality will only lead you to skepticism. Skepticism often, if not always, is founded upon the unreasonable assertion of an egotistical nature. We cannot deceive anyone but our own self—feel sure. You are the one who knows what you are doing. If you are hiding, it is hidden within you. If you are twisting the meaning, someone inside you knows that you are not doing rightly, whatever your social status may be.

Feelings are higher than reason. Go by feelings, not emotions. In the 21st century, feelings will be a very

efficacious point of reference—*real* feelings. It has to be honest feelings, not whimsical or willful feelings. As long as we are not twisting our feelings into willfulness, or whimsical wants, they will give us the right answer. The mind can be emotional and intellectual but conscience is neither. It goes neither by feelings nor reason; it is an infallible voice. What does it do? It *sees*. You may use reason to justify anything you want, but you cannot produce the same the results. You cannot imitate the effects. It has to be what it is. You have to be that. That is a golden law. Conscience leads you to Being, to the truth. Future civilizations will follow the conscience, not the intellect; intellect will have outlived its use. Just as today we see with eyes only but adept yogis can "see" with more than one sense, so there will come a time when we will use conscience, the direct method.

Feelings are needed to soften the sharp edges of our personality. We have become too dry, cold and intellectual. These should be refined feelings, purified feelings, honest feelings, not the crude feeling of "what I want." Modern man has a restless mind filled with skepticism, intellectuality and reason. He has lost track of the focus and purpose of life. If you knew the purpose of life you would not be skeptical. Then you would choose according to your purpose and focus. In the freedom of reason and intellectuality, the disturbed mind does not know where it is going or what to do next. It wastes energy as it loiters in enjoyments. Your focus should be the center of your being, your central identity. When you see as it is, then with that focus, with that stillness of mind, you get the answers. It is not by concentration but through stilling the mind that you hear the voice of conscience. And that will be very abiding. You will never lose it. 🌸

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