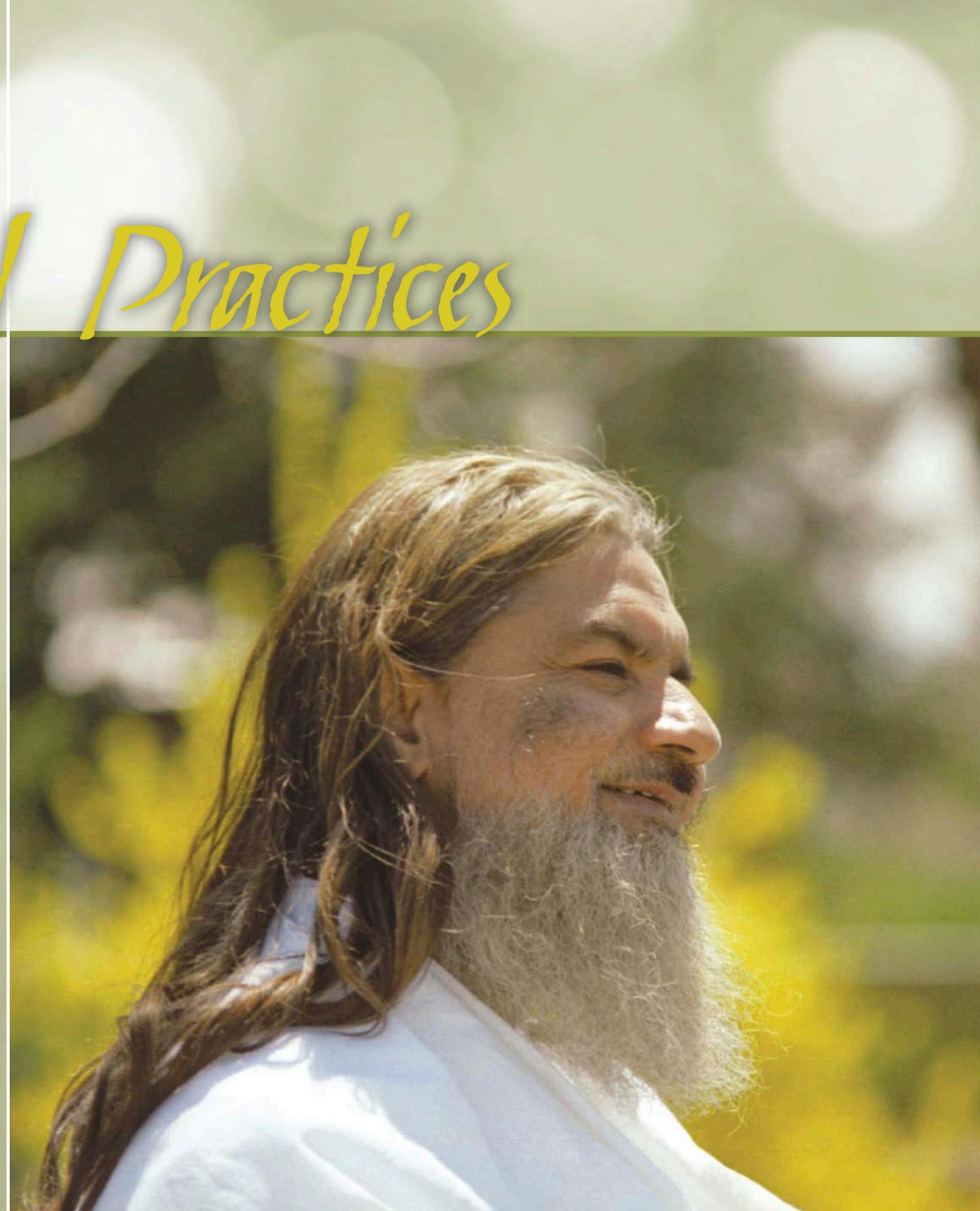


Satsang by Swami Amar Jyoti

# Vedantic Spiritual Practices

**Remind yourself that within the darkness there is always Light. It is our misconception that creates the struggle between God and the world, the Eternal and the finite.**

**B**Y THE GRACE OR MERCY of God, we have been given the faculty of distinguishing what is real and what is unreal, what is permanent or changeful, what is proper or improper. This capacity takes us out of the rut of circular, mechanical thinking, beyond intellectual understanding to insight. The first step is to watch your thoughts. You may not be able to do this during work or in busy times, at least not in the beginning. But as you proceed with silent contemplation or meditation ask yourself, "Is this thought permanent or transitory, real or unreal?" Now this may not be an enjoyable method but we have to do it. The practice of any art or music is, in the beginning, quite boring; maybe not for the practitioner but for those who are listening or observing. Creating a foundation for a building can be uninteresting, but when the structure begins to rise it is exciting.



This first step, and the second too, are very difficult. As per our experience, the majority will drop out there. They would like to sing the whole piece right away or erect the building then and there. The classic method requires labor in the beginning. In order to face ourselves, to ask what is permanent and transitory, what is real and unreal—not many can honestly do this. Even those who do most will not be honest, since the results will not be interesting. That is because ninety-nine percent of what we do and think is unreal. And who is going to face that? But those who want to evolve, who have the goal in sight—even though they may not be intense—would do well to face this. Whenever thoughts pass through your mind, while contemplating or meditating, ask yourself: “Is this a memory, a wish, a desire, imagination, planning, a projection, real or unreal?”

You might say, “I can’t just erase everything and still live in this world.” Many words could be used to explain this: I could call it *maya* or dualism. Through ordinary understanding, the Real is that which is permanent, changeless, eternal and immortal: Spirit, Light, God, Pure Consciousness. The unreal is that which is changeful, decaying, mortal and finite: that which we see all around us. So how do we synchronize the unreal with the Real? The answer is: by doing *sadhana*, spiritual practices, to grow deeper. Normally we feel, “I’ll lose something,” but that “something” is impermanent, changeful, fleeting. We feel comfortable with the changeful and the transitory because that is what we can easily grasp. But if we understand the synchronicity between the Real and unreal, then probably it will be easy.

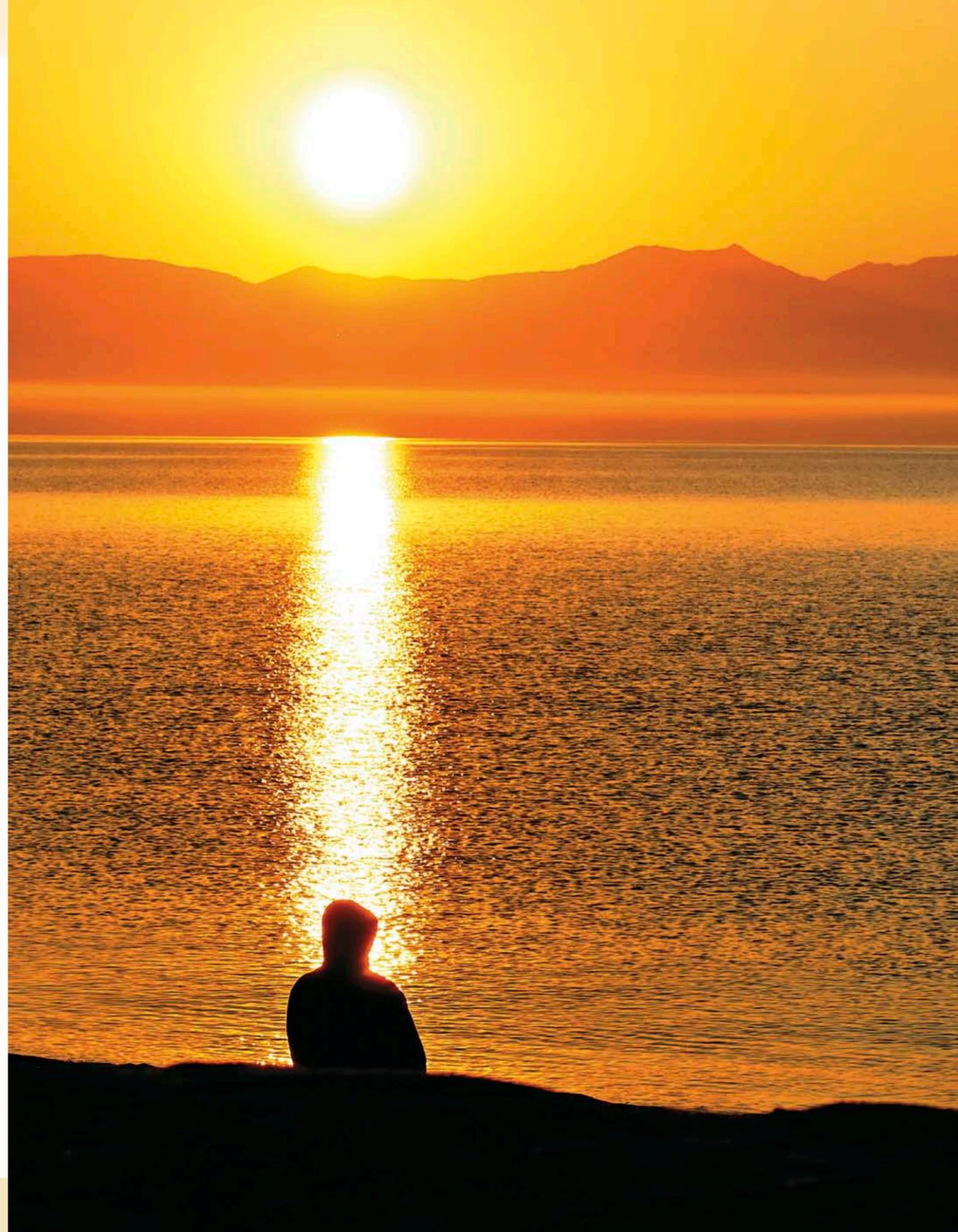
Often we forget that the foundation of the unreal and transitory is the changeless: Light, Pure Consciousness. The Eternal is not only the basis but *pervades* the unreal. If you understand and faithfully remember this, you will have no fear of loss. It is only when you separate the Real and unreal that you are in trouble. You can neither leave either one nor can you separate them. It is impossible to separate the Real and unreal. You can be unconscious of the Eternal part of it, but if you really engrave this truth in your mind you will never feel insecure or afraid. Remind yourself, even though theoretically, that the permanent and changeless is the pervading Reality throughout. It is only in your conception that you feel that you will lose the world around you if you hug the Real. That is where fear and insecurities begin.

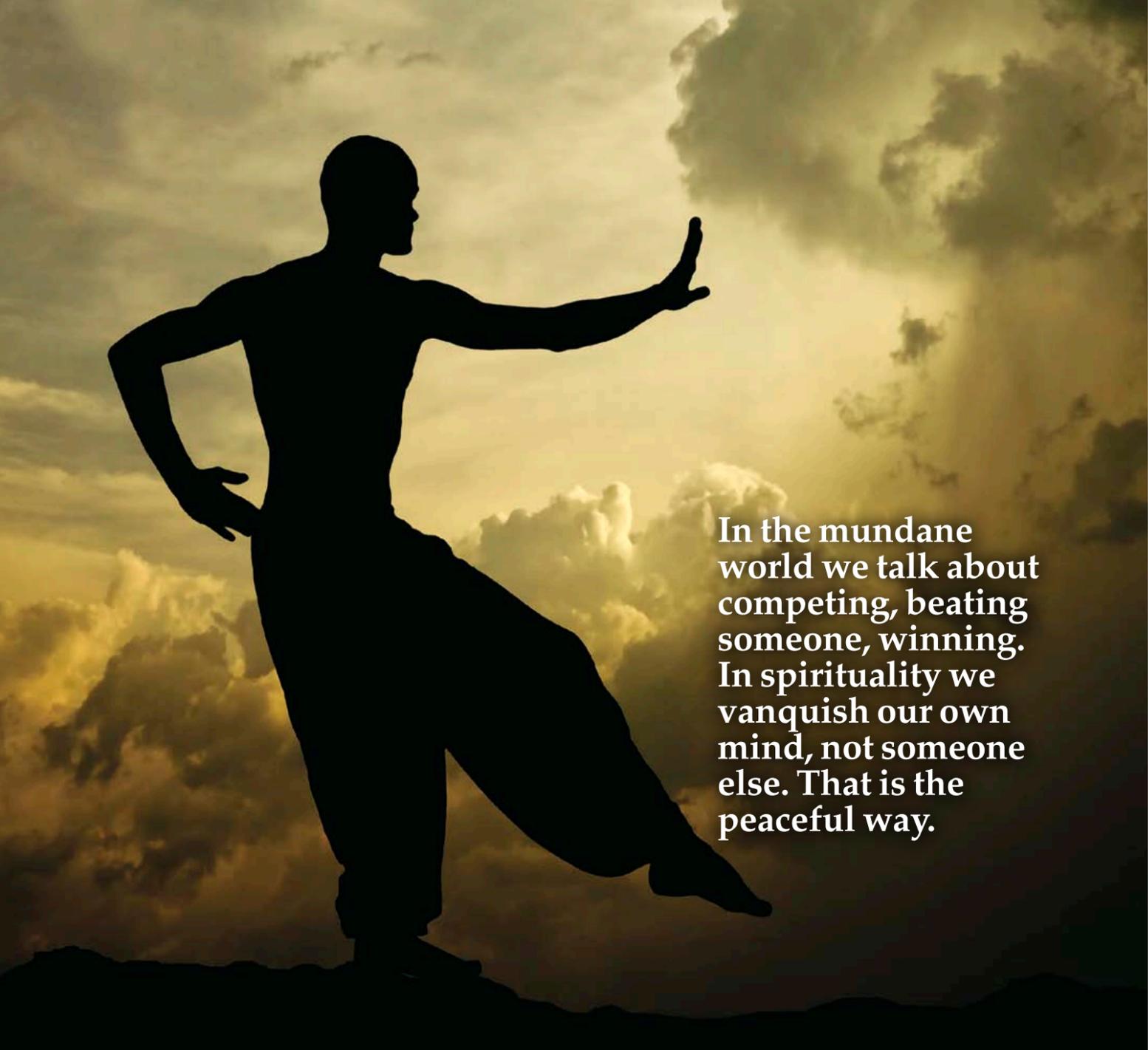
## **Faith is for the ego to eliminate itself. Spirit does not need faith; it is already Light. It is faith that vanishes the ego ultimately, not thinking.**

Remind yourself that within the darkness there is always Light. It is our misconception, our ignorance that creates the struggle between God and the world, the Eternal and the finite. Try to remember this. When you contemplate or meditate, as thoughts come and go—memories, worries, anxieties, happiness, whatever—remind yourself, “The basis of all this is my God, my Reality, Consciousness, without which this drama would not happen.” This is discrimination. Use understanding, intellect and rationality, but remind yourself that within these thoughts is that which is secure, the *summum bonum*, the Substance.

There is no need to fight with the mind. There is a smooth relaxed way. We have myriads of entertainments—phones, TVs, computers, cars, and a thousand things. The more entertainments we create, the more bored we feel. This being the case, the exercise of watching your thoughts and discriminating seems boring to us. So let us see what will give us peace and relaxation without hard labor. Thoughts mostly have to be tackled with thoughts first. When you watch your thoughts do not put too much concentration between the eyebrows. Just relax. In a relaxed attitude you will watch your thoughts more easily and correctly. What is the use of this? Because the Real and unreal are connected and inseparable. The awakened state called Consciousness is the very basis of our unconsciousness. While you are thinking or contemplating, you are still a conscious being. You have to have a basis, and that basis is Consciousness.

So first relax. Do not start with struggling, tension, hard labor, as if you are doing something that is very serious and God is going to be obliged to you. With a relaxed attitude you will miss some thoughts. Let them go. The thoughts that you observe or witness are the thoughts you should work upon. Do not see if they are good or bad. Do not avoid the bad and stick to the good. If you avoid so-called bad thoughts, the





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ones that pinch you, you are keeping your problems intact. It does not matter if you let some thoughts slip by; observe those that you can or you happen to grasp, whether good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant. Then only will you succeed. If you try to let go of bad thoughts, bad thoughts will not leave you. It is better to face them.

Ask yourself, without thinking about good and bad, “Is this thought the Permanent or impermanent?” How to know? You will know the finite as a passing phase, a changeful situation, a relationship, behavior,

loss or gain, harmony or disharmony, and so on. This is what practice is. At each stage, good or bad, remind yourself that the basis is Consciousness, the Divine. When you remind yourself in this way, you will get a sense of security, of comfort. Practice these two steps. First, try to achieve relaxation. Second, discriminate. This discrimination should be unqualified. Remind yourself: “The basis of both good and bad is Consciousness. It has not left me.” You may not be seeing this because to reach that Pure Consciousness is the ultimate end. Reality is there under or within the

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unreality. You are only bored when you try to divide the Reality, when you try to keep God away, trying to be a discriminative human. It is faith that will reach you within more deeply, not exercises. You have to have faith along with intellect.

Exercises are simply to exhaust your mind. When you are confused, holy people are happy because that makes you tired of your mind. It is faith that takes you deeper, not rational thinking, not even your discrimination. Why do we suggest that you employ discrimination, thinking and rationality? To exhaust your mind. So watch your thoughts. Do not avoid bad thoughts, because they will return. We know our frailties, weaknesses, how little control of mind we have. The mind is not in the grasp and control of most people most of the time.

Employ these three together: faith, discrimination, and belief in Consciousness or the pervading Reality. Does discrimination cancel faith, or faith cancel discrimination? No. Your faith is in that Pure Consciousness, God, not the unreality. You are employing discrimination for unreality. Faith is for the ego to eliminate itself. Spirit does not need faith; it is already Light. It is faith that vanishes the ego ultimately, not thinking. At the same time you are employing thinking. What does it come to? You are no longer fighting with yourself. This is a very peaceful method. You are employing all three faculties without rejecting or separating anything. Therefore you have no loss or fear or insecurity.

Fear comes in because you do not want to lose your favorite ideas, not because these are valuable but because you are familiar with them. That is why any fear of loss is fictitious, without exception, but we still fear losing because we have been identified with those things, grasping and possessing. There is no compromise in this. Therefore this exercise will be tension free. If you succeed at doing this to some extent for days, weeks or months, you will be pleasantly surprised. You will get a better understanding. Unknowingly you will have hit upon insight. This is the cream of Vedanta—*Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithya*. Reality exists; the world is illusory. Illusion and Brahma, the Reality, are inseparable. You are leaving none, separating none, fighting none.

This early morning I was thinking that the placebo effect is an offshoot of faith. Doctors named it placebo because I think they are afraid of calling it faith. In

scientific discoveries I have seen that scientists often avoid using spiritual words. I just laugh in my sleeves: they are only fooling themselves. They are trying to avoid faith because of reason and investigative methods. But if Einstein or some other scientist says something spiritual, how can they reject it? Avoid faith and you will not progress, let a hundred years pass, whether you are a philosopher or a scientist. It is only the investigative or analytical mind that gets confused. We have to have faith in the Goal, even imaginatively, in order to make this exercise fulfilling.

If I were to practice basketball I would need to have faith that I can get the ball in the hoop, right? Supposing I want to achieve a world record and the last guy who did this shot five hundred and one baskets without interruption. If I want to break that record I have to practice daily, but I also have to have faith in my ability to achieve five hundred and two baskets. How can I proceed without faith that I can do it? Likewise, when you are contemplating or meditating, you have to have faith that you will go through these distinctions of Real and unreal.

In the mundane world we talk about competing, beating someone, winning. In spirituality we vanquish our own mind, not someone else. You can beat someone in the phenomenal world because it is objective and dualistic, but not in the subjective world of Spirit. This being the case, faith is very much needed for the Goal, without competing with anything else. That is the peaceful way. Spiritual exercises do not disharmonize us with anyone or anything. It is the disharmonized vibrations and movements of our mind and vital forces that need to be pacified, settled and relaxed. This is very important because throughout these decades on Earth I have seen that Enlightenment does not have to be difficult unless you make it so. Do not separate God, the Divine, Consciousness from the material world. Distinguish the Permanent from the impermanent. Watch and observe your thoughts. Grasp those that you can, but remind yourself that there is a basis of Reality and Consciousness beneath your thoughts. This world would not exist if That were not there. The mind exists only because there is Reality behind it. So take both together.

Now these two steps are to start with—what is the next? Persistence. I remember when I was in Benares, there was a sage who hardly wore anything. In India nobody minds those *avadhuts*, those great ascetics who



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are not aware of anything outward. This holy man happened to be blind but that was not his handicap. If you had seen him—how he moved around, the agility he had—you would believe that he was seeing everything, though there was a disciple with him no doubt. I still remember, when he used to give Satsang, that people would ask questions and some would ask stupid questions. They would behave as if they were really great guns having realized everything and now they can question any holy man and challenge him. I remember how he would respond to such people. He would not give a direct reply, he would simply say, “Look, we preach for those who are imperfect, not who are already *siddhas*.”<sup>1</sup> And that guy would just be stopped dead.

View your thoughts; use the thorn to take out the thorn. That will be a realistic approach. Deal with each man, woman, child or animal as they *are*. Believe, even if you are not seeing, that God is within each one. Then you will have no tensions. I do not mean that you should therefore hug your child and forget God. Then you will be in trouble! Take both together. Problems come to us when we divide God and man, God and the world. This conceptual separation is the trouble. However, since we are imperfect to start with, realistically speaking, we have to imagine something or use our thinking faculty. That is what I am calling faith. When you start the exercise with faith you will enjoy it. Without faith, doing it mechanically will be boring.

Faith gives you humility and the courage to persist. If you are persisting intellectually you will give up after ten days, but if you start with faith your persistence will be more stable and you will carry on. And at one point, all of a sudden, you may hit upon insight. Then in normal life you will see and understand things better. What is achieved on the inside will be achieved

on the outside, in perfect proportion. What you have controlled inside you will control outside. What you have suffered or enjoyed inside will be the same outside. Whatever degree of peace you achieve within you will experience everywhere.

Once insight is born, you will achieve more and more depth until you touch your soul. Then you are better equipped to deal with others without disharmony and tension. Otherwise you will feel disturbed by others; you will get irritated and angry. It is not their fault but yours, because you are not immune to disturbances from the outside. Without faith you will not have the strength and courage to deal with disturbances. Vivekananda used to say that faith will give you nerves of steel and bones of iron, and “Vedanta fills life into you.” What I am trying to show is how to start harmonizing with the world while doing this exercise. Rather than clashing with outside vibrations, you are learning how to be immune. That is indispensable when you are on the path to Enlightenment. When you reach there you will be perfectly immune to everything. This method allows you to start with peace rather than end with peace.

One last thing I would like to say: keep yourself humble so that you accept onslaughts from outside. If you are humble nothing will trouble you. When storms come, great trees fall but the grass remains intact. Do not be stiff like trees that are knocked down in a storm. That is called arrogance. Humility makes you immune to such challenges, or at least able to tolerate them. So persist in faith, discrimination, and belief in your underlying matrix of Consciousness. 🙏

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Yogic adepts; those perfected in yogic practices.

© 2014 by Truth Consciousness. Teaching from the basis of eternal Truth, the message of Swami Amar Jyoti’s Satsangs (Sanskrit: communion with Truth) is one of deep spiritual unity. His way is not to espouse a particular creed but to impart a spiritual way of life. During His work for four decades (1961-2001), He awakened and uplifted countless souls around the world to God Consciousness, disseminating the timeless Truth underlying all traditions and faiths. Swami Amar Jyoti is the author of several books. These and over 700 audio Wisdom Teachings illuminating the classical path for modern times are available on compact disc and MP3. This Satsang was edited from *Vedantic Spiritual Practices* (P-64), given during the *Expanding Consciousness Retreat* in October 1996 at Sacred Mountain Ashram. A catalog of Satsangs by Swami Amar Jyoti, recorded live, is available at [truthconsciousness.org](http://truthconsciousness.org). Please see page 59 of this issue for further information. Photo on Page 3: Swami Amar Jyoti at Rockford, Michigan circa 1987.