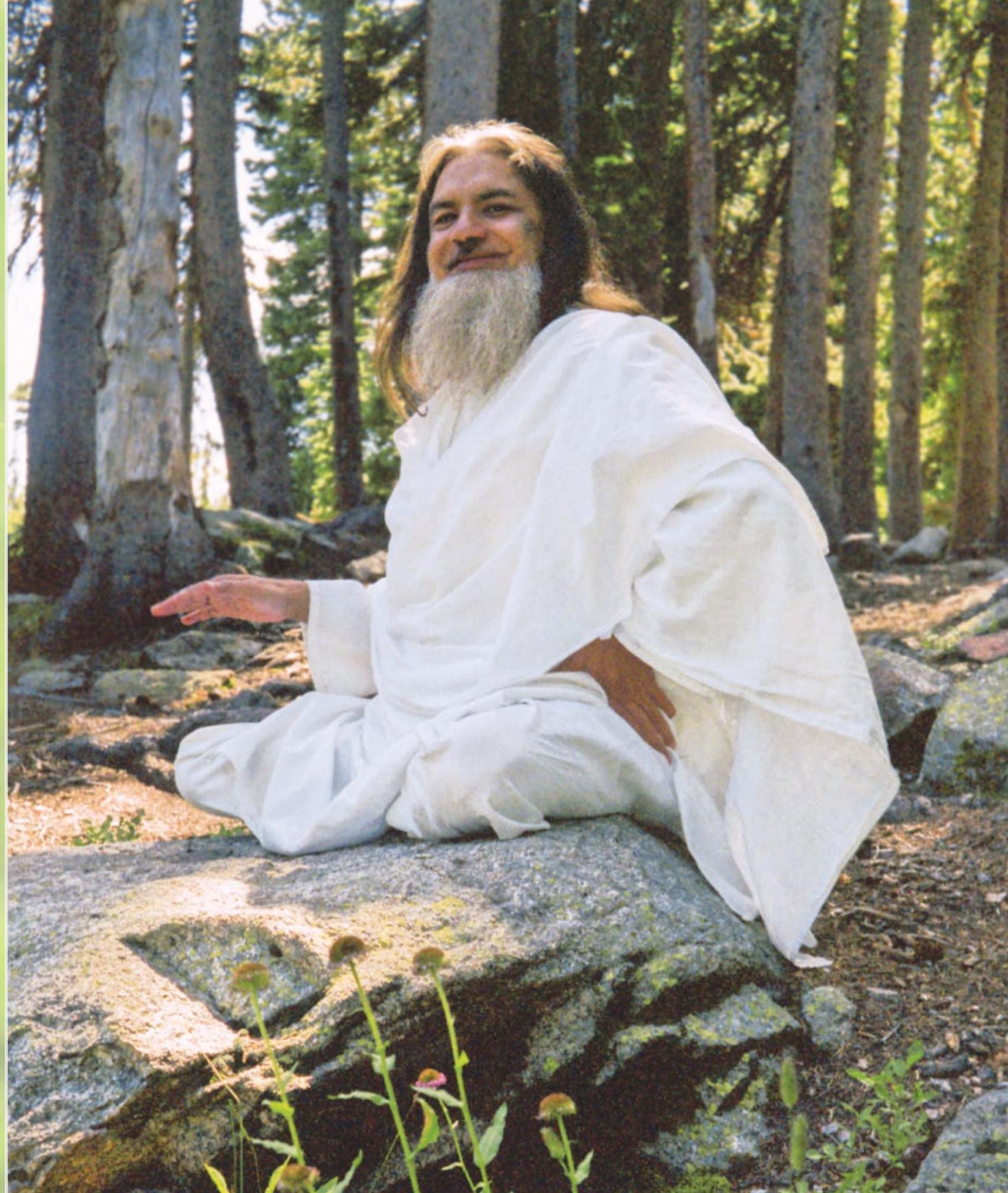


Satsang by Swami Amar Jyoti

Sincerity in Spiritual Practices

Practices are necessary to redesign and re-culture the mind so that you can choose and aspire more consciously. Instead of drifting with the circumstances of your life, you can consciously redesign it.

WHY ARE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES NECESSARY? Through practices you become master of your own mind. Then your mind is no longer ruling you. Not that mind is a separate entity; it is your own instrument, your own world. You created your mind with your will and now it is like a computer filled with the data you have put there. You are under the sway of your mental modifications, your choices. You allow yourself to drift into a chain reaction from the choices you have made, the habits you have created, and their results. This feels easy because it is recorded like grooves—the roads and paths you walk with your mind. These grooves in Sanskrit are called *samskars*.





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What you are not seeing is that because of these samskars you are losing your renewal and refreshment, getting into monotony and boredom, doing the same things over and over again throughout your life. To avoid this, practices are necessary to redesign and re-culture the mind so that you can choose and aspire more consciously. Instead of drifting with the circumstances of your life, you can consciously redesign it. Practices give control of the mind and more control over your destiny. Not only so, looking back you will see how you made your own destiny and that you can remake it again.

According to Raja Yoga, discipline of mind is called *samyam*. Through a disciplined mind your will becomes conscious action. Practices, *sadhana*, make you *siddha*, perfected. When you are consciously willing, consciously acting and consciously designing your life, you are a yogi. You could easily call this heaven but heaven is not the goal; it is to be enjoyed on the way. The real seeker would ask, what is next? Mystical questions would come up: What is the purpose of all this? What is God and what am I? Why do we fall and then again get back to paradise?

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Nothing short of Enlightenment will truly satisfy us but we cannot achieve it without practices. Without practices you would not even think of your True Self; intellect alone cannot do this. Practices make that very craving for Self Realization crop up naturally. Then you will see that Enlightenment is the goal for which all these practices were necessary. Practices are simply to counter-effect the degeneration that we have accumulated during the course of desires and karmas. When practices have served their purpose, when they have freed us from degeneration, misery and sorrow, they are no longer needed. Before that you were occupied with the ego, all the time feeding ego, on ego trips, wallowing in desires and diversions. That feels easy because it is what mind desires, but ultimately ego trips pull you into ditches from which you cry to be saved.

Practices, such as meditation, satsang, prayer, mantra repetition, chanting, worship, selfless service and reading spiritual books, clean and purify the mind. They inspire and elevate you to want to achieve a higher yoga, not only releasing your mind but releasing your soul into the Universal Soul. This is called *Mahayoga*—*maha* meaning great, *yoga* meaning union: *great union*. You are not only binding your mind but joining your individual soul, *jiva*, with Cosmic Being.

You cannot practice to join your individual soul with the Universal; it is simply letting go and surrendering to That. By that time you have achieved sufficient purity and are sufficiently cut off from worldly moorings. It may take decades of practices, which I call “improvisations of the first tune.” When you have finished your improvisations you come to ecstatic play. Then you are spontaneous and creative. You let go unto the Lord. Even if you have not heard about such things and do not remember them, at that purified state of your mind you will automatically want this. You do not need preaching there; preaching is before that stage. It is not so much, “God, Thou art all, I am nothing.” At that stage it is not your mind talking to God, as if trying to convince God through logic and reasoning. It is a soul leap into union and ecstasy. Some saints have called it the Great Silence.

Whatever we call it—the Supreme, the Godhead, Enlightenment—at that time there is nothing to pull you down. You have purified and pacified the mind by practices. You have gained control of the mind through

disciplines. Then the mind becomes your partner. Instead of clashing or pulling you hither and thither, it becomes a good instrument to work for you. With mind as your companion, you run together. Mind, your nature, your creation, is solved. You are neither renouncing your nature nor is your nature grabbing or tempting you. Both ways are finished. Your mind is in tune and harmony in such a way that you understand its secret.

Enlightenment is nothing else but vanishing the separation of “me” and the Creator. Then you will see that no questions remain. Not only do you *know* but you *be* That—*Aham Brahman Asmi*. You exist in your own reality. That is as far as words can go. You are in pure Existence—*Asmi*. All the yogas—hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, karma yoga—lead to this Mahayoga. Some have called it *sahaja yoga*, meaning natural yoga. Enlightenment is release, and that ends the clash of mind, desires, temptations and use of force. All that is over. You exist in your natural state, *sahaja*. Everything flows out of you spontaneously and creatively without trying to plan or achieve anything. To reach this state, practices are very necessary. Without practices we are just raw material, like ore from a mine. The Indian scriptures have said that without practices we are animals. Why? Without practices we are just led away by our minds. Although human beings, we remain slaves.

The state of Enlightenment is indefinable. You are pure Existence, pure Consciousness. There is no mind as a separate instrument. There is no duality of thought, no reasoning, no subject and object relationship, only Oneness. As we are now, mind disturbs that Oneness, that Being, because we have not dealt with it. It is as if you are a parent who wants to meditate and your children keep coming and disturbing your meditation. There is nothing wrong with the children. The point is that if you have not purified and disciplined your mind, it will go on disturbing you. You have to solve it. Even if someone egotistically says, “Mind is just a dualistic instrument—why worry about it? Let me meditate and attain Enlightenment,” every time you try to do that your mind keeps pushing you back.

Purifying the mind and making it free from temptations may look difficult in the beginning but ultimately the rewards are very high. It is an uphill task but this is how to train the mind, which is like wild horses. Once the mind is controlled and

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pacified, then you take hold of the reins and the horses take you wherever you want to go. You are not harming the horses; you are simply guiding them in a particular direction. This is the metaphor for the mind used in the Bhagavad Gita. When Arjuna's mind came back on the path he asked Krishna, "What do you command me to do?" Krishna told him: "Take up the bow and arrow." When your mind is in your control, your concentration is unswerving, unflinching, and one-pointed. With a distracted and confused mind you cannot reach your goal. When dualistic practices have fulfilled their function, counter-affecting your restless, confused mind, you proceed quietly toward your goal. Pay as much attention to practices as you do to any other thing in

your daily routine. They should be an indispensable part of your daily routine.

Enlightenment is a very natural state of being, of pure Consciousness, of pure Light. Enlightenment itself is not difficult to achieve, but the way we have created our minds has created hurdles and difficulties. Due to our mental tendencies or modifications, called *vrittis* in Sanskrit, our mind pulls us toward certain choices, desires, temptations, wishful thinking, and so on. The Vedic aphorism, *Yogas Citta Vritti Nirodhah*, means: "Yoga is stilling the movements of the mind." We create habits. Habits create karmas. Karmas create results. Results create a chain reaction and then we are bound. To get free from this bondage we bind the mind with practices. That is yoga.

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If we do not do yoga, we do *bhoga*, meaning: "mind trips." In modern life we call this "freedom," but from the spiritual or yogic point of view we call it *bhoga*. *Bhoga* has three meanings: enjoyment, bad luck and karma. These mental modifications and attitudes have put you in bondage and yet you say you have freedom of thought and action. However, in spite of having that "freedom," many are miserable and suffering. In this Kali Yuga, Iron Age, *bhoga* has become independence of thought and action, which is just glorified nonsense. It is actually a perversion of the truth, and the results speak for themselves. This so-called independence does not give us ecstasy or emancipation. It is simply "independence of enjoyment." Once we understand that our real enjoyment, our real ecstasy is in union with the Supreme, it will counter-effect our mind-trips. How do we do this? By spiritual practices.

Self-image and prestige have become the religion of modernity, which is actually quite a degrading factor. Self-image is nothing else but an ego trip, but image has become an eloquent tribute. How else could we make ego look prestigious and respectable? Therefore self-image becomes bondage and degradation until we "yoke" or "bind" the mind again to the higher Self, to Spirit. We cannot do this without having controlled the mind, and we cannot control the mind without practices. Daily study or sustained practice—*abhyasa*—is needed. If you leave gaps of some days or longer, by the time you begin again you have lost that sustained effort. Therefore regularity is very necessary. Whatever the results on a particular day, even if you do not feel much elevated, keep doing. You may ask: "What is the use of mechanical practicing when my mind is thinking of something else?" The truth is quite the reverse. That is exactly the reason you keep practicing: in order to control your mind's wandering and habits. As long as you are sincere in practices, even though it may seem mechanical, one day you will transcend. Today it may not look that way. "Isn't it better that I get up and do what my mind is thinking about?" If you do that you are allowing your mind to keep you in stark bondage. You are allowing yourself to be victimized by your own mind. You are allowing yourself to be weak.

If we succumb to our thoughts and actions the results are karmas creating a chain reaction, and that is exactly bondage. Practices bring your mind back into your own perspective. It may take time—years, decades, even lifetimes—but that is worth doing rather

than succumb to weakness. After all, who else can control your mind but you? If you postpone it today, you will have to do it tomorrow. You may fail at times but carry on. The mind is a mechanical instrument of cause and effect, of karma. It is as though you have lost control over the machine and now the machine has control over you. That is why we call it bondage.

Devotees, disciples and those who are consciously seeking have to understand the value of practices and give great importance to them. Make your mind do practices daily, whatever mental or physical restlessness you may have. Sit in meditation for half an hour or forty-five minutes daily. Just keep doing it. When your mind is weak, gives excuses, defends, avoids—do not accept that. Tell it, "Not this time. You did all that in earlier births and earlier years. I have a Guru now. No more." I do not mean to starve the mind, but do not allow it to remain restless, confused or wayward. Just tell it, "Now is the time to practice." Do your duties but keep the Goal in sight: "My mind should be in my hands. My destiny should be in my hands. Let me stay steadfast to my dharma, my virtue." Then you will overcome all weakness, miserliness, narrow-mindedness, untruthfulness, harmfulness, hatred, prejudice, jealousy and weirdness.

Be transparently childlike. Tell your mind, "Face the truth. You have been avoiding it, trying to make your own world by your way of thinking. Come to terms with the truth now." This will produce concentration, and when that happens Enlightenment is not too far. Concentration is the sixth stage of Patanjali's Eightfold Path; the eighth stage is Enlightenment. When you come to terms with the truth, perversion cannot remain. As long as you are avoiding the truth, perversion becomes your refuge. And it is not the perversion of language alone but inner thoughts also. Wrong thinking, impure or false thoughts lead to wrong actions, which create misery, suffering and loss of peace. When you begin to gather up your mind, the reverse is true. As you clean the mind you bring it under control and back on the path. The results will be gradual but you will see the change. Then Ganesha, the embodiment of wisdom, comes and helps you; your astrological stars help you. Then you will see the reason you found it difficult: because your wishes and desires were pulling you back.

When you get there you will see that Enlightenment is not only self-satisfying, it is *the point, the state* you

The way to Enlightenment is imperceptible, not sensational. It has remained the same since thousands of years. Even Buddha said: "Every one of you is a Buddha. I cannot make you a Buddha. You have to awaken the Buddha within you."

were searching for even in your unconsciousness. To be your True Self is what you have always been seeking. In the name of independence you thought and acted according to wrong attitudes and your unreal self; therefore you kept missing your True Self. You will eventually realize that you knew this truth all along but you were consciously avoiding it. And this avoidance can carry on for years and births. You replace one bondage with a new experience; it may yield something but slowly it proves to be another bondage. That is why we pray, "Lead us from bondage to freedom." It is no good just dreaming about Enlightenment; we have to clear the way through practices.

There is no fanciful jump to Enlightenment. The only way is through virtues and practices. This is the classical path, the eternal way, which sages have called *Sanatana Dharma*. It sustains you and leads you to your goal without being sensational. Whatever comes in between are simply diversions. We occupy ourselves with TV, movies, the internet, telephones, radio, et cetera. We run after whatever attracts our senses and dissipates our energy. There is nothing wrong with trying various methods, but sensationalism can only lead to a point. Whether it is a dream reader, a mind reader, a saline tub or rebirthing—all of these give you something but they do not take you to the Ultimate. Reaching the goal of Enlightenment is by the classical path of meditation, *japa* (repetition of mantra) and other practices. You cannot change this.

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Buddha. I cannot make you a Buddha. You have to awaken the Buddha within you." It has to come from you. We can give blessings, grace, show the way, purify you at times by love and rebukes, even inspire you, but ultimately Enlightenment has to come from within you. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you." The Goal is always there. Light is always shining. Buddhahood is within you. You have to awaken by

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purifying your heart and mind, by following the dharma, by sustained, steady practice and patience. Keep doing till you reach. 🌸

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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. This Satsang is edited from *Sincerity in Spiritual Practices* (P-56). A catalog of the live recordings of Satsangs and Retreats by Swami Amar Jyoti is available at truthconsciousness.org, or call 520-743-8821 for a free copy by mail. Please see page 68 of this issue for further information. Photo on Page 3: Swami Amar Jyoti at Brainard Lakes, CO, 1983.