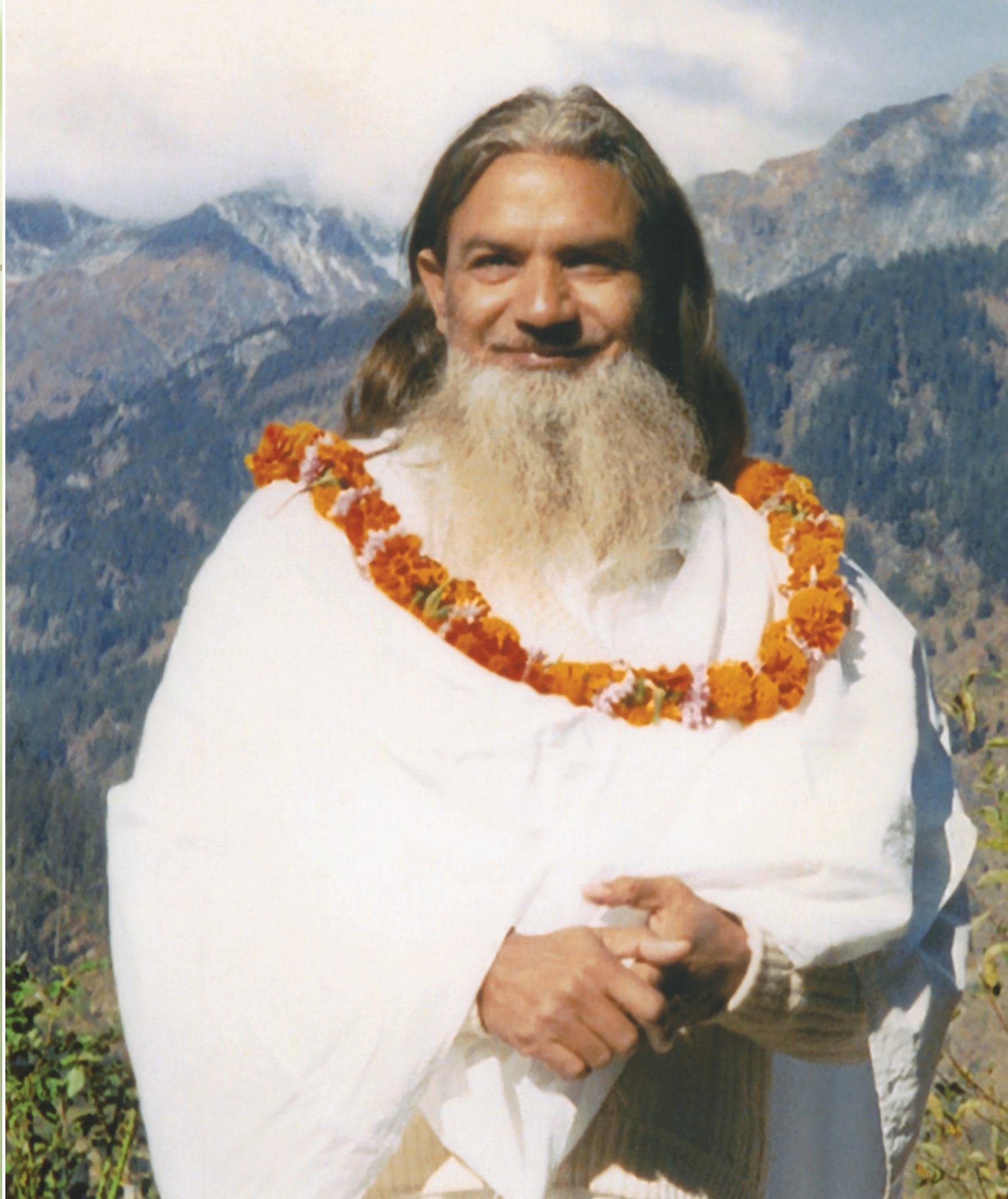


Satsang by Swami Amar Jyoti

# Upward Growing Practices

**Practices do not make you perfect; they make you proficient. But practices will eventually exhaust your mind. Your Perfection, your Light, your Consciousness within is self-existent.**

**T**HERE IS A BODY and within the body is the Spirit. We should take care of the body but it is not our entirety. It is a cover. When you receive a parcel you open it and discard the outer cover, or sometimes preserve it for reuse. In the same way, our bodies are recycled in nature into the five elements. The difference is, whereas you see and use a parcel wrapping for a very short time, you live with your body for so many years that you form an attachment, which has been called false identification.







The essence or Spirit is forgotten. When you look at someone, you see the body, the physical being, because that is how you are identified. This false identification creates a false or relative reality. Because of this identification, most everything in life is cultured to suit the body.

Through repetition of thought and action, called *samskar*, this body identification becomes so solid that it becomes your reality. If someone tells you your body is transitory, that is very hard to comprehend. Even if you recognize or focus on this in meditation—the body is transitory, Spirit is true—it may give you joy for a few minutes but afterwards you will drop down again. And when, God forbid, some dear one is ill or dying, all you see is the body and you are sad and mourning. That habit of identification with the body lingers on because you have practiced this same thinking process repeatedly.

Yoga practices were introduced to counter effect or nullify this false identification. Practices such as meditation, chanting, repeating the holy Name, pilgrimage and selfless service form a new identification

to nullify the previous identification. Practices eventually thrust the ego into dispassion or detachment from the baser elements. Your ego gets refined in such a way that you hit upon the idea: *What is the goal of my life?* With an unrefined crude nature that thought would never come.

Practice is also a form of identification, so much so that if you lose that identification, you may feel lost. I was in Benares and something like this happened. A certain lady devotee used to worship Gopal, the child Krishna. She had a small picture of Gopal and she spent her days offering flowers, feeding him, bathing him, fanning him, putting him in the cradle with a mosquito curtain at night, opening it in the early morning. In this way she continued her worship day after day, month after month, year after year. When I was there she had been years into that kind of identification or practice. She was soaked in love and devotion for Gopal. If someone told her to go somewhere else for a few days she would say, “But who will feed my Gopal?” And she meant it.

One day her Master told a disciple to take the picture of Gopal from her room. This lady—we called

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her Gopaler Maa, or mother of Krishna—had built up her practice in such a way that it was a really good example of image worship. That day when she came back from bathing in the Ganges and returned to her room, she didn’t find her Gopal. She began weeping and wailing as though she had lost her own child. All were sympathetic but none knew where Gopal was except her Master and that one disciple. And so it went on and on and everyone was sad. For three days Gopaler Maa did not eat or bathe or sleep. Her true son was lost and she could not feel anything else. She was just weeping. On the third day her Master came to her and said, “Look now, your Gopal is gone, okay?” Gopaler Maa told her, weeping, “No, I want my Gopal back. You are the only one who can bring him back.” Her Master told her, “Gopal has to go to so many others. He can’t be locked up here in your room only. He has so many homes to go. Why don’t you just release him?” Gopaler Maa said she could not, and really she couldn’t. Then her Master told her, “Look, he has gone nowhere.” Gopaler Maa said, “Well, he is not here.” Her Master said, “He just went into you. He is *within* you.” And she got it, somehow. She became silent and remained that way. She had a real vision of Gopal: she *was* Gopal. She never missed him again.

Identification with a practice can, no doubt, form its own trap. But whereas identification with anything that is part of baser human nature cannot lead you out of its own swamp, identification with practices will one day lead you to a breakthrough, which no other attachment can do. Therefore I value practices up to that

point. In the example of Gopaler Maa, the time came when her practices thrust her beyond her devotion and attachment, and she was *one* with Gopal.

I remember another lady in America in whose home I was a guest years back. This lady told me, “I have heard that people in India worship photos of their gurus.” At that time I was new to America and my photo was not kept anywhere, but some other gurus’ photos were. This lady was well meaning, in a way, and she was my hostess so I could not ignore her question. All of a sudden I noticed in that room several photos of someone, her son or grandson, and God saved me. I asked her, “Whose photo is this?” “Oh, he was my grandson.” She suddenly got so sad and pathetic. “God took him away at a very early age.” I asked, “Why do you keep his photo?” She was hurt, of course. She had forgotten her earlier question. I asked, “He is gone, right? This photo is not going to give you your grandson back.” She replied, “No, but it reminds me of him.” I said, “That is why disciples keep their gurus’ photos—to remind them.” She said, “I understand.”

Although practices themselves do not lead directly to Enlightenment or the vision of God, regular practices are essential, whether your heart is there or not. One day your identification with your practices may thrust you into questioning: *Why am I doing all this?* Or at least you will rebuke yourself for doing your practices mechanically. I have always said that practices do not make you perfect; they make you proficient. Perfection is self-existent. You do not practice perfection. But practices will eventually exhaust your mind. You follow certain rules and disciplines until those very rules thrust you out of the bondage of rules, then you transcend.

Your Perfection, your Light, your Consciousness within is self-existent. That may sound as though we should not practice, but if we do not, we will remain identified with the lower elements of our human nature—greed, attachment, falsehood, jealousy, competition, et cetera. To lift up our consciousness in the form of the mind we have to have upward growing practices. Practices uplift you from mundane identifications. Give attention to your practices in a very solid manner. When you worship or chant in ecstasy you attain the climax of your practices. You become a free-flowing soul unto your Lord, transcending all formulas and techniques.

For example, you may have heard the term *sahaja* as in *sahaja Samadhi* (spiritual absorption) or sahaja





meditation. Sahaja means normal or natural, so natural that it is not a formula or technique by itself. But since we give a name to it, it becomes a technique. It is as good as saying that if I burn a candle from a candle, it is a technique, but actually it is not. When you burn a candle from a candle, the light simply shines. The mind is habituated to three-dimensional thinking. This makes us see everything in that form or pattern. Where your view is, your identification is. If you are seeing the parts of the candle, the wax, wick and flame, you are not getting to its core: light. So what will you meditate upon? The light, not the candle. The candle is simply a carrier.

When you go deep into anything you come to the acme or climax, what is actually *there*. To start with, take anything and first see its outer form. Go deeper; you will see other components. What are those components

for? Try to see the point. If churches and temples, priests and rabbis were not there, would God be worshiped? Or is it the other way around? If God were not there, churches and temples, priests and rabbis would have no meaning. If the Spirit were not in you, you would not exist. If light were not all pervading, a candle would not burn. Science does not say this; it says a candle burns because of oxygen. But oxygen is everywhere, so why it is not burning everywhere? Here is the crucial question: is the capacity for light only in the oxygen? Einstein would disagree.

There are many, many systems of meditation. One is to concentrate upon a flame in a windless place where it is serene and unwavering. You meditate on that light not only because of the flame but because through that gateway you *enter* the whole cosmos of Light. That is,

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provided you are honest, sincere and regular in this practice. The candle is simply an instrument. It is the flame that makes it shine. So it is with the sages, realized souls and perfected beings. Light shines through them because they are instruments through which it can shine. Within everyone there is Spirit and Light.

When you persist in practices they chisel your concentration, making you more one-pointed and serene day by day until you have a vision of the very object you are worshiping. Tremendous vistas and mysteries will be revealed to you. The sages of Atlantis and other civilizations saw the past, present and future through crystals. Nostradamus looked into a bowl of water and saw thousands of years into the future. Where do these mysteries come from? Deep concentration. You first begin by focusing on some Goal, then gradually your longing increases, your concentration and pathos deepen and you get to what we call divine madness. In the Vedas it is written that the soul or Spirit within is a flame like *angushta maatrena*, which means “the size of your upper thumb joint.” In meditation, when you concentrate your energy into that core of your being, you are unaware of your surroundings or any phenomena. The gateway of the universe opens and through that you not only see the past, present and future, the whole cosmos of light shines.

Whatever you are doing, be aware and conscious. Normally they say: *Work while you work, play while you play*. I am saying: *Live while you live*. Do not do anything unconsciously or habitually; that is a dead life. When you are unconscious, your eyes may be open but your

consciousness is blind. You might ask, “How can I see everything I do? I’ll be tired. I don’t have that much time.” On the contrary, you are tired because you do not pay attention to what you are doing. If you see clearly you will never do anything unconsciously. You will be spontaneous and creative. This unfoldment process is so beautiful, relaxing and joyful. While doing you are not doing. This is true selflessness.

Therefore, in meditation and practices put your whole heart and soul, mind and might on your chosen Ideal or Goal, as if only *That* exists, not you. If you are looking for perfection, you have to choose an ideal upon which you can project that perfection. This is why *murtis* or images of Divine Beings came into vogue. Long back I asked a saint why we often worship an image in stone or wood or other material rather than a living guru. He gave a humorous reply but one with great wisdom. “Look, the stone will never betray your faith in it. If you project perfection on it, it is not going to be otherwise. But any living being, human or animal will sooner or later dissatisfy you.” When you impose your projection onto a stone or picture or symbol or a diagram such as a *yantra*, the image has no capacity to betray your conviction, since it is inanimate. Not that any inanimate object can be worshiped as perfect. There is a distinction between the holy and not holy. You choose a holy object of devotion because there are higher vibrations in that image.

For example, a table does not radiate holy vibrations. It is a dull object, so you would not worship it. But there are certain objects or places that radiate something invisible to the common eye that make them holy symbols or objects of worship. That is why there are temples and shrines in India and elsewhere in which the sacred image is called “awakened.” If you visit there, or pray or meditate there, you absorb those vibrations. It has to be holy, sacred, an inanimate object, or a being such as your guru. Whichever way you practice, Spirit is within you, so go on penetrating: first the body, then the vital life force or *prana*, then your mind and thoughts and feelings, then the ego. One day you will see that you are throbbing into Spirit. It may take you years or even lifetimes to reach that core of Light within you.

Ego is the gateway through which you penetrate to where Light is flooding. From that pinhole you emerge into the infinite cosmos. When you concentrate upon something to see it as it is, it does not stop there. It takes





you further and further. The more you try to see what it is, the deeper you go into it. I remember a holy man in India who was giving *Satsang* about love of God. He was so soaked into that love that he was weeping and some people were also weeping. At the end when the people began to leave I noticed one fellow really weeping with tears streaming. Near him was an open paper packet containing red chili powder. He had put that in his eyes but he was not hiding it. Some people

asked him, “Why did you put chili powder in your eyes?” He said, “Well, he was talking about love of God and weeping for God and I saw some people weeping. I tried to weep but I could not. So I put these chilies in my eyes.” In the meantime that holy man came nearby and heard the whole story. He said, “It doesn’t matter. At least he put the chilies in his eyes in God’s name. It may look artificial but his motive is good. One day he will truly weep for God.”

**If you see clearly you will never do anything unconsciously. You will be spontaneous and creative. This unfoldment process is so beautiful, relaxing and joyful. While doing you are not doing.**

Practices are essential as long as the mind is flickering, wavering, shaky, restless, hopping around like sparrows, with thoughts out of control. Can you stop your thoughts? One thought? Because your mind is restless you have to give it the anchor of practices. Then gradually these practices, if you continue sincerely for years, will throw you beyond practices. This so-called technique of consciously seeing everything as it is, is beyond practices. Therefore, logically it should be the most difficult, but actually it is the easiest. The paradox is intellectual, not spiritual. It is the easiest, for the simple reason that it is *direct*. But if you are not able to do that, then you come to other practices, which are also good. It is your earnestness of seeking that opens the way.

What is the purpose of a candle? What is the purpose of a flower? What is the purpose of this whole flowering creation? The candle’s purpose is to give light. The flower’s purpose is to bloom and give beauty and fragrance. There must be a purpose of human life. That purpose can be described in many ways. One of the ways is to shine, to give light to others. The problem happens when you focus on *me*: “give me, give me, give me.” That is our true selfishness. By thinking with a muddy, self-centered mind—“I want, I want it, I want it my way”—you are constricting and contracting your consciousness. The expansive way is inexhaustible: the more you give the more you have. Try to see the difference. I am sure that when Jesus said a camel could go through the eye of a needle before a worldly man could enter the gates of heaven, he meant that those who are simple and pure hearted will be led to heaven, not selfish ones. I can easily say that selfish ones cannot practice successfully. Some even start practicing to get and get and get. All the time: *what about me?* Then if their concentration does not work, no wonder. There

are certain ingredients needed in order for practices to yield results.

When you practice anything—meditation, worship, concentration—see that you lose yourself into it rather than doing it for selfish reasons. Do you know why Lucifer was banished from heaven? He was a minister of God. He knew so much. Many words could be said about him but one thing was prominent: he got very selfish. He became fixated on what he wanted, that God should do accordingly. Because of that he lost the whole heaven. One is the law of expansion; the other is of contraction. It depends on where you are going. Are you expanding or you are narrowing your consciousness? Virtues are all expansive; vices are all constricting. Apply this science. There is a joy in expansion; there are worries, clashes and stagnation in narrowing down. One leads to heaven; the other leads to hell. In expansion you get an inexhaustible supply of love, peace, help, joy, beauty, freedom; in constriction the supply goes on reducing until it comes to misery. Practitioners who are true seekers expand their hearts.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that we are God’s children, we should not only pray to Him to give us our daily bread. Ask Him for something more. Ask Him for light, joy, love and freedom. Ask Him for Liberation. These are the divine bounties He is giving us. Jesus said, “Seek ye the divine first and everything else shall be added unto you.” He did not say, “Blessed are those who are greedy, for they shall get everything.” Try to see the thing in itself. You will know the truth. Your mind will be still. You will penetrate deeply and find the Spirit. Everything else will unfold automatically. Creativity, spontaneity, freedom, joy, peace and love will be at your feet. You will not hanker after these things. They will be your bounties. 🌸

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