

Our ability to be in tune with others and Existence depends entirely upon how we conduct ourselves. It depends on the priorities we choose in life. What if we do not choose? What if we accept things as they happen to us?

It is time to talk about renunciation. Renunciation is not running away from life. Renunciation is flowing with life without resistance. The Sanskrit word *sannyas* refers to this state of trust with Existence that allows us to let go all other things in life.

Sannyas...

There is a beautiful story from the life of Buddha:

After enlightenment, Buddha visited many places preaching his dhamma or teachings, and initiating people into spiritual life.

On his way, he entered Kapilavastu, his birth place. He walked on the streets with his disciples wearing the saffron robe. Everyone watched them with great wonder.

Buddha's wife, Yashodhara, heard the noise in the street and asked what it was. Her maids told her that it was none other than her own husband who had returned as the Buddha, the enlightened soul. She did not go to meet him. Instead,

she called for her son Rahul. Rahul was born the night that Buddha left home in search of enlightenment.

She asked Rahul, 'Do you see that radiant figure there who holds a begging bowl and yet looks like a king? He is your father. Go and ask him for your inheritance.'

The young boy ran downstairs and pushed his way through to where Buddha stood. He fell at Buddha's feet and boldly repeated what his mother had told him.

Buddha lifted him up gently with a smile and looked at him. He simply removed the gold hemmed cloth the boy was wearing and replaced it with a saffron one.

The boy, seven years of age, was given his inheritance. He was the first and only child allowed into the monastic order of the Buddha.

Someone asked me, 'If everything in life is evolving naturally by the process of evolution like monkey into man, and bad into good, would man not ultimately evolve into god? Where then is the need for meditation, *sannyas*...where then is the need for inspiration?'

I replied, 'It took five thousand years for the monkey to become man, and it would take equally long for man to become god. If you are willing to wait that long, it is

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with a clear understanding about life, the laws and structure of the universe, and meditation. You can revolutionize the process of your evolution. The right revolution leads to evolution or enlightenment. That is *sannyas*, the greatest revolution of an individual. It is to live like a Paramahansa, to live like an enlightened being.

Adi Shankara, the enlightened master from India, beautifully says in his work Vivekachoodamani*:

*For all living creatures, a human birth is rare,
and even rarer is to have a sattvic (goodness)
attitude,
and more so to have steadfastness on the path of
spiritual activity
as explained in the Vedas...*

These words had a very powerful effect on the life of Vivekananda, an enlightened master from India who lived thousands of years after Shankara. When Vivekananda was preparing for his law examination, these very words landed on him like a

alright with me!'

On the other hand, you can decide to live consciously

thunderbolt. He could not read further. He left his books and started running along the road. He was running to his master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. While he was running, the truth of Shankara's words was ringing in his very being. He thought to himself, 'I have gained all these three: I have been born as a human being. I have gained the desire for liberation. I have got a great master....then why am I still wasting my life? Why am I still wasting my life?' Again and again, these words were haunting him. Vivekananda went on to become enlightened and spread Ramakrishna's mission worldwide.

Sannyas is the path for those who want to win over themselves, who want to be free from the clutches of jealousy, anger, stress and depression forever. People think *sannyas* is chosen by losers. No. Of course, sometimes those who don't know what to do with their lives take up *sannyas*. But that is not the spirit of *sannyas*.

Sannyas is the effort to become conscious for the first time, conscious of the mechanism that surrounds you as a human being. You are part of Existence. Existence moves with its own mechanism, with its own music. Falling in tune with it is the science of *sannyas*. *Sannyas* is a being level relationship, being in tune with the whole

Vivekachoodamani - Adi Shankara's philosophical work.

of Existence. That is the shortest path to success in life.

To hear the song of Existence, you need to start moving in the right space. To find that space, you need to first drop any other thing you know, and listen to the song with deep awareness. You will find it. In that space, life will flow like a river moving towards the sea. Any other path will take longer.

When life becomes a flowing river, it has to merge with the sea. There is no other way. *Sannyas* is the science of flowing with the natural course of Existence and finally merging with it.

Flow like a river

The river heads only towards the sea. It does not stagnate anywhere. A *sannyasi* heads only towards his goal of enlightenment. He knows no distractions. The river flows blissfully, whatever be the things thrown into it on its way. So many things are thrown into the river – flowers, twigs, food, animals, birds, dead bodies, etc. But the river flows, not bothering about anything.

Similarly, a *sannyasi* moves blissfully, untouched by anything that comes his way.

When life becomes a flowing river, it has to merge with the sea.

The current pulls the river over its obstacles, and it gurgles, with a constant music, moving towards the sea. The cosmic intelligence pulls the *sannyasi* over obstacles as he moves towards the ultimate goal. He knows not what obstacles are. For him, they are all stepping stones on the path to bliss.

During my days of spiritual wandering, I spent nine months between two locations – on the banks of the sacred river Ganga and on the banks of the sacred river Narmada* in North India. During this time, everyday, I would wake up before the break of dawn, have a bath in the river and sit on its banks. I would just watch it flow. The sun would be rising. As I watched the river flow, the mind would calm down, thoughts would progressively reduce, and the verbalization would get arrested. I would be one with the flowing river for hours together.

Not only that, when you watch the river continuously, you go on dropping fear. There will be so many things floating in the river. When you see dead bodies floating, you will clearly see that one day

Narmada - Fifth largest Indian river starting from Vindhya Hills in central India flowing east to west joining the Arabian Sea.

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you also will float like that. The deeply embedded fears will disappear when merging with the flow of the river.

One Zen master was asked, 'What is Zen?'

He replied, 'Walk on!'

Zen Buddhism beautifully says, life is like the river that flows and fills each form, and bursts its own limitations to expand its capacity. This is the essence of life, and *sannyas*. *Sannyas* is learning in action as life moves, not philosophizing. It is a force, not a dogma. For a real *sannyasi*, life simply moves in the right direction. The learning happens during the movement, not as a separate thing.

A small story:

Once there lived a thief who had a son. The son asked him to teach the secrets of the trade. The father agreed and that night he took him to steal from a big house. After everyone went to sleep, he silently led his son into a room that contained a clothes closet. He told him to go into the closet to steal some clothes. As soon as the son went inside, he quickly shut the door and locked him in. Then he went outside the house and knocked loudly on the front door. The

whole household woke up. He quickly ran away before anyone saw him.

Hours later, his son returned home and angrily shouted at him, 'Why did you lock me in that closet?'

The father just smiled and replied, 'If I had not done that, you would not have had your first lesson in the art of burglary!'

Sannyas is nothing but straightaway practicing the truths every moment. There is enough philosophy in the world but no one to follow it. *Sannyas* is simply a conscious decision to live the truth immediately in your life.

A Zen master tells his disciple very beautifully, 'Studying the truth as a philosophy is just collecting preaching material. Remember that unless you practice constantly, your light of truth may go out.'

Practice is nothing but continuously flowing in the right direction without stagnating. Even in stagnation, there will be movement around the obstacle, trying to find the flow again. There is no stopping.

A great Japanese warrior decided to attack his enemy. His army was only one tenth of his enemy's army, but he was very sure he would win. His soldiers, however, did not believe so.

On the way to the war, he went to a temple and told his men, 'I will toss a coin inside the temple. If heads appears, we will win. If tails appears, we will lose. Destiny holds us in Her hands.'

The soldiers agreed. He entered the temple, offered a silent prayer and tossed the coin. Heads appeared.

His soldiers were so excited, they went forward and fought with all their courage and won the battle.

After the battle, one of his assistants told him, 'No one can change the hand of destiny!'

The warrior said, 'I suppose not', and showed him a coin having heads on both sides.

A *sannyasi* continuously moves with the intelligence of Existence. There is no stopping. He lives in the moment, spontaneously and according to the need of the moment, which is what is called fluidity.

Just as the river has surrendered to the flow of Existence, the *sannyasi* moves with the intelligence of Existence, and Existence takes him along with the birds and animals to the sea. By surrender, I don't mean inaction. I mean action with an attitude of surrender. Then, the results are driven by the law of Existence and you simply relax into the flow.

Sannyas is the first conscious step towards responsibility – towards oneself and to the world.

When you relax, you start responding with responsibility towards life and people. Until then, you only react, you never respond. Reaction is the expression of the unconscious. Response is the expression of consciousness, and that is what is called responsibility. Reaction is never responsibility. *Sannyas* is the first conscious step towards responsibility towards oneself and to the world. This is a little known fact about *sannyas*. People think *sannyasis* have shrugged the responsibilities of life. No! They have taken up *more* responsibility in life. Their family is virtually the whole world. They take up responsibility for every individual.

Sannyas is not renunciation

Sannyas has always been wrongly associated with renunciation. You don't have to renounce anything. You just need to understand that you are a temporary custodian of some wealth, which is a part of Existence, just as you are as well. Then you won't need to renounce because you never possessed anything in the first place! Even if you have to part with wealth, you will not feel that you are giving away or

losing your possessions. The problem starts with the attitude of possessing, the feeling of 'mine'.

I read a beautiful line in a Zen book. It said, 'Mentally give away everything that you think belongs to you. Then one day, if it is really not there, you will not suffer.' This can be done as a beautiful 10-minute meditation everyday. It can have a powerful impact on the attitude of possessing.

Just sit by yourself as soon as you wake up in the morning. Close your eyes and visualize that all your things belong to Existence. None of it is yours. Existence is so graceful that it has allowed you to have it. Feel the gratitude flowing in you towards Existence. Experience this strongly and clearly. You will see, suddenly, the whole thing takes a 180 degree turn. You will wonder what is really yours in the first place. *Sannyas* starts with gratitude.

Neither does a *sannyasi* need to renounce the world nor does a *samsari** need to be afraid of renouncing. Just the plain understanding that Existence gives and takes at the right moment is enough. Then you know that what is happening is the right thing for the moment and life is flowing as it should. This creates a mental gap between you and your wealth and that

gap is called renunciation! It is just a gap, a break in the attitude of possessing, nothing else. It has been wrongly used in the context of *sannyas*.

A small story:

Two monks were traveling together. One of them strongly believed in acquiring wealth. He practiced spirituality through it. The other strongly followed the path of renunciation. They were discussing the two ways of life. As they were discussing, it became nighttime and they reached a river that they had to cross.

The one who believed in renunciation did not have money with him. He said, 'We don't have money to cross the river. Let us spend the night here and some one will take us across the river tomorrow morning.'

The other one replied, 'That is not possible. We will be eaten by wild animals if we spend the night here. I have money with me. Let us pay the boatman and cross the river.'

Once they crossed the river safely, he asked his companion, 'Now do you understand the value of money? If I too had been a man of renunciation, what would have happened to us?'

Samsari - One who is caught in *samsara* or cycle of birth and death.

The first one replied, 'It was your renunciation that brought us across safely. You parted with your money to cross the river!'

Renouncing is 'having' without the idea of having, and 'parting' without the idea of parting. Otherwise, by merely renouncing outer wealth, you will not gain anything. You will only feel the pain of sacrificing the 'mine'. *Sannyas* is not escaping from the 'mine'. It is going beyond the 'mine'. That is possible only through a proper understanding. If you renounce with understanding, it is okay. Otherwise, the 'mine' will simply persist wherever you go. Not only that, if you renounce with the idea that you are renouncing 'yours', it becomes the right action but for the wrong reason! By merely renouncing outer wealth, you can never be a *sannyasi*. *Sannyas* is a change in the inner mental setup, not a change in the outer material setup. Renouncing outer wealth to be a *sannyasi* is like doing the right action but for the wrong reason.

A small story:

There were three men in a mental asylum. One day, they went to the doctor and said that they were ready to be discharged.

The doctor was surprised! He said, 'Alright, come with me. We will have a small test to see if you are well enough to leave and live safely in the world.'

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He took them to a swimming pool that had no water. He told the first man to jump into the pool and swim. The man jumped and sprained his ankle.

The doctor told him he was not ready to be discharged.

Next he told the second man to jump. The second man also jumped and sprained his wrist. The doctor told him he too was not ready to be discharged.

Then he told the third man to jump. The third man refused to jump, saying 'No, I will not do it!'

The doctor was very happy and declared that the third man was cured and could go home. When the man was signing his papers to leave, the doctor was curious and asked him, 'Tell me, how did you decide that you would not jump?'

The man replied, 'How can I jump? I don't know how to swim!'

Understand: right action, but for the wrong reason!

Renouncing wealth to become a *sannyasi* is doing the right action but for the wrong

**Sannyas is living
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r e a s o n .
Wealth and
sannyas are
not mutually

exclusive. In fact, *sannyas* is the art and science of creating wealth flawlessly.

You should know one fact, the highest percentage of India's gold is sitting inside temples and monasteries! In South India alone there are so many temples with golden towers. Just imagine! When you understand the reality or truth of *sannyas*, you will not escape from wealth. You will have honest respect for wealth. The only thing is that you will never be caught in it. You will never internalize it. There will be no space for wealth in your inner space. So you will never suffer for it. You will never suffer because of it.

If you read the *vedic* scriptures you will see that they always talk only about the abundance of life. They never teach escaping from it. They teach loosening the attachment over possessions, not renouncing or hating it. *Sannyas* is seeing the vast abundance of life as one whole, and therefore not being attached to your own small possessions. It is knowing that wealth is also a manifestation of Existence and not the essence of life itself. Once this is known it doesn't matter how much wealth is lying with you. You remain

untouched by it. Remaining unattached to wealth has been described as 'renouncing' in the ancient years.

The *sannyasi* who renounces wealth physically may do so as a choice, not because it is any definition of a *sannyasi*. A real *sannyasi* is the one who lives beyond wealth. When he has gone beyond wealth, it does not matter whether he has it or not. If at all he physically renounces, it is out of a deep understanding of the whole thing, not out of failure or compulsion.

Sannyas is not suicide. It is life. *Sannyas* is living in tremendous beauty – inside and outside you.

The Persian mystic poet Jalaluddin Rumi* tells a story:

A sage once went outside to plough his field and saw a peacock busily destroying his own plumage with his beak. The sage could not bear to see this self-destruction, and that too of the most beautiful of birds. He told the peacock to stop what he was doing.

The peacock told him, 'I will not stop. My plumage that you admire so much is a source of danger to my owner. Hunters follow me all the time because of this, and my owner has trouble keeping me because of this. So it is better that I remove my feathers with

Jalaluddin Rumi - 13th century Persian Sufi poet.

my own beak and make myself ugly so that they will not pursue me.'

Outer beauty and wealth are not enemies to the path of *sannyas*. They are complementary. *Sannyas* adds inner wealth and beauty to your outer wealth and beauty. It gives us the intelligence to handle the outer wealth and beauty without any suffering related to it.

Live in reality!

Sannyas is not a game of one world against another, of material versus spiritual.

First thing you need to understand is there are no two worlds like material and spiritual. There is only one world. Second thing is *sannyas* is not a doctrine. It is a certain attitude of living in the world without suffering. It is an understanding of how to live in the best possible way. It is a conscious decision to live life as close to reality as possible, because living in reality is living in the most optimum way.

What is living in reality?

One person asked me a question, 'You say that currently our waking state is not reality, it is also a dream. But how can it be? Whenever we sleep and come back to the waking state, we find the things around us to be the same – house, belongings, people etc. But when we go to the dream state,

things in the dream are not the same. So obviously, we can conclude

that the dream is a dream and waking state is reality.'

Carefully understand what I am going to say now...

Sometimes, in one night's dream itself, you will dream ten to twelve years of your life. Am I right? You will start with your college and by the time you come out of sleep, you would have finished your marriage, kids, everything! You would have lived something like one decade overnight!

What does it mean?

It means you have lived ten years of your life in ten hours. Am I right? But when you are dreaming the dream, you don't feel that you are doing a fast forward. You are very clear that you are living your ten years of life in its own pace. But when you wake up suddenly, you realize you have spent only ten hours in sleep!

In the very same way, at any moment, you may wake up and feel you have not spent seventy years on planet earth, but that you spent only seven hours!

Let me explain.

Let us imagine that between 9th May and 10th May you dream as if you lived for one

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decade. In the ten hours of sleep, you dream that you are studying in your college, and that you fall asleep for a few hours everyday, and come back. For the whole ten years, you can't be without falling asleep, right? So you dream that you are falling asleep as well, and living a regular life.

Now understand an important thing. In these ten years of life, in one continuous dream, from the 9th night to the 10th morning, you lived ten years of your life. Many times you would have fallen asleep and come back as part of the life in the dream itself. Within this dream, whenever you came back from sleep, you were with the same identity as you were before going in to sleep. Am I right? That is, in your dream, if you went to sleep as a college student, you woke up also as the same college student. That is why starting with college, you moved to the next step...the next step...the next step and so on without any confusion.

What does this mean? Just like in the waking state, you came back to the same identity every time. So, coming back to the same identity every time as you said, the same belongings, the same place, etc. is not the scale to prove it is a permanent reality! Am I right?

What does it mean? It means that just falling asleep and coming back to find the

same bank balance, car, house and wife, also does not mean you are in reality!

This is a very important understanding. This understanding can lead to such a sharp analysis of your life. You will get clarity in so many things.

If you understand this one concept, that everything is *maya* or illusion, you will not renounce anything. You will live with everything without being disturbed by it.

Now, just like how this ten year dream happens in ten hours, there may be a different calendar where your 70 years, for example 1950 to 2020, may be just seven hours for somebody who is in a different space!

If the number of thoughts per second is more, you will feel as if you are living for a longer time. For example, if you are sitting with someone who you are completely in tune with, you will feel that time is moving very fast because your thoughts per second at that time will be very low. But if you are sitting with somebody with whom you don't feel connected, what will you do every five minutes? You will keep looking at the watch. Your thoughts per second will be high. You will be restless. So you will feel as though a lot of time has passed.

That is why in the *vedic* tradition, the unit of time is called *kshana*. It is not measured as a chronological second. According to Western understanding, the chronological

time is calculated with the unit of second. It means that one unit of time is equal to one second. In the *vedic* tradition, the unit of time is called *kshana*. *Kshana* means the gap between one thought and the next thought. According to the Western calendar, your one second and my one second are one and the same. But according to the *vedic* calendar, your one *kshana* and my one *kshana* will be different! This is because the gap between one thought and the next thought for me will be different from the gap for you. Here, time is not chronological, it is psychological.

We refer to Thoughts Per Second as TPS.

Now, in the dream state, you have too many thoughts or a high TPS. That is why you feel as if you have lived for a long time. In the waking state, there is a medium number of TPS. That is why it seems like time is moving fast. For the celestial beings, the TPS is very less, and that is why their one day will be one year for us! You can see this in the *vedic* calendars.

If you bring down your TPS considerably, you can enter into *samadhi* or *turiya*, merging with the divine consciousness, which is 'reality'. So understand that it is only when you bring your TPS down, that you will understand reality.

Now, let us come back to our dream and waking states. In the waking state, when

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your TPS is lower than in the dream state, you realized that the dream state was not reality. Am I right? But when you were in the dream state, did you realize you were not in reality? No! You felt it was real because you were going through everything realistically. You responded to everything. You had nightmares, you had all the regular problems. Only when your TPS was brought down in the waking state, did you realize that the dream state was an illusion. Now... in the same way, to understand that your waking state itself is an illusion, you need to bring down your TPS further! Come down... come to the *turiya* state. Suddenly, you will realize that this waking state is also an illusion!

In the dream state, if your TPS was, let us say 1000, then in the waking state it might be say 100. In the *samadhi* state, it is zero. Because of a reduced TPS in the waking state, you understand that the dream state was an illusion. In the same way, only in the *samadhi* state, you will understand that the waking state is an illusion! As of now, your inner space is occupied with all that you experience in the waking state. That is why you never enter into the *samadhi* state.

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One more thing to realize is that this whole situation is like a vicious circle. As long as you are enjoying the dream, you will never get out

of it. Only when you get out will you realize it is just a dream. Similarly, as long as you are enjoying the waking state, you will never understand it is an illusion!

Here is where Shiva comes to help us.

He gives a technique or method to get us out of the illusory waking state. This is a very subtle and important point. Whether you are in the dream state or in the waking state or *samadhi* state, the dreamer is the same, am I right? Whether you are seeing a 1000 TPS dream, or a 100 TPS dream, or you are in 0 TPS, the dreamer is the same. But what caused you to wake up from the illusion was the shift in attention from the seen to the seer. Am I right?

Whenever your attention moved from the seen to the seer, that is from the object that you were seeing to the person seeing it, you came to the next state, you woke up! So understand, whenever your

attention is diverted from the seen to the seer, you wake up.

This is the technique. This is the key: *turn your awareness from the seen to the seer*. You will wake up!

Sannyas is nothing but nurturing the awareness towards the seer. All the techniques of renunciation and meditation are methods to pull the awareness from the seen towards the seer.

Once you become the seer, you start experiencing your aloneness. Aloneness is your original nature. You experienced it in your mother's womb when you were by yourself. Aloneness is different from loneliness. Society teaches you to always be with people at home or any club or party or at least with the television. It weakens you by giving you these supports. When these are not there, you feel lonely. Loneliness always brings suffering. Aloneness on the other hand is the causeless bliss that is in you all the time, the bliss that all great enlightened masters have spoken of again and again. Aloneness gives you strength.

Sannyas is all about rediscovering that aloneness and relaxing into it.

Samsar and Sannyas

Samsar literally means the ‘world’ or the ‘path’. It refers to the worldly life that causes endless cycles of birth and death.

There are two ways to move in any path: either with baggage and people or by yourself. In the first case, you may have to wait for a longer time. In the second case you can reach, even this very minute.

Sannyas is the decision not to carry any baggage while moving. You can have everything, but you don’t have to carry it. When you don’t carry anything, Existence brings to you what you need for the moment. That is *sannyas*!

There is a beautiful story from the life of Buddha.

Buddha’s disciples gathered around him one day and asked him to teach them the essence of sannyas. He told them a small story:

One man was living on an island by himself. Suddenly he got the feeling it was time to move from the island. He did not have a boat. So he made one with whatever he could find – some twigs, branches, leaves. It was a difficult journey but somehow he crossed and reached the other side.

Buddha asked the disciples, ‘After reaching the other side, should the man

keep the boat or discard it?’

The disciples came out with different answers.

B u d d h a

continued, ‘The man of sannyas discards the boat knowing that he will be provided for as needed in the future. The man of samsar keeps it so that his effort doesn’t go waste if he wants to journey back!’

A *sannyasi* walks with his thoughts on Existence. A *samsari* walks with his thoughts on how to exist. A *sannyasi* uses the boat to cross the ocean of life. A *samsari* carries the boat even beyond the time it is needed, not knowing he can drop it. That is the difference. There is nothing right or wrong in this. It is just two different ways to live.

Let me explain *sannyas* in the context of *karma* because *sannyas* is the shortcut to exhausting *karma*.

Karma is nothing but the unfulfilled actions of your past that pull you again and again to take birth to fulfill them. It is the very cause of the cycle of birth and death. It makes you take birth again and again in this world until it is exhausted.

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There are three types of *karma* – *sanchita**, *prarabdha** and *agamyā**. *Sanchita karma** is your entire bank balance of unfulfilled actions (*karma*) accumulated over many lives. *Prarabdha karma** is that portion of *sanchita** that you bring and come to exhaust in this one birth. Every time you take birth, you bring with you a small portion of *sanchita* as your *prarabdha* to exhaust. It includes all your unfulfilled desires, lust, anger, fear, and such things. The third *karma*, *agamyā karma**, is the fresh *karma* that you create in this birth because of fresh, unfulfilled actions.

Ultimately, these three things need to be done in order to exhaust all *karma* completely. First, the fresh *agamyā** should not get created because it only adds to the bank balance or *sanchita* at the end of the lifetime. Second, the *prarabdha* with which you came should get exhausted, or fulfilled, in this life completely without a trace. Third, the volume of the *sanchita* itself should somehow be burnt so that the number of times you take birth reduces. This happens by fulfilling the *prarabdha* without accumulating the *agamyā* in a lifetime.

If the *prarabdha* is exhausted in the right way, *agamyā* will not get created. The same intelligence that properly exhausts the *prarabdha* will take care of not creating new *agamyā*. The *sanchita* itself can be exhausted only by the grace of an enlightened master.

Now understand clearly: if the fantasy of your *prarabdha* is greater than your intelligence, then *samsar* (marriage) is the path for you. If the fantasy of your *prarabdha* is lesser than your intelligence, then *sannyas* is the path for you! In the path of *sannyas*, your intelligence wins over your *prarabdha* and brings it to control and exhaust it. In the path of *samsar*, life teaches you in different ways and you exhaust your *prarabdha* through millions of births.

In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras*, there is an eightfold path to enlightenment. All eight parts have to be followed simultaneously. Three of the parts are *pratyahara*, *dharana* and *dhyana*. *Pratyahara* is drawing the mind inwards, away from the five senses. The next is *dharana* or the merging of the mind with the inner Self. The third is *dhyana*, meditation.

Sanchita karma - Bank of accumulated *karma* from which we choose to bring into this birth a few as *prarabdha karma*.

Prarabdha karma - Mindset and desires that we bring into this world when we are born.

Agamyā karma - The actions one constantly does out of free will after taking birth on planet earth. These are not born out of true desires but from desires borrowed from society, by looking at others.

Yoga Sutras - The book on yoga authored by enlightened master Patanjali.

Withdrawing the mind from the five senses itself can happen only when the mind merges with the inner Self! For example, you can release the foot from the lower rung of the ladder only after establishing yourself in the higher rung, is it not? You can let go of the lower branch of the tree only after clinging to the higher branch. We all think that only after renouncing worldly attachments, we can attain god. No! The truth is, only after attaining god can you really shake off the worldly things. Only after you experience *nithyananda* or eternal bliss, you can shake off *mithyananda* or worldly fantasies.

If you can become aware of and hold on more firmly to the higher rung you may let go of the lower rung more easily. That awareness is called *sannyas*. It is the process of understanding and moving to the higher rung and leaving the lower rung. As you move, renunciation happens as a byproduct. Because you realize that to climb higher you don't need anything but yourself! Anything you take with you is only going to make it more difficult to climb.

A small Zen story:

Having renounced his kingdom, a king requested a Zen master to accept him as his disciple.

The master told him, 'I will accept you, but I feel you have to wait until you gain

Withdrawing the mind from the five senses itself can happen only when the mind merges with the inner Self!

more maturity.'

The king was too impatient to wait. He pleaded with the

master. The master finally agreed on the condition that the king would move to another forest and live there. The king followed the master's words.

After a few days in the forest, the king was unable to bear the mosquitoes in the forest. He bought a mosquito net and protected himself. A few days after that he felt it would be better to have a cot to sit on for meditation, so he went and bought a cot.

Then he found that the rain was spoiling the cot. To protect the cot from rain, he built a small room and kept the cot inside it. A short time later he felt the need for someone to clean the room everyday, so he brought in a helper. Then, to keep the helper occupied, he brought in one more person.

This went on and on and eventually, he created a kingdom in the forest!

Understand, a king creates a kingdom even in the forest.

Sannyas is the search to answer the question ‘Who am I?’

A *samsari* goes to places to see the beauty of Existence.

A *sannyasi* sees everything around him as already divine and beautiful. When the *samsari* starts turning inward, he becomes a *sannyasi*. Until he finds the burning need for that, it is better for him to continue with what he is doing. For a *sannyasi*, the mind is happy all the time. What he gets is what he wants. He is always living in the mood of grateful and welcome acceptance. For a *samsari*, the mind is occupied with too many conflicts. He keeps trying to get what he wants. With intelligence, the *samsari* can awaken to the truth that what he is getting is what he needs for that moment and for his ultimate fulfillment.

There was a sannyasi who lived in a mountain area. The animals and birds would talk to him and he would respond. They would spend the whole day near his hut and at night would go back to their homes. Three times a week the sannyasi would go to the market place and preach. He spoke a lot about how to share what one has with others without the fear of becoming poor. He taught that Existence would shower abundantly if one trusts and does this.

One day, he found three men approaching his hut in the mountains. They came and asked him, ‘You have

always told us to share what we have and how good it is to do it. Now, we are in need of money for business. Can you give us some money which we will return to you as soon business picks up?’

The sannyasi was surprised. He took them into his hut and showed them. He had a mat, one set of clothes and a jug of water. He said, ‘Take these if you wish to. I don’t have any gold or silver to give you.’

The men became angry and shouted at him, ‘So you teach and preach what you yourself don’t follow!’

The *samsari* is concerned with material things and living life in a limited way. The *sannyasi* is concerned about death – death of all that is not him: ego, possessiveness, lust, anger, fear, jealousy and discontent. He knows he is something beyond all this. His whole quest is to find this, because once he finds it, he has found the higher rung of the ladder and he can leave the lower rung where the constant push and pull of all these emotions and material things reside.

Sannyas is the search to answer the question ‘Who am I?’ A *sannyasi* puts his whole energy into discovering the answer to this question. If people ask you, ‘Who are you?’ you will generally reply, ‘I am so-and-so’s son, I am an engineer, I am a professor.’

But those words describe who you are in your relationships with the world. If there were no world, then who are you?

The great enlightened masters who founded the world religions have said one thing repeatedly: *Aham Brahmasmi* or 'I am That' in the Hindu tradition, or 'Be still and know that I am god' in the Christian tradition, or *Anal-Haq* or 'I am the Truth' in the Islam tradition. Experiencing that you are god is the purpose of human life.

Once this purpose is experienced, the inner bliss that all these great masters talk about starts happening. Then you understand that the outer world is a beautiful stage where the divine play is happening. There is ultimate freedom from all worldly difficulties. You do, and yet you don't do, you speak and yet you don't speak. You cry and yet you don't cry. Your inner Self remains untouched. You are in 'eternal bliss' or *nithya ananda*.

The problem is that people generally think *sannyas* is a hindrance to worldly life. They think *sannyas* is seriousness. No! *Sannyas* is a certain quality for living life to its optimum. Seriousness will never help one live life to its full potential. Only sincerity and laughter will help. Laughter is the greatest spiritual quality.

A master was seated with his disciples. He was in an expansive mood and his disciples decided to ask him about the

various stages he passed through to reach the Divine.

With the energy of *sannyas*, you are ready for the challenges of life. *Sannyas* is strength.

The master beautifully started explaining...

'God held me by the hand and first took me to the Land of Action. I stayed there for several years. Then god returned and took me to the Land of Sorrow. I fell into deep sorrows but eventually went beyond them. I felt happy. Then, suddenly I found that god put me in the Land of Love. I went through burning emotions and found myself cleansed thoroughly. Then, he took me to the Land of Silence. There I learned the mysteries of life and death.'

The disciples asked, 'Was that the final stage of your quest?'

The master said, 'No. One day god said, Today I will take you to my very heart... and he led me to the Land of Laughter.'

So understand, *sannyas* is your very energy. How can it be a hindrance to anything? Not only that, with the energy of *sannyas*, you are always young. With the energy of *sannyas*, you are ready for the challenges of life.

Sannyas is strength. It is the quality of supreme self-discipline in this fantasy

With *sannyas*, you will continue to do what you are doing but in a much better way.

world. Someone asked Mahavira, the great enlightened Jain master, 'Who is more superior, the *samsari* or the *sannyasi*?'

He replied, 'Self-discipline is the most superior! A *samsari* can sometimes be more self-disciplined than a *sannyasi*.' Please understand that self-discipline is not self-torture. It is a beautiful resting that happens within you. It happens out of a deep understanding of the nature of your mind and the world. That's all. It happens from inside you.

When I share this idea, people ask me, 'Then why can't we continue in *samsar* and live with the consciousness of a *sannyasi*?' You see, the nature of man is such that unless a *conscious* decision is taken, it is difficult to bring about a permanent transformation in the consciousness. *Sannyas* is a *conscious* decision to transform the consciousness. *Sannyas* is a conscious decision. That is why *sannyas* needs to be taken. With a conscious decision, there is continued awareness. Continued awareness decreases the chance of slipping back. Without it, there is nothing binding one to keep on the path. It becomes easy to slip.

With *sannyas*, you will continue to do what you are doing but in a much better way, in

a more confident way, in a more creative way, in a way that is closer to god. Creation is the quality of god or Existence. Existence continuously creates. *Sannyas* is imbibing the very qualities of Existence, and knowing that everything is the creation of Existence.

A small story:

A woman was walking from her village to the neighboring village. While walking, she came to a field of golden pumpkins. She saw a huge oak tree in one corner of the field.

As she was very tired, she sat under the oak tree for some rest.

Suddenly she looked up and saw tiny acorns all over the huge branches of the oak tree. Ahead of her, she also saw big pumpkins on tiny vines in the fields.

She thought to herself, 'Even god makes blunders with his creations. He should have put the small acorns on the tiny vines and the big pumpkins on the branches of the big oak trees.'

After some time, she stretched out and decided to take a nap under the oak tree. She fell asleep.

There was a heavy wind blowing. She was awakened by a tiny acorn that fell and bounced off her cheek. She rubbed her cheek and thought, 'Maybe god is right after all!'

Sannyas is about seeing the wonderful co-existence of everything in Existence. *Sannyas* is existing in relationships like a water drop on the lotus leaf. If you see the lotus leaf, the water droplet will be on the leaf but will be untouched by it. *Sannyas* is living in relationships while being untouched by them. A common misconception is that *sannyas* is renouncing relationships. No. *Sannyas* enriches relationships.

So many of my disciples who have embraced the path of *sannyas* come and tell me, 'Swamiji, after initiation, the husband-wife understanding has flowered so beautifully. Now we are really living in tune with each other and with everything around us.'

With *sannyas*, you start watching everything. You become a witness. Because of this witnessing, a gap is created between you and the other person. That gap is misunderstood as 'renunciation'. If you notice, the gap was not there earlier. Each one was suffocating the other. Now the gap is there. The gap is not a gap of distance but a gap of awareness.

Awareness is bringing your consciousness to your mind and watching non-judgmentally. It is a very subtle action. Soon it becomes continuous in you. That

is *sannyas*! Bringing awareness to the moment continuously is *sannyas*. With awareness, the very root of suffering is addressed before it takes root. The suffering is addressed because you are watching. Without awareness, there is bound to be suffering.

Sannyas is also living without the burden of the inner woman or inner man. What is meant by inner woman or inner man? It is nothing but the lust hidden in your mind, the fantasies that you have created in your mind. Shiva says beautifully in the Tantra*, a man who has abandoned the woman in his inner mind is a *sannyasi*, even if he is still in the family. On the contrary, if thoughts of a woman persist in a *sannyasi's* mind, he cannot be called a *sannyasi*. This is the scale to measure if a man is a *sannyasi*.

In Buddha's teaching, the Four Noble Truths, the second truth deals with the cause of suffering. He beautifully says that suffering is because of the demands we make on life every moment. It is like asking a banana tree to bear mangoes! We will understand this habit only when we bring in awareness.

Not only that, when you watch, you start seeing exactly how transactions are happening in relationships. You see how

Tantra - Ancient *vedic* tradition of achieving enlightenment through spiritual techniques or practices, meditations and ritual worship.

**A *sannyasi* takes
responsibility for
the whole of
Existence. He
doesn't know the
difference
between his
family and the rest
of the world.**

expectations are driving the whole thing. You see the ulterior motives in everything. I remember an incident that happened when I was around twelve years of age. One of my grandmothers was about 104 when she passed away. She had no more children of her own. She was looked after by one of my uncles. My uncle and his wife were not happy looking after her. They would complain about her and not take care of her properly. She was also a difficult and unpleasant person. She was very miserly even though she was wealthy. She would often ask me to buy her tobacco. When I asked for money, she would tell me to ask my father for it! She would not even give water from her well to her neighbors during summer.

When she died, no one in the family wept. But the women in the household changed into cheap *saris*^{*}, removed their jewelry and got ready to receive friends and neighbors who arrived to offer condolences. As soon as the guests arrived, the women would start wailing. Every time a new set of

relatives arrived, the wailing would start all over again. I was shocked at the hypocrisy of the situation.

When the dead body was still in the house and relatives were still coming, the immediate family went into the dead lady's room where her box of jewelry was kept under her bed. They all laid their individual claim to her jewelry and started negotiating and bargaining even before her body had grown cold! They called in a goldsmith to estimate the worth of the jewelry.

At that moment, I lost all respect for family and its social conditioning. I started laughing loudly at their behavior. An uncle tried to hit me to stop my laughter. I held his hand and told him that if he tried to hit me again, I would tell the entire crowd what they were up to – trying to loot even before the body was cremated. My mother knew me well and told the uncle to be careful. She knew I was quite capable of doing what I threatened to do!

Then the relatives started arguing about who would pay for the funeral expenses. My father, a mild and innocent man who hated arguments, immediately agreed to take care of all expenses.

Completely disgusted, I took my Bhagavad Gita book and started chanting its verses in front of the dead body. It is said that

Sari - One piece garment worn by Indian women.

merely reading the Gita in front of a dead body can liberate the soul.

Given my age, this was the best I could do in that situation. A *sannyasi* takes responsibility for the whole of Existence. He doesn't know the difference between his family and the rest of the world. All are the same. He wishes for the liberation of anyone who comes his way. On the other hand, a *samsari* takes responsibility for one family or maybe for a few organizations. This taking of responsibility is always towards a definite cause. It is either to accumulate the credit of serving, to fulfill some obligation, or to co-exist easily with the people around him.

The nature of a *sannyasi's* responsibility is completely different. For him, the whole world is his family. There is no obligation driving him. Responsibility happens completely out of the quality of his inner space. Also, a *samsari* can rest after fulfilling every duty at that stage in life. A *sannyasi* continuously works, because people are constantly in need of truths in their life.

A *sannyasi* is established in rich relationships. People think *sannyasis* run away from relationships. A young girl asked me while I was addressing a college gathering, 'Was it failure in love that caused

you to become a *sannyasi*?'

I told her, 'It was success in love that

caused me to become a *sannyasi*!' Actually, *sannyas* is what softens you into real love, love towards not just one person but towards the whole of Existence.

Ordinary love comes with a reason, or with lust. Real love knows no reason. It is just a causeless overflowing energy towards everything in Existence.

In reality, *sannyas* is living like a king. *Sannyas* is the beginning of a kingly life because when you have cleaned yourself of all your suffering, then you have gained everything you can ever gain! You gain far more than mere wealth can give you.

When I was born, the family astrologer was called to cast my horoscope as per family tradition. The astrologer studied it and said I would be a *raja sannyasi*^{*}, a kingly *sannyasi*. If *sannyas* is adapted in its right spirit, it gives a kingly stature. *Sannyas* is the ultimate royalty, because it is rich without any paraphernalia! A king is rich because of his outer wealth. A *sannyasi* is rich because of his inner wealth. With outer wealth, there is the danger that any time you may become a pauper. With inner

***Sannyas* is the
ultimate royalty,
because it is rich
without any
paraphernalia!**

Raja Sannyasi - King amongst monks.

**The rich person is
the one who is
enjoying
everything around
him continuously.**

wealth, you
remain rich
forever.

It is said that when Buddha went begging, he would look like a king, and the person who gave him alms would look like a beggar! That is the hallmark of the *sannyas* quality. Of course Buddha was enlightened at that time. But the *sannyas* dimension itself has this quality in it. It will simply radiate a kingly energy.

Not only that, the inner richness causes everything outside to be experienced with richness. A *sannyasi* recognizes the unending abundance of Existence. His vision is oceanic. He is not stuck in narrow perceptions. He perceives the whole of Existence as one. He feels part of the whole. That is why he is rich. A rich man who feels he owns a few acres is not really the rich one. The man who feels the abundance of Existence is really the rich one.

A small story:

One day a rich man took his son on a trip to the country with the purpose of showing his son how poor people live. They spent a few days with a farmer's family.

On their return from their trip, he asked his son, 'How was the trip?'

The son replied, 'It was very good, Dad.'

The father asked, 'Did you see how poor people live?'

The son replied, 'Yes I saw.'

The father asked, 'Can you tell me what you learned from the trip?'

The son answered, 'I saw that we have one dog and they had four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden, whereas they have a river that has no end. We have imported lights in our garden, but they have the stars at night. Our courtyard reaches to the front yard, and they have the whole horizon. We have a small piece of land to live on, whereas they have fields that go beyond our sight.

We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy our food, but they grow their own food. We have walls around our property to protect us, whereas they are protected by friends.'

The father was shocked! The son finally said, 'Thank you, Dad, for showing me how poor we are.'

Understand that the very word 'rich' has been misinterpreted. How can a person who is enjoying just a few bungalows be rich? He cannot be! The rich person is the one who is enjoying everything around him continuously. His richness is the richness

of the whole Existence. He enjoys everything with no attachment to anything.

Awaken to the freedom

(This section contains words spoken by Nithyananda while briefly elucidating the poem 'Song of a Sanyasin' by Vivekananda, a great enlightened master from India. He delivered this to a small group of ashramites in the Bidadi ashram, spiritual headquarters of the Mission at Bangalore, India. He spoke little, but with an overflow that overwhelmed the group into dazed silence. He stopped abruptly, saying He would continue later. Parts in bold are words from the verses.)

Nithyananda explained how he works on the brahmacharis and brahmacharinis (young boys and girls training on the path of sannyas) and how they can accelerate the process by understanding the process.)

Wake up the note...!

Wake up the note! the song that had its birth

Far off, where worldly taint could never reach

In mountain caves and glades of forest deep,

Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth or fame

Could ever dare to break; where rolled the stream

Of knowledge, truth, and bliss that follows both.

Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold! Say –

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Strike off thy fetters! Bonds that bind thee down,

Of shining gold or darker, baser ore;

Love, hate; good, bad; and all the dual throng,

Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped, not free

For fetters, though of gold, are not less strong to bind;

Then off with them, Sannyasin bold! Say –

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Whether you are caressed or whipped, a slave is a slave.

Understand: currently, your ego is settled in a few places. Your ego is settled in pride, lust, anger, wealth, social importance, personal freedom and such things. As long

as you live according to those things, whether you fulfill your desires or not, depression will be your base. Any manifestation of ego causes depression, either in a subtle way or in a big way. Do you understand? I think we are discussing this poem for all of you...!

dual throng...caressed or whipped....

Whether you are shown love by the master, or whether you are whipped by him, as long as you follow your ego based routine, your ego based lifestyle, you will remain a slave.

for fetters, though of gold

Understand, there is something called 'immediate freedom'. It is like this: when you wake up, you conduct your life according to how you feel. You wake up at whatever time you feel like, do things according to how you think they should be done, spend money the way you want to spend it. All this is immediate freedom. Only when you shake that immediate freedom, will the cognitive shift happen in you. The feelings of 'I' and 'mine' will be jolted. The shift will happen.

If you watch what I do, you will see that I am simply shaking your immediate freedom all the time! Nothing else. Presently, you have invested your entire

personality in whatever you think as your immediate freedom. I will simply shake that!

Let me explain this so you can understand it in the context of your own life.

Presently, you may be following the ashram routine from five AM until midnight. Starting tomorrow, if I give you ten days off as a holiday, saying you don't have to follow the ashram routine, what will you do? For the first four days you will sleep long hours, tossing around in the bed! After that what will happen? Your own desires will take over, and you will start functioning according to your ways.

The routine that is set for you by me is there to raise your consciousness, but it will be boring for you. When you are given a break, you will feel free for a few days. But after that, what will happen? The weeds inside you, your unconscious desires, will pull you and take you over. Without your knowledge, once again, you will be a slave, but to your own desires.

Presently what do you feel? You wonder if there is a need to work like a slave all the time from morning until night everyday following the same routine. But what will you be doing after four days of freedom from that routine? You will be a slave to your own desires! That's all.

When you follow your own desires, you will simply be postponing and relaxing your

routine. Your eating time, your sleeping time, your whole routine will relax. While you are doing this, a thick layer of depression will start developing in your being. When your own whim starts guiding your routine, without your knowledge, the depression develops in you. But in the lifestyle that I give, that thick depression layer will not develop. Day by day, beyond your logic, a lighter and lighter mood will start enveloping you! This is the big difference between these two paths.

Let darkness go! The will-o'-the-wisp that leads

With blinking light to pile more gloom on gloom.

This thirst for life, forever quench; it drags

From birth to death, and death to birth, the soul

He conquers all who conquers self. Know this

**And never yield, Sannyasin bold! Say –
‘Om Tat Sat, Om!’**

Understand carefully: in the period between death and the next birth, the one who says, ‘*Aha*, I have done a good job and come away,’ that one is a *sannyasi*. In the period between birth and death, which

is life, the one who thinks, ‘*Aha*, I am doing something great,’ that one is a *samsari*! Do you understand?

It is in the gap between death and the next birth that the soul reviews its past actions. The soul feels good when it has lived the previous life closest to reality. The soul feels regret when it has lived in illusion. The *sannyasi* is the one, who during this time between death and the next birth, feels he did a good job of life and came away because he would have lived closest to reality.

The *samsari*, on the other hand, is the one who during the time between birth and death, which is life, prides himself with illusory achievements, and concludes he is doing a good job! Understand: when I say *samsari*, I don’t mean married people. I mean the ‘mindset’ that is of the illusory world. This has to be clearly understood.

thirst for life, forever quench; it drags

The thirst for life never dies. It keeps on happening forever. After having taken many lives, and getting bored, ‘settling down’ is what I call *anubhava*, the ultimate experience of life. The enlightened master is one who, after having taken millions of lives and feeling bored, finally settles down and radiates such an energy that a person who just *sees* him, holds on to him for life! That is the mark of the enlightened master. That is how the relationship between the

**By applying the
deep life solutions
inside you, within
your being, a
freedom will
awaken.**

master and
disciple
happens. The
disciple
simply sees
the master in
a way that is

beyond the disciple's logic and so holds on to the master!

Understand, all the experiences that can happen through many, many lives, I have gone through and have come here now. I am what you call a 'senior soul'. Otherwise, can you see any correlation between my 31 years of age and the soul that is inside here? No! There is no connection here!

In the *moment* of seeing the senior soul, capturing that experience and raising oneself is what is called *sannyas*! That is what Vivekananda is saying here. *Sannyas* is seeing the enlightened one and holding on to him to raise oneself.

**He conquers all who conquers self.
Know this**

And never yield, *Sannyasin* bold! Say –

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

**'Who sows must reap,' they say, 'and
cause must bring**

**The sure effect; good, good; bad, bad;
and none**

**Escape the law. But who so wears a
form**

**Must wear the chain.' Too true; but far
beyond**

**Both name and form is Atman*, ever
free.**

**Know thou art That, *Sannyasin* bold!
Say –**

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Just by escaping a law or a situation, never think you have really escaped. If any problem surfaces, just go into your being. Heal yourself by saying, 'I am *atman**', and feel the response to that problem happening within you, however difficult it may be. Act according to that response. That alone is freedom. Presently, when you have a problem, what do you do? You simply escape from that situation or from that person or from that place. Am I right? By escaping, you think you have freedom. That is what Vivekananda is denying here!

**Both name and form is Atman, ever
free.**

Know thou art That

Atman - Soul, Spirit, Consciousness etc as referring to the individual imperishable energy that is a holographic image of the Cosmic Consciousness.

By applying the deep life solutions inside you, within your being, a freedom will awaken. That freedom that comes from deep within is the real freedom. Only that will take you to the ultimate freedom. Other than that, through any other way, if you try to move towards freedom, it will take you only towards more and more bondage.

‘Who sows must reap,’ they say, ‘and cause must bring

The sure effect; good, good; bad, bad; and none

Escape the law. But whoso wears a form Must wear the chain.’ Too true; but far beyond

See: as soon as you take a form, as soon as you take birth, whatever you try to do to attain freedom, either by escaping from something or by resisting something, freedom never happens. Just like when you remove one chain that binds you, you tie another chain around yourself! If you want to heal a wound, you need to apply medicine to it. Can you heal it by digging into it continuously? No! Likewise, when you want freedom, the effort you make in the outside will only put you in more and more depression. From that depression, whatever work you do, will only take you

to further depression. Anything you do from bondage will take you only to further bondage. Working on the inside is the only thing that will help you.

For example, when you people do something wrong, to escape from it, you alter some situation or people in the outer world, right? You simply rearrange a few things to cover up. After that, only a worse sorrow happens to you! Once that sorrow comes, you think, ‘What will I tell people who enquire about this? What answer will I give them?’ Your ego will not permit you to tell that you brought the sorrow upon yourself. So what do you do? Without exposing your mistakes, without allowing the suffering of the sorrow to show, without exposing that you are in deeper sorrow now, you say, ‘Ab...I did everything right. Leave it. Everything is going the way it should go.’

Am I right? This is the way life goes on now!

Take life here in the ashram. When the boiling starts happening here, when I start causing trouble for the ego, for the built-up identity, you escape from here and go

Anything you do from bondage will take you only to further bondage. Working on the inside is the only thing that will help you.

to Pondicherry* ashram. When you go to Pondicherry* ashram, there is a greater sorrow waiting for you there! You escape from there to Salem* ashram. From Salem* you run to Tiruvannamalai ashram. If none of these work out, you go out of the organization itself! You escape somewhere, right? Understand that by escaping, only a greater sorrow will come your way. But even after that comes, what do you do? You save your face! You say, 'Nothing is wrong. Everything is just fine.' Even if you know that the suffering came only because your ego was unable to bear the boiling, you will console yourself and continue doing what you were doing. If this cycle continues, you block the chances of being liberated from it.

Both name and form is Atman, ever free.

Know thou art That

What is the solution? Again and again, Vivekananda says, 'Know 'thou art That'. Inside yourself, again and again, stand up and experience the freedom of the inner world through acceptance. Whatever happens in the outer world, experience it as a happening in Existence. Know about the inevitability of the 'moment'.

Pondicherry - A state in South India neighboring Tamilnadu.

Salem - A city in Tamilnadu.

Understand that you are the *atman* or soul. Actually, you don't even need to understand. Just *think* that you are the soul; that is enough. Just think that you are the pure soul, not bonded to the body and mind. Experience whatever is happening to you in the outer world as a divine play happening within you. Know that what you see are mere reflections. By reminding yourself of these truths, a freedom will awaken. That is the real freedom. That is the ultimate freedom.

Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold!
Say –

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

They know not truth who dream such vacant dreams

As father, mother, children, wife and friend.

**The sexless Self! whose father He?
Whose child?**

Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but One?

The Self is all in all, none else exists;

And thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say –

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Aye...!

They know not truth who dream such vacant dreams

As father, mother, children, wife and friend.

The sexless Self! whose father He? whose child?

Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but One?

Thousands of thoughts cross your mind every moment. Thoughts are nothing but vacant dreams, illusions created by your mind. All relationships and all emotions are but illusions. You came into this world to exhaust your *karma* and leave as an enlightened soul. But after coming here, you got caught in vacant dreams like relationships, emotions and such things. As these vacant dreams pass through your mind, suddenly you feel that the most torturous things are happening to you. You feel you can't bear it any more. Understand, if you feel this suffocation, it means that the time has come to stand up! The time has come to shake off the illusions and see reality. But what do you do? You alter the dream! You alter the situation! Then what happens? You continue the dream on a milder note. You

miss the opportunity to awaken and see the Truth.

When I boil you again and again, understand that I am awakening you!

When I boil you again and again, when I make the dreams terrible for you, understand that I am awakening you! When the potato is being boiled, if it jumps out, what will happen to it? It will go for waste! Similarly, when I increase the boiling, if you don't jump out, if you stay inside and make up your mind to see what is going to happen, it is enough! That is the becoming of a *siddha*, one who attains spiritual wisdom.

They know not truth who dream such vacant dreams

As father, mother, children, wife and friend.

The sexless Self! whose father He? whose child?

Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but One?

The Self is all in all, none else exists;

And thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say

—

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Siddha - One who is a practitioner of the spiritual techniques.

Understand that by jumping out, you only extend the dream. See, unless it is a wild dream, you will not wake up! If it is just a mild dream, you will not wake up. If I am changing your life into a wild dream, please understand that I am waking you up! I am doing the job of waking you up. At that time, if you shout, 'No! Leave me, *Swamiji!*' and you alter your situation, what will happen? It will become a mild dream. Then what will you do? You will keep continuing the dream. You can continue for as many days as you wish. It is each one's preference....*mmm?*

There is but One – The Free, The Knower – Self!

Without a name, without a form or stain.

In him is Maya, dreaming all this dream.

The Witness, He appears as nature, soul.

**Know thou art That, *Sannyasin* bold!
Say –**

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Have thou no home. What home can hold thee, friend?

The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed; and food

What chance may bring, well cooked or ill, judge not.

No food or drink can taint that noble Self

Which knows itself. Like rolling river free

**Thou ever be, *Sannyasin* bold! Say –
'Om Tat Sat, Om!'**

Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent,

Release the soul forever. No more is birth,

Vivekananda says, 'Live every day like it is a possibility for awakening'

But what do you do? Even though you come to me with this strong inspiration, after some time, you forget that every day is only for me to boil you and awaken you. You forget that every day is only for the purpose of boiling you. Then what do you do? You just settle down with a mundane attitude. You think, '*Ab...*all this is just business. What is there in this? What is there in that?' You settle down with these thoughts and get diluted. You start taking me for granted.

Thus, day by day, till *Karma's* powers spent,

Release the soul forever. No more is birth,

Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The 'I'

Has All become, the All is 'I' and Bliss.

Know thou art That, *Sannyasin* bold!

Say –

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Heed then no more how body lives or goes,

Its' task is done. Let Karma float it down;

Let one put garlands on, another kick

This frame; say naught. No praise or blame can be

Where praiser, praised, and blamer, blamed are one.

Thus be thou calm, *Sannyasin* bold! Say

–

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Truth never comes where lust and fame and greed

Of gain reside. No man who thinks of woman

As his wife can ever perfect be;

Nor he who owns the least of things,

nor he

Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro' Maya's gates.

So give these up, *Sannyasin* bold! Say –

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Say, 'Peace to all: From me no danger be

To aught that lives. In those that dwell on high,

In those that lowly creep, I am the Self in all.

All life both here and there, do I renounce,

All heavens and earths and hells, all hopes and fears.'

Thus cut thy bonds, *Sannyasin* bold! Say –

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Where seekest thou? That freedom, friend, this world

Nor that can give. In books and temples vain

You can't create enlightenment in a being by teaching. You can only reproduce enlightenment by inspiring.

**Whatever
decisions you
make during
depression will set
the next stage for
a scene of worse
depression.**

**Thy search.
Thine only is
that hand
that holds
The rope
that drags
thee on.**

**Then cease lament,
Let go thy hold, *Sannyasin* bold! Say –
‘Om Tat Sat, Om!’**

Vivekananda says, ‘Books or temples do not give you the right wisdom. It is the hands of the Guru who lives the Truth that give you wisdom. Hold onto those hands. Don’t let go of them. After that, there is no sorrow for you.’

Vivekananda was a true *sannyasi*! He sacrificed his very life for the sake of the goal. He lived to show how a Paramahansa lives on planet earth! Understand, these verses are expressions of a great Consciousness. They spur one to bring clarity within oneself, again and again, to stand up and make the right decisions. Out of that, he says, emerges the freedom that we seek.

So understand, to come out of depression, don’t change the situation. When you change the situation, you will only go into

further depression. Whatever decisions you make during depression will set the next stage for a scene of worse depression. Just imagine, when you are in depression, will you have enough clarity to make a good decision? Will you have the clarity to properly handle anything? No! You will not. Whatever you do at that time will be like hooking on to four or five more keys and entangling yourself with them. When a drunk man gets a rope, he will unconsciously bind himself more and more with it, thinking he is undoing it! All the decisions taken during depression are like this.

The only way to come out of depression is to bring clarity within yourself. Watch and stand up with courage. Then the real freedom will start happening.

****Namo Arihanta!***

What is the role of the master in *sannyas*?

Mahavir Jain was a great Jain master who compiled the teachings of Jainism known as the Jain Sutras. The verse begins, ‘*namo aribantana**’. ‘*Namo aribantana**’ means, ‘I bow in reverence to the *aribantas* who achieved the highest truths.’ He is talking about the great enlightened masters.

Namo aribanta - 'I bow down to Arihanta', the Jain master and deity.

These masters not only achieve, but they radiate the truths so much that those who go near them are also inspired to achieve!

Arihanta does not mean a person who teaches. No! *Arihanta* is a person who inspires. You can't reproduce enlightenment by teaching. If we could, we would have started selling it long ago! We would have created stores like www.enlightenment.com. 'Please visit our website to get enlightened!' We would have created 'Enlightenment Guaranteed' shops. No! Fortunately or unfortunately, you can't create enlightenment in a being by teaching. You can only reproduce enlightenment by inspiring.

Arihanta is the person who is radiating the truth very powerfully, very strongly. His presence is so intense that anybody who comes near him, even if they spend a few minutes around him, they get inspired. The fire is ignited. The transmission of light happens. They start feeling that this is the best state to live in. This is the best space in which to exist. This is the best thing that can happen to me in my life. Please understand that if you go near an enlightened being, even if you spend just two to three minutes around him, suddenly you will feel that this experience is the best thing that can happen to you.

Through just his mere presence, you will feel god. He will become a fantasy in you. He will inspire you so much. He will

***Arihanta* is the person who is radiating the truth very powerfully, very strongly.**

occupy your inner space so much that either you start working towards achieving that state or you feel you are not able to. Even if you feel you are not able to, it's okay. At least you have taken the first step. You have begun.

Respect towards an enlightened being is the first step towards enlightenment. It means that you want that state. Normally, you will not respect anything unless you agree with the ideology. Unless you have a little bit of attachment or feeling towards that ideology, at least a subtle feeling that you should be the same, you will not have respect for it. For example, if you are respecting somebody who is physically beautiful or handsome, be very clear, you have a subtle desire to be in that state, to have that quality. In the same way, if you respect a rich person, there is a subtle desire in you to have wealth. Anything you respect shows that it has entered your inner space.

When you say, 'I bow in reverence to enlightened beings,' it means you are paying your respect to enlightenment. Here you are not bowing down to someone who will help you when you are in fear. No. You are not bowing down to a king. You are not

bowing down to a rich person who will give you money. No. You are not bowing down to a person who will give you logic or philosophy, mere words. No. You are not following any person here. You are merely bowing down to a person who inspires, who drops the seed of enlightenment in you, who helps you achieve enlightenment! Somewhere you feel that just being with that person is enough. Enlightenment will happen. Such is the nature of the *aribanta*.

There is a beautiful commentary that says when you sit in front of an *aribanta*, the ultimate conscious being, without your knowledge, without even your conscious understanding, your whole being integrates towards that one goal, towards enlightenment. As of now you are not one being as you think. Your head is pulling, calling you in one direction. Your eyes are pulling you in the other direction. Your ears are pulling you in a different direction. A conscious decision to integrate these different fragments and direct the being towards enlightenment is *sannyas*! *Sannyas* is the determination to transform. Then the enlightened being can help you.

When you attain *sannyas*, you cannot explain it to anyone! You can experience it. You can radiate it, and they will catch it in the way you walk, in the way you talk and move around. You will become a spontaneous crowd puller. You will radiate an incomprehensible charm and energy.

Grace happens naturally with *sannyas*, because *sannyas* is nothing but revealing your inner beauty. The very fragrance of *sannyas* is grace and bliss.

Integrity – the trait of a *sannyasi*!

The word ‘penance’ means nothing but integrating yourself, making yourself a single entity. You may ask, ‘Are we not like that now?’ If you look closely, you will see that we exist as different entities, never as one. There is everything else in our life, except integration.

If you look deeply inside, you will understand, there are hundreds of voices continuously talking inside you. The moment the mind says, ‘Let us do this,’ the very next moment the thought will arise, ‘No. Let us not do it!’ After thinking of the side effects and after effects, the mind starts oscillating.

Integrating the fragmented parts of the mind is the very essence of life. Integrating the feelings and the mind, integrating your face and your mind, ensuring that your face shows the same thing as what your mind thinks, is the essence of life.

If you study the lives of great masters and try to search for one basic essence in all of their lives, you will find, it is not

knowledge or devotion. It is integrity! What they believed in, they lived. That's all! Their integrity was solid. They were ready to lose even their very lives, but not their integrity.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu*, the great enlightened master from India, used to move around on the streets just singing devotional songs. He never bothered about what others said about him. What he felt, he expressed. He was thrown into the sea because of the way he walked the streets, but it didn't stop him. To be like this requires a deep sense of sacrifice. It takes the courage to sacrifice anything to live with integrity!

That is why anything that these great masters did in their lives always culminated in eternal auspiciousness! Everything they did was an effort to integrate themselves with deep sincerity and devotion. The intense effort to integrate oneself completely is what is called penance. Penance always ends in auspiciousness. There will be innumerable things happening in your life all the time. Enduring all those things and intensifying your integrity with them - that is called penance. On the other hand, if you allow life's happenings to shake you, then you

land in disgrace. Which ever way you wish to go, is up to you.

Everything master did was an effort to integrate themselves with deep sincerity and devotion.

Adi Shankara was a great enlightened master from India. As a young boy, he was caught in a dilemma when he wanted to pursue the path of sannyas. He wanted to leave home with the permission of his mother, but she was unwilling to let go of him.

One day, he went to bathe in the river. Suddenly, his mother heard him crying out loud for help. She ran out and saw that a crocodile had caught his leg. He was struggling to be free.

Suddenly, by a flash of thought, he cried to her, 'Mother, if you give me permission to become a sannyasi, I will be freed from this crocodile now to continue with my life.'

The mother was surprised and asked how. He explained, 'According to the Vedas, if I enter a new ashrama (stage of life), it is equal to being born again. So, if you give me permission to enter into sannyas, then maybe god will give*

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu - A mystic from Bengal, India steeped in devotion to enlightened master Krishna. His followers are known as Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

Ashrama - The four stages in one's life: *brahmacharya* as a student, *grihastha* as a married householder, *vanaprastha* at the end of a productive married life and *sannyasi* as a person who renounces all material aspects in life.

**Once you
integrate, you
know who you
really are.**

*me a fresh
lease of life!’
The mother
was totally
helpless. She quickly made up her mind.
It was better to have her son as a
sannyasi than see him dead. She
agreed.*

*Immediately the crocodile released the
grip! Sankara ran to his mother with
great joy. He had lived the truth he
sought at that moment... and it worked.*

See, there are three things:

Thinking the Truth

Speaking the Truth

Living the Truth

The first two are easy to follow. But the third, living the Truth all the time, is difficult. It is very rare. *Sannyas* is the courage to live what we think is the Truth. We give importance to speaking the Truth. But living the Truth is most important. If you start living your Truth, your respect for yourself will increase. That is the beauty of it.

When you come to me with a problem, I sometimes give you consolation and tell you that it is alright. You see, the very fact that you are coming to me with the problem shows you don't have the integrity to live with it and solve it! So, I have to

console you. Anything can be lost, but not integrity. With integrity, your own evaluation of yourself goes up. When your own unconscious mind starts to believe you it is the most auspicious thing that can happen in your life. The gates of heaven are then open!

When you integrate, you drop hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is pretending to be what you are not. Hypocrisy is hiding in many places so people can't see who you really are. The fragments in you dominate over each other and make you hypocritical. When you fight with your own fragments and win, you are a *dheera*, a courageous one! It is easy to fight with others and win. When you fight with others and win, you are a *veera*, a warrior. But fighting with yourself requires more courage. You don't fight unless you are tired of yourself. Only when you are tired, you accept that you need to start the fight.

Once you integrate, for the first time, you know who you really are. All the masks drop. You are ready to expose yourself in relationships. You become more authentic. You suddenly realize that you were missing things because of *you!* *Sannyas* is all about becoming more authentic. When I say authentic, I mean that you will radiate your individuality instead of your personality. With fragments, you are a personality. With integrity, you are individuality. Individuality is seeing your authenticity through your own eyes. Personality is a built up image

in the eyes of society. The master's work is to create a space in you where you don't have to guard your personality, where you can be free, where just understanding can cause transformation.

Buddha used to tell his disciples, 'Count your life only after you have taken *sannyas*.'

Someone asked me if taking the vow of *brahmacharya** or *sannyas* will lead to enlightenment. Whether taking the vow leads to enlightenment or not is secondary. But if you observe the vows strictly for one month, successfully, the respect you have for yourself will tremendously increase. That is enough! It is called *asaadhya sadhana* – doing the seemingly impossible task successfully. It is making you do whatever your mind says you cannot do! Techniques like fire walking are in this category. Ordinarily, the mind will say that you cannot walk on a fire bed. Once you do it, the respect you have for yourself will increase! Then you will come into integrity.

Integrity needs to be understood in two ways.

The first part is integrating the fighting parts of the mind into one. See, the very life gets wasted in the oscillation of the mind. If you can follow any one path, you will attain it. For example, let us suppose

there are two paths to reach Bangalore. One path is 30 kilometers while the other is 30,000 kilometers. You are oscillating between which path to choose. If you choose any one path and proceed, you will reach Bangalore.

But if you keep oscillating, if you go on one path for half hour, and then change your mind and go on the other path for the next half hour, what will happen? You will never reach Bangalore! At least if you decide and take the 30,000 kilometer path, you will reach Bangalore, even if it takes you one year! But if you keep oscillating between these two paths, even if it takes thirty years, you will not reach Bangalore.

Even if the chosen path is wrong, the one who moves with integrity automatically comes to the correct path. He achieves what needs to be achieved. Understand clearly: there are only two types of people on planet earth, those who live with integrity and those who live without integrity, that's all! The scale to measure a person is not the path on which he went but whether he lived with integrity or not.

Integrity is the strength to live your belief, come what may.

Second, not getting diluted by external influences, is also integrity. It is the ability to not alter our integrity or dilute ourselves

Brahmacharya - Literally means walking in reality. The first stage of life in the *vedic* tradition as a celibate.

Integrating the mind is the essence of life.

due to inner confusions or outer influences. The person who lives with integrity, even if he dies on the train platform, will die with the satisfaction that he lived completely. The person who lives without integrity, even if he dies in the best hospital, will die with dissatisfaction. The scale to measure the quality of a person's life is to see how much he lived in tune with what *he* felt was life. For example, if he is an aesthet, if he lived as a strong atheist and died as a strong atheist, there is nothing wrong. He will attain! That very strength, when it goes deeper and deeper in him and searches, will show him the truth!

Integrating the mind is the essence of life. Decide you will always say and do only what you feel is right. Then, you will come to tremendous clarity and conviction in the inner and outer worlds.

Vivekananda recounts in his life that his master, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, died leaving him the responsibility of the mission. At the same time, Vivekananda's father died leaving behind a family of utter poverty. Vivekananda was the only hope for his family. He stood between saving his family and saving the world. No one recognized the mission he spoke of. He says beautifully, 'Who will sympathize with

the imaginations of a boy?' He was, after all, a young boy!

He describes those few days as 'unimaginable hell'. He was with a small group of boys, with no money, with only one thing: the integrity to live the life they believed in, the life taught by their master. Ten years later, he says, 'Ten years ago, I could not get one hundred people to celebrate master's birth anniversary. Today there are fifty thousand!' *Sannyas* is taking a strong decision not to allow the unconscious to hinder the consciousness and to establish consciousness firmly on the master and his words.

Vivekananda was questioned as to how he could desert his family at that time. Vivekananda beautifully replied, 'I believed that Ramakrishna's teachings could rationalize India and many foreign races. With that belief came the realization that it is better that a few persons suffer than for such ideas to die out of the world. What if a mother or two brothers die? It is a sacrifice. Let it be done. No great thing can be done without sacrifice. The heart must be plucked and the bleeding heart placed upon the altar. Then, great things are done!'

Such was his integrity.

Not only that, those who spoke that Vivekananda deserted his family do not know the correct facts. He continued to

fulfill his duty by giving them the bare minimum requirements. He also went to the court of Law to attend to some legal issues they faced.

A small story:

During the civil wars in Japan, an invading army entered a town and took control of the whole town. Before the army arrived in one particular village, everyone fled except a Zen master.

Curious about this master, the general went to the temple to see what kind of a man the master was. The master did not even acknowledge the general. The general became very angry when he was not treated in the usual respectful way to which he was accustomed.

He took out his sword and shouted, 'You fool! Don't you realize you are standing before a man who could run you through without blinking an eye?'

The master remained calm and asked, 'And do you realize that you are standing before a man who can be run through without blinking an eye?'

With the strength of integrity comes utter freedom and bliss. With freedom and bliss there is no fear in the inner or outer world!

Life is for enlightenment!

The very goal of life is enlightenment. You may have other goals, but knowingly or unknowingly, they are just different names that we give to the goal of enlightenment. In the same way, whatever else you may seek, what you actually seek is *sannyas* itself. But you don't know it. That is the problem!

You may think your goals are to have more money and more relationships. The truth is that even the one who searches for money actually searches only for enlightenment! See, there are only two things. One is money, and the other is name and fame. Name and fame mean nothing but to have more relationships. Whatever experience you feel you are going to get through money or relationships, you will only get through enlightenment!

That is why the soul never rests until enlightenment happens. No amount of money satisfies the soul. No relationship satisfies the soul. When money and relationships don't give satisfaction, it is called the 'depression of success'. This is what happens after reaching the peak of our career. People come to me and say, 'I have achieved all that I wanted to achieve, but *what for* I wanted to achieve, I have not achieved. I feel incomplete.' Understand that this is the call of your being that seeks no other goal except

The freedom to keep the consciousness either at a high or low level is available to you for a span of 70 to 80 years.

enlightenment. The response to it is *sannyas*.

Not properly understanding the goal of life is the

root cause of all problems. *Sannyas* is recognizing the goal properly and integrating to achieve it. Whatever goal you may be running behind in your life – money or relationship or whatever, your end goal is only bliss. There is no other separate goal in life!

There are only two types of people. One group knows the word bliss or enlightenment, and the path to it. They live their life according to that. The other group does not know the word or the path, so it comes around in circles. That's all! The former is *sannyasi*, the latter is *samsari*.

If you stand in Mysore Road and decide to go to Bangalore, you can take the shortcut and reach after thirty kilometers. Without knowing the shortcut, you can go around and reach after 30,000 kilometers. The people who don't know the shortcut keep going around.

Any goal other than enlightenment will leave you half way through the process. Any other goal will not fulfill you completely. Only the goal of enlightenment has the energy to stay with

you until the end and fulfill you when it is achieved.

You are going to live for maybe 70 or 80 years in this body. Am I right? In those years, you can keep your consciousness either in a high state or in a low state. You can play with it either way. The freedom to keep the consciousness either at a high or low level is available to you for a span of 70 to 80 years. Understand deeply, if you get any other gift and waste it, it is okay. But if you get the gift of consciousness and waste it, it is the greatest loss ever.

There are many glass pieces. But only a few are positioned in such a way as to receive the sun's reflection. Similarly, there are millions of living creatures. Not all of them are in the state to receive the cosmic consciousness and reflect it themselves. Only man has the power to reflect the cosmic consciousness in himself as the 'I'. For the mere reflection to fall on us, we are highly blessed souls. It is the highest possibility on planet earth.

If the direction of the glass changes, or if the glass breaks, the possibility no longer exists. The greatest loss is losing the possibility of the glass reflecting the sun in itself. Man is the glass that has been blessed with the reflecting capacity and given the right orientation to receive the reflection of the cosmic consciousness. Only human consciousness has the highest

possibility of flowering into enlightenment. Generally I don't force or impose anything on anyone. But when I see humans wasting the highest possibility of their birth, I feel bad for them. Everyone is moving around like people who have been led into the forest blindfolded. You move around in circles to fulfill the ego of other people. You are not even running to satisfy your own ego. You are running to satisfy someone else's ego! Your life itself is moving in this fashion. You don't know why you are running

You have achieved the human body which gives you the highest possibility to take the jump in consciousness. The glass is already reflecting the sunlight. Now all that the glass needs to do is to see the *source* of the reflection. That's all! Merging with the Source is what I call enlightenment, merging of the individual consciousness with the cosmic consciousness.

If this happens, then the goal of life, the purpose for which the glass was created, is achieved. Then, even if the glass breaks, there is no problem. But without achieving that, if the glass is broken, it is the greatest loss ever. If the human body perishes before enlightenment, there cannot be a greater loss than that.

Sannyas is the means to this achievement. *Sannyas* is not the end of life. It is the beginning of life. *Sannyas* is moving

towards enlightenment, the only and permanent purpose of life.

Conditioning is the culprit

If the purpose of life itself is enlightenment, where are we stuck right now? In what areas of our lives are we moving in the wrong direction? Understand that the problem is in recognizing the correct goal. If the goal is right, you have achieved it. If your goal is right, it means you are already living it.

Sannyas is nothing but creating clarity about the right goal. People miss because they don't have clarity about the goal. *Jeevan mukta*, a person who lives a liberated life, is a person who has clarity about the goal and pours his consciousness only on that goal every moment of life.

'Conditioning' is the reason that you miss the goal. When you were born, you came as a free bird, Paramahansa or the supreme swan, to flit and fly blissfully around and enjoy the whole of Existence. But after coming, not only did you fly around, unknowingly you also landed on

You have achieved the human body which gives you the highest possibility to take the jump in consciousness.

**A *sannyasi* moves
in synchronicity
with the whole of
Existence and
learns through it.**

planet earth. That was the problem. There are many people waiting to catch such birds that land! Society waits to fit you into the frame of country, religion, caste, community and creed.

You were a sweet soul when you landed on planet earth. You were not a Hindu, or an engineer or a worker. But understand that society wants engineers and workers. It is not bothered about your consciousness. Actually, neither your parents nor society are aware that there is something called consciousness. They themselves don't have that intelligence. They teach you what they were taught. That's all. Their conditioning is not a deliberate attempt to restrict or condition you.

Conditioning is the unwanted dowry that has been handed over for generations and lives, from person to person. First, there is parental conditioning. Then there is societal conditioning. Based on these two, you create certain ethics for yourself. This is the self imposed conditioning, your own *dharma*, your own path of righteousness.

Because we create so many layers of conditioning, we are unable to see the Truth directly. We are not able to perceive

the goal directly. We are not able to live the goal directly. We are caught in the conditioning and forget who we truly are. The conditioning creates certain limitations in us, and we start thinking that the limitations are the real us. Even the clothes that we wear condition us to believe we are the clothes!

Many of the conditionings are created in society in order to peacefully co-exist. For example, for easy communication, many languages are taught. There is nothing wrong in learning a language, but taking it up as a conditioning and making the language your very life, and creating sorrow for yourself and others is wrong. That mental attitude is wrong. So many people have sacrificed their lives for the sake of language. If the conditioning were not there, so many deaths would not have happened! The very history of mankind would have been written differently. Conditioning is the reason for terrorism among human beings. Today, conditioning-based-divisions goes right down to the level of belonging to specific political parties!

Let me tell you, the moment conditioning is sown in you, that moment itself, the noose of Yama or the lord of Death falls on you. Don't think it falls on you only at the time of death. When conditioning reaches its peak, it comes as the final death of the body, that's all. Death is the peak point of conditioning. Those who are

caught in conditioning move towards death every minute of their lives. Those who are under the guidance of an enlightened master are the ones who move towards freedom every minute of their lives. One group moves towards Yama, while the other group moves towards Shiva! If the coil of conditioning increases day by day, you are moving towards Yama. If the coil loosens day by day, you are moving towards Shiva. You are freeing yourself more and more from the conditioning.

By taking *sannyas*, you are taking the first conscious step to drop the past and enter a new world. The past is familiar, so you like to carry it. The mind always likes familiar patterns. Also, society teaches you to carry the past so that it can put guilt and fear in you that are based upon the past incidents. The past is unwanted baggage. *Sannyas* is disconnecting from the past. When you disconnect from the past and move to a new future, initially, there is utter insecurity. *Sannyas* is utter insecurity. In utter insecurity, there is nothing else to hold on to you, so you will find god!

Why do you think I give you a spiritual name? I give you a spiritual name to help you more easily disconnect from the past. When somebody calls out your name, immediately your awareness grips you and you respond. This is how deeply your name

is embedded in your unconscious. Your name brings immediate awareness into you. If you are sitting in a big classroom, and suddenly the teacher calls out your name, whether you were dozing off or listening to him, you will be jolted from that thought pattern, and come to the present. Do you agree? Your name is that significant in centering you.

The new name that I give you will constantly remind you of the psychological revolution that has happened in you, the new understanding that has happened in you. The name also indicates your individual spiritual path, according to your own innate nature, which will lead to the ultimate flowering of your consciousness.

A *sannyasi* works for the present moment. He works to give his whole life to Existence and doesn't care about the results. The results take care of themselves. That is his way. He knows only the moment, nothing else. Therefore, he learns directly from Existence every moment. That is why he has no doctrine, no religion. He moves in synchronicity with the whole of Existence and learns through it.

There is a Sufi saying, 'The Sufi is the child of the moment.' In Sufi texts, every moment is called a breath. The Sufis are called 'the folks of the breaths,' because they live in full awareness of every breath, of every instant. According to them, every moment, a new Self arrives. That is the

Sannyas is the joyful awareness that the 'moment' is guiding you closer to your enlightenment.

spirit of *sannyas*, fresh every moment. A person of the moment learns from the moment. For him, Existence is his teacher.

When the great Sufi mystic Hasan, was dying, somebody asked, 'Hasan, who was your master?'

He said, 'I had many masters. If I relate their names it will take months or even years, and it is too late now. I am going to die any time. I will tell you about three masters.'

The first one was a thief. Once I got lost in a desert, and when I reached a nearby village, it was late and everything was closed. At last I found a man who was trying to make a hole in the wall of a house. I asked him where I could stay and spend the night. He said, 'At this time of night it will be difficult. If you don't mind staying with a thief, you are welcome to stay with me.'

I stayed with this man for one month. Each night he would tell me, 'Now I am going for my work. You take rest and pray for me.' When he came back, I would ask him, 'Did you get anything?' He would say, 'Not tonight. But

tomorrow, god willing, I will try again.' He was always happy and hopeful, never in a state of hopelessness!

When I was meditating for many years, and nothing was happening, many times the moment came when I was so desperate, so hopeless, that I thought I should stop all this nonsense. Suddenly I would remember the thief who would say every night, 'God willing, tomorrow it is going to happen'

My second master was a dog. One day, I was going to the river to quench my thirst. A dog came and he was also thirsty. He looked into the river, and saw another dog there, which was his own image. He became afraid. He would bark and run away, but his thirst was so much that he would come back. Finally, despite his fear, he jumped into the water and his own image disappeared. I realized that the message had come from god to me: one has to jump in spite of the fear.

The third master was a small child. I went to a town where a child was carrying a lit candle. He was going to the mosque to put the candle there.

I asked the boy, 'Have you lit the candle by yourself?' He said, 'Yes.' Then I asked him, 'There was a moment when the candle was unlit, and then there was a moment when the candle

was lit. Can you show me the source from which the light came?’

The boy laughed, blew out the candle, and said, ‘Now you have seen the light going. Where has it gone? You tell me!’

My ego was shattered and my whole knowledge was also shattered.

It is true that I had no master. That does not mean that I was not a disciple. I accepted the whole of Existence as my master. I trusted the clouds, the trees. I learned from every possible source.

Sannyas is the joyful awareness that the ‘moment’ is guiding you closer to your enlightenment. All you have to do is be vulnerable, that’s all.

A sannyasi is utterly relaxed in the moment.

A warrior from Japan was captured by his enemies and was kept inside a prison. He feared that the next day he would be tortured, questioned and executed. He was not able to sleep at all.

Suddenly he remembered his Zen master’s words, ‘Tomorrow is not real. It is an illusion. The only reality is now.’ Remembering these words, the warrior became calm, peaceful and fell asleep.

Tomorrow also comes in the form of today. So why not focus on just today? When you

**You are in love
with everything
and everyone for
no reason at all.
That is sannyas.**

are in the moment, there is no space for pain or suffering. Only when you live in the past or future, you create the space for suffering. When you live in the moment, you automatically create a space where everything is beautiful. Life itself becomes a romance with Existence! You resonate with the whole thing. You are in love with everything and everyone for no reason at all. That is *sannyas*. Then, you don’t amass. You don’t fear. You don’t worry. Things happen around you like a beautiful dream.

A *sannyasi* is an eternal wanderer in spirit. Even if he is in one place, his spirit wanders without any pattern, touching so many things far away. He doesn’t care to accumulate anything. He gives away whatever comes his way. He receives much more than he needs. He lives like a king.

A small story:

There was a rich man who owned a cellar with lots of wine flowing in it.

He had one jug of special wine that he guarded, unopened.

Once, the Governor of the State visited him. He said to himself, ‘This wine is too special for him. I will open some other bottle.’ After some time, members of the royal family visited him. He

thought, 'I don't think even these people deserve this wine. I shall keep it for more special persons.' He served ordinary wine.

Then there was a family wedding, and he would not serve the wine, even to his near and dear ones. Finally one day he died and the wine was brought out along with the other jugs and served to the peasants of the neighborhood. No one knew that it was special.

When you don't hoard, you flow. Life is designed to flow. *Sannyas* is flowing with the awareness that Existence is the current pulling it along. This very attitude will attract the benevolence of Existence.

Enjoy the transience!

In a certain kingdom, the practice was that the royal elephant would pick the next ruler. The elephant would place him on its back and return to the palace where he would be unanimously crowned as the ruler.

On this occasion, the elephant started making its way towards the forest. Puzzled, the people followed. The elephant went to a place where a saint lived. It promptly picked him up and brought him to the palace! The saint was unwilling to be the ruler. However, after

much persuasion he agreed and ascended the throne.

Being a saint, he was driven by neither greed nor fear. By the sheer strength of his state, he caused the country to prosper. The ministers and people were thrown back into themselves with no scope for manipulation.

The neighboring king heard about the kingdom and decided to invade it.

But the saint could not be moved to respond to the cry of war. He sat firmly, not mobilizing an army. The offending king arrived in the battlefield with his army and found no one there. Surprised and curious, he entered the kingdom to meet the king. He told him, 'I want to wage a war with you.'

The saint asked, 'What for?'

The king replied, 'I want to have your kingdom.'

The saint replied, 'Take it.'

The king was shocked! He cried, 'What do you mean? Without a fight?'

The saint replied, 'Of course!'

The king fell at his feet and declared, 'I am not fit to rule even my kingdom. Please take it.'

Sannyas is the understanding of the transient nature of everything. All desires,

possessions, and emotions are moving and changing. Everything is changing and moving. Nothing is permanent. If you analyze your own desires before one is fulfilled, it looks like a mountain, a huge goal. After being fulfilled, the same desire looks like a molehill. Before being fulfilled, it will seem like your very life. After fulfilling one desire, you simply move to the next desire! Understand that the process itself shows that desires are neither solid nor permanent. They are just changing fantasies of the mind.

Sannyas helps you see the temporary nature of desires. Slowly, desires stop getting created. Then, all the energy that was locked up in desires is freely available to you. Automatically, your potential will take a jump. You are ready to do anything. Although you live in it, nothing in the material world really pulls you. Even if you see something beautiful, you don't wish to possess it. You just enjoy it and move on. That's all. That is *sannyas*.

Sannyas works like the log of wood that is used to burn the dead body and finally gets thrown into the same pyre. It burns out all the fantasies in you and finally gives itself to the same fire. It is a tool.

Adi Shankara beautifully says in his famous song, Bhaja Govindam*:

**Desires are
changing
fantasies of
mind.**

*Even when days
and nights,
winters and
springs have gone,
and life almost comes to an end,
the grip of desire is still there!*

Desire has such a pull at the unconscious level that liberating oneself from it is the greatest liberation.

A small story:

Once there lived a stone cutter. He was not satisfied with his position in life. One day he was passing through a wealthy merchant's house. Through the gate which was open, he noticed many possessions and important visitors in the merchant's house. He thought that the merchant must be very powerful. He became jealous and wished that he could be like the merchant.

To his great surprise, the stone cutter suddenly became the merchant, enjoying more luxuries and power than he had ever imagined.

One day, he was standing on the road when he saw a high official pass by. He was carried in a beautiful chair, accompanied by attendants and escorted by soldiers beating gongs.

Bhaja Govindam - Collection of 32 (sometimes 34) devotional verses composed by enlightened master Adi Shankara. This is considered to be the essence of *Vedanta* and *Advaita*, non-duality.

A sannyasi is one who clearly sees that everything is changing all the time, everything is beautiful.

Everyone, no matter how wealthy, had to bow down before the procession.

He thought, 'How powerful that official is! I wish I could be a high official!'

Immediately, he became the high official, and he was carried everywhere in his beautiful chair.

One day it was extremely hot, and he felt very uncomfortable in the sticky chair. He looked up at the sun. It was so bright and beautiful in the sky. He thought, 'How powerful the sun is! I wish that I could be the sun!'

He became the sun! He enjoyed his powerful position over everything.

One day, a huge black cloud moved between him and the earth, so that his light could no longer shine on everything below. He was surprised. He thought, 'How powerful that huge black storm cloud is! How I wish I could be a cloud!'

He became the storm cloud, flooding the fields and villages.

Soon he found that he was being pushed away by some great force, and realized that it was the wind. He thought,

'How powerful the wind is! I wish to become the wind!'

He became the wind and powerfully blew over the roofs of houses and through forests.

One day, he came across something that would not move, no matter how forcefully he blew against it. It was a huge and towering rock. He thought, 'How powerful that rock is! I wish to become the rock!'

Then he became the rock, more powerful than anything else on earth. But as he stood there, he heard the sound of a hammer pounding a chisel into the hard surface, and felt himself being changed. He thought, 'What could be more powerful than a rock?'

He looked down and saw a stone cutter far below him!

This story clearly illustrates how the mind always thinks that which has not yet been achieved is greater than that which has been achieved. The grass on the other side is always greener. But when we go to the other side, what happens? We feel the grass on the opposite side is greener! We jump from one thing to the other, from one desire to the next, from one point of view to the next, but we are seldom happy.

The truth is, we are already enough unto ourselves. We just need to awaken to it.

That's all. If we awaken to that truth, our beauty will be enhanced. Otherwise, we only waste time moving and searching.

A *sannyasi* is one who clearly sees that everything is changing all the time, and everything is beautiful just the way it is. He also knows that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. That is why he sets out first to clean his eyes. Eyes are the windows of the soul, so his work is at the core level. If you see the world through a red colored lens, everything appears red. If you see with a green colored lens, everything is green. If you see with clear eyes, everything looks clear and beautiful. Existence has always been beautiful, but we missed seeing it. *Sannyas* is the decision to see with clear eyes.

If life itself is changing all the time, then why are we trying to frame it? Buddha says in his Dhammapada, 'Life is like a flash of lightning in the sky.' Life is transient. Then what are we trying to do? We are trying to do an impossible job. Our job is to see, enjoy, and move on. If everything is a passing manifestation of Existence, then where is the scope for ego or fear or greed? *Sannyas*, as such, doesn't change anything. Everything remains the same. But it changes the way *you* see things. *Sannyas* happens in you. *Sannyas* has nothing to do with the outer world.

A small story:

***Sannyas* is
awakening the
charioteer. Man's
body is like a
chariot and his
consciousness is
the charioteer.**

Once a spiritual teacher came to visit the king. Nobody stopped the teacher and he entered the court where the king was sitting on his throne.

The king asked him, 'What do you want? The teacher replied, 'I would like to have a place to sleep in this hotel.'

The king said, 'This is my palace, it is not a hotel.' The teacher asked him, 'Who owned this palace before you?'

The king replied, 'My father owned this palace, but now he is dead.' The teacher asked, 'Who owned it before him?'

The king replied, 'My grandfather. He, too, is dead.' The teacher said, 'This is a place where people live for a short time and move on. Yet you are saying this is not a hotel!'

Sannyas is awakening the charioteer. Man's body is like a chariot and his consciousness is the charioteer. The charioteer is fast asleep, and the chariot is moving according to the horses. The five horses are the five senses, each with its own different idea. Not one of them is the truth. They are just transient ideas!

**The master waits
many lives for you.
But you have to
say 'yes'.
Remember, the
master is a
gentleman.**

Even in the most difficult times, a *sannyasi* remains with the awareness that life is a fleeting dream!

He carries a completely different definition for success and failure. He doesn't carry success or failure itself. A *samsari* on the other hand carries success and failure with him wherever he goes. There starts the problem.

Surrender, love, compassion, *Sannyas*

Sannyas is saying 'yes' to Existence. Saying 'Yes' is surrender. Saying 'yes' is love and compassion.

The human mind is trained to always say 'no'. Saying 'no' boosts the ego. 'Yes' makes the ego vulnerable, so the mind continues to say 'no.' *Sannyas* is saying 'yes' to Existence. Existence created you. It is waiting to express its divine play through you. By saying 'yes,' you allow the divine play to happen through you. When the divine play happens, things happen exactly according to the flow of Existence. Then, everything becomes auspiciousness! That is the meaning of dropping the mind,

becoming sensitive to the flow of Existence and working in tune with it. That is surrender. That is obedience to Existence.

In the effort to say 'yes,' you start softening. *Sannyas* is about becoming soft. As long as you say 'no,' you remain hard. When you make an effort to say 'yes,' you start softening. When you make a conscious decision to say 'yes,' it starts. That is where the master plays a role. *Sannyas* is saying 'yes' to the master without asking for an explanation. When you start trusting the master completely, *sannyas* starts happening in you. Somewhere you get the click that the master knows better than you. Then you start letting go of your hold over your mind and start holding the hands of the master. The master's hands are always stretched out, but you were not ready to hold them. Once the 'yes' starts happening, you hold his hands.

Then a space is created where love starts happening. Love happens only when you start saying 'yes.' By saying 'yes,' not only do you start loving, you allow the other person to love you as well. Then your inner space that was like a rock earlier, starts becoming like cotton! It becomes soaked with love. The love is not just towards one person or for any reason. It is an overflowing energy. It is towards the whole of Existence for no reason. You start communing with the trees, with everything around you. You feel that life is a song,

the song of Existence of which you are a part. You are in a deeply resonant mood with everything and everyone around you, including yourself. Your actions simply become an outpouring of the joy and ecstasy that is enveloping you all the time.

A small story:

A Zen master arrived at the meeting place of the Cambridge Buddhist Society. He found everyone dusting and cleaning the whole place in anticipation of his visit.

They were surprised to see him because he was not supposed to arrive until the following day.

He simply tied back the sleeves of his robe and joined the preparations. They could not believe that he wanted to help. He asked, 'Why can't I also prepare for the grand day of my arrival!'

When you are resonating with Existence, you enjoy everything, including yourself. You don't see yourself as separate from anything else. You see no separate reason for anything. There are people who commune with nature but fail miserably when it comes to people. Then, even their communion with nature is not real communion. Feeling only for nature is not a scale by which to measure love.

People tell me that they are already communing with Existence. Trees and

animals don't create trouble for you. That is why you claim to commune with them! They keep quiet. You can simply express anything to them. You can thrust your feeling on them, pull it out, and feel good, that's all. It is just an ego trip. The essence is in the ability to always commune with the whole of Existence. If you can create that space of love under those conditions, then you are communing.

A poet once wrote a love song and sent it to his friends. A few days later, he received a letter from a lady to whom he had sent the poem.

She wrote to him saying, 'I am so touched by your poem. Please come home, meet my parents, and ask them if you can marry me.'

The poet was surprised. He wrote back to her, 'That was a poem of love from my heart that I wanted to sing to a few souls. It was nothing more than that!'

She replied, 'You are a hypocrite. Because of you, I will never again entertain a poet in my life.'

The problem is, everything happens with the reason of the intellect. Love has been reduced to mere lust for the other person's body. That is the problem. Real love is an expression of the overflowing energy that starts happening in you when you start saying 'yes' to Existence.

The master happens in your life with just one intention to destroy your ego and allow the attitude of sannyas to flower in you.

The famous poet Kabir says that when love possesses you, don't even think twice. Just dive into it. If you start thinking, it is like arranging your pillows when deep sleep of rest has come to your eyes. He says, 'Even though the head itself must be given, why should you weep over it!'

The master waits many lives for you. But *you* have to say 'yes'. Remember: the master is a gentleman. He gives you the freedom to remain in bondage. He waits. Once you say 'yes,' he takes you in his arms. The master is the only one who can show you the power of love.

A small story:

Sadashiva Brahmendra was a great saint from South India. He lived just like a child. He never wore clothes. He was always in ecstasy.*

One day he was walking in deep ecstasy when the Nawab, the Muslim ruler of that territory, went riding past*

him. He was in such deep ecstasy that he did not notice or pay respect to the Nawab. The angry Nawab* cut off his hand with his sword. Sadashiva Brahmendra* continued to walk, not reacting in any way to what had happened.*

One of his devotees saw the scene and was struck very deeply. She started weeping, 'O master! You have lost your hand for not showing courtesy to the Nawab!'

He was surprised and asked the devotee to bring the severed hand. He then put it back on, and it became whole again. The devotee was dumbstruck when she saw this.

Sadashiva Brahmendra explained, 'The Nawab's hatred destroyed my hand, your love healed it!'*

An enlightened being's love and compassion is boundless. Sannyas is living like an enlightened being. It is living enlightenment.

A sannyasi is one who is established in love and compassion in the inner world, while being established in concentration and precision in the outer world. A real sannyasi has the precision of a sword. When he closes his eyes, the outer world

Sadashiva Brahmendra - 18th century Tamil saint and music composer.

Nawab - A noble of the Moghul empire.

is no more. When he opens his eyes, his work is perfection, perfection not only in work, but in relationships also! He is a father, a mother, a brother and a friend, all at the same time.

He moves guided by inner intelligence. That is why he is in the present moment all the time. He responds to the moment. That is the ultimate sense of responsibility, responding to the moment spontaneously. True love and compassion are spontaneous responses to the moment. That is why they surface irrespective of people or situations.

A small story:

One man went to a Zen monastery and told the master, 'Master, I wish to practice Zen for the rest of my life but I have never stuck with anything for very long. I always look for shortcuts to everything. Is there a shortcut to enlightenment?'

The master told him, 'You are accepted into this monastery for two days. In these two days, you will be taught the shortcut to enlightenment. Is there anything that you like to do in particular?'

The man said, 'Since I don't stick to anything for a long time, I am unable to tell what I like to do most. But I like to play chess.'

The master called for a young disciple who was supposed to be a good chess

The master moves, guided by inner intelligence.

player. He asked the two of them to sit down

and placed a chess board between them. He then took out his sword and placed it in front of the two of them and said, 'Both of you have to play. The moment one of you loses, the loser will have his head cut off.'

They were shocked at the master's words! They started the game and played.

They concentrated on the game like they had never done before.

Initially, the young monk made good moves, and it looked like he was going to win. Then suddenly he made a mistake. The man took the opportunity and took over the game. Soon, he was clearly on the way to winning.

Suddenly, he looked at the young monk and thought with what dedication and devotion the monk lived his life with the master at that young age. Then he thought about his own life and how he had wasted it. Suddenly he decided, if at all anyone should die, it should be himself. He deliberately made a wrong move. The young monk saw that and took over the game again.

The master was watching the whole thing. At that point, he took the board

**Sannyas is
nothing but
finding out
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That exact place
is known as
nothing but the
ego.**

away, and the coins fell in the air. He said, 'Nobody wins. Nobody loses. The game is over. There are only two things needed for enlightenment: concentration and compassion. Today, you learned both. Stay with me and study the way you have played chess today. Enlightenment will be yours!'

Sannyas is bringing together concentration and compassion. With concentration, you never forget the goal of life, enlightenment. With compassion, you are ready to sacrifice your very life so that the other may reach the goal! When both are there, both you and the other will reach! That is the greatness of *sannyas*. That is the space of *sannyas*.

The greatest quality of a *sannyasi* is his immense trust in Existence. Society trains you to always protect yourself from everything. That is the problem. You are made to believe Existence is the enemy from which you have to protect yourself. You apply the same rule and protect yourself from the master also. The master happens in your life with just one intention - to destroy your ego and allow the attitude of *sannyas* to flower in you.

Sannyas is nothing but finding out exactly where you are going wrong. That exact place is known as nothing but the ego. If you understand this, you will simply open up to the master and allow him to strike the ego. You will simply drop all your defenses and open up. Being closed to the master's presence is like closing your nose with your fingers when there is a fragrant breeze blowing. When you open up to him with trust, you will see miracles happen all around you.

A small story:

There was a man with a few disciples. He was not enlightened. He was just guiding the boys. A new disciple joined the group one day. He was so humble, so pure and authentic, that the other disciples became jealous of him. They felt he would be the master's successor. There was a lot of politics and they tried to kill him.

One day they said to him, 'If you really believe in the master, can you jump off the cliff? If your trust is true, no harm can happen to you.' The disciple readily jumped off the cliff.

The rest of them rushed down almost three thousand feet below into the valley. They went to pick up his scattered bones. But he was sitting there in lotus posture looking very happy.

He opened his eyes and said, 'You are right, trust saves!'

They thought it must be some coincidence and they created another plot to kill him. A house caught fire one day and people were trying to rescue those who were trapped inside the house. They told him, 'If you love our master with trust, go in and save the woman and child who are trapped inside.'

The disciple rushed in and after a few minutes came out with the woman and child.

They still did not give up. One day they were going somewhere, and they had to cross a river. They told him, 'You need not go in the boat. You have such great trust, you can walk on the river.'

The disciple entered and started walking on the river! They were simply shocked.

That was the first time the master saw him. He was not aware that he had been told to jump into the valley and told to go into the burning house. He saw him walking on the river and asked him, 'What are you doing? It is impossible!'

The disciple replied, 'It is not impossible at all! I am doing it by your power, master!'

The master thought, 'If my name and my power can do this to this ignorant man, then imagine what I can do!' He got up and tried to walk on the river and drowned!

Trust has amazing power. It works beyond logic. Anything that works beyond logic is the direct truth. It never fails. When you trust the master, when you surrender to the master, you are giving him the responsibility of you. He never fails! It does not mean you can surrender to him and then do foolish things. No! The first thing to realize is that when real surrender happens, it will never prompt you to do foolish things. Only surrender in the name of surrender will attempt to do foolish things. Real surrender is a consciousness, not a concept for trial.

Sannyas is a consciousness that flowers in groups of people in the presence of the master. Over the years, *sannyas* has always happened in groups. All the great masters have ordained groups of *sannyasins*. When a group of people start dissolving in love, when a group of people start melting, *sannyas* starts happening. Suddenly, so much beauty radiates. Suddenly, Existence appears to be profoundly mystical and beautiful. The power of coincidence becomes a way of life. Tremendous energy starts flowing. For no reason, life looks tremendously beautiful. Everything seems to be perfect. There is an inexplicable

Sannyas is moving one step closer to god, and god is the ultimate creator. The very energy of sannyas is creation.

feeling of blossoming all round.

It is not that Existence has become more beautiful.

Existence is

always the same. You have started responding to it, that's all. Your own human qualities have enriched tremendously. That is *sannyas*! When you start responding to Existence with enriched qualities, when you start melting into Existence, when you start yearning for it, *sannyas* starts happening to you.

When *sannyas* happens, you automatically add more beauty to Existence. You become a creator. People think *sannyas* is renouncing creativity. No! *Sannyas* is moving one step closer to god, and god is the ultimate creator. The very energy of *sannyas* is creation. This is a little known fact about *sannyas*.

When Sannyas happens, the moment is right ...

A small story:

One day a young man approached Socrates, the Greek philosopher, and said, 'O great Socrates, I come to

you for knowledge.' Socrates took the man to the sea and pressed his head down into the water for a few seconds.

When he released him, the man came up gasping for breath. Socrates asked him to repeat what he wanted. The man said, 'I want knowledge.'

Socrates put him under the water again, this time for a longer period. Then he released him and asked, 'What do you want?' The man replied, 'Knowledge.'

Socrates repeated this a few times.

After a few times, Socrates asked again, 'What do you want?' The man gasped, 'Air. I want air!'

Socrates said, 'Good. When you want knowledge as much as you wanted air, you shall have it.'

Sannyas is a deep urge that rises from within you. It is a deep yearning. Even if the longing is not completely consistent over time and space, it is alright. You can take the jump. It may not become consistent. But becoming consistent is not the criterion needed. When it takes root, that alone is enough. You are ready. Once you jump in, everything takes care of itself.

One man was walking towards the Himalayan mountains in the winter months. An old man saw him and asked, 'It is so cold in the mountains. Are you

sure you can make it?’ The man replied, ‘My heart is already there. So it is easy for the rest of me to reach there.’

The initiation itself will trigger the process. The outer adornments of *sannyas* will take care of the inner adornment. That is why, with the initiation, a new name and saffron clothing are given. They will do most of the job for you. They will keep the awareness alive every moment.

But if you start analyzing the decision to take the jump, you will miss it. *Sannyas* is linked to your energy. Just by seeing your energy, I can tell you are ready for *sannyas*! You cannot analyze energy with logic. Energy is beyond logic. When you take *sannyas*, the moment is right, that’s all. Even if you drop it later, have no regrets. The seed has been sown. Once a *sannyasi*, always a *sannyasi*. It will happen again at the right time. That time may be the final time.

Sannyas is a decision taken by intelligent people. When life comes to the boiling point, to a peak of depression, to a point where you feel the outer world is of no use, when there is nothing further that can be done to help your situation, there are three choices you can make.

The first choice you could make is suicide. Suicide appears to be immediate freedom but actually it creates terrible suffering. People think that suicide takes courage.

Energy is beyond logic. When you take *sannyas*, the moment is right, that’s all. Even if you drop it later, have no regrets.

Courage is a beautiful word wrongly used here. Do you need courage to rub chili powder in your own eyes? No!

It is simple foolishness. In the same way, it does not require courage to commit suicide. It is simply foolishness. There is nothing courageous about it.

Understand the science behind suicide. Suppose your normal life span this birth is ninety years of age and you commit suicide when you are forty-five. For the remaining forty-five years, you have to wait as a spirit. Only at the end of ninety years can you choose the next body to take birth. These forty-five years will be the worst hell you can ever experience, worse than the struggle that happened when you were in the body. Suicide is not the relief you think it is.

The second choice is to resort to some sort of addiction, like drugs or alcohol, and slowly poison the system until it dies. This is equally as foolish because you are knowingly abusing the body.

The third and most intelligent path is to look into yourself. When the outer world seems to be over in your mind, the time has come to look inwards. *Sannyas* happens when you decide to look in and introspect.

**Sannyas allows
you to play any
number of roles
without
identifying with
any of them.**

Sannyas is the alchemy of transforming your entire lifestyle, directing your whole energy towards enlightenment. When the first thought to look in comes, when the first thought to embrace spirituality happens, the intelligent one takes the jump into *sannyas*. *Sannyas* is the shortcut.

A small story:

A fifty year old student of enlightenment approached a Zen master and said, 'I have been studying spiritual studies since I was a small boy. I have learnt that even the grass and trees will become enlightened. This seems very strange to me.'

The master asked, 'Of what use is it to discuss how grass and trees become enlightened? The question is how you can become enlightened. Have you ever considered that?'

The old man answered, 'I never thought of it in that way.'

The master said, 'Then go home and think it over.'

Sannyas is a focused appointment with yourself. It is a conscious commitment to yourself that you are going to destroy 'all

that you are not', and cleanse yourself completely.

Once you make the commitment, your seeing, hearing, talking and feeling will start being different. The same things will cause a new understanding in you. That is what commitment to *sannyas* does to you. When you take on *sannyas*, with just the energy level concurrence, bypassing your logic, you will see that there will be magic in your life. *Sannyas* needs only to be sown, the seed planted within you. The rest will happen automatically. Its very nature is transformation within and without.

Sannyas is going to be the only solution for the future, because it is the only thing that teaches you to be established in yourself and yet learn to act in the outer world in a playful, joyful, ecstatic way. *Sannyas* allows you to play any number of roles without identifying with any of them. It keeps you in continuous excitement and ecstasy all the time. It makes you experience the very essence of taking birth on planet earth.

Recollections of a childhood friend of Nithyananda

(This section is an extract from the narrations of a childhood friend of Nithyananda.)

Deeply associated with Nithyananda before his enlightenment, Sampath describes the indescribable yearning for enlightenment that he saw in Nithyananda as a child.)

Towards the end of his polytechnic years, Swami* reached a stage when he felt there was something that had to be achieved, but all the activities of the present were a waste in that context. Then he became like a child. If we get the thought that we have to achieve something, we will reject all other things and be focused only on that, just like an obstinate child. Until we get what we want, we refuse to eat or sleep. He became like that.

Our hometown Tiruvannamalai, a spiritual incubator, is home to many wandering mendicants. They were all over the place, pursuing their path in different ways. At that time of his life, he started begging the *sannyasi* that used to pass by us. He would go up to them and tell them, 'Please do something for me. I will come away with you. Please take me with you.'

There was one such person who had just entered Tiruvannamalai from outside. If you saw him, you would see that he appeared to be just like Shiva, the Hindu god! He might have been between 28 or 30 years of age. He had a shaven head,

with a *rudraksh** string tied in his hair. He wore gold earrings and a grand *rudraksh** necklace. He appeared to be just like Shiva. If you looked at him, you would feel like falling at his feet. There was so much radiance in him. He beautifully sang verses from ancient lore. People would melt with tears as he sang.

He was just an ordinary wandering mendicant with no intensity of seeking whatsoever. But his outward appearance, which was like Shiva, kindled a deep yearning in Swami* that was beyond his control. He saw only Shiva in him! As soon as he saw this mendicant, he fell at his feet and tears poured from his eyes.

He pleaded with him, 'Swami*, I am not able to.... Please take me with you and go. Please take me with you. I will come away with you. Please do something for me.' I was surprised.

Since he had gone to the peak of yearning, any wandering mendicant who he saw, he started begging, 'Do something for me. Do something for me.' Those wandering mendicants clearly saw that they were not qualified to guide him in any way. They clearly saw that he came from a different space altogether. They told him that they would not be able to guide him, and moved on.

Swami - An honorific term used for a *sannyasi*, a monk.

Rudraksh - Seed of a tree used for Hindu rituals and for wearing. Retains energy of meditation.

When I saw his struggles, I understood his state of inexplicable yearning from my own level. When I saw how he sobbed to those wandering mendicants to take him with them, I realized the extent to which he was yearning to merge with the Infinite. If I imitate him for you, you will not be able to digest it.

Those few incidents are deeply engraved in my memory. I can never forget them. I often wondered, 'Why is he crying like this? What is spirituality? Why does he do all these things? Only now am I able to understand. I must have been a real wooden head in those days. Even to understand such things, we need the grace of the masters. When they share an idea with us, even for that idea to go inside us and work, we need their grace. I often think to myself, only because I was with Him am I able to understand such things.

I frequently asked him, 'Why are you doing this?'

He would say, 'I am unable to. . . I am not able to concentrate on anything. I don't know if I will be here much longer. Time is up. I need to move.'

At that time, I didn't know there was a life different from this life. I didn't know that enlightenment is the purpose of life and that is why we have been born.

Also, he was struggling as if no one was there to support him. In that condition, I

didn't always feel that I should go with him. Many times I felt I should go, but there was no courage or conviction on my part.

In those days, he included me in everything just because I was his friend. That's all. He finally told me one day, 'I am thinking of going away now.' I just said, 'Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay.' Nothing stirred in me to even venture into a discussion.

Real love doesn't stand in the way

A true mother is one who lets go of her child when the time is right. A mother who is too possessive of her child should probably hesitate to give birth in the first place! Even giving birth is a form of letting go, she is allowing the child to leave her body! Only a mother who is ready to allow the next level of explosion to happen, a mother who is ready to let go, a mother who is ready to give inspiration only can be a real mother.

If you are possessive, if you feel sad just thinking about separating from the child, then you should not even give birth to the child! You should continuously feed him through the umbilical cord. The umbilical cord connection should be continuously kept alive! Just as the child grows physically only after you deliver him into the outside

world after nine months, likewise, he can grow psychologically only if you allow him to break from you.

Physical disconnection is birth. Psychological disconnection is *sannyas*.

In that way I am very fortunate. When I went and told my mother that I wanted to leave home for *sannyas*, it was late at night, around eleven o'clock. I went to the temple, spent some time as usual, and came home at my regular time. I opened the door with my key and walked in. I wore wooden sandals, normally worn by wandering ascetics. They made a loud noise on that granite floor! My mother's usual custom was to wake up, prepare the food of my choice, and serve me the moment I entered. If I had finished my dinner at the temple, I would tell her and both of us would go to sleep.

That particular night, she got up and was about to prepare food. I called her and told her, 'I have decided that I am leaving home for *sannyas*. You can give me food tonight, even though I have already eaten. I will eat now because tomorrow I will be leaving.'

It was a very casual announcement from my side. Of course, she was shocked, but she did not say anything. One thing is that all of my family knew from the beginning that talking and trying to convince me to do otherwise would never work. They

knew that before saying anything, I would be very clear about it inside. Only after knowing what to do, would I say it out loud. When I say something, it means it is going to be done, that's all!

Tears started pouring from her eyes. I looked at her and asked, 'What do you mean by crying? Do you mean that I should not go?'

She shook her head and said, 'No, I am not saying you should not go. I am crying because I am not able to control myself. I am not able to accept it. That's all. I can't say that you cannot go.'

She knew all along that one day this would happen. One day or the other I would leave. It was predicted through my horoscope. The beauty of it was, she never said 'No!' Not only did she not tell me I couldn't go, she broke the news to my father as well. My father thought she had shouted at me and created some problem and that was the reason I had decided to go. He asked her, 'Did you shout at him? Did you create any problem? You know how he is!'

My mother said, 'No, I did not shout or say anything. He came of his own accord

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and told me this.' Then my father calmed down.

It was a straight and simple declaration. My father came to me, sat down and asked, 'Swami, your mother is saying a few things as your words. Are these things true?'

Funnily, they used to call me 'Swami' even in those days!

I told him, 'Yes. I have decided to leave home to pursue *sannyas* and become enlightened.'

It was a shock to him. But he saw that I was very clear, balanced, cool and relaxed. He made only one statement. He said, 'If you fall sick, please inform us. We want to take care of you.' That's all. He simply said, 'If you ever fall sick anywhere during your travels, please inform us. We want to take care of you. That is the only thing we want, nothing else. Otherwise, do what you want.'

My parents never stood in my way. Understand, any relationship, including the parental relationship, is a healthy relationship, only when the person is ready to allow the next phase to happen. I have seen thousands of youngsters who are so inspired, who are bold enough, who are courageous enough to take up this path of seeking. However, they don't even give themselves a chance to explore because of their parents.

Parents simply fall into the regular way of life, living to satisfy other people's ego, and bringing up children. Very rarely, a few souls get the inspiration and courage to explore. Try to understand that I am not asking you to train your kids or force your kids to become Swamis. No! I am saying that if at all they feel that click towards *sannyas*, do not stand in their way. You will be blessed if you do not stand in their way.

Have the intelligence to see the path the child has chosen. He has chosen the ultimate path. Even if he cries and struggles and becomes a failure, there is nothing wrong, if that is your fear. I might have been a failure in my previous ten births. That is why this time I am successful! One thing, when the struggle is for *sannyas*, even if enlightenment does not happen, it is not a failure. It is a great success because you lived with integrity, and that too, in the conscious field. In the conscious field, Existence watches over you completely. You are taken care of at every step. So understand that any exploration, any research, any adventure in the conscious field should be encouraged, allowed, and supported.

I feel eternally grateful to my parents for not standing in the way.