

Here Be Wisdom

108 Aphorisms on the Mature Stage of Spiritual Life

by David Bruce Hughes
(Gaurahari Dāsānudās Bābājī)

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Preface: The Absolute Truth

The Absolute Truth is the essence of what is.

Who can know the Absolute Truth?

Only one who perfectly understands the true nature of the soul, and God, and has developed Divine Love.

For the Absolute Truth is not a thing, nor is it information, but a state of being and an experience of the pure soul beyond the mind and bodily senses.

Words and ideas cannot contain the Absolute Truth because they are symbols. Symbols are mere abstractions—shadows of the truth—and the Absolute Truth is ultimate reality.

The world of phenomena is not the Absolute Truth, because it is limited, temporary, conditional and changeable. The Absolute Truth is neither temporary nor changeable, but is unlimited, unconditional, eternal and unchanging.

If neither the finite and unbounded phenomenal universe nor the bounded but infinite world of ideas and symbols can contain the Absolute Truth, where is there space enough to hold it? Within the core of everyone's heart lives the soul, and in the core of the soul lives the radiant Absolute Truth, eternal, unlimited and just.

This Truth is the source of all life and consciousness. If you are alive and aware, the eternal, unlimited dimension of Absolute Truth is within you.

The challenge of spiritual life is to find this Truth within. One who knows this has come to the perfection of all knowledge, for this Truth is the source of all Divine Wisdom.

How to know the Absolute Truth

Because ordinary words or symbols cannot actually contain or describe the Absolute Truth, it is easier to describe what the Truth is not.

The Absolute Truth is not ordinary truth. It is fundamentally different from ordinary truth. Ordinary truth is true only for a limited time, person or set of circumstances. But the Absolute Truth is unconditionally true for all time, all beings and all circumstances.

The Absolute Truth has been true for all eternity since before the creation of this material universe, and it will remain true eternally after this material universe has passed away. This Absolute Truth is a unique class of truth.

The Absolute Truth is not in the self-serving speculations of professional philosophers and theologians. It is not in the screaming news headlines or the lurid fabrications of the tabloids. It is not in the conceited inventions of the academic scholars and scientists, nor in the pompous pronouncements of the priests and politicians.

The Absolute Truth is not accessible to the proud, the learned sophists, the lusty, or those attached to money, power and possessions.

It hides from those seeking reputation, fame and prestige. Truth is modest and shy. It flees from passion, pretentiousness, ambition and desire.

For the Absolute Truth cannot be known by the senses, or mind polluted by material desire. Even purified intelligence without any tinge of desire can only begin to approach Truth. But only the pure soul in Divine Love of God can experience the Absolute Truth.

This most esoteric teaching is the core of mysticism and the gateway to spiritual liberation. The experience of the Absolute Truth has no beginning or end, for it is the experience of the eternal ecstatic relationship between the soul and God.

The internal self-revelation of the Godhead within the human heart is the essence of spiritual enlightenment. The spiritual presence of the Lord surpasses the golden nectar of bliss, and His love shines brighter than a thousand suns. Compassion and solace flow from Him like great rivers of liquid light.

This is the experience of Absolute Truth to which all saintly persons aspire, and in which their spiritual quest finds deep fulfillment. In this state all prayers are answered, all sufferings assuaged. The glory of the Lord, shining forth in their hearts, fulfills all desires.

This illumination is the profound state of grace taught by all holy teachers and sacred scriptures. Alas, it is realized and practiced only by a rare few. Yet it is the goal of all religions and the aim of all spiritual paths: the blessing of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Soul

The Absolute Truth is directly experienced by the pure soul. The soul is the fundamental particle of consciousness. He is an individual spiritual being with spiritual qualities similar to the Lord's: personal, conscious, eternally existing, full of perfect knowledge and spiritual bliss. Full knowledge of the Absolute Truth is natural for the soul. But when the temporary, conditional material mind and body cover the soul, this knowledge is also covered.

To realize the true nature of the individual soul, one must cease to identify oneself with the material body. We do not have a soul; we are a soul. The body and mind are merely temporary external

coverings of the pure soul. That is why all genuine spiritual paths teach detachment from the material body, activities and desires.

The soul is eternal. It does not die when the body dies. The blessing of eternal life is already ours. The soul is not affected by any material qualities or activities. Nevertheless, the soul's identification with the material mind and body in material consciousness makes it appear that what happens to the body happens to oneself.

This is the primary root of all illusion and ignorance, and the real cause of all our troubles. A wise person who wants to know the Absolute Truth strives to overcome this false identification of the soul or self with the temporary material coverings of body and mind.

One who has realized that the self is really the soul is no longer attached to the body and its activities. Thus even while walking, working, sleeping, eating and drinking one can understand these are only the mechanical activities of the material senses in relation to their natural objects.

Such a wise person is no longer affected by the material qualities. To the wise, honor and dishonor, success and failure, pleasure and pain are all the same. Stones and gold are of equal value, and one looks upon all creatures great and small as spiritual brothers and sisters.

This is why the saints and martyrs of times past could so easily accept and tolerate austerity and suffering in pursuit of their spiritual goals.

They are not afraid of hardship or death because these are only temporary material conditions. Rather, suffering teaches us patience and encourages us to take complete shelter in the Lord.

Hearing about the spiritual nature of the soul is the beginning of realizing the Absolute Truth. Performing the process of spiritual realization under the personal direction of an advanced soul is the best method for attaining spiritual perfection.

The Spiritual Teacher

The first step in spiritual life is to understand the true nature of the soul. The next step is to realize this truth by studying with a person who has already realized it. Unfortunately, ordinary religious and spiritual teachers cannot impart complete knowledge of the Absolute Truth.

They have compromised realization of the Absolute Truth for convenience and status in the material world.

But the Absolute Truth is not of this material world. Similarly, a spiritual Teacher who can expose the student to the Absolute Truth is not a man of the world. Although he may appear to be an ordinary man, he has transcended this world by his realization of the Absolute Truth.

The realized spiritual Teacher lives in the light of the Spirit of God and knows the Absolute Truth by direct personal experience. Divine Love is his nourishment and spiritual ecstasy is his most prized ornament. Such a realized Teacher can impart wisdom because he can see the Truth directly.

No one can find such a perfect Teacher simply by his own efforts. Anyone who tries will surely be deceived. One can obtain a realized Teacher only by the kind mercy of God, because such a Teacher is a perfect representative of God.

Taking shelter of the transcendent, all-powerful Lord alone, one should pray for spiritual guidance. The Lord hears and responds to

all sincere prayers. He alone can send His true servant to teach the sincere disciple.

The Teacher must choose the student. If the student attempts to choose a teacher he will err, because he is in ignorance. Otherwise he would not need a Teacher. The successful student prays and waits for the Teacher to find him. When the Teacher appears he recognizes the sincere student and extends an invitation to join his school.

To be successful, the student must dedicate himself completely to the Teacher's mission. Holding nothing back, he should offer the Teacher everything and serve him with all his heart. He should sincerely inquire from the Teacher regarding all his doubts, and submissively hear and try his best to understand the Teacher's answers. This is the ancient system of receiving transcendental knowledge.

The Teacher, in return, gives the student the spiritual seed of knowledge of the Absolute Truth in the form of the Holy Name of the Lord. This is the process of initiation. By watering this seed with love, devotion and selfless service to the Teacher and the Lord, the student gradually grows in realization of the Absolute Truth.

At some point the student becomes sufficiently advanced to begin to share his realization with others. At this time the student may, with the Teacher's blessing, begin to instruct others according to his degree of realization.

After some experience, the sincere and progressive student may also become a fully qualified Teacher of the profound mysteries of the Absolute Truth. Finally, the successful student who avoids the numerous pitfalls on the path achieves the same status and spiritual destination as his own Teacher.

Meditation

In prayer we speak to the Lord; in meditation we listen for His response. Both are necessary, like breathing in and breathing out.

What kind of conversation is it when only one person speaks? Therefore we should not only pray but also meditate. In fact, considering that the Lord is our spiritual Father and Master, we should listen more than talk!

The Lord hears every prayer; this is a fact. And He will also instruct us through scripture, through teachers, by creating challenging situations and in many other ways. Meditation is one of the most valuable of the ways in which the Lord instructs, since the meditative mind can receive and understand many things the mind in the ordinary state cannot.

Meditation also cleanses the mind from contact with the senses and helps us understand our real spiritual nature. There are seven stages of meditation:

1. Preparation
2. Sitting posture
3. Breath control
4. Withdrawing the mind from the senses
5. Concentration
6. Contacting the Lord
7. Ecstatic trance (Samadhi)

Preparing for meditation is like preparing for death. In fact, it is good practice for preparing for death. We want all our accounts brought up to date and all trespassers forgiven before we close the doors of the senses and enter the Temple of the Heart.

We also want to be in a peaceful, safe place as far as possible from the noise and distraction of the world. The wilderness is the most excellent place for meditation, but any clean, quiet place will do. It is best not to meditate in a place used for sleeping.

Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing and sit in such a way that you can relax completely. The spine should remain erect and straight. Breathe deeply, but slowly and gently, watching the breath from within. Relaxing with each breath, gradually withdraw your attention from the senses, closing the doors to the outside until your attention is completely focused within. Your aim at this stage should be the conscious contemplation of consciousness itself.

Now concentrate the mind by focusing your attention on a single point. This can be a physical location in the body such as the heart or the 'third eye' between the eyebrows. Even better is to focus on a mantra, or prayer containing the Holy Name of God. (Any name of God will do, as long as you have faith in it.) As you focus your attention, the mind will gradually become concentrated.

In the beginning your mind will try to divert your attention from concentration by offering various distractions. Thoughts, feelings, impulses, desires, memories and fantasies, sometimes of the most trivial or bizarre nature, will appear in your mind. It is important not to struggle with these, but allow them to drift through your consciousness like clouds and disappear.

If you do lose your point of concentration, gently, patiently and gradually bring your attention back to your focus. The point is to maintain your focus on your mantra and not to identify with thoughts.

If you struggle with controlling thoughts, your mind has won the battle, for you have become identified with it. Allow the thoughts to drift along without fixating on them, and they will gradually go away.

After some practice of concentration you may begin to see shifting shapes and colors of light. This is the state of illumination that precedes real meditation. When the mind is concentrated on one thing, it is automatically full of light. It is only when the mind is fragmented among many thoughts that it becomes dark. Let this light increase until it is brighter than thousands of suns.

When the theatre of the mind is cleansed by withdrawal from the senses and illuminated by concentration on the spiritual energy, real meditation can happen. Meditation is not something you can do – it is a blessing, a gift from God. When you are ready it will come to you. As one of my teachers would admonish when I was trying too hard to meditate: “Don’t just do something, sit there!”

True meditation is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit on the purified altar of the Temple of the Heart. This is a very important event: it is a personal loving message direct from God. This message may take the form of a word, an image, or a complete visionary experience wherein you are transported to another world. Or it may come softly, gently like a fragrant flower petal.

In any case the material received in deep meditation is of a completely different quality than the petty, distracting thoughts of the mind. A genuine Divine message is completely spiritual; it has nothing to do with the material world or life in the realm of illusion. And rather than distracting us from our state of concentration, real meditation actually increases it.

For the authentic spiritual communication is accompanied by an ineffable and subtle feeling of causeless transcendental bliss. This bliss serves as a natural focus for increased concentration of the mind. It is so wonderful that you literally never want it to end, and emerging from the meditative trance at its conclusion is always a letdown.

As you practice prayer and meditation more and more, you deepen your relationship with God. Gradually the bliss of His transcendent Presence increases until you begin to feel symptoms of spiritual ecstasy.

Ecstasy in spiritual trance is a very deep subject in itself. Briefly, ecstatic trance occurs when the soul is in direct relationship with God. In this state one thinks that there could be no greater gain, and no longer laments or desires to have anything. One who experiences this Divine state even once has tasted the perfection of life, for he has known the Absolute Truth directly.

Success in meditation is never due to our own efforts, but it is a gift of the grace of God. Never become proud of your advancement in meditation or you will lose it. The practice of meditation merely prepares us to receive the beauty, knowledge and grace that is the eternal state of the pure soul.

The Holy Name of the Lord

God is the Lord and Master of all that exists. All good things are available through His Holy Names. He has an unlimited number of Holy Names that express and embody His unlimited spiritual potencies. Since God is transcendental and absolute, His Holy Names are not mere symbols (as in ordinary words or the names of ordinary beings) but are identical with Him.

The absolute nature of the Holy Names of the Lord makes them a powerful source of benediction. This potency inheres in every name that refers to the Supreme Lord alone.

The Lord's Holy Names reveal His spiritual potencies to His beloved worshippers. He is the First Being and the Father of all other living beings. No other spiritual beings or demigods compare with Him, for He is the greatest, the one Supreme Lord of the universe.

No one can fully know or understand Him, but He knows everything about Himself, the creation and all living beings. He alone exists before all things, and He is the Creator, Maintainer and Destroyer of all manifestations. All worlds and beings are under His complete and perfect control and belong only to Him. All advancement in spiritual realization is due to His mercy alone. He always fulfills His desires and attains His aims. His plans and promises are infallible. He is the very ground of being. Everything comes from Him. From Him come all knowledge, memory and forgetfulness. He is most gracious, merciful and beautiful; indeed He is the source of all grace, beauty and mercy.

The great saints, sages and prophets glorify Him alone. He is the highest pleasure, and He is the source of pleasure for all beings. He protects those who fully surrender unto Him, and He lovingly corrects those who belong to Him when they stray from His path. All beings in the creation know of Him, but very, very few know Him as He really is. He is the ultimate benefactor, and the ultimate spiritual destination of all beings. He creates and destroys the material manifestation again and again. He is the only shelter for those who seek mercy, salvation and Truth. Everyone serves His purposes, whether they want to or not. He can use anything in the creation to accomplish His purposes. His mercy, His prowess and His promises are infallible. He sends empowered beings to teach His Truth, and occasionally appears in this world Himself to teach us. All those who worship Him are glorified and purified by His grace.

Everyone who worships Him by glorifying His Holy Names, qualities and activities receives causeless wisdom, bliss and salvation from all miseries. And to those who call upon Him by His Holy Names, He becomes the best and most intimate Friend. All glories, all glories, all glories to the unlimited Holy Names of the Lord!

Doctrine and Heresy

Many, if not most religious denominations and spiritual teachings draw a sharp distinction between right and wrong understanding, good and bad conduct, correct doctrine and heresy. Adherence to such fundamentalist views and dogmatic attitudes is a very significant obstacle to the search for Truth.

Why do there exist in this world so many religions with different, often contradictory spiritual beliefs and practices? Yet all of them trace their lineage back to God Himself in some manner. This raises the question: If God allows one and only one manner of approach to His Truth, why did He create so many religions? Or if we accept the argument that the multitude of religions is created not by God but by human beings, then why does God continue to tolerate their existence?

The concept of heresy is dangerous because it institutionalizes hate and intolerance, allowing bigots to retain the external appearance of piety.

In reality, hate in any form is a sin because it is ungodly. God loves even those who hate Him. The greatest saints and devotees have always taught love of one's enemies as the highest principle of morality. Love of God and Humankind is indeed the best path to enlightenment and Truth.

Theological hairsplitting, sectarian prejudice and doctrinal debate cannot open the secret door to the experience of transcendent Absolute Truth. The mystery of the self-revelation of the Absolute Truth occurs only when the heart is softened by love and service, and the gnawing doubts of the mind stilled by devotion and rapt contemplation of the original transcendental beauty.

In that illumined state, one sees clearly the spiritual power of love—and the utter futility of hate, prejudice and condemnation.

Doctrinal attack against those who believe differently from us is an utter waste of time. It serves no one's spiritual progress, and only darkens our hearts with negativity and clouds our minds with false arguments.

God is everything to everyone, the source of everything and the origin of all good qualities. In His mercy He has made approach to Him easy by creating many religions for many different kinds of people. Who are we to question His ways?

When the Jewish council was plotting against Jesus' disciples, the wise Gamaliel advised them, "Leave these men alone. If what they teach and do is merely on their own, it will soon be overthrown. But if it is of God, you will not be able to stop them. Be careful, lest you find yourselves fighting against God."

If we see someone engaging in what we feel are incorrect ideas and practices, the best approach is to expose them to a higher level of truth by friendly discussion. Then drop the matter and leave the result to the Lord. The sincere who are truly in error will see and correct it themselves. The ignorant and insincere will never change by friendly persuasion anyway. Prayer often accomplishes what argument and force could never do.

Surrender

In the illusion of material consciousness, we see ourselves as free beings surrounded by a bewildering array of choices. Most of these apparent choices have to do with different forms of material enjoyment; all of them embody some exercise of free will.

However, if we carefully analyze our 'free will,' we will see that our vaunted freedom of choice has only led us into confusion, suffering and spiritual darkness. If this is not so, why do we find ourselves at the mercy of old age, disease and death?

In reality the only freedom of choice we have is whether to engage our tiny will and intelligence in the service of our limited mind and temporary material desires, or to surrender them to the perfect will of the Lord and serve His eternal spiritual purposes.

The service of our limited, selfish desires is material bondage, and it leads to spiritual defeat and death, for in so choosing we deny the spiritual nature of our true self. The service of the Lord is actual freedom; it leads to eternal spiritual victory. We realize the Absolute Truth ourselves, and help the Lord in His mission of spreading spiritual Truth to all beings suffering in the illusion of material consciousness. And at the end we are eligible to enter the spiritual world to fully experience our natural eternal life of full knowledge and bliss.

Thus paradoxically, our material freedom is actually not freedom at all: it is a form of bondage to the material senses, which are inferior to our real nature. Whereas surrender to the will of the Lord is true selfdetermination, since it grants liberation into eternal spiritual freedom.

Either way, in this life we are servants, and our only free will lies in choosing whether to serve our limited mind and senses or the unlimited Supreme Lord. Actually, the choice to serve ourselves is merely a form of self-betrayal. The service of the mind and senses is a bewildering network of paths leading only to dissimulation, deception and death. To be the servant of the Lord of Heaven is glorious, heroic, and leads to eternal salvation. The best choice we have is to dedicate ourselves completely to the Lord's service, willingly letting Him direct our desires and intelligence.

The path of surrender to God begins with prayer. In prayer, we can tell the Lord all our problems and concerns, and turn them all over to Him for resolution. Further, we can sincerely ask Him to take charge of our life and direct our mind and intelligence in ways that are pleasing to Him. Finally, we can offer Him our remaining life,

energy and work to be used in His service. He never abandons such a surrendered soul, and promises always to protect and guide him.

When we do this sincerely, we can expect the Lord to take away the parts of ourselves that He doesn't like. He will mold His servant's life into a form that is more pleasing and useful to Him. Of course, this will be very good for us. He will take the broken tool we offer to Him, and make it sharp and true again on the anvil of His will. This may cause sweeping changes in our life, but we should never doubt our decision, remembering that surrender to God is the price of actual freedom.

Indeed, we should be happy and thankful that God is purifying our life of sin, ignorance and error and making it an offering fit for His pleasure.

Once our surrender is made and we have been spiritually renewed by the Lord's grace, we can serve God's purpose by helping Him care for His children. By loving and serving them we serve His spiritual purpose and earn our eternal place in the spiritual world. This dedication to spreading the light of the Absolute Truth is the true fruit of spiritual surrender, and the real symptom of knowledge of the Absolute Truth.

Introduction: A Spiritual Life

My whole life has been a quest in search of God, His wisdom and His love.

I still remember quite clearly the warm Palm Sunday afternoon when I sat in church on a hard wooden pew, not quite able to reach the kneeler with my feet. My mother and aunt were decorating the church with lilies and palms for the afternoon's service. I recall the sweet aroma of the lilies, the echoes of the chancel, the musty smells of ladies' club dinners long past permeating the aged church-wood.

I was contemplating a beautiful stained-glass window of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, a mysterious beam of light from Heaven illuminating his beatific face. I realized in that moment that Jesus was seeing God face-to-face. In my innocent mind arose the thought that Jesus had told us whatever he could do, we would do also. From that moment I wanted a personal relationship with God, just like Jesus had.

I was three years old.

I grew up in that old Episcopal Church. We were there every Sunday, and almost every other day of the week too. My family members were all officers of the church, and we were close with the pastor and his family. In many ways I was fortunate to have such a religious upbringing. Nevertheless, from my earliest childhood there was something about my church experience that did not ring true.

Jesus taught about love in the Gospels, but I did not feel love coming from the pastor or the majority of parishioners. I have always had the gift—or curse—of being aware of others' feelings, often to my acute discomfort. I sensed love from my mother and a

few others, but it was always mixed with a good deal of anxiety and other negative feelings.

From most so-called Christians flowed suppressed rage, disapproval, frustration, empty pride, moral superiority, a dull sense of duty, depression, pain—all hidden behind a veneer of politeness and piety.

It was difficult in childhood for me to comprehend how such negative sentiments could find a home in those who called themselves followers of Christ. I could not reconcile their behavior, and especially their state of being, with the noble words and sacred concepts I read in the Gospels and Epistles. If the aim of our church-going was really to “love God with all our minds and hearts, and our neighbors as ourselves,” where had we gone wrong? In my heart of hearts, I longed to meet a real Christian who could show me these great ideals in practice.

A real Christian, to my young, innocent mind, would be very sincere and honest, yet understanding, affectionate and loving. He or she would be capable of firm guidance, yet also of inspiring people to bring forth their best. A real Christian would be straightforward and broadminded, capable of understanding and dealing with all kinds of people and situations. Materialistic greed, pride and attachment would be far from the heart of a real Christian. Yet, a real Christian would be fun and very interesting to be with. To this day, I see no need to alter this portrait of a genuine Christian I gleaned from the scriptures before the age of five.

As I matured, I was shocked and hurt to discover that my family members, parishioners and even my minister and bishop did not measure up to, nor seem to value, the clear, simple ideals of Christianity so obvious to me from the words of Jesus. At the time, I thought since adults were capable of so much that I was not, surely they were capable of following Christ’s clear instructions.

The fact that they did not implied strongly that they did not want to; that other things were more important to them.

To them, perhaps, but not to me.

I resolved at a very early age to live as faithfully as I was capable to Christ's way of life, no matter what the cost. I soon found out what a daunting and lonely path that was to be. It became difficult to like and trust people I considered hypocrites. The depth and apparent deliberateness of people's spiritual intransigence and moral duplicity affected me deeply, so that I withdrew emotionally. Nevertheless I resolved to be kind and helpful, and despite my inner detachment, I was.

I grew up a serious child, self-effacing and quiet. I was repelled by my peers' aggressive boisterousness and bored by their cute silliness. I was helpful at home and cooperative at school, and could neither understand nor condone other kids' unspoken conspiracy against authority. I preferred the more sober and intelligent company of older kids and adults. I performed my class assignments quickly and accurately, using my spare time to help my teachers clean up around the classroom.

Needless to say, I was not popular among the other children. I became the object of almost constant teasing. I rarely said or did anything in my own defense, considering it more important to turn the other cheek as Jesus instructed. Some of the more aggressive kids took physical advantage of this, and I was appalled that none of the other children, or even most adults, seemed interested in preventing this brutality.

Later on in grade school I began to demonstrate a certain academic precociousness. Every evening from a very early age my aunt would sit me on her lap and read aloud from The Bible or The New York Times. I soon gained reading ability far beyond my years. I became a regular customer at the town library, where my reading

skills and tastes developed at a rate that occasionally alarmed the town librarian (a member of my church) when she found me paging avidly through a thick tome in the adult Science or Philosophy stacks.

When I was in the fourth grade, my uncle, an aeronautical draftsman, gave me an old slide rule. I was fascinated by the idea of a ruler that could solve arithmetic problems, and soon figured out how to do simple multiplication and division problems with it. From that point on I used the slip-stick for my homework.

One fine day I brought the slide rule to school. I was mortified when the teacher chastised me in front of the other students for using it to work arithmetic problems. I objected that the slide rule is a better way to solve them than rote memorizing endless multiplication and division tables. The teacher sent me to the Principal's office for discipline.

That day, I was truly angry for the first time in my life. I would not accept the Principal's version of the same arguments, and in addition, I brought up the fact that college students and professional engineers generally use slide rules, so I deserved credit for advanced work. I felt I should get praise, not censure, for figuring out how to work this instrument on my own. For my trouble, I was sent back to the second grade for two weeks.

This incident disillusioned me forever regarding the true function of education in our society. School obviously was not about learning; it was about control. I resolved to do the minimum schoolwork to get by, and to take responsibility for my own education. I proceeded to do both with a vengeance. I spent my time in the library, not doing my homework, but reading ever more erudite volumes on subjects that genuinely interested me. I slid by with Bs and Cs at school with little effort but got a very good liberal arts education on my own.

My academic interests branched out into music, and I became a singer with excellent intonation, and a quick study on several instruments. I still went to church, becoming an altar boy and singing in the choir, often soloing with my youthful soprano voice on special occasions.

Eventually as I grew older I was promoted to lay reader and assistant minister. But I felt a large gap between my understanding of religion and that of the other churchgoers. In my opinion they had given up on being what Jesus would consider good Christians, and had embraced a pale, conventional reflection of the actual standard of a Godly life.

I went through the motions of going to church, while inside I felt more and more disappointed by the level of spiritual realization I experienced there. I found refuge from this hypocrisy in the worlds in science and music. I saw in both a kind of perfection derived from God's Law. In science and mathematics God's perfection was reflected in the intellectual sphere, while in classical music I found an emotional haven undisturbed by the imperfections of my fellow humans.

Consequently I became deeply absorbed in both as only a bright, insatiably curious young man can. By the time I finished high school, earning academic honors in physics, performance prizes in music, and an honorary life membership in the New York Mensa Society, I had a difficult life choice to make. I was offered two scholarships: one to a prestigious university in nuclear physics, and another to a local State college in musical composition.

After much agonizing reflection, I decided to follow my heart and study music. A brilliant classmate who was a precocious computer genius accepted the other scholarship. On the way to accept the award, the student driving the car fell asleep, and all occupants were killed in the ensuing collision. I would certainly been among them had it not been for my love of music. This incident had a

profound lifelong effect on me, as I saw in it the personal intervention of the Lord in my life.

During the period of my college life, however, my spiritual views drifted toward a qualified intellectual agnosticism. I still believed in Jesus and His teachings, in which I found an intuitive and spiritual satisfaction. But I could not see how to live a truly Christian life without a community of serious practitioners and a guide, teacher or leader who perfectly realized and embodied Jesus' teaching. My readings, which had ranged widely through the sciences and humanities, began to turn toward research into alternative religious paths and spiritual communities. I gave up going to church, except perhaps on special occasions when I would visit my family.

I began to read broadly in comparative religion, exploring different flavors of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and the humanities. I found the intellectual freedom of college life refreshing. My family's fundamentalism had denied me many of the privileges my peers had long enjoyed. However, I found no joy in the fraternal drinking parties and promiscuity so common in those days. I dated, but found the venality of the girls and the sexual competitiveness of other men extremely off-putting. I had a few short and unsatisfying relationships, but could not find a partner who met my standards.

I graduated from college with a degree in musical composition and immediately went to work producing music for television at a prestigious New York advertising agency. I enjoyed the creative expression and the excellent income this position afforded, but the New York City business world was a shock. The competitiveness of the college social scene was child's play compared with the cutthroat, backstabbing battles in the halls of a major advertising firm. No strategy was too underhanded, no trick too dirty for the young account executives I worked with. I tolerated this little suburb of Hell for eighteen months, then took my savings and went

on a sabbatical that surprised no one when it turned out to be permanent.

My aim was to find people with whom I could live an ethical, spiritually oriented life without compromising my beliefs. It was 1968. The West Coast afforded all kinds of opportunities to explore spiritual and community alternatives. I spent some years investigating the best that the so-called counterculture had to offer. While working as a jazz musician, I studied the exercises of Hatha-Yoga, the esoteric Sufi teachings of Gurdjieff, the mystic Sikh yoga practices of Kirpal Singh, the intellectual puzzles of Kabala, the rituals of Tantra and many other spiritual paths and practices.

While I was attracted to the spiritual wisdom of the East, I was familiar enough with the source materials of Eastern religion to see how much it had been adulterated by translation to the West Coast hippy culture.

I saw in the popular Western incarnations of the Eastern teachings none of the philosophical rigor, lyrical poetic aesthetics and strict ethical standards that had attracted me to them in the first place. I had as much of a problem with the faithlessness of the pop versions of Eastern religions to their original sources as I had with the hypocrisy of the Christians.

After this experience I reached the horrifying but inevitable conclusion that something was very wrong. All the ancient spiritual traditions, from Christianity to yoga, had become irreversibly corrupted in the process of transplanting them from their roots in the East to the fertile but materialistically aberrating soil of America.

I longed to live the simple life of Jesus and his disciples, the timeless life of the spiritual renunciant, the archetypal peripatetic disciple. Such a lifestyle is almost impossible in the West but was, I knew, still an honored tradition in the East. I also longed for a

Master Teacher to show me the ways of the true spiritual path; someone who lived like Jesus and had deep knowledge and realization of the Absolute Truth I had encountered in my studies of Eastern philosophy.

This longing was satisfied when I met His Divine Grace Abhay Charanaravindam Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, a very orthodox and highly respected author and Spiritual Master in the Brahma- Madhva-Gaudiya lineage of Vaishnavism, a branch of the Vedic tradition. The story of how I met my Teacher is instructive.

During my years in New York, I had frequented the Greenwich Village artist neighborhood. One day as I passed by Tompkins Square Park, I saw a saffron-clad Indian gentleman and some Western hippies chanting in some incomprehensible language. I had no idea what they were doing; to me it was just another inexplicable Village happening. Little did I know that the Indian gentleman was to become my Spiritual Master, and the strange chanting that was the Holy Name of the Lord would soon become the dominant theme of my entire life.

Soon afterward I left New York for San Francisco and moved into an apartment in the Haight-Ashbury district. By the arrangement of the Lord, my new dwelling happened to be less than two blocks from the West Coast ashram of my guru. Before long I started attending classes at the ashram, where I met Swamiji, as his followers then called him.

After some years of preliminary instruction and practice, I accepted spiritual initiation from Prabhupada. I was given the spiritual name Dasanudas, meaning “servant of the servant of God.” I felt that this name accurately reflected my position.

Soon I traveled to India, where I spent almost twelve years living the simple, renounced life of a celibate Vedic monk. I spent long periods in retreat at isolated temples in rural holy places. I studied

ancient Sanskrit books of sacred wisdom written by wise sages of yore. I performed esoteric Tantric rituals and intricate Vedic pujas.

Sometimes I attended festivals at sacred pilgrimage sites, surrounded by thousands or even millions of chanting, praying pilgrims. I took long, solitary hikes through the Himalayas, and visited ancient temple villages in South India.

I also did a lot of spiritual service. I raised millions of rupees for food relief of the poor, and helped cook and serve huge feasts for thousands of poverty-stricken villagers. I helped design and build beautiful temples dedicated to round-the-clock glorification of the Holy Name of God. I served as the Chairman of the Music Department of a traditional Vedic school, and wrote a thesis on the correlations between the Vedic sacred musical scale and the mathematics of quantum mechanics.

I was fortunate to have many meditative experiences of illumination, spiritual visions and lucid dreams wherein deep, confidential truths about the spiritual world were revealed to me. My spiritual experiences and the knowledge that was revealed to me far exceeded my personal expectations of spiritual life. After more than two decades of immersing myself in learning about, serving and worshiping God, the answers to many lifelong spiritual questions became very, very clear to me, and I finally became confident of attaining the spiritual goals I had aspired toward from my childhood.

However, my deep spiritual experiences highlighted the difficulty of passing on to others the benefits I had received. Upon my return to the West, the difficulty of teaching or sharing what I had learned without reducing its value by change or adulteration appeared overwhelming.

The personal qualities required for success in materialistic society are diametrically opposed to those necessary to spiritual progress

and enlightenment. A truly spiritual person will never fit in with materialistic society. His values will always conflict with people whose only aim is materialistic acquisition, power and enjoyment. I am certain that the many wonderful transcendent visions and spiritual realizations I attained in India could never have happened if I had remained in America, working in industry to make and spend money.

My spiritual experiences in India totally validated my early conclusions concerning the materialistic corruption of Western religion. To operate a church successfully today, a pastor requires the personal qualities of a businessman rather than a mystic. How can such a materialistically engaged person teach spiritual love, renunciation of material values, and inner transformation through meditation—all essential ingredients of spiritual enlightenment? Austerity, renunciation, voluntary poverty, simplicity, celibacy, deep study and contemplation of the scriptures, solitary retreats, fasting, and extended prayer and meditation have been almost completely abandoned by religious institutions in the West.

How can we attain true enlightenment without these time-honored spiritual processes? Unfortunately, the influence of Western materialistic culture has also corrupted the Eastern religions. It is very difficult to find a spiritual organization or group anywhere in the world that has not altered its practices, modified its beliefs and compromised its ethics to accommodate modern culture.

Since returning to the West, my focus has been to express the ancient spiritual tradition into which my Teacher initiated me so that it both retains its fidelity and connection to its original source, and is rendered practical and effective in today's materialistic social environment.

Hopefully this small book is a contribution to the reader's spiritual development that will serve as a link between modern Western spiritual thought and practice, and the living tradition of the

Eastern mystical esoteric teaching, which I was fortunate to contact and assimilate through the Divine Grace of my Master Teacher, Abhay Charanaravindam Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya

David Bruce Hughes (Gaurahari Dāsānudās Bābājī)

Aphorisms 1: Introductory

Aphorism 1: The Lord enlightens me with His secrets; but who can understand them?

The proverbs and aphorisms in this book were revealed to the author during an extensive series of meditations toward the end of 1998. The first hundred or so came within an intense two-day period, and the rest were added gradually afterward.

While it sounds very pretentious, even to me, to state that these sayings were given to me by God, that is essentially how this book came to be written. I was reviewing The Bible and meditating on Ephesians 1:17-19, where Paul prays for the Lord's spirit of revelation, and God's response to me was a flood of wisdom good enough for Solomon. It seemed that every incident during those two days, no matter how trivial, sparked in my mind some reflection of God's infinite wisdom.

I was inspired to compile these revelations into a book to demonstrate how God reciprocates our sincere prayers, and also to glorify this aspect of His compassion for the enlightenment of all. However, due to the esoteric subject matter of many of the aphorisms, I felt the need to add a commentary to explicate the meaning hidden in these recondite sayings through the process of exegesis.

The aphorisms seem less bombastic and intimidating on paper, and adding the commentary adjusts them to human scale. Nevertheless, they focus on subjects concerning the mature stage of spiritual life. Spiritual dilettantes and sectarian neophytes may find many of them difficult to digest.

I offer no apology for this, but I hope the reader finds herein nourishing food for thought, meditation and tangible spiritual advancement as he contemplates their deep meaning over time.

Aphorism 2: An aphorism packs pages of pregnant prose into a single pithy line.

The aphorism is a literary art form with an aesthetic all its own. Similar to the Japanese haiku poem, an aphorism is a concise saying that connects words and meaning to catalyze a meditative process in the reader's mind. Many popular sayings are actually aphorisms ("A stitch in time saves nine"). A proverb is an aphorism with moral or religious overtones.

This process of intellectual and emotional association sparked by the aphorism hopefully leads to realization of an esoteric truth, or at least to a point of view the reader has never experienced before: an Aha! Experience. While reams of significance are generated in the process, that is not its true value. The real aim of an aphorism is to enable to reader to remember, and inspire him to actualize and practice the spiritual truth so succinctly expressed in it.

Thus spiritual writers and teachers from time immemorial have used the aphorism as a device to stimulate spiritual contemplation and growth in their readers and students. Aphorisms encourage people to think for themselves about spiritual truths, and plumb the depths of wisdom God makes available to us through intuition guided by the indwelling Spirit.

Aphorism 3: Men speak in prose; angels speak in poetry; God speaks in aphorisms.

Prose plods linearly along the ground; poetry soars freely and passionately through the sky. But the aphorism embodies the even

higher creative potency of God's Word because it is able to inspire a meditative process of self-revelation of the Absolute Truth within the mind of the reader. And the best aphorisms do so with effortless economy, mathematical precision and semantic elegance.

The scriptures of the world are full of wonderful aphorisms. The *sūtras* of the Vedānta, the Taoist sayings of Lao-Tsu and Chuang-Tsu, the haiku and koans of Zen have much the same fragrance. Their brevity and pithiness combines with exquisite paradox to express profound cosmic significance hardly attainable in any other literary form. Consider the wise Proverbs of Solomon, the exquisite *ślokas* of the *Bhagavad-gita*, the recondite *sūtras* of the *Vedas*. In the Gospels, Jesus of Nazareth speaks almost exclusively in parabolic aphorisms.

The aphorism has another advantage that endears it to the sages. It is rather impractical to take detailed notes during inspired meditation. Yet the nature of the experience of Divine inspiration is such that if a revelation is not recorded immediately, its impact tends to evaporate as soon as the meditator leaves the trance state. But one can easily and quickly record these important realizations and striking revelations in the form of aphorisms without breaking the flow of Divine communion. The aphorism seems to be the natural form of expression in the ecstatic state of Divine inspiration.

Aphorism 4: An aphorism is like a good joke; having to explain it dilutes its effect.

As discussed above, an aphorism has both intellectual and emotional impact. Just as a joke combines significance and absurdity to humorous effect, an aphorism combines significance and sacred paradox to produce a spiritual effect. A hearer or reader who is ready to realize the spiritual truth communicated by the aphorism "gets" it immediately, just as a person with a good sense of humor gets a joke.

One who is not prepared to realize the inner meaning of the aphorism requires an explanation, which reduces the juxtaposition of paradox in the aphorism to linear prosaic significance. Thus it loses the multidimensionality of paradox and the potency to induce immediate spiritual realization, and devolves into mere philosophy or theology.

Then why have I appended this commentary? If the aphorisms seem self-evident, fine. I have placed all the aphorisms without commentary in an Appendix. But exegetical explication is a necessity for people who are just learning to respond to the inner meaning of the aphorism. I suggest that you read each aphorism by itself and meditate upon it for some time before reading the commentary. The aphorisms you find most difficult to grasp indicate the areas of spiritual life in which you most need to grow.

You will find that the effect of the aphorism is better when you have not read the commentary, just like a joke is more enjoyable the first time you hear it, before you know the punch line. You may also find your understanding of the aphorism diverges from the commentary. This is expected, since your perception of the aphorism's significance depends upon the state of spiritual development you bring to its understanding.

Aphorism 5: The more improbable an aphorism seems at first glance, the more valuable it is.

If this seems strange, consider Jesus' proclamation to Nicodemus: "With all the earnestness I possess I tell you this: unless you are born again you can never enter the Kingdom of God." Nicodemus was absolutely flabbergasted. He was totally unprepared to deal with this fantastic statement. From a logical point of view, it is completely absurd; yet Jesus was absolutely sincere.

With this paradox Jesus delivered to Nicodemus the most important truth he would ever hear. Jesus used aphorisms in his teaching precisely because his intention was not merely to convey information, but to have a provocative and transforming effect on his listeners.

Twenty centuries later, Jesus' aphorisms seem familiar, even obvious. I suggest this is only because ensuing generations have developed elaborate theological rationalizations to defuse their inherent paradoxes. Heard outside the conventional apologetic framework, Jesus' statements are astounding, bombastic, mind-blowing. By casting eternal spiritual truths into new aphorisms, we hope to engender similar effects in the readers of today.

Here end the Bhaktisiddhartha exegeses to the Introductory Aphorisms. All glories to the Holy Name of the Lord!

Aphorisms 2: Wisdom & the Wise

Aphorism 6: The greatest truths cannot be spoken or written, only realized.

Words are only symbols, not truths. Truth has an independent existence, completely separate from the symbols that name and describe it. God's Truth does not require man's words to exist, nor his artifacts to act. Theology and churches are only subtle and gross symbols of God's Truth. God can reveal His Truth within anyone's mind, whether or not the person is learned in the ordinary academic sense. That the Infinite can manifest within the finite is the 'miracle of miracles,' spiritual revelation or enlightenment.

Aphorisms are composed of few words, but have significance and power disproportionate to their size. When properly read and contemplated, aphorisms help the mind and heart to work together harmoniously. This expands the field into which God, who is ever watching over our inner life, can reveal His Truth. Consequently aphorisms can help us realize the Truth about God, which is the basis of spiritual wisdom.

Strictly speaking, all words are lies because a symbol is never the thing it represents. Since words are relative, deriving their significance from the realities they symbolize, they can—and often do—combine to form meanings that are utter nonsense, for example 'horse feathers.' Facile mastery of logic and semantics alone cannot guarantee that the results of verbal reasoning will be correct, or even possible. This is nowhere more true than in topics of transcendence. Most so-called theology is simply philosophical mental speculation without tangible spiritual realization.

However, there is one special class of words that are absolute, and thus identical with the object they represent: the Holy Names of God. All the Holy Names of God—and there are thousands and millions of them—share this unique and powerful characteristic, which makes them the perfect vehicle for spiritual realization. Meditation on the Holy Names is the quickest and most direct route to enlightenment and self-realization.

Aphorism 7: A new thought is old by the time it is spoken; by the time it is written down it is dead.

If we have the slightest desire to know God, He continually inspires our minds with thoughts that lead us closer to Him. And the world of the senses beckons us in the opposite direction. We choose which thoughts and impulses to give attention to, encourage and cultivate, and thus we pursue our destiny. For the thoughts we cultivate eventually become words, words lead to actions, actions accumulate into tendencies, tendencies over time become habits, our habits form our character, and our character determines our destination in spiritual life.

The sacred scriptures and holy books exist in part to help us identify God's inspiration in the flow of thoughts and impulses in the mind, and choose accordingly. But dead words on a cold page are far from living thoughts in the mind. This is why to serve a living Teacher is always better in terms of spiritual advancement than simply studying books. A personal, realized Master Teacher shows the Truth by good example and can correct us when necessary, whereas a book can only make static suggestions.

Nevertheless even a perfect Teacher can only bring us so far. The mind is a quicksilver chariot that can take us from heaven to hell in a moment of inattention. Therefore in the ultimate issue, nothing

can replace the individual exercise of discrimination in thought as the principal means of controlling our destiny.

Certainly mere printed words can never express the dynamic personal reality of spiritual relationship with God. Anyone who has struggled to record the spiritual inspirations from the Lord in his soul is all too aware of the limitations of the written word.

Aphorism 8: Scriptures point to the Truth, but only God and those whom He chooses can actually understand; for Truth is a mystery.

Because the scriptures are but words, symbols of the actual Truth, they are merely signposts pointing the way toward the living Truth of God's transcendent Presence. It remains for us to follow their direction and walk toward Him. Even so, the words of the scriptures are charged with sacred energy because their intent is to reveal God; nevertheless, no one can actually understand them properly without God's special mercy.

Therefore, we are told to "knock, and it will be opened." Knocking on God's door through prayer opens the confidential meanings of the scriptures to our hearts. We must pray for the spirit of revelation to illuminate God's dark sayings. For only one who has seen the reality of the spiritual world can know the actual purposes for which God created the world with all its manifold creatures and phenomena. And only those who understand God's deep purpose can reach the spiritual perfection of human life, which is to fully engage our initiative and creative energy in cooperative service to Him. The opaque language of the scriptures is not an end in itself, but a means to begin our approach to God through the mystical process of intuitive revelation.

Aphorism 9: Know the Lord in the silence within; fill yourself with the secret light of His love.

The confidential source of spiritual wisdom is direct communion with the Lord in spiritual love. Mere academic study of the scriptures is useless. It leads inevitably to mental speculation, wrong doctrine, pride and ultimately deviation from the Lord's real purpose. Even scriptural studies in the mood of devotion can only prepare the ground for a personal relationship with God.

This relationship begins with scripturally-based prayer and progresses to deep meditation on the Holy Name. The real meaning of the scriptures becomes revealed through this meditation, which grows naturally out of a deep prayer relationship with the Lord and progresses through a long period of mental purification and emotional clearing guided by the Holy Name. Finally, the personal presence of the Lord is revealed in ecstatic love.

God can fulfill all our emotional needs through this mystical communion, which is extremely personal and confidential, just a like a secret love affair. No one else can understand the actual nature of the relationship between the pure devotee and the Lord. Only God really knows Himself, and He alone can reveal Himself to us. Our role is to pray earnestly for this self-revelation of the Divine Presence, purify our minds with the Holy Name, and then open our hearts and silently receive His loving illumination.

The Lord will reveal His presence within as soon as we remove the distractions that keep us engaged in material consciousness. Meditation on the Holy Name is the key to developing this deep stage of transcendent devotion, or ecstatic emotional relationship with the Lord.

Aphorism 10: Truthfulness, sincerity and humility are the first signs of wisdom.

A person who is truly wise tries to see everything from God's point of view. He studies the scriptures closely, prays incessantly, and tries to put himself in God's position—not to become Him or imitate Him, but to understand Him. He soon realizes that since God knows everything, there is no point in hiding anything from Him. And his meditations soon convince him that if God wants someone to know something, it will be revealed as clearly as the sunrise on a cloudless morning. The wise therefore abandons all attempts at untruthfulness or dissimulation in favor of simple honesty in all dealings.

For the same reason, the wise do not practice pretense, subtlety or diplomacy, but are sincere and straightforward to everyone. The real truth eventually becomes known, so why should we unnecessarily complicate our lives by delaying its disclosure? There is no real gain, and much loss, in employing disinformation of any kind.

When we first come to know God we are amazed and overcome by His vast greatness. Later on we are similarly affected by His wonderful personal qualities: wisdom, goodness, trustworthiness, loving kindness and so forth. In the presence of such greatness, one automatically becomes humble, despite his rank among humankind or the range of gifts and talents that God has bestowed upon him. For no human being, no matter how great, can amount to anything before God.

Conversely, to the degree that any person, though honored and elevated in materialistic or ordinary ecclesiastical society, fails to manifest truthfulness, sincerity and humility we should gauge them a fool. For the price they have paid for temporary material

success is nothing less than the trust and favor of the Almighty Lord.

Aphorism 11: Virtue is its own reward; goodness brings its own wisdom.

Virtue—the practice of morality, charity and the Law of God—is inherently rewarding. There is deep aesthetic satisfaction in doing right. And if we love God, there is intrinsic pleasure in doing what we know is pleasing to our beloved Lord. If God, the root of all being, is pleased, we will be pleased automatically. We can also derive self-esteem from having the faith and self-discipline to rise above temptation and impulse, and act on spiritual principles.

Beyond this, there is natural enjoyment—spiritual pleasure—in filling our minds and hearts with good thoughts and feelings of love, kindness and benevolence. Beauty and kindness always feel better than anger and destruction. The higher emotions such as compassion, loving kindness and charity are a natural outgrowth of virtue. If someone claims to be spiritually advanced but is very negative we can understand that he is actually a neophyte in spiritual life.

Finally, acts of goodness and self-control fill us with an energy that produces deep spiritual insight as an automatic by-product. This wisdom flows naturally from God as a reward for following His Law of Love. It counteracts the enervating effects of ignorance and material attachment. It returns the vibrancy and fearlessness of youth, which is the special sign of the wise, even in advanced age. The carefree joy of living and the self-situated independence of spiritual freedom is a special benediction to those who follow God's Law of Love.

Aphorism 12: Truly great men are persecuted during their lifetimes; yet once society adjusts to them, their influence persists for centuries.

The greatest men always exhibit a healthy disregard for the false standards of materialistic society. This is, of course, because from God's point of view, any society that encourages the development of materialism at the expense of enlightenment is bunk. Great men are always ahead of the times. This is because their prescience and influence act to transform their surroundings until their teachings have been thoroughly assimilated into society.

Human society is built on the false notion that human law and economic development are more important than God's Law and spiritual development. God sends His prophets and representatives, and periodically arranges natural disasters and other catastrophes to break down this conceit and counteract society's gross ignorance.

Even so, people resist God's Truth and persecute His spokesmen. For example, as a result of society's demand for unnecessary material luxuries, we are on the verge of an environmental disaster unprecedented in known history. If the rape of the earth's forests and oceans continues much longer, the consequences will threaten the very survival of the human race. Yet human economic greed seems unable to adjust its insatiable demands, even though the entire scientific community now supports the truth of this spiritual prediction, first made in the West by 'ignorant savages,' Native American shamans well over a century ago.

So-called Christian society's treatment of these noble and wise people is a terrible blemish that reveals a deep hypocritical tendency. How embarrassing, especially now that history, and even science, is proving them right. To offend the eternal spiritual principles for transient material gain is never progress. Yet time and

time again, great men of God are mistreated by the very people they came to help.

Aphorism 13: The only friend of a wise man is God; but then, He is the best Friend of all.

We should arrange our inner life so that our primary relationship is with God. Friends, family and all other relationships will pass away; but our relationship with God is eternal. Actually only God can really be our friend. Sooner or later all others will betray us—by deceit, selfishness, broken promises, error, failure, desertion or death. Plato defined a true friend as one who is willing to share everything unconditionally in pursuit of a common purpose. Is there anyone like that except God? When Satan tested Job, even his pious wife insulted and faithlessly abandoned him, but not God.

The tragedy of the human condition is that our imperfections make truly perfect love impossible. God is willing to share everything—all His unlimited wealth, strength, fame, beauty, knowledge and renunciation—when we become His sons and friends by accepting Him as our eternal Father and Friend. No other friend can give us such abundance as eternal life, full knowledge and complete happiness.

We have only to appreciate the value of His gifts and accept His freely offered friendship. God will accept all our troubles and worries and our miniscule service in return, and throw His eternal unconditional love into the bargain.

Was there ever such a wonderful, perfect Friend as God? Whenever we call out His Holy Name, He is immediately present, ready to help us, bathing us in His incomparable love. And we have one other true friend in the person of the Master Teacher who shows us the value of the Holy Name, the key to winning the eternal Friendship of God.

Aphorism 14: To whom can he whose only wealth is wisdom give in charity, when no one values understanding?

The world today is moving under the spell of materialistic ignorance and passion. Scientific advancement of material knowledge may assist economic development, but can never solve the real problems of life, beginning with aging, disease and ultimate death. Few people value spiritual wisdom, and most that do are neophytes on the spiritual path, limited by sectarian doctrine and a narrow-minded, literal conception of the scriptures. Such neophytes cannot discriminate between the beginning and advanced topics of spiritual knowledge, and tend to misunderstand and reject those with a more mature and broadminded perspective on spiritual life.

An advanced student of spiritual wisdom strongly desires to share his wealth with others. He also desires the association and fellowship of others on his level. A person who has dedicated his entire life and energy to obtaining spiritual wisdom will rarely also possess the superficial decorations of material sophistication and wealth. However, these worldly qualifications are required for acceptance in today's misguided society. The wise soul therefore finds it difficult to share his learning with those of lesser attainment, who in their ignorance mistake him for a mere eccentric or escapist who is frustrated and unsuccessful in attaining material opulence.

People in general require substantial spiritual education and training before they can distinguish the true man of wisdom from the legions of facile professional imitators. This is compounded by the fact that the enlightened person thinks and acts so differently from the norm. For this reason, many spiritually advanced men live isolated lives, remaining misunderstood by those around them and unknown to people in general. This, however, diminishes neither

their importance to human society nor the magnificence of their reward when they pass beyond this mortal world, for only they can offer real guidance to solve the fundamental problems of life.

Aphorism 15: Perhaps one man in 10,000 understands true wisdom—but not one woman!

Real spiritual knowledge is exceedingly rare. We all know people who appreciate the external meaning of the Scriptures, but to find a man who has understood the deep esoteric meanings hidden in the confidential passages of the Scriptures is very uncommon. Even more exceptional is the man of true wisdom who has realized the covered meaning of the Scriptures in his own soul and manifested them in his being.

There are certain esoteric verses in The Bible and other authentic Holy Scriptures of the world that are ignored and even contradicted by the popular religious leaders. These modern-day Pharisees are the same people who base their reputation on the claim that the Scriptures are the literal Word of God. The fact is, if anyone teaches the esoteric passages of the Scriptures as they really are without softening their true meaning, they will lose their popular following, because people in general are not ready or willing to understand advanced topics of spiritual knowledge.

For example, women are biologically engineered by God to bear and nurture children. They are designed by their Creator to be obedient helpmates and supportive companions to their husbands in the challenging task of economic support and spiritual leadership of the family. They are very softhearted, and also very sentimental and attached to the bodily conception of life. This makes them better mothers and wives, but it also makes them vulnerable to being misled.

This does not disqualify women from taking initiative in family affairs and organizing social and religious welfare activities, or from attaining enlightenment by following the teachings of a bona fide Spiritual Teacher. But women should rely upon their husbands for guidance and direction, just as men who are neophytes in spiritual knowledge should rely on those who are further advanced.

At present women are being systematically trained to reject the guidance and protection of their husbands. They are instead being misled into the vicious competitive world of materialistic professional and business activities. This erodes their natural qualities of faithfulness, compassion, mercy, loving kindness and submissiveness, crippling their ability to nurture and raise children to be emotionally stable and spiritually advanced. It also leads to unnecessary quarrels between the husband and wife, further destabilizing the home environment. This is a major cause of suffering in the world today.

All the authentic Scriptures of the world expressly forbid women to teach spiritual knowledge. Women cannot understand, assimilate and present pure spiritual knowledge without compromising with material values. They tend to lack philosophical discrimination, and will accept any nonsense as truth as long as it is presented in a sentimentally pleasing and flattering manner. Their emotions cloud their judgment and nullify their philosophical discernment. To allow women positions of power and responsibility in spiritual organizations simply causes confusion and disturbance in the spiritual order.

We understand that this position is unpopular, but God's wisdom is not subject to our popular vote of approval. Either we believe and follow it or we do not. God knows why He created women and men with different qualities. If God's wisdom was good enough for the Patriarchs of old, who ruled over great kingdoms with spiritual

wisdom, insight and justice, who are we to question and revise it based on popular sentiment?

Aphorism 16: Speaking the Truth is as close as a man can get to wielding the Power of God.

God uses the creative power of the Word to create the world and all its creatures. God expresses His will through His Word, and whatever He speaks certainly comes to pass. God can never tell a lie, for His Word is eternally true. Therefore, the transcendental sound of the Word of God is called the Absolute Truth.

Our words can assume similar creative power, though of course only on a limited human scale, when we adhere to God's Truth in everything we speak. A person who always speaks the truth acquires a reputation of uncompromising honesty. This reputation and the trust it engenders are worth far more than any temporary benefits one can obtain by lying.

Always speaking the truth confers a kind of mystic power. A truthful man's words become charged with power to change people's hearts, for he speaks unpretentious words directly from his heart. When such a truthful man speaks the message of God's Truth, the results are far greater than the effort expended, for the creative power of God inheres in his words. The Absolute Truth expressed in words by a true lover of God has the power to change the world.

Aphorism 17: Real happiness and freedom lie in wisdom, simplicity, detachment and love of God.

We have all read the Gospels. Does anyone really think the life of the average religious person today actually reflects the values of Jesus Christ? Of course not. Then why do we go on in the same

materialistic way when deep in our hearts we know the Scriptures do not approve? This life of superficial pleasures does not make us happy. Instead we are full of fears and anxieties, striving endlessly for material goals that never actually arrive. If we want the full joy of love of God, we must be prepared to live like Christ, to make a sacrifice like Christ's to concentrate our energy in serving God.

People spend many years and much trouble to acquire an education in material knowledge. Yet they invest little or no time or effort in real spiritual training under the competent guidance of a realized Master Teacher. But materialistic life or superficial, ritualistic religion alone cannot make us happy without God's grace, which is the real food craved by every soul. Multiplying possessions merely multiplies our attachment and anxiety. And even the best sex life is a poor substitute for the thrilling ecstasy of love of God, which is not limited by time and space, and is so wonderful that it cannot adequately be described by words. No amount of material riches can compensate for spiritual bankruptcy.

This is not to say that everyone is fit to become a holy mendicant like Jesus, but that we have come very far away from the simple spiritual life prescribed and exemplified by him. It is time to move toward balance, and to encourage those few who do wish to live a simple life for the purpose of attaining the Kingdom of God. For true love of God is difficult, if not impossible to achieve outside of the life of renunciation and purity. The very best way to develop wisdom is to live a simple life focused on spiritual values and practices.

Aphorism 18: Wise indeed is the sinner who accepts God's mercy, and sins not again.

There are two kinds of sin and two kinds of mercy.

Under the external rules and regulations of exoteric religion, the material provisions of religious law extended by theological exegesis and philosophical interpolation define sin. But under the internal requirements of the God's universal Law of Love, sin is defined by the root of all spiritual laws: "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." Actual sin is any deviation from this Law of Love, which is written in the hearts of all creatures by their Creator.

Mercy under external religious law is forgiveness of sins in exchange for periodic ritualistic performance of sacrifice and worship. In esoteric spirituality, mercy is the gift of God's love. When we fully accept God's love into our hearts our sins are wiped out, forgotten as if they never were, and the luminous Presence of His Holy Name indwelling as the Holy Spirit transforms our heart into an abode of Divine Love. This is the real second birth praised in the Scriptures.

Sin is action inspired by the selfish animal nature of man. The animal birth of the material body is the first birth. The second birth occurs when one realizes oneself as a spiritual being, surrenders to one's spiritual Father and forms a loving service relationship with the indwelling Holy Spirit so He can reveal His Law of Love to us.

The journey from the first birth to the second is a long hard road of life lessons. Spiritual life actually begins with the second birth. At that time we graduate from the external law of ritualistic religion to the inner law of esoteric spirituality. This is the real meaning of forgiveness of sins, or mercy. The mercy of external religious law is harsh, while the mercy reserved for true lovers of the Lord is bountiful forgiveness and loving tenderness from the core of God's heart to ours. The beauty of this unlimited ecstasy is indescribable.

Many neophytes on the spiritual path accept the mercy of God superficially and declare themselves 'born again' before actually attaining the essence of this profound realization. Thus they pay lip

service to God while continuing to live a life centered on the animal propensity for sensual enjoyment. This lack of renunciation and austerity feeds the animal nature and eventually leads to falling back under its control. The inevitable result is backsliding, falling down from the spiritual path and gross sin.

The truly wise escape this trap by simplifying their lives and dedicating themselves to a ministry, sacrificing their personal gain to follow the footsteps of their own personal Master Teacher. It is very difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Aphorism 19: The fool seeks praise for himself, leaving the work of praising God for the wise.

Students of spiritual life who want to attain spiritual maturity are well advised to cultivate a very simple lifestyle. Similarly, anyone who acts publicly as a spiritual teacher must maintain an exemplary character of saintly behavior and material detachment.

In the history of Christianity, the Roman Church became practically the antithesis of the humble disciples of Jesus who founded the Christian faith and brought it to Rome. Puffed up with wealth and political power, its prelates preached a despotic doctrine of violent intolerance instead of humbly praising God and accurately representing Christ's gentle mercy to the masses.

We see an echo of Rome's excesses in the immoderate opulence of today's preachers. Attired in expensive, fashionable suits instead of simple robes, they travel in late-model luxury automobiles and live in palatial homes. What a divergence from the lives of Jesus and His disciples! "Give up everything and follow me," he said, and they obeyed, leaving family, wealth and comfort for the more recondite joys of the spiritual path.

A person who is actually in deep communion with God recoils from anything that would distract him from his blessed occupation. Praising God is tangible bliss that supersedes mere sensory pleasure. Great saints welcome poverty and hardship because tolerating difficulties is the best proof of one's faith. Our modern clergy would do well to follow the example of the holy Teacher they claim to represent.

Aphorism 20: Professional preachers measure success by the size of the collection, not the pleasure of the Lord; beware of them.

The apostles of Jesus walked from village to village, risking their lives to bring the message of salvation to spiritually ignorant, often hostile people. They stayed as guests in others' homes and claimed no salary or property as their own. John the Baptist lived in the desert and pasturing grounds, and ate locusts rather than set foot in towns full of sin and every kind of material distraction.

Today anyone who would follow in the footsteps of John, the apostles or Jesus would be regarded as a public nuisance and jailed for vagrancy. Instead we pay obeisance to preachers who command huge corporate information empires and collect millions of dollars annually. Of course, a large percentage of this collection is spent for the personal benefit of these preachers. They do not seem to care that the Teacher they claim to represent was homeless, or that he died painfully so that our path to salvation would be clear.

Fellow preachers: the Lord does not care how much we collect but how faithfully we represent His teaching. We cannot teach the truth accurately if we ignore the example of the founders of the faith we profess. God easily could have arranged for Jesus to appear in the family of a king or a banker. We would be better off spending our

time and energy seeking the lesson in His humble lifestyle, instead of worrying how to increase the collection.

Spiritual teachers who are too opulent mislead us. Their example sends the message that we can be holy and also enjoy unlimited material pleasure and wealth. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Religious organizations can be helpful in the early stages of spiritual development. However, the limitations of organized religion frustrate those who would progress to the advanced stages of spiritual realization.

Mature students of spiritual life do better on the periphery of churches and other spiritual groups. Any closer involvement with organized religion inhibits the development of deep devotion, independent self-realization and complete dependence on the Lord. Attaining the peak of spiritual realization is a journey each pilgrim ultimately must make alone.

Aphorism 21: A fool cannot understand the wise man; neither can the wise man understand the mind of a fool; but the Lord understands and loves them both.

No one can understand the mentality of a person who is vastly different from himself. Fools who rely on their own strength cannot understand how the wise can surrender to and rely upon God; neither can they understand the spiritual wisdom revealed in the Scriptures. The Godly soul is a mystery to them because they have no actual experience of spiritual life; their knowledge is external, based on the senses. They admit this and are proud of it; nevertheless it blocks their path of spiritual advancement.

On the other hand, a wise man advanced in spiritual realization has difficulty understanding the mind of a person who has limited himself to the realm of sensual perception. Their terrible fears, anxieties and uncertainties are as unknown to him as his spiritual

ecstasies are unknown to the fools. Nor can he comprehend their compulsive lust, disobedience and violence. Consequently fools sometimes take advantage of the material naiveté of the wise to compromise their spiritual teaching activities.

However, the Lord understands everyone, and has made allowance in His plan for every type of individual. The Lord's advice and consultation are available to everyone who seeks shelter in His mercy. Therefore the wise can deal effectively with the foolish by following the established policy of the Lord and showing compassion toward them by distributing the Lord's Holy Name. However, the wise should avoid close personal involvement with sensual people, for the association of fools is spiritually degrading.

Aphorism 22: What fools call wisdom is but the opinion of the ignorant; soon it will change, but real Truth never changes.

Just as fools speak thoughtlessly without considering the spiritual consequences, so they wrongly consider the products of imperfect human intelligence to be wisdom. Human thoughts and ideas are at best relative truth; at worst they are complete ignorance misrepresented as truth. Fools are easily misled by such fatuous nonsense, for they have no standard of Absolute Truth with which to compare and evaluate it.

For example, the material scientists present their speculations as truth in textbooks and technical publications. They do not reveal, however, that their theories are in a constant state of flux due to a process of vicious political contention within the scientific community itself. The result is that so-called scientific theories of the universe change as regularly as the hemlines at Paris fashion shows.

Real wisdom, however, is always true and unchanging. It confers practical benefits resulting in increased quality of consciousness, wisdom and our experience of life. God is ever the same, ever true, ever approachable by prayer, ever merciful and loving. Nevertheless even in the field of religion we see the influence of fad and fashion, and the products of human fallibility misrepresented as eternal truth.

We should beware of fashionable theological ‘movements’ promoting such fallible speculation, and focus our research on the original teachings and practices of the founders of religion. We should endeavor to become as they were, and draw close to God to receive the illumination of the Holy Spirit from the original Source through the power of the Holy Name of the Lord.

Aphorism 23: Fools make a good business of teaching foolishness; the wise give away the greatest wealth to anyone who values it.

There is a growing international marketplace for literature, educational courses and seminars on subjects that are irreligious or even anti-religious. The ‘new age’ movement has sparked a large number of profitable functions at which foolish followers of specious doctrines gather and enthusiastically exchange useless information. Modern entertainment media spew countless hours of programming at the unsuspecting public, that even they admit are trivial trash.

Profiting from foolish ideas is not limited to the ‘new age’ and entertainment arenas; our modern universities bear little resemblance to their origins as sacred institutions of learning. They have become so completely secular that even courses on religion approach the subject from the speculative academic point of view, rather than providing practical spiritual training. And tuition

charges have risen so sharply that the government is considering legislation to regulate them. We have already commented on the trend in religion toward big name show-business preachers with a superficial, trendy approach to spiritual truth.

In contrast to the modern profiteers of ignorance, the representatives of pure spiritual wisdom are honored to remain humble servants of God and therefore never charge for their services. Yet the knowledge and practices they teach provide the greatest possible benefit to the human soul: complete salvation from the suffering of material life through wisdom, purity and devotion to the Holy Name.

Aphorism 24: The ignorant automatically assume the Truth is a lie; unprovoked, they viciously attack the wise.

Sinful, spiritually ignorant people use lies to feed their selfish desires. Because they do not accept God's love, they are never satisfied. They live in darkness and fear. When such people hear the wonderful truths of God's love and forgiveness, they naturally think a confidence game of the highest order is being played. This is because they cannot imagine life without deception. They cannot for a moment believe that the message of God's mercy is the plain simple truth. So when one tries to offer such people the truth about God, they attack although no one has provoked them.

The only remedy for this is to take shelter of the Lord in prayer: Holy Father, protect us who have no other shelter except You. Defend us from those who have declared themselves our enemies, although we do not consider them enemies. Allow us to continue to present Your message and offer Your wonderful gift of salvation to anyone and everyone. Give us intelligence, Lord, so we can counteract and nullify the false arguments of those who are inimical to Your Truth. And let us be patient to bear all the hardships in Your work without losing heart. Father, only You can

satisfy our needs for spiritual companionship and unconditional love. Grant us Your peace, which is beyond human understanding. Teach us to overcome our failures and learn from our mistakes. And finally, let us come to You for rest when our work in this world is complete. In the honor and glory of Your Holy Name, Amen.

Aphorism 25: The unjustified hatred of the foolish for the wise is the very sword that destroys them.

To attack God's servants is the most serious offense. God loves all His creatures, but He is especially partial to the saints who love Him and do His work of helping the fallen souls of the material world attain spiritual maturity. The irrational hatred of the wicked for the wise is like a heavy stone in their hearts that drags them down to hell. Although such evil men may prosper for a season, their existence is miserable and their end is swift and decisive. They cannot escape punishment for their sins.

The wise are always the object of envy for the ignorant. It is difficult to maintain one's existence in separation from the Lord. Life is a hard struggle for the demoniac, who deny themselves the comfort of the merciful shelter of the Lord. Their hearts are always filled with fear, lust and other uncomfortable negative emotions. To encounter a saintly person and see their purity and spiritual happiness is intolerable for them. So they attack, and are destroyed by the reactions of their own sins and offenses.

The wise carry the power of the Lord's Holy Name; although they seem defenseless, they are a formidable power to reckon with. Whole kingdoms have been destroyed and powerful dynasties have been obliterated due to offenses against a holy Master Teacher. Since the Holy Name is identical with the Lord Himself, when fools attack the wise they are doing battle with the Almighty Lord of the Universe. Who can prevail against Him who is the source of all opulence, power, strength and victory?

Aphorism 26: One who speaks without wisdom is like the whistling of the wind, or the clucking of birds.

Ordinary people who do not have an inner relationship with God waste much valuable time and energy talking nonsense. There is no spiritual substance to anything they say; neither are they sincere or heartfelt in their speech. It is simply empty conversation. They chatter on about trivial matters better left unsaid, or waste words on vicious gossip.

The godless speech of the so-called learned is just as useless and meaningless. Better to listen to the cries of animals in the forest, or the sound of waves crashing along the beach. At least these sounds are natural, while the so-called learned arguments of sophisticated materialists are forced and synthetic. There is nothing good in them; they simply confuse and mislead everyone who hears them. Their learned sophistication is just an illusion; they are empty and void at the core. It is better to eschew their company.

The greatest wisdom is the glorification of the Holy Name of the Lord. All other topics of human discourse are as nothing before the Holy Name. The Holy Name of the Lord is the ultimate object of worship and the most advanced subject matter in transcendental realization. This is because the worship and glorification of the Holy Name grants all benedictions desired by the living beings, from material fealty and freedom from fear, to spiritual liberation, to the ultimate shelter of an eternal ecstatic service relationship with the Lord.

Aphorism 27: A fool blurts out the first thing that comes to mind; the wise man considers many things before speaking.

The soul needs God, and the intelligence needs His Absolute Truth like the body needs food. The soul in material consciousness suffers

deprivation from God's association. Foolish people who have no spiritual knowledge identify with their feelings, mistakenly thinking they are real and important. They give vent to their feelings in the vain hope that these outbursts will relieve their inner unease, which is actually due to separation from the Lord.

But the wise man understands that his feelings are not himself; they come not from Spirit but from the temporary interactions of the bodily senses and their objects. Instead of speaking impulsively he considers the likely results of his words with a cool head. When he does speak it is with the intention of promoting the spiritual welfare of the hearers.

For many years I desired to write about spiritual life. But I hesitated for a long time, wanting to verify my realizations and ascertain my real state of spiritual advancement before releasing any of my work. I did not want to mislead the public. Many pages of journals and notes, many drafts and false attempts were abandoned and destroyed before the present work could rise like the Phoenix from the ashes of its predecessors.

What does appear in these pages is seasoned by time, tempered by experience, and proven by many tests. I waited many years for the proper circumstances and the direct inspiration and approval of the Lord before proceeding to write these commentaries, which are intended to highlight the glories of the Holy Name of the Lord for the benefit of the public.

Aphorism 28: Shouting and quarreling drive away love; wisdom thrives best in silence.

Love requires trust and understanding. A loud, quarrelsome person drives away any possibility of love by creating a critical, contentious atmosphere. It is better to avoid such persons. The human mind is a delicate instrument; even under the best

conditions it often fails to arrive at the conclusion of devotion to the Lord, which alone can mitigate the innate suffering of the human condition. An atmosphere of purity, sanctity and sacred silence is the best nourishment for spiritual contemplation and meditation on the Holy Name of the Lord. The saints of yore were well aware of this.

The mind of a wise man is honed to a sharp edge by years of contemplation and prayer. Balancing the mind and focusing it on God requires a minimum daily period of silent contemplation and concentrated meditation on the Holy Name. One should remove oneself from all distractions and allow the mind to settle. The goal is to be able to address the Lord in fervent prayer and call earnestly upon His Holy Name until one has attained an enlightened state of grace.

Anyone who sincerely wants to realize God would do well to experience several years of monastic lifestyle, a simple life of menial service and spiritual training under the guidance of a self-realized Master Teacher. It is no accident that the great wise men of yore made periodic trips to the wilderness for undisturbed meditation. Only in such an atmosphere of uninterrupted concentration can one who is embodied reach the highest stages of spiritual ecstasy. The happiest and most fulfilling times of life are those spent alone with the beloved Lord, meditating and chanting His Holy Name without distraction.

Aphorism 29: The bellowing voice of a fool drowns out the quiet voice of truth in our minds.

The concentration required to pray and meditate effectively requires a delicate mental balance. Yet fools who lack wisdom, compassion and good sense shout out their nonsense and break the sacred state of mindfulness without consideration. Such fools seek only to dominate the social environment without making any

compelling spiritual contribution. The only way they can prevail is by sheer volume. For this reason a wise man removes himself from the company of fools without becoming implicated in their nonsense.

A more subtle kind of interference with meditation is found in the thoughtless fault-finding talk of women. While this selfish foolishness may be presented in an apparently civil and polite manner, it still causes pain to the heart and disturbance to the mind and is a distraction to spiritual life. One who wants to become enlightened but finds himself in a relationship with a woman who treats him with subtle disrespect, would do well to withdraw to the safety of monastic life.

God does not tolerate interference with the devotions of His servants. He arranges various entanglements to trap the fools who offer obstacles to the worship of His Holy Name, and send them to hell by their own sinful acts. In this, God is being entirely fair. It is not a deception, because anyone with a sense of purity and righteousness would not take the bait. The offenders trap themselves by their own lust and greed, like a foolish monkey who dooms himself by refusing to let go of the fruit used as bait in a trap.

Aphorism 30: Fools remain ignorant no matter how loudly they shout; the wise become wiser even in their silence.

Ignorance is foolish, no matter how loudly it is shouted or how broadly it is broadcast. The fools who parade their ignorance before millions of people on the public media only advertise their gross stupidity. Communications tools like television or the Internet would be better used for spiritual purposes instead of prostituted to blatant hucksterism. Yet even the preachers who appear on television cater only to the lowest common denominator of

spiritual development. All their doctrinaire shouting does not make them or their foolish audience any wiser.

A really wise man conserves his energy for important spiritual work by speaking only when he knows he will be heard. Most of the time he remains silent, meditating on the Holy Name and praying to the Lord. Thus his silence actually increases his wisdom. A truly Godly person can never be defeated in any situation or condition of life. He is always protected and his purposes furthered by the inconceivable power of the Holy Name of the Lord.

Aphorism 31: The ignorant idealize youth; the wise welcome the years, for experience is wisdom.

The materialistic concept of life is deeply rooted in sex desire and conditioned by sensory consciousness. The physical sex urge is strongest in youth, and youthful bodies are the most desirable objects of lust. Ignorant people try to remain young forever to attract youthful partners for illicit sex enjoyment. By foolishly trying to find love through sex, they lose the benefits of spiritual wisdom and condemn themselves to a hellish existence of unending dissatisfaction.

Wise men do not resist the aging process, for experience is a valuable source of wisdom. If nothing else, the more time one has had to make mistakes, the better chance one has of finding the truth by process of elimination!

Life is complex, and understanding it properly takes time. The Scriptures are open to interpretation and require many years of study and contemplation to understand rightly. The natural vicissitudes of life do push one toward God over time. Through the years of change and suffering, one comes to see the only real stability is in knowledge and love of God.

In mature years one who seeks wisdom can more easily overcome sex desire and conquer the material bodily concept of life, opening the door to higher vistas of spiritual realization. All these advantages make the later years of life far more desirable than youth for the spiritually astute.

Aphorism 32: The wise man dies before his death; he lives as a dead man on leave to serve the pleasure and purpose of the Lord.

He led me through the golden early morning light, across the plain to a place where the Way became steep and forbidding. I hesitated, looking at the wild country ahead and then back to the city where He had found me. Knowing my mind, He said, "This proud city of sin will be destroyed along with all its condemned inhabitants. It served no purpose other than to shelter and nurture you in the weakness of your infancy. Let us go on."

For a terrible moment I doubted Him. Then I realized the true nature of my heart, and rebuked myself. For I had regretted leaving the protection of the city, with its walls of fear, spires of pride and streets of desire, its many dark chambers of sin and debauchery. Although it was evil, it was familiar. And now I was to follow Him into the unknown. I trembled, though not entirely with fear.

Humbled, I said, "Lord, I commit my life unto You. You have never failed me when I sought Your shelter in my hour of need. Lord, lead on and I will follow wherever You go." Silently, His eyes full of love and compassion, He turned and we continued the long journey toward the light.

Aphorism 33: The wise look toward death as a prisoner longs for the day of his release.

This material world is a prison with walls of flesh, cells of words and ideas, and whose warden is ignorance. There is great evil and ungodliness in the maladministration of this world, causing great and unnecessary suffering for its unfortunate inhabitants.

For the Godly man, death is the completion of his term in the prison of bodily existence. It represents final release from a difficult life in hellish circumstances to the resurrection which he has already earned and experienced in part through spiritual service, deep meditation and loving communion with God through His Holy Name.

Thus the wise see death as a friend, and strive to overcome the physical bodily conception of life long before its time. Death is indeed a friend to one who knows and loves God. The body is a chrysalis for the spirit, who starts life as a sense-bound worm and gradually transforms, through development of consciousness, into the butterfly of the eternal soul. At death the chrysalis breaks open, releasing its captive resident to a new life of soaring freedom.

Solomon in his wisdom declared the day of one's death to be better than the day of one's birth. For a spiritually advanced man, death is a new birth into the resurrection of eternal life. This is the great purpose for which God created the universe and populated it with many and varied beings: that we may ever grow in wisdom and in truth, mature in understanding, and assume ever-greater responsibility in helping with the conscious evolution of all sentient beings. For those who have understood this lesson, death is graduation from the present grade of spiritual education, and the celebration of a new chapter in the eternal existence of the soul.

Aphorism 34: When the last wise man disappears, the destruction of the world will begin.

God created the material world to serve as a home for His creatures, especially human beings, who are created in His image and are intended to be His eternal companions and helpers in the spiritual world. As soon as the material world stops producing men who have earned this elevated destiny, it ceases to serve its intended purpose. Just like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were destroyed as soon as there were no more righteous people living in them, this world has no future if it ceases to serve God's purpose.

The same is true of our churches, governments, businesses, families and other institutions. As soon as they cease to serve the purpose of the Lord, they are doomed to destruction. This destruction may come tomorrow, or it may not happen for a hundred years. God, to whom a thousand years is like a day, works on His own timetable. Nevertheless, as soon as we diverge from the real meaning and intention of God's creation, we seal our doom. From that point it is only a matter of time before we are annihilated.

Therefore, it is essential that a class of truly enlightened men exists and is well-maintained for the welfare of the entire planet. This is why the great Master Teachers strive to create esoteric schools

independent from all ordinary religious organizations to propagate the highest principles of spiritual life to a small cadre of dedicated students. Without the presence of these schools scattered all over the world, the very existence of the planet would be jeopardized.

Fortunately, God is merciful and gives us many chances to reform ourselves before final destruction. There are so many Holy Scriptures and spiritual teachings of every rank and quality that we can accept. The whole point of our existence is that whatever we do should be dedicated to serving God's purposes. It is in our best

interest to accept every opportunity for spiritual advancement. The best method of spiritual advancement is to worship and glorify the Holy Name of the Lord without interruption.

Here end the Bhaktisiddhartha exegeses to the Aphorisms on the subject of Wisdom and the Wise. All glories to the Holy Name of the Lord!

Aphorisms 3: Spiritual Attitudes

Aphorism 35: Sin cannot remain in the presence of Divine Love; wisdom cannot remain without it.

Spiritual wisdom in this material world is a fragile flower that requires a supportive environment. Divine Love of God is much stronger and more robust than the wisdom it nourishes and fosters. Divine Love is also more durable than evil. Divine Love defeats sin, although it is not aggressive. Nor does Divine Love need to defend itself against the attacks of sin. Divine Love simply exists eternally on the pure spiritual platform, which sin can never reach or disturb.

Divine Love tolerates the attacks of sin, and acts just when sin mistakenly thinks itself victorious. Divine Love reaches out from the spiritual platform as God's mercy to encourage the development of spiritual wisdom in our hearts. By giving us wisdom, Divine Love shows us how sin gains a foothold in our hearts through desire and attachment. Thus wisdom turns evil to a spiritual purpose. The long-term results of evil are self-defeating, for the pain we suffer when we sin ultimately teaches us to avoid sin and take shelter of Divine Love by exercising the discrimination born of spiritual wisdom.

Wisdom grows through the often-painful experience of trying to develop wisdom and reach Divine Love in a world of sin, or separation from God's Divine Love. We cannot separate spiritual wisdom from Divine Love—love of God—or it soon begins to atrophy and turn into its own opposite: ignorance. Divine Love is spiritual wisdom's nourishment, its patron and protector. And to develop Divine Love is wisdom's ultimate purpose.

Aphorism 36: Behind every sin is a fear; behind every fear is a failure to pray for the grace and love of God.

There is no substitute for the exchange of Divine Love between the soul and God. The eternal outpouring of God's infinite love for us fulfills the basic human need for unconditional love, which cannot be satisfied anywhere else. And God is the perfect object of love who we can love and serve unlimitedly.

While we are spiritually immature, we fear being unable to meet this need from God because of our faithlessness and disobedience. Out of false pride we are ashamed to come before the face of God, surrender and beg for His love. This pride and the resultant shame drives us to deny our need for God's love and attempt to find substitutes through sensory gratification. Thus we sin again and again but still do not find satisfaction. Indeed, as we move farther from God by sinning, our unconscious craving for His love simply increases, and our fear that we will never get it drives us to even greater sin.

This vicious downward spiral finally ends when we turn to God, beg His forgiveness for our sins and pray for His love. Unfortunately this almost never happens until our addiction to sin causes us to 'hit bottom,' when we finally realize that to continue to substitute sin for God's love leads inevitably to the destruction of everything we consider desirable.

The best cure for the disease of ignorance and sin is to worship the Holy Name of the Lord. Since the Lord is fully present in His Holy Names, by constantly chanting and hearing Them we remain always in the Divine Presence of our supreme object of love. This is innately satisfying to the soul because it completely annihilates the basic seed of sinful life: separation from the blissful personal presence of the Lord.

Aphorism 37: God's purpose in setting up the entire situation in which we find ourselves is to develop our love for Him.

We find ourselves in a difficult situation in this material world. We come into this world with many needs that we ourselves cannot satisfy. In addition, we must suffer for the sins and misunderstandings of our parents and other ancestors, and because of ignorance of God's ways we cannot understand the reason for this pain.

The suffering inherent in material existence drives us to search first for relief, then for wisdom to understand the cause of our suffering, and finally for tangible liberation from the suffering of this material world. The failures of sensory gratification, material technology and economic development, psychology and philosophy, ordinary external religion and theology to mitigate the pain of material existence lead us step-by-step to search for ultimate meaning in a personal, transcendental relationship with God.

The difficult situation of the human condition in the material world is no accident, but has been created by God for our benefit. God's deep purpose in structuring the world as He has is to motivate us to develop personal qualities—such as initiative and creativity—that He deems desirable for our future existence in the spiritual world. There is simply no other way for us to develop these qualities than to solve the difficult problems of life that God has set before us. By the time we develop the wisdom to turn to Him in faith and call out His Holy Name in Divine Love, we have the robust experience that makes us fit for the elevated spiritual destiny He has in mind for us.

Aphorism 38: We are created sinless by God; born into the sins of our ancestors; spend our childhood learning the sins of our culture; and finally earn the right to sin independently.

God deals only in the craft of perfection. Thus every created being enters this world in a state of pristine purity and perfection. Alas, this blessed state does not long endure. Before we get any chance to exercise our perfection, we are overwhelmed by the burden of our ancestors' sins. The proof of this is in the tragic suffering sometimes experienced by infants too young to commit sins on their own.

If we survive infancy, we must attend school, where we are forced to learn the philosophy, propaganda and modus operandi of a sinful materialistic culture. At school we come in contact with a peer group and teachers who are bound to lead us far away from God. In fact, in many countries the law prohibits the teachers from even mentioning God, let alone teaching us how to worship Him. This is a symptom of a demonic society.

At last we reach the age where we are free to do whatever we want—or so we like to think. Actually we cannot help but be influenced by the advertising media screaming the gospel of materialistic consumerism, and by the all-pervading pressure of a culture for which money and sense pleasure are the only objects of worship. And still we want to resist all spiritual authority, and in the name of blessed freedom, become the sold-out slaves of our minds, senses, and the materialistic values of the idolaters that surround us.

Clearly, this so-called freedom is nothing but slavery to sin. Fortunately for us, just as soon as we ignorantly think we have achieved complete freedom, some disaster occurs to remind us that we are still under the authority of the natural laws of God. Thus the whole world is actually a school in which we are taught compelling lessons in the difference between materialistic illusion and spiritual

reality. We graduate from this school when we finally accept God's authority, surrender to Him in love and voluntarily do His will, guided by the Scriptures and the indwelling intelligence of the Holy Spirit.

Aphorism 39: We must repay our ancestors' debts as well as our own; no wonder life seems baffling and unfair.

The Lord states clearly in the original text of the Ten Commandments handed down to Moses that, especially for the unsaved, the descendants of sinners must endure punishments to the third and fourth generations. These sinful reactions account for many of the difficulties of life for which there is no apparent cause or explanation. The actual standard of sinlessness under the New Covenant in the dispensation of Christ extends even to mental sins such as lust and anger. Whenever we violate God's Commandments, we sin. All these sins destine us and our descendants to endure sinful reactions.

There is no real alternative for salvation from sinful reactions other than sincerely begging forgiveness from the Lord for sins known and unknown, accepting His gracious pardon, and ceasing to sin from that moment on. God declares that He will forgive the sins of all those who confess their sins and beg forgiveness from Him. But Jesus admonishes us: "Go and sin not again."

Life is not unfair; there is perfect justice in God's great universe. Life seems unfair only if we do not understand God's rules as revealed in the Scripture. Sinful reactions and other hardships of this world exist to push us toward taking full shelter in the Lord alone. The challenge is to rise above the miseries of material life and find succor on the spiritual platform. A life of purity and virtue is the price we must pay for freedom from suffering.

Aphorism 40: In spiritual childhood, our Father will repair all the defects of our material childhood.

No one's life is perfect; no one's parents can shield their offspring from all the problems of life. We all grow up with challenges that permanently shape our lives. There is a psychological theory that adults are motivated by a need to compensate for the shortcomings of their childhood. This applies only until we create a loving, personal relationship with God.

When we accept forgiveness from the Lord for our sins, we are born again on the spiritual platform and become spiritual children of our all-powerful Supreme Father. This spiritual childhood is without lack or defect, because God is a perfect parent. God is omnipotent; therefore He can repair all the damage done in our natural childhood.

When we are actually born again, we live free from the burdens of our past, fully satisfied by the infinite and eternal love of God. He can meet all our internal and external needs, so we no longer need to strive to satisfy our own personal needs. This frees us to serve and love others by distributing God's spiritual wisdom to them, as He desires. All we need to do is call out our Father's Holy Name, and He immediately begins to cleanse the hurts of a lifetime and prepare us for an eternity of blissful life with Him.

Aphorism 41: Attaining spiritual maturity requires a lifetime, beginning from childhood.

Spiritual childhood is a time of salvation, relief, life repair, the cessation of sinful activities, and celebration. In contrast, spiritual maturity sees the development of a personal ministry, mission or service capacity, a deepening of spiritual compassion, love and devotion, and a period of profound transformation from the material to the spiritual platform of consciousness. It is a phase of

spiritual purity where the believer has become free from all but minor accidental sin.

Spiritual maturity is also a time of profound deepening in prayer, study and the inner revelation and realization of spiritual truth. The process of personal relationship with God through meditation and worship of His Holy Name, leading to the stage of pure devotion and ecstatic love, gradually becomes more prominent in the believer's inner life.

The less time we spend in the stages of sinfulness, salvation and spiritual childhood, the more time we will have for the vital stage of spiritual maturity. We should make spiritual maturity the most important goal of our spiritual practice and indeed, of our life. For it is in this stage of spiritual development that we can best serve the purposes of God. In spiritual maturity God's pleasure and satisfaction in us are maximized, for we take on the active responsibility of spreading His message of redemption and salvation to a suffering world through the propagation of the esoteric teaching of His Holy Name.

Aphorism 42: Life is a school; the Lord is the Teacher; death is the final examination; salvation is the diploma.

The school of life prepares us for our eternal vocation in relationship with God in the spiritual world. Whenever school is in session, the students' duty is to pay close attention to the instructor. Between sessions the students are to complete homework and study assignments, and follow the rules of deportment to uphold the honor of their school.

Our Teacher the Supreme Father lectures His students through the agency of the Scriptures and counsels them through the Holy Spirit indwelling in our hearts. He tests our comprehension of His lessons by means of Satan and his agents, who endlessly plot the downfall

of every good soul. Those who pass His tests advance to higher grades and progressively more difficult lessons. Those who fail are given an unlimited number of opportunities to try again.

When our ordained term for learning in this earthly classroom is complete, we must take the final examination of death. How well one has lived and studied is reflected by how well he deals with death. To fools, death is the final destroyer; to the wise, it is a glorious reward for all his struggles in life's school.

Advanced students may apply for extra credit as tutors and assistant professors to help those who cannot study effectively on their own. Nevertheless, all of us remain lifelong students in God's great school. Our diploma is our salvation from sin and death, and our eternal life in the spiritual world with God is our endless graduation party. Those who pass the examination will be awarded the degree of E.S.H.N.L.—Eternal Servant of the Holy Name of the Lord.

Aphorism 43: Spiritual life is unutterably serious; at stake is nothing less than our eternity.

Our spiritual training, education and worship are far more important than any other aspect of our lives. It would be very shortsighted to limit our spiritual work to spare-time activities or reduce it to a lower priority. Spiritual advancement is not a hobby or luxury, but the greatest necessity in our lives. We should be very alert to search out and obtain the very best spiritual training. The mentoring of a spiritually advanced, experienced and capable Teacher is an invaluable requisite for one who wants to make the most of this life's spiritual opportunity.

Life on planet Earth offers the best conditions for advancement in spiritual life, because here we must exercise faith in all aspects of our relationship with God. Once we have passed beyond the veil of

death into eternity, our role in God's Kingdom is determined by the degree of faith we have developed here. Thus, a difficult life fighting constantly against the forces of evil is desirable, because in this way we develop our faith to the maximum—if we are not defeated by the temptations of passion, ignorance and darkness.

Thus when troubles and temptations come our way we should not complain, but regard them as lessons for increasing our wisdom and opportunities for spiritual gain. And let us always remember that God and His agents are watching our struggles compassionately from the viewpoint of eternity. Then we should take wholehearted shelter of the spiritual protection of the Holy Name of the Lord, for this is the best way to develop our faith.

Aphorism 44: Material possessions and activities are distractions; act only to serve God and you will not forget Him.

It is impossible to think of God or to pray when the mind is focused on material objects. How, then, are we to remember God and pray to Him always, when so many material engagements are required to maintain our existence and care for our other responsibilities?

The answer lies in dedicating all our material activities as acts of service to our beloved Lord. We must not only tithe a tenth of our income to the Lord's work; we should connect everything we do with His ministry, and think of it as sacred service. We should think, "Nothing belongs to me, but everything is God's to be used in His service."

Of course it is wonderful if we can make the ministry our full-time vocation, or retire from the world into a monastic community. But even if this is not possible, every faithful lover of God should have some kind of ministry or spiritual service activity to which he can dedicate his time, energy and interest. The goal is to dedicate the

result of every act to the Lord, then we can think of Him with love at every moment.

Even family activities can be dedicated to the Lord if our intention is to raise children whose lives are pleasing to Him. Otherwise, such activities, along with our material possessions, can only distract us from the real purpose of human life, which is to

serve the pleasure of the Lord. Dedication of all our material wealth, possessions and work to His purposes is the only way we can remain always mindful of Him without complete retirement from material life, or the practice of monasticism.

Aphorism 45: Act and speak only to bring glory to God among men, and your life is perfect.

To bring glory to God by every act and word is the art of spiritual work. If we can do this, our activities become spiritualized by their dedication to God's glory. Such dedicated activities, though apparently material, are no longer a cause of bondage but a powerful means for spiritual perfection.

Since we profess God, whatever we do reflects on Him in the eyes of others. When people observe the exemplary character and wonderful activities of one who is spiritually mature, it enhances the glory of God in their minds. As sincere servants and sons of God, let us be careful to speak and act always in ways that increase His good reputation.

Of course, God is all-good and all-perfect, and nothing we puny men do can actually affect His stature. But the impressions we make in the minds of other men are significant factors affecting their view of God, and consequently their chances for spiritual advancement and salvation.

I remember vividly how the negative impressions I received early in life of spiritually immature Christians' character made me hesitate to take up the path of spiritual life for many years. I did not want to become a hypocrite like them. This negative opinion certainly delayed my spiritual advancement.

People are always watching and evaluating our character, especially when we make an issue out of being religious. By reflecting God's wonderful qualities in our own lives as much as possible, we open the path of spiritual advancement to others.

The perfection of life is when everyone who sees us is automatically reminded of the perfection of God. And the perfection of speaking is when we always meditate on and glorify the Holy Name of God.

Aphorism 46: Everything except God's love is ultimately futile.

Our material existence is of small moment from the purview of eternity. Our material bodies, possessions, activities and everything connected with them are transitory and impermanent. At the time of death, everything is swept away except whatever spiritual advancement we have managed to make in our short lifetime. Our wealth and other so-called possessions will be distributed to others, and our ideas and activities will quickly be forgotten. Soon, no trace whatever of our present existence will remain.

Our short journey from dust to ashes is meaningful only if we use it to gain tangible spiritual advancement. Advancement on the spiritual path is measurable in terms of progressive detachment from material pleasures and possessions on one hand, and on the other, positive development of knowledge and love of God.

Our transcendent relationship with God develops through the dialogue of prayer and inspired meditation. By feeding our soul with God's Word and glorifying His Holy Name we prime the pump of Divine Love. Then the ecstatic flow of this spiritual love comes through the deep communion of prayer, followed by the receptive listening for God's reply in deep meditation.

Thus, prayer and meditation, rather than superficial institutional activities, should form the core of our spiritual life. Because at the end, the transcendent love and affection we develop through the power of the Holy Name of the Lord becomes the spiritual body that will sustain us eternally.

Aphorism 47: The praise of foolish men is worth nothing; worth still less is the praise of women.

To measure our self-worth, our effectiveness and especially our spiritual progress by the yardstick of men's praise is deceptive and dangerous. If we act for men's praise we shall certainly take the wrong path, for men are foolish and ignorant of God's ways. They are swept up in fads and fashions, and deluded by false materialistic knowledge and values.

The praise of women is even less desirable. It is a certain sign that we are regressing on the spiritual path. Women tend to put their own personal sentiments, bodily sensations and ego ahead of spiritual values, duty and everything else. They almost always find it impossible to rise above the material bodily and sentimental emotional platform to the pure spiritual platform of consciousness.

Therefore anyone who seeks the praise of women will certainly be distracted from the path of spiritual advancement and engaged in sinful material activities. Women especially enjoy seeing an intelligent, powerful man deviated from service to God and degraded by lustful attachment to sex life, because it feeds their

false sense of importance. The most threatening thing to a lusty woman is a man who has actually transcended the need for sex life through spiritual advancement, nullifying the power of her net of sexual illusion.

The real measure of spiritual advancement is how well our character compares to the great Master Teachers. We must keep our course set on the beacon of purity, avoiding actions that attract the praise of women and of men that have become too much like women due to their intimate association. Instead, we should strive to earn the praise of God through the power and purity of His Holy Name.

Aphorism 48: Man's whole world is but a bubble in God's great ocean.

The diameter of the Earth planet is almost 8,000 miles. Yet the entire range of man's activities is confined to a thin layer of habitable biosphere only three miles thick. This fragile bubble is our natural sphere of activity as determined by God. We can leave it only by extraordinary and dangerous measures and then only for a short time, by the power of technology revealed to our tiny brains by God. Yet some foolish men dare to declare mankind masters of the universe, when we can hardly even comprehend the tiny bubble in which we are trapped.

Once in a vision, God picked me up in the palm of His hand. I rose dizzily for an awful span of time. When the vertigo passed and I dared to look, I was high—hundreds of miles high—over a shoreless ocean extending to infinity. God revealed to me in His gentle, loving way that each and every drop in that ocean was an eternal realm in His great spiritual world, and each and every bubble of foam in the endless waves that crashed and broke across that unlimited sea was a temporary material kingdom like our own. Such is God's infinite opulence.

The limited human mind can scarcely comprehend such unrestricted greatness, compared to which all our human endeavors are microscopically insignificant. In the light of this fact, all our self-importance and false egotism is starkly revealed for the ignorant, self-serving illusion that it is.

Aphorism 49: Guard your heart against the world; fill it up with God's love.

Materialistic values are a complete inversion of those leading to spiritual elevation. Those who are prominent in this material world are the last to be admitted to the spiritual Kingdom of God. The leaders in actual spiritual qualities like peacefulness, Divine Love, humility, service attitude, purity, holiness, wisdom and detachment will certainly remain obscure in this world of materialistic competition, lust and violence.

But thank God, spiritual life has its own profound rewards. The lover of God feels within his heart a most subtle joy, an unconditional and causeless happiness emanating from the spiritual vibration of the Holy Name of the Lord. This factual bliss more than compensates for any material loss as a consequence of following the spiritual path. One whose heart is full of God's transcendent love certainly feels no attraction for material enjoyment. And anyone who has felt such joy even once will hanker for it continuously until he attains it permanently.

For having felt the greatness, purity and self-sufficiency of God's love, he considers all other happiness insignificant, and having attained it, feels confident that there is no greater attainment. This is the mysterious food that sustains the saints, and accounts for their bountiful mercy and spiritual magnanimity even in the face of rejection, ridicule, persecution and death. Having attained the shoreless ocean of happiness, they confidently turn their backs forever on the stagnant puddle of material existence.

Aphorism 50: A clever mind is a devil's workshop; better a simple heart full of God's love.

It is said that an idle mind is a devil's workshop. But a clever man whose intelligence is perverted by material contamination is far more dangerous than an idle fool. The fool may commit sinful or criminal acts for which there is no excuse, and suffer or be punished as a result. But the clever fool is sure to rationalize his sins with sophisticated logic, and defend his nonsense with baffling arguments. Perhaps he may even quote Scripture like Satan did when tempting Jesus, or attempt to deny scriptural authority altogether by subtle though false logic.

But the simple believer knows the difference between right and wrong in his heart of hearts, without the need for convoluted arguments. In fact, he is right to distrust complex logic in favor of the clear instructions of the Lord. He is obedient to God out of love and respect. The Holy Spirit can guide his thoughts in the right way because he is humble and defenseless before the Lord. One should always feel oneself to be a fool in the presence of God.

Clever minds working overtime have devised so many unnecessary arguments and synthetic issues. This has created an atmosphere of confusion in spiritual life, leading to quarrels even among the faithful who actually share the same beliefs, but are deluded by subtle though illogical reasoning. The passion for honor and the lust to enjoy material power and pleasure have produced so many clever but false deviations from the simple, clear message of the Scripture. Only the simple heart, full of God's love and empty of concocted egoistic ideas, can actually know the truth. And the truth is revealed in silence and aloneness, through constant service to the Truth and meditation on the Holy Name of God.

Aphorism 51: Selfish pride is the ecstasy of ignorance; Divine Love is the ecstasy of wisdom.

Pride and love are emotions; ignorance and wisdom are states of knowledge. The intellectual and emotional parts of man act together to guide the physical part. Thus our passion produces an emotional mood according to our state of intellectual and spiritual development in knowledge and love of God. This mood drives our physical body to act according to its quality.

When one is ignorant of God's ways, his passion can lead only to pride and then to sin. The ignorant man thinks himself to be the center of everything. Satisfaction of his mental impulses and bodily demands overrides all else. Such an ignorant man is certainly on the high road to hell.

One who has wisdom lives in the knowledge and love of God. He knows God's loving kindness and compassion, and he strives to emulate these exalted qualities in his own life and actions. His passion reflects God's causeless gift of love to his fellow men, and all his actions are redolent with the fragrance of Divine Grace emanating from the sweetness of the Holy Name of God.

Aphorism 52: Only the pure in heart can walk with God.

To love God requires us to counteract all the selfish competitive instincts of our natural animal mind. But this counterintuitive effort yields an incomparable spiritual pleasure, for God is the root of all existence. When we satisfy God by our unselfish love and service, we satisfy all our obligations to everyone in the universe, just as watering the root of a tree automatically satisfies all the branches and leaves. But to give God joy requires us to rise above every circumstance of material existence and seek loving shelter in Him alone, serving His pleasure to the exclusion of all other causes. That

by doing so we also automatically fulfill the dearest desire of our heart of hearts is one of the greatest miracles of spiritual life.

Another great miracle is the astonishing fact that, although God is the Creator and Master of innumerable universes, He likes to be intimately involved with the most intimate and picayune details of His children's lives. He dotes over us just like a concerned and affectionate Father, and is ready to offer perfect advice and inspiration on any question, no matter how trivial. When we take complete shelter in Him, asking Him in prayer to see to our every need and solve all our problems, He feels pleasure just like an ordinary father.

We find our pleasure in His, for He lives within us, as we live within Him, and pleasing Him automatically pleases us. One who realizes this devotes himself to pleasing God without reservation, having discovered at last that the key to unblemished happiness lies in totally unselfish love of and service to our universal Father.

Aphorism 53: There are many religions; there is one God.

Religions are semantic and conceptual systems inspired by God but manufactured by human beings in an attempt to contain the infinite variety and power of the Lord. They try to define Him and in the process, limit His vastness to a platform of conventional understanding comprehensible by human beings. Religions usually consist of three parts: philosophy, including ontology, cosmology and theology; traditions of ritual and sacred lore; and morality and ethics, or rules for everyday living and the conduct of human society.

God, on the other hand, is limitless and unfathomable. He is utterly transcendental and infinite. Everything sacred and profane, religious and irreligious, good and bad exists within Him, is created by Him and is under His control. Our relative religious and

moralistic definitions of good and bad, right and wrong do not affect or limit God. They only provide a conceptual platform from which we can develop a relationship with Him. For this reason alone, however, religions are useful and necessary, for the limited human mind confronted with the infinite majesty and inconceivable spiritual variety of Godhead cannot but choke on His infinitude and utterly fail to grasp His reality.

There have been many religions in the history of the world, and there will be many more. Each one serves its appointed purpose in the vast spiritual ecology of God's cosmos; each one reveals some special aspect of God's infinite glory. When a religion has completed its usefulness to God, it disappears, and God Himself or His empowered representative starts another religion to take its place.

By definition, there is and can be only one God or Supreme Being. But there is no limit to the possible number of religions, for God has an unlimited number of Holy Names, ecstatic pastimes, eternal spiritual qualities, forms and abodes. Each of them is wonderful, perfect and worthy of worship and glorification by His created beings.

The lesson here is that God reveals different aspects of Himself through different religions according to His pleasure and the degree of qualification of His worshipers. We should not disrespect or quarrel with other religions, for all are facets of the great jewel of Love of God. God inspires all religions directly or indirectly. The intelligent worshiper studies them all, and gleans the best from each to enhance his personal relationship with and love for God.

Aphorism 54: Only one who has the second birth really knows right from wrong.

The second birth marks a transition in consciousness from thinking oneself to be a material being on the temporary bodily platform, to thinking of oneself as a spiritual being on the eternal spiritual platform. Of course, we have always been spiritual beings, so the second birth is really the removal of the illusory covering of the sensory mind from the pure soul, and the beginning of true wisdom.

Popularly known as being ‘born again,’ the second birth also entails a rededication of our life purpose from seeking our own pleasure to serving God’s pleasure. At the highest standard of realization, the second birth is accompanied by the symptoms of complete cessation of desire for material enjoyment, and total immersion in devotional service in love of God by continuous ecstatic meditation on His Holy Name.

To desire the second birth is only the beginning of the process. In practice, this final shedding of the sensory mind takes some time. It is not a matter of temporary sentiment at an afternoon pep rally at the local church, but often requires years of deep study and personal spiritual training with a highly qualified and realized Master Teacher.

On the bodily platform, the concepts of right and wrong, good and bad are based on the survival and pleasure potential of the material body. People on the bodily platform therefore tend to confuse goodness with passion. After the authentic second birth, the emphasis shifts from bodily survival to spiritual growth and service. Since on the spiritual platform, immortality is guaranteed, survival is not an issue. Thus, actual goodness is whatever enhances the increase of spiritual wisdom. This eternal standard of good often conflicts with the enhancement of bodily enjoyment and

survival. For example, pain and suffering are good from the spiritual standpoint because they push us toward humility, gentleness and the sincere search for God.

Celibacy is good because it decreases the dependence on the material mode of passion and the distraction of the transient pleasures of the senses, and limits illicit association between the sexes. But only a wise man who is truly reborn into spiritual wisdom can appreciate this, especially at the time when it is happening to him.

Aphorism 55: There is no weight heavier than sin.

Sin can be gross or subtle. Gross sin means external, tangible physical violation of God's Law as expressed in the Ten Commandments. Subtle sin is an action of the mind; it always precedes and is the cause of gross sin. For example, the subtle sin of lust precedes the gross sin of adultery. The subtle sin of covetousness or greed causes the gross sin of theft.

We are spiritual beings meant to fly like the angels, indeed, higher than the angels. But we are weighed down to the ground by sin. In conventionally religious people, the bulk of this sin is subtle sin. We see a nice car on the television, and we covet it; we see a beautiful woman and we desire her. It makes no difference whether or not we go on to perform gross sin; we still have reinforced the false bodily conception of life by engaging in subtle sins.

The only remedy for subtle sin is sincere prayer, deep meditation and constant spiritual service to the Holy Name of God. Ordinary religious life can, at best, help us overcome gross sin. To defeat subtle sin we have to take the struggle to a new level. We have to become mystics, completely immersing the mind in God by glorifying His Holy Name in ecstasy until the very concept of bodily existence is erased from our consciousness by the ecstatic

flood of His Divine Love. Only then will we be released from the heavy weight of sin and soar to the true spiritual heights of which we are capable, and for which God created us.

Aphorism 56: Saints work out of love of God; sinners work out of fear of the enemy.

Our motivation for working is a reflection of our worldview, our priorities and our level of spiritual development. People who are attached to the bodily conception of life are afraid of anything that might hinder their sense enjoyment. They are always afraid of losing the material enjoyments of life, because such things are transient by nature. Thus they work very hard day and night to amass wealth and other material assets, and create relationships and obligations with other materialists they think will protect them against the inevitable end of material pleasures and possessions.

In the process of such inauspicious work, their attention must always be alert for any competitive threat to their material security. After all, it is easier and quicker to steal a fortune than to amass it by honest hard work. They do not have time, they think, to build a relationship with God because they are always in anxiety about material things. Thus through fear, inattention and neglect of spiritual knowledge they commit many sins, ruining their chances for spiritual success, even if they think themselves to be religious in the ordinary sense.

Those who have a personal relationship with God do everything to please Him. They do not care for the false pleasure and illusory security of temporary material existence. They already taste the tangible joy and know the world of eternal spiritual existence by the causeless self-revelation of the Absolute Truth through their worship of the Holy Name of God. While on the surface the activities of a spiritually advanced person may superficially resemble those of self-interested people, actually they are

completely different because they are motivated only by a desire for God's pleasure. Such God-centered activities protect one from sinning even in one's mind. This motivation is the greatest difference between the saint and the sinner.

Aphorism 57: Loudness and activity mark him who seeks; he who has found remains quiet, satisfied in God.

Many immature seekers try to obtain quickly by faith and force of will what they actually need to earn through the long and unavoidable process of spiritual growth and maturation. They loudly proclaim their freedom from sin and their fervent desire to serve God. They hold boisterous worship services full of noisy crowds, with hysterical outbursts that sometimes resemble a circus performance. They appear on television and make outrageous statements to solicit large sums of money from the gullible public, ostensibly for missionary activities. They author numberless tracts and slick paperback books to pound into us their understanding of God, religion and ourselves.

To those who actually know God, their shrill loudness clearly marks them as unsatisfied seekers, stridently teaching the very things they themselves most need to learn. The mature believer is at peace, satisfied with his spiritual love and worship of God. He has no need to prove anything to anyone or shout pious phrases from the pulpit, for he is a humble student of the greatest Teacher. Nor does he need to control or dominate others, for he has mastered his mind and controlled his senses. His consciousness is absorbed in ever-blissful meditation on the Holy Name of God, so he has no desire to complicate his life unnecessarily by extensive missionary activities.

Perhaps he picks a few sincere people over time and helps them achieve a deeper understanding and realization of God through his personal example and training. He lives with whatever material

possessions and wealth are acquired easily and honestly, placing no undue strain on his disciples for material support. Such a perfect man of God is rarely found, but a truly deserving student can get such a Master Teacher through sincere desire and prayer.

Aphorism 58: Being good is important; but salvation comes only through God's grace.

Some denominations believe that we must become sinless to be candidates for spiritual salvation. The irony of this doctrinaire position is that no one in this world can avoid sin. Sinful reactions are passed down from parents to their descendants, so everyone is born into sin. Making sinlessness a prerequisite effectively closes the door to salvation, for everyone has sinned and can sin again at any time.

No one can avoid sin by his or her own strength; therefore no one can earn salvation by being good. However, we can be freed from the consequences of sin by God's grace, or gift of forgiveness. We cannot earn or deserve God's forgiveness, but we can and should need and desire it. When we realize that without absolution we have no chance for spiritual emancipation, we can come humbly before God and beg His mercy and forgiveness. And if we are sincere, He will certainly bestow it. At that moment our sins are forgotten as if they never happened.

The danger is that we will take God's forgiveness for granted, and continue to commit sins on the strength of His mercy. Does anyone really think that God is such a sucker that he can put one over on Him? "Go, and sin not again" is Jesus' instruction, one that we should take very seriously. Being good is not a prerequisite for receiving God's grace, but it is certainly a condition for keeping it. The most appropriate time for performing good works is after salvation. By remaining good after forgiveness we demonstrate our

thankfulness and sincerity, and prove our faith both to God and man.

Aphorism 59: Happiness and perfection are ours from God for the asking; but we are so foolish that we insist on working for them.

As discussed above, complete forgiveness of all sins is available to everyone from God. From the moment we accept His free gift of salvation our spirit is wiped clean of all sin. The omnipotent Lord, who can do anything He desires, even the impossible, bestows this perfection by His sweet magnanimous will. He can bestow anything He desires from His unlimited resources to His loving worshiper.

By accepting the Lord as our dear Father, we become members of His spiritual family. From that moment He treats us just like His beloved sons. This is a deep spiritual mystery that can only be experienced by those who have unflinching faith in the power of His Holy Name.

As sons of the Almighty, we have a special link with God. Because we have accepted His forgiveness and dedicated ourselves to the role of His spiritual sons and helpers, His purposes and our purposes have become one. Therefore we can pray for all manner of blessings—spiritual and material—and receive them without a doubt, direct from our Father God.

This brings up a question: If all we have to do to receive happiness, love, perfect instruction and any other spiritual or material benediction our hearts may desire for the achievement of the Divine purpose is simply to pray with sincere faith in the power of His Holy Name, then why do so many believers still work so hard for cheap material benedictions like money, possessions and position in material society? If we are really forgiven, and have

fully accepted the free gift of salvation, and have a direct prayer pipeline to the ear of our Father Almighty God, why would we ask Him for anything material at all?

Why would we not instead use this wonderful facility to ask for truly valuable benedictions like permanent freedom from sin, eternal perfection in spiritual understanding, wisdom, forbearance, purity, freedom from anger and faultfinding, protection from falldown, and the other virtues of holy character? Why waste such a golden opportunity on trivial, temporary material things? Why lay up our treasures where moth and rust doth corrupt?

Material possessions do not bring happiness, only anxiety for their inevitable loss. They lay a burden on the soul that leads to falling from the spiritual path. Why, when we have spiritual perfection and ultimate emancipation from the cause of all suffering within our grasp, would we ask to be enchained again in the same burdensome network of causes of material bondage?

Those who want to be 'born again' cheaply, without considering the deep ramifications of spiritual liberation, should be more careful to understand what they are asking for. To request and receive the forgiveness of the Lord, and then ask Him for the means to sin again is a very great offense. Those who are actually born again should be beyond childish material pleasures and absorbed in pure love of God through glorification of His Holy Name. Otherwise by accepting absolution then sinning again, their condition is worse than before, because of offending the Lord.

Aphorism 60: Seek not the loud praise of ignorant men, but the secret admiration of the all-knowing Lord.

The real reason that so many nominally religious people—who should know better—act just like materialists and sinners is that they still crave approval and status in human society. They have

not fully accepted God's kind offer of salvation; they still measure things by human values instead of looking toward the values of the eternal. They choose to remain citizens of the material world instead of becoming full citizens of the spiritual world. They are too proud to live the simple, holy life prescribed in the Scriptures. They are too attached to material pleasure to prove their salvation by casting matter aside for the real satisfaction of God's Divine Love and the ecstasy of His Holy Name. They form associations to hire professional preachers and pay them outrageous salaries to keep them comfortably asleep in their dream of false religiousness. Meanwhile, from within their hearts, God watches their every thought and act, waiting for the day when they will finally understand the truth, turn their backs on the material world and come to Him for real salvation.

But what rewards await the rare one who actually believes God's promises in the Scriptures and abandons all efforts to enjoy the material world! God enlightens him with amazing spiritual knowledge, fills him with joy from within, gives him unshakable peace and confidence in his glorious future in the spiritual world. Like the man who built his house on a rock, he becomes eternally secure in his survival. He is filled with wisdom direct from the heart of God that can never be shaken by any false argument. The unseen hand of God buoys his spirit; nothing can deviate him from his attainment. His faith is unshakable because he actually knows God, understands His purposes, and sees Him acting in the world by spiritual vision. This is the reward that awaits when we ignore the attitudes of men, like Mary when she ignored Judas to anoint Jesus' feet with fragrant oil, and seek the secret praise of God through the glorification of His Holy Name.

Aphorism 61: Revenge destroys the avenger; forgiveness opens the gate of salvation.

Acts of destruction are always sinful. Revenge is especially sinful because it is premeditated: one has had sufficient time to forgive but has decided to injure instead. Revenge is therefore far worse than self-defense, when there is no time to consider an appropriate response; one must act or be destroyed.

Revenge may even be carried out by someone other than the victim, such as the State's punishment of a criminal, in which case it is doubly premeditated. Revenge is part of the Old Covenant law: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." But it is obsolete under the current dispensation and certainly inappropriate behavior for those who consider themselves 'born again.' It is also the acme of hypocrisy for religious people to consider themselves forgiven and born again under the New Covenant, while supporting a government that operates under a hard-line Old Covenant policy.

Under an enlightened government, criminals would still be incarcerated to protect society but instead of being punished, they would be rehabilitated by education and spiritual training. In the present system, even people who are religious at heart but have backslid through poor training or bad association are punished the same as hardened criminals, instead of being forgiven and provided adequate rehabilitation by the State. Since the State is acting without mercy, those who support such a State policy are also treated without mercy, under the same Old Covenant law they would apply to others. God says, "You want Old Testament law? OK, you got it." Thus the entire population suffers unnecessarily because the attitude of revenge has been made State policy.

The best State policy is that of King David: to subsidize academies for practical spiritual training, and broadly encourage the congregational chanting of the Holy Names of the Lord. If people

would simply glorify the Holy Name of God as instructed in so many places in the Scripture, God would open their eyes to knowledge and fill their hearts with mercy. Instead they harden their hearts toward others, claiming ultimate mercy from God while at the same time maintaining sinful material desires and attitudes in their hearts. Thus the world becomes filled with sin and hypocrisy. What a better place it would be if everyone followed the Lord's

simple, clear instructions in the Scriptures!

Aphorism 62: One who does not know God lives in sleep; he moves in a world of dreams and illusion.

God and His Holy Name are ultimate reality. As one enlightened Master Teacher used to say: "I pledge allegiance to my God: Reality the Beautiful." All else is based on Him and finds its true meaning and ultimate significance in relation to Him. We human beings find completion of our deep needs for love and urges for understanding in the transcendental wisdom and affection of our Heavenly Father. We also find our eternal identity and the actual meaning of our life in our eternal spiritual loving relationship with Him.

Considering all this, an ungodly or unfaithful person cannot understand the real meaning of anything. He cannot understand the relative existence of the material world, and mistakenly considers it the all-in-all. He will erroneously assign independent existence to material objects, although all of them are created and sustained by God at every moment. He will be unable to find fulfillment of the deep urges of human existence, and will search futilely in material relationships and enjoyment for satisfaction that will forever elude him. The actual purpose of life will escape him, as will his real spiritual identity, leaving him with at best, a concocted, illogical philosophy and world-view, and a temporary, false concept of self.

Without faith in and worship of God, it is impossible to find adequate answers to the fundamental questions of life, or satisfying solutions for the existential problems of the human condition. One who is faithless will simply drift like a ghost through a world of dreams, never finding anything solid or reliable on which to base his life. The imaginary security of materialism is a woefully inadequate answer to the questions posed by the impermanence of life and the ultimate challenge of death.

Aphorism 63: Praying in tongues gives spiritual strength; music is the language of spiritual emotion.

Regarding praying in tongues, parago inur fagrestas kaipalutim saf degolutisam azat. Whereas others maintain that tegorilno kebaba tanustha samagorum alanina. Stephalo parabara tepaladinum subilitan kutah. Orana tiralenu? Govindam adi purusham tam aham bhajami.

Either you get it or you don't. Klamo statinudidat progrestas; thestas zifolatadnit krepanesti. Oran gamesthi pekradoditum ekan. Treto dutanini sthaledino karapektat, ove kre talundobey, omnamo bhagavate vaasudevaaya. And if you think this is nonsense, try honestly reviewing the progression of thoughts in your mind for an hour.

The expression of spiritual emotion in music is a vastly complex and deep subject far beyond the limited scope of this work. There are several musical languages that have sophisticated palettes of melody, harmony and rhythm quite adequate for the expression of any flavor of spiritual emotion. The danger with music is that it is so full of passion; it is easily misdirected toward material enjoyment instead of spiritual service.

The most important qualification for music to be accepted as spiritual is that its subject matter must be clearly and specifically

related to God, His Holy Names, eternal forms, infinite opulence, spiritual qualities, abodes, pastimes and associates. I have written a thesis on the deep spiritual aspects of music entitled *Sapta Svarah*. The inquisitive or adventurous reader may find this document in several places on the Internet.

Aphorism 64: Do everything in the presence of the Lord; remain always with Him.

The great secret of advanced spiritual consciousness is to invoke the presence of the Lord by meditating on His Holy Name. By praying in the Lord's Name, we invoke His signature on our petition, guaranteeing its success. And by praising and glorifying His Name, we remain always in His personal presence.

The Holy Name of the Lord has immense power. All His creative potencies are present in His Name; indeed, He Himself is personally present in His Name. Ordinary material persons are different from their names, which are merely relative symbols used to denote and identify them. But the Lord and His Holy Names are identical because of His absolute spiritual status.

Therefore calling the Holy Name of the Lord, either out loud or mentally, invokes His personal presence. He comes just as a parent comes at the urgent call of His child. The Lord is already present everywhere, but in the absence of His Holy Name we are not aware of Him. The Holy Name makes His presence tangible to our limited consciousness. The spiritual sound vibration of the Holy Name of the Lord alone can satisfy all our spiritual needs. All we need to do to feel its effect is to call out His Name sincerely and repeatedly for an extended period of time. There is no prerequisite, no conditions and no charge for this form of meditation. Anyone from any race, religion or country can chant the Holy Name of God as they understand and accept it in their native language, and it will have

its full effect. For the Holy Name is identical in all respects to the personal presence of the Supreme Lord.

Aphorism 65: Few of the thoughts in our minds are really ours; we live in an ocean of mind.

Although we are eternal spirit souls, we live in the material world, our original spiritual consciousness covered by the veil of the material mind, body and senses. In material consciousness, we cannot perceive the mental and spiritual dimensions that coexist with and underlie the material creation, but that does not mean that they do not exist. The eternal spiritual world, though extremely subtle, is not only real; it is more robust and substantial than this temporary material existence.

The material creation is derived from the original spiritual substance, and inherits its qualities from the spiritual varieties of the spiritual world. The material creation is just like a shadow or projection of the original spiritual existence. The connection between the perfect spiritual world and the imperfect material world is the subtle dimension of mind. Without mind, the soul would be unable to interact with the gross material body or perceive the objects of the material senses.

We ordinarily think that our mind is separate from all other minds, but actually this is not so. What we call ‘my mind’ is actually just a specific region of the mental dimension, which is also populated by many varieties of subtle beings just as this material world is full of various types of creatures. The activities and struggles between good and evil spirits, angels and demons in the subtle mental world exert a strong influence on earthly human affairs. Countries, governments, races, peoples and even individuals are guided by these subtle beings, who in turn are under the control of God.

The subtle beings of the mental world are always trying to influence our behavior by projecting thoughts into our minds. Whether we accept good or evil guidance depends on our level of spiritual maturity. We need to develop sharp discernment so that we will not be misled onto the path of evil by the influence of demonic beings on the mental platform.

The best way to repel the negative influences of such subtle beings is to always remember and chant the Holy Name of the Lord. The purifying power of the Holy Name immediately defeats the influence of the messengers of evil and drives them from our minds. The Holy Name is the infallible protector of the surrendered soul in every way.

Aphorism 66: Only God never lies or breaks a promise; ignorant men cannot help their lies and betrayal.

We cannot see the future, but God inhabits eternity and is omniscient. He knows everything in the past, present and future, and He knows every being better than they know themselves. When God speaks of the future, there is no question that whatever He says will come to pass. Because God is omnipotent, it will happen just because He said it would.

Although we are very attached to our tiny plans, actually no human being can see even five minutes into the future. Unlike God, all we really know about the future is what God says about it; and indirectly we may infer the consequences of God's Laws. We can know what we want, or want to do, but that doesn't mean it's going to happen that way. We can ask God for something in prayer, and if it is part of God's plan or promises (such as healing) we can be sure He'll do it, but even then we don't know how or when.

Considering all these facts, whenever we make a promise about the future we are taking a risk. Who knows whether we will be alive

tomorrow? And planning for every contingency is impossible. It is better to live life one day at a time, and leave telling the future to God and those He blesses with the gift of prophecy. This makes life simple and helps us concentrate on glorifying His Holy Name.

Aphorism 67: To be born again is to be what you really are; first you must be willing to die to what you have become.

Being born again does not mean to change, or become a different person. Being born again means to drop all pretension and return to the pure state of spiritual consciousness in which God originally created us. It means forgiving as well as being forgiven. It is a cleansing of everything impure, artificial and man-made in us: all our self-serving lies and wrong responses to life. It means letting go of all our emotional garbage, becoming innocent and loving again.

The only impulse in our hearts that we can trust is love. Everything else is contaminated by some material desire. If we act on any impulse other than love, we sin, and damage others and ourselves. To really be born again, we have to let the false self, created by so many years of sinful life in the human world, die so the real self can be uncovered and flourish.

We are all created to help—to love God and to love others as ourselves—and to serve. Each of us has a noble purpose to serve in God's world; everyone has a beautiful dream and a gift of service that is their unique reflection of God's love. Being born again means to make this service our purpose in life. When we are born again into real spiritual life, the old, false material self has to die or our spiritual transformation is incomplete, superficial and temporary. By worshiping the Holy Name of God, all that is impure and unworthy in us is cleansed and washed away, leaving us

purified in our original state of ecstatic love of God. This is the real meaning of being born again.

Aphorism 68: Death is devastation to the sinner; it is a promotion for the righteous.

Death is the ultimate disaster for everyone in the bodily conception of life. They cannot imagine that there is anything beyond the body because they categorically reject spiritual authority. Without submissive, patient hearing from authorities such as the Holy Scriptures and the Master Teacher, one cannot develop faith, or firm trust in the reality of the unseen spiritual world.

Yet such foolish men believe in the existence of fictional abstract entities such as nations, corporations and property rights, because they hear from and put their faith in limited, fallible human law instead of God's eternal infallible Law. This is a form of idolatry or false religion, for which they are punished severely in the afterlife. No wonder they cower so pitifully before the specter of death.

For the faithful, wise men of God, death is blessed deliverance from the indignities of material existence. No one who has known the purity of the soul, the grandeur of God or the bliss of His Holy Name can enjoy material bodily pleasure. Matter is a dull covering on the spiritual senses of the pure soul, and the wise man longs to shed this barrier to his real life and identity.

For the saintly devotee, death means the end of all material miseries. There is no suffering in the spiritual world, only bliss and happiness in association with our beloved Lord. Thus the wise man is delivered from the pangs of old age and death by the enlightening power of the Holy Name of the Lord.

Aphorism 69: We do not truly love until we can cry at another's pain.

Real compassion means putting oneself in the position of another. Compassion for others is necessary if we really want to help or love them. We all have had painful or difficult experiences, and the anatomy of suffering is the same in all cases. Suffering begins from unrealistic expectations due to ignorance of God's Law. When we act against God's spiritual purpose, we suffer. If we expect others to serve or rescue us, we invite disappointment and mental pain. When life or other people hurt us, out of pride we try to hold in the agony. This only makes us hurt more, and distances us from those who really want to help us. Healing begins from being willing to feel our pain and learn the spiritual lesson behind it.

It is possible to feel another's pain if we are totally open to our own pain, feeling it so completely that we no longer resist it. We can help another person by showing them how to feel their pain as if it were our own. This is the basic skill of the counselor or therapist. Success in therapy comes when the client learns from the therapist how to feel and discharge pain and painful emotions independently, and address the incorrect ideas and false expectations at the root of his problems.

Self-knowledge and self-acceptance allow one to let go of pain and move on to a better understanding of life, God and oneself. This opens the door to emotional healing and spiritual advancement. All these therapeutic skills come naturally to one whose heart is opened by meditating on the all-blissful Holy Name of God.

Aphorism 70: People are like children; expect them to be ignorant and foolish, and they won't disappoint you.

Much of our suffering is due to holding unrealistic expectations of people. We tend to think that other people are like ourselves.

Especially if we are inclined toward spiritual consciousness, this is seldom borne out by experience. Most people in this world do not care about developing wisdom, do not want to please God, and are insensitive to others' pain. They are unconcerned about truthfulness, justice and integrity, and deliver the most astounding lies with aplomb. Nor, despite their many fine and flattering words, are they really interested in love.

The sad fact is that very, very few people in this world are actually spiritually advanced. Those of us who are concerned about wisdom and higher consciousness would be well advised to consider and treat them like ignorant, foolish children. One should not expect anything from children except silliness and foolish behavior. Most adults are just like children, except their attachment, passion and malice have grown proportionate to their bodies. We should not have very high expectations for them. Then if by chance they do something intelligent or spiritual, we may be pleasantly surprised.

However, this spiritual attitude of cynicism toward the world is no excuse to lower our own standards of ethical and Godly behavior. God's eternal Law of Love applies to everyone, but is especially important for those who desire enlightenment. To minimize the complexities of life, one should lower expectations for others. Meanwhile one should maintain the highest standards of purity, humility, kindness, truthfulness, compassion, ethical conduct and faith while always remaining devoted to the Holy Name of the Lord.

Aphorism 71: No man deserves your unqualified trust; reserve the full measure of your devotion for God alone.

Until the golden saffron dawn of Love of God rises in a man's heart, he is basically an animal controlled by the senses and mind. Without the discrimination born of spiritual realization, our minds are like rudderless ships, mirroring the impulses of the material

senses and the lusty suggestions of every passing mood. Under these conditions it is inevitable that people will act selfishly and be harmful both to themselves and others.

Therefore it is advisable for one who is seriously committed to attaining wisdom and spiritual enlightenment to remain aloof from the general public. In this way one can minimize the problems caused by association with people who are more or less like animals. To deal with the difficulties posed by relationships with unenlightened people is very time-consuming. It also diverts valuable energy from our primary service of worshipping the Holy Name of the Lord.

Many people, even those who pretend to be religious, can only understand relationship in terms of control and domination over others. These individuals should be completely avoided, for they can wreak havoc on the delicate inner balance and clarity of mind required for deep spiritual work.

Devotion to the Lord is too important to dilute with materialistic concerns and coping with the superficial problems caused by ignorant people. It is better to live completely alone, or in a monastic retreat with similarly inclined associates and pursue spiritual realization with one's total energy and attention. In this way one may worship and glorify the Lord's Holy Name without interruption.

Aphorism 72: Once you have been born again, you may forget God but He will never forget you; He disciplines His children until they realize the error of their ways.

It is easy to lose one's spiritual direction and backslide once again into sensual life. The main causes of falldown are association with materialistic people and offenses to the spiritual Teacher or the Holy Name. Without good association, the world's influences push

us towards empty gratification of our senses at the expense of spiritual progress.

We may lose our faith, but God is always faithful to His promises. Once we sincerely surrender to Him and turn our lives over to His protection, He never forgets His promise to rescue us from the horrors of material existence. He will arrange our lives so that we are slowly but inexorably pulled towards Him. God can be soft and loving, or firm and severe. He loves His children dearly, but He disciplines them when they deviate from the progressive path of spiritual advancement and dawdle in the trough of so-called material enjoyment. The troubles He sends serve to wake us up to the illusion of material enjoyment and the urgency of spiritual life. He punishes us only to get us moving forward again.

God's plan for our lives will not be frustrated by our procrastination and misconduct. Once we choose Him, we are committed to Him, and He is committed to us. He will ensure that we remain true to our promise, as He remains eternally true to His. He will never forsake us, but will use any and every feature of His creation as an agent of His loving discipline until we wake up, turn again towards Him in love, and glorify His Holy Name.

Aphorism 73: The most profound spiritual growth happens slowly, in silent repose, in deep trance of communion with God after all human efforts have failed.

Spiritual advancement cannot be accomplished by any human effort. It is a miracle, a blessing, a gift from God. All our spiritual work on ourselves merely qualifies us to receive this wonderful gift. A farmer may plow his field, fertilize and plant seed, but the rain and sunshine that makes the crop successful comes only from God.

Nevertheless we must do everything possible to prepare ourselves for God's mercy: scrutinizing study of the Scripture, sincere prayer, uninterrupted glorification of God's Holy Name, deep meditation on God's revelations, and good works in our life. The more we do and the deeper we go into the trance of God consciousness, the better prepared we will be to receive God's certain response to our service.

When God moves in us, heals and enlightens our heart, He is answering our heartfelt prayers and responding to our call for His spiritual care by bringing us closer to Him. This almost always happens after we have done all we can, and we are full of desire for love of God by dint of our spiritual work.

God comes quietly into our deep rest and stillness, and without noticing it we increase in His gifts. Truly He comes like a thief in the night, blessing us with spiritual understanding, visions of the Divine world, freedom from sin and fullness in His Divine Love. This is the inevitable result of long and steady devotional service to the Holy Name.

Aphorism 74: Every time you make spiritual progress, expect a counterattack from Satan; watch your weak points!

Our spiritual progress does not go unnoticed by the opposition. Whether or not you believe in the literal existence of Satan, there is an intelligence in this world that would like to spoil our victories and steal our peace. The agents of illusion and ignorance like to tempt us as soon as we make a little advancement on the spiritual path.

Opportunities for money, power and sensual enjoyment—wherever our weak points lie—threaten to distract us from our spiritual service. Difficult people may harass us for no reason. Our own

friends and fellow spiritual students may cause us trouble and heartache, or our body may become sick. All these and more are stratagems of the forces of darkness to cause us to backslide from our advancement in spiritual life.

The remedy for all spiritual difficulties is the same: continued and fervent devotion to the Holy Name, and sincere prayer addressing our specific needs and problems. The Holy Name is inconceivably powerful, because the Lord has invested all His spiritual potencies in His Holy Names. The Holy Name has the power to conquer ignorance and darkness, heal our material and spiritual ills, and bring to the greatest spiritual victory of love of God. Nothing can stop the worshiper who is sincerely devoted to the Holy Name of God.

Aphorism 75: All evil is summed up in the statement: “Let me become God.”

By definition, there can be only one Supreme Being. He is the all-successful Supreme Personality of Godhead, full of all knowledge, existence, bliss, opulence, power, beauty, compassion and all other powerful potencies and desirable qualities. No one can imitate Him and no one can take His place.

Yet evil beings try to become gods within their limited purview, and imitate God by subverting His natural role as master, judge and spiritual leader of all souls. They try to claim for themselves the honor, obedience, worship and love due to the real God. Sometimes they assume power and proprietorship over a tiny piece of His property, the material creation and created beings, sometimes they try to control or destroy it, and sometimes they stupidly and falsely declare themselves incarnations of God.

All these are ultimate acts of rebellion against God’s sovereignty and authority. Those who would imitate God by usurping His

power over His own creation are actually the lowest of evil perverts. The only power they actually obtain by such unlawful actions is to condemn themselves and their deluded followers to an unlimited term of hellish existence.

Just as surrender to God is the essence of piety, the essence of evil is rebellion. And the ultimate rebellion is to attempt to occupy the position of the Most High God. This most heinous act is the greatest sin because with it, the rebellious beings cut themselves off from the very source of their salvation. What they mistake for the greatest triumph is actually spiritual suicide.

Aphorism 76: Remember: there is no real shelter anywhere except the Lord.

People who are unaware of spiritual Truth try to find shelter from the difficulties of life in material security. Some seek asylum in sense pleasure, family relationships, possessions, wealth, eroticism, sports, political arrangements, business agreements, mundane knowledge, art, or sentimentality. These people are driven by passion. Others try to find shelter in destructive acts like violence, criminality, intoxication and rebellion. These people are deluded by ignorance. All such shelters are temporary at best; at worst, they are completely false, because instead of providing shelter, such sinful materialistic acts are causes of further suffering for the perpetrators.

The illusion of material existence gives these false shelters the appearance of certainty and stable, independent reality. The truth is that everything material, including the material creation itself, is temporary and cannot offer us the permanent shelter that, as spiritual beings, we crave. Seeking shelter from material suffering in material enjoyment is a sure disappointment. When the means of temporary enjoyment is finished, we find that we suffer more than before. And the underlying problem still is not solved.

Why should we expect shelter from the very thing that is the source of our suffering in the first place? This is ignorance. Material existence is the cause of birth, aging, disease and death. It is the source of all our troubles. Material nature is meant to push us toward God by presenting us with an endless series of insurmountable difficulties. These difficulties persist until and unless we surrender to God, our eternal shelter.

Only God can provide the unconditional love, spiritual ecstasy, eternal protection and transcendental shelter that we, as His spiritual children, need to be happy. The dramatic climax of human life is the transcendental change of heart that occurs when we remove our faith from false material arrangements for happiness that never arrives, and repose it safely in the strong arms of our beloved Lord by the constant chanting of His Holy Name.

Here end the Bhaktisiddhartha exegeses to the Aphorisms on the subject of Spiritual Attitudes. All glories to the Holy Name of the Lord!

Aphorisms 4: Sex & Celibacy

Aphorism 77: Rectitude is the foundation of wisdom.

A person who can withstand the pushing of the senses and control them according to scriptural standards of purity is understood to have tangible advancement in spiritual life. The tongue and genitals are most difficult to control, followed by the mind and heart.

A man in the perfectional stage of spiritual maturity uses his material bodily senses only in acts of devotional service to the Lord. He can extend his senses when required for such service and withdraw them again when they are no longer needed, like a tortoise withdraws its limbs within its shell, to concentrate his energy and attention on devotional service to the Holy Name within.

A person who allows the senses to act without restraint is considered irreligious. Actually such a person is like an animal in a human body. Indeed, the very word 'religion' is derived from the Latin words re+legere, meaning 'to bind back.' Therefore sense control is fundamental to religious life.

It is said in the esoteric Scriptures that the practice of celibacy alone is sufficient to ensure liberation from material existence. In fact, controlling the senses according to the principles of religion brings subtle blessings of spiritual wisdom and thrilling ecstatic bliss unimaginable to the undisciplined sense-enjoyer.

Sense control may be a preliminary stage of spiritual development compared to the exalted state of pure love of God, but without it there can be no increase of wisdom or meaningful spiritual realization. The Holy Spirit is called 'The Restrainer' in the Book of

Revelation because He stops us from acting on sinful sensual impulses. The Holy Name of the Lord is the most powerful purifying agent because, of all spiritual practices, it invokes the Holy Spirit in the greatest measure.

Aphorism 78: Sensuality is not a solution for life's problems; like intoxication, it is merely a distraction from them.

Sensual enjoyment is certainly bewildering to the spirit soul, since even after repeated indulgence, there is no substantial satisfaction of his real needs. In fact, the primary cause of material suffering is the passionate activity of sense enjoyment, especially sex life. Sex is the material cause of conception, which marks the beginning of the soul's suffering in association with the material energy.

Paradoxically, materialists consider sex enjoyment the highest pleasure in the material world. Yet overindulgence in sexuality is a cause of tremendous suffering. A whole spectrum of communicable diseases awaits the indiscriminate sex enjoyer, from the relatively benign gonorrhea, to more serious diseases like hepatitis, to deadly syphilis and AIDS.

Then there is the suffering from overpopulation due to unrestricted sex. The progeny generated from illicit pregnancies is generally sinful, illiterate and unmanageable. Such foolish, unwanted children are the bane of the entire world. An economic burden and a political nightmare, they cannot follow any good instruction and seem proud of their addiction to sin, making their living from violence and criminal activities.

Anyone who seeks escape from the problems of life in sense enjoyment is actually creating more problems, both for himself and everyone else. Like the drunkard who intoxicates himself into insensibility, the sense enjoyer's problems are still there afterward,

plus there is the hangover of sinful reactions to deal with. Such foolish people fall into the darkest regions of ignorance by their irreligious activities.

Aphorism 79: Do not be proud of your body; God sees all sinners as made from the same dust.

The actions and sensations of the material senses are the same in all bodies. The so-called pleasure derived from sex is the same, whether one inhabits a human body or an animal body. The pleasure derived from even the most beautiful human body is exactly the same as ordinary cats and dogs experience when having sex.

Therefore pride in one's body is a complete illusion. Experientially, all bodies provide the same facility for sense enjoyment. Real happiness cannot be found on the material platform, even if one has a very nice body. So what is the use of it? Better to spend one's short life in activities meant to promote and enhance spiritual realization.

All material bodies are made from the same material elements, are composed of the same senses, and experience the same pleasures and pains. All creatures are conceived, gestate within the mother, are born, and grow from infancy to childhood, adulthood and old age, and finally die.

There is no factual basis to be proud of one's body or its imaginary extensions like possessions, wealth, family heritage, position in society, national origin, race, religion, etc. when it all ultimately ends in death. These are all illusions even more ephemeral than sense pleasure, and pride is an intoxicant as delusive and addictive as any drug.

God does not see the temporary material body, but the soul within the body struggling vainly to find happiness in separation from Him. To Him, the body is just a container for the soul. He provides all facility in the form of religious and spiritual teachings for us to understand our real position and know Him. From His point of view we are all sinners, yet we also are all His beloved spiritual children. Therefore He has given us the Scriptures, the Holy Teachers and His Holy Name to help us get out of the entanglement of material existence. It is up to us to take advantage of these spiritual facilities to put an end to all material suffering.

Aphorism 80: We hurry to satisfy our lust, and think we have no time for God; then we get the rest of eternity to experience the result.

The materialistic so-called enjoyer spends all his time searching after the objects of the senses. His whole day is spent in questions and answers concerning dry materialism. He has no time to search after God, or so he thinks.

The material atmosphere is surcharged with anxiety. Thus in all the affairs of the senses there is an artificial hustle and bustle born of impatience and fear. We hurry after the transient boons of materiality, before they fade into oblivion. Thus even the materialists realize the temporary nature of material things to some degree, but it just makes them more desperately frantic to enjoy them.

The rush to enjoy sense objects is nothing but a race to death. Has opulent sense enjoyment ever added a day to anyone's life? No, we live our God-appointed time and then we must leave this false world of the senses. Where do we go then? The answer lies in the store of impressions accumulated in the mind. At the time of death, one's entire life flashes before his eyes. This is more than an old

wives' tale: it is true. When a person is mainly concerned with material things their whole life, naturally at the time of death all they can think of is the same material subject matter. Thus they achieve a very unfavorable destination after death.

An elevated devotee, however, has spent many thousands of hours striving after the pleasure of the Lord. Studying the Scripture, praying, chanting the Holy Names of God, meditating on the wonderful spiritual attributes of God, associating and sharing realizations with fellow believers, he has accumulated a tremendous store of sacred impressions in his mind.

At the time of death, when the spiritually advanced devotee's life flashes before his eyes, he automatically thinks of God with love. Thus he attains the highest destination of personal association with the Lord after death. The easiest way to attain this exalted destiny is to constantly glorify the Holy Name of the Lord.

Aphorism 81: Sex life is like poison candy, unless you are lucky enough to marry a saint.

Poisoned candy is certainly sweet tasting, but its aftereffects are deadly. In sex life and other passionate activities, the beginning is as sweet as nectar, and the end is as bitter as poison. Every veteran of material relationships has experienced this fact. Yet fools try again and again to relish false happiness, vainly hoping the next time will be better.

The actual standard of saintly life is to marry by the arrangement of family and spiritual authorities for compatible companionship and to facilitate spiritual service, not for sex enjoyment. Prospective husbands and wives should be careful to ensure that their philosophies are harmonious before marriage. After marriage, they should avoid becoming entangled in passionate activities as far as possible.

If the couple desires children, they may very cautiously engage in procreative sex during the time of the woman's greatest fertility, or 3-5 days before menstruation. Before and after this act they should spend several hours in chanting, prayer and deep meditation to remember God. This will counteract the tendency of the sex act to induce a state of material bodily consciousness.

This kind of marital relationship is rare in today's world, although in the ancient past it was the standard for all civilized people. Spiritual life is in many ways exactly the opposite of material life. In saintly marriage, the beginning is like poison, because it is very difficult to restrain the passionate impulse of sex in youth, but the end is like nectar, when the pious couple's accrued spiritual service activities bear fruit in love of God.

Once the couple's children are grown and they have accumulated sufficient assets to provide material security for the wife, the husband may renounce home and hearth to pursue spiritual realization in a monastic retreat, leaving his wife in the care of their grown children. Thus they both attain spiritual happiness and satisfaction in God in their old age.

This is the way of the spiritual and Godly married life, which the saintly sages of yore recommend for God realization. We realize this kind of lifestyle appears problematic to contemporary people, nevertheless it is the best platform from which to pursue the arduous path of self-realization and spiritual advancement. Marriage based on sensual enjoyment is not a very durable arrangement, as we can see from the soaring divorce statistics and the increasing popularity of temporary extramarital relationships. The Godly society is based on the principle of spiritual realization in all things, and this principle extends even to marriage.

If the reader thinks that our point of view is impossible, please consider the following unsolicited account, written by a young

couple who married under the spiritual arrangement advocated herein:

“In our marriage, we have found that the closer we follow prescribed duties as given to us by our Master Teacher, the easier and more hassle-free our relationship becomes. We have personally experienced that there is all good fortune in these instructions, even if they seem politically incorrect. We are not perfect, but we feel we have a marriage that works, and that it works because it has duty as its foundation, as per our Master Teacher’s instructions, not ‘love and romance.’

“Just after my marriage, my wife and I took my mother and sister to see some holy places. At some point, my sister asked my wife, ‘How can you marry my brother if you never knew him before, or don’t love him?’ My wife replied, ‘In your country, you marry because you love each other, but the marriages don’t work. If a marriage is based on love, then all your marriages should work out, but they don’t.’ My sister further asked, ‘But what about love, how can you ever love him?’ My wife then said, ‘When you are living so close to someone and serving them, don’t you come to love them? How do people in materialistic society fall in love in the first place? You meet somewhere at some party, in the workplace, do something together, and before you know it, you fall in love. You don’t usually fall in love from a distance. Even though two people don’t know each other before marriage, after marriage they usually fall in love anyway. So it is better to get married and fall in love than to fall in love and get married. If the basis of your marriage is simply love, it will probably not work out. In my family, everyone knows that the arranged marriages usually work out and that the love marriages usually fail, or husband and wife become very miserable.’”

Aphorism 82: By the time you are wise enough to marry well, you are old enough not to marry at all.

In this age people are very slow to understand spiritual principles. They are lusty, impulsive, intolerant, argumentative, rebellious and selfish. The predominating materialistic culture trains them through the advertising media to have unrealistically high expectations of material enjoyment. Thus the entire planet is suffering due to the unrestricted material consumption of a few. In this atmosphere of greed and exploitation it is very difficult to understand the conditions needed for spiritual success.

Marriage is an extremely important institution; the stability of the entire culture depends upon the strength of the family. If the family environment is troubled, the children will suffer because of emotional insecurity. This leads to even greater material and spiritual difficulty for them later on in life. Therefore the happiness and stability of the family is a matter of tremendous spiritual importance for the whole society.

All passionate relationships are unstable. It is simply the nature of passion to be stormy and unpredictable. This mood of passion is exactly the wrong atmosphere in which to raise a child. Society recognizes this in some ways, and tries to protect children from pornography, for example. But no laws can protect children from the emotional uncertainty they experience in the home when their parents' relationship is based simply on temporary sex attraction.

When marriage is based on passion, there are certain to be misunderstandings and arguments between the husband and wife. It is likely they chose each other on the basis of physical attraction and began a relationship without really getting to know each other. As the glow of eroticism wanes over time, they begin to confront the fact that they have serious disagreements about many things.

Compounded by the natural problems of raising children, these disagreements often spell the end of happiness in their marriage.

It is best for spiritual life if one can remain unmarried and be satisfied without sex life. If one simply must have sex, one should be extremely cautious to find a mate whose degree of spiritual development is compatible. It is best if both follow the same religious teaching and practices. And it is vital to spend enough time to get to know each other well before making a commitment to marriage.

To follow this advice is so difficult that for most contemporary people, it is next to impossible. The degree of personal and spiritual maturity it requires is rarely found today. Yet this is exactly what is required for a happy and spiritually successful marriage. Even so there will be many distracting problems due to the natural conflicts between men and women. It is better to focus one's short life on spiritual development without the added complications of an intimate relationship. This is why all authentic spiritual teachings recommend celibacy as the ideal lifestyle for maximum spiritual advancement.

Aphorism 83: Sex reinforces all the illusions of material existence; it is death with a pretty face.

The potency to attain self-realization is based on one's ability to contain the seminal fluid and redirect the energy normally wasted in sex life toward spiritual development. Sex indulgence undermines spiritual advancement because it supports the illusory view that we are our bodies. This misconception of the nature of the self is the essence of the material entrapment and the root cause of all our suffering.

If we do not maintain a minimum supply of sexual potency in the body, we cannot even have good intelligence or a vigorous healthy

life in the ordinary way. The immune system also requires a good supply of sexual fluids for its proper operation. It is no coincidence that immune system abnormalities and serious infectious diseases are common among homosexuals and other libertines.

All genuine martial artists refrain from sex indulgence while in training before an important contest. Similarly, by spiritual culture we are training for a great battle with illusion in the form of old age, disease and death. If we squander our potency on trivial sensual enjoyment we will be at the mercy of the material illusion when we change the body at death. This is spiritual suicide.

With disciplined retention of sexual energy, the mind becomes sharp and memory is increased. My spiritual Master Teacher renounced sex life at an early age. As a result he had an indelible memory. Once he was introduced to someone, he never forgot their name or the details of their spiritual life and service. Even in his old age, he could recall details of conversations and events that occurred decades earlier with total sharpness and clarity. This is the long-term mental effect of celibacy.

If we fail to control the senses and mind by spiritual principles, the illusory principle of material existence will make fools of us. We see the example of this in the so-called 'situation comedy,' which is typically a satirical presentation of a weak-minded male exploited by a female with a strong personality. Actually it happens very often in life that a man who wastes his potency in sensual indulgence becomes a hapless victim of female cynicism, manipulation and disrespect.

When a man becomes helpless and weak because of squandering his essence in useless sense enjoyment, he becomes victimized by illusion. The dark forces of material nature attack and overwhelm him. He loses his intelligence and is dragged down to hell by the results of his own ignorant activities. This is the natural end result of a wrong approach to life that overemphasizes material pleasure

at the expense of spiritual advancement. Therefore every genuine spiritual teaching emphasizes sense control, with celibacy as the most important item.

Aphorism 84: Masturbation is as sinful as adultery; all lust is spiritual poison.

Masturbation is the desperate act of a hopeless person. Tormented by lust, the masturbator cannot control his mind nor calm his senses. Waiting for a proper marriage partner is out of the question. Due to so much propaganda for sense enjoyment, the agitation of the mode of passion produces uncontrollable sex desire even in the absence of a partner. This is a triumph of ignorance.

Sex indulgence, with or without a partner, is spiritually enervating. Actually masturbation is even more exhausting than intercourse. It is an activity ruled by lust, fear and hopelessness. These negative emotions dissipate one's energy and poison one's faith. For this reason, especially for one who is serious about spiritual life, masturbation should be avoided as far as possible.

As soon as we yield to lust, we forget the primary truth of spiritual life: we are spiritual servants of the Supreme God. The body is a just a covering of the eternal soul. Sex life is a luxury, not a necessity; no one ever died from restricting sex indulgence. If you can live without it for a month, you can give it up forever.

By practicing celibacy we are giving up something of small value—negative value, actually—to receive something of very great value. Foolish prostitutes and their even more foolish customers haggle like cats and dogs in the street over the price of sex enjoyment. But who can put a value on purity, or on the pleasure and blessings of the Almighty Lord?

Animals like cats and dogs, and even lower, can have sex enjoyment. People who indulge in unrestricted sex are more or less still like animals. But only the human beings can engage in the development of consciousness, the cultivation of spiritual knowledge, meditation on our real spiritual nature, prayer, spiritual service and the process of self-realization. Why waste the unique spiritual opportunity available in the valuable human life on having sex like the animals? And illicit sex and masturbation are offenses against the Holy Name.

We are well aware that this point of view is widely considered old-fashioned, impractical, unhealthy, and even neurotic. We are well acquainted with those who explain the health value of good sex in the most sophisticated and learned terms. We are also well acquainted with the most august of the hermetic philosophers who live in the jungle temples of Bengal and the caves of the Himalayas. After experiencing all aspects of life and deeply considering their pros and cons, we have firmly chosen the side of the recondite hermits.

Aphorism 85: You cannot enter the inner sanctum of your temple until the eighth day after an orgasm.

Orgasm is the ecstasy of lust. In orgasm one completely forgets oneself and is overwhelmed by a frenzy of gross physical sensation. Orgasm offers a fleeting and temporary cessation of material suffering, therefore the materialists become mad after it, considering it the highest pleasure.

However, orgasm is so spiritually contaminating that the ancient yogis considered themselves impure for up to seven days after orgasm. This applied even to orgasm in sacred Tantric ritual intercourse for the purpose of begetting an enlightened child. We can only imagine how much more contaminating gross

physical sex indulgence is. The reason for this is, as discussed above, that orgasm reinforces materially conditioned consciousness and spoils spiritual intelligence. This spiritually poisonous effect takes some time to overcome.

If you practice meditation you can easily observe the difference in your meditation practice in the days immediately after an orgasm. The mind is unsteady; it is difficult to concentrate. Distractions arise in the mind and are more difficult to tolerate. Physical vitality is lower, and circulation is reduced. Drowsiness and lack of concentration arise from a general lack of vigor.

The ultimate standard in meditation is the state of trance, called Samadhi. It is very difficult to attain Samadhi for some days after an orgasm. More than a week after an orgasm, it becomes easier to attain day by day. After a month without sex, Samadhi is immediate and effortless for the trained meditator.

These observations are drawn from personal experience over many years of spiritual practice in all kinds of conditions. If Samadhi is compared to the inner sanctum of a temple, after orgasm we are thrown outside the temple gates into the street, and have to find our way back in all over again. When one becomes serious about meditation and prayer, one can easily observe the damage sex indulgence wreaks on spiritual practices. It is no wonder the wise men of old retired from the world to meditate and glorify the Holy Name in a pure atmosphere of sacred silence and material renunciation.

Aphorism 86: You cannot have both human lust and Divine Love; choose one and receive its rewards.

It should be apparent to any reader who has borne with our discussion thus far that sexual lust and real spiritual advancement are mutually exclusive. The sex energy is very powerful; it has the

ability to create new life. The creative potency of sex can be expressed outwardly and materially, or inwardly and spiritually. How to wield this potency is one of the most important choices we have to make in life. It has tremendous consequences for our destiny.

Many people try to cultivate some spiritual values and still enjoy the material pleasures of life. As one might expect, this fence-sitting attitude leads only to compromised results in both areas. One cannot attain success in material life in this age unless one is completely lusty, heartless, unabashedly dishonest and ruthlessly competitive. The moral and ethical values of spiritual life inhibit the vicious animalistic tendencies required for attaining a high degree of material power and success. One does not see saints becoming CEOs or being elected to high political office these days.

Spiritual success, on the other hand, requires purity, sacrifice, total dedication to service and long periods of undisturbed meditation practice. It is impossible to perform this kind of regimen while working for material ends. The constant extroversion and innumerable distractions of material life interrupt the concentration required for deep meditation, focused prayer and realization of the Absolute Truth.

Therefore one who tries to compromise between materialistic and spiritual values will wind up a failure in both realms of enterprise. He will have neither the drive and callousness to achieve material success, nor the purity and focus to attain spiritual success. He will ‘perish as a riven cloud, with no position in any sphere.’

We are called therefore to choose our direction, material or spiritual, and make a full effort to attain our chosen life’s goal. The alternative is a life of failure, frustration and compromise. So many people in this age are working hard night and day for transient material success. We who would know God must make a similar effort, but for a higher spiritual aim. Because the very basis of

material life is sex, celibacy is the indication of total spiritual commitment. It is the gateway to the highest levels of spiritual attainment.

Aphorism 87: Just as the authentic Holy Spirit comes only to those who truly thirst for Him, so celibacy is a special gift; it must be earned.

The life of celibacy is for those few who have achieved maturity in spiritual understanding and realization. It is inappropriate or even dangerous for the vast majority of believers who are still growing in faith and understanding. It is better for them to have a pious marriage based on spiritual service and duty.

Celibacy has a stabilizing and crystallizing effect on the mind and personality. We should be careful to stabilize the mind on the right platform; it must crystallize around the proper seed. The danger in forcing celibacy prematurely is real and significant: if one's spiritual understanding is in any way imperfect, one can make subtle sins like anger or jealousy a permanent part of one's character. This is exactly how monstrosities like evil spirits and the Inquisition came about. Therefore one should not pray for the gift of celibacy unless and until one has attained the platform of Divine Love under the careful guidance of a Master Teacher.

Celibacy must proceed naturally from insight; it must never be forced by our own will. The exception is when one takes a temporary vow of celibacy for a specific purpose, such as a prayer retreat or fast. For most people, attaining celibacy unnaturally is impossible. The sex urge is too strong and overwhelms their will. Repression carried to an extreme can produce neurosis and impotence. This neurotic impotence is not to be mistaken for celibacy.

When the time, experience and one's spiritual understanding are ripe, sex desire falls away of its own accord. One sees clearly undesirable results of sex indulgence; this insight makes the very thought of sex life unpalatable. The spiritual ecstasy of Divine Love more than compensates for the absence of so-called sex pleasure. We should pray for this blessing, for it marks the beginning of spiritual maturity and the blossoming of our worship of the Holy Name.

Aphorism 88: The life of celibacy is like a young woman betrothed to a superbly handsome, intelligent and qualified man; she can love no one else as she awaits their wedding day.

There are many places in the Scriptures where the soul is compared to a bride and God to her beloved. This is more than a metaphor. The Lord is the Source and Creator of everything, including the soul. He is the seed-giving Father of all existence. He loves His spiritual children eternally and unconditionally, and their duty is to love and serve Him in return.

When we give up all attachment to mundane sexual love, we gain the position of eligibility for pure Love of God. This love between the soul and God has different flavors according to its intensity. In the beginning of spiritual life, there is neutral admiration. The Lord is very great and we are insignificant. In this humble mood it is difficult to have a personal relationship with God because of the realization of God's awesome grandeur.

Further realization of spiritual duty leads to the active relationship of servitorship. In this mood, our relationship with God is based on our service activities. There is still a mood of awe and veneration, but the relationship between the Lord and soul is much closer because of the direct personal exchange of service.

When we attain our real spiritual nature through serving the Lord, we may advance to the level of spiritual friendship with God. In this exalted mood of service, we become similar in spiritual quality with the Lord. We understand His purposes in everything He does, and actually come to anticipate His desires and actions.

When Divine Love develops still further, we may come to the stage of parenthood. In this spiritual relationship, we actually supply the needs of the Lord just as a parent takes care of a child. When the Lord appears in human society, He requires parents. These very advanced devotees are in a parental relationship to the Lord by His own desire.

The highest development of Love of God is found in those devotees who have a conjugal relationship with the Lord. This is a very confidential subject revealed only to the most advanced worshipers of the Holy Name.

When Love of God increases in intensity, the worshiper cannot think of anything but his Beloved Lord. This is the stage of pure devotion. The moods of spiritual love may swing from the anguish of separation, to the exultation of meeting, to longing, to deep meditative trance, to active striving in service. But in all of these, the Lord is the primary object in the worshiper's consciousness. This is the stage of pure devotion, and it is the inevitable result of worshiping the Holy Name of the Lord.

In the stage of spiritual perfection, one sees God everywhere, in everything, and sees everything in Him. One is overwhelmed by spiritual ecstasy, and may forget even one's own name. The pains and pleasures of one's material body seem insignificant in the state of pure devotion, as if they are happening to someone else far away. In this state, one lives in the spiritual world although his body is still here in the material world. At the end of the body he transfers his existence back to home, for an eternal life of bliss in the spiritual world.

Aphorism 89: The life of celibacy is like a man to whom God gives Divine vision; seeing though all the falseness of this world, he finds his eternal home at the feet of his Lord.

If our vision were not obstructed by the opacity of the material energy, we could see the real situation of this world. Actually this world is but a shadow of the spiritual world. Just as a three-dimensional object produces a two-dimensional reflection in water, this world is simply a reflection of the higher-dimensional spiritual existence in the ever-shifting waves of the material energy. The man in knowledge of the Absolute Truth realizes how this is so.

When sex energy is directed toward the objects of the senses, we come into this world, take birth, produce offspring, and perform material works. All these actions create material results for which we must suffer or enjoy. Whether we enjoy the result of good works or suffer the result of bad works, we have to remain within the material world. This is the vicious trap of material existence, and sex is the bait that lures us into its fatal embrace.

When we direct the sex energy inwards, we recreate ourselves in the image of our Divine Lord and become the form of the service mood that we cultivate towards Him. We experience the second birth of awakening to our spiritual identity, we produce students and disciples by our preaching and teaching, and we perform many works of spiritual service. Whether our service is good or bad, successful or unsuccessful is of no consideration as long as our sincere intention is to please our beloved Lord. Therefore there is no reaction to spiritual work except to deepen our eternal love relationship with the Lord. This is factual liberation from material existence, and renunciation of sex is the key to the gate of spiritual freedom.

We do not teach that sex is bad; it is a necessary part of the maintenance of the material world. But overindulgence in sex is spiritually harmful. The false propaganda of the materialistic society places sex at the zenith of all pleasure. This motivates an orgy of material achievement and consumption that weakens the will of the ordinary man, and fills the coffers of the captains of industrial excesses who exploit him. This is the world of the cheaters and the cheated.

One becomes a victim of cheating by indulging one's own greedy propensities. We are not meant merely to exist like polished animals: living, suffering and dying in the grip of insatiable lust. We are actually meant to put an end to all misery, but to do that first we have to put an end to our animalistic material greed and lust.

The sex habit is built up over many years of wrong living. The good news is that since sex life is a habit, culturing new habits of spiritual purity can break down the old habit of lust. Realistically, this does take years of training under expert guidance. But if one is willing to pay the price, the rewards are very great.

For many people, it is impossible to imagine a life without sex. To them I say, go back to your homes and churches; let the dead bury their dead. And to those who are willing to renounce false material security and false material pleasure for eternal spiritual existence and unending transcendental pleasure, I say, by the purity and power of the Holy Name of the Lord, come and follow me.

Here end the Bhaktisiddhartha exegeses on the Aphorisms on the subject of Sex and Celibacy. All glories to the Holy Name of the Lord!

Aphorisms 5: Materialism & the World

Aphorism 90: This world is made of sand; find God and build your house on the most durable Rock.

Everything in this material world is temporary. This is the fundamental cause of all suffering. But because the hypocritical morals and corrupt ethics of human society, the selfish activities of economic development, the conceited philosophical arguments and pompous theological teachings of ordinary religion, the ignorant so-called scientific materialistic theories of the creation of the universe, the falsified accounts of material history, the arbitrary administrative rules and artificial political boundaries of this world are based on the illusory concept of bodily existence and material values of sense gratification, they are all temporary, changeable and ultimately meaningless.

And as everyone knows, the material body and mind we inhabit are also temporary. The body is constantly changing from an embryo to a fetus, to an infant, to a child, to an adolescent, to a young adult, to a mature adult, to middle-aged, to old-aged and finally to a diseased and worn-out body. At last the soul departs this temporary living body, and it becomes a dead body. Our minds are constantly altering viewpoints on the world through enlarging experience, rejecting yesterday's wisdom and making today's opinions tomorrow's ignorance. The unremitting transformations of the body and mind, the inherent meaninglessness of synthetic material concepts, and the concomitant transmigration of the soul from one kind of body to another even in this life, create an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear where unexpected change, loss or death can occur at any moment.

There is no security or durability here; everything material is essentially fragile and unsound. This is the existential human condition. Although we are eternal and indestructible conscious souls by nature, nothing we can perceive through the material senses or mind is reliable or permanent. The only certainty in life is that 'This too shall pass:' all this will be taken away by the irresistible force of eternal time.

However, no one, not even the wisest man can say when everything we know and depend upon will be swept away into the dustbin of oblivion. This is because the apparent substantiality of the material world has only a derivative reality. It has no self-sufficient or permanent existence, but derives its apparent realism from the actual reality of eternal spiritual existence. The qualified reality of the material existence and everything it contains is dependent, relative and temporary, whereas the reality of the spiritual world is independent, eternal and absolute. Therefore the existential suffering of the human condition is inseparable from the dependent ontological position of the phenomenal world in which we live.

The ever-changing and shifting nature of this material world is like the reflection of a tree seen in the water of a lake. The reflected tree is an apparence, a two-dimensional image of a three-dimensional object, a dependent illusion. The actual tree does not move, but every wave and ripple in the lake makes the false reflection seem to move and change its shape. If the waves become too violent, the reflection breaks up completely and becomes unrecognizable. Similarly, this material world is a superficial reflection of the higher-dimensional reality of the spiritual world. The ever-mutable material world is not real in itself, but is simply the reflection of the unchanging spiritual world in the lake of eternity, agitated by the constant fluctuations of the waves of time.

Considering the astonishing immensity and bewildering complexity of the material existence, it is difficult for our tiny intelligence to even imagine the unlimited, inconceivable qualities of the spiritual world. Every limited conditional mode of existence, object, quality, energy or process we observe in this material world exists in the spiritual world in infinite quantity and eternal, absolute perfection. Whatever we experience here is just a pale reflection of its spiritual origin and reality.

Actually, as spiritual beings, we have nothing in common with this material existence. Our real life is in the spiritual world. We are out of place here, and we can never make this world comfortable for our existence. We are spiritual beings, eternal by nature. In this alien world we are pierced by the thorn of death, and no matter how hard we try, we cannot adjust to it. We are certainly ‘strangers in a strange world.’

In the spiritual world there is no death, no suffering, no ignorance, no pain, no hunger or thirst, no poverty, no disease, no birth and no death. Everyone there exists eternally in a blessed state of spiritual love and ecstatic bliss. All needs are fully supplied by the internal spiritual potency of the Lord. The Creator implants the knowledge of the spiritual world deep within the heart of all beings.

The root of all our pain is an acute feeling of separation from the spiritual world and God, and the unbearable longing to be reunited with the actual absolute Reality and original Source of our existence. Therefore the only real solution to the suffering of material existence is to get out of material life completely by culture of self-realization.

Spiritual liberation is available from the Supreme Lord for the asking. We have only to give up our attachments to the false material existence, and cultivate pure Love of God through the power of the Holy Name. Our spiritual Father is only too glad to

relieve us of the suffering of this false existence, and take us back home to His world of eternal reality and spiritual perfection. This is the actual objective of all spiritual teachings and practices.

Aphorism 91: Whatever man creates is evil and superfluous; whatever God creates is necessary and good.

Human intelligence and activities are limited by the inevitable human defects: illusion, mistakes, cheating and imperfect knowledge. The so-called advancement of material civilization is actually a devolution of consciousness and regression toward a hellish condition of life. The unnatural practices and unseemly lifestyles justified by the vicious cartels of economic development and political domination are simply polluting our minds, bodies and the entire planet with ignorance.

We are caught up in superfluous, unnecessary activities that waste our valuable time and distract us from spiritual self-realization. Our minds are absorbed in useless, foolish topics of material speculation, entertainment and sense gratification instead of the eternal knowledge of the Scriptures. Our bodies are full of toxic chemicals, nutritionally depleted by junk food and enervated by lack of exercise, excessive comforts and sex life. Our time, energy and resources are diverted by so many unnecessary possessions.

By following man's ways we have become entirely deviated and isolated from God's pure natural ways of life. We live jammed into ugly cities, completely surrounded by the perverse products of misguided human effort. We fill our minds with foolish ideas and useless topics generated by impure human intelligence. We squander our valuable time in direct or indirect service to unnecessary industrial projects designed by fallible human planners and self-interested political administrators. Man's creations simply waste our time, sap our energy and mislead our intelligence into a bewildering network

of endlessly conflicting material paths. In this way we coast ever faster down the wide road to hellish existence, all in the name of 'bigger, better, more.'

God, on the other hand, is completely perfect. Whatever He does is good for everyone. His intelligence is not compromised by human defects. Therefore His creations lend beauty and harmony to the world, and add life and vitality to all beings. His ways lead to purity, truth and liberation from all suffering. The most vital necessities of life are provided by God alone: fresh air, sunlight and moonlight, the very earth on which we stand, water, milk, fruits, vegetables and grains, rain, our bodies, minds, intelligence, life force and even our very souls. No one can live without these natural necessities supplied by God alone. What criminal fools are we to claim them as our own and force our brothers to ransom them with the coin of Caesar?

The inventions and customs of mankind are completely unnecessary. Foolish ideas such as money, individual and collective property ownership, the corporation as a legal entity, and the existence of political states separate from a God-conscious royal dynasty, have unnecessarily created an atmosphere of exploitation, abuse, conflict and confusion. Such artificial entities and godless fictions exist only to provide material and economic advantages to the few while exploiting the many. They have nothing to do with the truth, but are highly artificial extensions of the principle of illusion already present in this world.

The best lifestyle for self-realization is a simple, pure and natural existence far from the madness and pollution of the cities, and close to the land and nature. A lack of polished material opulence helps concentrate the mind on God. A simple homegrown diet of fresh, organically grown vegetarian food promotes good health, sharp intelligence and celibacy. All this emphasizes the mode of goodness

and helps purify us from the passion and ignorance endemic in human society.

There are those who argue that if such a lifestyle were widely adopted, economic development would be thwarted and the progress of human society would cease. We reply, ‘progress toward what?’ Progress away from God is no progress at all. Besides, in this age there are always plenty of passionate fools available for the exploitive games of false material ‘progress.’ Very few people are intelligent enough to adopt the simple natural principles of spiritual life, and make real progress in spiritual realization.

All the great sages and saints throughout history observed this time-honored spiritual lifestyle. By following this path, the main causes of sinful life are diminished or eliminated. Most important, such a clean and simple lifestyle leaves plenty of time and energy for study of the Scriptures, prayer, meditation and the worship of the Holy Name of the Lord, without which all the rest is yet another artificial material arrangement.

Aphorism 92: This evil world rejects the wise, stones the prophets and kills the Messiahs; but the Day of the Lord comes soon.

This material world is a fool’s paradise. People are mad after sense gratification, even when it is shown time and time again to be the cause of all their suffering. As soon as we examine the supposed pleasures of the material world from the platform of spiritual realization, or even from the platform of commonsense reasoning, they are all shown to be foolish ignorance that inevitably lead us to our doom.

Any child can understand this very clearly. Then why do people go on in the same thoughtless materialistic ways? The great and wise King Solomon declared, “Vanity, vanity; all is vanity.” The material

world turns by the false pride of its beleaguered inhabitants. Everything is done in such foolish ways simply to flatter those who are susceptible to pride and vanity, in the name of attaining worldly wealth and position. No one cares if the whole world goes to hell, as long as their bank account and influence are enhanced in the process.

As Shakespeare wrote, "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." Thus when the wise Teachers, holy Prophets and great Messiahs are sent by God to correct the mistaken conceptions of ignorant, worldly people, they are rejected, punished and attacked by the very same foolish, unfortunate people they were sent to help. It is just like when a doctor attempts to treat a spoiled child. The child is suffering because of some disease, but when the kind doctor tries to apply the medicine that will end his suffering and restore his health, the foolish child kicks, bites and scratches him.

No doubt the path of spiritual realization is difficult, especially in the beginning. We have to counteract years of wrong living and let go of many bad habits contracted in material association to put our lives back on the path to God. Spiritual advancement requires unlearning so many wrong conceptions of God, the world, life and ourselves, and learning the proper understanding that will bring us closer to God and help us realize our true spiritual nature. We also have to tolerate the uncomfortable process of detoxification from the poisons and intoxicants we have absorbed into our body and mind in attempting to enjoy false material sense gratification.

All these things are certainly difficult, but unless we do them, at the end of our short lives full of trouble and pain we will have to accept the judgment of the Lord. Everything in the world belongs to God, and should be used for His pleasure and His purposes; by misappropriating and misusing the resources of the material world for our own pleasure we become thieves. Thieves deserve to be

punished, both for their own reformation and to serve as a deterrent to other fools who would follow in their path.

Therefore many hellish realms exist where the errant souls are chastised for their sins. These are not myths, as less intelligent people speculate, but the prison houses of the administration of God. The government maintains many prison houses to punish and reform people of criminal mentality. Similarly, the Lord also maintains prison houses in His universal administration, and these are called hells. The Lord does not like to place His spiritual children in such uncomfortable situations, but He has to, just as a responsible father or government places a wayward son or citizen under the care of a strict disciplinarian to bring him into order, lest the mischievous child harm the community and bring infamy on the name of the father.

There is no sin greater than interfering with the missionary activities of the loyal sons of God who spread His glories to all people throughout the world. Those who blaspheme, criticize and harass the faithful devotees of the Lord will have to suffer far more than any troubles of this life can give. We should always guard against such sinful actions to avoid the anger and chastisement of the Lord. In addition, we should always glorify and worship His Holy Names and draw closer to Him in love and service. That will help us avoid the terrible day of judgment of the Lord.

Aphorism 93: God owns the world, but Satan manages it.

The classic doubt of the cynical agnostic is, “If God is perfect and loving, why does He permit suffering in the world?” The answer is that God does not want us to be here, He wants us in the beautiful spiritual world where we can enjoy loving pastimes with Him eternally. He permits suffering in this material world to chastise us for our sinful activities, correct our foolish misunderstandings, teach us the real truth and drive us back toward Him.

No one in this material world wants to accept the authority of God. We come here to escape the supreme authority and try to enjoy in so-called freedom. God obligingly hides His glory from our material eyes, or rather, covers our original spiritual vision so we cannot see Him. Nevertheless we are still subject to the Law of God just as it is in the spiritual world, but since we are rebellious against His authority, we become offenders and must be punished.

Therefore God allows Satan, the very symbol of rebelliousness and ignorance, to cruelly mismanage this material world to emphasize the futility of trying to enjoy separately from God. We complain about the evil leaders of this world, but without developing spiritual realization, if we had the power we would act in exactly the same way. In this world, whatever we do brings suffering. This whole material existence is a place of suffering. What people mistakenly call happiness is just some temporary, partial relief from the normal suffering.

We know from experience that everyone who is born must die. How can anyone be happy if they know they have to die? Whatever small happiness we may attain by hard struggle in this world will be taken away by death. Why do we go to so much trouble for such meager reward? Material wealth, fame, strength, power, knowledge, and ordinary pious activities and external, ceremonial religious practices cannot help us. Death is the ultimate end of every created being. This is the insurmountable Law of God.

The only solution is to turn death to our advantage through spiritual means. We must die now to our material ego and false identities, and renouncing the self-defeating struggle for material enjoyment, discover our real identity as servants of the Almighty God. This is self-realization, the second birth or the beginning of real spiritual life.

Satan can dominate this world because he has a limited license from God to harass the forgetful souls in material consciousness

and drive them back to Him. Once we take full shelter of God and dedicate our lives in service to Him, Satan has no more authority over us. When we surrender to God, glorify His Holy Names in full ecstasy and use everything in our possession to spread knowledge of His glories to all the sleeping souls, our life is on the right platform. It is then that our real life of good fortune begins.

Aphorism 94: The wicked flourish until they are suddenly cut down; the Godly are pruned back while they slowly ripen into the sweetest fruit.

In the farmer's orchard there are two types of plants: the unruly weeds and the productive fruit. The weeds grow very luxuriantly without any tilling, fertilizing or other cultivation. Nevertheless they are useless and undesirable, because they produce no fruit. At a certain time the farmer cuts them all down mercilessly and plows them under to mulch the crop he wants.

The farmer treats his fruit trees and vines differently. In their dormant season, he prunes them carefully back to the knob, so they may later on develop stronger branches, better foliage and more blossoms for additional yield of fruit. This apparently severe treatment actually increases their beauty and value.

This whole world is God's orchard, and He manages it perfectly according to His confidential aims and purposes. God's main purpose in creating the world and its population is to produce beings like unto Himself: spiritual leaders and teachers to help Him manage His ever-expanding creation. Not that the omnipotent Lord requires our help, but such spiritual service engagements are good for our spiritual well-being and development.

Therefore we should not be concerned about the apparent flourishing of the demoniac people of this world. They will all be cut back in God's good time. He periodically arranges wars and

other natural catastrophes to cut down the undesirable godless population and send them to their deserved fate. In any case He is present as cruel death to the evildoers, who although they may rebel for a short time and appear to achieve success, ultimately cannot surpass His order.

God's treatment of His faithful servants is very different. They may not appear to have a very significant position in this world, but their spiritual destination is glorious. During this life they are subject to so many strict disciplinary measures of the Lord. They have to follow the Laws of God, and this puts them at a competitive disadvantage to the demoniac who know no limitation to their sinful activities.

But this situation is only temporary. Despite any superficial condition of suffering or limitation, the devotees of God are never in an inauspicious condition at any time. The pruning of God's discipline simply makes the Godly souls more spiritually beautiful and productive of the finest fruit: Divine Love or pure love of Godhead. This loving attitude toward God is manifest in their careful following of all His rules and regulations, because they understand the confidential spiritual purpose behind them. It also shows in their dedication to spiritual service, especially the glorification of His Holy Names and their willingness to sacrifice their own happiness to spread God's message all over the world. Like the valuable fruit trees of the farmer's orchard, such spiritually advanced, dedicated devotees of the Lord are never without divine protection from the encroachment of the undesirable weeds of materialistic people.

Aphorism 95: Worldly enjoyment leads to suffering; worldly suffering can lead to salvation—but only if you have faith.

The ways of passion are like nectar in the beginning, and like poison at the end. Worldly enjoyment leads inevitably to suffering. The sweet honeymoon is only the beginning; waiting down the road is a bitter separation. The great plans of the materialistic enjoyers always finish in defeat, and their intoxicated, self-congratulatory associations always end in blame and enmity.

Actually no one is responsible for the failure of the materialists' plans, save and except the Lord. His will is insuperable, and His spiritual purpose is all-successful. He has designed this world in such a way that the impulse of selfish enjoyment always leads to suffering. This divine law is as inevitable as gravity, and just as universal.

In the same way, the cultivation of goodness and spiritual values always leads to acceptance, healing, regeneration, wisdom, happiness, and ultimate salvation from all suffering. The way of wisdom is like poison in the beginning, and like nectar at the end. This is because when one surrenders to the Lord, first he is pruned back by the Lord's disciplinary measures, as described above, to rid him of the undesirable characteristics of material consciousness.

This temporary suffering can lead to permanent spiritual advancement, but only if one understands why it is happening. If one does not understand that such apparent worldly suffering is actually the mercy of the Lord, he can lose his faith and again rebel against spiritual authority. This is tragic; for our blissful life of perfect spiritual realization can begin only after the Lord's disciplinary measures purify us from material desire.

Without renunciation of the rebellious materialistic spirit of enjoyment and acceptance of the ultimate authority of the Lord, no

one can advance in spiritual life. Often this renunciation has to occur by force, and when this happens, it is the special mercy of the Lord. We need to understand His ways. From His point of view, bodily suffering cannot harm the spiritual soul. His pruning cannot kill the tree, but will save it from bolting and becoming unproductive.

The cultivation of spiritual knowledge, deep devotion and personal service to the Lord bring a joy all their own. This has to be experienced to be understood. In material consciousness all enjoyment has a definite cause associated with the objects of the senses. Thus sense enjoyment becomes the principal focus of material life. But the happiness of spiritual life does not have a specific identifiable cause, and is therefore said to be causeless.

Actually spiritual happiness is the pleasure of the Lord. Since the Lord personally resides in the heart of the devotee, His pleasure naturally results in our spiritual pleasure. One who carefully hears and humbly accepts the instructions of the great souls and Master Teachers, and surrenders unto the Lord, serves Him and glorifies His Holy Names with great faith, can know all these confidential secrets of spiritual life. Others, though they may possess imposing titles and be held in great esteem in material calculation, cannot understand. This is the key to the mystery of spiritual life.

Aphorism 96: You cannot enjoy the pleasures of both intoxication and Divine Love.

Intoxication is a manifestation of the material mode of ignorance. Divine Love is the expression of purified goodness or spiritual energy. These two are as incompatible as oil and water. They never mix. The illusory pleasure of intoxication is but the temporary forgetfulness of material suffering.

Actually, the influence of poisonous substances is another kind of suffering, but this suffering is predictable, understandable and self-administered. To the spiritually ignorant, self-chosen suffering seems preferable to involuntary suffering inflicted from outside.

Nevertheless, intoxication is merely a temporary screen to block our consciousness from the experience of other kinds of suffering, and it is miserable in every way. For when the temporary effects of intoxication are finished, the suffering that caused the use of intoxicants are still there; plus there are uncomfortable aftereffects from poisoning the body. Nothing has changed, except that some valuable time has been wasted and lost forever; therefore in dejection the user immediately begins planning the next episode of intoxication. All this is productive of further anxiety and material suffering.

We need to adopt the attitude that the Lord destines the suffering that comes our way in the course of material affairs as a spiritual lesson. Therefore when unwanted suffering occurs, we should look for the lesson in it. What is God trying to tell us by putting us in this situation? What have we done to deserve such a reaction?

Actually, in this world suffering comes even to sinless people. The example of Jesus Christ comes immediately to mind. Our own spiritual Master Teacher also suffered at the hands of his neophyte so-called disciples. In this material world, suffering is inevitable. Therefore suffering cannot be stopped, but only understood from the proper spiritual perspective.

To the faithful, all material suffering is a test of faith and persistence in rendering loving service to the Lord. Spiritual service is not a material activity; it is on the same absolute, unconditional platform as the Lord Himself. Therefore the ever-changing conditions of the material world can never actually interfere with our service. Once we are properly initiated with the spiritual seed of authentic devotional service, we can go on remembering and

glorifying the Holy Names of the Lord in all circumstances without any impediment, for such service is eternal.

Aphorism 97: Most suffering comes from our own greed and wrong desires.

There are three kinds of suffering: suffering caused by divine Providence, such as birth, old age, death, earthquakes, storms and other natural catastrophes; suffering caused by other living beings, such as disease germs, biting insects, barking dogs and abusive people; and suffering caused by the reactions to one's own impious activities.

In material life, every action causes an equal reaction of the same quality. So if we perform activities in the mode of passion or ignorance, we will receive reactions as suffering in these same modes. But if we perform acts in the mode of goodness, we will receive good reactions. While all material reactions tend to bind us to the material world, the mode of goodness is liberating, because it is purer than passion and ignorance. Goodness also bestows sharp intelligence and spiritual knowledge.

Unfortunately almost no one knows how to act in the mode of goodness. Almost all our activities are covered by some degree of passionate selfishness and dull ignorance. This world is so contaminated that even the most intelligent man is sure to be entrapped by reactions to passionate and ignorant activities if he does not know how to please the Lord in devotional service.

The majority of our suffering, then, grows from the root of selfishness. We try to please ourselves and wind up suffering. Therefore we seek more pleasure to try to counteract the suffering, and thus begin a vicious circle that spirals down to death and a hellish condition in the afterlife.

This unfortunate condition is only due to ignorance. We must know that this material world is a place where suffering takes place, and no one is exempt. The sufferings of birth, old age, disease and death attack everyone without discrimination. We should also know that the basic principle of suffering is separation from the Lord. God's personal association is indescribably blissful, like nourishing food for the soul. Separation from God, on the other hand, is like a void in our soul that can never be filled or satisfied by any other entity or substance.

Trying to fill the void of separation from the Lord with material pleasure is the first step in an endless series of ignorant material actions and complimentary reactions that lead only to suffering and death. The way to eternal life is to stop the wrong actions that cause our suffering, and begin the actions of goodness that lead to liberation from all suffering. Meanwhile we may have to tolerate the vestigial reactions of our past impious activities, but this is nothing compared to the existential suffering of being trapped in this false, illusory material existence in separation from the Lord.

Association with the Lord begins from hearing and chanting His Holy Names, remembering Him and serving Him. These are all reliable methods to obtain His association through devotional service. One can obtain a personal audience with the king or other executive head of state only by performing some especially meritorious service to the country. However, the Lord is more merciful than any worldly king. Anyone can obtain the personal association of the Lord simply by repeatedly glorifying His Holy Names, wonderful spiritual qualities and eternal activities. This is the permanent cure for all suffering.

Aphorism 98: In times of hardship food, jewels and precious metals are worth more than money; but wisdom is the most valuable jewel of all.

When life is easy, we naively think the good times will go on forever. We forget that there are periodic disturbances because of the sinful and impious life of the people in general, and especially of the leaders. Good times of easy living are the exception rather than the rule in the history of the world. When life is too easy we should become very circumspect and plan for any contingency.

It is easy to forget the abstract nature of money. Its value is only a convention, an agreement of convenience. When conditions are unstable, money values often fluctuate wildly; in real disasters, money becomes practically worthless. Therefore it is good to keep aside a certain portion of one's income in the form of tangible wealth, like food, fuel, jewels and precious metals. This prudence becomes a great advantage in times of difficulty.

The shifting conditions of this material world are always a cause of concern to the conditioned souls in material consciousness. Those who are too much identified with their bodies and senses enjoy like anything when things go well, but they also suffer more when life is hard. But those who cultivate wisdom and spiritual consciousness are on a different platform, where happiness is not defined by gross physical bodily enjoyment. They are neither happy when things go well, nor unhappy when there is a disaster. They simply see everything that happens as the mercy of the Lord. No one can attain this state of detached equanimity artificially; it is the spiritual result of concentrated chanting of the Holy Name of the Lord in loving devotional service.

Aphorism 99: Money brings struggle, worry and heartache; only the poor have time to think of God.

There are two kinds of wealth, and two kinds of poverty. One who has material wealth, either by inheritance or hard work, always has to struggle to keep it. He is constantly on guard and vigilant that any his business partners, friends or relatives may try to cheat him out of his wealth. Ultimately those closest to him may arrange to dispose of him to get control of the family fortune, or he may be kidnapped and held for ransom; thus he has no peace.

One who has spiritual wealth may have earned it by great pious activities, inherited it by the mercy of his Master Teacher, or become the recipient of some extraordinary mercy of the Lord. In any case, such spiritual wealth or advancement is eternal and permanent. No human being, celestial or demoniac being, time, death or even God Himself can take it away. Therefore one who has attained spiritual wealth is always peaceful and satisfied within himself.

Material poverty can be the result of impious activities, material misfortune, or it can be due to the mercy of the Lord. Poor people are generally more religious-minded than the rich, because they are suffering. They have little, so they have more time to meditate and perform spiritual service. They may pray to God for money. But if they get it, they often forget God. Therefore God may arrange to keep them in a poverty-stricken condition just for their benefit. There are also great renunciants who take vows of poverty just so they have more time for spiritual practices.

Spiritual poverty is the greatest misfortune. If God is pleased, then we feel happy even if we have nothing. But if we have no love for God, the spiritual vacuum in our hearts will never let us really enjoy life. One who is spiritually poor is always unhappy and agitated, even if he is in an opulent material situation.

One of the great secrets of spiritual life is that a wise man does not feel possessive even if he is in a position of material opulence, because he sees that everything belongs to God and is to be used for His pleasure and purpose. Whatever material things are temporarily in his care he sees as instruments of the Lord's devotional service. Therefore even if he is rich, he is poor because he does not see himself as the proprietor of his riches.

One who sees with such spiritual vision is never disturbed, although he may be a king or otherwise possess great wealth. Only those who carefully worship the Holy Name of the Lord with great attention can develop this advanced stage of spiritual consciousness.

Aphorism 100: Why do you work so hard? Everything you earn will be taken by others.

In materialistic life, even so-called religious people are always concerned about their position in the material pecking order. Thus they are motivated by the opinions of their relatives, neighbors and business associates to work very hard for temporary economic advancement. Never mind that all these people are ignorant of the real purpose of life; the materialistic soul tries to serve the standard of material affluence, and therefore becomes chained to a treadmill of economic slavery to pitiless institutions of usurious financial exploitation.

Working hard all day in the office and at home at night, such enslaved materialists have no time or energy to contemplate life's actual purposes. Therefore they are caught in an illusory web of attachment for false material wealth. They do not realize that God alone creates the elements of the material universe, and are fashioned into the multifarious resources and objects of this world by His will and orders alone.

Therefore everything we think is ours is actually God's property. If we use it for our pleasure in the illusion that it is our property instead of using it for God's pleasure, then we are thieves. By the law of God we are due to be punished for this thievery. Eventually, God's irresistible potency of eternal Time takes away our temporary material body and mind, along with all our so-called possessions, and distributes them to others.

The house one worked so many years to build, maintain and pay for, the late-model car that was so much nicer than the neighbor's, the closet full of expensive clothes, the library of hand-picked volumes, the tools and instruments of one's trade, the garden with its wilting flowers, all is temporary, all is washed away by the great river of Time.

Nothing is ours; everything is God's. As His children we may share His things freely, but according to His instructions only, otherwise we become offenders. Real worship of the Lord begins from renunciation of the selfish mentality of possessiveness, and the realization that everything we have is to be shared with others in such a way as to increase their consciousness and understanding of God. This high realization can come only through sincere service to the glories of the Holy Name of the Lord.

Aphorism 101: Anyone who has felt God's Love counts success and failure in this world as less than nothing.

This world is a hollow shell. It is not real, but an appearance of reality only. Real life, real love, real activity, existence, knowledge and freedom are only in the spiritual world with God. Without God we are nothing. He is our everything; even the very Self of our soul. How can we not love Him?

To be concerned with worldly success or failure means to measure the value of one's self by the yardstick of this false world. Such a

gross conception is demeaning to the soul and insulting to God. Some of the greatest men were failures by any material calculation. Therefore the concept of material success or failure is worth less than nothing; it has negative value because it tears down the soul and tries to make him equal to matter.

The happiness that comes from pleasing God has to be experienced to be understood. The electric grace of His touch, that fills the soul with ecstatic bliss, cannot be described. Who would not want to be with Him forever? Material conditions are illusory, because only the soul is real. That which is temporary is illusion; only that which is eternal is reality. In the light of spiritual consciousness, this whole material world is as nothing.

To feel this eternal Divine Love, to be with this light of the spirit is the real purpose of human life. We are eternal; spiritual existence is ours whether we want it or not. The unbearable lightness of being is not a problem to be solved, but it is our natural existential state, and one that is very pleasurable when we understand how to link it properly to God. To the atheist, eternal existence is unbearable hell; to the lover of God, it is only the beginning of real life.

Aphorism 102: Whatever you have is not yours, but God's; share it freely and lovingly with His other children.

The secret of happiness in this world is to remain a child of God. Everything that God kindly provides for our maintenance belongs to Him. Therefore we are to share this bounty with our brothers and sisters in love of our Father and Master the Supreme Lord. When we do this, we are happy. When we try to hoard everything for ourselves, not only do we suffer, we make everyone around us miserable as well.

Spiritual work, or applying material things in the service of the spiritual energy, is a great art. Practically speaking, it can only be

learned by approaching a self-realized spiritual Master Teacher and becoming his humble apprentice. This is the only way can we work in this material world without becoming entangled in sinful reactions.

Know that all our material so-called possessions actually belong to God. To use everything as God intends it is the pinnacle of life in this world. It requires great wisdom and a good heart as well. A great soul can give everything away in charity, knowing well that God will supply his needs by spiritual arrangement. There is no need to be afraid, to clutch onto this world and its phony security. Our real life is waiting just on the other side of death; if we know how to grasp it, that is the actual security. Death is inevitable; therefore nothing remains in our possession, even our own body. To use everything to please God while in this world is the perfection of spiritual life.

Here end the Bhaktisiddhartha exegeses on the Aphorisms on the subject of Materialism and the World. All glories to the Holy Name of the Lord!

Aphorisms 6: Transcendental Knowledge

Aphorism 103: To understand God, hear His message; walk in His footsteps; bear His cross.

To understand God completely or perfectly is beyond human ability. Our limited intellect cannot approach the infinitude of God. However, we can understand God well enough to serve Him, to please Him, to receive His blessings and to make Him our spiritual destination. There is no way to understand God by mental speculation or the imagination of our tiny brains. The only possible way to understand Him is by hearing the esoteric message handed down through the lineage of self-realized souls to our own Master Teacher. This is transcendental knowledge because its source is beyond the relative existence of this material world.

Therefore without contact with the esoteric school of the self-realized Master Teacher, there is no hope of understanding God as He really is. The Holy Scriptures, despite their importance and greatness, are merely words. They are like signposts pointing out the obscure path that leads to God. While books can give some idea of the spiritual path, the actual reception of the message of God must take place through aural reception from the transparent via medium of the self-realized soul. Without direct association and personal guidance it is unlikely indeed that anyone can receive the transcendental transmission and traverse the difficult path of spiritual enlightenment in its entirety.

Only the Master Teacher can explain the arcane truths of spiritual existence in such a way that they take root in the heart of the sincere disciple, and ultimately bloom and ripen into the most desirable fruit of Divine Love. Once the seed of the Absolute Truth has been planted in the heart of the disciple by dedicated service,

receptive hearing and patient inquiry from the right source, the self-realized Master Teacher, the process of cultivating the seed begins. Watering the seed by hearing and chanting the Holy Name of the Lord with love and without offense is the main process of cultivation, and overcoming the misunderstandings of false material conditioning through transcendental knowledge and detachment from material engagements is compared to cutting the weeds of illusion. Both processes must go on for many years to attain full self-realization.

There is no shortcut to complete enlightenment. To be successful in attaining self-realization, one must dedicate his life to serving the purpose of God in this world. God's purpose, as we have discussed several times herein, is to facilitate the spiritual development of all conscious living entities. We have to take up God's purpose as our own, and work as humble servants tending His garden for a significant length of time, before we can even begin to understand His real plan and purpose. We have to walk many miles in God's shoes and feel for ourselves the enormous burden of His mission to actually realize the greatness of His love, wisdom and detachment. Only then can we truly claim to understand and love God. For how can we love someone we don't fully or properly understand?

Performing the thankless service of helping the materially conditioned souls attain enlightenment and self-realization is the only way to earn the full favor of God. We should become expert at presenting the spiritual knowledge and practices in exactly the same way as our own Master Teacher. This takes many years of study and practice. We should expect to sacrifice all our time, energy and even our life itself in this endeavor to achieve the perfection of spiritual understanding like the great souls of the past. Complete and perfect enlightenment is not cheap, but comes only at the price of full surrender, decades of dedicated service, and constant worship of the Lord in the transcendental sound vibration form of His Holy Name.

Aphorism 104: Prayer fulfills all desires within God's plan.

For one who is surrendered to Him, God stands always ready to help. We can ask Him for anything in prayer, and just like an attentive father, He will grant it. However, He will not automatically give us something that will be detrimental to our spiritual progress. Nor in most cases will He violate His own preexisting laws.

God is no one's servant; we dare not treat Him as our order supplier. Such an attitude is an offense. His position is always superior, and all other beings are His servants. Some realize and accept their real position, and others rebel against Him. Nevertheless as a responsible Father and creator, He is supplying all our needs, from the basic material bodily necessities to the most esoteric spiritual knowledge required for liberation from material existence.

Sometimes God creates hardships for His worshipers just to increase their attachment and dependence on Him. At such times it is quite appropriate to approach the Lord in prayer and request His help in overcoming our problems. It is not a violation of the principle of humility to ask God to help us achieve His purposes. In fact, He enjoys and encourages seeking His help in prayer because it sweetens our serving relationship with Him.

Therefore we should pray to God for all our needs, and especially when we are in difficulty. But we should also pray to Him for intangibles like wisdom, purity, devotion, spiritual love, detachment from material things, protection from falldown, success in helping to bring His lost children back to His feet, simplicity, sincerity, humility, pridelessness, appreciation of His glories, realization of spiritual truth, dedication to His Holy Names, and most of all, for a Master Teacher who is on the perfectional level of spiritual attainment.

Aphorism 105: Pray not twice for the same blessing.

It is not necessary to pray over and over again for the same thing. Our relationship with God is not a mechanical process, but a living, personal and dynamic exchange with a loving Father. When we pray, we should have full faith that the Lord hears us and will help us in our hour of need. We should not continually pester Him with the same petition, and we should allow Him full freedom to reciprocate in His own way.

God hears every prayer without a doubt, and He also knows what will be good for us better than we ourselves do. Sometimes God will respond immediately and concretely to our requests; other times, He may appear not to respond at all. His response is there, but it may be delayed, or it may be in some form that we do not expect. Consequently we may have difficulty connecting His response with our prayer. As we begin to understand God's deep ways, we can see more easily how He responds to our prayer requests. At all times God acts to increase our faith. We need to understand this and interpret His responses accordingly.

And let us not always pray to ask God for some blessing; let us also pray to thank Him for His wonderful loving kindness and other blessings, and also to praise Him for His magnificent spiritual qualities. The facility of prayer is a blessing in itself, since by prayer we always have a direct line to God. We never need to feel alone; we can always talk with our heavenly Father. We can discuss anything with Him, just like we would with our natural father or a trusted, intimate friend. And the highest form of prayer is the constant, offenseless repetition of the Holy Name of the Lord, which brings us directly into the Divine Presence.

Aphorism 106: Religion is based on law; self-realization is based on love. Only the self-realized spiritual master can offer friendship with God through his grace.

Law means a rule based on the threat of force. The Law of God expressed in religion is a code of belief and behavior enforced by the threat of spiritual retribution. “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” The law of *karma* states that whatever we do to others, the same shall be done unto us. Such religious conceptions provide facility to approach God, but in such a consciousness we are overawed by His majesty and power, offer some little service and avoid sinful actions out of fear of His power.

As such, religion is primarily a material instrument of moral restriction. The word religion comes from the Latin *re + legere*, meaning to restrict or tie back. Those who are religious in the ordinary sense want to commit sins, but they restrict their activities out of fear of punishment by the Lord. This allows them to advance in spiritual understanding to a limited degree, or at least avoid the most heinous sins even though they still desire to commit them.

If I have a relationship based on law, for example with an employer, I have to accept his directions: “Do this, do that.” I must follow my employer’s order or there will be some punishment; I could even lose my job. It doesn’t matter what I want to do, I have to serve the desire of my employer. Because I fear losing my job, I will put aside my desire and serve his. This fearful tension between my desires and the desire of my employer is the nature of any law-based relationship.

God accepts the fearful relationship with His dear children through religious law, because for most of us there is no better alternative. But God does not want us to fear Him; He wants us to love Him: “Love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, all thy heart and all thy soul... These two commandments are the root of all the Law and

the Prophets.” The Law of God is ultimately meant to support and encourage love of God; otherwise there is no higher meaning to this Law. Therefore God wants us to rise above ordinary religion and cultivate a direct, mystical relationship with Him. This spiritual loving relationship is the source of eternal happiness, free from all fear under the loving protection of the Lord.

One who loves God does not need laws or rules to behave properly. If I love someone, I will serve his desire automatically. In fact, his desire and my desire are one, because I desire his happiness and pleasure. It becomes my pleasure to serve the desire of my beloved, even if it is not my desire. Therefore if I truly love God, it becomes my pleasure to serve His desire. I no longer need the restriction of laws to regulate my behavior, because if I know God I understand His purpose deeply enough to participate directly in it, and if I love God I want to further His purpose because I know it will please Him.

The lover of God is therefore on a platform above the rules and regulations of the Scriptures because he serves the purpose behind the Law: the desire of the Lord to advance the consciousness of all His children. This doesn't mean he abandons or breaks the law, it means he obeys it automatically without fear or coercion, since the Law is nothing but the desire of the Lord. To attain this platform of spontaneous goodness in love of God is the goal of human life. The question then becomes, how to attain this exalted platform of life? As we are all born sinners in this material world, we stand accused in God's court. A prisoner accused in the court cannot have a friendly relationship with the judge. The judge has authority over the accused, who has to prove his innocence or face reformatory punishment by the court. In this situation there is no possibility of a friendly relationship. This is the situation of ordinary religion.

However, if a personal friend of the judge becomes the advocate of the prisoner, and gives his word of honor to the judge that he will

engage the accused in voluntary reformatory processes under his personal care, the judge may release the prisoner temporarily on his recommendation. In time, if the accused accepts the advice and careful guidance of the advocate, he may clear himself of all charges and through the agency of his advocate, gain a personal introduction to the judge as a friend. This transformation from prisoner to friend is a result of the prisoner voluntarily accepting the advice of the advocate and reforming himself, instead of being forced to accept the judgment and punishment of the court by law. In other words, he graduates from the coercive relationship of law to the relationship of loving friendship with the judge through his relationship with the advocate.

This example illustrates the role of the spiritual Master Teacher. The Master Teacher must be in the topmost transcendental position of a friend and knower of God. A man engaged in such reformatory activities of the fallen conditioned souls is executing God's most dear desire; therefore he is acting out of love instead of fear. He is giving God pleasure by his dedicated service and is a personal friend of God. He can intercede in the process of judgment and punishment of the sinful conditioned soul as an advocate, and by prescribing purificatory and reformatory processes, transform the conditioned soul from a sinner into a saint by application of esoteric transcendental knowledge. Then when the disciple is ready, the Master Teacher can introduce him directly to God for an eternal, blissful relationship of spiritual service and friendship. This is the process of esoteric mysticism beyond the rules of ordinary religion.

When we first meet a Master Teacher, we are certainly in the darkness of ignorance. Everyone born into this material world is covered by ignorance except for those few empowered souls sent directly by the Lord to recover His fallen children and set them on the path back to their spiritual home. So we will not understand the character and teaching of the Master Teacher at once. We may think

he is a great man, or a very pious man, or we may even think he is an eccentric, an impractical dreamer. Whatever our first impression of the Master Teacher might be, it is certainly wrong because everyone in this world is in illusion. Therefore we should be very cautious not to offend such a great soul and ruin our chance for spiritual advancement by angering the Lord, who is his protector.

The Master Teacher creates a situation where we can perform reformatory processes under his direction to cleanse our minds of the fog of ignorance. The actual Master Teacher will require us to give up eating unclean animal foods such as meat, fish and eggs, will prohibit all intoxication, will disapprove of all gambling and mental speculation, and discourage illicit sexual connections among his students. He will also instruct us in the study of the Scriptures and engage us in the worship of the Holy Name of the Lord.

Finally, the Master Teacher will instruct us to assist in the mission of the Lord to reclaim and reform the lost souls of the material world. There are many deserving and intelligent men who are simply loitering in the street, or rotting in the dark well of intoxication out of disgust with the perverted maladministration of this world. The Master Teacher canvasses widely among such men for candidates for spiritual reformation. When such fallen men become bona fide disciples, they can attain spiritual advancement far, far beyond the ordinary religious people and their narrow-minded leaders. This is all possible through the power of the Holy Name of the Lord.

Aphorism 107: This age is the dispensation of the Holy Name of the Lord. All other dispensations are obsolete, of academic interest only, or have become perverted into tools of Satan.

Each historical age has a specific religious process associated with it by the order of the Lord. In the past the processes of prolonged silent meditation, elaborate religious ritual and opulent temple worship all had their day. But in the present age, the large institutions required to maintain these religious processes have all become corrupt due to the contamination of ignorance in human society.

Therefore in the current age, only the process of chanting the Holy Name of the Lord is possible to execute properly, since it does not depend on any complex social institution or material arrangement to be successful. The practice of silent meditation requires an extended period of time in a purified, peaceful environment, where all one's needs are taken care of and there is no need to perform any activity for one's maintenance. In the distant past there were many hermitages run by great sages in lonely and inaccessible places. Pilgrims in search of enlightenment could go there and meditate under the guidance of holy Master Teachers for the many years required to reach enlightenment by that route. These hermitages were supported by donations from rich men and pious kings. However, in this age there is no place untouched by the spiritual contamination and constant disturbance of sinful life. The authentic hermitages have all been closed due to lack of support, even in India. Therefore the method of silent meditation has become all but impossible.

The ancient emperors performed elaborate sacrificial ceremonies in their courts of under the direction of the sages. In these ceremonies, all the sacred paraphernalia was made of the finest gold. The priests and royal participants were dressed in the most gorgeous

robes. Thousands of people from all parts of the kingdom and all walks of life were invited, and they were all housed, fed, cared for and rewarded nicely according to their spiritual positions. The great sages worshiped the Lord with esoteric hymns, and the assembled congregation chanted His Holy Names with great jubilation. In addition the Lord was offered great sacrifices of precious metals, valuable jewels, delectable foodstuffs, rich cloth, and all kinds of new and useful goods. The pious kings then distributed these valuable offerings among the guests as the mercy of the Lord, and in this way satisfied everyone.

Nowadays the government simply collects taxes and the officials pocket the money. There are no state religious rituals; in fact even the mention of God is prohibited in government facilities. So the process of religious sacrifice has become impossible due to the secularization of the governmental institutions required to support it.

In more recent times, temples and churches were the settings of opulent worship of the Deity form of God. The Deity was offered all the facility of a royal king: a golden throne, beautiful songs and dances of praise, delicious meals, beautiful dresses, and elaborate ceremonial worship. All the offerings were then distributed among the people as God's mercy. In this way even the most ignorant or poverty-stricken person could actually see God, taste His mercy, and worship Him according to his ability.

But when the priestly class of men required to operate these temples became corrupted by political influence and the false philosophy that God is formless and impersonal, they removed the sacred images from the temples and began to worship mere symbols instead. This led to the spiritual falldown of the priests into moral degeneration, and rejection of the temples and churches by the people in general, because they have lost the potency of the actual presence of God. Therefore today we see the great buildings

standing empty except for a few hours on Sunday, and even then mainly the old and fearful, and innocent children go there. The majority of people have lost all faith in religion because of the degeneration of religious institutions; therefore the path of temple worship has become untenable.

Thus in this age of rapidly increasing sin and ignorance, all the traditional processes of approaching God are more or less useless. Therefore, this is the age of the Holy Name of the Lord. No other way of spiritual advancement has any real potency in this degraded time. The Holy Name of the Lord does not require any elaborate rituals, expensive sacrifices, or complex systems of meditation to be effective. Therefore it is practically immune to the corruption that has destroyed the value of past paths to God. Indeed, the actual effectiveness of all other systems of spiritual advancement was and is derived from the power of the Holy Name of the Lord, and served only as a container and context for glorification and worship of the Holy Name, which was always a required factor in their performance.

Aphorism 108: The greatest power is in the Holy Name of the Lord.

Material power is temporary and limited, and therefore useless for spiritual purposes. In addition, material power is degrading to the possessor because it blinds our limited intelligence to our true spiritual position. Puffed-up people who possess temporary material power often falsely think they can dictate religious principles. Therefore they create faulty policies and degraded materialistic associations that erode real spiritual values among the people in the name of material enjoyment. This is the actual cause of the decline of earlier spiritual paths as described above.

Real power is the ability to please God by one's worship. As my Master Teacher used to say, it is not so important for us to see God,

but if we can attract God to see us by our sincere service, that is actual success in self-realization. The most attractive form of worship in this age is the chanting of God's Holy Names. There are unlimited Holy Names of God, and all of Them are accepted by great sages as being equal to the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself in potency. One can chant whatever name is locally understood to refer to the Supreme Lord in the local vernacular, or any Holy Name of God in which one personally has faith.

All the Holy Names of the Lord are equal to Him in quality and power because they are transcendental sound vibration. Since the Lord is transcendental and absolute, any nomenclature applied to Him partakes of the same spiritual quality. The Lord very kindly allows us to worship His Holy Names for our benefit. Calling out the Lord's Holy Name calls Him to us, just as when a child calls the name of his mother or father, the parent immediately comes to take care.

Association with the Holy Name of the Lord spiritualizes us, just as a cold piece of iron becomes as hot as fire by being kept in the fire for some time. A red-hot iron can ignite fire in a piece of dry wood, even though iron is different from fire. Similarly, even though we are not perfect like God, we can absorb many of the qualities of God by taking His personal association through His Holy Names for a significant length of time.

The important thing is to chant the Holy Names of the Lord without offense. Offenses to the Holy Name are the same as offenses to the Supreme Lord personally. It is beyond the scope of this introductory treatise to cover the elaborate subject of offenses to the Holy Name of the Lord. There are many wonderful books in our line of disciplic succession about the potency of the Holy Name and how to chant it without offense. This is an important subject into which the sincere student should inquire deeply from his

spiritual Master Teacher. In the beginning, it is enough to know that one should chant the Holy Names of the Lord with love.

Since chanting the Holy Name of the Lord has the power to draw even the Supreme Lord Himself to the worshiper, it is by far the greatest power, far beyond any other gross material or subtle mystic power. Moreover, it is a power that can only be used for the greatest good, and cannot be misused or abused, since it is identical with the Personality of Godhead Himself, the chief among all rulers and judges, the supreme source of all purity and goodness, and the creator of all systems of morality.

We have attempted in these pages to offer a small glimpse into the world of esoteric philosophy and transcendental religion. We have also attempted to offer some arguments exposing the inadequacies of conventional religion, and the false truths of perverted material consciousness. It remains the responsibility of the sincere reader to take the next step and implement our suggestions, both negative and positive, in his life for his benefit.

The primary responsibility for spiritual advancement rests with the student. Remember, one of the qualities God seeks to establish in us by His training is initiative. One must take initiative to advance in spiritual realization, but one must also be careful not to distort the teaching he has received into a means for gaining personal advantage over others. In other words, it is easy to misuse the power gained by these deep spiritual insights as a tool for domination of weaker and less evolved personalities. This is one of the greatest traps on the spiritual path. If the student detects the tendency toward this aberration in himself, he must be extremely cautious not to misuse the blessings he has been given, for this will inevitably lead to spiritual falldown and degradation.

It is up to the student to carefully apply the teachings of esoteric spirituality for the benefit of all others he contacts. This will bring the actual benefit he seeks, not using a little spiritual knowledge to

become a false lord of this material world in the name of religion. Esoteric spirituality is a path of the heart as well as the mind. If one develops knowledge of God without love, it is a very dangerous condition because one can wind up more fallen and sinful than when he started. Religion without philosophy easily becomes fanaticism, but philosophy without devotion easily becomes a grievous offense to the Lord.

Thus counseled, the wise student should try to develop both his mind and heart under the guidance of a qualified Master Teacher. It is impossible to overstress the value of the personal guidance of a Teacher. One should only accept a Teacher of the highest qualification, since one cannot develop beyond the stage of advancement of his Teacher. At the same time, we must allow the Lord to assign us a Teacher on the basis of our qualification and sincerity, lest we choose wrongly because we are starting from a condition of spiritual ignorance.

We wish the student well on his progressive march of spiritual advancement. It takes many years to make tangible progress in spiritual life. God works in the purview of eternity. Therefore one should not become discouraged if he does not attain the higher stages immediately. Slow and steady progress is preferable to a quick rise followed by a long fall. Offenses are easy to make if one thinks himself advanced before his time. Humility is the guiding principle in all spiritual dealings. Remember what Jesus said about sitting in the lowest seat at the wedding feast.

What we have presented herein is not the most advanced knowledge we have in our possession; rather, it is an introductory view intended more as an appetizer for the real thing. If you find this level of knowledge appealing, know that there are levels of spiritual understanding far, far advanced beyond our humble offering herein. We do not pretend to have the last word in spiritual knowledge or personal spiritual advancement. We are only an

agent of our spiritual Master Teacher contacting potential students for his esoteric school. The seriously interested reader is invited to contact the author for further discussions of the spiritual subject matter, possibly leading to admittance to the same esoteric school in which the author is only a beginning student.

Here end the Bhaktisiddhartha exegeses on the Aphorisms on the subject of Transcendental Knowledge. All glories to the Holy Name of the Lord!

Conclusion: The Ocean of Divine Consciousness

A prose-poem in seven Currents by David Bruce Hughes
(Gaurahari Dāsānudās Bābājī)

Introduction

The entire objective of all religious and spiritual teaching and practice is to develop direct spiritual consciousness of God. This is the nourishment our soul needs to be whole and healthy. Only the sweet spiritual sense of God consciousness can counteract the spiritual disease of materially fixated consciousness and compulsive extroversion. These unspiritual engagements only take us farther from our true home and deeper into suffering and ignorance of our true self.

It does not matter if you approach God as Kṛṣṇa, Rama, Allah, or through Jesus Christ. Any terminology indicating the Supreme Spirit is qualitatively equivalent. The point is to be conscious of God as much as possible during our normal life activities. Artificially changing one's lifestyle or religious designation will not bring the desired result, for these are external processes and can only give superficial results.

Developing the actual God consciousness latent within the soul will bring us to the highest platform of spiritual consciousness, no matter with which name or in what form we conceive of God. With this aim in mind, I have written the following prose-poem based on scriptural knowledge and the actual experience of devotional service. In it I hope to convey some of the feeling and motivation of the life of devotional service in God consciousness, as distinct from any particular religion or dogma.

The piece begins from hearing because our God consciousness also begins from hearing the Absolute Truth from the self-realized spiritual master. It continues with tasting because once we are in association with devotees of God, our taste for hearing and chanting about Him develops as we taste the remnants of sacrifice in the form of incense, sanctified food and other spiritual offerings. After some development of taste for God we become qualified to see God. Actually we can see God anywhere and everywhere if we just know how to look.

Knowing how to see God naturally leads to feeling His presence everywhere and in everything. If we can feel Him we can also touch Him, spiritually of course. At this point we can really say that we know God, and can begin to love Him. How can we love someone we don't really know? So one must come to the point of knowing God before love of God is really feasible. We want to encourage everyone to develop to this point of knowing and loving God, for this is the perfection of human life.

First Current: I Hear You

I hear Your sound in the deepest silence

I hear Your ecstasy in the cries of lovers

I hear Your awesome battle-roar in the thunder

I hear Your contented laughter in the ocean waves

I hear Your wisdom in the words of the Scriptures

I hear Your sighing for Your lost children in the wind

I hear Your love-call in the sweet words of the saints

I hear Your passionate heartbeat in the temple drums

I hear Your concern in the instructions of my Teacher

I hear Your presence in the sound of Your Holy Name
I hear Your unforgettable loving voice deep in my heart
I hear Your music in the inimitable melodies of the birds
I hear Your beautiful voice in the sacred songs and hymns
I hear Your shyness in the esoteric teachings of the Scriptures
I hear Your intelligence in the profound reasoning of the great sages
I hear Your sadness in the weeping of those who are separated from
You by illusion
I hear Your pleasure in the narrations of Your transcendental
qualities and pastimes by Your devotees

Second Current: I Taste You

I taste Your purity in the morning dew
I taste Your freshness in the country air
I taste Your austerity in the driven snow
I taste Your cleanliness in the cool mountain lake
I taste Your fecundity in the fragrance of the earth
I taste Your goodness in the rich flavor of pure milk
I taste Your sensuality in the incense offered in the Temple
I taste Your happiness in the sweet-rice offered in Your temple
I taste Your sweet attractiveness in the scent of the altar flowers
I taste Your presence in Your Holy Name dancing on my tongue
I taste Your ecstasy in the scented water that washed Your holy feet

I taste Your care in the fruits and vegetables You kindly supply us daily

I taste Your loving-kindness in the tulasi leaves and buds offered to You

Third Current: I See You

I see Your brilliant smile in the sun

I see Your glowing eye in the moon

I see Your sense of humor in the butterflies

I see Your bodily hue in the new rain-cloud

I see Your tastefulness in the colors of the dawn

I see Your helping hand in the lives of the saints

I see Your bright, spacious mind in the clear sky

I see Your all-consuming mouth in the sacred fire

I see Your majesty in the snow-capped mountains

I see Your playfulness in the young of all creatures

I see Your beauty in the beauty of women and men

I see Your disfavor in people's forgetfulness of You

I see Your peacefulness in the still waters of the lake

I see Your affection in the motherly love of all species

I see Your deep thoughts in the words of the Scriptures

I see Your actions in the miracles that happen every day

I see Your energy in the multitude of living beings You create

I see Your power in the expansive universe You have created
I see Your prowess in the unfolding of a seed into a beautiful tree
I see Your creativity in the endless variety of natural manifestations
I see Your artistry in the land, clouds, trees, flowers, animals and birds
I see Your eternal pastimes in the spaces between the moments of time
I see Your omnipotence in the fact that no one can avoid Your determination
I see Your kind mercy in the churches, mosques and temples all over the world

Fourth Current: I Feel You

I feel Your will in the miracle of birth
I feel Your playfulness when the wind tousles my hair
I feel Your healing touch when water caresses my skin
I feel Your authority in the instructions of the Scriptures
I feel Your life force in the constant beating of my heart
I feel Your sincerity in the simplicity of Your instructions
I feel Your ability in my own intelligence and resourcefulness
I feel Your response to my chanting when You dance in my heart
I feel Your presence in the austerities I perform for Your satisfaction
I feel Your dreaming in the temporary conditions of this material world

I feel Your power when I create words, music and art for Your pleasure

I feel Your steadfastness in Your promise never to abandon Your devotee

Fifth Current: I Touch You

I touch You when I write for Your pleasure

I touch You in the kitchen when I cook for You

I touch You in the offerings I make in Your Temple

I touch You in the simple pleasure of serving Your mission

I touch You when I determine to spend my life in service to You

I touch You in the chanting beads I use to count Your Holy Names

I touch You in the bathing and dressing ceremony of Your Deity form

I touch You when I decorate the Temple for Your transcendental festivals

I touch You in the ecstasy of chanting Your Holy Name with many friends

I touch You when I read Your words in the Scriptures and think, 'How true!'

I touch You when I hear from advanced devotees about Your loving pastimes

I touch You in the Temple when the articles offered to You are passed before me

I touch You when I offer myself to You by bowing down before
Your Deity form

I touch You in the heart of the person who hears Your Holy Name
for the first time

I touch You in the mind of the person who understands Your
purpose for the first time

Sixth Current: I Know You

I know Your excellence in the best of everything

I know Your intelligence in the wisdom of the wise

I know Your justice in the inevitable approach of death

I know Your purpose in the confidential objective of religion

I know Your will in the control You assert over Your children

I know Your reasoning in the transcendental science of the Self

I know Your consciousness in the consciousness within my mind

I know Your mentoring in the good qualities You instill in Your
devotees

I know Your happiness in the love of Your most beloved spiritual
Consort

I know Your all-pervasiveness in the beginning, middle and end of
all things

I know Your indispensability in everything that has been, is and is
yet to come

I know Your independence in Your aloofness from the cause and
effect of matter

I know Your inexhaustible power in the vastness and intelligent design of this universe

I know Your care because You know everything about everyone, although no one knows You

Seventh Current: I Love You

I love You by taking care of Your devotees

I love You by constantly hearing about You

I love You by keeping my faith in You strong

I love You by cleaning Your temple and kitchen

I love You by dedicating my life to Your service

I love You by rising before dawn to worship You

I love You by chanting Your Holy names every day

I love You by fasting on the eleventh day of the moon

I love You by surrendering to Your will in so many ways

I love You by offering my food to You before enjoying it

I love You by reading Your wisdom in the Holy Scriptures

I love You by being patient and enthusiastic in Your service

I love You by singing and playing instruments to glorify You

I love You by meditating on Your beautiful transcendental form

I love You by remaining aloof from temporary material enjoyment

I love You by offering all my accumulated wealth for Your service

I love You by telling others about Your wonderful qualities and pastimes

I love You by following the instructions of my spiritual master to the best of my ability

Appendix: The Aphorisms

Introductory

Aphorism 1: The Lord enlightens me with His secrets; but who can understand them?

Aphorism 2: An aphorism packs pages of pregnant prose into a single pithy line.

Aphorism 3: Men speak in prose; angels speak in poetry; God speaks in aphorisms.

Aphorism 4: An aphorism is like a good joke; having to explain it dilutes its effect.

Aphorism 5: The more improbable an aphorism seems at first glance, the more valuable it is.

Wisdom and the Wise

Aphorism 6: The greatest truths cannot be spoken or written, only realized.

Aphorism 7: A new thought is old by the time it is spoken; by the time it is written down it is

dead.

Aphorism 8: Scriptures point to the Truth, but only God and those whom He chooses can actually

understand; for Truth is a mystery.

Aphorism 9: Know the Lord in the silence within; fill yourself with the secret light of His love.

Aphorism 10: Truthfulness, sincerity and humility are the first signs of wisdom.

Aphorism 11: Virtue is its own reward; goodness brings its own wisdom.

Aphorism 12: Truly great men are persecuted during their lifetimes; yet once society adjusts to them, their influence persists for centuries.

Aphorism 13: The only friend of a wise man is God; but then, He is the best Friend of all.

Aphorism 14: To whom can he whose only wealth is wisdom give in charity, when no one values understanding?

Aphorism 15: Perhaps one man in 10,000 understands true wisdom—but not one woman!

Aphorism 16: Speaking the Truth is as close as a man can get to wielding the Power of God.

Aphorism 17: Real happiness and freedom lie in wisdom, simplicity, detachment and love of God.

Aphorism 18: Wise indeed is the sinner who accepts God's mercy, and sins not again.

Aphorism 19: The fool seeks praise for himself, leaving praise of God the work of the wise.

Aphorism 20: Professional preachers measure success by the size of the collection, not the pleasure of the Lord; beware of them.

Aphorism 21: A fool cannot understand the wise man; neither can the wise man understand the mind of a fool; but the Lord understands and loves them both.

Aphorism 22: What fools call wisdom is but the opinion of the ignorant; soon it will change, but real Truth never changes.

Aphorism 23: Fools make a good business of teaching foolishness; the wise give away the greatest wealth to anyone who values it.

Aphorism 24: The ignorant automatically assume the Truth is a lie; unprovoked, they viciously attack the wise.

Aphorism 25: The unjustified hatred of the foolish for the wise is the very sword that destroys them.

Aphorism 26: One who speaks without wisdom is like the whistling of the wind, or the clucking of birds.

Aphorism 27: A fool blurts out the first thing that comes to mind; the wise man considers many things before speaking.

Aphorism 28: Shouting and quarreling drive away love; wisdom thrives best in silence.

Aphorism 29: The bellowing voice of a fool drowns out the quiet voice of truth in our minds.

Aphorism 30: Fools remain ignorant no matter how loudly they shout; the wise become wiser even in their silence.

Aphorism 31: The ignorant idealize youth; the wise welcome the years, for experience is wisdom.

Aphorism 32: The wise man dies before his death; he lives as a dead man on leave to serve the pleasure and purpose of the Lord.

Aphorism 33: The wise look toward death as a prisoner longs for the day of his release.

Aphorism 34: When the last wise man disappears, the destruction of the world will begin.

Spiritual Attitudes

Aphorism 35: Sin cannot remain in the presence of Divine Love; wisdom cannot remain without it.

Aphorism 36: Behind every sin is a fear; behind every fear is a failure to pray for the grace and love of God.

Aphorism 37: God's purpose in setting up the entire situation in which we find ourselves is to develop our love for Him.

Aphorism 38: We are created sinless by God; born into the sins of our ancestors; spend our childhood learning the sins of our culture; and finally earn the right to sin independently.

Aphorism 39: We must repay our ancestors' debts as well as our own; no wonder life seems baffling and unfair.

Aphorism 40: In spiritual childhood, our Father will repair all the defects of our material childhood.

Aphorism 41: Attaining spiritual maturity requires a lifetime, beginning from childhood.

Aphorism 42: Life is a school; the Lord is the Teacher; death is the final examination; salvation is the diploma.

Aphorism 43: Spiritual life is unutterably serious; at stake is nothing less than our eternity.

Aphorism 44: Material possessions and activities are distractions; act only to serve God and you will not forget Him.

Aphorism 45: Act and speak only to bring glory to God among men, and your life is perfect.

Aphorism 46: Everything except God's love is ultimately futile.

Aphorism 47: The praise of foolish men is worth nothing; worth still less is the praise of women.

Aphorism 48: Man's whole world is but a bubble in God's great ocean.

Aphorism 49: Guard your heart against the world; fill it up with God's love.

Aphorism 50: A clever mind is a devil's workshop; better a simple heart full of God's love.

Aphorism 51: Selfish pride is the ecstasy of ignorance; Divine Love is the ecstasy of wisdom.

Aphorism 52: Only the pure in heart can walk with God.

Aphorism 53: There are many religions; there is one God.

Aphorism 54: Only one who has the second birth really knows right from wrong.

Aphorism 55: There is no weight heavier than sin.

Aphorism 56: Saints work out of love of God; sinners work out of fear of the enemy.

Aphorism 57: Loudness and activity mark him who seeks; he who has found remains quiet, satisfied in God.

Aphorism 58: Being good is important; but salvation comes only through God's grace.

Aphorism 59: Happiness and perfection are ours from God for the asking; but we are so foolish that we insist on working for them.

Aphorism 60: Seek not the loud praise of ignorant men, but the secret admiration of the all-knowing Lord.

Aphorism 61: Revenge destroys the avenger; forgiveness opens the gate of salvation.

Aphorism 62: One who does not know God lives in sleep; he moves in a world of dreams and illusion.

Aphorism 63: Praying in tongues gives spiritual strength; music is the language of spiritual emotion.

Aphorism 64: Do everything in the presence of the Lord; remain always with Him.

Aphorism 65: Few of the thoughts in our minds are really ours; we live in an ocean of mind.

Aphorism 66: Only God never lies or breaks a promise; ignorant men cannot help their lies and betrayal.

Aphorism 67: To be born again is to be what you really are; first you must be willing to die to what you have become.

Aphorism 68: Death is devastation to the sinner; it is a promotion for the righteous.

Aphorism 69: We do not truly love until we can cry at another's pain.

Aphorism 70: People are like children; expect them to be ignorant and foolish, and they won't disappoint you.

Aphorism 71: No man deserves your unqualified trust; reserve the full measure of your devotion for God alone.

Aphorism 72: Once you have been born again, you may forget God but He will never forget you; He disciplines His children until they realize the error of their ways.

Aphorism 73: The most profound spiritual growth happens slowly, in silent repose, in deep trance of communion with God after all human efforts have failed.

Aphorism 74: Every time you make spiritual progress, expect a counterattack from Satan; watch your weak points!

Aphorism 75: All evil is summed up in the statement: "Let me become God."

Aphorism 76: Remember: there is no real shelter anywhere except the Lord.

Sex & Celibacy

Aphorism 77: Rectitude is the foundation of wisdom.

Aphorism 78: Sensuality is not a solution for life's problems; like intoxication, it is merely a distraction from them.

Aphorism 79: Do not be proud of your body; God sees all sinners as made from the same dust.

Aphorism 80: We hurry to satisfy our lust, and think we have no time for God; then we get the rest of eternity to experience the result.

Aphorism 81: Sex life is like poison candy, unless you are lucky enough to marry a saint.

Aphorism 82: By the time you are wise enough to marry well, you are old enough not to marry at all.

Aphorism 83: Sex reinforces all the illusions of material existence; it is death with a pretty face.

Aphorism 84: Masturbation is as sinful as adultery; all lust is spiritual poison.

Aphorism 85: You cannot enter the inner sanctum of your temple until the eighth day after an orgasm.

Aphorism 86: You cannot have both human lust and Divine Love; choose one and receive its rewards.

Aphorism 87: Just as the authentic Holy Spirit comes only to those who truly thirst for Him, so

celibacy is a special gift; it must be earned.

Aphorism 88: The life of celibacy is like a young woman betrothed to a superbly handsome, intelligent and qualified man; she can love no one else as she awaits their wedding day.

Aphorism 89: The life of celibacy is like a man to whom God gives Divine vision; seeing though all the falseness of this world, he finds his eternal home at the feet of his Lord.

Materialism & the World

Aphorism 90: This world is made of sand; find God and build your house on the most durable Rock.

Aphorism 91: Whatever man creates is evil and superfluous; whatever God creates is necessary and good.

Aphorism 92: This evil world rejects the wise, stones the prophets and kills the Messiahs; but the Day of the Lord comes soon.

Aphorism 93: God owns the world, but Satan manages it.

Aphorism 94: The wicked flourish until they are suddenly cut down; the Godly are pruned back while they slowly ripen into the sweetest fruit.

Aphorism 95: Worldly enjoyment leads to suffering; worldly suffering can lead to salvation—but only if you have faith.

Aphorism 96: You cannot enjoy the pleasures of both intoxication and Divine Love.

Aphorism 97: Most suffering comes from our own greed and wrong desires.

Aphorism 98: In times of hardship food, jewels and precious metals are worth more than money; but wisdom is the most valuable jewel of all.

Aphorism 99: Money brings struggle, worry and heartache; only the poor have time to think of God.

Aphorism 100: Why do you work so hard? Everything you earn will be taken by others.

Aphorism 101: Anyone who has felt God's Love counts success and failure in this world as less than nothing.

Aphorism 102: Whatever you have is not yours, but God's; share it freely and lovingly with His other children.

Transcendental Knowledge

Aphorism 103: To understand God, hear His message; walk in His footsteps; bear His cross.

Aphorism 104: Prayer fulfills all desires within God's plan.

Aphorism 105: Pray not twice for the same blessing.

Aphorism 106: Religion is based on law; self-realization is based on love. Only the self-realized spiritual master can offer friendship with God through his grace.

Aphorism 107: This age is the dispensation of the Holy Name of the Lord. All other dispensations are obsolete, of academic interest only, or have become perverted into tools of Satan.

Aphorism 108: The greatest power is in the Holy Name of the Lord.