

A Talk by
Gurumayi Chidvilasananda

Whatever You Do
Perform It as Sacrifice

With great respect and love, I welcome you all with all my heart.
Kabir said:

Love, pride, status, affection —
How easily they all vanish
The moment you ask a person
To give you something of himself!

The sages say that when you have not done sacrifice, when you have not made an offering of yourself, you are not able to give. When you have not done sacrifice, you are not able to receive, either. Therefore, divine sacrifice is absolutely necessary in one's life. When this sacrifice has not been performed, whatever happens — either in the mind or in the body, at any particular time or place — immediately we say, "I give up; I'm not made for this." "I give up; this is not meant for me." "I give up; that person is not for me." "I give up; that place is not good for me." "I give up; this is not my cup of tea."

Why do you feel you want to give up? Whenever something happens that you think is out of the ordinary, why do you just want to give up? It is because you have never given yourself. Therefore, the sages say, perform divine sacrifice. When you have performed this sacrifice, then whatever happens, you know it is God's will. Whatever happens, you know it is for the best. Whatever happens, you have the strength to bear it.

In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord says to Arjuna:

The actions of a person
Whose attachments have been broken,
Who is liberated,
Whose mind is firmly established in wisdom,
And who performs work as a sacrifice
Are dissolved completely.

Someone wrote a letter to me, saying, "The only way I can make my child drink water is by saying, 'Gurumayi wants you to drink.'" And she continued, "How long can I go on doing this? It seems so presumptuous." She wanted to know what she could do.

The best thing is to drink a glass of water yourself, and say, "Wow, this is so good!" Then the child wants to drink it. It is so simple. Even though matters are simple, even though God's ways are so natural, we make everything very complicated and difficult.

Therefore, the Lord said to Arjuna, whatever you do, perform it as a sacrifice. Do not think you are doing it for yourself. Realize that this entire universe is a sacrifice to us and that we are a sacrifice to the universe. We are food for this universe, and the universe is food for all of us. Each sacrifices itself to the other. When this divine sacrifice is taking place, one is not bound by attachment.

Jnaneshwar Maharaj talked about a being who is free from all his actions and attachments in this way:

Though he inhabits a body,
He appears as the Self;
Tested by the touchstone of the Absolute,
He is utterly pure.
Since this is so,
Even if he performs any actions out of interest,
They are completely absorbed into him.
Just as untimely clouds
Which appear in the sky but yield no rain
Suddenly disappear
And become as they were before,
Similarly, although such a person
Performs all actions

According to prescribed rites,
By his state of harmony
He attains union with all.
Such a person is totally established
In his own Self.

One day a great saint was sleeping when a thief entered his house and began looking for something to steal. He found nothing at all, but as he was leaving, the saint opened his eyes. He saw such disappointment in the face of the thief that immediately he threw his blanket at him and said, "I don't want you to leave my house disappointed. Take this blanket. It will do some good for you."

The thief was utterly shocked. No one had ever been so generous toward him. He fell on his knees and said, "Give me what you have inside yourself, that state you live in all the time."

When you sacrifice yourself to the Truth, to the Absolute, to the inner experience, then others want what you have. And when you have this divine sacrifice in your life, then you are also able to accept everything. You are able to see through everything. You do not just take things at their face value; you are able to look into the heart of things, and into the hearts of all beings. Otherwise, we do not really know what we want.

There was an old woman whose daughter was very sick. She loved her daughter, so she prayed to God, saying, "Give my life span to my daughter. I'm old already. All my senses are weak now, and my mind can hardly think. Why should I live any longer? Please give to her whatever is left." She was praying to God with great sincerity.

Then, all of a sudden, she heard a noise coming from the front of the house. A cow had come to the courtyard and tried to eat something from a big pot. The pot had gotten stuck on its head, and the poor cow was running around everywhere, blinded by the pot. When the old woman came outside, she saw this scene and she thought, "Oh! Yama, the lord of death, has come!" And she began to scream, "My daughter is so sick. She will die anyhow. Take her. Don't take me!"

A sudden change. So many times we pray with words, "Oh Lord, do with me whatever you want." Then we feel we have done such a great thing: "Ahh, look at me! I'm giving my life to God!" But when we feel even a little touch and we are not sure how it is going to end up, we say, "Not yet."

We pray and we think we are offering ourselves, but when our prayer is answered, when the opportunity to give comes to us, we miss it, we cannot take

it, because our prayer is only a verbal one. It is not contemplated, it is not felt, it is not yearned for. Somewhere we have heard that if this sacrifice happens it is good, so we think, "This should happen to me," and then we pray for it. But we have never given ourselves to what we are asking for. Therefore, when it does come to us, we are not able to know the value of it, we are not able to cherish it, we are not able to enjoy the taste of it. This is why the sages tell us, perform divine sacrifice. Give yourself to That completely, then you will be able to attain That; you will be able to be in That. In the Gita, the Lord says:

For him, the act of offering is God
And the oblation is God;
By God, it is offered to the fire of God.
God is attained by him
Who realizes God in his works.

Jnaneshwar Maharaj comments on this:

In his mind, there exist no such differences
As "This is an oblation,"
"I am the sacrificer," or
"This is the one who partakes of the sacrifice."
The sage performing the sacrifice
Regards the ritual,
The offerings, and the chanting
As the eternal Self.
O Arjuna, one who understands
That all action is the Absolute
Is free from the bonds of action,
Even though he performs actions.

When we perform our actions without feeling, "I am doing this so that I can attain that," "I am doing that so that I can attain this," "I am doing this work so that I can finish my karma with this particular work," or without thinking, "I'm scrubbing the wall so that I will have no more impurities" — then it becomes divine sacrifice. Otherwise, it is a bargain. We are negotiating with our fate, we are negotiating with God, and there is no purity in that. This is why a verse in the Guru Gita says, if you chant the Guru Gita with a particular desire, you will attain that; however, if you chant the Guru Gita with no desire, if you chant it just for the love of chanting, for the love of the

Guru, for the love of God, then you attain everything. You attain all that which you must have in your life. So when you perform actions, keep yourself free from all these mental and emotional conditions. If you can remain free of them, you feel cleansed and purified; then you do not have to know whether you have attained that or not. Just your presence itself is the attainment, and that is how it should be. And if we are in a situation where we do not understand something or if something is bothering us, then we should contemplate it, we should find out what it is that is being bothered within us. Somehow, instead of ourselves changing, we always think the other person should change, but sacrifice does not take place in this way. We have to change. And this is the food for contemplation. In this, sacrifice takes place. As we give ourselves to this contemplation, we sacrifice ourselves. And when we sacrifice ourselves, we experience the Truth. As Jnaneshwar explains, "The sage performing the sacrifice regards the ritual, the offerings, and the chanting as the eternal Self." Baba repeatedly said that when you give yourself to God, you are not disturbed by your mind nor by the pain of the physical body. However, when you keep yourself to yourself, you experience disturbances of the mind and body, and you experience the limitation of your own being. Because there is no sacrifice, instead of experiencing the freedom of the Self, all you are experiencing is mental, physical, and emotional contraction. When you give yourself to the Truth, when you sacrifice, then in turn, you become That.

The Lord says to Arjuna:

Some yogis offer sacrifices to the gods alone,
While others who have realized the Self
Offer the Self
As a sacrifice by the Self
In the fire of the Supreme.

Jnaneshwar Maharaj says:

Those who have left behind
The youth of indiscrimination,
Who have committed themselves
To nonattachment,
And who perform the worship of the fire of yoga;
Who perform sacrifices night and day,
And who burn the ignorance of their minds
In the fire of their Guru's words,

They make offerings to the fire of yoga,
Which is called the divine sacrifice.
In this way, O Arjuna,
Strive for the joy of the Self.

Listen, I'll tell you more:
There are those who maintain the sacrificial fire
In the form of the Absolute,
And who offer the sacrificed Self
As an oblation to that fire.

In ancient times, during the Vedic period, when a student finished his education with the Guru and went back home to become a householder, he was given fire to take home and worship. From that time on, whatever happened in his life, good or bad, positive or negative, he gave to this fire. This fire would also be used for the marriage of his children, and when he retired from household life, he would take the fire with him. Finally, the same fire would be used to cremate his body. The fire was kept alive as the Witness, as the Guru, as God.

The fire was always there, a constant witness, and so one abstained from doing anything that would create feelings of guilt or remorse in the future. This Witness is true. Even if you think no one is looking at what you are doing, this all-knowing Presence is always watching.

This is how sacrifice becomes the source of one's life. When you have this constant fire burning inside, you give yourself to it all the time and automatically you are purified. Very naturally, you experience the cleansing process.

The Lord explains to Arjuna that people perform sacrifice in different ways:

Some offer hearing and the other senses
To the fire of restraint.
Others offer sound and other sense objects
As a sacrifice in the fire of the senses.

Many people think discipline means subduing your emotions and your thoughts. But while instructing Arjuna, the Lord describes discipline as "the fire of restraint." When the Lord said, "Some offer hearing and the other senses to the fire of restraint," he meant that they only hear what is beneficial, they only hear what is elevating, they only hear what is good for them. If there is anything that is going to destroy their faith, if there is anything that is going to



destroy their life, they abstain from hearing that.

“Others offer sound and other sense objects as a sacrifice in the fire of the senses.” Once the seeds of the senses have been burned, the only thing left is purity. The senses only hear that which is good, they only see that which is good, and in this way they create goodness in one’s heart. Jnaneshwar Maharaj comments on this:

When the sun of dispassion breaks forth,
They prepare the sacrificial hearth of restraint
And uncover the fire of the senses;
Then, when the flames of dispassion arise,
The fuel of the passions is burned up
And the smoke of desire disappears
From the fivefold vessel of the senses.
Then, carefully following
The injunctions of the scriptures,
They constantly offer oblations of the sense objects
Into the caldron of the fire of the senses.

Once you uncover the fire of the senses, then you know you do not have to go anywhere to perform this sacrifice. You perform this within yourself: the objects of perception are offered to the eyes; the objects of taste, to the tongue. In this way, you bring back inside all the energy that has been flowing out of you indiscriminately.

In Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras, the withdrawal of the senses is described as pratyahara. Many people ask, “How can I withdraw my senses from this world? The senses want to go toward this world.” It is true, the objects of the senses are so fascinating to a lot of people. But Baba said many times, there is such great Shakti in your senses if you can only uncover this fire. Once this fire is uncovered, then whatever happens, you are able to give everything to it in divine sacrifice. The withdrawal of the senses is very difficult. However, when you offer the sense objects to the fire of the senses, you feel greater strength; you have greater willpower and much more energy. Without working hard for it, you are able to tap this natural Shakti, this inherent power.

Still others offer all the actions
Of their senses and of their prana
Into the fire of the yoga of self-control,
Kindled by knowledge.

Prana, the breath, is a very strong force. It is the life of all the senses. Through self-control, you protect this breath. A teacher once showed the head of a dead tiger to a group of young people to demonstrate the power of prana. She said, "If there were breath in this tiger, you would not touch it. But because there is no prana in it, you don't hesitate to touch it and play with it. If there were prana, you would worship it from far away." So this breath is a divine power, and through self-control, you protect the vitality of this force.

If you think a lot, what is being used up? Your breath, your prana. The mind cannot think without prana. You cannot have emotions without the breath; the breath is the force behind the emotions. You cannot move around without breath. It is the force behind everything; it is the force in your life. So when you offer this force to the fire of the yoga of self-control, you preserve it. Your breath is not wasted; it is protected and sheltered. The more you preserve it, the better your thoughts, the purer your emotions, the greater your actions.

So the Lord tells Arjuna to perform the divine sacrifice in which you give yourself to the Truth. In this way, you attain the Truth and you become the Truth.

Kabir said:

Drunk with love am I, O Beloved.
Pour on, pour on.
The vessel of the world is empty;
It holds not a drop of love.
But my Beloved is within,
Nourishing me forever and ever.
Ah, what a joy, what a joy!

Once we taste the inner ecstasy, the inner love, then we taste it in everything. Inside, it never becomes empty. Outside, it may dry up due to our carelessness, but inside, never. Therefore, it is said again and again, look within.

With great respect and with great love, I welcome you all with all my heart.

Sadgurunath Maharaj ki Jay!



Reprinted with permission of SYDA Foundation, pp. 66-75, from *Darshan* #9, by Gurumayi Chidvilasananda. © SYDA Foundation©.