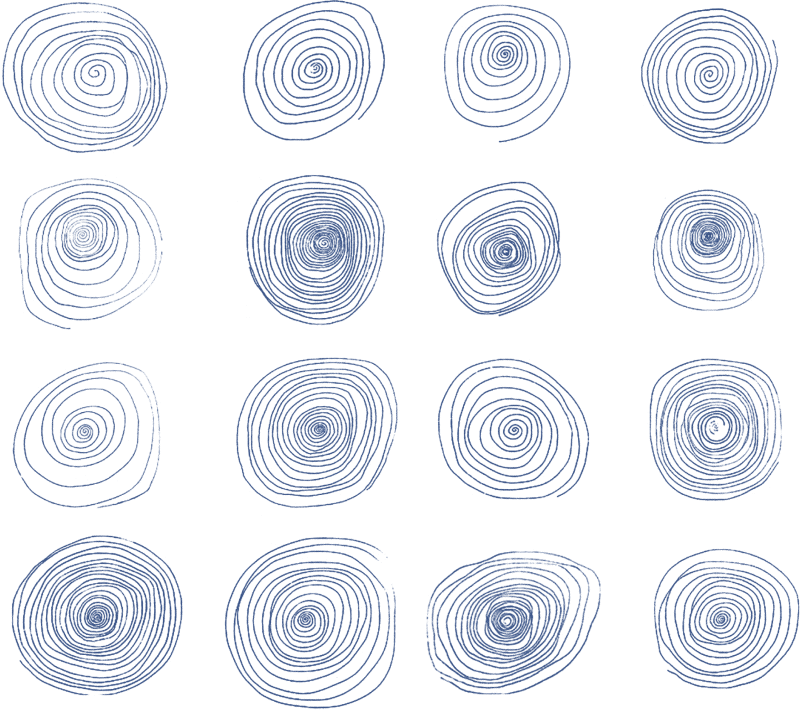


ALL DIRECTIONS POINT HOME



*BHM*

Our  
Union is like this,

You feel cold,  
So I reach for a blanket to cover  
Our shivering feet.

A hunger comes into your body,  
So I run to my garden  
And start digging potatoes.

You ask for a few words of comfort and guidance,  
I quickly kneel at your side offering you  
This whole book—  
As a gift.

You ache with loneliness one night  
So much you weep

And I say,

Here's a rope,  
Tie it around me.  
Hafiz will be your companion  
For life.  
(Hafiz, "The Gift")

ALL DIRECTIONS  
POINT  
HOME

## Hello.

It was while walking on an early summer evening when the seeds of what you now read were planted. My internal compass began pointing me towards an earnest attempt at writing with a waxing intensity. First I felt resistance, then consideration, then hesitation. What did I have to say? I was strolling down Altgeld headed for Dennis's garden one night in June of 2020 when it occurred to me that perhaps I didn't have to know what I had to say. I sketched out an idea where I would proposition friends and family for a question. It could be any question of their choosing, either something they themselves have deeply considered, or something that occurred to them in the shower, whatever they wanted with the understanding that I would seek to answer their question as part of an upcoming project. This here, is the result of that.

From where I sit now, I can see all of the subtle ways these questions colored my experience over the past year, and am deeply grateful to their askers and to the Friend whose silent smile shepherded this work into being. There was the woman who stopped me on the street and asked me to pray with her while I was working on the prayer question, and unintentionally reading Carl Jung's *Red Book* while working on the dream question. I was treated to little artifacts that I didn't write, but the *Big Holy Moment* snuck in with a helpful wink to pepper these pages. If a single person whose eyes grace them feels even the slightest hint of levity, connectedness, or understanding, well then I guess my compass steered me in the right direction after all.

Before diving in, here are some words from Alice Ann Bailey's introduction to *Initiation, Human & Solar* as a preface for what follows:

“It is to be recognized that throughout this volume facts are alleged and definite statements made which are not susceptible of immediate proof by the reader. Lest it be inferred that the writer arrogates to herself any credit of personal authority for the knowledge implied, she emphatically disavows all such claims or representations. She cannot do otherwise than present these statements as matters of fact. Nevertheless, she would urge those who find somewhat of merit in these pages that they not be estranged by any appearance of dogmatism in the presentation. Nor should the inadequacy of the personality of the writer act as a deterrent to the open-minded consideration of the messages to which her name happens to be appended. In spiritual issues, names, personalities, and the voice of external authority hold small place. That alone is a safe guide which holds its warranty from inner recognition and inner direction. It is not, therefore, material whether the reader receive the message of these pages as a spiritual appeal in an idealistic setting, a presentation of alleged facts, or a theory evolved by one student and presented for the consideration of fellow students. To each it is offered for whatever of inner response it may evoke, for whatever of inspiration and of light it may bring.”

Thanks for stopping by, I hope you find something in these pages that serves you.

With love,  
*BHM*



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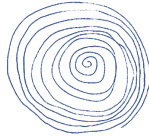
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What would you consider a perfect hour?  
How would you attain it?



Right now! Surrender!

The only true definition of perfection is existence *as it is*. When you relieve yourself of the binding dualities of good and bad, you let go of the idea that *somewhere, anywhere*, could be more satisfying than exactly where you are right now, this very instant.

Reading these words, sitting where you're seated, breathing the air you're breathing, with the people you're with (or alone if you should be so lucky), in the precise state you are in... this is perfection.

Once you've abandoned these arbitrary, inhibiting qualifiers, then, illusion fades. Then, all hours are perfect. Because this hour belongs to the Friend. And if you squint your intuitive (third) eye, you can even see them. They're all around you, giggling and winking with playful affection. Hiding in the charming way the light is striking the wall, or the joyful chirping of the birds outside, or the sweet smells coming from the next room.

Don't be a stranger, be a gracious host when the Friend arrives. Make them feel at home, as they are always reminding you of your own at-home-ness. Soon, your recognition will sharpen and their appearances will seem to multiply—you won't be able to escape them. And why would you? They are the source of laughter, love, joy, light, and relief. They are the very root of existence, they are our refuge from material dread. Their intimate tent, which surrounds you – even now – whether you have learned to sense it or not, is whispering tender affections to your hand-me-down spirit.

“O human beings! You are fortunate. The clarion call of the Universal has reached you. That very call is vibrating in every cell of your body. Will you now lie inert in the corner of your house? Will you now waste your time by clutching ancient skeletons to your breast and moaning over them? The Supreme Being is calling you in the roar of the ocean, in the thunder of the clouds, in the speed of the lightning, in the meteor's flaming fires. Nothing will come of remaining idle. Get up and awaken the clouded chivalry of your dormant youth. The path may not be strewn with flowers - an inferiority complex may seek to hold back your every advancing footstep, but even then you have to proceed onward, tearing the shroud of darkness. You will soon rend the thick darkness of despair on the way to the attainment of the Supreme State, and advance onwards in the swift-moving chariot, radiant with the sun's brilliance.”  
(Anandamurti, 187)

It will serve you to abandon the part of yourself that wants to convince you that it is possible to out-perfect the Friend. It's a losing battle. And once you surrender, bless us all, you shall inherit no less than heaven on earth.



## Does Happiness Have a Cost?



For the sake of clarity, let's define happiness as it will be used both for this, and all answers moving forward. When talking about happiness, we're not interested in anything temporal, trivial, or qualified, but a deep, sustained state of contentment. For the purpose of our conversation, happiness has everything to do with our comprehensive well-being and a welcome-ness to the myriad potentialities of life. Happiness is the difference between those who are in love with life and those who are not. Those well practiced in love appreciate the difference between 'feeling good' and being Happy. Any judgment which attempts to dim the brilliance of that love evaporates with the appreciation that contained within each instant is all you could ever wish for, and even in your darkest moments, there is a light that radiates from within you.

Each of us is born with the seeds of happiness, a propensity to be happy. The only cost, if you want to call it that, is the effort and maintenance it takes to cultivate those seeds. Like any other bud, happiness demands care, attention, sunlight, and water. So you must tend to your happiness. It is a process, not an achievement.

Right now, in this moment right here, you can access and experience pure, infinite, blissful awareness. That sensitivity lies dormant in your consciousness at all times. Once you make up your mind to develop and cultivate your practice (this is a decision that requires great mental stamina, but that's all it demands), a peaceful gratification and fulfillingness will blossom from deep inside of you. You will learn to experience life through the lens of an all-encompassing sense of love and ease. Your well will spill over, and worry will become a foreign language.

I don't know that there's a goal to this living thing, but if there is one, it is surely the pursuit of this state.

One of the trickier parts of tending to your happiness garden is that we inherit many troublesome myths about happiness from our environment. For example, the myth that happiness is something that comes later in life, or that happiness arises as a result of material/financial abundance, or that happiness might be found in another person\*. Simply put, any narrative which tempers your capacity for happiness is a mental obstacle that necessarily must be uprooted and unlearned in order to find true fulfillment. "Fortunate means that a man has assigned to himself a good fortune: and a good fortune is good disposition of the soul, good emotions, good actions." (Aurelius, 36). At the end of the day, we get to choose for ourselves which

\*These myths must be abandoned in order to find peace. I could go on about the psychology of capitalism, and why the myths around it are so deeply entrenched in our society, but that's for another project. All I'll say is happy people make awful consumers.



narratives we use to relate to our surroundings. It will serve you to reflect upon the stories that frame your understanding and consider their contributions to your happiness.

This is the path. The pursuit of temporal satisfaction and the putting off of would-be happiness is counterproductive to life itself. There is no reason to delay, and it is ridiculous to work towards anything else. All paths lead to this singular destination, so resistance is only delaying the inevitable. Delight in the effort, celebrate the cost, and happiness will become effortless.

### Tools for a Bountiful Happiness Garden

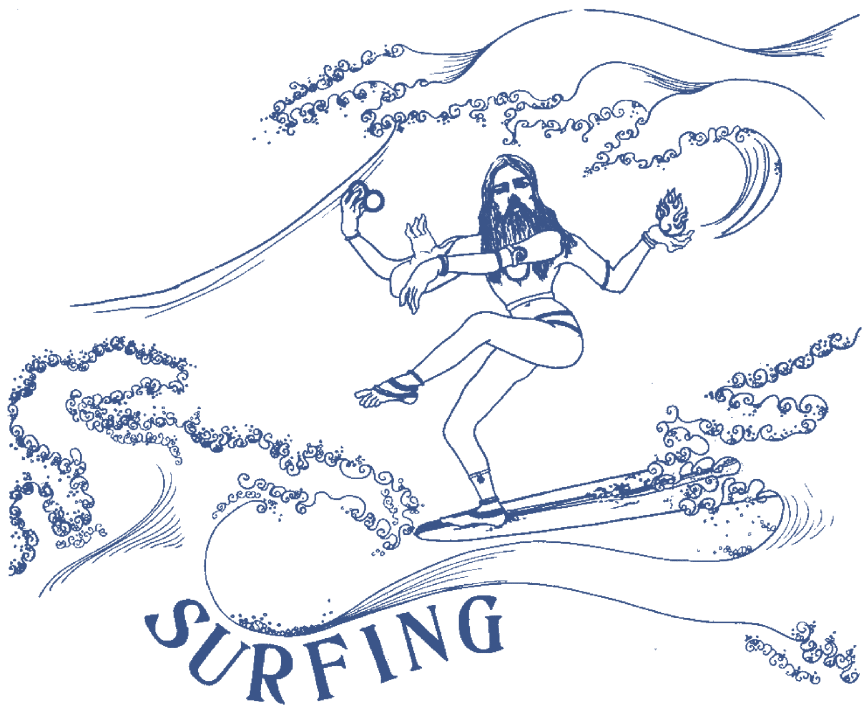
- Meditate.
- Be as sincerely affectionate and gracious as possible. It's ok to fake it at first if need be, it will become natural in time.
- Don't take yourself (or anyone) too seriously. Reality is absurd - enjoy it.
- Commit to the development of a skill (sport, craft, instrument, language, etc.), always be learning.
- You are what you eat - pay attention to your body and honor your vessel with nourishment that makes you feel good.
- Try journaling / therapy.
- Get good sleep.
- Go on walks, walking is medicine.
- Spend as much time outdoors as possible.

- Moderation, moderation, moderation.
- Consider what your 'best' looks like, and learn to balance honesty and compassion in its pursuit.
- Try new things as often as possible.
- Don't ever be afraid or ashamed to ask for help.
- A critical, yet often abandoned tool for those of us of cynical, secular disposition is faith. Our rational minds struggle feverishly to preserve our beloved skepticism, but I urge you to suspend your dualistic compulsions and tune in to your intuition from time to time. You will be surprised by what it has to say, and even more surprised by the relief you feel once you get the hang of it.
- Finally, and this is perhaps the most important tool in the box, find ways to be of service. Selflessness is the root of happiness. Devoting your life, your efforts, and your intentions to something bigger than yourself is unquestionably the surest path to happiness. That's why affection is so important. And time in nature. And these practices of growth. Because these are means to experiencing that which is both our essence and the essence of the entire cosmos. No act can be too small. What one person can offer is not comparable to what anyone else can offer. Whether it's listening to a loved one, sending a thoughtful card to an old friend, sharing your talents and abilities to bring joy to others, there is no wrong answer. Every day when you rise, thank the Friend for making you their servant. Ask for nothing more than to be of service to them. We are

all connected, and in our service to one another, our spirits blossom and the mysterious beauty of which elevates the whole garden ever closer to collective bliss.

“Joy should neither be made, nor sought, it should come, if it must come. You should not serve your personal devil. That leads to superfluous pain. True joy is simple: it comes and exists from itself, and is not to be sought here and there. At the risk of encountering black night, you must devote yourself to me and seek no joy. Joy can never be prepared, but exists of its own accord or exists not at all. All you must do is fulfill your task, nothing else. Joy comes from fulfillment, but not from longing.” (Jung, 491-492)

“People want happiness, want composure, and want peace. In the course of their efforts to get happiness, people realized that happiness could not be found in finite objects, but only in that which is infinite and limitless - *nálpe sukhamasti, bhúmaeva sukham*. A little happiness is no happiness, and ends quickly. No sooner do you put a delicious but small item in your mouth than it dissolves. Only a craving for the item persists, and you agonize with an unfulfilled desire. It follows that if you want to enjoy real happiness, then you have to find something that will never come to an end, and will give you complete satisfaction that will never come to an end. The source of this happiness, however, is no one but *Parama Puruśa* Himself, *Puruśottama*.” (Anandamurti, 92)



What would you have to not achieve / not have  
to say your life wasn't happy when you die?  
Or what goals, things do you have in life  
that you deem necessary to a "good life"?



Let's say a "good life" is the expressed state of a satisfied individual.

Several years ago, I was blessed with a wonderful, significant trip. Inspiring as it was, it left me with a dreadful feeling of conclusion, like a period at the end of a long book. I felt as if all the trouble of my life had been wrapped up and tied in a bow, and was ready to move on... but life just continued happening, day in and day out.

This existential weariness created a fog of despondency which took the better part of a year to pass through, but bearing this dreary state forced me to reconcile the inner paradox I was now faced with. I had to learn to transform my jaded conclusion into a humble awe. My inability to relate my sense of completion to something sacred and eternal was keeping me from connecting with the simplistic unity of all that is. The better I got at integrating this understanding with my most mundane of my observations and movements, the more the fog cleared.

I also learned that you can't live your life waiting for punctuation. The marks will arrive precisely on cue, and with utter disregard for what you think they ought to look and feel like. It will serve you to let go of what you think is "best" for you, and to surrender with gratitude to whatever life offers you—especially if it's not what you expected, and even more so if it makes you a little afraid. The challenge is to find joy in our absurd, dumbfounding meaninglessness without getting bored, jaded, or otherwise complacent.

For me personally, the checklist for a "good life" includes:

1. Being of service to others and in effect to the beloved Friend
2. A sense of connectedness with other living beings. Call it love, or intimacy, or understanding
3. Confidence that I am doing my best (Right Effort)

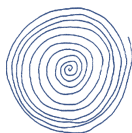
This requires a continuous flow of healthy, stimulating challenges to keep growing, balancing recognition of growth with continuously seeking for higher ground. It was through practicing unqualified love, self expansion, and striving with sincerity to serve others that I was able to free myself from the fog, and fall in love with life in all its paradoxical splendor. I believe this is the secret recipe to overcoming existential dread.

The real question is, what does it take to be satisfied *now*? It can't be stressed enough how important it is to ask yourself: what do I want *now*? What do I need to be happy *now*? It is so tempting to shy away from these questions because often the answers make us uncomfortable for one reason or another. Not to mention, we are often taught to conflate the question of what we want with what will give us the most worldly pleasure. Remember, nothing will come of remaining idle. Forget the "when you're older" nonsense. There are no guarantees. Learn to love the confrontation with your fears, doubts, and discomforts. Yes, they will demand change - inertia is not an option. A 'good life' demands constant, diligent work of sitting with yourself, coming to know the honest answers to these questions, and pursuing them relentlessly.





## What does it mean to be a woman?



Let's start by considering the definition of a woman. For the sake of this exercise, I am going to make a slight edit to the verbiage, and rather than discuss womanhood, I'd like to unpack femininity. Because as our friend Hafiz tells us, "I view gender as a beautiful animal that people often take for a walk on a leash and might enter in some odd contest to try to win strange prizes". To be a man, to be a woman, it is sort of a loose thing.

As a social body, we are collectively developing a more nuanced relationship to gender, deepening our comfort with the fluidity of these identities. It makes sense to abstract our understanding because necessarily all human beings are endowed with masculine and feminine characteristics, yin and yang, we need both. No one is 100% masculine or 100% feminine. For the health and harmony of our physical bodies, it is necessary that our energetic and hormonal systems express both of these two opposing qualities.

So let's explore them, keeping in mind that these are generalities and there are obviously exceptions to the rule.

The feminine is inextricably tied to qualities and associations pertaining to motherhood. Fertility, sensitivity, compassion, receptivity, and passivity all live in the realm of the feminine. This is very much by design, as these traits have evolved through natural selection to maximize survival of the species. In addition, selflessness (servitude), cooperation, group-mindedness, and interdependence are feminine attributes that are essential in their own ways to the thriving and surviving of offspring, and extend to the survival of greater bodies - a family, a community, etc.

It is the feminine disposition to consider compromise. This means that given a limited set of resources, feminine leaders have an intuitive ability to evaluate the nature of those resources, and to distribute them not necessarily in an 'even' fashion, but in a qualified, "fair" sense: taking into consideration the myriad factors which might lead someone to merit more or less than their share at a given time. In this way, the feminine is the multi-track mind.

Masculinity is expressed in relation to the paternal, though these qualities hold less gravity to their essence than the feminine. In terms of paternalities, masculine attributes tend to include independence, assertion, discipline, and self-orientation. It makes evolutionary, biological sense for men, the hunters and protectors, to have more selfish, aggressive characteristics. The fathers that survived and ensured survival for their offspring often had to depend on those instincts, so the masculine has evolved to emphasize these traits.

Over the course of human history, the qualities more commonly associated with the masculine have played a dominant role in shaping our complex society. The way these characteristics are embodied in our environment reflects our collective balance of yin and yang. Especially considering the history of what's broadly referred to as western civilization, there has generally been an overexposure to the masculine characteristics. The masculine bias does not value to the same extent, and as a result, does not teach feminine virtues in the appropriate proportion. In an ideal world, feminine and masculine qualities would be expressed in a balanced manner. As mentioned before, balanced does not mean a simple 50/50 split. Communities are dynamic systems and require an intuitive sensitivity to navigate. What harmony looks like from one moment to the next is determined by the cumulative shifting energy of the collective body, which is why...

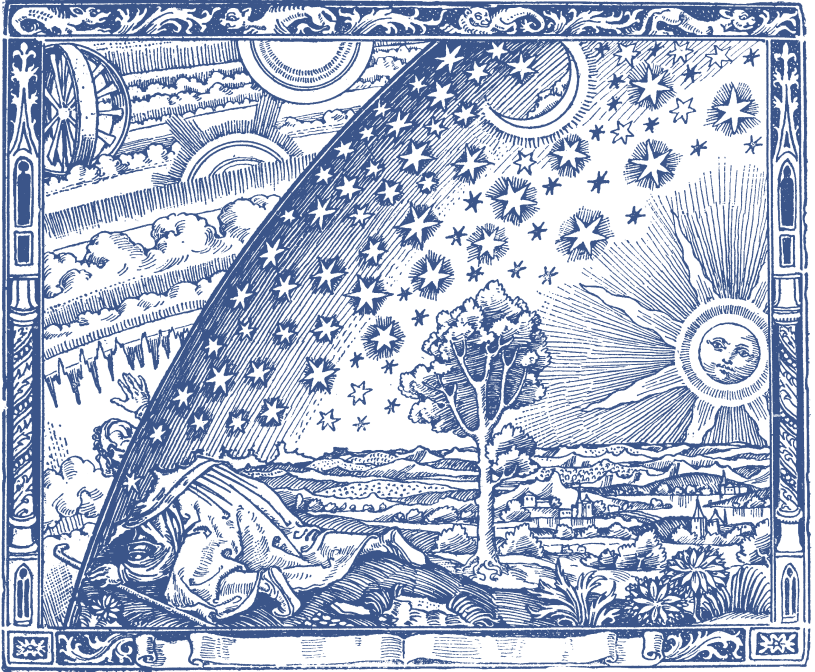
You guessed it...

The only world in which a holistic, sustained balance is possible is one in which individuals of a strongly feminine disposition are the ones making decisions on behalf of the collective. In other words, true harmony for mankind is only possible with feminine expressing individuals in charge. I don't make the rules.

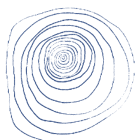
So what does it mean to be a woman? To be a woman above all else is to be of service, and that is truly a blessing.

“You can hardly say of your soul what sex it is. But if you pay close attention, you will see that the most masculine man has a feminine soul, and the most feminine woman has a masculine soul.” (Jung, 227).





## Who are the characters of your dreams?



In the same way that man is made in God's image, the characters of your dreams are made in your image. The beings of our dreams could not exist if not for our personal awareness. Each character is animated by, and so reflects, a specific aspect of your subjective, or what we'll call unit consciousness. In this way, these personalities can be understood as unique projections of that individual awareness. In other words, you are the characters of your dreams.

With respect to our awareness, there is always going to be subject and object - the point of view, and that which is viewed. Your unit consciousness functions as both the object and the subject of your dreams. This is true even if, for example, you are not personified at all in a particular dream, and so experience it as an all-knowing awareness. That perception, that poetic omniscience, still retains its subjectivity. If you could meta-analyze your state of being in the dream, you would be able to identify a feeling of "I", your "me", your subjective self. This "me" of your dream is a continuation of the "me" you experience in your waking state.

The universes created from the experiences of your dreams are thought-projections from that same “me,” with the addition of all the unconscious processing and experiencing done by your “me” throughout your life (and previous lifetimes, but that’s for another question). This is all to say that the characters, settings, and narratives of your dreams are filtered through your subjective perspective of the “objective reality” of your wakeful state.

Because it is our own mental waves that animate the activity of our dreams, our dreams behave in a sense like mirrors. These mirrors are not pristine, but rather they reflect information back at us through a codex of symbols and metaphors (this happens to be true of our waking life as well). Cosmic consciousness conveys information to us via metaphors and symbols in what we experience as “objective reality.” In Sanskrit the external world which we understand as “objective reality” is referred to as *maya*, or the cosmic illusion. This divine language is made up of the myriad character projections which we experience with our waking consciousness as other beings, as well as our intuitive instincts. Due to our immersion in the universal mirage, we are often unable to appreciate the symbols for what they are, and we create great suffering for ourselves and others by participating in the drama which arises when we mistake the illusion for the ultimate reality. In fact, there is only one reality and it is One. We are all connected to each other from the source of supra-consciousness the very same way the characters of your dreams are all connected to your unit consciousness. This unifying meta-awareness, or



Cosmic Consciousness, is all that really is. Your waking life is as illusory as your dreams, and with the cultivation of your awareness, that truth becomes increasingly self-evident.

Go ahead and meditate on that for a minute if you'd like...

So you may ask, well then how does one define reality? What does *real* even mean? And in return, I offer the thoughts of Carl Jung, who says in *The Red Book* that the characters of our dreams “are real because they are effectual” (249). I quite like this statement because for one, it disregards the absurd notion of an “objective reality” which is simply an impossibility unless of course, it was God’s perspective we were talking about. And two, it touches on an all too often overlooked consideration, especially in a world that is so deeply entrenched in materialism and structuralism. The singular relevant measure of reality by Jung’s definition is its “effect,” which is necessarily qualitative in nature. Did your dream impact you in any way, shape, or form? Then regardless of if it can be quantified, consider it real my friend.

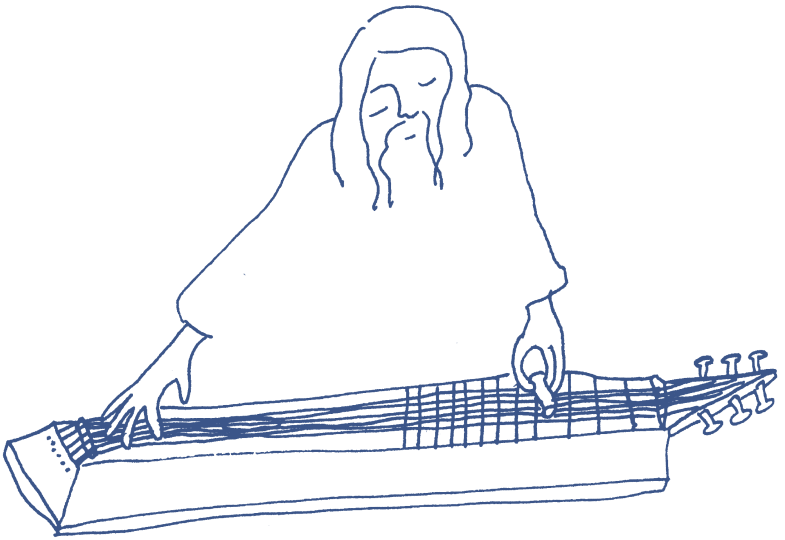
Because our dreams are expressions of our “selves” without the filter of our conscious ego, dreams often offer us the clearest channels to our intuition and divine guidance. Again, the language of dreams is incredibly nuanced, and as with any second language, it takes a great deal of practice to develop fluency. But with care and attention, you can channel a finer sensitivity to your intuitive awareness and access the subtler messages the Friend is sending you via your dreams.

It often takes the inhibition of waking consciousness with the help of dreams to tune in to those sweet whispers that are always helping to point you home. Much to our ego's chagrin, that journey home demands an unavoidable detour through hell, and so often we resist the guidance of the voice or choose not to listen, foolishly thinking we can find an alternate route.

The consequence for ignoring your intuition? Nothing at all. You are just buying more time idly cycling through *maya*. Eventually, you will start to get antsy and an agonizing hunger for something sacred will spark in your innermost being until you finally surrender to your demons and your God. Then, your spark will erupt into a blaze of glory. You will find harmony with the great flow once again, and an astonishing relief and gratifying quality of well being will accompany you wherever you go.

Dream sweetly, loves.





## Is there ever value in escapism (TV, film, fiction), or should we only spend time pursuing meaning?



While the consumption of media is often a form of escapism, I want to quickly note that this is not always so. Any action can be both escapism and a pursuit of meaning. The difference between the two lies in the intention and the attention committed to it. For example, it is possible to mindfully watch a film, and to be entirely checked out while meditating. Another small point is that fiction and story-telling is one of the most primal tools mankind has for communicating meaning, and reducing it entirely to escapism dismisses the great capacity it has to enlighten. Meaning is implicit, there is no need to pursue it. You will grow weary and cynical very quickly if you spend all of your time looking outside of yourself for meaning.

“The fact is that we are far removed from our own real self, and we have little desire to confront that self. Instead, we run from any encounter with our real selves, choosing aimless trifles over the truth. Then we try to convince ourselves that we’d be more than glad to live the spiritual life and take up praying, but there’s never enough time for it, because all the cares and worries of our lives take up all our time. And yet, what is more important: the redemptive eternal life of the soul, or the short-

lived life of the body, which we spend so much time attending to? It is this that leads people either to good judgement or to stupidity.” (*Way of A Pilgrim*, 100).

A critical condition of mindfulness is attention: presence, awareness, concentration. When we endeavor consciously or unconsciously to escape, we remove ourselves from the present moment. Intuitively, we know that it is best for our spiritual progress to maximize our presence in our day to day experiences, which is to say, to escape as little as possible. But something that is often misunderstood about walking the spiritual path is that it is the middle path, not the perfect path. There is inherent compassion baked into the journey that allows plenty of room for error. In fact, error is essential to the path itself. We get to be gentle and forgiving with ourselves when we take any step that we feel is “off the path”, in the wrong direction. The truth is, there’s no such thing. So long as we return our intention to our highest good, there will continue to be growth in our spiritual development.

It’s also useful to consider *why* we escape. What are we escaping from? For most of us, the root of escapism is the very tender nerve of loneliness. At birth, we are torn from the unity we have with our mothers, and from the mother of creation. Human cognition relies heavily on categorization and duality to make sense of the world around us, which often works against us as the world is very fuzzy and cannot be understood as discrete binaries. Especially in relation to the self, our experience of the material world makes us feel separated from

the source, and escapism allows us to forget the aching we feel for true connection. When we limit our understanding of our “selves” to the physical makeup of our bodies, dissatisfaction is a natural consequence because this way of thinking isolates us from our environment and the beings we share it with.

To see through the illusion, we must look the monster of loneliness square in the face. This requires the voyage I mentioned in the last question through “hell,” and a disciplined approach to presence. The practice of learning to see oneness as it is is the curative herb that lies at the root of our loneliness. Overcoming the fear and discomfort that comes with confronting our most sensitive vulnerabilities is a life’s work, not an item on a to-do list.

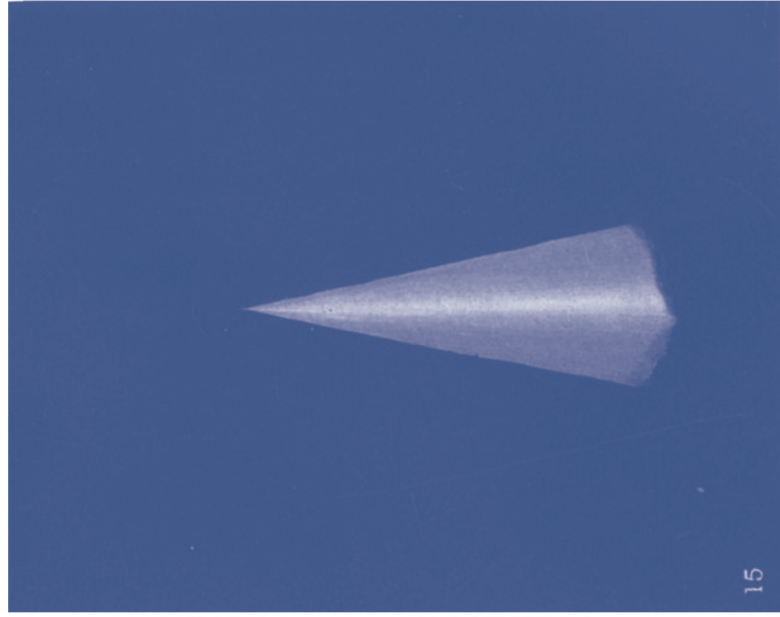
Sometimes you just need a break, and that’s ok. The worst thing you could do when you’re already weary from bearing the burdens of existence is to go on criticizing yourself for not having superhuman stamina. Relax, breathe, check in with your body. Would Christ be upset with you? No. Christ would forgive you for your “mis-step” (which again, it isn’t). So you can forgive yourself too.

But while you’re escaping, if you can, try to pay attention to the qualities of escapism you’re most attracted to. It’s likely that you gravitate towards narratives or messages which are acting as a subversive compass, directing you in your distraction back towards the source of what you are escaping from, that curative herb that will heal your aching love wounds.

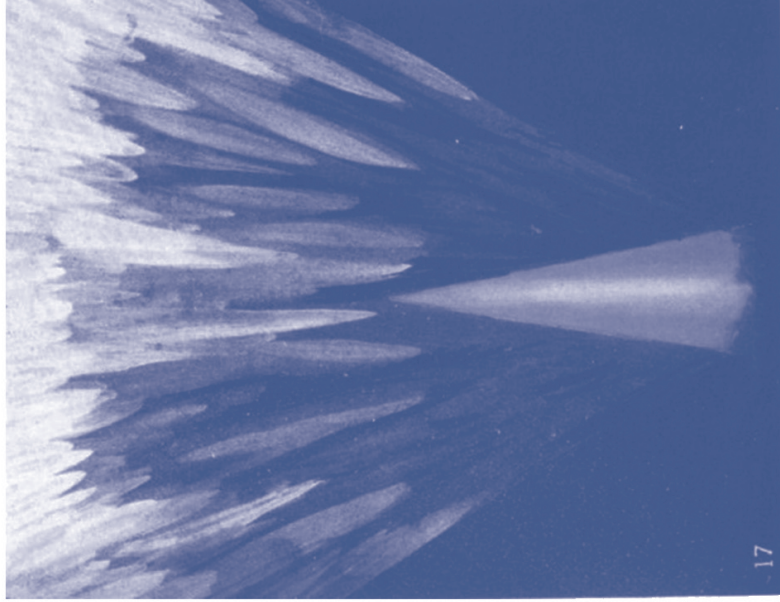
By the grace of nature, fruit doesn't drop from the tree until it is ripe, and you can't force a snake to shed its skin. Don't pass criticism on yourself if you yourself are not yet ripe, if you aren't meeting your self-imposed standards of success or progress. In fact, let go of any narratives surrounding success and progress entirely. Be patient, compassionate, and understanding. Your blossoming is a matter of time. Show up, do your best, and let God do the rest. When gratitude is due, offer it lovingly and liberally. When you are ready, you will make the changes necessary to realize that whatever you are avoiding is in need of your care. You will stop running away from your pain and fear. You will learn to confront the uncomfortable, to disarm it by seeing it for what it is, and an intoxicating relief will flood your being as you discover the absurd emptiness therein.





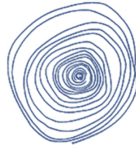


Upward Rush of Devotion



Response to Devotion

## What is a prayer?



Brain steps down energy radiating from stars through optic nerve to pineal gland arranging these myriad photons into a neurological, space-time grid.

It conveys the influx of light as a field, mentally.

So thought is a form of organized light.

Non-physical variables, my wish, intent, expectance also react to and transcribe energy.

Even if mind never operates as slowly as the speed of starlight, your future dwells gracefully in the space of your imagining. (Berssenbrugge, 20)

The universe is composed of matter and energy. Modern quantum theory suggests that matter is in fact more or less condensed energy. So we can say that everything is, in essence, vibrating energy. This is true not just of material structure and measurable properties like light, heat, or sound, but of abstract internal mechanisms like thought and language. When you have an idea, electric stimuli shoot around your nervous system,

generating impulses, mental images, emotions, etc. When we pray, those mental waves resonate both within us and become manifest in the world around us. The vibrational quality of a prayer is like dropping a pebble in a pond, it will ripple, interacting with the myriad other waves, and create patterns of interference and harmony depending on the context.

“Every thought gives rise to a set of correlated vibrations in the matter of this body, accompanied with a marvelous play of colour, like that in the spray of a waterfall as the sunlight strikes it, raised to the  $n$ th degree of colour and vivid delicacy. The body under this impulse throws off a vibrating portion of itself, shaped by the nature of the vibrations-as figures are made by sand on a disk vibrating to a musical note- and this gathers from the surrounding atmosphere matter like itself in fineness from the elemental essence of the mental world.”  
(Besant & Leadbeater, 18)

A prayer is an act of surrender. It is understanding the limits of our control in life, and also a recognition of something beyond ourselves that might have more control. It doesn't matter what you believe from a religious perspective. It is a human thing to pray, and prayers are incredibly powerful.

The laws of karma and physics tell us there is a natural order to life. It is important, if not crucial, to remember that each of our small, subjective minds with their small, subjective capacities for understanding will not fully comprehend this order. As a result, life may appear chaotic and disordered from

our individual perspectives, and you may very well feel that to be true. But from the macroscopic lens, there is absolute order, symmetry, and balance.

What this means in relation to prayer is that what you pray for, and whether or not your prayers are answered, is entirely a product of these natural laws. Which is to say, whatever is meant to be will be. There is never any need for fear, resentment, insecurity, or to take it personally when prayers appear to fall on deaf ears. The Friend with its infinite wisdom will always give you exactly what you need, but only when you are ready for it. Patience and detachment are central to this practice of surrender.

Thoughts construct reality. As one learns to direct their prayers towards the infinite, away from selfish and worldly affairs, life rewards us with a tremendous wealth of abundance and freedom. The more loving your prayers, the more intoxicating the very act of prayer becomes. In this way, there are degrees of prayer ranging from the most self concerned to the most selfless. Praying for harm to befall another for your own gain would lie at one end. While the most selfless prayer is “O Lord, I ask for nothing from you. I want nothing but to serve you and your creation because it is pleasing to you.” This is the prayer of a devotee, the personification of love, the form that bliss takes. Devotion is the path to union. Union is the expressed state of bliss, the oneness of love.

So the question is left... how to pray?

“If you want it to be pure, correct, and delightful, then you must choose any brief prayer, consisting of a few but powerful words. Repeat it frequently, for long periods of time, and then you will acquire a taste for praying.” (*Way of a Pilgrim*, 125)

While words are most common, they are not essential. Visualization is a powerful tool in the devotee’s arsenal. Attempt to experience the feeling of gratitude you would feel if you were already receiving what you are praying for. Put what you want in your mind. If you don’t know what you want, consider something abstract like abundance, love, acceptance, gratitude, or if you’re looking for a challenge, try servitude. The most important thing is to pray as it feels natural to you. Use words, paint a mental picture, or invoke emotionally that which you desire and sit with that longing, concentrate on it. Let it radiate from inside you until you feel a sense of completion. Start by holding your prayer for a breath, then two. According to Abraham-Hicks, manifestation requires at least seventeen seconds of continuous concentration. And at the end, remember to surrender the prayer and its ripples, where it goes is out of your hands now. Be at peace with whatever comes of it.

Let it slow you down. You will come to pray with increasing selflessness. In time, love and bliss will color your every waking (and sleeping) thought. Your desires will fade until all you long for is intimacy with the Friend. When you pray for the eternal, when your intention becomes limitless and you direct your heart towards pleasing the Friend, you will

naturally adopt a serene disposition. You will tread lightly along the path, nothing will distract you as you go. Your prayers will develop a graceful clarity. It takes practice. Your manifesting abilities surely will blossom.

Offer devotion and gratitude whenever possible, return to one, loosen your grip, and watch your garden bloom.

“No prayer, be it good or poor, is lost before God. Inner freedom, warm desire and spiritual sweetness are indications that God is rewarding and comforting you for your valiant efforts. While weariness, inner darkness, and aridity indicate that God is purifying and strengthening the soul and is saving it through the exercise of patience.” (*The Pilgrim Continues His Way*, 111).

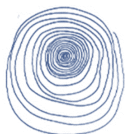
“What is the correct way to surrender? Prayer? Asking God for this and for that? There the responsibility for what you ask is yours - you might ask for something very inferior, although you approach the All-Powerful for it. The best prayer is, “O Lord, do whatever you think fit and best for me. I do not know in which way lies my good - You know.” (Anandamurti, 241).

“A prayer of the Athenians: rain, rain, o dear Zeus, down on the ploughed fields of the Athenians and on the plains. In truth we ought not to pray at all.” (Aurelius, 29-30).





## What is the difference between luck and coincidence?



“Everything that takes place comes by way of consequence or continuity” (Aurelius, 56)

There is no luck, nor is there coincidence. Good fortune and synchronicities appear to our minds because our capacity for perception is limited by our biological machinery. There are natural laws which govern the universe very systematically. The trouble is, when trying to grasp this order from anywhere short of the top of the celestial mountain, the best we can do is piece together vague patterns from the spectacular symmetries at work molding this great illusion we call life, and so we’ve invented superstitions to make sense of the noise.

If we could see the whole pond, all the karmic stones endlessly dancing across its surface, and the myriad manifestations of each little ripple, it would become obvious very quickly that there is nothing that occurs which could be called an accident or luck. Everything is simply cause and effect. Our small unit consciousness’s inability to perceive the whole doesn’t make it any less true\*

There is nothing in life that is not a gift from the Friend. Take nothing for granted! You are where you are right now, reading these words as a direct result of sacred law. Welcome home, I'm so happy you're here. You are invited to a holy wedding! There is a profound union taking place all around us as we speak. Creation is embracing us as one, with a mother's love, and if you quiet your mind with me for just a moment, you might start to sense the warm, tender glow of her affection. It's in the air you're breathing, the colors you see around you, the texture of the page on your fingertips, the splashing of these words across the pool of your mind.

Pause with me for a moment, will you? You've been reading so intently.

How do you feel? How is your posture? Your breathing? Are you aware that you are God? Because you are. Are you treating yourself as you would treat God? You know it's never too late to start. Are you treating everyone else as you would treat God? Because you can't forget they too, are God. Every last one of them - even that one you're sure couldn't be. There is no such thing as coincidence, love. There is no such thing as luck. You are where you are, every instant, every interaction, every thought, dream, obstacle, doubt, surprise... it's all been shepherding you into the blossoming of your arrival to this Holy Moment.

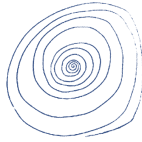
\*Incidentally, if you'd like to obtain an objective, cosmic perspective and see our 'whole' as it is, I can't recommend enough taking up a spiritual practice that teaches the union of the subjective and the objective – the many with the one, which arises naturally from any practice of unqualified devotion.

Can you feel it? Maybe even a little bit? Now do yourself a favor and let go of the notion that anything could possibly be which is outside the Friend's dutiful persuasion. Nothing is outside the jurisdiction of natural law. And once you emerge unfettered, resplendently from the bondage of illusion, ahh... like magic! There is nothing to fear.

Bliss to you all.



## Why Meditate?



*“Consciousness is substantiated by purely first hand internal experience. Through meditation, it is possible to experience higher consciousness every bit as real as your sitting here in this room... to sense your own consciousness is one with the consciousness of the whole universe, that it’s with you as well as all around you. The more we expand our sense of reality, and our sense of being, the more we feel connected to all beings, the happier we are, the less fearful we are, the less lonely, because we realize that all is a part of us, and we are a part of all. The inner quest facilitates the embracing of all within ourselves.” (Dada Gunamuktananda)*

According to my guru Shrii Shrii Anandamurti, the human need for meditation is:

1. To reduce stress and tension in our everyday lives
2. To quench our thirst for limitlessness
3. To evolve consciousness

He says external splendor, ritualistic movement, and acceptance of any scriptures are not necessary. In fact, regular practice of meditation helps us arrive at a deeper clarity with respect to our belief and disbelief. As our mental horizon

gently unfurls, we gradually approach the transcendental state of realization.

We can intuit the practical benefits of meditation like increased concentration, stress relief, etc. These physiological transformations are easily understood by the intellect. As you embark on your practice, as I encourage each of you to do, artifacts will begin to appear which lie beyond the scope of the intellect. There is an unraveling of the self into the eternal, a sweet tasting liberation which blossoms from your devotion to the beloved Friend, and a sublime awakening to the interconnectedness of everything in the universe. All of this is incomprehensible to our intellect because it cannot be quantified or observed directly by the senses. As Dada Gunamuktananada puts it, meditation is “intuitional science.” It is a path for our consciousness to come to know the most fundamental truths of the universe - not externally through “objective” measurement, but internally through enlightened awareness.

With the help of meditation, we dial into our internal compass, crystalizing our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. As we become attuned to the higher, more subtle layers of consciousness, we are guided towards the paths which reinforce a state of harmony and effortlessness.

Meditation offers clarity to those reflecting on life’s most challenging questions like: what do I want? What do I need to do to feel satisfied in life? What is love? What is it I should *do*? And how much is enough? As you establish yourself on

the journey to limitlessness, life will present you with hints, glimpses of truth that will comfort your spirit in the face of uncertainty and disorientation.

On top of that, you will get better sleep, improve your health and well being, reduce your cravings and unhealthy urges, increase your energy, minimize anxiety, unleash rapids of creative inspiration, cultivate selflessness, obliterate complexes and insecurities, learn how to serve your body rather than be a slave to it, deepen the connections in your life, weed out existential dread, abolish fear, fall in love with life, and discover a grounding force which will provide purpose, direction, and at-homeness while navigating life as a stranger in this world.

And none of this holds a candle to the ecstatic bliss and transcendence that arises naturally from practice.

Of all the matter we know in the universe, self-consciousness is very rare. It evolved like everything else, from the ethereal to the crude. The crude form refined over time, growing in complexity through entropic clashing up the orders of life... this cycle of evolution is called *pratasyncara* in Sanskrit. The origin and completion of this cycle is *Parama Purusa*, The Friend, Cosmic Consciousness, One. From the one comes many, and from the many, the return to one. Meditation is the act of reuniting our unit consciousness, our I-creature, with Cosmic Consciousness, restoring it to its cosmic abode, completing the cosmic cycle.

“The mental body is an object of great beauty, the delicacy and rapid motion of its particles giving it an aspect of living iridescent light, and this beauty becomes an extraordinarily radiant and entrancing loveliness as the intellect becomes more highly evolved and is employed chiefly on pure and sublime topics.” (Besant & Leadbeater, 18)

With practice, an individual’s unit consciousness becomes more refined, like any muscle with exercise. And just like the development of limbs or other biological tools evolve for the fitness of a species, so too the evolution of consciousness is a tool for humanity to cultivate. “Since happiness is the cherished goal of all, and the desire for happiness is not to be satiated without the attainment of limitlessness, and then again since this attainment of limitlessness itself is *dharma sadhana* (spiritual practice), then *dharma sadhana* is indispensable for every living being. Creatures inferior to humans cannot do *dharma sadhana* due to their undeveloped minds. But humans can, and the one who does not do it ill fits the epithet of human being” (Anandamurti, 19).

So, where to start?

Sit for a few minutes. Turn off all devices and distractions. Close your eyes. Notice your breathing. Scan your body starting with your toes, and try to tune in to any discomfort you experience. Create an image in your mind of releasing that tension or pain. All the while, breathe. Each time a thought creeps in, notice it without judgement, let it go, and



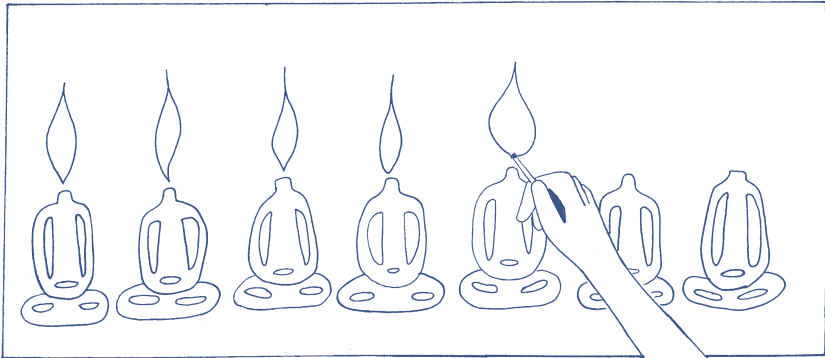
return to your breath. Whether visually, with a mantra, or by mentally creating the feeling, direct your awareness towards our beloved Friend, losing yourself in the currents of devotion gently cascading you into blissful eternity.

Start here, and remember that like any sort of exercise, meditation comes in countless forms. Find the method that resonates most for you, be playful with it. If you can, do your best to find a teacher. Remember teachers come in many shapes and sizes and will appear only when you are ready to receive what they have to offer. That being said, setting an intention to find a teacher is a great place to start.

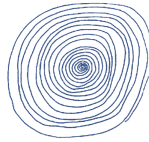
Finally, be prepared to struggle because that's the whole point. There is no 'winning' or 'succeeding' in meditation. As with life, you show up, do your best, and let God do the rest. It won't always be fun or flashy, you will go through periods of prolonged stagnation, but you must not get discouraged. The Friend will be there with you all the way.

“Remember to retire into this little territory of your one, and above all do not distract or strain yourself, but be free... the universe is transformation, life is opinion.” (Aurelius, 20)

P.S. Remember that the experience of meditation cannot be intellectualized. Scholars churn the butter of the scriptures, but devotees drink the buttermilk. One is ultimately satisfied, the other tired and thirsty.



## What is the ideal programming for your non-denominational Sunday school?



This one needs a bit of context. In the summer of 2020, amidst the trappings of quarantine and restlessness of social discord, I started mentally sketching an idea I had for a non-denominational Sunday school. For so many of us during this time, the world felt dauntingly out of control. There was nowhere you could turn to find concrete answers, and the murky ambiguity paired with the violent reactionary quality of those days took its toll on everyone. For me, something about spelling out the details of a make-believe idyllic sanctuary brought a good deal of comfort.

There were a few really sweet ideas that came from the exercise... imagine a lush garden that the children would learn how to cultivate - mapping the lessons of the garden more broadly onto life itself, sharing land with a home for the elderly so people of all ages could engage with and learn from one another... and so on. The further you venture along the spiritual river, the wider the stream gets. As the internal compass is pulled with stronger and stronger attraction towards the infinite, you start to see that no matter which direction you take, it leads to the same destination. All that

matters is that you do everything in your power to progress along the path.

A weekly Sunday school, like any other Sunday school, makes a lot of sense as a tool for giving children their spiritual bearings from a young age. However, unlike traditional Sunday schools, this one would be devoid of dogma, teaching relevant bits from all traditions and philosophies as they apply, centered around five interdependent themes.

The first is love - specifically, devotional love. Devotion is not only the most direct path to enlightenment, it plants seeds which reap a deep infatuation with life, the self, humanity, and of course the Friend. The art of devotion grants the satisfaction and grace that comes from consecrating everything in our lives, from the most grandiose to the most ordinary. Lessons around this theme will aim to cultivate tenderness in the spirits of students, providing the tools to empower them to appreciate the sacred design of life, even when it feels most disorienting. We want to set our children up for a harmonious relationship to their emotions, attachments, desires, insecurities, and ambitions. They will go about their lives carrying themselves with the grace and levity of a devotee.

*Song: Raffi - "Baby Beluga"*

The second theme is collectivism or selflessness. A natural consequence of devotional living is a heightened awareness and appreciation of the interconnectedness of the universe,

and as a result, the fading of selfish motivation. As the children grow and are able to explore the more nuanced implications of our cosmic unity, we will construct exercises that expand the horizons of self, from the individual to interpersonal relationships, to the community, to the planet, and beyond. We will start with simple ideas like the importance of sharing, and doing *mitzvot*, or good deeds. Throughout the program, we will work towards more mature themes like environmental responsibility and how to be of service in ways that are harmonious with the spirit. The children will be encouraged to develop their individual strengths for the collective benefit of society, understanding that they can provide the greatest service by contributing the skills with which they are especially gifted.

*Song: Woody Guthrie - "This Land is Your Land"*

The third is joy. What could be more important to the art of living than levity, laughter, and play? It will be made crystal clear to our children that life is theirs to delight in. We will have lessons exploring the differences between sensory pleasure and happiness, unpacking the roles that guilt, pain, responsibility, and sorrow all play in joy. If we do our job right, the students will cultivate an understanding of the fact that happiness doesn't always *feel* good. There will be sound assurance that once you learn to enjoy the little efforts demanded by our day-to-day existence, life is transformed into Heaven on Earth.

*Song: Rosy Grier - "It's Alright To Cry"*

The fourth is the middle path. There are so many ways one can lead their life, from the most humble to the most excessive. Without judging their "rightness" or "wrongness," we will consider the merits of the full spectrum of living in relation to whether or not it serves each individual. Children will be tuned in to their intuitional compasses, "teaching them to fish," so they can guide themselves healthfully and harmoniously into adulthood. The emotional and spiritual grounding earned through this practice will make them a source of light to their communities throughout their lifetimes. Moderation, balance, flow, and discipline will be the major pillars of this theme.

*Song: Donovan - "Happiness Runs"*

The fifth and final lesson will be yoga, meaning practical spiritual living. All of these abstract ideals are empty without an understanding of how to apply them to our lived experiences. In these lessons we will explore the many definitions of service. What does it look like to live a life filled with joy, love, selflessness, and discipline all at the same time? We'll have conversations about how to understand, or at least relate to the great mysteries of life, what it means to be a responsible citizen of the world, and how to take care of ourselves. By engaging in sincere, open conversation with the students on these subjects, we hope to provide a sturdy, nutritious foundation on which a rich, fulfilling life will blossom. By grappling with these life-long curiosities and challenges, we hope to bypass the

treacherous clutches of worldly conditioning with its deceptive illusions of scarcity and aloneness. Our aim is to clear the path for healthy, gracious, blissful beings, surfing the tides of life with the confidence of one who knows the true meaning of surrender.

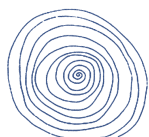
*Song: Cat Stevens - Moonshadow*

# MAKING IT SACRED





## What is a dream to you?



Of all the questions I was given, this one proved to be the most challenging. Its open-endedness posed an abundance of directions to explore, and I struggled to take the first step in any of them. My hesitation was rooted in a relationship to the idea of dreaming. Wakeful dreams, the stuff of manifestations and visualizations, have long posed a personally challenging paradox. The great teachers all say that if there is something one desires, it should be pursued wholeheartedly without hesitation. If this isn't possible for whatever reason, then the proper course of action is to surrender the seed of longing and reflect instead with gratitude on the abundance of blessing already bestowed upon one's humble spirit. Desire and attachment are the root of all suffering, so in order to obtain freedom in this life, dreaming is to be met with stern prudence and discipline, so I often opt to forgo the practice entirely rather than dance with the devil.

That being said, with my Aquarian sun, I am no stranger to the world of ideals. There is a "dream" I often revisit which outlines a loose sketch of what the optimal expression of life on Earth looks like. It's a vision I can claim no ownership of - countless writers, artists, and thinkers have each in their own

way independently arrived at this ideal conception of reality. It's the utopian sanctity found in Dostoyevsky's *"The Dream of a Ridiculous Man"*: "It was like being in love with each other, an all-embracing, universal feeling." It is a dream of innocence, of simplicity, of harmony... at the crest of every breath a spilling over of abundance, devotion, and fearlessness. Absolute sincerity. Absolute unity.

How does this dream manifest in a practical sense? This is where my vision breaks down, but there are a few things I do know. For one, the Earth is not meant to sustain this many people. We are terribly over-burdening the carrying capacity of our planet, and as a consequence, harmony is impossible in this state. I am also certain the beings of this dream would lead utterly devotional lives. The highly evolved collective consciousness would inspire unfettered intuitive insight to guide decision making both on a personal and collective level. Cosmic order would flow effortlessly, each being maximizing the utilization of their unique strengths and abilities, allowing the abundance of nature to meet the needs of the collective.

This deep understanding of divine will instills a sacred feeling of unity. Everyone will carry themselves with patience, selflessness, and satisfaction, because every atom in their being will vibrate with the recognition that they have everything they need. This in turn cultivates a lightness of spirit, a radiance, and a fearlessness. Death, loneliness, insecurity, and confusion will all be delivered to this light, which by no means suggests they disappear. Rather the clarity of vision arrived at

through this sentient lifestyle disarms these dreadful facts of life, allowing us to see them for what they are. Thus we are set free with a radical acceptance and gratitude for all.

The shared origin of everything in the universe will be understood on a fundamental level. We will live in constant remembrance of our divine interconnectedness and thus nothing and no one will ever be taken for granted. It will be a culture of grace, mindfulness, and servitude; balancing outward devotion and consecration with an appreciation that the journey is *necessarily* an inward one. This means that before we can optimize the service we wish to offer others, we must first learn the art of serving ourselves - our highest selves, and taking due care to be compassionate and forgiving along the way.

I know this ideal expression of being is fully possible - even today - despite how distant a reality it sounds. In a way, it is the world I imagine the children who graduate from Sunday school to grow up and cultivate. The paths to this dream could manifest in countless forms, but the biggest obstacle to overcome is each of our independent attachments to the comforts of the gold-plated shackles of “the way things are.” It is each of our responsibility to work towards this dream individually if we care at all to taste the delicacy of its bliss.

What if there was another way? Do you care to be free?

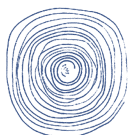
“Only in walking does one learn how to walk. And then - miracle - one walks.” (Lispector, 61)

“In all spheres of human existence, in the aesthetic sphere as well, humanity should live collectively. You should live in unison. You should vibrate together to the same music. You should move in a common psychic flow. You should fight collectively against your common enemies.” (Anandamurti, 232)





## Is the idea of living an extraordinary life a reasonable or appropriate goal for humans and/or a particular individual?



Absolutely not.

Why is it that the idea of an extraordinary life is so appealing? It is because the thought of being extraordinary is exciting to your ego. We want to feel bigger and better and more important than other people. Subconsciously we like the idea of being more loved, of being more special to our beloved Friend. You think “oh, once my life is extraordinary, then I will be accomplished, then I will be satisfied.” But once your life is extraordinary, now will you rest? No. You will never rest. In fact, when you set “extraordinary” as the goal, you will certainly never rest because you will never be “extraordinary” enough - always comparing yourself to others and criticizing any progress you make along the way.

We come up with such silly justifications to this end. “But what if I want to be extraordinary in my service to others? Surely this is the way?” The answer is still no, and you must be especially wary of such traps along the path. This way of thinking is still attached to the arbitrary qualifier - so now

your service is qualified. If you do the greatest service, but deep down you crave recognition for its extraordinary nature, this is not true service. This is not the service of a devotee. This is not *bhakti*, not love. The insincerity of your selflessness becomes a *disservice*, not only to yourself, but to the evolution of the collective.

Remember you are on the path, *effortlessly*. There is no need to pursue extraordinary-ness to receive the Great Gift of the Friend. From the moment you are born, you are showered with blessings. What is so troublesome about being “ordinary”? What do you feel the need to overcome? Do not ask for more. Be gracious, children. Be humble. Be at ease. The path of least resistance, a path so seemingly ordinary in nature, is actually quite extraordinary - that’s the secret. As a devotee, each obstacle along your pilgrimage transforms, like magic. The irritating blockage that disrupts your journey turns out to be a detour through a shimmering meadow that dances in the twilight and giggles with affirmation. The sun winks you farewell as it tucks you into the snug warmth of humming crickets and whispers immaculate reassurance from the cosmos that you are precisely where you ought to be.

Come home love, don’t stay away so long. We long for your company exactly as it is - beyond its ideas of ordinary and extraordinary.

If being a true servant is your concern, good. Show up and do your best. Let go, let God, and you can’t miss. If it pleases

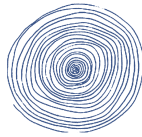


the Friend that you should be “extraordinary,” rest assured you will be. And if not, all the more pleasant. It is as simple as that.

Release the notion that “extraordinary lives” are somehow more valuable. This thinking is poisonous to the spirit and a grave misunderstanding. All life is sacred, all life is given by God. God’s love is all there is - sinners and saints, ordinary and extraordinary - it is all the same in the tender laughing eyes of the Friend. So laugh along, love a little, and remember you are exactly as you are intended to be.



## What is your perception of the soul?



It is impossible to speak directly of one's perception of the soul because the soul itself transcends perception. It exists beyond the scope of the senses, and so in order to articulate the essence of the soul, mystics and artists alike have relied on analogies and metaphors. These linguistic tools work to kindle a warm sense of verity, offering an implicit feeling that "certainly this is so," "I've known this before, perhaps in another place and time." The voice which recognizes this familiarity is the voice of our soul. And so our perception of the soul is best described in relation to the divine recognition of Truth that we feel when we are most tuned into it.

It can be useful to think of each of our souls as a holographic projection of the cosmic soul. In Michael Talbot's paper "The Holographic Universe" he looks at the implications of a 1982 experiment by French scientist Alain Aspect. One of the most interesting conclusions he gleans from the experiments is that the universe is at heart "a phantasm, a gigantic and splendidly detailed hologram."

The critical thing to know about holograms is that they work by projecting light through a two-dimensional surface,

creating a three-dimensional image. If you had a hologram of say, a rose, and you were to cut a piece of the two-dimensional surface on which the image of the rose was printed and project light through it, each piece wouldn't project a piece of the rose. Instead, a smaller but equally whole image of the original rose would appear. You could extend this idea to imply that every subatomic particle within the structure of the surface of the hologram somehow contains the entire information of the rose within it.

This is both a terrific metaphor for understanding the complexities of quantum physics and a useful comparison for describing the soul.

When it is said man is made in God's image, or that life is an illusion, these can be logically explained by the holographic principle. Everyone and everything in our universe is a divine projection of Cosmic Consciousness. Life is an "illusion" in the same way the projected rose is an "illusion". But that does not mean that what we perceive in this three-dimensional reality doesn't exist. It simply means that our holy gestalt is dependent on the projection of higher consciousness. Everything in the universe, including ourselves, is animated by the thought projection of that consciousness. The soul can be thought of as the quality of our physical existence that represents the nature of the rose within the metaphorical projection.

In a similar way, we can say the rose lies beyond objective perception. How beautiful is a rose? How sweetly does it

smell? These things cannot be measured or observed in a Newtonian, materialistic capacity. It is a quality, not a quantity - a pattern, not a particle. This doesn't mean it isn't beautiful, or that it cannot impact us in any way. Like our dreams, it is real because it is efficacious. If we limit our understanding and investigation of the universe to what can be objectively measured, we neglect the vast majority of existence.

And just because the soul and these qualitative essences lie outside the field of traditional physics, that doesn't mean we cannot study them very systematically. Anyone with the desire to understand the nature of these rich symmetries and orders of the universe is in luck. There is a vibrant, highly developed intuitional science through which these curiosities can be addressed directly, and you can cultivate an intimate familiarity with the nature of the soul. As you may have guessed, this method is meditation.

There are a few elements of this metaphor worth exploring further. For one, with the knowledge that we are all projections of God, it becomes increasingly clear why spirituality places such emphasis on selflessness and service. Quite literally, serving others is both serving the self and the whole. The same is true when we wrong another.

In addition, the holographic principle illustrates why introspection and self reflection are fundamental to that outward service. By establishing a fundamental awareness of the self, and working to serve that true self, beyond the illusions

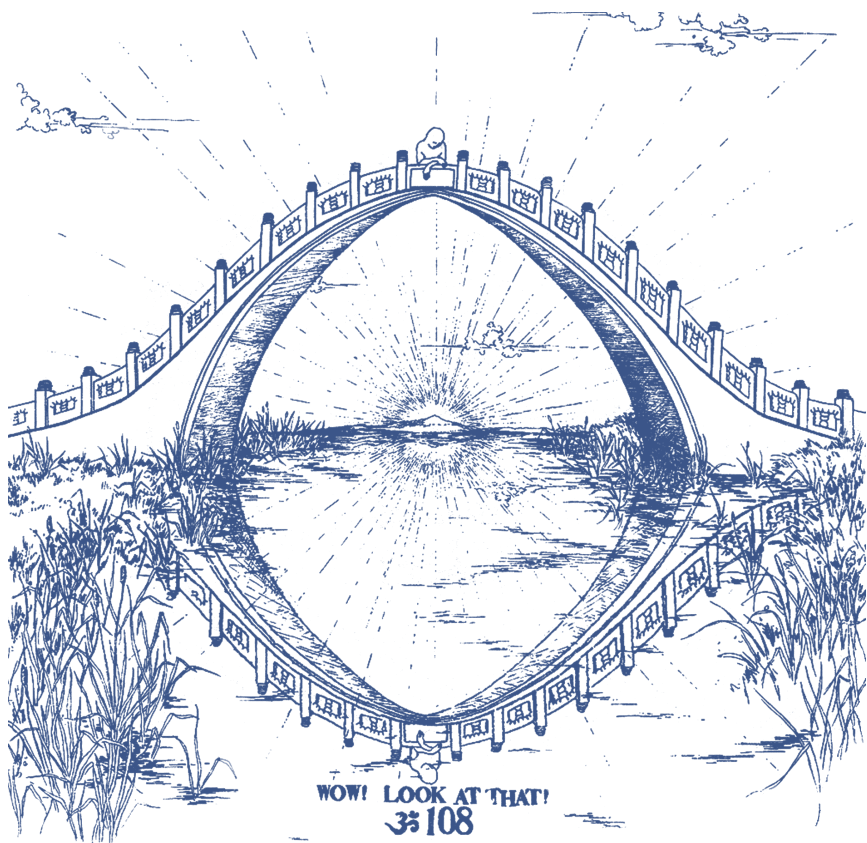
of worldliness, we come to know the image impressed upon every particle in the universe, that of God. The soul of one is the soul of all, that holy form is impressed upon everything in the universe, from the most gargantuan celestial bodies to the tiniest of quarks. No matter how far you zoom in or out, eventually you'll focus in on the Friend's loving wink.

Existing in a constant state of flux, the soul can never be perfectly outlined, it is hazy and loose. Its nature is beyond substance, outside of measurement or judgement, and imperceptible to the five senses. Only the subtlest states of awareness can tune into it, though it is always there. Another metaphor is common to mystical poetry:

The soul can be likened to a delicate, ancient pot. With it, we carry holy water in the hollow carved out of us by our apparent separation from the Friend to and from the well of devotion. We experience humbling relief upon submerging our vessel in the boundless sea of oneness, where we are emancipated from forms, whirling about unfettered in pools of love and union. Each droplet loses itself within the wholeness of that sacred ocean. This is the spirit's journey. There comes a time when your soul will fall from its envelope. This is the great return, the sinking of the pot, the roundness of a circle.

The perception of the soul is all of this, and none of it.

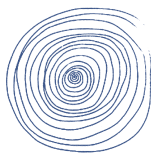




WOW! LOOK AT THAT!  
3:108



## Tell of your past lives. What was your most exciting life? Your most regretful?



“When the clothes become old and tattered, they are replaced with newer ones. This is the law. Nobody wants to wear old, tattered, and dirty clothes. Similarly, when the body becomes old and worthless, it is changed for a newer one.”  
(Anandamurti, 244)

To be born again...

*Samsara*, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, is a natural part of existence. It can be fun to consider the various roles we’ve played in the great cosmic *lila*, or staged drama of reality. I am not advanced enough in my practice to speak to the nature of my spirit’s previous characterizations with any certainty. I have been told by a clairvoyant that long ago I was a Shaolin monk, but identities like these are trivial in nature.

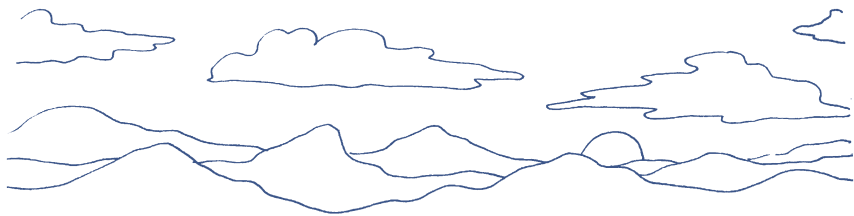
As with the more esoteric, occult powers and abilities that arise from a well-developed spiritual practice, it is essential not to dwell on them. Any fixation, even if it is to knowledge

or skills which arise from your practice, is an obstacle. You must never get distracted on the path. Always move forward. At every step, there will be endless curiosities that will pull you this way and that. It is all too easy to get distracted and start going down a fruitless tangent of the path. This is why devotion and selflessness are once again such critical rooting agents. They will protect you from these interruptions, and keep your momentum always Godward.

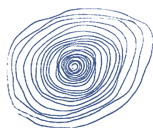
As I ventured to illustrate throughout this volume, we are all one. So you have been, and will be everyone else. This is yet another reason why doing harm to another is harming yourself twice over. So the question returns - where are you now? How can you be of the greatest service to humanity now, in the body you currently inhabit? These questions are pertinent to your journey.

That being said, the lifetimes I am most excited by are the ones most filled with devotion, growth, love, and service. The most regretful are those in which I am the most cowardly and resistant to the Friend's guidance. The path is long, and there is much work to be done. We play so many roles in this great drama, but the personalities themselves, the characters, are empty. They are means to an end. It is best not to dwell on the details of their stories but rather to deeply consider their meaning and the lessons painted into their landscapes. Offer your contemplations of these narratives to the Friend as a prayer that they humbly guide your ship as you sail ever closer to that great, ineffable oneness.

“For human beings the earth is a traveller’s inn, where they will not stay for long. Or it might be compared to a railway waiting room, where passengers from different places come and sit together for a while. The moment the train whistle blows, they forget each other, pack up their bags, and set off for the train. They do not look right or left. *Paruma Puruṣa Kṛṣṇa* [The Friend] is that train, and this world is the waiting room. “ (Anandamurti, 54)



## What is the role of romantic love in spiritual practice?



Because the woman I love lives  
Inside you

I lean as close to your body with my words  
As I can

And think of you all the time, dear pilgrim.

Because the one I love goes with you  
Wherever you go  
Hafiz will always be near.

If you sat before me, wayfarer,  
With your auras bright from your many charms,

My lips could resist  
Rushing to you and  
Needing to befriend  
Your blushed cheek

But my eyes can no longer hide  
The wondrous fact of who you really are,  
The beautiful one whom I adore  
Has pitched his royal tent inside you

So I will always lean my heart  
As close to your soul  
As I can.

(“The Woman I Love,” Hafiz)

There are two ways a person can travel along the spiritual path. The first is as a *sanyasi*, a monk, or a renunciate. The alternative is as a familial practitioner. It is critically important to emphasize that one path has no greater merit than another\*. By forgoing certain problems, you introduce others. The path that is right for you will appear before you naturally as a result of your *samskâras*, or your karmic predispositions.

The role we choose to play means nothing next to the sincerity with which we devote ourselves to the role. It is in the best interest of all beings that we follow the path which feels most authentic to our being, responding to the energetic propensities that resonate within us, and making conscious decisions free from worldly persuasion.

\*This is something I have struggled with personally. I have wasted more than my share of time on this earth feeling guilty and criticizing myself for not committing to the life of a monk. The practice of appreciating my path for what it is, and being at peace with the responsibilities and burdens the Friend gifts to me, takes constant reflection, gratitude, and surrender.

A key distinction between these parallel passageways is that romantic love is only a consideration for familial yogis. *Sanyasis* take vows of celibacy and direct all affection towards the Friend directly. For the familial aspirant, the ideal romantic partnership takes an incredible amount of discipline and commitment.

What is commonly talked about when we refer to “romantic love” is often not love at all. What most people call “love” is often a misnomer for attachment. In our world, most of the examples and models we have for “romantic love” are filled with toxicity, ego, and complexes. Shamefully, there is very little in the way of education to demonstrate enlightened, healthy approaches to romance and familial living. My teacher Sadhana eloquently spoke to this idea, stating:

“Attachment is a natural part of being human. We are not to shun or suppress it, but to channel those tendencies into seeing the other as *atman* [God incarnate], not just personality. If we truly practice this, our relationships are vehicles for remembering God.”

Because that’s what relationships are intended to be - compasses for disoriented travelers pointing home. The ideal partnership is one between two “empty mirrors”. That is, two beings who know the truth of their inner light, and so are able to both honor and reflect it with absolute selflessness and tenderness back at their beloved, with the same intensity as if it were Jesus Christ or Buddha right there beside them. It is critical that one

be sound in the footing on their own path before endeavoring to devote oneself to anyone else. You have to be in tune with your own melody before you can harmonize.

“A relationship starting out as one that awakens love can only remain a living vehicle for love to the extent that it is continually made new or reconsecrated. That is, each partner in love must always strain to see through the veils of personality and body to see the divine essence within - within himself and his partner. And he must come to see the veils as veils... as *maya*, the divine illusion, the divine mother... and worship even the veils without getting trapped into thinking them real. Such ideals are related in the highest marriages, or for that matter, in the highest form of any relationship. Play your role in the divine dance, but know it to be such and worship its divinity.”  
(*Be Here Now*, 73)

Unfettered, affectionate union. This is the intoxicating state of the empty mirror. To know the intimate comfort of the Friend's tent and recognize it in the presence of your beloved. To remain unattached, yet ceaselessly inspired by the treasure chest of secrets buried just behind the veils of your sweetheart, this is true love. This is the role of romance in spiritual practice.

This adoration is necessarily selfless. It sparks within each of us as we play hide and seek with the Friend, gradually awakening to our opalescent wholeness, the holographic nature of our reality. The recognition of this sublime state is abundantly fulfilling. It tears the shroud of loneliness,



freeing us to celebrate this radiant, flowering life without fear or reservation. Liberated and independent of illusion, romance is only satisfying if it further contributes to this blissful state. This is why my teacher Sadhana also says “If only one person in the relationship has *that* goal (the goal of liberation), the other may feel they are not number one, and they would be right.”

This is again why both individuals must first awaken on their own to the burning desire for the Friend, and from there they can discover the hidden mirrors behind the veils of their loved ones. “And in being together in the spirit, be in love together. It’s all making love. Make love in beauty. In joy. In seeing each other in truth.” (Dass, 110-111)

A final thought on romance and the spiritual path. Once again, the concept of surrender is invaluable. We must surrender ourselves, our insecurities, our attachments, fears, ambitions, complexes - all of it must go in order to fulfill our commitment to our beloved. As helpful as a fellow yogi may be to your spirit, you must not develop even a hint of dependence, expectation, or attachment to that being and the connection that you share. If and when it will serve you to find your mirror, rest assured you will. Do not go about hunting for it. Have faith in the Friend, and learn to take refuge in the tent that has been pitched in your own heart. As we surf the karmic sea, tides will come and go. Relationships will grow and change. Remember in all relations - romantic and otherwise - the Friend is always winking at you from behind the veil. So do not grasp at clouds.

Let nature run its course. If your mirror gets cloudy, it's okay to trust that there's a reason, that it will pass, and give yourself the fresh air you need to cleanse your spirit. Romantic partners are here for us as teachers before all else, helping to shoulder the burdens and strife that come with the territory of simply being alive.

If you do not get that from your partner, or cannot provide that to your partner, change is in order. Return your love to the source directly. Regain your internal orientation. If and when the time is right, love overflowing with tenderness, playfulness, and ease will rush into your camp. But only when you no longer need it - only once the pangs of your heart have learned the taste of satisfaction and have snuggled up to the one true refuge, the source of love itself.

In the early morning hour,  
Just before dawn,  
Lover and beloved wake  
And take a drink of water.

She asks, do you love me or yourself more?  
Really, tell the absolute truth.

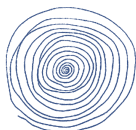
He says, there is nothing left of me.  
I am like a ruby held up to the sunrise.  
Is it still a stone, or a world  
Made of redness?  
It has no resistance to sunlight.  
The ruby and the sunrise are one.  
Be courageous and discipline yourself.

Work and keep digging your well.  
Don't think about getting off work.  
Submit to a daily practice.  
Your loyalty to that is a ring on the door.

Keep knocking, and the joy inside  
Will eventually open a window  
And look out to see who's there.  
("Sunrise Ruby" Rumi)



## What Is Wrong With Your Life?



First  
The fish  
Must say  
'Something ain't right  
About this camel ride-  
And I'm feeling so  
Damn thirsty.'  
(“Damn Thirsty,” Hafiz)

You silly goose, there's no such thing!

Where would anyone even look to find an answer? How can you know what is “wrong”? Certainly I could never say that every last instant of my life has been optimized for maximum pleasure or satisfaction. Nor could I suggest that I have been spared deep wells of loneliness, or that I haven't collected my share of trust scars, love wounds, and a host of other aches and pains while on this astral voyage.

But there's always a choice, and it is infinitely easier to bear these burdens with grace and dexterity when we choose to look upon them as purposeful. By recognizing everything

we experience, from the most sublime to the most dreadful, as an offering from the Friend, we free ourselves to relate to life with a tender gentleness and patience. We absolve ourselves of regret and dissatisfaction. The strange beauty of the path attracts us with its effulgent magnetism by the grace of unqualified gratitude to the Friend. This means faithful surrender to all that is, without judgment, despite how your ego might try to dull life's pallet with pity and crudeness of mind.

If you are struggling, if you believe something is “wrong,” you can rest assured when the time is right, when the lesson is learned, you will be redeemed. If you find yourself pointing outward, thinking “this is not how things should be,” you’ve missed the point. You have forgotten Baba’s grace! Just because you have a human mind, limited in its perceptual and processing abilities, which cannot grasp how and why the Friend has gifted you such a condition, it doesn’t mean that Baba has forgotten about you. Baba never forgets his creation - that is precisely what makes him *Paruma Purusa*, the Friend, God. So in turn, you must do everything you can to remember Baba and his love always.

This truth about life is called *Madhu-vidya*, honey knowledge, in Sanskrit. When you realize this *Madhu-vidya*, graciousness arises from your spirit no matter what greets you at your door. There comes a time when you will arrive at the understanding that, in the words of Clarice Lispector, “not only is this it, this is exactly it.” So trust the Friend. I promise, there is *nothing* wrong with life, such a state cannot

exist. The Perfect Hour is upon us, beckoning your ancient, jaded carcass to drop your ridiculous pretenses and join us in the hysterical celestial dance.

Bliss to you all.

With my sincerest love and devotion,

Your friend,

BHM.

You carry  
all the ingredients  
to turn your life into a nightmare –  
Don't mix them!

You have all the genius  
To build a swing in your backyard  
For God.

That sounds  
Like a hell of a lot more fun.  
Let's start laughing, drawing blueprints,  
Gathering our talented friends.

I will help you  
With my divine lyre and drum



Hafiz  
Will sing a thousand words

You can take into your hands  
Like golden stars  
Silver hammers,

Polished teakwood  
Strong silk rope.

You carry all the ingredients  
To turn your existence into joy.

Mix them, sweetheart,  
Mix them!

(“To Build A Swing” Hafiz)



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With endless gratitude to everyone who made this book what it is, I especially want to thank each of my dear friends who so earnestly offered their questions, Dad, Tim Breen, my family, Sadhana, Luke, and of course our most beloved Friend.

If anything in these pages inspires you with questions, comments, or general feedback, please feel free to send me a note. My address is 2851 Independence Ave. Glenview, IL 60026. If you prefer not to connect the old fashioned way, you can also reach me at [izzyfradin@gmail.com](mailto:izzyfradin@gmail.com).

