

## Choosing a Spiritual Life

A Talk Given by Swami Rudrananda in February, 1972

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A spiritual life is a happy, rich, full wonderful life. You don't study spirituality because you can't succeed in life. It's what you do after success - when you want more. It's a way of living more fully; it's a way of being more happy and joyous. Conducting a spiritual practice is not like being a mental institution where people ring bells and do a couple of chants and think that this will get them into heaven. It is not for people who can't live in the world because they are crippled in the brain or in the emotions. A spiritual life is for healthy human beings who want to live better, live more deeply, and continuously express the joyousness that is God.

When spirituality came to India, India was at its peak materially. It was the renaissance of India. When this great spirituality existed, when Krishna walked and Ram walked, India was a country of opulent wealth. It was the richest country of its time. So was China when Buddhism came in. They were rich countries and could afford to import teachers. That is exactly how teachers came - they were imported. Spirituality of any kind only comes into a rich culture. It is a paradox. So is your life and everyone else's. It takes a tremendous richness to nourish a spiritual seed, and material wealth is one kind of richness. It is like the parable of the sower and the seed. The seed falling on rocks can never come to fruition; only the seed that falls on cultivated soil will take root and flourish.

However, an extraordinary person will use any condition to advantage. There are people who are under incredible tension, but they nonetheless have the capacity to go inside in a profound sense; they are extraordinary. Many brilliant people who came from backgrounds in which they were properly nourished were put into concentration camps. Put under such conditions, they made a choice; instead of going outside, they went inside. That is the perfect situation of spiritual development. But only for someone who has had the necessary preparation; if you put a thief in jail, he certainly won't end up as a great spiritual person unless he really changes the pattern of his life by reading and studying and meditating a great deal. The basic content of the person who develops a spiritual life through extreme experiences has to be remarkable to begin with. Then the pressure added to the content brings about great spiritual growth.

You have to make the choice. You can't build a spiritual life on tension. Tension eats energy. So if you are fighting for your very existence, if you look at someone who is subjugating you and are filled with hostility, then all your energy is eaten up by the tension of that hostility. It is impossible for such a person to have a spiritual life. Only if you can detach from the physical, if you can make that sacrifice and turn inward, only then can you reach for the spiritual.

Spirituality means that you have to look inside yourself every day and feel the joy and sweetness there. Visualize something sweet and full - a ripe peach or a pineapple - and feel your heart open. Feel the sweetness inside and allow it to flow downward, from one chakra to another. But if you do this from tension, what are you doing? It's like squeezing a green pineapple, a green apple - you are squeezing something that doesn't have any juice. You can feel more alive by feeling the gentle sweetness inside you and you can open from that. You can't "open" by ripping and tearing with tension.

There is no content to anything you might extract from yourself by this ripping and tearing. You must find gratitude and sweetness and open from them: open from sweetness, from joy, from gratitude, from consciousness. Then something opens in you that can be a sweetness in your life. But if you are crying and complaining and trying to open from that tension, what will you open? Something that anybody else would try to drop off a bridge and lose. If you open from tension, you create something that has no nourishment, no sweetness, and you take that inside. You are opening to your self-hate. What then will open? What will it smell like? What will it do to you?

It's as if you were a grocery store, with all this material laid out inside. If you run right up to a rotten tomato, a rotten cabbage, and say, "This is what I am," part of you is that. But if you go to a fresh and beautiful tomato or cabbage, and put your love and attention there, that will be what you smell. If you surrender them, the rotten things will fall right through you and become fertilizer. So why should you deal in unripe or rotten things? This is your own choice. If you go to something inside you that is sweet and you open to that, it will marinate your whole body in sweetness. If there is something that has gratitude, it will open your whole body to gratitude.

You have to be intelligent about it. Try to find something inside you that can love God, something that is sweet. Bring your attention there, and open to that. If, instead, you sit and open to the fight you had last night or to the bad things that have happened, you are opening inside to tensions, to negative vibrations, to all kinds of poison, and this is what will pervade your body.

When you come to God, bring to God what is God's - the finer, higher parts of yourself. Bring love, bring quality. This will give you the nourishment to transcend all the rest. If you open to tension, how will you have the energy to rise above it? You are relating to things that don't give energy, life or sweetness. It is your mind that is sick, nothing else. Your sick mind goes to things inside that its tortured self thinks it deserves. You are eating rotten tomatoes, green apples, and you have a stomach ache. You are choosing it yourself.

When you sit and moan and cry, and you go to that in you, every day is a funeral - every day is torturous. You put yourself in the torture chamber, when next door there is a merry-go-round. Why open the door to the torture chamber when you have a choice? The other door is always open.

There is a vastness in you. There is a tremendous vastness in you; there are things that are wonderful. I didn't select any of you unless I found in you something beautiful and

sweet. I can find sweetness in you; why don't you find sweetness in yourself? Why don't you find the things that are wonderful in you and open to those things? It is very real. You have a closet full of clothes and when you shovel snow you pick out some old shoes and old pants to wear. But when you sit down to do your spiritual work, you should take out the brightest prints, the most beautiful fabrics, the most joyous things to adorn yourself with.

Open to that within yourself and have a party. Every day will be Mardi Gras. It will be beautiful. You will draw this beauty through you and magnetize it for yourself - that is what you will attract. It's your way to celebrate your life.