

Spirituality in troubled times - A primer

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We live in extraordinary times. We are being ripped apart by happenings at local and global levels and things are set to get worse. Whether you like it or not a devastating phase is ahead. How do we cope? I have found spirituality to be a great coping mechanism. Maybe it can help you too? It will help you deal with your personal problems and it will help you in alleviating the pain of others by developing your compassionate nature. Since a long time my friends and readers have been urging me to write a note for this troublesome age; this is it.

This world is like a windowless house. Many keep searching for the window so they can peep out. Out? That window is within us. It is not easy to locate and open. But it is not impossible either. It requires intent and resolve.

It is futile to think death will open that window. The mind that is creating the world survives death and again drags us back to this world.

We need to cease interacting with this world. We need to ignore it to an extent that it realizes we are not working material. It then leaves us alone. The scriptures talk of not making any plans. No *sankalpa*. No conceptualization. One just rolls on like the wheel of a cart that has detached itself. After some time it will lose its momentum and fall.

Rebirth is a cruel fate. To be embodied is to invite suffering. To be embodied is to be expelled from our true nature. In the Krishna Uddhava Sambad Sri Krishna talks about Kali Yuga; the present age. The people will forget God, he tells Uddhava, and be entirely taken up with worldly matters. Uddhava is shocked. "That is the worst fate that can befall a person!" he responds. Spirituality is the dynamo, the energy center within us that guides and soothes our soul and makes life bearable. Life is full of suffering. The body is the disease. Sri Ramana called it a tumor. He said the only purpose of life is to turn inward and seek the Self.

"Punarapi janamam, punarapi maranam, punarapi jananim jathare shayanam". To take birth again, to die again, to experience the torture of being in your mother's womb! The sadhus and sannyasis contemplate on this to develop the quality of *vairagya*, dispassion towards matters of the world. The Buddhists have a skeleton in their monastery which they view every day. The *Vaishnavs* witness the cremation of dead bodies. All of this is to contemplate on the temporary nature of the world and turn towards ones real identity. They also have another phrase etched in their minds, *Sadhu Sabdhan!* Be alert O sage do not fall into the traps of the world. For those aspiring for realization the world is a bed of thorns to be wary about.

Why did the world appear? The consciousness, it is said, felt lonely. But it has no wants and is complete in itself and therefore cannot feel lonely. Others say it wanted to know itself. What do you do to see yourself? You look in a mirror. But even as the mirror image is a dutiful reflection of yourself, it is the opposite of you. Similarly the world reflects the opposite of the consciousness though it is constituted of it. Why is this so? To feel pleasure you need the experience of pain. Therefore there is a diversity of experience in this world. We are thrown out of his Kingdom to suffer the pain of separation and seek him to obtain fulfillment.

According to the *Sankhya* philosophy the whole world is made up of the basic 5 elements, space, air, water, earth and space, that emerge from the conscious base and their derivatives leading to 24 tattvas in all. This too deals a mortal blow to the “earth is real” concept just as quantum physics has come to the conclusion that energy is the basis of the world. The spiritual aspirants keep this in mind. Sri Chaitanya had startled his mother in childhood by saying that the world is a play of the *Panchamahabhoota* and is not real.

Is there a heaven or hell? Heaven and hell are activities of the mind prompted by the force of Karma. They are chosen by the mind in an attempt to free itself from the ties of karma by experiencing its results and thereby emptying the impacts. But bereft of the right knowledge the task remains unaccomplished and more complications result. The mind travels propelled by propensities and experiences pleasure and pain. What it needs to know is that both ought to be abandoned. It needs to go beyond the concepts of pleasure seeking and pain avoiding, embrace everything that comes across without getting disturbed, and assume the stance of the witness.

In the Manduka Upanishad is the tale of two birds. They are sitting on a tree and are the mirror image of each other. One remains aloof and simply watches. The other is always busy eating the fruits. When the fruits are sweet it is happy. But when bitter fruits come along it becomes very unhappy. Often while it is not happy it turns and watches the other bird that does not engage in action. Then after repeatedly suffering it starts admiring the bird for not being engaged in eating fruits. At the end it realizes that the other bird is its own higher cosmic self. It then flies and merges itself into it.

So we have a watching self (Shiva) and a thinking and performing self (Shakti). They are also called Purusha and Prakriti. Prakriti is the world of manifestation and action. The field of Prakriti consists of pain and pleasure. Involved in this, people undergo bitter sweet experiences that sap their strength and ultimately lead to dissatisfaction and loss of energy.

Should one give up action? No. One should be mindful of the higher watching witness self and identify with it while acting out one's role in the manifested world. This ensures perfection in work, dropping of the baser qualities, developing detachment and compassion, and also moksha or liberation. This is called Karma Yoga which is very important for the manifested world.

God does not want the world to end with mature souls seeking liberation. So he places many obstacles on the path. The person desirous of liberation should thus balance ones role on earth with the desire for liberation. It is like performing Sava Sadhana. While meditating sitting on top of a corpse (the world), the corpse is invaded by spirits who make it agitated. At that time the one meditating feeds it with pre arranged food and keeps it quiet. So the person in this world must deal with it adroitly even while seeking liberation.

With this exercise the mind becomes refined and one practices Bhakti Yoga or devotion. With devotion comes knowledge and the practice of Gyana Yoga - moving forward with clear knowledge. This leads to refined practices like Raja Yoga and the path to liberation opens up.

Knowledge is essential. With the correct knowledge comes correct attitude and practice. Things start falling into place when the attempts are sincere and come from the heart.

Where does compassion come from? It comes from fellow feeling and empathy. What is this fellow feeling? The cosmic self is one. When through spiritual practices the cosmic self starts expressing itself the love for others arises in the heart and selfishness recedes. There are no others at the cosmic level. All are one. You are not helping any other but your own self. Seeing the self in all is a huge blessing. *Selfishness is at the core of all suffering.* One needs to act towards others as one acts for one's own self. One should not harm others even in a dream because one is then harming oneself. Things are complicated when we see multiplicity. Things become simple and divine if one witnesses the play of the cosmic self in all. The realized person has no enemies.

Is there the need for a God or religion? Hindu philosophy is a method of inquiry. It is atheistic in nature and does not depend upon any God or religion. Vedanta is an exercise of meticulous reasoning based upon logic and rationalism. What is needed is conviction, a change of stance and sincere practice. There is no need for anything else.

One needs a Guru. But where does one get a genuine Guru in these days? Maybe it is not necessary that the Guru be in physical form. India is replete

with memories and advice of sincere Sages. If you per chance read about them it is because they have willed it. If you come across such books and you are attracted you have received the blessings of the author. Follow them and they become your Guru. The real Guru is the Self. It is always there with you. The Self pulls you in from inside. The Guru pushes you in from outside. When you submit to the Guru you become the detached wheel.

Books talk to you. They come to you at opportune moments. There is a practice among readers of scriptures to randomly open a spiritual text in times of doubt and turmoil. The answer is often available on the opened page. Suffering from intolerable pain I have often done that. Whenever I have contemplated ending my life I have done that. I have been amazed at the results. But then books can only point. You have to walk the path. Reading is good, but practice is much better. *You can get lost by reading too much.*

Is it necessary to read a lot? Sri Ramakrishna provided a good example. He said if you want to bathe in the Ganges you need not have to bathe in it from the origin to the end. You need to visit it at a point and bathe there. Similarly you need to seek your point of entry into spirituality and practice what you have learnt. If your motive is self realization you should choose one path and stick to it. Otherwise you will be like the person who digs superficially at a lot of places and does not get water.

What books to read? Go according to the religion you are born into. You will realize that the practices of your ancestors have primed your body and mind for them and they are easier to imbibe. But there is no hard and fast rule. The divine scheme of things puts you where you fit the most.

In Hinduism Vedanta is the method of self inquiry and de-hypnotization that leads to self realization. The masters on this path are Sankara, Ramana Maharshi, Atmananda, Nisargadutta Maharaj and his disciples. There are many who have written on Vedanta. You need to seek out what suits you best. In this age mental inquiry is probably the only path.

What happens when you sit to meditate? Meditation is not easy. The mind is projected outwards. The moment you close your eyes it becomes hyperactive. You are reminded about unfinished work and you get disturbed. It is like wading into an ocean. The waves throw you back. A lot of persistence later you experience the calm.

However experiencing the calm is not the intent of meditation. *It is about opening a window that is already open.* You are not an individual. The world is not real. You are the consciousness that pervades the world. Quantum physics reveals that there is a single consciousness, and nothing else. A supreme intelligence is witnessing an illusion of its own volition, of its own creation.

Remain as a witness even in meditation. The thoughts that trouble you can be tackled by a method. When such thoughts appear tell yourself, "To whom do they appear?", and then again go back to your meditation. This helps you reach the source of the thoughts. According to findings of neuroscientists, it is not you that is thinking. The decisions you make are made before you become aware of them! Investigations into the mind reveal many such interesting findings.

The disturbing thoughts, calm, the bliss, the visions, the sounds, the voices, the powers encountered during meditation are to be ignored for they too are

an illusion. This illusion is activated to prevent the practitioner from progressing. Maya wants people to remain engrossed in the world. It does not like people escaping, just as the fisherman is disappointed when the fish manage to jump out of the net.

What happens when you persist? Suddenly the truth is upon you. Your ego disappears as you experience the vast consciousness called *Sat-Chid-Ananda*, the Truth-Consciousness-Bliss that gulps down your petty existence. This is the goal that is to be reached. Swami Brahmananda, the spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna and the first President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, was very specific. "You do not grow two horns upon self realization", he had said, "You simply realize your true nature".

For the unrealized the world is very real and the only thing that matters. The reality is hidden from them. But for the realized souls the world is just a haze as reality illumines everything. Gold ornaments appear different according to their shapes. But for the one who knows they are made up of the same gold, the shapes have no value. Similarly the world is actually made up of consciousness. The different shapes are merely appearances. What did Nachiketa seek of Yama? "Tell me that by knowing which everything else is known." Rouse the Nachiketa within you.

There is a form of sadhana called *Asparsa Yoga*. It is about keeping the senses away from the world. Sri Ramakrishna added another layer by instructing the aspirant to turn the senses towards God. If you give yourself to the world, he would say, it will destroy you. But if you give your body and mind to God, he will save it for you. If you want to desire, desire God. If you want to be passionate, be passionate about God. If you are consumed with

anger, direct it at God and demand that He shows himself. If you want to love, love God. It is as easy as that.

How to overcome the obstacles during meditation? How to go beyond the visions? Say "Get out of my way, O Mother!" This was the advice of Totapuri to Sri Ramakrishna who was unable to proceed beyond visions. When the visions persisted, Totapuri advised him to mentally cut through them with the sword of discrimination. Then he pierced the brow of Ramakrishna with a piece of broken glass and asked him to concentrate there. Sri Ramakrishna did that and his mind disappeared. He achieved samadhi.

No amount of reasoning or logic can reveal the truth. One can only experience it. It is beyond description. *Abangmanasagocharam*. It is beyond the mind and senses; it is beyond our capacity to describe. Words fail, the realized person falls silent. When a sugar doll falls into an ocean it loses itself. Who is left to describe the experience?

When you meditate you invite that consciousness to reveal itself. When Sri Ramakrishna rolled on the ground screaming; "Mother reveal yourself", he was calling upon this consciousness. Ramana Maharshi called the ego the thief that robs us of the knowledge that we are the supreme Self. He devised the path of questioning the ego, "Who am I?" The ego is like the unwanted guest in a marriage. Everyone thinks the other has invited him. But when the questioning starts, "Who is this guy?" he perks up. When this question travels through the marriage party, the thief disappears.

What is the answer to "Who am I"? Sri Ramana says there is no answer. But Nisargadutta Maharaj reminds us that the "I am" is not a person but the cosmic consciousness. This opens up a vast new dimension.

The world does not exist. Nothing is happening. No one is striving for realization. Shocking as it seems this is indeed the truth as expressed in the Mandukya Karika by Gaudapada. "There is no dissolution, no birth, none in bondage, none aspiring for wisdom, no seeker of liberation and none liberated", Verse 2.32, Mandukya Karika. "Nobody is born. Nobody dies. You are the unborn!" So says Nisargadutta Maharaj. The illusion is very deep. Why cling to it? Why think that it is everything? Why waste our time by giving it all our attention?

The *Drig Drishya Viveka* is an inquiry into the nature of the "seer" and the "seen". It comes to the conclusion that the seer, the seen, and the art of seeing are one! There is also no time. The past, the present, and the future are a play of the mind. There is no concept of travelling either. When a devotee informed Sri Ramana that he was leaving the Ashram, Ramana reminded him, *you are not going anywhere*. The world is truly an illusion. You can overcome it through knowledge, reflection, and reasoning.

Why do we call the visible world which appears so real an illusion? Think of it in terms of permanence. Everything in this world has a beginning and end. Reality does not have a beginning or end. It is ever present. What is conjuring this illusion? Our mind. Its power to conjure is evident in the dreams we witness. Those dreams are very real for the experiencer. The world dissolves in sleep when the mind is inactive.

The same applies to all of our thoughts, desires and aversions, fear and assurance, pain and pleasure. They are all temporary. They are not real. What is real is the witness; the one who is ever present in life, in death, and in the in between.

Is there free will? Everything is predetermined in this game. You are simply consciousness undergoing an experience. There are many souls who, at a very young age, get an inkling of what they have to undergo. It is said that the soul is presented the plan and agrees to it before the illusory birth takes place. This is another contemplation that helps tame our ego. Why engage in the pushes and pulls of the world forgetting our real nature? The true fighter fights with the knowledge that it is not he that fights. Remember the words of Richard Bach, no bird flies too high if it flies with its own wings. That third wing is important and it is the one that flies.

Is there a conflict between science and spirituality? Science has actually provided the basis of spirituality by going deep into matter and finding "spooky action". It finds that the universe is made of "dream stuff", the observer being everything. Without the observer there is no world. Faced with such "irrational" findings it finds itself in a quandary and can proceed no further. Spirituality sees the world as the play of consciousness and guides the stranded humanity towards a path out of endless misery and conflict. The macrocosm and the microcosm are one. The same forces play everywhere and in the same pattern. Everything is a cyclic pattern that progresses by completing one cycle and beginning another. Indians know it as the *Chakra* the weapon of Lord Vishnu. *It is this Chakra that moves the world and the events that happen within it. Becoming aware of the consciousness and experiencing it as the sole element liberates the person.*

“A fundamental conclusion of the new physics also acknowledges that the observer creates the reality. As observers, we are personally involved with the creation of our own reality. Physicists are being forced to admit that the universe is a “mental” construction. Pioneering physicist Sir James Jeans

wrote: “The stream of knowledge is heading toward a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine. Mind no longer appears to be an accidental intruder into the realm of matter, we ought rather hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter. Get over it, and accept the inarguable conclusion. The universe is immaterial-mental and spiritual.” – R.C. Henry, Professor of Physics and Astronomy at Johns Hopkins University , “The Mental Universe” ; Nature 436:29,2005)

The Universe is of mental origin, it is the dream of Vishnu. But what is real? The reality is the witness Self. We are the witness. We are the awareness. We must be aware of the awareness and hold on to it. From this awareness springs everything. It is the source and our real identity. The ego deceives us and we become busy with our pettiness and the desires that accompany it. The ego is the mind that propels the individual self and all concepts associated with it. We must lose ourselves to become the Self. We must shut down the mind. The destruction of the mind, *Manonasha*, is the goal.

In my childhood I remember sitting in a library and even while I was reading, I was also contemplating on a deep suffering I was experiencing. I was wondering how I would live. Suddenly I had a mental flash where the words 'remain in the world like a witness', *tui sakshi hoe thak*, startled me. I instinctively looked around trying to locate the source of the words but there was nobody near me. I have always adopted that stance and it has sailed me through the innumerable difficulties that I have experienced. That was my first initiation into spirituality.

"Journey towards God even if you be lame or crippled in spirit, for to wait for healing is to lose time." These words in the book *Spiritual Healing* by Swami

Paramananda of the Ramakrishna Mission provided more impetus. Whatever be ones condition, one should aspire and progress. Life is like a drop of water on a lotus leaf. It can roll off any moment. It is better to be vigilant and practice to reach the goal before the body falls off. You do not know under what circumstances you will reappear the next time. You have come with a bundle of karma (*prarabdha*), acquired more here (*agami*), and more lies in store yet to be tackled (*sanchita*). It is not easy to escape them. You can only burn up all your karma with intense practice and giving up all hope of enjoying the fruits of your action.

Prayer is a good step to adopt though that too is resented by the ego. At every step we realize that the ego is what stands between us and our heritage. We hold our heads high inflated by the ego of worldly knowledge. Bending that head is not easy. It is only after suffering engulfs us and we face the storm of worldly disruptions that we are forced to turn towards a higher power. Suffering is the love that the Supreme bestows on you. It is your mother calling you home.

Is there a need to prepare the body and mind for the spiritual exercise? Yes, there is. We have three qualities or *gunas*; *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. Purity, activity, and inertia. It is *sattva* or purity that is desired. You can change your diet, eat frugally, and cultivate calmness to infuse *sattva* into your personality. You also need to progressively withdraw from the intensity of attraction towards the world.

The body can be tamed with hard work and by keeping busy. Following the time cycles for eating and sleeping help a lot. Keep a set time for meditation twice a day. Taking a good bath early in the morning has a soothing effect.

Vicious habits and passions that are the bane of today's world can need the advice of holistic healers. Do yoga and pranayama if it suits you.

Read up on holistic systems; naturopathy, ayurveda, and homeopathy. They will do you a world of good by detoxifying your body and mind and providing the energy you need.

You need to allow the quest to enter your life. Choose a mantra. Chant it. Think of it the first thing in the morning as you get up. Think again before going to sleep. Keep it at the back of your mind as you work. Read when you get time. Reflect on what you have read. Slowly this will become routine and you will love what you are doing. Sri Chaitanya stressed upon love. Once you love chanting the name of God and derive intense happiness from it, you are saved. *Jive daya, name ruchi, vaishnav sevan.* To have interest in chanting the name of the Lord, paying respect and serving the devotees of the Lord, and serving all creatures with compassion; these are needed on the path.

We may practice and not achieve anything. We may turn the rosary and remain ignorant. The Holy Mother had the answer. It is like you are travelling in a train and you have fallen asleep. Do not worry; the train of devotion is moving towards its destination. You will reach.

Self realization is essential. It is not about losing anything. People recoil from the concept because they are in love with the world, infatuated with it and enjoying what little it has to give and suffering pain anxiety insecurity and fear as a result. Self realization is reaching your fullest potential. It is like gaining your father's property that nobody can ever take from you.

The Kali Yuga is harsh. But it has one thing that is not available in any other age. Self realization is easiest in this age. It is as easy as repeating a mantra or remembering God twice a day. In our topsy turvy world this is the only solace. The ego is the strongest in this age. It reaches its height. However this achievement makes it extremely vulnerable for it loses its mooring and ventures into uncharted waters. As it threatens the existence of the world, forces are set in motion to vanquish it. When it stumbles and falls those that are ready and aspiring are released from the burden of the world.

What is the way if one cannot meditate? The other path is reflection and self inquiry. By constantly reflecting on the temporary nature of the world and the fact that we are the consciousness, *Brahman*, that pervades it, the world loses its grip upon us and prepares ourselves for the truth. The trick is to be aware of the awareness. Another method is to adopt the world of silence. The silent mind reflects the Self. In meditation you seek to silence the mind. There are also other methods of contemplation mentioned in the Shiva Sutras.

The world is a matrix. There are techniques to pierce the structure of the world as revealed by the Vigyana Bhairava Tantra. There are 112 meditations to aid in the process. For example; being aware of the space between the two breaths, the space between two thoughts, listening to a gong as it fades and concentrating on the silence beyond it, absorbing oneself in the constant flow of water in a river, and losing oneself in the constant roar of a waterfall. These are the spaces as are many others. Many of these meditations are a play of words intending to shock you. In that moment of shock you may realize the Self and become silent.

Sri Aurobindo has given us a readymade formula. Aspiration - Rejection - Surrender. You should aspire for the divine, reject whatever comes in the way, and surrender to the divine will. This path requires you to know what to aspire for, be eternally vigilant to ward off errors, and have complete faith on the divine scheme of things.

Faith on the scriptures and faith on the words of the Guru are potent instruments you cannot do without. Without faith you remain blind and the spiritual path does not appear. Spirituality is not for doubting Thomas's. Faith is easy if you understand the power of silence and the peace that passeth understanding. Once you realize that the screaming world is not a place where you can find the peace you seek your faith on the invisible inner world will grow.

The most important thing in spiritual life is to convince yourself. You have to do it yourself. Nobody can do it for you. Your own mind is either your friend or foe. To make it your friend is a struggle you need to undertake. The child needs to start the first steps on its own.

Sri Aurobindo and The Mother also talk of "Grace". The Self cannot be reached by intellectual inquiry or even by any personal effort. It is a mystery beyond the senses. But it is our core. When we sincerely struggle to prepare ourselves for it, it too does its bit and finally drags us in. This is termed as Grace. *Brahman* is open to all and is every ones birth right. A Mother does not distinguish between her children. She loves all equally. When the child is finished playing, throws all the toys aside and yells for her she comes and picks up the child into her lap.

One can pray to deities in the beginning but we need to step beyond it as the ultimate goal is to seek our own divinity. The Master bows to no one. It does not allow anything or anybody to dominate. It is the singularity that pervades. This is a very tricky approach as it may invoke the ego. But to the right practitioner it comes as something normal and self evident. It is actually the killer of the small ego that binds us to the world.

What becomes of the world when you turn inwards? Nothing needs to change. You proceed as before. You love your family, your friends; carry on your regular duties. You become like the maid in the rich man's house. The maid is everything to everyone but she knows in her heart that this is not her family. It is like being in a boat and floating in water. You need to float and keep the water from getting into the boat. Swami Ranganathananda, the 13th President of the Ramakrishna Order, used to stress on this. Be in the world but not of it.

Your personal world will not fall apart if you decide to dive within. A devotee is forever protected. *Yogakshemam Vahamyaham*. "The devotees who constantly think of me, without any other thoughts in their minds, worship Me with single-minded love and devotion, without any other interest than uniting with Me, I attend to their needs and security", says Lord Krishna in the Gita. Here the word "I" carries a lot of meaning. "I" denotes the Lord himself. Sri Ramana has also said, "I protect the devotee who seeks the Self within". When a devotee was meditating in a portion of the sunlit space within the room of Sri Ramakrishna, he personally placed an umbrella to cover him. He did not ask anyone else to do so.

You should not also think that your work will be incomplete if you take to the spiritual path. As Ramana Maharshi tersely commented to a devotees

query, *you will do the work you have come here to do*. He compared the world to a running train. You are sitting in it with luggage on your head as you feel you have to travel with it. But it is enough if you put it down. It will travel with you. Similarly the burden of your worries and duties need not be carried by you. They are travelling in the train and will reach their destiny with the train.

Detachment is a great virtue. Cultivating this quality alone and not thinking you are the doer is enough to reach the goal. You need to die before you die. But it should be sincerely practiced. There is the story of a gardener who killed a cow. Being a person of knowledge he rationalized it thinking that he was not the doer. God was amused. He appeared before him as a connoisseur of gardens. The gardener happily showed him around and boasted about his achievements. Then they came upon the dead cow. The gardener refused to acknowledge he had killed it. But by this time he could sense his mistake. He realized who was standing before him and apologized. *We are often guilty of deceiving ourselves*. The spiritual life requires the head and heart to be together.

The load of your mind can be great. Sri Chaitanya lamented that there can be the grace of God, Guru and the sincere devotee, but if there is no grace of the mind, it leads to chaos. The mind is always there to convince you that you are not meant for the path. It will deceive you by stating that the invisible world does not merit attention. It will pull you in the opposite direction. There can also be negative memories. The trick is to start despite the obstacles.

The mind is like air. Our attitudes ossify it. If we consider our memories to be set on stone, they will be so. If we consider them to be floating on water they

will float away. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, all your sins are like a ball of cotton, light the lamp within you and they burn away in no time. No sin is greater than God's capacity to forgive. If there was the world would not move forward one inch.

The mind is like the untamed horses of a chariot. You need to be a skillful charioteer and move them towards the right direction. There will be difficulty in the beginning. But then you will sense that there is a spiritual current in this world. Aligning to it has great benefits as it carries you slowly and gently at first, and then speeds up its momentum. Do not grapple too much with the mind. It is simply a projector. You are not the mind so rise above it and do not let it dominate you. When you are not the mind why bother about it? If you ignore it, it will subside.

Ramana Maharshi says you do not lose your consciousness upon self realization. It remains. You don't disappear. There is nothing to fear. *The individual identity is replaced by the universal identity.* That identity according to Haidakhan Babaji is Truth-Simplicity-Love. Pure unalloyed intense love indeed is the thread that binds the world. Those who have a glimpse of it during near death episodes say it is unlike anything that they have experienced earlier. They realize it is their home. We as children of God are full of truth simplicity and love. We need to seek that state again. All else is the dross that becomes the source of misery.

Haidakhan Babaji had come to warn the world that **terrible destruction** is going to befall this world that will be ravaged by wars and natural calamities the likes of which have never been witnessed before. As the 5th manifestation of Mahavatar Babaji, he appeared in this world in the year 1970 as a boy of 12 and departed 14 years later in 1984. The only way to stay

sane in this world, he said, is to take the name of God. The name of God he asserts has more power than the mighty weapons the world has gathered. The mantra he gave to the world as the talisman against end time suffering is *Om Nama Shivaya*. He has also provided a narration of the teachings of Baba Gorakhnath. He has blessed that rendering and said whoever goes through it will be liberated. He has not been the only one to have predicted so. Many others have given the same warning that is also reflected in all the scriptures of the world.

Sri Aurobindo had remarked, "I would not like to be present on earth to experience the destruction that is coming".

Sri Ramakrishna has also noted that we live in end times. He advised people to hold on to God. While wheat is being ground to flour, the grains that stick to the central pestle survive. He said that hold on to the pillar of God and you will escape the terrible suffering. Everything in this world is evanescent and survival lies in clinging to the permanent base. Sri Ramakrishna was not a spoilsport. He enjoyed the divine play and derived great joy from it. We also know that the position of Srimati Radha is greater than Sri Krishna. The devotee is greater than God who yearns to enjoy the nectar of devotion!

It would be good if you stop believing in human leaders and learn to depend upon your spiritual ideal. The human leader approved by the powers that be will come to deceive. You have to be vigilant.

Why is there the need for such destruction? The natural world has its own set of laws. When these laws are broken and disobeyed the corrective force of nature destroys the disturbing element. Today this destructive force has spread globally and become extremely powerful thanks to the thought

process that has been embraced. Breaking the rules has become the goal of our society. Nobody has stopped to think of the consequences. Nobody has thought about how we can live despite ignoring the forces of nature and being a hindrance on their path.

We live in a biological world. It needs a biological thought process. It is compatible with biological structures and networks. Today we have built an empire of incompatible philosophy, structures, and modes of communication. All of this needs to be broken for the natural world to assert itself again.

It is not wise to tinker with natural processes. But our present civilization is proud of doing just that. We are genetically modifying living beings, we are mixing species and creating genetically engineered hybrids, we are torturing living beings, we are building artificial intelligence, we are setting up vast artificial wireless networks that not only go against nature but threatens its very existence, and we are poisoning the atmosphere beyond belief. We have choked the world with our continuous felling of trees and relentless mining. We have amassed deadly and destructive arms and displayed the intent of destroying the world many times over. Our planet is a living being. It has the right to live. It has the right to and the capability of fighting back to restore itself. It will simply do whatever is required to set things right.

This is not the first destruction that the world is facing. According to Prabhupada the founder of the Iskcon movement, there have been 84 civilizations before the present one. Often we come across the remnants of those civilizations and wonder where such technological advances came from. When reckless development grips the world and people become technologically very powerful they lose their humility and become arrogant.

At the peak of their development they seek to destroy the natural laws and establish their own. They interfere with the natural order of things. At such times destruction comes. This time the peak of such arrogance and the powers developed warrant a destruction that will match and triumph over it.

The best thing is to hope for the best, prepare for the worst, and take what comes. God does not will suffering for this world. Our ego and its infatuations lead to pain, suffering, and destruction. Many of us will succumb. Many of us will stand tall amidst the calamity and help those in need. Many egoistic persons will be humbled. The wise will seek their spiritual moorings.

What is the silver lining? The world will fall apart but nothing will happen to you. You are the soul that cannot be cut, burnt or destroyed in any form. It is beyond damage by any element. *Nainam chindanti shastrani nainam dahati pavaka na cainam kledayantyapo na sosayati marutah.* Such is the assurance provided by Sri Krishna in the Gita. The helplessness and terror you witness and feel should not overcome you. You owe a debt to the world that you have so far neglected. Strengthen your resolve to help the fallen.

The objective of this note is to make you come face to face with what is coming so you can prepare accordingly. Now is the time to reclaim your spiritual heritage and receive the armor of God. The future destiny of this civilization has already been written. It is doubtful if things will change. The minds leading the world to destruction know what they are doing. They have intense hatred towards God's creation. But they can only destroy the visible. The invisible is beyond their grasp. We are spiritual beings living in a material world. This knowledge has great liberating power.

We are spiritual beings. We are not the body and mind. There is just the universal cosmic consciousness and nothing apart from it. The manifested world is not our home.

Always remember the four principal Mahavakyas;

- *ekam evadvitiam brahma* - Brahman is one, without a second (Chāndogya Upaniṣad)
- *so 'ham* - I am that (Isha Upanishad)
- *sarvam khalvidam brahma* - All of this is brahman (Chāndogya Upaniṣad) 3.14
- *etad vai tat* - This, verily, is That (Katha Upanishad)

The Mahavakyas according to the Vedas (espoused by Sankaracharya);

- *" prajnaM brahma ": Consciousness is Infinite [RIG VEDA]; It is connected to Govardhana Pitha*
- *" tat-tvam-asi": That-Thou-Art [SAMA VEDA]; Connected to Dwarka Pitha*
- *" ayamAtma brahma": This Self is the Truth [ATHARVA VEDA]; Connected to Jyotirmath Pitha.*
- *" aham brahmAsmi":- I am the Infinite Reality [YAJUR VEDA]; It is connected with Sringeri Sharada Pitha*

There are also four **salvation practices;**

- *"Nitya-Anitya-vastuveveka"* which means discrimination between the eternal and non eternal.
- *" IhamutrarthaphalabhogaViraga" : Indifference to the joys in this life or in in Heaven, and of the fruits of one's action.*

- " *Shatsampat*" : Six-fold virtues that are : i) *Sama* (Control of mind), ii) *Dama* (Control of senses),iii) *Uparati* (Cessation from worldly enjoyments), iv) *Titiksha* (Endurance of pleasure and pain, heat and cold), v) *Sraddha* (Faith), vi) *Samadhana* (Deep concentration).
- " *Mumukshautva*" (*Desire for liberation*).

Do not go deep into rituals. You also do not have time to follow each and one of them. Your de-hypnosis comes from simple steps like becoming aware. Your attitude should be that of a child yearning for ones parents. You do not need elaborate rituals for that.

Self realization is realizing that you are always at home. It is just the shift of stance. Sri Ramana Maharshi had narrated a story about it. An ashramite decided to survey the world outside the ashram. He wandered about and travelled a great distance. He interacted with a lot of people. Then he suddenly remembered he had to return to the ashram. Hurriedly he set about on the path. But the path seemed never ending and he was tired. He rued his decision to set out from the ashram. He rested beneath a tree and slept a hungry man. He had a dream. When the dream broke he found himself within the ashram. He had dreamt the whole thing and never left the place!

Our coming to this world and engaging with it is the same thing. It is a dream we need to wake up from.

Your spiritual routine;

- Meditate twice a day. Have a room for meditation where you can meditate for half an hour or more undisturbed. If you are a very busy

person try meditating in your bed before going to sleep and in the morning after getting up.

- During meditation go into the thoughtless state and stay there. Observe your thoughts like clouds floating in the sky. Question your ego with “Who am I?” When any compelling thought drags you into its fold, question “Who is it to whom this thought appears?” and again return to the thoughtless state.
- Do not be deceived by any experience during meditation. Many things are a part of your inner world that you will come to know. But they too are an illusion and not permanent.
- Be free from all desires. The desireless and thoughtless state is your natural state.
- If you have a mantra or a deity, treat them as tools to reach the highest state. They are for enabling you to concentrate. Let these not dominate you, for you are much beyond them. You are the emperor of all you survey. The world is emerging from you.
- Think of the mahavakyas and contemplate on what they are trying to say whenever you find time or keep it in the back of your head.
 - This world is Brahman. It is made up of consciousness just as gold ornaments are made of gold. The shapes that I witness and interact with are an illusion in which I am caught because my ego makes me feel I am separate from the consciousness and a part of this world

- I am Brahman. I am that consciousness. I am the consciousness in which this world is playing itself just as a film plays itself on a screen. I am the infinite reality
- Everything I consider to be real is in fact unreal. Everything is temporary. I am the permanent underlying reality
- Where was I before I was born? What will happen when I die? I came from the absolute consciousness, got caught up in this world, and on death I again merge into that consciousness. I am deathless. I exist forever. The reality always exists.
- I have come to this world to play out my role that is decided before I am born. I am the experiencer. I am also what I experience. I am also the objects that I perceive.
- My duty is to work selflessly without in any way imagining myself to be the doer. The play is being enacted by a higher force
- If I get caught up in this world I will suffer. I will remain as the witness to whatever happens without involvement even as I go about doing my duty
- My sole duty is to go within and seek my true identity. Once I realize who I really am the game is over. If I constantly question “Who am I?” my ego will be erased and the reality will manifest itself
- When you realize your ‘self’, you will come to know that it is beyond consciousness. It is the witness behind everything that can be thought about and contemplated upon. It is beyond everything that can be discussed or expressed.

- Do not be disheartened by any apparent lack of progress. You are indeed progressing. No effort is lost. If you die without self realization you will begin again from the spot you have left off. There is no waste of spiritual effort. Nobody can take it away from you.
- Do not be disheartened with any adversity you are having to experience. Try to be aloof to all your difficulties. Concentrate on your spiritual efforts alone.
- You should remember that people with insurmountable difficulties have achieved despite them. Your resolve is the only thing that matters. If you fall, simply get up and try again.
- You have come to this world and experienced it innumerable times. Every time you have entered with great hope and exited with unfulfilled desires and great disappointment. Your hopes and desires in this world are the chains that drag you on. Do not desire anything in this temporary world. Keep your mind fixated on the goal and you will succeed.

When you give up thinking
of outward objects
and prevent your mind
from going outwards
and turn it inward
and fix it in the Self,
the Self alone will remain.

~Day By Day, 18-7-46.

Sri Ramana Maharshi