

Self-Mastery

BY

SWAMI PARAMANANDA

Author of "Path of Devotion,"
"Vedanta in Practice," "The Way
of Peace and Blessedness," Etc.



(Second Edition)

THE VEDANTA CENTRE

1 Queensberry Street
Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

Reprinted from the Vedanta Monthly
"THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST"
Issued by The Vedanta Centre of Boston.
\$1.50 a year. Single copies 20 cents.

Copyright 1914, 1916 and 1917 by Swami Paramananda

THE BRATTLE PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| I. SELF-CONQUEST | 5 |
| II. HOW TO CONSERVE OUR ENERGIES | 19 |
| III. SELF-HELP AND SELF-SURRENDER | 31 |

I

SELF-CONQUEST.

Once a General approached Lord Buddha and addressed Him thus: "There is one doubt which still lingers in my mind, O Blessed One, and that is concerning duty. I am a soldier. I am appointed by the king to enforce his laws and wage his wars. The Blessed One who teaches kindness and compassion to all living beings, does He permit the punishment of the criminal? Does He declare that it is wrong to go to war for the protection of our homes, our wives, children and property? Does He teach the doctrine of complete self-surrender, so that I should suffer the evil-doer to do what he pleases and yield submissively to him who would take away violently what is my own? Does the Blessed One maintain that warfare waged for a righteous cause should be abandoned?" .

To this Buddha replied: "He who deserves punishment must be punished, and he who is worthy of reward must be rewarded; yet at the same time the teaching is that non-injury, love and kindness to all living beings must be observed. These injunctions are not contradictory. One should be loving and kind; yet one should recognize that the criminal must be punished for the crimes he has committed. His suffering comes not through the ill-will of the judge, but on account of his evil doing. His own acts have brought misfortune upon him. Therefore let him not harbor thoughts of hatred in his heart; let him consider that this is the fruit of his own action; as soon as he will understand that, the punishment will purify his soul and he will no longer lament his fate, but will rejoice in it."

The Blessed One then continued: "Warfare in which man tries to slay his brother is lamentable, but those who go to war in a righteous cause, after exhausting all means to preserve the peace, are not blameworthy. He should be blamed who is the cause of the war. Struggle there must be in this life, for all life

is a struggle of some kind. He who struggles in the interest of self — that he may be great or powerful or rich or famous — will have no reward; but he who struggles for righteousness and for Truth will have great reward, for even his defeat will be a victory."

Then Lord Buddha, addressing the General, said: "O General, he who goes to battle, even though it be in a righteous cause, must be prepared to be slain by his enemies, for that is the destiny of warriors; and should this fate overtake him, he has no reason for complaint. But he who is victorious should remember that all earthly things are fleeting and transitory. Whatever his success, however great it may be, the wheel of life may turn again and bring him down to the dust. If, however, he is moderate; if, extinguishing all hatred from his heart, he lifts his down-trodden enemy up and says: 'Come now, let us have peace and be brothers;' he will gain not mere transitory success, but a true victory, the fruit of which will remain forever. Great is a successful general, but he who has conquered self is a greater victor. The doctrine of the conquest

of self is not taught to destroy the souls of men, but to preserve them. He who has conquered self is more fit to live and to gain victories than he who is the slave of self. He whose mind is free from all delusion regarding the self, he will stand and not fall in the battle of life."

Christ said: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The conquest which any human being seeks in the external world is insignificant in comparison with that which lies within his own self; and until he has conquered his inner kingdom, all outer conquests must be fleeting and uncertain, for his own unwise actions may at any moment cause his ruin. Even though the world may regard him as a conqueror, even though he may consider himself invincible, he is not a conqueror in the spiritual sense so long as he is willing to give his soul life in exchange for any material advantage. He may gain the whole world, but it will profit him nothing. In all the lofty spiritual messages of the great

Teachers one ideal stands out above all others, — that each one must rouse himself and bring out what is best in him. He must learn to stand up and hold himself above nature; for a man who constantly obeys nature like a bond-slave gradually loses the power of independent action, and life sooner or later must prove joyless and burdensome to him.

The tendency of the average mind is outgoing. All its ambitions and interests are directed towards external things; but however much it may gain materially, there is always something lacking to make its happiness complete. Take, for example, the life of Alexander the Great. The world has rarely seen such a conqueror, yet within him there remained something unconquered and this often tormented him when there was no outward cause for unhappiness. Such is the universal experience. Should we not try therefore to acquire something more satisfying? Should we be content to lead a life of slavery, obeying the impulses of our physical nature? This question must eventually arise within every heart; no one can evade it. Each one must

face and answer it. It is the starting-point of all religion.

As we are now, we have very little control over ourselves; even this body which we call ours refuses to obey us and we are constantly driven hither and thither by the undisciplined forces of our nature. But one who has perfect control over the body is not made restless by his physical energies; instead of distracting him, they serve to bring him serenity and freedom, for they become constructive, not destructive elements in his evolution. Sri Krishna declares in the Gita: "He indeed is a truly happy man who can withstand the impulse of greed, lust or anger even before he is separated from this body." And this represents a greater manifestation of power than when we make another person obey us. The man who desires to rule must begin by ruling himself. He must prove that he is the master in his own dwelling-house. Instead of allowing his physical organism to dictate his course of action, he must make every part of his body subordinate to his will.

We all have a certain amount of power

within us; but when this power is dissipated or ungoverned, it brings an unhealthy condition of mind and body. Disease more often comes from misdirection of the life-force than from lack of it. We allow ourselves to fall into a negative state and gradually hypnotize ourselves into the belief that we are without power or will. But the Great Ones constantly remind us that if man is to attain his freedom, he must awaken and raise himself by his higher Self; for he is his own friend and he can be as much his own enemy as an external foe. Therefore they tell us: Let no one lose hold of himself, but let each one lift himself, for who else can save him? Even a Divine Incarnation cannot save one who is without the will to be saved and devoid of the energy necessary to follow His example and precepts. A certain degree of self-reliance or faith in our higher Self is essential for our spiritual regeneration. Each soul is inherently divine, for it has within it that which is part of the Infinite. Why should we not exert ourselves and seek to find That? Why should we let our mind remain in a negative state and

believe only in the forces which are working on the surface?

No one can ever attain the supreme goal until he has become conscious of his higher Self. Man seems like a double being. There is one man, — the eating, drinking, sleeping man, the man of physical limitations: this man has but little power and little capacity. And there is another man dwelling within, who has greater capacity, greater power. It is this man whom we want to awaken. The surface being, who constantly identifies himself with physical conditions and makes himself believe that he has no power to conquer, no power to overcome obstacles — that man must be dropped. Nor does this mean self-torture or self-annihilation, it means rising above limitations. It is not that the physical man must be destroyed; not so; but the causes of those lower impulses in us, which lead us to hate or strike in anger or do any unworthy act, must be rooted out. This is not achieved by destroying our eyes, ears, or any organ by which we may perform evil deeds. We must go behind the sense organs to find the real cause of evil in

us. "The senses are merely instruments; and when properly controlled, they become powerful aids towards our spiritual advancement. "Through the practice of austerity man may deaden the feelings of the senses, but longing still lingers in the heart; all longings drop off, when one has attained the Highest."

The little man, the man who sorrows, who grieves, who feels constantly that he is a helpless mortal, that man must expand and gain another vision by which he can realize his freedom. The Upanishads give a very beautiful illustration showing the relation between the lower self and the higher Self. They are like two birds sitting on the same tree of life. One hops from branch to branch trying to gratify his desire by tasting the different fruits of the tree; the other sits calm, majestic and free from desire. As the first bird moves about tasting the sweet and bitter fruits and experiencing pleasure or disappointment, joy or sorrow, he suddenly beholds that other bird of like plumage, sitting serene and ever-conscious of his divine nature. As he gazes at it, his delusions fall away from him

and he realizes his oneness with that higher Self. Until a man becomes master of his lower nature, he can never gain that lofty vision which sets him free; therefore he must rise step by step until he attains it. He must deal first with what is nearest and most definite, his physical organism. He must see how far he can make his body obey him, — his hands, feet and all his senses. Let him next try to make his mind obedient to him. Let him subdue both body and mind and make them instruments in his hands to work out his freedom.

This is how we must begin our conquest of self. We must watch over our bodily activities and strive to avoid all unnecessary expenditure of energy. With every one there are certain automatic movements of the hands, feet or other members of the physical organism which continue even when we think that we are lying or sitting still. These should be checked, as they represent a waste of life-force. The Yogis overcome this habit by the systematic practice of *Asanam* or posture, learning to relax every muscle and then train-

ing the body to remain motionless in some fixed position. This enables them to conserve their energies and also prepares them for higher spiritual pursuits. Another cause of waste lies in the unwise use we make of our vital energies. Needless talking is one of the most usual forms of this waste and often results in nervous exhaustion. Uneven and impulsive use of our forces, leading to extremes of activity and inactivity, is another. This must be overcome by steadfast practice of moderation or balance in all our bodily habits, even the most insignificant ones. We must exercise conscious control in our eating, drinking, talking, walking, sleeping, in our work and recreation. This will enable us eventually to gather up our bodily forces, which are now being dissipated through lack of proper control and direction, and unite them into one strong whole.

Next our mental forces, which at present run hither and thither unrestrained, must be brought into subjection. As the first step in this task we must try to cultivate the faculty of discrimination. We must not follow blindly

every impulse that rises in our mind, but we must learn to reflect and to distinguish between what is fleeting and what is lasting, what is essential and what is non-essential, between what is pleasing to our bodily appetites and what is wholesome for our soul. The next step is to keep our mind fixed on the path chosen by our discriminative faculty. Thus firmly holding our thought develops in us the power of concentration, without which we can never hope to gain victory over the lower nature. This may seem a difficult task, but it is possible to every human being who strives with determined will and perseverance. From the very outset of our spiritual life we must root out the negative thought that we cannot do anything. Once for all we must shake off this notion and learn to believe that we can do even what seems impossible — not in any spirit of arrogance, however, thinking that we can do because we possess individual power; but because we are part of God, because God dwells within us and all things are possible unto Him. This should be our prevailing thought, until we gain a hold over our little

self and put down our lower propensities which veil the true vision of our higher nature.

Christ, Buddha and other illumined Souls are often called masters. Why? Because they conquered in themselves that which must be overcome, that which is the source of all fear, jealousy, hatred and ignorance. It is because they thus conquered that they are masters. And being masters of themselves they alone can be masters of men. If we wish to attain this state of mastery, we must make our own self obedient to our will. It is not the aggressive man or the man with strong muscles who can expect to gain freedom; but the man who reflects, the man who governs his appetites, the man who lives in moderation, the man who has power to forgive, to love even his enemies; for he is the stronger man. The power of resistance is good, but the power of non-resistance is greater. As long as we have the feeling that someone is attacking us, we must protect our interest. But there may come a time when, through the expansion of our nature, such feelings will disappear and we shall know that nothing can touch us. One may strike us

or speak angry words, but our understanding will place us so far above the blow or the insult that no impulse to retaliate will rise in us. And this is called non-resistance. When our lower nature no longer asserts itself in us, whatever may be the provocation, then self-conquest is complete.

This indeed is the loftiest thing man can accomplish; for then his kingdom is not confined to a fixed country or people, but he carries his kingdom wherever he goes. Always is he the master. No external condition can disturb him, therefore he lives in eternal peace and happiness. So long as our thoughts, ambitions and unsatisfied desires haunt us and make us restless, we know that we cannot find either freedom or peace even by going into the jungle. Self-conquest alone will give us that for which all men are seeking. Let us then lay hold on the sword of wisdom and the shield of perseverance, that we may fight with undaunted courage and gain victory over our only enemy, the self.

II

HOW TO CONSERVE OUR ENERGIES.

According to ancient Indian philosophy this universe is composed of two principal elements. One is called *Akasa*, an all-pervading primordial substance, imperceptible to the senses, but manifested in the basic elements, earth, water, air, fire and ether, out of which all bodies come into existence. The other, which holds together these material forms, is known as *Prana* or vital force, the force by which man lives and moves and without which he can do nothing. The senses which appear to be such important factors in our life would be of little use without this vital force, so also the mind and every part of the physical organism. We should therefore try to understand what the nature of this life-force is and how it may be controlled; for the great Indian teachers have taught us that by proper

control of this force a man can be not only physically healthy, but intellectually brilliant; he can also rise spiritually and become illumined.

At present there are very few who know the use or even the existence of this *Prana*, for we cannot see it. Most of us live here unconsciously, doing everything automatically through habit. We utilize our energies without thinking what they are or what they should bring us; still less does it occur to us that it is our duty to conserve and direct them to definite ends. Yet we shall not know what true health or happiness or illumination is until we have learned how to gather up these vital forces of our organism and command them at our will. Just as light when dissipated scarcely suffices to read by, but when we put a shade over it and concentrate its rays we are able to see the finest print; similarly when all the forces manifested through our body, mind and senses are stored up, regulated and focused, we discover possibilities of wisdom and happiness within us of which we are wholly unconscious at present.

But how is this to be accomplished? Some may think hastily that by not doing anything one may store up his energies. It has been found, however, that the energy of a man who does nothing, instead of increasing, fades away. On the other hand, if we imagine that by constant use of our faculties we can gain greater power, that is also a mistake; for we know that through overwork a man often breaks down. Neither of these methods therefore can help us to conserve and increase our energy. But there is a way by which it can be done, — not by overworking, nor by stopping work, but by finding balance in all our activity. When this balance is manifested in the physical body, the result is good health; when it is manifested on the mental plane, we have intellectual power; when it is manifested on the spiritual plane, the result is super-consciousness or illumination. But the energy is one. It is always the same life-force which the Indian Sages called *Prana* — the vital cause of our existence, of all our thinking and doing. It manifests itself on every plane; but as we are able to draw it up from our lower organ-

ism, we gain ever-increasing power for higher things.

As thought guides all our bodily activities, so the Sages found that thought was the best medium for directing this life-force. How little attention we pay to this great instrument which is placed in our hands by God Almighty! How often we abuse or misuse it! Yet our actions can never produce the best results until our thoughts are properly regulated. Only as we cease to dissipate our mental energies and are able to establish a balance between our outer and our inner activities, between our body and our mind, can we hope to have either peace or strength. Every living being, even the most insignificant, has the same possibility of awakening this great life-force within himself. As a rule, however, we run after pleasure and power to try to gain these from the external universe. The result is that we are always rushing outward and we do not stop to think what we have within ourselves. Whenever a problem arises in our mind, our tendency is to go outside; we hasten to consult a book or some person; but the wise

men tell us that we have within ourselves the key to all knowledge. In fact, no one can give us knowledge beyond the point where our inner nature is unfolded. We must therefore discover this inner storehouse of energy, and in our search it is best to deal first with that which is most immediate.

This body is the most immediate reality to the majority of people. We may talk of subtle spiritual forces, of an imperceptible Soul abiding within, but very few can understand or believe in the reality of finer things. For that reason we must begin with the grossest of all instruments, the physical body. And the first question which arises is, have we this body under perfect control? Will our hands and feet, our senses and other organs obey us? Can we govern and direct them as our higher instincts prompt us? When we analyze, we find that very few of us have any power of control over what we call the body. The energies which manifest through it have become dissipated and because of this dissipation our eyes cannot bring us perfect vision, our ears and all our senses can give us only partial

knowledge; that is why our perceptions are never free from error. But when we go to the foundation of our being and gather up all our forces, then we gain command over them and can utilize them to our best advantage.

Matter cannot exist without the support and coöperation of *Prana*; therefore if man wants anything, he must try to understand this vital principle; and to do this he must first of all find balance. As long as there is undue activity or lethargy in our body, we cannot have true insight. What we need is to gain equilibrium in our whole organism, for equilibrium means strength. The body also must be obedient to the mind. Which is the sign of the greater strength: when you let a horse rush madly on, carrying you to destruction because you have no power of control over it; or when you hold the reins firmly and make it go as you will? Certainly when you control it. Similarly this little body of ours, this instrument which God has given us, we should train and control it in such a way that it will be a true aid in our spiritual journey, instead of being the drawback it too often is.

Very few indeed are regulating and directing their forces properly. How much energy do we waste talking unnecessarily or in permitting useless automatic physical action which only exhausts us. How much nervousness and misery might human beings avoid by a wise expenditure of their God-given energies! To remedy this is the stepping-stone to religion. Religion is not confined to one department of life. It has to do not only with man's soul nature, with his spiritual interest. It covers the whole ground of his being, for how can man arouse his spiritual interest until he has freed himself from physical bondage? All things work together. There is only one law and the law is uniform on all planes. What is good for one plane is good for all.

If man tries to prepare his body, not for selfish ends, but in order that he may acquire greater wisdom, there is no wrong in his devoting himself to the care of his physical being; but he cannot gain either health or strength until he has proper control over that through which all his power comes. Man cannot truly enter into possession of his own

latent possibilities until he has discovered and connected himself with his inner resources — until he has awakened his spiritual nature. If he is outdrawn, dragged hither and thither by his uncontrolled energies, he must try to be indrawn. He must cultivate his faculty of intra-vision. He has been looking outward so long without realizing his dream or finding true happiness; let him now look within and see if he cannot find there what he has been vainly searching for on the outside.

He must also practise moderation. As long as man strives madly for pleasure, without using his faculty of discrimination, he merely exhausts himself and makes himself miserable. Nor should he go to the other extreme and practise self-torture. That man alone enjoys real blessing who observes moderation in all his activities. We must neither destroy any of our propensities nor become slaves to them; but we must take a masterly attitude towards them. And this is a great lesson that everyone needs to learn. How often we raise our voices and want others to obey us; but have we succeeded in making ourselves obey?

Yet we have the power. All power is within us. The very power which enables us to see ordinary things can be stored up in such a way that it will give us Divine sight; the power which helps us to hear these outer sounds and gain knowledge of this material world, can also lead us upward and enable us to hear the Eternal and gain knowledge of that which satisfies the soul of man.

We must therefore gather up our forces and gathering up means concentration and concentration means strength. A single thread is easily broken, but when a number of threads are put together and twisted into twine, what power of resistance they have. Similarly all our small dissipated forces can be gathered together and through the power of concentration twisted into one strong whole; then we shall be able to resist anything. It is through such positive thoughts that the Sages have taught us — not that we are sinners, but that each one can save himself; that the only saving grace for each one of us is in his own higher spiritual nature; and until we have awakened that, no one can save us. Do you

suppose that by merely making laws for the prevention of crime we can prevent it? What we want is education, and the greatest education is to give man confidence in his higher Self. In every man there are two tendencies: —one is dragging him down through the senses, the other is telling him what his soul needs. If he will awaken to that higher soul instinct and follow that, then he will find his Saviour within himself.

Until we have gained control over our lower nature, however, we never even suspect that we have imbedded in our heart the potentiality for the highest illumination and the highest happiness. We should therefore form the habit of having certain hours when we relax and withdraw from all bodily activities. We find in all religions times set apart for prayer and meditation. Why? Because so long as we constantly move outward and do not look within, forgetting the vital factor in our life, there is nothing to sustain or nourish us. We must always try to keep ourselves connected with the storehouse of our life-force; and the more we can do this, the more irresistible will

our power become. The man who has command over his vital energy or *Prana* will always accomplish greater things in less time and with less exertion. Also, the more quickly we can achieve victory over our lower self, the sooner shall we gain spiritual illumination.

These ideas of self-conquest, of the power of concentration and meditation, are not peculiarly Indian. In every religion, wherever there has been any true growth of spiritual thought, you will find that it has come from an indrawn, meditative life. Even material scientists, how much they have to concentrate on a problem before they can solve it; for concentration always throws light, and gives greater power. Physical concentration is necessary to gain health of body; mental concentration is necessary to sharpen our intellect; and when we have practised these two well and with discrimination, there will come a time when we can direct all our forces towards spiritual regeneration. Then the things which seem to us impossible to-day will become absolute realities. Our doubts will vanish of their own accord, for where there is sunlight there cannot be any darkness.

All the imperfection and limitation which we feel in our body and mind we can remove by not constantly thinking of this immediate, apparent, physical existence, but by joining our thoughts with the Higher Source, the Fountainhead of life and energy. When we can remain focused there, we shall be able to go on doing our duties without feeling any reaction. That is one of the great secrets of the Indian Teachers. Through the ages they have taught that man can make his work a recreation; and that if he will connect himself with the Highest and keep his motive lofty, his work instead of exhausting him will bring him even greater strength. It is not necessary for us to retire to a corner or become inactive to restore our vitality. If we will but learn to practise balance and moderation in all our activity, we shall enjoy true health of body and mind and shall surely attain spiritual illumination and freedom.

III

SELF-HELP AND SELF-SURRENDER.

Self-help and self-surrender are the cardinal teachings of all religions and philosophies. Man is persistently told on the one hand that he must "raise himself by his Self, let him never lower himself, for he alone is his own friend and he alone is his own enemy"; while on the other hand he is taught with equal insistence that he should never rely on his individual strength, but should trust wholly to God. How are we to reconcile these two apparently contradictory ideas? How can we be self-helping and at the same time surrender ourselves wholly to the Supreme? Yet we find these two ideas preached in all Scriptures by all Teachers; so although they may seem diametrically opposite, there must be some relation, some basis of harmony between them.

There are different grades in the conception of the individual ego. Our first conception of I-ness comes through birth and environment, we are born in a certain family, with a certain name and position, and we measure our whole importance by these; but as we grow in understanding, we learn to identify ourselves less and less with outer conditions and nature. Then we discover that there are finer forces than the merely physical upon which we depend. When in ordinary human existence a man says "I am the doer," that sense of I-ness arises from his identification of himself with the body. He is conscious that he has strong muscles, that he has a certain amount of power; but this strength, being entirely confined to the physical plane, is necessarily limited. He may not realize this as long as he has a healthy body and can accomplish whatever he wishes through his bodily energies, but sooner or later he must come to recognize that the power manifested through the physical is too insufficient to carry him very far. This naturally leads him to seek something higher and greater upon which he can safely lean.

Thus in all the various stages of progression, we shall carry the same idea of ego, only with different understanding. The ego which binds us to the body and bodily conditions is called the unripe ego and this brings misery and misfortune; but the ripe ego, which springs from our higher nature, liberates us. It is this ego which leads us to surrender ourselves wholly to God. Of course self-surrender does not mean that we have to abandon all duties and activities. On the contrary, it is through consecrated action, through constant practice of the ideal, that we become purified and are able to see the hand of the Divine in everything. But as long as we believe that we are the doers, we must help ourselves. So long as we feel that the whole responsibility lies in our hands, we must make every possible effort.

It is useless to suppose that we can give up all idea of ego at once and be conscious that God is working through us. We do not see God working. We are talking, we are performing our tasks, we have hands and feet, we possess strength. As long as we hold to

these notions, we must act for ourselves. We cannot do otherwise. But if in all our actions we practise discrimination, that will in time unfold our true nature and enable us to perceive the real source of our power. When we become conscious of that mighty Cause of all things, then we cannot but yield ourselves up to His guidance. Thus self-help will lead to self-surrender.

The more clearly we see God working everywhere, the more easily we shall be able to resign ourselves to Him. It is very difficult for ignorant people to practise self-surrender, because they have not consciously experienced the existence of a Cosmic Power. They do not know that there is such a thing. They must first test their own powers. They must prove through the use of all their energies, physical and mental, whether they themselves are the real doers or whether they are governed by some superior power. They must learn through the practice of discrimination what part of their being is matter and what part is God; then when they have come to perceive the difference between soul and body,

spirit and matter, the undying and the dying, they will surely cling to that which is deathless; for who does not cling to life, who will not naturally look for help and protection to that which is most mighty?

It is not an easy thing to surrender ourselves absolutely to God. We must first understand something of His Divine nature and power; otherwise, if we pretend to practise self-surrender, without really believing that God is the only Doer and that all happens through His will, our words and actions will always be inconsistent. There is a parable of a Brahman, who once killed a cow. Killing for a Brahman, whose life is supposed to be dedicated to God and to the practice of non-injury and love for all creatures, is a terrible crime. When the Brahman was accused of killing the cow, he declared: "I did not do it. Indra (the Lord of the senses) is responsible, not I." To show him his error, God, assuming human form, entered his garden and began to praise its beauty and the skill of his gardener. The Brahman replied with pride: "Oh, no, I myself have done everything; come and I will

show you the different parts of my garden.” As he led his visitor about he kept exclaiming: “See, I planted these trees and shrubs, I laid out these paths, I made these flower beds.” Every other word was “I”. The Lord listened patiently for some time; then he exclaimed: “You have done all these things; only for killing the cow the poor Lord is responsible.”

That is too often our position. We may say “Thy will, not mine,” but we feel in our heart of hearts that we are the real doers. If a harsh word is spoken, we feel hurt and grow angry; or if we are praised, we become elated. But this is not the case with one who knows that everything happens through God’s will. He is always the same, in happiness, in misery, in praise or blame. He accepts all things with even-mindedness. He does not lose his balance, he does not curse life when things go wrong; because he recognizes that God is the Doer and that whatever comes from Him must be a blessing. Surrendering to God makes a man so mighty, so fearless, that nothing in life or death can disturb his serenity.

Such faith in the Supreme is the basis of true self-reliance. With such faith one can accomplish the most impossible things. As Christ said: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you." Such is the power of faith. When we have realized the Divine within us, what can shake us? As long, however, as we identify ourselves with name, form and physical limitations, our power must be limited and therefore our vision of Truth also must be veiled; because darkness and light cannot co-exist, and the sense of "I" is the greatest darkness which can cover the soul. The Sages indeed have declared that there is no enemy greater or more potent than the ego.

As long as we identify ourselves with this ego or our lower nature, we can never transcend delusion or ignorance. Therefore we must subdue our lower self by surrendering it to the higher Self. Let that higher Self, or the God within, take the lead in everything. The true devotee says: "Not I, not I, but Thou.

I am nothing. What can I accomplish? The sooner I can resign myself to Thy will, the better." The *Gnani* or philosopher declares: "I am not this body. I am not the senses. I am none of these things. I am He. I am that which is formless, deathless, eternal, unchangeable." One is the dualistic point of view, the other the monistic; but both lead to the same end.

Christ expressed the two phases in different stages of his spiritual consciousness. When He said: "Not my will but Thine be done"; "Thou art my Father, my Lord, I am Thy son, Thy servant"; his attitude was that of a devotee. When, on the other hand, He declared: "I and my Father are one," He expressed the monistic attitude of a follower of the path of wisdom. In one phase we look upon God as a separate Being. He is the Creator and Preserver, the real Father, and we surrender to Him, recognizing the limitation of our lower self. In the other phase we rise above the plane of the lower self and realize our identity with the Supreme. In either case, whether we see that Truth within ourselves or outside ourselves, we transcend human imperfection.

When we are convinced that God is the only Doer, the only Guide, that all the power which we possess comes from Him and that we are merely instruments in His hand, we attain freedom even in this life and nothing can overthrow us. But the ego is very deluding. It is said that even the gods are deceived and fall under its sway. In one of the Upanishads the story is told that once the Devas (Bright Ones) achieved a great victory, and being filled with pride they proclaimed: "This victory is ours. We ourselves have achieved it;" and each one boasted of his power. Suddenly they perceived a mysterious form. Brahman, the Doer of all things, appeared before them; but they did not know what it was that they saw, so one by one they were sent to find out. First, the Fire-god approached the mysterious form, who asked him what power he possessed. "I have the power to burn the whole universe." "Then try to burn this straw," the Lord said, but he could not. Then came the Wind-god and Brahman asked him what power he possessed. "I can blow this entire universe away." Then blow this straw

which I place before you." He tried, but could not. At last Indra, the head of the gods, went; and as he approached nearer, he realized that the mysterious form was none other than Brahman, the Supreme Lord Himself, to whom all glory and praise belong; that to Him alone was due their victory and not to themselves.

Surrender to God is the greatest sign of wisdom. The ignorant man, who clings to this ego, must suffer constantly. The man who surrenders himself to God as the Doer of all things, he alone finds peace. Through his life and actions he becomes blessed and brings blessing to others; for he no longer acts through selfishness or ignorance, but he becomes a direct instrument in the hands of God and all his doings are filled with Divine Love and Wisdom.