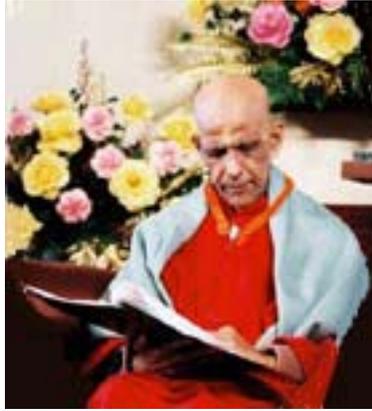


Short Topics by Swami Kripalvananda



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*If God is the wind, then we should become the fragrance which is borne on the wind;
If God is the river, then we should become the boat which is carried by the current;
We must become the flute of the Merciful Lord,
And play the tunes that he breathes into our being.*

On Music and Dance

Music holds a very high place in the practice of *yoga*. I would even say that without music, it is impossible to attain to the Lord, for the Lord himself is music. In India we say, "*Nada Brahma*" which means "Sound is God". It is just like the place in the Bible where it says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." If we live a musical life, we can say that we are living a life of *sadhana*, a spiritual life. Music is the greatest intoxicant in the world. When one is totally intoxicated by music he goes into *samadhi*.

There is another aspect of music, and that is dancing. Dance purifies the body, and music purifies the mind. If we use music for its purest purpose, it will not fail to bring us the highest results. In spiritual life in India, there are two main manifestations of God that are worshipped: that of Lord *Shiva*, and that of Lord *Krishna*. Both are great musicians and master dancers. My experience shows me that those who do not know how to sing and dance will never reach God.

For in deep meditation when *prana* begins to effortlessly rise, music and dance are born from within. This is not the result of conscious intention; it is simply an expression of *prana*. So, dance is a part of meditation and does not disturb it. This spontaneous dance has two phases: external and internal. At first the dance has external movements. Gradually these movements cease until there is complete stillness, externally. Yet the dance continues inside.

The spontaneous dance that I went into outside my *Rajeshvari* meditation room was like what used to happen to me many years ago in the earlier stages of *yoga*. Then it stopped and I moved into another stage. On this occasion, behind *Rajeshvari*, I started by doing some hand mudras, and all of a sudden, after many years without it happening, the dance started to come to me again spontaneously, automatically. There was a difference, however, between what happened in the past and this: before, the dance was very fast; this time it was very slow and rhythmic. When this dance happens, it stretches all the nerves so much that after five minutes you are ready to collapse. Yet I, at the age of 65, was able to dance constantly for over half an hour! This kind of music and dance is the very highest kind of *sadhana*; the very highest method of purification of mind and body.

On Love

from *Darshan, Guru Purnima*, 1980

Truly, the wise proclaim that love is the only path, love is the only God, and love is the only scripture. Love flowing in another's life is the source of our happiness, and the love flowing in our life is the source of another's happiness. This is a universal law.

When any living being opens the doors of his or her heart to satisfy another's thirst for love, the doors of the recipient's heart also spontaneously open. The path of love is very ancient. When I was born, I received the initiation of love . . . Now, with the same love, I initiate everyone else.

Love is my only path. I am, in fact, a pilgrim on the path of love ... In love, there are no barriers raised by language, no costumes, no egos, no distinctions of any kind.

Until one becomes attracted to *sadhana*, one will never be eager to begin practicing it. The *sadhak* must contemplate the principles of *yoga* in depth. Such contemplation is the provision for the spiritual journey.

On Prayer

This world is full of many types of people. Whenever any of them are in a difficult situation, they experience the need for an invisible divine power. Great saints call this divine power God.

God is the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Maintainer of the universe. He is the well wisher of all. When someone accepts the existence of God firmly, he can ask or beg for help when he finds himself in difficulty.

This asking for help or begging is called prayer. The success or failure of the prayer cannot do any harm to almighty God. God is the solace of everyone. Only He is wealth, friend, beloved, fame, supremacy, and strength. Prayers to Him or remembrance of Him always give happiness. God is the only route to happiness, peace and bliss. Anyone who can do true prayer becomes deserving of God's supreme grace.

The cause of all unhappiness is separation from God. The cause of happiness is reunion with God. The nature and purpose of prayer or remembrance is reunion with God. Prayer is the first step of *Yoga*. Just as the earth is the cause of the evolution of the trees, so prayer is the cause of the evolution of individuals.

Prayer can be done through the tongue and the mind. God is omniscient. Even when the tongue will not move and the mind will not think, prayer is always there. Prayer is the silent speech of love.

God listens very carefully to the prayers of illiterate people. God is almighty so prayer offered to God is never useless. God gives without asking not according to the asking. He takes first what is offered in his hand and only then does he listen to the prayer with a smiling face. Prayer is the light of love.

Prayer is the only eternal path that leads us from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. -*Jai Babuji*-

Sattvic Charity and Tithing; Rajasic and Tamasic Charity

Buying something one wants from a shop is not attachment; paying for it is not renunciation. If one gives money or gifts to family members or loved ones, such giving is not renunciation or charity; it is one's family duty. Any gifts one offers while bowing at the feet of one's *Sadguru* are not charity; such giving is homage or dakshina and is an expression of love. Also, anything one dedicates at the holy feet of the Lord is not charity; it is consecration and an expression of love. Furthermore, anything which one gives to another with pleasure is not charity; it is a gift. Moreover, the salary given by an employer to an employee is not charity; it is wages given in exchange for his labor.

Charity is only that which one gives with compassionate and religious feelings.

Although almost everyone wants to have an abundance of material possessions, they forget that before acquiring plenty of riches they should offer some portion of their possessions as a token of their love for God. After all, when a farmer sows an old seed in his field, the compassionate Lord gives him 900 seeds in return. Through love for this generous Lord, one should give away a portion of whatever one hopes to acquire, even if one gets an inadequate amount. Then, after obtaining one's desire, one should first set aside a small portion for charity and use the rest for himself.

The farmers of India are very generous. Whenever a *Sadguru* comes to their home, they welcome him by tossing a few grains of rice over his head. When he is ready to leave, they give him a huge bag of rice that they have set aside. This act is inspired by the thought: "We are farmers. It would be shameful to welcome the *Sadguru* by tossing just a few grains in the air. We sow just a single grain in the field, and the Lord gives us hundreds of grains in return. The sight of God's generosity inspires us to be generous too; and even our feelings of generosity are His grace!"

Likewise, before I began this discourse, you in the audience also bowed down and offered the guru whole flower pots rather than a single flower.

Charity comes in three varieties: pure, passionate, and polluted; that is, *sattvic*, *rajasic*, and *tamasic*. Lord *Krishna* defines charity as gifts given to helpless and deserving persons, with the feeling that it is the giver's duty to give; and which are presented in the proper place, time and situations.

Everyone in the world can give very generously whether he is very rich or very poor. To equate charity solely with gifts of money, clothes, or food is a real delusion. In fact, we can give countless other gifts such as education, security, and comfort. The Lord is invoked in our heart whenever it melts at the sight of a helpless person's intolerable pain. At such times, our heart becomes totally illuminated with the Lord's divine light.

Everyone has his own pains to suffer. But those who suffer for others' pain are God's messengers because He extends His help through them. These messengers are actually very fortunate. Even without practicing austerities, when their heart is touched by the pain of others, they experience the same *sattvic* feelings which usually emerge as a result of practicing arduous austerities. This experience should be considered truly the grace of the Lord. Just think, anyone can be a great philanthropist. One can give great comfort to the hearts of others just by giving a loving glance to someone who is in despair or by addressing an afflicted person as "Brother" or "Sister."

Since *sattvic* charity remains engraved in the donor's memory, his heart (*antahkaran*) continually receives a form of divine joy. Note, however, two of the major principles of *sattvic* charity: "give and forget" and "give secretly"; that is, as much as possible give without others knowing.

We cannot see the Lord as He continually nourishes the sun and the moon with light, as He secretly fills the earth with food, and as He secretly fills the clouds with water.

Human eyes can clearly see the sun, the moon, the light, the earth, the food, the clouds, and the water. However, our eyes cannot perceive the Lord, any part of His body, or even the shadow of His body. The Creator of the world is so great; and since we are truly His children, then our nature should contain a bit of His generosity.

Pure *sattvic* charity is defined as "generously giving everything one has or totally giving of oneself." When a devotee offers pure charity with faith to God and *guru*, they, in return, feel tremendously content and merge with the devotee, making him their own.

Those with exorbitant wealth are considered rich. Yet, if despite their wealth they are not generous, they are really paupers, because they behave like paupers. Conversely, those who are very poor but who are generous despite their poverty are actually wealthy because they behave like wealthy people. One who donates anything to the family, society, nation, and the world, according to his capacity, is a truly wealthy and cultured person. Those who do not give of themselves are poor and degenerate. The average person hoards everything he earns and uses it only for himself instead of for others. Many wealthy aristocrats are even more selfish than that; they not only hoard everything they have for themselves, but they also try to snatch everything they can get from others. They are a treacherous threat to everyone everywhere.

Thus, it is irrational to equate wealth with material abundance. Actually, anything considered valuable is an asset and is, thus, a form of wealth and prosperity. From this perspective, we should treat as assets and wealth our physical and mental health and well-

being, our love, and our knowledge. Some portion of whatever one gets should be set aside for others; only then should the person wholeheartedly enjoy whatever remains. Donation is a basil leaf through which the subsequent enjoyments become the Lord's *prasad*.

Rajasic and Tamasic Charity

Rajasic charity involves the type of giving which is forced and painful, with obligation attached and exchange expected. Almost everyone in the world practices *rajasic* charity.

Tamasic charity involves the type of giving which is motivated by condescension and contempt, and in which the improper place, time, and recipient are chosen. For lack of time, I have not elaborately explained these two forms of charity.

In conclusion, remember to always keep this sentence from the *Upanishads* in your heart: Relish and set aside even a little bit of whatever you receive for the love of God.

Temples are the Very Soul of Religion and Civilization

The importance of temples of God or prayer halls has been equally accepted by all the religions of the world. It is the religious leaders who have established these temples of God throughout the whole world from ancient times. The temples are centers of religion, centers of civilization and centers of service. Whatever humanity is still seen in the society today is fully due to the temples and to the Holy Saints who provided the initiative for establishing them. It was these temples which served as the source from which the fountain of religion and civilization spread all over the world. The temple is the head of religion and civilization. Its destruction is tantamount to the destruction of religion and civilization.

In modern India there are innumerable institutions for the service of humanity, and many more are being established day by day. The temples are the birthplace of all these institutions. In ancient India when none of these institutions existed, and only the temples were there, the activities of social service were most efficiently carried on. This goes to prove that the temples of God were not only prayer centers or centers of inspiration or centers of service, but were ever watchful well-wishers, thinking about the welfare, needs and grievances of the people.

The temples are not madhouses of people who take a stone image to be God. The temples are schools of humanity, abodes of peace, lands of compromise and pacification, centers of hope, and places of inspiration and concentration. Just as men do away with the impurities on their bodies by bathing in a river, men with a devotional bent of mind do away with the impurities of their minds by bathing in the river in the Form of the temples of God. The pilgrims, who run to Gokul, Vrindavan, or Kashi, are

numerous. This practice was not started a year or two ago. Its beginning can be traced back thousands of years, and yet there is not the least slowing down of the flow of pilgrims to these places. People who look at this fact from a materialistic point of view or those intellectuals who believe themselves endowed with the highest sense may well think these devotees to be on the wrong path; but humble, mature and experienced persons who look from the spiritual point of view, believe them to be on the right path.

The Gods in these temples may well look like inanimate objects, but they have in various ways given consolation, satisfaction, peace and solutions to innumerable devotees. These temples have repaired the broken hearts of millions of persons. The Gods in the temples are the support of the weak, the hope of those who have lost all hope, the eyes of the blind, the feet of the lame, the speech of the mute and the future success of the defeated. When mother, father, brother, sister, wife, son, daughter, friend, relatives, beloved persons, physicians, and others can provide no assistance, these temples fulfill all wants.

These temples or prayer halls are not the meeting grounds of people of blind faith. They are psychological laboratories provided by saintly religious leaders who are the well-wishers of the society. By the Darshan of their favorite God, or through the hearty prayer of that God, millions of devoted men and women have successfully swum the ocean of frustration, and have attained new lives. We will therefore have to accept this fundamental truth.

It can be proved from the analyzing the lives of those who go to temples regularly that the temples are laboratories of psychology. If any science is proved by arguments alone no experiments will be necessary, but to prove the truth of an argument the need of an experiment is inevitable. When an idea is proved with the help of an experiment, it does not remain a mere idea, but it attains the status of truth.

That the temples are the laboratories of psychology is not only an idea. It is a truth established by experiments, as the results achieved there from are before our eyes. The person who does not accept truth even when he sees the results is not a scientist. He is an obstinate man who does not understand science. His opinion has no validity.

When the physician gives any medicine to the patient, he does not reveal to him the ingredients with which the medicine was prepared. It is not necessary to do so; neither does the patient show any curiosity about it. His only wish is to get rid of the disease. Similarly, the religious Saints who are well-wishers of the society do not reveal the way in which the sentiments, ideas and activities of a troubled man can be given a suitable direction. It is not even necessary to do so.

The ideas that are engendered in the mind of an individual are based on his previous ways of life. Due to this we have to take recourse to a desired idea to change the direction of an undesirable idea according to the many previous ways of life.

On Overcoming My Obsession with Food

Such an unusual fate I have had! From earliest childhood, I used to go to my mother all day -- morning, noon, and night -- with only one prayer -- "Please give me something to eat." Yet, after going out to play again, I would soon become hungry and run back for another snack.

Yes, hunger and I were terrible enemies. Hunger stalked me voraciously, and the fire of my appetite never subsided. My mouth just kept moving like a millstone. I would always beg to eat a little more at lunch so that hunger would not overpower me so soon afterwards.

I was born into a family during an age when parents often inspired their children to undertake fasts. Other children were fasting at age five or six, but I had not yet fasted at the age of ten. As soon as the thought of fasting came into my mind, my appetite would voraciously attack me. It would force me to eat twice as much breakfast, at a time even earlier than usual.

Finally, when I was ten years of age, my mother proclaimed that I should observe the upcoming *Ekadashi* Fast Day. My sister *Indumati* advised my mother, "If you really want him to observe the fast, you will have to lock him up in his room. Otherwise, since he normally eats four times a day, he will eat five times on this fast day."

Everyone was sure that this plan would never work if I knew about it beforehand, so they kept it a secret from me. Then dawned the dreadful day of the *Ekadashi* fast. After I had arisen and performed my normal routine, Mother said, "Come upstairs with me." The moment I followed her into my study room on the second floor, she locked the door behind me and announced, "Today is the auspicious day of *Bhima Ekadashi*, and you must observe the fast. I will call you when it's time for fruit."

As soon as my mother went downstairs, hunger came upstairs. I just could not fast, and yet fasting was being forced upon me. My mind became very restless and angry as a result of my hunger.

"How can I ever make it through this fast today?"

"What if I go to bed hungry?"

"How will I sleep with an empty stomach?"

"How can I get some food?"

I knew the schedule and habits of the entire household. I knew that when my mother went into the kitchen to prepare my brother's lunch, that was my chance to sneak into the pantry.

There was a small balcony off my study on which a garment was drying. I quickly lashed it to a pillar and quietly lowered myself directly into the kitchen courtyard. My mission now was to hunt for any food stored in the pantry. I crept softly into the storeroom. Without a sound, I explored every can, jar, pot, and pan. A bag of rice flakes came into my hand. Gripping it between my teeth, I rapidly scrambled up onto the balcony the way I had climbed down.

Gleeful, I thought to myself, "Now I can spend the whole day eating these rice flakes!" (Ed. Which he did, though his ruse was discovered two weeks later when his mother went to find the rice flakes.)

Now just consider: if a person could not tolerate hunger when he was ten years old, how much less would he be able to tolerate hunger when he was nineteen? At nineteen, I was used to eating two meals and two snacks a day. Not only that, but I would never turn down extra snacks or meals. Since I was very fond of exercise, my appetite was voracious.

I was a disciple of my Reverend *Gurudev*. *Gurudev* was a great man. I believe he knew me inside and out, and I had unflinching faith in his divine wisdom.

One day, *Gurudev* said to me, "From tomorrow onward you should eat only once a day." I became depressed merely upon hearing this order. My appetite was notorious. Thus, when my *Gurudev* told me that from that day on I should eat only twice a day, I pleaded, "*Guruji*, how will I be able to carry out this formidable task?" But he gave no comfort to my cowardice.

I was utterly dissatisfied during the first week, but thereafter my train gradually began to run on the right track. After two months, *Gurudev* changed the routine again.

He instructed, "After tomorrow, you should eat only once a day, and that meal should be moderate."

"I have to eat moderately and only once a day?"

He nodded, "Yes."

My mind was in revolt for a week.

Eventually, however, it mellowed.

Gurudev insisted that I eat with him, and informed the sister who served us that I must eat moderately. After I ate the moderate portions she had served, *Gurudev* would order me to leave the table. Sometimes the sister cried in pity at my situation, although it was obvious that *Gurudev's* orders contained no trace of cruelty or oppression; they were full of a very powerful and tender affection. The task that had at first seemed difficult was made easy, and the person who had seemed cruel was actually loving.

Then, after keeping me on the dietary regimen of one meal a day, *Gurudev* instructed that I only drink milk for three months. During the first few days, I felt discomfort again, but afterwards, things began to run smoothly.

Eventually *Gurudev* said, "My son, starting tomorrow you should fast for forty days on water and practice *Mantra Japa* (repetition of sacred Sanskrit sounds). His first two words, "My son" seemed so sweet. They had the unique power to sweeten the bitterness of everything that followed. Yet, my mind was not prepared to believe that I could observe a forty-day continuous fast on water. I may have had the willpower to fast on water for two or three days, perhaps, but I knew that to fast for forty days was far beyond my capacity

On hearing his order, my mind became a battlefield between conviction and logic. I was prepared to obey. Yet, although I had unflinching faith in *sadhana* (spiritual practice), I was very doubtful whether I could actually accomplish this task.

Gurudev said, "I will quote to you from scripture: The word *upvas*, or fasting, is composed of two syllables: *up* meaning 'near or close' and *var* meaning 'to reside'; that is, 'to live close to the Lord.' Thus, the Lord sits near the fasting devotee who is helpless with love. Actually, a true devotee is hungry only for love, and since the Lord loves to look with unblinking eyes at the face of the love-hungry devotee, He never leaves him alone. When he does not eat enough food to fill his stomach, the Lord fills him."

Finally, it was the day of the fast. *Guruji* initiated me with the *mantra* and showed me to the room where I was to fast. He said, "You must observe austerities for forty days. There is a water pot inside. Every day I will lock your door from the outside and keep the keys with me. You are free to come for *darshan* (a meeting or audience with a spiritual master in this case, with himself) twice a day."

Expressing my mental anguish and confusion, I asked, "*Guruji*, must you bother to lock and unlock the door yourself?"

"Yes, I will do this myself," said *Gurudev* with finality.

Such affection for his disciple. What unparalleled grace! I have never been proud of my arduous austerities, even in a dream; it is all truly due to the divine grace of my *Gurudev* [*Dadaji, the Lord Lakulish, who is seen in the idol at the Temple of Lord Brahmeshvar*]."

On Diet

Moderation in diet is one of the foundations of spiritual progress. Moderation means eating the precise amount of food required to keep the body alert and efficient. But if a delicious dish is put in front of an orator while he is preaching about moderation in diet, he will want to stop talking about moderation until he has eaten the food.

In India, moderation in diet is given deep consideration as an important part of spiritual life, since one's energy is generated, protected, and maintained by moderate diet. In addition, every religion invariably prescribes fasting. If fasting were not woven into the structure of the social religions, there would be even more disease and death in the world.

On Fear and Disease, Eating and Exercise

July 9, 1977

We are afraid of disease. But at the time of overeating we forget that if we overeat we will be unhealthy, that overeating is the invitation to the disease. When we have to run to the bathroom often, then only do we say, "I made a mistake in eating." That mistake is the fear. What is the picture of the fear?

The knowing that our desire will not be fulfilled creates a fear. When we desire something and we have the painful projection that we will not get it, a fear is created. Our doubt is our fear. Doubt is not a real thing. When we have such a doubt, whether something is gold or brass, for example, we are in the middle. Whenever we doubt something or are indecisive about something, we are in limbo. If we do not know what health is, we are afraid of disease.

The same reasons that protect your health will remove your poor health. So the first thing to determine in protecting your health is, "How should I behave?" One of the reasons for disease is indigestion. Indigestion is due to lack of physical exercise. Without the physical exercise, you cannot digest food properly. If you could really digest food without exercise, you would eat all the food in stock. There are some people who do some form of exercise and then eat twice as much. If a person were to choose to eat less, he would have a sharp intellect. It is worthwhile doing physical exercise.

We can only truly live happily if we do physical exercise. Those who exercise properly digest food properly and they find food very tasty. The taste of food is one thing, but the inner sensation of real hunger is all together different. You get up in the morning and after you finish your morning routine you start overeating. This is not proper. Leave your stomach empty for awhile and you will experience joy and alertness of the body. When you get up yawning, you are eating yawns. Then you eat food again. That increases the dullness.

In such conditions, there won't be the alertness. In order to become alert, give up morning breakfast. Another thing, when you eat, chew your food well. If you do not chew thoroughly, the saliva does not mix with the food properly. And that does not help digestion. One of the many joys in this world is to eat the food that you like. By eating moderately your intellect remains pure and you can engage your attention on the Lord. I'm not willing to overeat, [thereby] missing the opportunity of having my attention on God.

It is necessary for you to know that in order to prevent disease you must follow moderation in diet. And to keep from getting sick you must do postures and pranayama and other forms of exercise. To prevent disease you should not eat when you are not hungry and chew your food well for proper digestion.

By always remaining consciously aware, you will protect yourself from disease. It is best to not stay up late at night and to protect your body with proper understanding. Keep the doors of the mind closed so that inappropriate thoughts can't enter and keep the vents open so that the good thoughts flow through.