

# **The Dhammapada: The Way of the Buddha, Vol 1**

## **Chapter #4**

**Chapter title: Just lucky, I guess!**

**24 June 1979 am in Buddha Hall**

The first question:

Question 1

BELOVED MASTER,

UPON RETURNING TO HOLLAND LAST YEAR I STARTED COMMUNICATING ABOUT YOU WITH AN OVERWHELMING SENSE OF URGENCY. I FELT YOU IMPARTED THIS URGENCY TO ME, BUT IT SEEMED ALSO TO BE A PART OF MY NATURE.

THIS FEELING OF NOT HAVING A SECOND TO LOSE, THE WISH TO GET MORE DUTCH PEOPLE TO BECOME SANNYASINS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, MADE ME FAR FROM PLAYFUL. THE SERIOUSNESS LED TO MUCH ANGUISH BECAUSE I WAS CONFRONTED WITH INDIFFERENCE, RIDICULE AND CONTEMPT, ESPECIALLY FROM THE JOURNALISTS. OBJECTIVELY I DID NOT FAIL -- FAR FROM IT -- BUT IN TERMS OF BEING, MY TRIP WAS NOT EXACTLY wu-wei. I SIMPLY COULD NOT COMBINE THIS URGENCY WITH JOY AND RELAXATION.

WILL YOU SAY A FEW WORDS ON THIS URGENCY, EVEN THOUGH YOU HAVE GIVEN ME SO MUCH ALREADY?

Deva Amrito, the playfulness that I talk about comes very slowly. You cannot just jump out of your seriousness which you have accumulated for lives. Now it has a force of its own.

It is not a simple matter to relax; it is one of the most complex phenomena possible, because all that we are taught is tension, anxiety, anguish. Seriousness is the very core the society is built around. Playfulness is for small children, not for grown-up people. And I am teaching you to be children again, to be playful again. It is a quantum leap, a jump...but it takes time to understand.

And as far as I am concerned, you have been immensely successful: objectively, certainly, but subjectively too. Unexpectedly you have been successful. Anybody else in your place would have been in a madhouse.

You were excited, and it is natural to be excited. When somebody understands me, feels me, he immediately starts feeling an urgency -- not a single moment to lose. And the word has to be spread. A kind of tremendous immediacy overwhelms. It is natural! It is true that there is not a single moment to lose. And if you love me, you would like all those people to come to me, because they may not get the opportunity again -- for centuries, for lives together!

When you love, and you have found a treasure, you would like to share it. And if the treasure is such that it can disappear any moment, how can you avoid the feeling of immense urgency? You will have to shout from the tops of the houses.

And the response that you will get is absolutely certain and fixed. The more you would like people to come to me, the more they will escape -- from you, from the very idea of coming to me. And the only way to escape is to ridicule you, to laugh at you, to call you mad. That is their way of defending themselves. If they listen to you understandingly, if they allow you to overwhelm their being, to overflow into their being, to flood their being, then they will also find themselves in the same grip. And it will be very difficult for them to avoid.

Hence, from the very beginning they will ridicule you, criticize you, oppose you, laugh at you. They will do everything possible to create the feeling in you that you are wrong. But they failed. They could not create that feeling in you. The more they ridiculed you, the more they laughed, the more they criticized, the more you tried to convince them.

And you have been objectively successful -- you have convinced thousands of people. Since your going to Holland, many many Dutch people have arrived, and more are arriving, and more will go on arriving. You have created a great stir. You have touched many people's hearts. And it has been a great experience for your inner growth too.

The impact that you created has not got into your head yet; it has not made you more of an egoist. In fact, it has made you more humble. It may not have been exactly wu-wei, but it was very close. And I was not expecting it to be absolutely wu-wei, but it has been more than I was expecting.

I was a little bit afraid, Amrito, that you might go mad. The urgency was such, your ecstasy was such, you were so passionately in love with me, that I was afraid deep down. I was sending you with all kinds of apprehensions. But you survived the test. You have come back. The turmoil that was created around you because of your talking about me -- in the newspapers, on the radio, the TV -- the way you talked, it gave the sense of your immense love, it gave the sense that you have found the home.

Many have been convinced. And many who have not been convinced have also started thinking about it. And even those who have ridiculed you and have opposed you are impressed; otherwise who cares? Why should you oppose somebody if you are not impressed? Why should you ridicule and laugh if you are simply alert that he is mad? Nobody laughs at a madman, nobody ridicules a madman. It is enough to know that he is mad and everything is finished!

You have created a chain which will go on. And I would like many of my sannyasins to be so excited, to feel the urgency, to go to their countries and spread the word. And you will have to shout from the tops of the houses.

And whenever you are in love you look mad -- you are mad. Love is madness...but far higher than the so-called, mediocre, mundane sanity. And love is blindness, but a blindness that is capable of seeing the invisible.

Love is not part of the ordinary world that we have created. We have expelled love from it. So whenever you are in love -- and to be in love with a master, to be in love

with a buddha, is the ultimate love -- it drives you crazy. It makes you part of the beyond. Nobody can believe it.

How can your friends, Amrito, believe it, that it has happened to you and it has not happened to them? It is so much against their egos that you have found and they have not found yet, and still they are struggling. No, the easier way for them is to deny, to say that you have not found, that you are in an illusion, that you have been hypnotized, that you are hallucinating, that you have been drugged. That gives them a consolation, that gives them a kind of at-easeness. If you have really found, then they will feel very very uneasy -- then their lives are failures.

It has been a beautiful experience. I know you could not be very playful. It was difficult. Next time when I send you, you will be more playful. Now don't get afraid! I know that you don't want to go back again. Enough is enough...but one more time. Next time the whole project is to be playful. Then people will laugh more and they will think that you have gone even more mad. But laugh...dance, sing. This time you were arguing. Next time no arguing -- singing, dancing, hugging people.

But I am absolutely happy. Whatsoever has happened has been good objectively, has been good for others, has been good for you. It is a device: to send you for a particular purpose is a device for your inner growth. And you have been successful.

There was every possibility of being a failure.

I am reminded:

Once George Gurdjieff asked P.D. Ouspensky, his chief disciple of those days, to come from London to a faraway place somewhere in the Caucasus. It was very difficult. Financially Ouspensky was bankrupt. He had no money, no house to live in, nobody to support him. And such a long journey! And the times were very dangerous. In those parts of the world it was dangerous to move, because the Russian revolution was happening. People were being massacred, killed, murdered. There was no peace. Even Gurdjieff had to leave Russia, and he was hiding in the mountains of the Caucasus.

It was not a right time to go there; it was very dangerous. The journey was not easy: all the trains were unsettled, roads were cut, bridges were broken. It was chaos! But when the master calls, the disciple has to follow. Whatever belongings he had, he sold. He borrowed money from people, and traveled thousands of miles. It took him almost thirty days to reach Gurdjieff. Tired, tattered, thinking many times, "What am I doing? People are escaping from Russia, and I am going there!" And he was on the blacklist of the communists, because he was a well-known figure -- chief disciple of George Gurdjieff, a well-known, world-famous mathematician, a great author, one of the greatest the world has ever known. His books were translated into almost all the languages of the world. Going back to Russia was dangerous. He could be caught, imprisoned, killed. He was anticommunist! -- no sensible person can be a communist, because the whole idea is nonsense. But he traveled...and when he reached Gurdjieff, Gurdjieff looked at him and the first thing that he said was, "Go back to London and start work again."

Now that was too much. Ouspensky failed. He could not trust this man. Now what kind of a joke is this? Playing with somebody's life in such a way...and immediately he said, "Go back right now! I have nothing else to say."

Ouspensky went back -- turned against Gurdjieff, became an enemy. That was a great device of a great master. If he had trusted, he would have become enlightened. He missed the opportunity. He died an unenlightened person.

When things are going smooth and easy, trust is easy -- but it is worthless. When things become difficult, arduous, impossible, and you can still trust, when it becomes absolutely illogical to trust and you can still trust, only such a trust becomes a transforming force.

Amrito, I am going to send you one more time. And remember, I am not a very consistent man: it may be twice, thrice...it depends. But for the moment, one time I am going to send you -- that much is certain.

And this time the project is being playful.

The second question:

Question 2

BELOVED MASTER,

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY RELIGIONS IN THE WORLD, AND WHY DO THESE RELIGIONS CONTINUOUSLY QUARREL WITH EACH OTHER?

Geetam, it is natural that there should be so many religions. In fact, more are needed. As I see it, each individual should have his own religion; there should be as many religions as there are people. The number is not so much: there are only three hundred religions -- and how many people on the earth?

Each individual should have his own religion, because each individual is so unique, so different from anybody else. How can two persons have one religion? It is impossible. But we have been asking the impossible. Each individual has to reach God in his own way, and that way is never going to be traveled by anybody else again.

Hence, buddhas can only indicate, can only give you hints. They cannot provide you with certain, absolutely certain maps -- just hints, a few hints. And those hints have not to be taken very seriously -- very playfully. You are not to become a fanatic. If you become a fanatic you are no longer religious.

A religious person is humble, available to all kinds of hints; he is a seeker, a searcher, an explorer, and he will learn from every possible source. He will learn from the Bible, and he will learn from the Vedas, and he will learn from THE DHAMMAPADA. He will listen to Buddha, to Jesus, to Zarathustra. He will learn from all possible sources, but still he will remain himself. He will not become an imitation, he will not become a carbon copy. He will retain his authenticity. He will be humble, sincere, authentic; he will not become pseudo. He will not be a follower, he will be a lover.

He will love the buddha, but he will not follow him; he will not follow him in the details. How can you follow a buddha in the details? He is a totally different kind of

person. You have never been before, nobody like you has ever been before, and nobody who is exactly like you will ever be there again. Hence your religion has to be your religion, your truth has to be your truth.

And that is the beauty of truth, that it always comes in such a unique form that you can say, "This is a special gift from God to me." Hence there are so many religions. And it is beautiful! -- there should be many more. Many people have been trying to make one religion; that is utter stupidity. You cannot create one religion. You can enforce one religion on people, but that will destroy their spirit, their freedom; that will cripple their being and paralyze their growth.

Just as there are so many languages, there are so many religions. The variety is beautiful, the variety makes it possible for you to choose according to your type. Religion is not and cannot be decided by birth, and those who decide their religion by their birth are utter fools. You cannot be born a Hindu and you cannot be born a Christian; birth has nothing to do with your religion. Religion is an inquiry. You may be born to Hindu parents -- that is one thing -- but if your parents really love you they will not convert you into a Hindu. Of course they will tell you all they have known and experienced, but they will leave you free. And they will tell you, "Become more alert, watchful, mature, and when you are mature enough and you want to decide, choose your own religion."

Go to the mosque, go to the church, go to the temple, go to the gurudwara. Listen to all kinds of things, see all kinds of flowers: the garden of God is so full of variety, is so rich because of variety. There are roses and lotuses and a thousand and one other flowers. Go and choose your own perfume, your own fragrance, because unless you yourself choose you will not be dedicated to it, you will not be surrendered to it.

The world is not religious because religion is imposed upon us. The parents are in a hurry to impose; the church, the state, the country -- everybody is in a hurry to impose a certain religion on the child. How foolish! How stupid! Religion needs maturity, great understanding, before one can choose.

Nobody is born a Hindu or a Mohammedan or a Parsi. Everybody is born clean, innocent, a TABULA RASA, and then everyone has to seek and search. This is the beauty of life because life is an inquiry. And don't be settled too early; there is no need. It is possible that no existing religion may satisfy you. But that is good; that means a new religion is born in you. The world becomes richer: one more religion, one more flower, one more tree -- a new phenomenon.

Buddha brings a new religion into the world; the world was poorer before Buddha because it was missing Buddhism. Buddha could have followed the religion of his parents; then the world would have been still poor. The world would have missed something immensely valuable, a new door to God. Buddha opened a new door, a new vision, a new insight. He was not convinced by his parents' religion; otherwise, he would have remained a Hindu. He rebelled. All religious people are rebellious people.

He went on an individual search -- all religious people are explorers, all religious people are adventurers. It would have been easy and convenient and comfortable to believe in the religion that had been believed in by the parents and the parents' parents,

and for centuries. It would have been more convenient because you need not inquire, you need not go through the whole effort of finding the truth. It has been found by some seer in the past -- you can simply borrow it. But a borrowed truth is not a truth at all. A borrowed truth is a lie.

Buddha went on a search; arduous was the inquiry. He risked all -- his kingdom, his life. But when you risk so much, life showers new treasures on you. A new religion, a new insight, a new vision, was born into the world.

Mohammed could have followed his parents' religion. Jesus could have followed Judaism. Become a Jesus, become a Buddha, become a Mohammed! Don't be a Mohammedan and don't be a Buddhist and don't be a Christian -- explore! Don't waste life in imitating, because then you will remain pseudo. And a pseudo person cannot be religious. Great authenticity, sincerity is needed.

So, Geetam, it is good that there are three hundred religions -- there should be more! I am always for variety. I want the world richer in every possible way. Would you like the whole world to have only one kind of flower -- just roses, or just lotuses? Will it not be an impoverished world, very poor? Would you like the world to have only one language? Then the different nuances of the different languages will disappear.

There are things which can be said only in Arabic and cannot be said in any other language; and there are things which can be said only in Hebrew and cannot be said in any other language. There are things which can be said only in Chinese and cannot be said in any other language. If the world has only one language, many many beautiful things will remain unsaid.

Lao Tzu can speak only Chinese. You may not have pondered over the problem: just think of Lao Tzu writing his TAO TEH CHING in English...and the book will be totally different. It will miss something of immense value; it will have something different, a totally different color to it, but it will miss the flavor that it has in Chinese.

Now, Chinese has no alphabet; it is written in symbols. Because there is no alphabet, symbols can be interpreted in a thousand and one ways; symbols are more fluid, less fixed, more poetic, less prosaic. One symbol can mean many things. It is not scientific; it is very difficult to write scientific treatises in Chinese. For that, English is a far more adequate language.

But what Lao Tzu has given to the world would not have been possible without Chinese. Each symbol has many meanings, a multiplicity of meanings. You can choose your meaning according to your state of mind. Each symbol has many layers of meaning. As you grow in your understanding, the meaning of the symbols changes.

Hence, in the East a totally different kind of reading has existed which is nonexistent in the West. You would not like to read the same Bernard Shaw book again and again and again, or would you? Unless you are insane you would not like to read it again and again and again. What is the point? Once you have read it, it is finished! That's why the paperback has come into existence: read it and throw it. But in the East a different kind of reading exists: the same book is read again and again the whole life long.

The TAO TEH CHING is not a book which can be published in paperback -- they are doing that now. It should not be published in paperback -- it cannot be, because it is a

totally different kind of book. It has layers and layers of meaning. When for the first time you read it, it is one book because you know only one meaning, the superficial. After meditating for a few months you read it again; another meaning reveals itself; after meditating a few months more you read it again...a third meaning. It has to go on, it has to become a life's study.

And you will go on finding the meanings -- they are inexhaustible. Aes dhammo sanantano: the ultimate is eternal and inexhaustible. It is not a fiction; you cannot just read it and be finished with it. One reading is not going to help you at all; it simply introduces you, it does not give you the core of it. It takes a whole life to come to the core of it.

Now we need all kinds of languages. English is needed for its definiteness, for its certainty. Each word has a definition. Science cannot develop without such a language. Science could not be born in India because of the language; Sanskrit is a poetic language. You can sing it -- it has that quality -- you can chant it, but you cannot make much of a syllogism out of it. Many songs, certainly, but it is not argumentative; expressive but nonargumentative.

Arabic has a very haunting quality. If you chant it, it will become a haunting in your heart. Stop chanting it and the chanting continues in the heart. Arabic has that quality in it because it is a desert language; desert languages have a haunting quality. When you are calling somebody in a desert, far away, you have to call in a certain way -- and in a desert you can call people who are very far away; if you call them in a rhythmic way your sound will reach them.

Hence the beauty of the Koran. It is not a book to be read -- those who read the Koran will miss its meaning -- it is a book to be sung. It is not a book to be studied: it is a book to be danced, only then will you reach its inner spirit.

It is beautiful that there are many languages because there are many things to be said, expressed, communicated. And as the world grows, many more languages are needed, because as the world grows, many more things people are feeling, people are going through, people are reaching.

Religion is nothing but a language for expressing the ultimate. Geetam, there is nothing wrong in there being many religions. Of course, there is certainly something wrong in their constant quarreling with each other. That shows that the so-called religions have lost their religious quality, they have become political; that these so-called religions no longer have alive masters in them but only dead, dull, mediocre priests. They go on quarreling, they go on trying to convert, because numbers create power. If there are more Christians then Christianity has more power and the pope in the Vatican becomes more powerful. If Hindus are more in number, of course they are more in power.

Numbers give power. So Christianity wants everybody to be a Christian, and Mohammedans would like everybody to be a Mohammedan, Their ways and means may differ, but the effort and the desire is the same, a very deep political desire -- it is power politics. Then naturally quarreling will arise. Politics is quarreling; it has nothing to do with religion.

Religions should be as many as possible. And there is no question of any conflict: it is a question of like and dislike. If I like roses, you don't try to come and convince me that I should like marigolds -- you simply accept my liking. And if you like marigolds, it's perfectly okay; there is no question of arguing, quarreling. We need not fight with each other -- actually or intellectually. I can leave you to your choice, and I don't feel offended because you like marigolds and I don't like them.

Likes and dislikes are individual affairs. One may like the Bhagavadgita, another may like the Koran, somebody else may like THE DHAMMAPADA -- it's perfectly okay, absolutely okay. We should share our likings with each other, but we should not try to convert the other, to force the other into our fold. Yes, share by all means, because sharing shows your love. If you have found a source, share! But the sharing should be out of love, not for power politics. It is not to convince the other and to drag him into your fold. Religions have been doing such ugly things. People have been converted at the point of the bayonet; people are being converted by money, by bribing them...by any means, right or wrong. Become a Christian! Become a Mohammedan! Become a Hindu! Grab more and more people so you become more powerful, and don't allow anybody else to leave your fold.

Mulla Nasruddin's son was asking him, "Papa, when a Christian becomes a Mohammedan, what do you call him?"

Nasruddin smiled and said, "He has come to his senses, he is a man of understanding, wisdom. He has understood what is false as false and what is truth as truth."

The boy asks again, "And Papa, if a Mohammedan becomes a Christian what do you call him?"

Nasruddin was very angry and said, "He is a traitor! He has betrayed. He is stupid!"

Now, if a Christian becomes a Mohammedan, he is a man of intelligence, a wise man; and if a Mohammedan becomes a Christian he is a traitor, stupid. And the same is the situation if you ask the Christian.

A Hindu became a Christian. All the Hindus were against him, naturally -- he had betrayed them! But Christians made him a saint. Sadhu Sunder Singh was his name. They almost worshipped him as if he was an incarnation of Jesus, because he proved the truth of Christianity. And Hindus? -- they were so angry with the man that they wanted to kill him. And there is every possibility that they did kill him, because one day he suddenly disappeared and his body has not been found since then. It is still a mystery what happened to Sadhu Sunder Singh.

I know a man who was a Hindu and became a Jaina. Hindus were very much against him, naturally, obviously. They tried in every way to destroy the man, but he became the most famous Jaina saint. Ganesh Varni was his name. He defeated all other Jaina saints; he reached the highest pinnacle. What was his real quality? Why did he reach the highest pinnacle? Because basically he was a Hindu and became a Jaina. "He proved that Jainism is far higher than Hinduism; otherwise, why has this man, such a wise man, come to our fold?"



Geetam, these religions quarrel because they are not religious; they have become more and more political. And when you quarrel, then everything is right -- in love and war everything is right.

A Catholic is trying to convert a Jew and tells him that if he becomes a Catholic his prayers will certainly be answered -- because the priest will give them to the bishop, who will give them to the cardinal, who will give them to the pope, who will shove them up into heaven through a hole at the top of the Vatican, which just matches a hole in the floor of heaven, where Saint Peter will take them to the Virgin Mary, who will intercede on their behalf with Jesus, who will say a good word for them to God.

The Jew repeats this whole itinerary with an astonished air, ending, "You know it must be true, because I have always wondered what they do with all the shit in heaven. They must throw it down that little hole in the Vatican, where the pope gives it to the cardinal, who gives it to the bishop, who gives it to the priest, who gives it to you -- and you are trying to hand it to me?"

Religions are good -- many more are needed -- but quarreling religions are not religions. The very quarreling attitude makes them political. And the priest and the politician have been in a very subtle conspiracy down the ages -- because the politician can dominate the people through the priest very easily. The priest possesses the souls of the people and the politician possesses the bodies of the people. Both are oppressors, exploiters. Both are in the same business, both are partners. Both can help each other. The politician can help the priest because he has temporal power, and the priest can help the politician because people listen to him, worship him, take his word as divine.

Do you know, Buddhism did not become a great religion because of Buddha; it became a great religion because of the emperor Ashoka. It was not because of Buddha that millions of people became Buddhists, no. While Buddha was alive, only a few, a few chosen people were courageous enough to walk with him in his light, to commune with him. And they were courageous -- because they had to suffer, they had to suffer much ridicule, opposition, because the established Hindu church was against this man Buddha.

Buddhism became a world religion not because of Buddha but because of the emperor Ashoka. When the Buddhist priests joined hands with the emperor Ashoka, then the religion became a world religion. The whole of Asia was converted. Now the priests would help Ashoka to retain his power, and Ashoka would help the priests become more and more powerful.

Christianity became a world religion not because of Jesus. Jesus was very alone -- only a few disciples, twelve disciples, and a few hundred sympathizers, that's all. And even those disciples disappeared when Jesus was being crucified, and the sympathizers simply forgot about him; they stopped talking about the man because it was dangerous even to show sympathy.

It is said that the people who had sympathized with Jesus came to spit on his face while he was dying to show the people, "We are against, we are not for him." To prove to the

people...because this man is dying -- now they will be in trouble. They have to live, they still have to live. They have to give some proof that they are against this man.

They denied Jesus while he was dying. They threw mud, stones, they spat on his face, just to show the crowds, "See, isn't this enough proof that the rumors that you have heard that we are sympathizers are absolutely wrong, unfounded? We are against him as much as you are -- in fact, we are more against him than you are."

The enemies were not spitting on him but the friends. Jesus became a world force not because of himself but only when the Roman emperors and Christian priests joined hands. Now, this is an irony. Jesus was crucified by a Roman emperor -- see how history moves! Pontius Pilate was just a representative of the Roman power, of the Roman emperor; he simply followed the orders from Rome. Who would ever have thought that Rome would become the central place of Christianity? Who would ever have thought while Jesus was being crucified that Rome would be the residence of the pope? But that's how it happened. When priests joined hands with Emperor Constantine and other Roman emperors, Christianity became a world force.

Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism -- they have all depended on politics. They are not true religions anymore but political games being played in the name of religion. I would like the world to have many more religions, so many that each individual has his own religion -- then no priest will be needed. That is the only way to drop the priests. If you have your own religion, no priest is needed -- you are the priest and you are the follower and you are everything.

You have to listen to your inner voice. Buddha says: Follow your own nature; there is no need for anybody to intercede on your behalf.

But I am not in favor of creating one religion; enough of that nonsense! In the past we have been trying to do that: make one religion so that quarreling can stop. But it is not possible. Even if you can enforce one religion, if the whole world becomes Christian, then again there will be Protestants and Catholics and a thousand and one sects. And the same game will start again: people will start quarreling -- because their needs are different, their understandings are different.

I have heard:

A beautiful young woman came home from London. She belonged to a small village, was from a Catholic family. After three or four years of living in London she had become very rich; she came back to see her parents. The mother could not believe her eyes. She asked, "How did you manage? You have become so rich -- such beautiful clothes, a diamond ring, a beautiful car!"

And the girl said, "Mother, I have become a prostitute."

Just hearing this the mother fainted, became unconscious. When she came back she asked again, "What did you say?"

The girl said, "Mother, I said I have become a prostitute."

And the mother started laughing and she said, "I misunderstood you -- I thought you said you had become a Protestant."

To be a prostitute is okay, but to become a Protestant...? The same quarreling will start. Even small religions -- for example, Jainism, one of the smallest religions in the world -- have so many sects, sects within sects. In fact, we have not yet become aware of the great necessity that each individual needs his own version of God, and each individual has his own way of approaching God.

A man picked up by a prostitute in a bar is amazed by the college pennants and diplomas ornamenting the walls of her room.

"Are these your diplomas?" he asks.

"Sure," she says airily. "I have my Master of Arts from Columbia, and took my Ph.D. in Shakespeare at Oxford."

The man is incredulous. "But how did a girl like you get into a profession like this?"

"I don't know," she says. "Just lucky, I guess."

People have different understandings, different ways of looking at things, different interpretations. And they have to be allowed this freedom.

The third question:

Question 3

BELOVED MASTER,

MY PARENTS WERE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN INDIA FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. MY BROTHER WAS A JUNKIE, MY SISTER A COMPULSIVE LIAR. AS FOR ME, I AM SO SERIOUS THAT IF I SMILE MY MOUTH HURTS. HOW DID I END UP HERE?

Prem Parijat, just lucky, I guess! You will live in ecstasy and you will die in ecstasy.

Did you hear about the man eighty-seven years of age who married a nineteen-year-old girl?

He died of a new disease called ecstasy. It took them three days to wipe the smile off his face.

Now, this is going to happen to you too: living your life will be a laughter; dying, it will be difficult for the people to wipe off your smile.

It may be just because your parents are Christian missionaries that you have landed here, because to be born to any kind of missionaries -- Christian, Hindu or Mohammedan -- is to be fed up with all that nonsense. To be born to a priest is to know one thing for certain: that priests don't believe in God. It is their business; they pretend.

It is a rare opportunity to be born in the house of a priest, because children are very perceptive and they can see through and through that all that nonsense that their father in preaching is just preaching -- he does not mean it because he never practices it. The children of the priests are bound to become aware of the hypocrisy of the so-called religious people.

It may be just because of it, because it is almost impossible to be in the house of a priest and not to know that he is the most irreligious person possible in the world.

Priests are exploiting religion. They are exploiting people's trust. They are the greatest cheaters in the world, because to exploit people's trust is the greatest crime. You are destroying their trust. But they live on that kind of cheating; that is their whole trade secret.

The bishop was very proud of an elegant mansion he had constructed as his official residence. One day, a friend and the bishop were engaged in conversation and the bishop was pursuing a seemingly atheistic train of thought....

That kind of thinking is becoming very prevalent in Christian circles: religionless religion, Godless Christianity -- these are being talked about, discussed. After Friedrich Nietzsche, who declared that God is dead, Christianity has been in a turmoil -- what to do now? They have been trying every possible way to create a Christianity which does not need God anymore, so that the profession can expand again.

Now God has become a barrier; the moment you assert the word 'God', you put people off. So Christian theologians are discussing, thinking, meditating, how to create a Christianity that does not need God at all. And it is possible! -- because Buddhism is there without any God, and Jainism is there without any God, so why can't there be a Christianity without God?

...This bishop was pursuing a seemingly atheistic train of thought. The friend asked him, "Bishop, do you believe in God or not? Say it exactly, say it in short. Don't go round and round. Say simply yes or no -- do you believe in God?"

After a long hesitation, the bishop replied, "Of course I do! Who do you think paid for this house?"

Now, the house that he has made, a beautiful mansion, is possible only because people still believe in God; and because they believe in God, they believe in the bishop. He cannot publicly declare there is no God. If you drop God, then Jesus is no longer the Son of God, then the pope is no longer the representative of Jesus, and so on and so forth. And they all go down the drain. It needs a hierarchy: God at the top and the priest at the bottom, the whole ladder.

And the priest certainly knows that there is no God. If he was aware that there is a God, he would not have been a priest in the first place -- he would be a Jesus, he would be a Buddha, but not a priest. He would be a prophet but not a priest. He would bring something of the unknown into people's lives, but he would not be part of a status quo, he would not be part of the established church. No man of understanding, no man who has some religious consciousness and experiences, can be part of any established church. It has never happened. Buddha has to leave his fold, Jesus has to leave his fold, Mohammed has to leave his fold -- this has always been so. Whenever a religious man is born, he has to leave his fold, because the fold is already in the hands of the politicians and the priests, whose whole interest is in exploiting people.

Anand Moksha has written to me:

During the time of the major earthquakes in Guatemala in 1976, the Catholic bishop at Lake Atitlan befriended me and allowed me to stay in his garden for a while.

A few months passed and after-shock tremors were still common. At that time I discovered that a beautiful house on a hillside was for rent for very little money. The reason was that a large boulder ominously overhung the house and people were afraid. I felt the vibes and it seemed okay to me -- so I rented the place.

When I told the bishop, he reacted with nervous dismay and swung his arms about, saying, "Aren't you worried about that rock tumbling down on the house?"

I replied, "If the Lord wants to take me, he will."

The bishop shrugged his shoulders and said, "You don't believe that, do you?"

It may be simply, Parijat, that just because you were born of Christian missionaries it became possible for you to be here. Christian missionaries, and twenty-five years in India! -- that is too much. In the first place, Christian missionaries and in the second place, twenty-five years in India...that is enough, more than enough, to convince the children that their parents are pseudo, that they are talking business, that they don't believe.

It is not a question of belief at all.

I have heard a small story:

In a school, a Christian missionary school, the teacher asked the children, "Who is the greatest man in history?"

An American boy says, "Abraham Lincoln."

A Mohammedan boy says, "Hazrat Mohammed."

A Hindu girl says, "Lord Krishna."

And so on and so forth...and finally, the little Jewish boy stands up and says, "Jesus Christ."

The teacher could not believe her ears -- the Jew and saying Jesus Christ? She asked, "Do you really mean that?"

He said, "That is not the question. In my heart of hearts I know it is Moses -- but business is business."

To be with Christian missionaries for twenty-five years, and in India, and seeing what they are doing, is enough to disillusion you. The whole credit goes to your parents and their twenty-five years in India. They have brought you here -- be thankful to them.

The fourth question:

Question 4

BELOVED MASTER,

I FEEL THAT I AM A VERY SPECIAL PERSON. I AM SO SPECIAL THAT I WANT JUST TO BE ORDINARY. PLEASE CAN YOU SAY SOMETHING ABOUT THIS?

Anand Sangito, everybody here thinks exactly the same. And not only here, but everywhere else. Everyone deep in their heart knows that he is special. This is a joke God plays on people. When he makes a new man and pushes him down towards the earth, he whispers in his ear, "You are special. You are incomparable, you are just unique!"

But this he goes on doing to everybody and everybody goes on carrying it deep in the heart, although people don't say it as loudly as you are doing, because they are afraid others may feel offended. And nobody is going to be convinced, so what is the point of saying it? If you tell somebody, "I am special," you cannot convince him because he himself knows that he is special. How can you convince anybody? Yes, maybe sometimes somebody may be convinced, at least pretend to be convinced. If he has some work with you, as a bribe he may say, "Yes, you are special, you are great." But deep down he knows business is business.

A braggart is telling his friend about his three cars, etcetera, etcetera. When he also mentions that he has two kept mistresses in New York, but that he has made his ravishingly beautiful and terribly passionate private secretary pregnant, and must therefore take his gorgeous blond stenographer with him on his business trip to Rio de Janeiro to see the carnival, the listener suddenly begins to pant, grabs at his own necktie, and has a heart attack.

The braggart interrupts his tale, gets water, pats the victim on the back, etcetera, etcetera, and he asks solicitously what the matter is. "Can I help it?" the man gasps. "I am allergic to bullshit."

It is better to keep such bullshit hidden deep down inside yourself, because people are allergic. But in a way it is good that you exposed your mind.

If you think you are special then you are bound to create misery for yourself. If you think that you are higher than others, wiser than others, then you will attain to a very strong ego. And the ego is poison, pure poison. And the more egoistic you become, the more it hurts, because it is a wound. The more egoistic you become, the more you become unbridged from life. You fall separate from life; you are no longer in the flow of existence, you have become a rock in the river. You have become ice-cold, you have lost all warmth, all love. A special person cannot love, because where are you going to find another special person?

I have heard about a man who remained unmarried his whole life, and when he was dying, ninety years old, somebody asked him, "You have remained unmarried your whole life, but you have never said what the reason was. Now you are dying, at least quench our curiosity. If there is any secret, now you can tell it, because you are dying; you will be gone. Even if the secret is known, it can't harm you."

The man said, "Yes, there is a secret. It is not that I am against marriage, but I was searching for a perfect woman. I searched and searched, and my whole life slipped by."

The inquirer asked, "But upon this big earth, so many millions of people, half of them women, couldn't you find one perfect woman?"

A tear rolled down from the eye of the dying man. He said, "Yes, I did find one."

The inquirer was absolutely shocked. He said, "Then what happened? Why didn't you get married?"

And the old man said, "But the woman was searching for a perfect husband."

Your life will become very difficult if you live with such ideas. And yes, the ego is so tricky, so cunning, it can give you, Sangito, this new project: "You are so special, become just ordinary." But in your ordinariness you will know you are the most extraordinarily ordinary man. Nobody is more ordinary than you! It will be the same game, camouflaged.

That's what so-called humble people go on doing. They say, "I am the most humble man. I am just the dust on your feet." But they don't mean it! Don't say, "Yes, I know you are," otherwise they will never be able to forgive you. They are waiting for you to say, "You are the most humble man I have ever seen, you are the most pious man I have ever seen." Then they will be satisfied, contented. It is ego hiding behind humbleness. You cannot drop the ego in this way.

You ask, "I feel that I am a very very special person. I am so special that I want just to be ordinary. Please can you say something about this?"

No one is special, or, everyone is special. No one is ordinary, or everyone is ordinary. Whatsoever you think about yourself, please think the same about everyone else, and the problem will be solved. You can choose. If you want the word 'special', you can think you are special -- but then everybody is special. Not only people, but trees, birds, animals, rocks -- the whole existence is special, because you come out of this existence and you will dissolve into this existence. But if you love the word 'ordinary' -- which is a beautiful word, more relaxed -- then know that everybody is ordinary. Then the whole existence is ordinary.

One thing to be remembered: whatsoever you think about yourself, think the same for everybody else and the ego will disappear. The ego is the illusion that is created by thinking about yourself in one way and thinking about others in another. It is double thinking. If you drop the double thinking, ego dies of its own accord.

The last question:

Question 5

BELOVED MASTER,

WHEN I CAME HERE I FELT GOD TO BE VERY NEAR -- ANY MOMENT AND I WOULD BE WITH HIM -- BUT AS TIME PASSES IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE. HE IS NOT AROUND; IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HIM.

WHY IS IT SO? PLEASE SAY SOMETHING ABOUT THIS.

Vedant Bharti, you must be carrying a certain image of God in your mind; hence you are missing. And unless you drop that image you are going to miss. God has no

obligation to fulfill your idea of him. You must be carrying a certain idea that "God looks like this, behaves like this...." That's why it is becoming impossible: you are making it impossible.

God can be known only by those who are capable of dropping all ideas about God. Any idea that you have accumulated in yourself in your ignorance is a hindrance. Drop all ideas about God and you will be surprised, you will be shocked, you will not be able to believe your eyes...because only God is! Then you will never ask, "Where is God?" You will ask, "Is there any place where God is not?"

Then in the very ordinariness of things you will see something tremendously extraordinary. Then ordinary pebbles are transformed into diamonds. Then ordinary humanity is no longer ordinary -- then something luminous is in everybody's heart. Then man comes closer to the divine, and the divine comes closer to man; the human and the divine disappear into each other, the world and God disappear into each other. Then you are not searching for a God who is separate and high and far away, living in the seventh heaven; then he lives in your neighborhood as your neighbor. Then he is human, he is animal, he is vegetable, he is mineral...he is all.

And when you can see that he surrounds you, not as a person but as a presence, then only does your inquiry come to a fulfillment. God is not hiding from you but you are keeping your eyes closed because of so many prejudices. Somebody has a Hindu idea of God, and somebody has a Christian idea of God, and somebody else a Mohammedan idea of God. Now, God is neither Mohammedan, nor Christian, nor Hindu, so all these people who are carrying these ideas are bound to go on stumbling in darkness and more darkness. From darkness to darkness will be their journey, from death to death they will move. They will never know the light.

A Hindu cannot know God, a Mohammedan cannot know God. First you will have to cleanse your mind completely of all Hinduism, all Mohammedanism, all Buddhism. When you are utterly thoughtless, just alert, aware, watchful, then God explodes. And he explodes all over the place.

Vedant Bharti, you say, "When I came here I felt God to be very near." That was your imagination.

"...Any moment and I would be with him." That was your wish.

"...But as time passes it seems impossible" -- because no imagination can ever become real. No dream of yours can ever be fulfilled. Reality has to be discovered, not imagined.

Now you say, "He is not around; it is difficult to see him."

Only he is around. It is difficult to see him because your eyes are too burdened with your own prejudices, concepts, systems of thought. Be a little more childlike, be a little more innocent. God comes only when the heart is innocent. God comes only when you are utterly empty of all ideas. He is always ready to come, he is standing at the door, but you cannot hear because your mind is so full of turmoil, full of thoughts, millions of thoughts clamoring around. Your mind is so noisy you cannot hear the silent knock on the door.

Be silent, be innocent. God is. Only God is.