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Universal Target is a spiritual journal promoting unity in diversity and peaceful co-existence. It is founded on the belief that all human beings share a common source and spiritual heritage, irrespective of the differences of culture and world traditions. The journal draws upon the shared and accumulated wisdom of our common heritage, to encourage harmony through self-realisation. Universal Target endorses the maxim of His Holiness Nirankari Baba, 'Know One, Believe in One, Become One'.

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EDITORIAL

An Extraordinary Festival

Whilst the London Olympic Games were taking place, an extraordinary international Festival of Oneness was being hosted at the NIA in Birmingham.

The purpose of this spectacularly incredible festival was to complement and reinforce the ideals of the Olympic Games.

This two-day function, attended by delegates from all over the world, crowning the run up events like the community games, street shows, the open-air concert, and the world record-breaking bhangra dance, paralleled the Olympic finale. The two events ran in tandem to address the two human facets – the body and the soul. For one without the other, is inadequate and incomplete.

The ancient Greeks came to the conclusion that an ideal person should be physically, mentally and spiritually balanced. It was to be a holistic approach, emphasising the importance of both the spiritual and athletic accomplishments. The notion of excellence was promoted in all areas of life. However, this idea of wholesome development began to dilute with the introduction of a monetary reward and the rise of the professional athlete. The victor came to attach more value to honour, glory and prizes than to the original ideals.

With the shift in political power, the Games moved to Rome, where they distanced even further from the original ideal. In AD 392, the ultimate pursuit for glory, fame and money eventually brought down the curtain on the ancient Olympic Games.

It was not until the late 19th Century that the modern international games were revived by a French educationist, Baron

de Coubertin, who, himself, was inspired by his visit to the Much Wenlock games in England. The first modern Olympics were held in Athens in 1896. Coubertin envisioned modern Olympics as the means of securing universal peace 'among all nations' through the promotion of the values of excellence, mutual respect and friendship.

Sadly, the years of agonising and sacrificing normally concentrates only on the physical excellence and ignores the important spiritual aspect. The resulting imbalance, created by this singular occupation, renders our society worse-off.

The Festival, presided over by HH Nirankari Baba of the Sant Nirankari Mission – a global spiritual peace movement, had a clear message to give to the whole of humanity. Stretching human limits, breaking old records, and reaching new heights, though exhilaratingly captivating, would not be sufficient to meet the holistic needs of the individual and society at large without satisfying their innate spiritual thirst. The delegates at the festival laid emphasis on man's inner quest for oneness through wholeness. This theme of oneness had wider implications for the individual and society at large. Oneness was the need of the hour for a caring, peaceful and a loving society where an individual can experience paradise on earth.

The movement sought to create an awareness of the importance of integrating the physical with the spiritual self. In other words, to achieve the much desired wholeness, our material and non-material dimensions have to be combined and applied in our daily lives. For without wholeness, real joy and happiness would continue

to evade us.

This process essentially entails self-discovery. What we do not often realise is that we, as individuals, are all on a common journey to become what we already are. Till this realisation dawns, one regards oneself as a separate being from the whole. This lack of awareness gives rise to duality, which creates wedges between humans, erecting insurmountable barriers of the kind that breed strife, conflict and hatred. As long as this situation exists, the world will continue to burn unabated, and there will be no respite from agony, anguish and social unrest.

Hence, the diversity which should be a reason for celebration has become a curse for the human race. Yet, it would be horrific to imagine a world without such diversity.

Human beings require colourful diversity as much as they need water or oxygen to live. To turn diversity into a blessing, one needs to unite with the source of all that is animate and inanimate, or that which we commonly refer to as creation. This is simply an echo of the ancient wisdom, which states that everything is the product of the one eternal Spirit. The quest for oneness involves a continuous relationship with the whole (the Spirit), the fountain of all energy and love.

Love is the only antidote for hate, greed and violence. But this love has to be universal, which springs from the universal whole.

To fulfil the cherished dream of a peaceful, loving and a tolerant world, whilst applauding the ideals of the modern Olympics, the movement advocates that we have to also excel in the spiritual aspect of life. For both the physical and the spiritual goals of human aspirations go hand in hand, and are of equal importance.

Harbans Singh ■

Timeless Message

This is an abridged version of the address delivered by His Holiness Nirankari Baba at the Festival of Oneness, held at the NIA, in Birmingham (UK) on 11th August 2012.



You have all gathered here today at the Nirankari International Samagam, outside India, for the first time. You have all convened here from afar, not only from Europe but from many other countries and continents. As soon as the dates were announced, everybody wanted to be here. The prayers of all those who managed to get here, and also of those who did not, have been acknowledged.

This atmosphere you find yourselves in is one that is based on feelings of humanity and Oneness – the Oneness that all the sages and seers wanted to see. To witness their ideals in action, you have arrived here in earnest, relishing all the contributions, particularly those of the youngsters, who truly excelled themselves.

There has been so much enthusiasm since the announcement. Last year, I felt it would be a good idea to hold an event in London in line with the Olympics. But due to certain logistics, we had to shift to Birmingham.

The theme of this Samagam is Oneness. Three years ago, it was harmony. Whether it is harmony or Oneness, we are aiming towards the same common goal - to bring about unity in mankind.

The world is divided into religions, races and communities. The more the prophets endeavoured to unite us, the more fragmented we have become. A lot has to be done to establish the state of Oneness that saints had, and aspired to.

There is one God, and we are

all his children. So why these walls? Why is everybody fighting? Individuals are fighting individuals, communities are fighting communities, and countries are fighting with other countries. If we truly reflect, we can see that we are harming ourselves, be it individually, communally or nationally. In fact, it is man who is being harmed.

The wisdom was to get man closer to man; for man to be an ideal being in an ideal society; and for man to exist harmoniously with other people. Such ideals of the prophets are very important. It is because of them that we are here. We are here, not to vent narrow-mindedness and hatred, but to spread the wisdom of the wise.

Unfortunately, that which needs to be spread is not being spread. Hence, we are to give prominence to the words of wisdom, as we cannot seriously live without them. We need to divert from the unrighteous path that creates harm rather than harmony, to the path of righteousness that is good and beautiful, making us worthy of being called God's children.

We listen and learn that everything comes from God. One

earth has been created by Him. From God's perspective we are all one - i.e. just one form, which is neither physical nor cultural, but spiritual. May glory be to God Almighty, as we are all part of his glorious Oneness.

In fact, we are on a journey to become that which we already are, but we fail to realise it. Whilst on the journey, we further fail to understand that we actually come from the very same source and that we are composed of the same five elements. We come from the same Almighty God, but we are ignorant of it. This is the paradox that depicts our ignorance.

Those, whose journey begins with illumined souls, rise above petty differences. They see everybody as the reflection of their own selves; their journey of seeking comes to an end when the illumination takes place; and their doubts and delusions no longer loom large. They enjoy bliss. Their distances are bridged, and they go on to appreciate that there is one in all, and all in one. Not only is the whole world in it, but that the whole world depends on it. However, there are those, who do not recognise themselves as the

children of God, or even think of their universal Father.

We can only recognise who we really are when we begin to get rid of our duality. Until then, we cannot merge the 'I' in You, and the You in 'I'. But when the 'I', the duality, is duly shed, what is left is Oneness. This is what the Sufi poet, Bulleh Shah, says,

By letting go of your 'I', indeed you will see,

That the one you adore, Bulleh Shah, is you

If you have read the one, and seen the one

Then who can say that there are two of you.

He says that it was only when he actually saw the one he had been reading about, that he was able to become one with him. Prior to that, the reading and the seeing were two separate things.

In fact, everybody reads about the Almighty, but do not believe in him, simply because they cannot see him. The enlightened ones are altogether different, for not only do they recognise their real self, but also end their duality.

The aim is to become one, and for this we must bring people together. If every country were to work together like the Olympics, and find ways and means of uniting people, through sports or other activities, we would truly be moving in the same direction. We would be moving higher and higher towards spirituality.

If we truly endeavour to work hard and earnestly take on board this Oneness, we shall be worthy of being congratulated. This has to be done, and the world as a whole needs to improve. In so doing, nobody remains an alien. If this vision were to exist, there would be no walls, no language problems, no issues of cultures or wrangles of religion. If our hearts

are full of love and compassion, brought on by self-awareness, there would be only one language of love.

To help the whole world rise above its petty, narrow-mindedness has been the goal of every wise man. But man has been treading the path of destruction time and time again. In such a plight, would we declare him to be fortunate or stupid? If he continues on this path relentlessly, it would amount to sheer stupidity.

Man should be wise. This is the time to improve himself, and comprehend, whilst in this world, his true nature – his spirit. He should reform himself, and the world at large. Every direction should be his real spring; he should imbibe love, compassion, tolerance and forbearance. There should be people meeting each other, and embracing each other. Wherever people worship, they should celebrate their togetherness. They should drop the walls of separation. If this is seen to be so, love and respect would reign supreme everywhere. This atmosphere of change, charged with bliss, is one that the wise always want to implement.

Let us, therefore, go forward. Let us be like a bouquet of flowers. In fact, let us be in a fragrant, beautiful garden, where we do not pull out the petals, but exist collectively as diverse flowers in one colourful garden.

Gathering here today is testament to the fact that we want to spread the message of Oneness everywhere. In such propagation lies our redemption. Promoting harmony and compassion has always been something that the saints wanted to promote. If we live our lives with love and compassion in our hearts, rising above violence and hatred, we shall be showing regard and paying respect to our saints and seers. Rituals and religious

observances alone, without love and compassion, will not render you a believer.

Every contribution or event since the first leg of the Festival's inception in June has been to spread the message of Oneness – a message that we could learn from, and imbibe in our lives. Let us move towards this Oneness. ■





DOOR TO INFINITE POSSIBILITIES

SHARMISHTHA DUREJA, CHICAGO, USA

It is Fall in Chicago and that means the arrival of bugs. Yes, you read it right - bugs. These bugs are as colorful as the leaves on the trees. While I enjoy the bright colors of leaves, I am not fond of the bright colored bugs.

This year I noticed a swamp of orange and black flying bugs, invading almost every place. The sight itself was not so pleasant. I later learned that these bugs appear only in fall. Their lifespan is very limited. Come the first freeze, they will all perish.

This knowledge was not enough to curtail my dislike of these bugs. One afternoon, I decided to clean the windows, since a lot of them were stuck to the window screen. I equipped myself with a vacuum cleaner, dust pan and brush, a cleaning towel and a bug spray. All this preparation was to protect myself, just in case I got attacked by these miniature beasts. But what happened next completely changed my perspective. Half of these stuck bugs were dead. The remainder - alive, were not at all ferocious. In fact, they were so fragile that even if I touched their mini feathers, to pick them up, they would crumble to death.

At this very moment, mindfulness set in me. I soon began to see that there was no reason to be fearful. These little creatures have their own span of life, their own purpose of life, and in no way are they interfering with me. The feeling of hatred soon vanished. Now, I was carefully picking up each bug and releasing it into the back yard. When I saw them flying up in the air, it gave me an immense sense of happiness. What transformed within me?

As I go out for a walk, I notice my legs. The left leg never tells the right leg *"you are good for nothing"*. The right leg does not take pride in itself or discriminate with the left leg. Every time the right leg needs it, the left pitches in, without insisting that it is better and stronger. Such is the case with our hands, eyes and ears. Although there are multiple organs in our being, they all work as one mechanism.

These are two very small but profound experiences. I began with 'two' namely stronger and weaker, left and right. With mindfulness, I transcended from two to one and then back to two, knowing that it is all one! I figured out that it is a one to many, and many to one relationship.

When I first heard the term Oneness, it appeared to be a very limiting notion. I was scared, similar to my fear of the bugs. I was afraid that accepting Oneness would take away all that is me and mine. I was then reminded of

the story of clouds.

As a reader, one will clearly see that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Rightly so because without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow: and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If there is no cloud, there is no paper. In this way, paper, cloud and you, the reader, I, the writer, are all inter-connected through Oneness.

If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sun shining in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow. In fact nothing can grow. Even we cannot grow without sunshine. And so, we know that the sunshine is also in this sheet of paper. Thus, the paper and the sunshine are inter-related.

And if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cuts the tree and brings it to the mill to be transformed into paper. Further, we see the wheat. We know that the logger cannot exist without his daily bread. Therefore, the wheat that became his daily bread is also in this sheet of paper. The logger's father and mother are in it too. When we look in this way, we see that without all of these things, this sheet of paper cannot exist.

Looking deeply with the eyes of Oneness, I realize that none of us can exist without all the others and that each one of us, is all the other. So really, there is no other. The fear vanishes. The duality ends. Oneness remains. Oneness does not begin, nor does it end. It is.

When I connect with the Almighty (Nirankar), I have direct experience of Oneness. In such instants, I can see the entire creation in a piece of paper, or realize how the bodily organs work in tandem, or be compassionate towards insects and animals. It is the realization of Nirankar that links me to the reality, the reality

of Oneness.

In scientific terms, Oneness is understood very well through holograms. In a hologram, every fragment contains the whole. In an article called *The Universe as a Hologram*, Michael Talbot explains that *"if we try to take apart something constructed holographically, we will not get the pieces of which it is made, we will only get smaller wholes."*

He describes a remarkable scientific experiment in which electrons instantly communicated with each other, no matter how far apart they were. Physicist David Bohm proposed that *"the reason sub-atomic particles are able to remain in contact with one another regardless of the distance separating them is not because they are sending some sort of mysterious signal back and forth, but because their separateness is an illusion. . . . At some deeper level of reality such particles are not individual entities, but are actually extensions of the same fundamental something."*

In the world of religion, the concept of Oneness is fundamental. Jesus said, *"I and my Father are one"*, (John 10:30). Further he said, *"This is eternal life... That they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us... that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one... that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them"*, (John 17:3, 21, 23, 26).

Hindu belief gives prominence to two ideas: atman (soul) and Brahman (the universal cosmic force). It is this divine force which is the spiritual essence of the universe. Atman is the divine spark in everyone. It is the spiritual essence in all human beings. Enlightenment dawns with the realization that the atman is Brahman, and Brahman, the atman. They are one and

the same. Understanding this Oneness brings liberation.

Shehanshah Baba Avtar Singh ji, more recently, proclaims *"The One Divine Spirit permeates all"* (Avtar Bani 9B).

In all simplicity, he continues to sing the praises of this Oneness in the Sampuran Avtar Bani (Avtar Bani). *"The Formless One Nirankar is this only One, it has no Form"*. (Avtar Bani 12)

Thus we see that spiritual concepts like Oneness are eternal, beyond time, wherever they are found. The eternal perspective is not often out in the open, and is usually only hinted at. An enlightened being is able to understand these subtle hints, take them a step deeper and then present it to humanity for the benefit of their human experience.

So what is Oneness? If it still remains unclear what Oneness is, three things come to mind to help understand it.

1. True courage comes from Oneness because fear arises from unknowns, and it is only unknown when one is not aware of Oneness. The courage then is not to fight but to drop all the fights.
2. True love comes from Oneness because in knowing we are all connected, compassion arises. This is the eternal love. Hatred may arise but soon transforms into love.
3. Oneness opens the door to infinite possibilities of experiences and living..... allowing us to bask in the glory of each and every one of the One. The kaleidoscope of life is ever so colorful then.

All the glory, therefore, must be to the beloved and benevolent Lord Master, the enlightened One. It is because of His grace and mercy that we can be mindful of Oneness, singing his praises, while breathing in Oneness. ■



‘Esprit de corps’ is a French term commonly used to describe enthusiasm for a common interest or responsibility, and is usually referred to feeling a sense of unity within a group associated with a common cause.

The importance of such team work can be demonstrated all around us. We find teams at the work place, health institutions, religious groups and governing bodies. Within all of these groups, enthusiasm and teamwork are essential, and without them the group simply disintegrates or goes unrecognized. What is it that drives members of a group to have enthusiasm and want to work as part of a team? Why is an individual driven, not towards selfish, but group achievements?

The first answer to these questions lies in what the actual motive of the team is. In the workplace, the motive may be for more financial reward, which may lead to increased individual financial gain. Alongside this,

a motivating factor may also be to reach a high position in the workplace hierarchy. In a governing organization, the motivation might be the power to rule. In a healthcare institution, the motive may be to provide optimum healthcare for as many individuals as possible, as well as for the personal kudos. Within a religious or spiritual movement, what possibly can be the motivating factor, as there usually is no financial gain and no governing power?

In answering this question, let’s take a look at what team work can achieve:

Creates synergy

The definition of synergy is two or

more things functioning together to produce a result, which is independently not obtainable. In spiritual terms, we can look at this in two ways.

Firstly, the synergy of body mind and soul only takes place with God-realization, which is facilitated by the True Master.

Secondly, the synergy of self-realized saints and the True Master, the Nirankari Baba, forms the Sangat (the fellowship of enlightened beings), which helps to shape our lives

Supports a more empowered way of working

By working in a team, constraints, which may ordinarily prevent an

individual from reaching their potential – i.e. the heightened experience of the divine – becomes surely possible. The Sufi saint, Rumi's following metaphor helps us to understand this.

"Why should I stay at the bottom of a well, when a strong rope is in my hand?"

The saints in the form of a congregation empower the individual to get out of the darkness. They urge him to grab hold of the rope, which the Lord has already provided, to pull himself up into the light that awaits him.

Promotes less hierarchy

The Nirankari Mission's teaching is to foster communal harmony by rising above the differences of colour, creed, class and culture. This is done by removing one's duality – the thought that I am separate from the world around me. For the truth is that within every single being, the Lord Himself resides. When everybody recognizes this, a group of like-minded people is formed.

Fosters the ability to respond to change

Without teamwork, there can be little scope to change as there is less manpower to make the changes. Within any organization or even within oneself, change is vital to achieve happiness and understanding.

Ideally, change takes place when we observe the changed. Just as the drop of murk also becomes the Ganges, the individual, however evil, also becomes the Almighty when he becomes conscious of Him.



TEAM
WORK

The attributes of Service, Contemplation and Fellowship are also conducive to good teamwork.

The wheel represents the group, and the cogs, the individuals. If the cogs are well-oiled, they form the harmonious parts of the whole. However, for the whole to function effectively, it must inspire them and guide them so that the one is the whole, and the whole is the one.

This amounts to 'esprit de corps'. ■

ONE ONE TO

Surjit Dhami, Staffordshire, UK

A good life is generally described as perfect health, wealth and a long, peaceful old age. All else is deemed bad or undesirable. Man thinks of a good a life or happiness in very limited terms - 100 years or more.

But what is a 100 years in the face of eternity? It's only when we divert our focus from this faltering body to the eternal, immortal soul that our appetite for Infinity develops.

The body that has not budged for hours becomes restless. The mind that has not been intellectually stimulated becomes irritated after a short time. Even when we exercise the mind and body, we still feel uneasy. The soul that has been ignored, not for days or hours, but a whole lifetime, how would that feel?

It is often when man hits rock bottom that he finds his foundation. When personal affairs are in disarray and the usual support structures are seen to be crumbling, that is when a break-down is inevitable. At that time, he cannot turn to the body or the mind. The only sanctuary that remains is the soul. Just as bones break when they are unable to deal with severe physical stresses, the mind, similarly, is no different. It, too, snaps like a twig under the pressures of life. Only the soul is unbreakable.

Humanity has always been inspired by saints, who refused to be broken under duress. They yielded not to temporal powers; their conviction was founded on the Supreme. Such unflinching faith was not based on hearsay, but direct experience of the Supreme.

Those who doubt are in the throes of hope or fear, which is nothing but a sense of uncertainty. Hope is to get somewhere or to become someone. Fear is to lose something or someone. Hope carries a temporal sense of joy as well as anxiety, but fear brings distress and despair.

The enlightened person rises above both of these inflicting states. The body is fragile, the mind is fickle, but the soul is permanent and pure.

Despite our global understanding of the world, we all live in our own worlds, or should I say minds. It is not in the global world,

but in the mind that we make friends and enemies. We never see things as they are. We only see things as we are. Seeing only that which affects us directly, we remain oblivious to the obvious. Looking for inspiration from the stars in the sky, we ignore the spiritual stars walking on the ground.

When we turn away from the enlightened ones, we begin to experience the dark troubles of a troubled mind. For instance, battlefields are just fields until someone's thoughts turn to battle. No time or space is condemned or made holy until the mind makes it so. It is the mind that becomes the sinner or saint. On the other hand, the soul is eternal and never changes. The mind ever changes as though its nature is in a flux. How wonderful would it be if the mind became more like the soul?

The union of the mind and soul is rare. The mind that rests on a hot bed of burning embers of anguish is unaware of the calm tranquillity of the soul.

Religion that is supposed to harmonise the immortal and the mortal, has set one mortal against the other. The religious platform to lift man to the Absolute has become, for many, the obsolete. Its role in society has been greatly reduced to festivals, funerals and wedding ceremonies. It has allowed itself to be dragged into piety disputes.

When we reflect on the birth of each faith, we cannot help but be drawn to the intimate 'one to one' message that each wise personage bestowed upon the seeker. The closeness of the disciple with the spiritual teacher has been resigned to a footnote in the pages of history. This most divine link has been lost amongst the number game of the 'masses'. Too busy constructing more and more shrines, rather than forging harmonious relationships, humanity has been sacrificed on the altar of greed.

The message that saints declared openly to the masses has been well documented, but shrouded in mystery. The entire Bhagavad Gita focuses on revealing a secret, which is beyond intellect. Each chapter paves a path to the climax, where Arjuna receives the secret from Lord Krishna.

Christ alludes to this in the Gospel of Saint Luke (8:10):

"The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that though seeing, they may not see, though hearing they may not understand."

We are all familiar with the stories, sayings and parables of inspirational saints, but what remains a mystery is the divine secret, that one great soul passed to the other. Just as food nourishes the famished body and intellect feeds the mind, the starving soul hungers for the secret divine.

The secret of the heavenly kingdom can be attained even in this day and age if one persistently seeks, as stated in Saint Luke 11:10:

"For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

Those who have a genuine thirst, all they have to do is to keep seeking and knocking till they find the right place. ■

Peace and Tranquility

Prabhjot Lashar, Toronto, Canada

The search for the eternal and the quest to discover life's true happiness has never been limited to a specific era or time frame. It has consistently been a part of man's very existence.

Friends and acquaintances have often expressed their frustration in attempting to figure out life's purpose. As far as I am concerned, my personal belief has always been that people should follow their hearts and find whatever it is that brings them joy. But sadly most people rarely know what truly makes them joyous. All they ever experience is temporary, fleeting moments of satisfaction.

This leads us to ask some questions: How do we attain true happiness? Does the soul always find its final destination? Does the inner-self ever really achieve a state of permanent peace and tranquility.....?

His Holiness Nirankari Baba was once asked, how do you know when you've reached a state of complete bliss? His answer was in the form of a question: Ask yourself, how many times in a day you get disturbed.

The analysis then begins. How do you prevent the mind from becoming easily and frequently agitated? HH Nirankari Baba further addressed this issue by indicating that duality must be eliminated. For only then can we become one. God-knowledge

(brahm gyan) teaches us that we are all one, originating from the single, one source and eventually culminating into the same endless, one source.

What we call enlightenment results from this knowledge of the Creator. But ignorant and misguided people around the world continue to wage war of hatred against each other – i.e. their own brothers and sisters. This destroys relations, creating havoc in the world. The world is in complete disarray and disorder, all because the ultimate, one goal and the ultimate, one direction are lost.

To attain peaceful co-existence and to elevate ourselves to the heights of spirituality, we must detach ourselves mentally and emotionally from the material world. Physically, we have a responsibility to participate in our worldly duties, but mentally, as per the advice of a wise devotee, we must allow our soul to take charge of the mind, and not vice versa.

In order to rise to such echelons, our negative habits - hatred, jealousy and intolerance - must die first. Once the mind lets go of these practices, we realize the importance of making God a priority. We become more humble, grateful and tolerant. The result of this lifestyle change is ultimately to walk, as per HH Nirankari Baba's saying, on a path to become that which we already are. How

profound indeed to be on such a journey! What mustn't be forgotten is that this path requires much dedication, discipline and continued self-sacrifice.

One time during a congregation, I observed a devotee shedding endless tears of love upon seeing and being in the presence of His Holiness. When she sat down, I embraced her as she continued to weep quietly on my shoulder. As I looked up, I noticed His Holiness smiling at me with such happiness. I realized then that a simple act of kindness and compassion can make a difference in another person's life, and reminded myself that I needed to make it a habit.

Very rarely do we even take the time to connect with God, let alone with other human beings. Filling our hearts with love and empathy for others can be difficult particularly when we are influenced by the pull of ego and materialism. Our attraction towards useless objects only hinders and distracts us from our true goal. We often think that if we don't take care of ourselves and our desires first, then nobody else will - we forget that God is the ultimate Operator.

The simple task of writing and editing this article allowed me to notice my own errors (e.g. typos). Similarly, by continually making it a practice to correct my mistakes through life, I hope

they will become more apparent to me early on so I can take the necessary steps to fix and learn from them.

Our inner conflict and duality is caused by our own desire to run after things instead of searching for peace. Once, a grandfather was talking to his grandson explaining that we all have two 'wolves' fighting in our hearts - one is vengeful, angry and violent, while the other is loving and compassionate. The grandson asked which wolf wins in the end. The grandfather replied: whichever one we feed. In other words, whatever we focus most on in our lives will become primary, strong and dominant.

If we continue to let our thoughts and actions to be ruled by this duality, it will lead to our own spiritual downfall. The mind

seems to naturally default in negativity, since it is easy and requires almost no effort. True and priceless bliss comes from practicing to live in a state of peace. As humans, we will certainly falter at some point along the way, but the important step is to pick ourselves up and carry on. We must persistently try harder to improve ourselves for the betterment of this world.

Making an effort to live in Oneness is not easy. It requires the diligent dismantling of the walls of ego inside us, as well as maintaining a constant state of compassion towards all living beings. After all, we are divine beings, not just human beings. When we let go of our differences, we rise above the materialistic world and enter the eternal realm of Spirit, where lies peace and tranquility. ■

How do we attain true happiness? Does the soul always find its final destination? Does the inner-self ever really achieve a state of permanent peace and tranquility.....?





Oneness

Poonam Anandani, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Saints and sages have all preached the same ONE truth. Their message has always been the same – one of love, compassion and humility. They come, not to lay the foundations of a new creed and religion, but to unite dominions and lands with love.

God is **ONE**. He is the creator of the universe and can be known only by the grace of living master. The living master provides the missing link between the soul and its source. He initiates us, imparts spiritual wisdom through his teachings and liberates us from the never-ending cycle of birth, death and re-birth. Being one with **HIM** is the very purpose of our birth.

Our soul has the very same attributes that God (Nirankar) has. Together they represent Oneness. This God is the sun, and we are his rays----

Oneness; he is the ocean, we are his drops----
Oneness; and he is the moon, we are his light----
Oneness.

The sad part is that we do not and cannot realize this Oneness until and unless we reach the level at which we can really be with **HIM**.

We need to understand our essence. Let us look at evaporation and condensation. If a drop of rain falls in the dirt and remains in the dirt for a long time, it may well feel that it is dirt. But once the sun shines on it, it realizes its Oneness with water, and the fact that it is something else. It evaporates and moves towards the clouds to realize its original source and becomes one with it.

Similarly, when the Perfect Master removes the dust of worldly passions and attachments, the soul realizes its true form - a part of the Super Soul. It elevates us to higher levels, and begins to realize its



Oeness.

A child kidnapped by robbers and dacoits, at birth, does not know of his **Oeness**, his origin that he is someone else. He lives, eats and behaves just like robbers and dacoits because he has never realized his **Oeness** with his own parents, siblings, friends and relatives. Later on, when the father comes to find him and sees him behaving like robbers and dacoits, he convinces the child of his **Oeness** with him and takes him back home. The same is the story of our soul. Countless ages have passed, staying in the company of the mind, dominated by senses and the heavy burden of Karmas (actions). How can it ever realize its **Oeness** with God?

It is our beloved Master, who just for our sake, takes on this human garb, lives, behaves, eats, drinks just like us to make us realize our **Oeness** with **HIM**.

Once we realize our **Oeness** with **HIM**, **Oeness**

with our fellow beings is established as we see **HIM** dwelling in each and everyone. Duality and ego disappear. The principle of Universal Oeness is understood and realized. Mutual differences and discords disappear. We love one and all without any sense of discrimination or division.

This **Oeness** can be seen exemplified in the communal food (langar). Langar is designed to uphold the principles of equality where all people, regardless of their religion, caste, colour, creed, age, gender or social status, have a meal together. In addition to the ideals of equality, the tradition of langar also aims to express the ethics of sharing Oeness of all human kind.

May the Lord bless us all with the gift of His remembrance so that we can espouse noble qualities and imbibe Oeness and universal love. ■

We hear the words less is more so often in our world today. A society, that searches for more and more in everything, what benefit can it possibly derive from less? Especially if man's desires, born out of greed, have no end. They grow and grow. One wonders if there is any real happiness in them.

The Lesser Good

Ricky Bhatia, Birmingham, UK

In fact, for those who have it, plentiful abounds. We are suffocating from abundance – more seems to be merrier. The wardrobes are full of clothes and the garages, designed for cars, full of goods. There is not an inch of space in our homes, as every nook and cranny is packed with things that have outgrown their utility. If recycled, they could fulfil the needs of many impoverished millions. Whilst we throw away tons of food from our over-stocked kitchens, millions of mal-nourished people, all over the world, sleep without even one square meal.

In order to think about what we can do, at an individual level, about the needs of others who are far less fortunate, we first need to reflect on our own actual needs. Our needs, in reality, are minimal. Through them, we can lead quite an exciting and fulfilling life.

This view is not meant to be contrary to progression, but simply a perspective. When we think about moulding our lives and our nature into the lesser, there is a great purpose behind it. But man today cannot even

bear the thought of the lesser. His inclination is for more - more redundant possessions and futile information, which have little value in the big picture we call life.

Look at the world and the entire creation. Do we get more satisfaction out of a single rose in a vase, or from a bouquet of flowers formed with the add-ons found at a florist's shop?

An artist once created an exhibition in which his displays included nine rooms of empty space which he called "the Art of the Void." He wanted people to come into the rooms which had white-washed walls and wanted them to pause and understand the environment around them. In such circumstances, the empty voids appear to be full of meaning, and there is indeed a presence within the perceived absence.

There is a real treasure in minimalist itinerary. Quantum physics tell us that if we take a box and empty it of its contents, there will be nothing within it. However, scientists theorise that within that emptiness or void,

there is something present. They say it is perhaps dark energy which governs and causes the expansion within our world.

The wisdom of the spiritual adepts and masters tells that the empty space, within which we exist, is replete with the all-pervasive force, which is the very thing that gives birth to matter and life.

It is this very power that one really needs to tune into in order to attain our potential, and thereby see more in the less. It's not a case of depriving the senses to create a diminution of life's experience, but rather enhancing them for a greater understanding.

It is so very subtle. So much so that the greatest of minds in this world have tried to understand its presence, but still remain bewildered. The reality is that this 'force' exists without bounds. The unravelling of the mystery of such a force will show that less is more, and more is less.

Therefore, one needs to find the one who can un-ravel it! ■

HIGH JUMP

Patrick Byrne, Wolverhampton, UK



On your marks, get set, and go!
With gusto, care and confidence
Body and mind working in sync,
Aim high! And exude effulgence!

The benchmark that's already set
You must approach, with finesse
You can go beyond it, with zest,
But total zeal you must possess!

Motivation has to be the force
Driving you, to your prized goal
Make every attempt, your best
With one 100%, play your role!

In spite of all the sweat and toil
If you fall from grace, and fail,
Let it not be, disappointment
Or the reason to sob and wail!

If you let it go, even in the end
You will end, all the good work
Life's jump we can miss at times
But our aim, we must not shirk.■

Balance and flexibility through spirituality

Rakesh Mutreja, New Delhi, India

We produce, below, a rendition of a speech delivered by Rakesh Mutreja, on 12th August 2012, at the the Festival of Oneness in Birmingham (UK); - UT Editorial Team.

*.....Let noble thoughts come unto me
from all over the Universe, - Rig Veda*

These words have been motivating many a man since time immemorial to learn from every part and every aspect of the universe. It is only the enlightened, the conscientiously awakened souls that learn from everything all-around, be it the sunshine or the moon; be it the flowing river or a smiling flower; be it a simple lifeless stone or sand. They know how and what to learn from each particle in the world and thus justify the above mentioned words of the Rig-Veda.

Today in the same vein, HH Nirankari Baba has blessed us to learn from the World of Sports, and the World of Olympics.

We have just been watching the amazingly inspirational videos based on the sports of skiing and gymnastics. Both of the clips were clearly establishing the need for the qualities of Flexibility and Balance that are required to perform well. The videos emphasised the importance of these two virtues.

Flexibility is only possible in our lives if we learn to accept people and situations as they are. No one, in my experience,

can be more flexible in the world than the Nirankari Baba. He moulds himself, wherever he goes, to please his disciples. When in Gujarat, he becomes a Gujarati; when in Maharashtra, he becomes a Marathi; and when in the UK or America, he adjusts himself accordingly. I do not believe any one can be more flexible and versatile than him. The characteristic of acceptance and that too with grace, is only possible by acting upon the message behind the words of the Bhagavad Geeta:

*Karamanya vadhikarate ma
phaleshu kadachana*

*Ma karamphul heturbhu ma te
sangostivakarmani*

In other words, we don't have a right to seek the result of our deeds. Our domain lies only in performing, in doing, and nothing thereafter. If we understand this maxim of the Geeta, we would become less judgemental. For asserting our rights and demanding the reward for our deeds, make the heart and mind rigid. Acceptance of God's will, on the other hand, can make us more flexible and accommodating.

The world has its own ways to decipher the meaning of 'Flexibility'. Citing an example, there was a lady who after having got married, was asked to give a welcome speech in her new family. She began by saying- "Look folks, I am very flexible and accommodating, I am not here to change anything. I would want everyone to continue doing what they have been doing to date; those who were washing dishes may continue to do so and those doing the rest of cleaning and dusting may also please follow their routine. I don't want anyone to change because of me". How clever? This is how people make use of flexibility. Even a catapult is flexible, but it is used to harm and hit others. On the other hand, a rubber band, which is also flexible includes and accommodates everything within its bounds. The True Master today wants us to be flexible so that we embrace others, help and accommodate them.

Balance, the second virtue, is achieved in life by the act of unconditional surrender to the Almighty God as the holy Bible says, "Make me an instrument of

Flexibility is only possible in our lives if we learn to accept people and situations as they are.

thy will and thy purpose”.

So let me surrender all my wisdom, all my deeds, all my ethics, my right and wrong, my good and bad, unconditionally onto the lotus feet of my Lord. The moment I gather this understanding and surrender, I am in balance.

In the battlefield of Mahabharata, the great warrior, Arjuna, finds himself in deep despair and negotiating an acute dilemma. Should he fight and kill his own kith and kin? Should he battle against his highly respected teachers and trainers, who happen to be members of the opposite force? It is at this juncture that Lord Krishna comes to his aide, telling him;

“Surrender all your sense of right and wrong (dharma) unto me, and I shall cleanse you of all your sins and worries.”

Likewise, the Nirankari Baba is also asking us to surrender all our ‘dharma’s’ to the Almighty Lord, to acquire a perfect balance in life.

So let us usher in a new era of submission, where there are a new dreams in a new era, and fresh roses of a new weather. New is the energy, new is the love. This is the answer to all the hatred. ■





ONENESS

DR. D K MEHTA, WOLVERHAMPTON, UK

The undeniable fact is that as a society, we are fractious, diverse and different, and that in order for us to become One, one requires a radical process of refinement – a refinement in which all our impurities are shed, however painfully, to arrive at perfection.

The age-old conundrum is to be or not to be. For in being, we face the trials and tribulations of life with pain and pleasure, failure and success, and poverty and riches. And in not being, we end our lives to reach a land of dreams where presumably the travails of life affect us no longer. Should we, therefore, become cowards by ending our lives, or be brave in the face of a sea of troubles

to reach the shore, from which there is no return?

Alchemy

The likes of Jacob Boehme and Heinrich Khunrath, the spiritual alchemists of the West, tell us that being or becoming one entails merging with the one source, which requires a process of liberation. This art of liberating parts of the Cosmos

from temporal existence and achieving perfection is called alchemy. For base metals, it is gold. For man, it is longevity, immortality and redemption. This perfection demands the philosopher's stone for metals, and the elixir of life for humans. In Greek and Western practices, the spiritual ennoblement comes from the revelation of the Gnosis. In the East, it is God-consciousness

(brahm gyan), which is graced upon the aspirant by the Alchemist (Sat-guru).

The Advaita

Non-duality or Advaita, in Vedic literature, is the realisation of the Oneness – the self which is already and always here; it neither comes nor goes. It is not some distant goal for the chosen few, but the domain of peace, love and happiness, which is already here. It is something of which we are all made. Through a simple self-enquiry, with the aid of a ford-maker, we can awaken from the dream of a separate self to the reality of Oneness.

Hebrew Oneness

As his most basic creed, a Jew declares to the whole of Israel day and night that the Eternal is God, the Eternal is One, and blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom, forever and ever. We are told, time and time again, that this world and everything that occurs in it, is no more than an illusion. We are all trapped in it, believing we are separate and independent of the omnipresence of Oneness. The capacity of this Oneness to express itself in finite forms and pluralities is then no more than the ultimate expression of perfect Oneness. The fact that we fail to understand is because we fail to fully appreciate the Master's parables - the explanations of the Infinite through the expressions of finitude. Like the movements of an oriental martial artist, we have to fuse stillness and motion, gentleness and force, between the singularity of God and our multifarious reality. If we grasp one of these truths alone, we have no truth at all, but if we grasp both at once, we have God.

Tawhid

According to al-Ghazali, there is nothing in existence except God, and that the fruit of spiritual ascent of the Sufi is to witness that there is no existence in the world save God. All things are perishing except his face (Qur'an 28:88). This unification or the Oneness of God is best expressed in the concept of Tawhid - the three tenets of theology:

Tawhid al Rubu'biya is the belief in the Oneness of the Lordship of Allah, who is Creator, Organiser, Planner and Sustainer.

"Allah created all things and He is the agent on which all things depend" - Qur'an, Sura 39 (Az-Zumar), ayat 62

Tawhid al `Uluhiyya – is the belief in the Oneness of

the Worship of Allah, and that none has the right to be worshiped except Allah.

"If you asked them who brings down water from the sky and with it brings the earth to life after its death? They will most certainly say, 'Allah'." - Qur'an, Sura 29 (Al-Ankabut), ayat 63

Tawheed-al-Asma was-Sifaat – is the belief in the Oneness of the Names and the Attributes of Allah, being affirmation of all the Divine Names and Attributes of Allah in a manner that suits His Majesty, as mentioned in the Qu'ran.

"There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer." Qur'an, Sura 42 (Ash-Shura), ayat 11

Buddhist Oneness

At birth the Buddha took seven steps and declared:

Above the heavens and below the heavens, I alone am most noble.

What is noble is not the physical form of Lord Buddha, but that which he is in essence - the omnipotent and omnipresent spirit, which is the real wisdom of every buddha.

The Nirankari Baba describes the subject of Oneness as a paradox. He says there is a basic notion that we do not understand, which depicts our ignorance of the fundamental truth that we are on a journey to become that which we already are.

He explains that we are already one – one family, one community and one world – because we are made of the same elements and the same spirit. There are no aliens or strangers; we are part of the same glorious Oneness. If people confine themselves to narrow-mindedness, divisive rites and rituals, they do not understand the concept of one in all, and all in one. They do not understand that we are part of the same fragrant garden, which is beautiful because of its different colours. All the flowers should be allowed to exist together, not at the expense of others, but with others. No petal should be shed, and no flower crumpled.

We should dwell on the One. For Oneness comes from wholeness. If there is no Wholeness, there is no Oneness. When we focus on the One, our journey of enlightenment begins. When enlightened, we then begin to bridge the distance between those who are and those who are yet to be enlightened. ■



GAME OF LIFE

ARPIT GROVER, BIRMINGHAM, UK

Gliding and speeding, cycling along
Waking the echoes with cheer and song
First real GRIP is the thought to win
Then efforts result and motions begin

The PURSUIT is being winner of the game
To continue to be in it, to achieve the aim
To dance on the pedals, the VISION replete
The rolling SPEED twin wheels cannot beat

Pull along the course, become the LEAD
Focus on the pace, to be able to succeed
Nearing, nearing, nearing, nearing our goal
Do face the RESULT, be in self-control

Life is a game, both simple and true,
Not just about winning, but playing too
Life can be easy, or it can be hard
All you can do, is to play your card

Bowstring bisecting the archer's face
Aiming at the TARGET with both eyes
Power of PRECISION the archer beholds
Both FOCUS and READINESS he unfolds

Pull back the string, RELEASE the arrow
A perfect BULL'S EYE, neither high nor low
Such is the game of life, such is OUR mission
Aim to hit the target, must be our ambition

These Olympic Games are true reflections
Of games of life in different connections
Journey of life, fascinating to understand
Assorted tasks and struggles to withstand

Growing in speed, strength, determination,
Playing together in peace, unity, jubilation
It's all the nations uniting and amity-inviting,
Fostering harmony, joy and love un-dividing

Fair play, respect, taking care of others
Give your best: excellence, skills and calibres
Breaking unfavourable barriers of differences
Forming friendship, tolerance, acceptances

Courage determination inspiration and equality
All Olympic values spread fragrance of humanity
Join in the sports or indeed play the game of life
Keep the Olympic flame of universal values alive

Love, peace and unity is time's call
To rejoice, enjoy Oneness with all. ■

We are born of One

Dr. Ashish Toor, California, USA

Billions of years ago, a concentrated mass of infinite density and temperature exploded with a bang. As it expanded at exponential speeds, matter was created that would form the universe. Everything was created from one point in space, from one beat in time.



It is believed that about 300 million years ago, on planet earth, a large land mass called Pangaea began to fracture and drift. From one mass arose our continents that would, with time, subdivide into countries, kingdoms, states and cities.

Even life, our earliest ancestry, began from one cell. It was a single celled organism that crowned the genealogical tree of life as it evolved into the plethora of species that populate our world.

The irony of creation is that despite having a unified point of birth, we continue to race away from each other with relentless haste, just as the stars continue to separate from each other with chasms of emptiness. We have classified and subdivided ourselves in countless permutations of race, religion, language, nationality, caste, and wealth. But, as theoretical physics predicts the eventual collapse of the universe back into the single

origin, where it all began, the human soul longingly awaits the day when mankind as a whole will reunite as one.

The genetic blueprint of creation, the human genome, has been entirely sequenced. Our genes determine protein synthesis, which in turn gives rise to every characteristic of our bodies. Scientists have now determined that the human genome carries a 96% similarity to the genome of a chimpanzee, our closest relative. If our genomes are virtually identical to an ape, an entirely different species, then imagine how similar we must be to each other.

We burn and pillage our neighbors on the basis of religious disparity. We shun and discriminate on the basis of racial segregation. We even criticize and torment on the basis of political and ideological differences. And yet, at the very heart of our being, we are all produce of the same crop. We are

programmed with the same code.

In fact, humans are so creative in this game of division that even in factions of society that one would otherwise consider “uniform”, we have discovered even more intangible ways to create enemies. Yes, you may share my language, my color and my food. You may walk my walk and talk my talk. You may even share my blood or be bonded to me sacredly in marriage. Even then, I think I will pepper our relationship with a sprinkling of jealousy, a dash of animosity, flavor it with lies, and top it off with a dollop of anger - the perfect recipe to sour the purest relationship between the closest of souls.

In this way we manage to distance ourselves even further from our dearest and most beloved. There is an old story about a learned saint who was once asked why it was that people spoke loudly to each other when in anger. The saint replied that when two

people are angry with each other, their hearts have drifted so far apart that they have to shout to bridge the distance. As the anger subsides and their hearts begin to near, they begin to speak in softer tones. This is why lovers whisper. When two hearts become so close that they are almost one, there becomes no need for words. Feelings are understood on a deeper level that supersedes language.

It is obvious from the workings of the world that in most cases, we cannot even keep our close relations in peace. These single relations are the building blocks of family and friends. Family and friends are the building blocks of our community. Communities are the building blocks of society. If our foundation is cracked, then how will we ever carry the weight of "Oneness" in society at large? Our houses of straw and hay tumble to the forces of evil in this world. In the quest for "Oneness", where must our journey begin?

As with all things in life, the answer lies within. Oneness begins in our soul. A soul that is connected to God is fed with love and all that is good. A soul filled with love generates thoughts that are pure. Thoughts that are pure produce words that are gentle and actions that are noble.

Gentle words and noble actions draw people together. And when people are drawn together, then society unites with one purpose. But first, our thoughts, words and actions must act in synchrony. They must harmonize to one symphony, the symphony of love.

At the end of the day, when the smouldering flames of hatred have burnt to cinders, when the turbulent waves of anger have subsided, and when the gusty winds of unrest have settled for the night, then all that is left is love. Love endures all and is the glue that binds us inextricably to each other. If we have the courage to discover this, then the path to Oneness begins.

In all ages, we have celebrated those in this world who have stood up for unity, pioneered acceptance, and have abolished walls of divisiveness. There are those who accept that we are not Caucasian, African or Asian; neither Hindu nor Muslim or Christian. We are beyond class and caste. We are all equal, regardless of gender. We are neither young nor old, but eternal. Above all, we are all blessed with an abundance of wealth in the diversity the world has to offer. And those who see this light, savor every moment of life. ■

The Whole

Akanksha Mehla, Toronto, Canada

While studying for my psycho-biology mid-term, I stumbled upon a key concept dictating the principle of emergent properties which states: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

When we enter a dark room, our first instinct is often to turn on the light switch to illuminate the space we are in. But where does this light come from?

From a scientific perspective we know that as soon as we turn on the light, an electric current is transferred to a tungsten filament inside the light bulb, which in turn conveys visible light throughout the room. The current, light switch and filament alone are unable to transfer the light into a room. However, altogether they are able to illuminate the darkest of spaces.

Therefore, the entity as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Spiritually, the illumination, that is the divine vision, is the final product. There are a number of external factors which lead us to this artefact. Much like a light bulb being unable to shower light without the current, the divine vision is also incomplete without the giver, the guru.

Likewise, the concept of Oneness is also incomplete until the very idea embodies itself deep within us. You and I are both in continuity with one another just as a wave is in continuity with the ocean. Looking out from the horizon it is impossible to differentiate between two water molecules. The molecules come together in order to create the vast ocean that we see as one. So why do we differentiate within the human race? If God wanted us to divide ourselves based upon our religion, class, language or sect, then the Formless One would have created us to do such things. This, however, is not the case. Religion, language, sect, and class are novel ideas created by man, not God.

The essential tools in a quality musical composition consist of the melody, harmony and rhythm. The beauty and emotionality that accompanies a composition is incomplete without the coordination of these three factors. In the same way the idea of Oneness alone is not enough to set us on the path of unity. Without the coordination of action and implementation balanced with love and compassion for the diverse world we live in, we cannot even endeavour to walk on the path of Oneness.

We are only as strong as our unity. As soon as we divide we are weak. Today, we have the technology to land on the moon, to fly in the air like birds, to swim in the ocean like fish, and yet we lack the ability to live together as brothers and sisters in harmony.

Together we can do so much, and divided, so little. Henry Ford once said, coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is success.

Uniting as one family is only the tip of the iceberg. We need to work together, listen with ears of tolerance, see with eyes of compassion and speak with the language of love to achieve Oneness in a world of diverse beings, not only at a physical level, but a metaphysical one too. ■

The age of enlightenment

Dr. Chicky Dadlani, Washington DC, USA

Currently, we are in the midst of a peak global crisis. There is economic depression and global warming; increasing natural disasters and mass destruction; depleting natural resources and increasing hatred; senseless acts of violence and crime. There is immense sorrow, anger, jealousy and intense negativity. Repeatedly, mankind is trying to be awakened. Whilst most are pressing snooze, some are starting to see the message, and a few have been forced to sacrifice for the greater whole.

Often, it takes the darkest hour for the mind to let go of ego. It takes the darkest hour to surrender oneself to God's will, and to teach true forgiveness. It takes the darkest hour to be thankful for what we have, and to know the God we worship. It takes the darkest hour for the mind to let of ego, and to say I love you and I am sorry. It takes the darkest hour to teach humility, compassion, generosity, and kindness. It takes the darkest hour to build character, integrity and strength. It takes the darkest hour to test true faith in God, and to awaken the consciousness - the breaking of a new dawn. It is the darkest hour that puts our souls through a process of alchemy, from coal to diamond. But all the time, even in the darkest hour, God has a purpose.

That time is now. The darkest hour is already here. We are the coals that have been placed under pressure and heat to transform our souls into shinning diamonds that reflect light, clarity, beauty and love. Our souls must awaken to the calling that the world is so desperately in need of - love, unity, and Oneness amongst mankind.

Many individuals and seers have speculated that, based on the Mayan Calendar and other historical prophecies, the year 2012 will be the end of the world. It is more of a symbolic allegory of the human consciousness. The world will not come to a physical end. It is hoped that the collective human mind will end its perpetual cycle of destruction and harm. It is a hope for the end of the polluted human mind as we currently know it. We have come to a peak of negativity. The human collective consciousness is on the brink of a drastic, immense, powerful transformation from pain suffering and negativity to universal love and Oneness. It is always just after the darkest hour that the light of dawn brings hope for peace, love, kindness and unity into the new age.

2012 is the call for The Age of Enlightenment - a call to end the crisis that our minds have created on a global scale. Souls are being awakened out

of slumber across the planet to realize their true purpose.

The Nirankari International Samagam 2012 (NIS), held in Birmingham, UK was exactly that. It was a call to all souls to awaken and help awaken others to the message of Oneness so that we may rise out of this dark age into a new world. The spiritual master and teacher of the Nirankari Mission, HH Nirankari Baba, who presided over, showed us a window into the future.

More than 5,000 delegates representing over 33 countries came together to promote peace, love and Oneness. They came to inspire and learn from each other. These souls - the seeds - were all planted and so carefully nurtured so that they go on to blossom in their respective countries.

"The flower that blooms in adversity is the rarest and most beautiful of all" - Mulan

It is critical that we live each breath and each moment in the present. We must spread love, connecting with each other, as the time for change has been upon us for a while now. The ripple effect will be felt across the globe and through time, if we can only instill the teachings in each and every present moment.

Stop! Take a deep breath, and focus on this energy of Oneness in your everyday actions. HH Nirankari Baba leads by example and is showing us how we should live together in peace and harmony. He is teaching the meaning of peace, forgiveness, compassion, kindness, sacrifice, and love. All this is in the hope that these virtues spread like a wild fire in the forest, all over the globe.

Thus, the breaking of a new dawn comes as light and warmth shine from the burning of barriers. Out of the darkest hour, a new age of enlightenment can and will arise. ■

We were getting ready to go to Montreal to participate in a two day spiritual health convention. My wife and I had planned to drive to Montreal, which is 500 miles from our home in New Jersey (USA) by road and we were going to need to pack for an overnight stay. One of the things I hate about travel is packing, especially if you have to pack formal clothing. My wife had to literally push me into the closet to pack for the trip. I needed to select at least one formal suit; it's not a requirement but tradition has it that people dress up somewhat formal on one of the two days of our church conventions.

Much to my dislike, I have been conforming to this unwritten dress code. In addition to a few casual clothes, I packed a totally new outfit for the formal day - a pin-striped suit, a button-down shirt, a bright necktie with fall foliage print, a pair of dark tan designer shoes, all bought recently at an Italian designer store. I had not worn this brand new outfit before. The only piece of the ensemble that had been used earlier was a tan leather belt and that too looked like new. I had probably worn it once or twice in the last year. Having spent almost 30 minutes in the closet, I was satisfied that I had done a fairly good job packing everything I needed.

We quickly loaded our car and were on the road for our estimated eight hour drive from New Jersey to Montreal. It is a beautiful, scenic drive on Highway 87, surrounded by the Adirondack mountain ranges for hundreds of miles. It was a perfect day for travel - a sunny Saturday morning drive, no traffic, comfortable 65 degrees, beautiful fall foliage views along the highway, and we were excited about arriving at our destination in the evening to participate in the convention. We cruised well throughout the journey, except for the two hour wait on the Canadian border. As a result, we were running late for the evening convention.

As soon as we checked into our hotel room, I freshened up and changed from my travel clothes - jeans and t-shirt - to the dressy outfit I had selected for the evening. My wife complemented that the new suit, shirt, necktie, and shoes looked perfect on me.

"Thanks, but there is a problem," I said.

"What's the problem?"

"The belt..."

"What about the belt?" she impatiently wanted to know. "Did you forget to pack the belt?"

"No, I didn't forget anything, but the belt...I am embarrassed to admit, but..." I mumbled, "it doesn't fit any more...it's an inch too tight!"

The wardrobe failure was caused by a couple of extra pounds I had put on my waist since the last time I had used the belt. Without

YO-YO EFFECT IN LIFE

ASHWANI MADHOK, NEW JERSEY, USA



wasting any more time, I called the hotel front desk, explained the problem, and asked them to send me some tools. Thankfully, the hotel housekeeping managed to get me a special tool meant for punching holes in leather. Now the belt fitted perfectly.

Amazed that the hotel had the right tool to punch holes in leather, I said to the member of staff, "Thank you for your help! I am sure you have never received this kind of request from a hotel guest before."

"No problem, sir. Trust me; this is not the first time. We get such requests all the time! That's why we have the right tool for the right job. So, don't feel too bad!"

My wife and I couldn't believe it. Anyway, we were soon on our way to the convention, which was only a couple of miles from the hotel!

I would like to share how this wardrobe failure has become a powerful driver of change in my life. It began a transformative process, forcing me to think about the weight we carry - not just physically but also spiritually. So often we are unaware of the extra baggage on our body and mind.

Upon more careful examination of the belt, I realized that three holes in particular had been used a lot. The extra wear and tear on those holes indicated that my weight must have fluctuated back and forth in the past 5 years or so. For a long time, my weight hovered around 155 pounds, and then I lost 10 pounds, and then regained 10 pounds...this process must have repeated 50-60 times over many years. That's almost three or four of me! Upon our return home, I looked at our family photo albums and my pictures of the past few years confirmed that I had indeed been in a weight gain-loss-gain back mode.

This cyclical process of losing and gaining the weight back is called the "yo-yo effect". Kelly

Brownell, an American scientist and internationally renowned expert on obesity had coined that term. In 2006, Time magazine had included him in the "100 Most Influential Men in the World." His theory certainly influenced me.

Anyone who has tried weight management knows that it is difficult to keep weight off permanently. There are many interesting similarities between weight-management and self or spiritual management. In addition to bodily weight, we carry metaphysical weight too. The weight that our self carries has many names: anger, greed, lust, pride, ego, sorrow, despair, hatred, envy, jealousy, gossip, ill-tempereness, wickedness, violent thoughts, and the list goes on. Different religions and codes of ethics have grouped, numbered, and classified these in many ways - Christian ethics has seven deadly sins, Islam has seventy and Hinduism has nomenclature for numerous types of sin. Whether the number is seven, close to seventy or more is immaterial. What is significant is that most of us indulge in such behavior - off and on. We shed a bad attribute for a while and then adopt it again; it is sort of a roller coaster ride, relapse-rehab syndrome, or the yo-yo effect.

The metaphor of weight management can teach us a lot about spiritual management of our lives. There are similarities:

Weight management:

There is a myth that it is possible to lose weight with fad diets, magic pills, and high-intensity workout programs - and that it is also easy to keep the weight off.

Self management:

There is a myth that it is easy to lose evil propensities in us just by going to the church - and evil won't be back with vengeance.

Fact:

Fad diets will make claims like:

"Lose 30 pounds in 30 days!"

"Eat as much as you want and still lose weight!"

"Try the thigh buster and lose inches fast!"

"Six weeks to get six-pack abs."

Scientific research shows that fad diets and short-burst workout programs are not the best way to lose weight and keep it off. Fad diets often promise quick weight loss or tell you to cut certain foods out of your diet. In fact, research shows that such programs may even be dangerous. The fact is that the weight will come back unless you eat right, consume moderate portions, and build an active lifestyle in your daily life. Similarly, while you are in the church the aura of positive influences will make you feel free from evil propensities. It does work. However, the "spiritual high" you might experience there is comparable to the "exercise high" or "runners high" which is caused by release of endorphins. Although beneficial, such "high" is a transient effect and will disappear when you step out into the world. The evil will take over unless you watch what you feed your mind, practice restraint, and build active spirituality into your doings and dealings on a daily basis.

A motivational speech by a fitness expert might inspire you to lead a healthy life and you would swear to go to the gym regularly and promise to eat healthy...until you see that tub of your favorite ice cream. A spiritual discourse in the church too will give you the resolve to purge yourself of all sins, be good, control your anger...until your wife prepares a cup of tea for you—God forbid she put too much or too little sugar in it!

Weight management:

You go to the gym regularly and then for whatever reason you miss it once or twice. If it continues for too long, people tend to give up on their weight loss plans and all healthy habits and resolutions fall by the wayside. Usually people will not only discontinue the workout routine but also begin to splurge on unhealthy foods. Many surveys and studies on dietary non-adherence have demonstrated that there is a natural tendency to binge if we are not on a regular regimen.

Self management:

If you miss going to the church for some time, it becomes a challenge to get back into the routine. In some people lack of Godly discipline might even result in diminished Godliness in their lives. It may not apply to everyone, but most regular churchgoers have experienced this downward slope as a result of prolonged absence from the church.

Fact:

Once in a while everyone slips up - in weight management and in self-management. No gym penalizes its members

for not going to the gym on a regular basis nor does God take attendance in churches. Moreover, God allows U-turns. The need in both weight management and self-management is to not let a slip-up make you give up. Prolonged non-adherence to weight management plans can result in unwanted fat gains that can show up somewhere and embarrass. Protracted non-compliance with the edicts of goodness can also have undesirable effects on our lives.

Experts advise that we shouldn't let occasional non-adherence of either kind hinder our progress. It often helps to recommit to the source of inspiration, the original plan, and the determination to get back into the best shape - physically and spiritually. Healthy outcomes call for not just going to the gym but also a proper follow through - abstaining from unhealthy foods and maintaining active lifestyle. Spiritual progress stipulates that we not only listen to sermons, but also apply them in our lives. We are called to make progress - to move forward and march onward. A seemingly insignificant experience in Montreal has had a profound effect on me, making me very conscious of monitoring my spiritual progress. Indeed, continuity, consistency, and commitment to the process and

practical action are needed to prevent the "yo-yo effect in our lives."

In the Avtar Bani, Verse 9, Baba Avtar Singh Ji declared:

Just as the best medication is ineffective unless precautions are complied,

No goal can be really accomplished if practical action is not applied. ■



Thousands of Yesterdays, Millions of Tomorrows

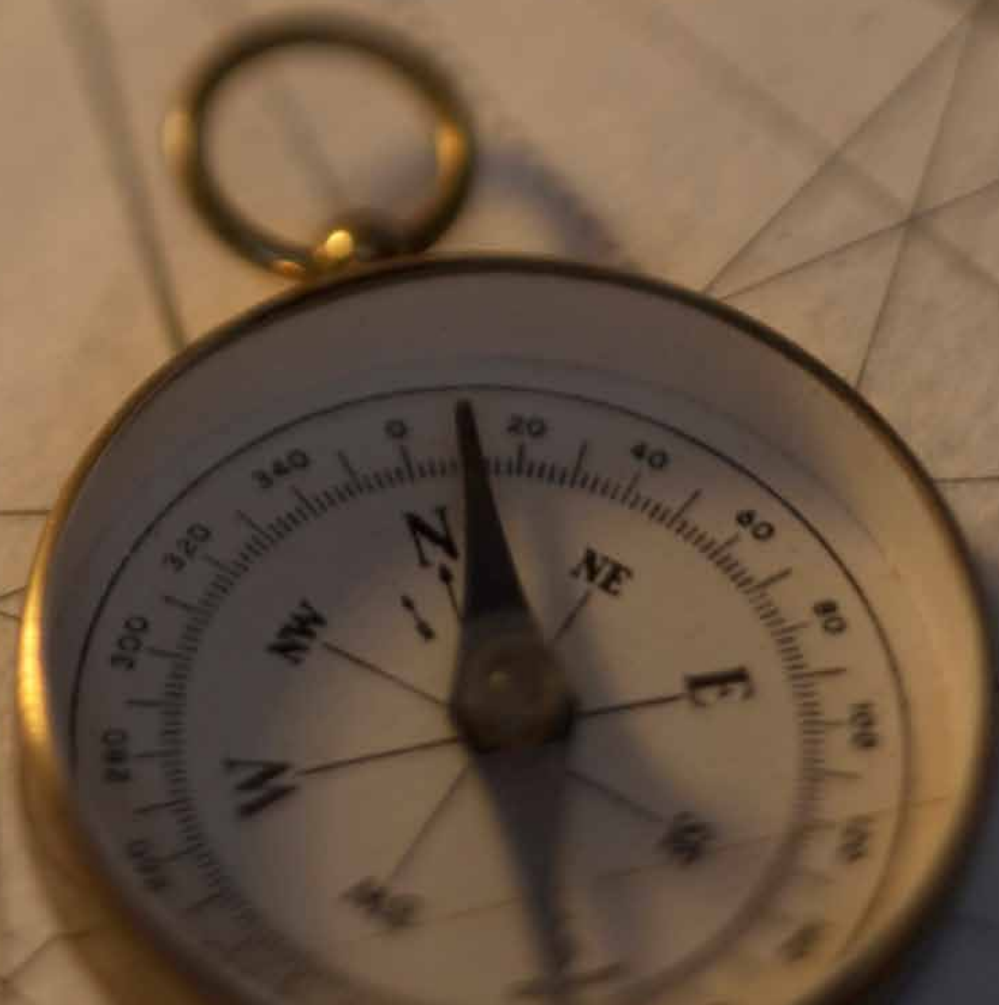
RAMAN CHAUHAN, VICTORIA BC, CANADA

Countless yesterdays have gone
Millions of 'morrow's will come
There is only one today
And of this what will become?
What do I really need to do
To succeed in this game of life
One challenge ever confronts me.
What indeed is it to be rife?
I go on sleeping and waking
Cherishing what's before me
I think it over, over again
Will it ever set me free?

There's always an imbalance
Between wants and needs
And there's always a race
to pursue and please
I want, I get and I go on
It's merely a game, no more
I'm obsessed, I compare
Then I want even more
I consider myself happy
But I have never dared
To look within myself
To see why I'm ensnared

I have one chance to see
To wake up and succeed
One chance to seek myself
One chance to breathe
To bear the torch and see
In the Lord Master's eyes
The all-righteous One
Blame-free, perfect and wise
He is the Giver of the sun
To him, I have to let go
To care and to forbear
My leap of faith to grow

The will to find harmony
To finally sleep in grace
For the one soul to meet
Super-Soul, face to face
If I am weak of heart
Then He comes to find me
Because I am ignorant
It is He who enlightens me
Countless yesterdays have gone
Millions of 'morrow's will berth
But with the Lord's grace today
There can be heaven on earth. ■



ACT OF DEFIANCE

Dr. Kanwal Chawla, DDS, Florida, USA

Most of the conflicts we see in the world today can be attributed to disputes over religious beliefs and man's defiance in one way or another. Although all the major religions agree that there is only one God, divisions amongst people occur because of their name for God and the manner in which they pray to Him.

The concept of one common creator was supposed to unite all of us on this planet, yet ironically it seems to have become the source of separation and violence. All the Divines who preached love, peace and tolerance, have sadly been misconstrued and misunderstood. Sacred places, which were supposed to be havens of peace, have become targets of terrorists. God, a symbol of peace, beauty

and love, has become the reason for unbridled tension, disunity and bitterness.

Yet many people seem to worship Him out of fear, but that is not the relationship He intended. It ought to be a child-like relationship that one should have with Him. Man's relationship with the Lord should be no different to that of a child's to his mother, who looks after

him, gives him food, shelter and protection. It is founded on trust, respect and love, not just fear. The ultimate goodness and welfare of the child would be paramount in any caring mother's mind, and where a child transgresses, she would not hesitate to discipline him. Not to do so would run contrary to the child's best interest.

The fact that man defiantly continues to transgress with impunity, begs the question “for how long should God tolerate it?”

This might sound preposterous in modern times, but do we really want to find out as to what extent God will go to, to discipline errant human beings? How long can fanaticism and violence be tolerated for?

We see God’s name being used in vain to justify acts of violence. For example, the deluded 9/11 suicide bombers committed, in God’s name, heinous acts of violence against mankind (i.e. God’s children) in the belief that their ‘martyrdom’ would secure them a place in paradise.

Here we have a religious man, using God’s name, to maim and murder God’s children. So where is his love and respect for God? It appears that all that man is doing is abusing God’s kindness and advancing his own self-interest. On the one hand, he seeks forgiveness, on the other, he keeps on erring. For instance, human beings continue to do the same mistakes’ even after

dipping in the Ganges and placing confessions at the church. How can he liberate himself without solidifying his bond with God?

HH the Nirankari Baba says that people keep on making the same mistakes and God keeps on forgiving them – someone has to give in!

Rather than turning to God, man increasingly appears to be turning away from Him. In the USA, the currency notes bear the following time-honored phrase - In God We Trust. Yet there are some people who feel that the state should omit it because of their myopic notion that God should have no role in their secular lives.

One would have thought that the breath-taking technological improvements adding to our comforts would have enabled man to be closer to God. But that is not to be. Instead, man has drifted away.

Men of religion, who are supposed to guide and steer the ordinary folk on to the path of spirituality, have not helped either. If anything, they have served to confuse and

complicate matters.

From time to time, prophets and sages have continued to give a wake-up call to humanity to adopt the path of righteousness, but only a few contemporaries heeded their message. Most of them elected to ignore, ridicule or decry them. Ironically, when the prophets were no more, their followers swelled exponentially, but their defiance continued relentlessly. Their followers revere them, adore their name, but fail to heed their word. This act of defiance can be seen everywhere.

Fortunately, all is not lost. There is an effulging glimmer of hope for all mankind. God, our creator, is the one and the only true source that can provide us with refuge, sustenance and hope. This glimmer has always been around, but what is needed is the ability to see and own it. It involves the invocation of the eternal Entity to shower its grace through the True Master, who can show the way to God. This is the only way one can overcome the inherent act of defiance. ■

Flowing Grace

Patrick Byrne, Wolverhampton, UK

To keep life afloat with flowing grace
Some words you must heed and face,
If you want to be poised for life's race
Perfect posture is the required base!

Right foundation is the spring board
For timing rhyme rhythm and chord
Both body and the soul must accord
For the sought-after, prized reward

No matter what, you have to adhere
To the ends do relentlessly persevere
However painful, agonisingly austere
You must go on, without let or fear!

For the synchronisation of the mind
To all else, the eyes have to be blind
Focus on the coach must be assigned
To gain finesse, and be ever refined!

Perfection demands sweat and toil
Your spirit has to be, like fertile soil
The lamp must burn with endless oil
As long as you are in the mortal coil

Like the pistons that ceaselessly beat
Winning strokes have to be equally neat
To bridge the gap for the ends to meet
You have to excel, in your chosen feat!

In the pursuit of the objective supreme
In realising your cherished ideal dream
Towards consistency, you have to lean
For triumph to be savoured and seen!

Flaw-less balance, you have to attain
Equipoise always you have to maintain
Resilient buoyancy if you want to retain
You mustn't buckle under stress or strain

To keep life afloat with flowing grace
Some words you must heed and face,
If you want to be poised for life's race
Perfect posture is the required base! ■

Oneness in all

ARPIT GROVER, BIRMINGHAM, UK

Red and yellow, pink and green
Purple and pure, orange and blue
Some sober, soft or deep
Others bold and fiery to view
Oneness is colourful yet harmonious
Vividly, vibrantly painted on a canvas

Different races, different faces
Different beliefs that communicate
Different languages and cultures
All forming part of ONE interfaith
Different food, different games
Cheerful, jubilantly sharing the same

Oneness is respect, embracing positivity
Love and tolerance saying "No!" to negativity
Oneness is the art of unity
Affiliating man with diverse community
In bringing togetherness and peace
Remember to grip it tight, never to cease.
Without diversity we would all be clones
No personality, having nothing of our own

So, let us celebrate who we are,
Being diverse with hearts near, not far
Is Oneness for all essentially the aim
And if so, why not spread the good name
Once we're 'ONE', what do we deserve
Joy and happiness, we surely observe

Respect equality harmony and unity
Are the essentials of inner beauty
Unitarian, humanitarian affiliations
Lead the way to stronger nations
Know ONE, Become ONE is time's call
To celebrate and enjoy Oneness in all. ■



RAJVIR RAHEJA, SEATTLE, USA

Technological advancements have allowed us to journey to all corners of the world. Even to the most remote areas where internet access is limited and cell phone signals are hard to receive.

Yet, wherever we go, we can be sure of finding the vast earth inhabited by people from all walks of life with one thing in common - the feeling of Oneness.

There is so much diversity to experience in the world - languages, food, music culture et al. A poet once said,

“Civilizations should be measured by the degree of diversity attained, and the degree of unity retained.”

This is a good measure of the progress of civilization.

The beauty of life exists in the diversity of the world we experience. We are able to experience the love of God through our interactions with His creation.

We cannot experience this world without experiencing its diversity and for that I remain forever grateful to God. If the feeling of Oneness is present within your heart than anyone you meet becomes a part of that Oneness.

Imagine a world where everyone was isolated from each other. There would be no interactions, no exchanges of feeling, and everyone would exist separately from each other. It's hard to imagine such a world or life, at all. Looking back at life, the fondest memories involve another human being or some interaction with another soul. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume we can live without unity in diversity.

This reminds me of a study conducted by an anthropologist recently. He proposed a game to a group of children in an African tribe. He put a basket full of fruit near a tree and told the kids that whoever got there first would win it. When he told them to run they all took each other's hands, ran together, and then sat together to enjoy their treats. When he asked why they ran together holding hands, instead of one of them having all the fruit for himself, they said:

“UBUNTU, how can one of us be happy, if all the others are sad”.

UBUNTU – in the Xhosa culture - means ‘I am because we are’. The message of this story is that we are one and inextricably connected. While competition benefits one person, cooperation benefits all.

The message of HH Nirankari Baba has always been unity in diversity. Recently, I had the opportunity to experience this more closely. My husband and I had a chance to travel to an Island in the South Pacific. We had discovered a whole new part of the world, but one thing remained consistent – the humanity of the people we encountered. I'm not sure why I was surprised, or if I had even stopped to think why people would be different? I guess, I was thinking about all the wars over religion and culture, and about the evil that some people spread in the world. I overcame this feeling and allowed myself to experience good and kind- hearted people who also exist, working day and night to make the world a better place.

Everyone we encountered, not only opened up their hearts but also their homes to us. HH Nirankari Baba has taught us that people we meet are not strangers, but rather vehicles that the God Almighty resides in. The connection we share with all human beings is that of love and humanity. The message of my Guru and the Sant Nirankari Mission has always been of Oneness. HH Nirankari Baba has said,

“If all understand this today, the distances on the basis of language, provinces, and countries may go on disappearing.”

Wherever there is nearness or closeness, there is happiness and love. My Guru has always expressed that the language of love is the best language. We are able to experience the love of God through our interactions with His creation. After this experience, I was able to reflect on HH Nirankari Baba's message of unity in diversity and truly experience it. I pray, wherever we may travel, whatever we may experience that we always remember that here today, we are all together as one unity in diversity. ■



Mind and Heart Become One

Sneha Bijlani, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

There are approximately seven billion people on earth. Seven billion people who vary in nationality, culture, belief systems and thought processes. Humankind is not homogenous, as each person is unique in their experience of this human existence. In this competitive world, there is a need to stand out and appear different; to associate with a certain nationality, culture and belief system in order to feel a sense of belonging. To fragment and compartmentalize seems natural, and simplifies a person's way of living.

However, let's take a look at the bigger picture. When babies are born, they are not branded with a barcode stating their nationality, culture or belief system. These differences were not ingrained in their being. As they grew up, they learned that they were different. They realized that they had learned to speak a certain language, belong to a particular race, culture and nationality. They

also learned that they practised certain religious beliefs.

This human experience taught them the differences. In fact, people spend their entire lives learning to see these differences. As people undertake the journey of this finite experience, their minds are automatically conditioned to think that they differ from each other.

But humankind in essence is ingrained with the truth that the formless creator is one, with its one creation. If we go back to our basics - the source we originated from - we have always known, in our hearts, that this truth existed.

However, blinded by our isolated lives, we forget that we originated from the one and the same source, as spiritual beings having a human experience. The internal strife to un-learn what human beings spent their entire lives to learn, begins in earnest. The goal then is to re-unite the heart and mind to enable us to see the one creator in all fellow human beings.

In so doing, the differences are alleviated, and the seven billion people are all perceived to be one.

"The mind can calculate, but the spirit yearns, and the heart knows what the heart knows." — Stephen King

The mind is fleeting; it can run in a thousand different directions. However, our soul yearns to be one with this One. This human existence is experienced differently by each one of us. But the differences start and end with the human experience in this finite transient existence. Beyond this life, beyond this human experience, our souls are interconnected and woven in the divinity of the Formless Creator. When our mind realizes the truth our heart has always known, life becomes a celebration.

Let us celebrate life in the sure knowledge that we are all one in the infinite spirit, despite our manifold finite differences. ■

THE POWER OF

RAUL KAMAL, LONDON, UK



On an ordinary day, something extraordinary happened.

It was 8:15am. I was walking to my local train station, as normal, to go to work when I felt a strange twinge in my nose. I pulled a tissue out of my pocket and blew my nose. But much to my dismay, the tissue was covered in blood.

Having run out of tissues, I went into a shop that I had never taken any notice of before. The shopkeeper, noticing my nose bleed, immediately picked up a packet of tissues and gave it to me.

I mopped up the unwanted blood, and as a precaution, asked for another packet. The shopkeeper kindly obliged. Not only did he offer me the use of his wash basin, which I accepted with thanks, but he also refused to charge me. He said that he was merely trying to help a person in need.

I wondered why the gentleman was so kind and considerate. Was it impulse or was it something else? When I returned two weeks later to give thanks, I found the answer.

"My son", began the shopkeeper, with a glint of grief in his eyes. "He's young and yet he suffers from regular nose bleeds. Every droplet of his blood means so much to me. I

cannot bear to see him suffer".

My nose bleed had reminded him of his own son's condition.

This ignited a divine revelation within me. Isn't this how we would all behave, if we saw each other as our own kin? Wouldn't the love and care, shown to a loved one, be unparalleled in kindness and warmth? Wouldn't we go to great lengths to prevent the shedding of even a single tear, and put up with hardships galore for a single smile?

When the special bond between us and our kin becomes so strong that we start feeling each other's pain, we are then inseparable. Just imagine the scenario in which you see every single person as your own family member. Would it not be a vision of Oneness with the whole of humanity?

This does not have to be a distant cry or a utopian dream. On the contrary, it can be more than real. All we have to do is to make the soul's purpose our sole purpose.

That is to say that we must have unity in diversity, not uniformity.

We have to understand who we really are as an entity, both physically and subtly. Physically, we are all made of the same four elements, and subtly, our emotional and spiritual make-up is also the same. As soon as a go-between, an adept or a messiah shows us our commonality – the spirit which is the source of all existence – we begin to understand our Oneness.

Confucius, the Chinese Philosopher echoes this: all people are the same; it's only their habits that are so different.

Just as our body has to work as one entity to function effectively, the world as a whole also has to work as one unit to manifest its humanity. In so doing, we become one with ourselves, one with others, and one with the all-pervading energy we call God. This energy binds us all into a necklace of unique beads with a subtle thread - a thread we all know exists, but cannot always see.

Is it that simple? It can be.

Mother Teresa reminds us: If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.

Belonging to each other necessitates knowing each other, and knowing each other necessitates knowing the source of all existence. When we get to know the source of all existence, we realise that we are all individual limbs of the one supreme Entity, in which the many have to become one to make one whole.

In the words of the Nirankari Baba, there is no Oneness without wholeness. Wholeness only exists as Oneness when it is realised through a contemporary adept.

When will you be one? ■



Conquering *Oneness*

Navdeep Anand, Long Itchington, UK

Whilst out in town one day, I decided to stop at a small café to have some lunch. I selected a sandwich, paid and then sat down at one of the tables to eat my meal. As I began to eat, I realised I had not picked up any serviettes and so walked back up to the main counter to get some.

Just to the side of the main counter was a separate station which contained cutlery, condiments and serviettes for customers. As I approached this station, I noticed that the several compartments which would usually contain the serviettes seemed to be empty. I looked closer at the dispensers but could not see if there were any serviettes in there. I then prodded the dispenser to see if any serviettes would miraculously appear, but this technical approach did not provide any results. I then prodded a few of the other dispensers to see if they would deliver any success but had no joy.

In frustration, I turned to see if I could find any members of staff to ask for some serviettes, as well as to provide comment and disdain as to how a busy café could fail to stock up on such customer essentials. Whilst glaring at the passing members of staff to get their attention and continuing to prod the dispensers, a small voice next to me suddenly said,

“here you go”, and passed me a serviette.

I had not noticed, but a young lady had also come up to the station to get cutlery and serviettes for her meal. She then proceeded to open the flap on one of the dispenser's I had been prodding and took out a handful of serviettes for me. She giggled reassuringly to cover my obvious embarrassment, as she passed them over to me and said, “It's a bit tricky until you know how!”

Feeling very silly for making such a simple mistake, I turned to thank the young lady for her help. As I turned and said, ‘thank you’, I realised the young lady had Down's syndrome. I looked at her earnest smiling face, and broke out into a big smile of my own in recognition of my stupidity.

I sat back down at my table still smiling to myself as to what had just happened. Here I was, an allegedly intelligent and well educated individual with a professional job demanding a lot

of skill and responsibility. Yet I had been outwitted by a simple flap on a serviette dispenser in front of a café full of people. My saviour in this situation was an individual that society would normally regard as requiring special attention or would garner pity and sympathy. Instead, the young lady had come to my aid and had competently solved my problem with politeness and humility.

That short two minute experience taught me a lot.

Firstly, it reminded me of the phrase “pride comes before a fall”. Regardless of how well read we are, how much education or social standing we may have, we will never know it all. On that basis, there is no place for ego, as all of our accumulated knowledge or wealth can be taken from us in a moment, or in fact may be of no use at all in particular situations.

This concept of subconscious ego then led me to think about my own capabilities. Regardless of how genuine I believe my good

intentions are for changing the world and being a role model for society, are all of these grand gestures irrelevant if I can't even change myself? If I wish to make a positive impact on the world by helping others less fortunate than myself, then surely I must firstly have the skills to do so. If I wish to educate mankind in the ways of achieving contentment and perfection, then perhaps I should achieve contentment and perfection first.

HH Nirankari Baba encapsulates this concept in a few simple words:

"Be whatever you strive to be in this world, but first of all be a human being".

We all have aspirations of achieving wealth, glamour and notoriety, which is all fine. But first and foremost, we must achieve the more difficult task of becoming good people. It is a universally accepted statement that man is capable of achieving great acts of goodness, as well as great acts of evil. We are all aware of the deficiencies we have in our own characters and the impurities that taint our everyday lives. The majority of us understand and appreciate that these negative characteristics should be kept aside as best as possible and try to keep them in check. However, it is very easy for such negative qualities to quickly take us over as soon as we let our guard down, and in fact it is easier to be negative as it takes far more effort to be a positive individual.

However, no one wants to be a negative person by will; we just become negative because we fail to overcome it. The obvious next question is how does a person overcome and remove such negativities to become a better individual? The answer is very simple – through hard work!

The tools for overcoming our unwanted traits are widely acknowledged and are easily

available: tolerance, acceptance, humility, surrender, love, compassion etc. The only difficulty is instigating and maintaining the change in ourselves to make the improvements we require.

If we fail to change ourselves, we will effectively become incapable of progression. If we fail to progress ourselves, we will never be able to achieve happiness and contentment, and therefore cease to have a valued life. Changing our frame of mind and our character is therefore not a preferred lifestyle choice, but a necessity in order to actually live and appreciate life to the fullest. As well as improving our persona, self-change provides the means to obtain the happiness our beings crave.

The key therefore to achieving all that we desire in our own lives and beyond, is to change ourselves. Leo Tolstoy, the Russian author famous for his books exploring morality, once said:

"Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."

We sometimes set forth chastising and commenting about the state of the world, when in fact we ourselves are guilty of failing to act in a correct manner which then contributes to the upset we see around us. Mahatma Ghandi is famously quoted as saying:

"Be the change that you wish to see in the world."

Many of the atrocities and disregard that we see around us are due to normally good people failing to act in a good way. If we have prejudice and avarice in our hearts, this will translate into our actions. Our actions will then affect those around us who will mimic our behaviour in order to fit into the social context we have provided. An angry word borne out of frustration to a work colleague at the beginning of the day, can quickly lead to conflict

and a negative atmosphere being perpetrated throughout the department. Whereas control and understanding can swiftly defuse a potentially hostile situation and can pave the way to a harmonious resolution.

To therefore become capable and have the skill set to assist others that need help, we must firstly condition ourselves to become positive human beings. In fact, if a person takes the initiative to replace the hatred in their heart with love and tolerance, even if they are unable to actively help others, the peace and contentment in their character will automatically positively influence those around them.

My encounter with the serviette dispenser highlighted to me how much more I need to work in order to become an individual capable of bringing some positivity to the world. The usual assumption a person would make if viewing the scenario at the time would have been that the young lady because of her condition would have been struggling and I had come and assisted her. Instead, she had helped me with sincerity and compassion when I was incapable of completing a simple task. She challenged my perspective of what capable actually means, and whether I had even changed anything about myself in order to be at the very least a decent human being, let alone a shining light to the world.

The young lady's selfless actions also demonstrated that there is no reasonable argument why we cannot strive to do our best at all times. Although in conventional terms she would be deemed below the average person's capability, this did not hinder her from stopping to help me. In fact I am sure it would not have even come into her contemplation that she would somehow be prevented from assisting me because of her condition, but she did it because it was her inherent

character to be kind. She showed that none of us are actually perfect, but that should never stop us from doing our very best at all times. Those who sincerely wish to improve themselves will always be in a state of learning and adaptation, but practical application has always been the best way to learn and improve. Just because we may not yet have overcome every vice that we have or have perfected ourselves, this is no obstacle to still doing the right thing.

The ultimate ideal is for the unification of mankind, to adopt the concept of Oneness. Achieving this immense task does not rely on mass revolution, but individual evolution. Changing oneself for the better is the quickest way that we can make an actual and positive impact on our society. This concept is at the core of all religions and faiths, and is again promoted and emphasised by the Nirankari Mission.

HH Nirankari Baba often gives the example of a lit candle and the benefit it can give. Once a candle is lit, it extinguishes the darkness around it. However a gust of wind can then blow the flame out. But if a person cups their hands around the flame, the flame cannot be blown out. The flame can then be used to light many more candles and spread light wherever is required.

Similarly, a person who has overcome their vices and characteristic frailties will then be strong and bright enough to illuminate the lives of others and join society in Oneness. Accordingly, the way to achieve global Oneness amongst our fellow human family is to firstly become one in ourselves and only have love in our being. We must work hard to dispel our multitude of imperfections, and fortify goodness within ourselves. Perfection is not an ideal, but a possibility, which relies on us to triumph over our self-made obstacles and conquer our own Oneness.■

“Although the 2012 Olympic Games concluded in August, the Spiritual Olympics, however, continue ceaselessly.....” UT

The Spiritual Olympics:

THE RACE TO BECOME ONE

ANIK PAL, NEW YORK, USA

On your marks!.....Get set!.....Go! The Spiritual Olympics has just begun....and it has just begun with you! In this race, you are running to win the grandest prize of all.....the gold medal.....the gold medal of Oneness. You are running a race to achieve universal brotherhood, a race to achieve an all-embracing friendship, a race to achieve a worldwide family. However, a great amount of dedication and training is necessary for one to excel and win the grand prize of the Spiritual Olympics.

Spiritual Olympics, associated with the soul, is way beyond the physical Olympics. The Bible (1 Timothy 4:7-8) says: "... physical training is of some value, but Godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." Training the body for its physical wellbeing does hold value for the balance of one's entire being. One's entire being does not just consist of the body, but also the soul. Train your body. Train your mind. Train your heart. It's all about balance. However, a question arises as to how one can equip the soul with proper training and good health in order to win the Spiritual Olympics?

A well-renowned reggae singer by the name of Damian Marley asserts that: "The body is just a vehicle transporting the soul; it is what's inside the person that's the beauty to behold." True beauty lies underneath the veil of the body and mind, and that beauty is the beauty of the soul or spirit. The most trained and most fit spiritual athlete is the one who is able to perceive Divinity or the beauty of the soul within all beings. This beauty of the soul lies in its inherent nature. It is formless, shapeless, colorless, ageless, weightless, genderless and indestructible. The soul is the same in an American and a Briton; it is the same in a Christian and a Muslim; it is the same in a dark-skinned individual and a light-skinned individual; and it is the same in a young man or an old woman.

The soul resides in all beings of different colors and nationalities, and all beings reside within it. The soul is the Pure Being. This entire universe is welled up with this one light of the Universal Spirit. It is the light of Existence. The true winner of the Spiritual Olympics is the spiritual athlete who perceives the beauty of the soul in all people, irrespective of their belonging. The Spiritual Olympics involves exercising all

our assets of compassion, love, kindness.... and unity. By imbibing these traits, one is able to ascend one's soul into Godliness and find the true meaning of being human. One, who becomes God-like, wins the real gold medal.

Everyone participating in the Spiritual Olympics is a winner. Even if one practices a little bit of spiritual fitness in their life, he achieves a whole lot. However, in the intense training and fitness for the Spiritual Olympics, a spiritual coach is necessary. Such a coach is vital in the welfare of the soul.

During the opening ceremonies of the physical Olympic Games, an athlete is required to take an oath, in which he declares: "In the name of all competitors, I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules that govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honor of our teams."

In the Spiritual Olympics, a participant pledges in the name of all human beings on this planet, to take part in the Spiritual Olympic Games, by respecting and loving each and every being, and to practice compassion and tolerance, in the true spirit of Godliness, for the ultimate glory of the Soul and the honor of fellow beings.

Just as the physical Olympics make us physically fit, the Spiritual Olympics make us spiritually fit. The fitness has to be wholesome, which then leads to Oneness. It has to be an equi-poise of the body and the soul. When in perfect sync, man moves towards Oneness, which is not only our real essence, but also our real being. The greatest of all the prizes – gold, silver or bronze – is not just to win the freedom of a city, but to be a member of the City of God. For that is the real, indispensable gold – the reward for the Spiritual Olympics. ■



DANCE OF DUALITY

As a person of faith, I often claim that being one with God brings the truest sense of bliss. For God is the origin, God is the destination, and God is also the road in between. In life, we struggle in our search for happiness, be it in relationships, in a career, or in our passions. But if I truly know a short cut to happiness - being One with the One - why is it that I fail to embark on such a journey?

I think I've figured it out, but I am, in fact, engrossed in something called the Dance of Duality. In truth, I am always and forever one with Him, but instead of experiencing this, I entertain myself with the thought that I am something else. At times, I am connected with Him, enchanted by this Oneness. Other times, I feel a discontent while I tiptoe into this duality. I am Him, but I am also me. Here lies the dangerous duality. For I begin to believe there is a difference.

I step forward into jealousy, step back into hatred, and turn around propelled by my ego. This dance of duality continues throughout life, becoming more prominent in times of hardship or pain. I forget that He and I are one and instead of submerging myself in Him, I worry myself silly with the thought that I am, myself, all alone.

Have you ever felt yourself engaging in the Dance of Duality? You feel a discord within yourself, as if you have been split into pieces and none of them are whole. Your thoughts, words, and actions don't seem to align. I find myself moving through life with a constant struggle; things happen and I react. The movement isn't natural and pure but mechanical and structured. My heart says to do something, but my mind convinces me otherwise. And again, I step forward, backward and turn. I tiptoe around the truth, sometimes getting close, but again not fully connected.

I wouldn't have noticed that I was doing such things, but you see, I've witnessed someone break free from the dance of duality and move into a blissful state. This soul epitomized the concept of Oneness. When she laughed, the sound resonated and reached the souls that surrounded her. When she spoke, her words carried pearls of wisdom that enlightened the lives of those who heard her. Her beauty wasn't limited to her

physical features, but instead, it shone through her like the radiating sun. Her life was the perfect example of Oneness, for she allowed Him to permeate through her being.

She was a woman who stood strong, a lighthouse of her own. People would flock toward her, both young and old, sharing problems and searching for help. She had this air of positivity around her; a trait that she held until her last breath. I sometimes wondered what it was about her that attracted so many people. One day, I heard her whispering something to my best friend. When I inquired later about the conversation, I found out she was saying that she felt Him there with them; she felt His presence. Having moved passed hatred, jealousy, she had broken the shell of ego. Whilst most people fear death, she knew that it was only a continuation of her relationship with Him. This enabled her to be her truest form of herself - Him.

She once wrote:

Bhatak kyu jaate hain hum baar baar, hain har taraf jab yeh Nirankar.

Nikal aatey hain jab is samundar se, chor dete hain jab iska saath.

Tab hi shayad hota hain ye man udaas.

Why do we continuously fall when God is completely surrounding us? We leave this sea of bliss when we let go of His Company and that is why we become upset.

In the dance of duality, I lose myself to the ugliest fragments of my being. My vices take over and my life loses its very purpose. Instead of swimming in happiness, I drown in my sorrows. Yet, it all occurs so easily that I do not even realize it is happening.

She proved that life is greater than just a moving walkway; it is a pathway in a beautiful garden. When you are one

with Him, each moment is enriched with pure bliss. She was saturated with His love, and for that reason, everyone around her experienced that natural pull. This soul wasn't afraid to speak the truth because she had nothing to hide. She was pure through and through, without restriction, without reservation. Can you imagine such freedom? It was as if a bird realized the door to its cage was unlocked, and it opened it to find paradise in waiting.

Honestly, I am tired of living in ignorance. In this chaotic world, I often search for a lighthouse of peace. When everything seems to be upside down, I frantically attempt to hold on to something strong. For I have forgotten my source. I find myself lost in a dark room, because I refuse to open my eyes. But why don't I take advantage of that shortcut to happiness and connect with Him? I too can experience my soul soaring, that unlimited freedom. This soul I speak of was a daughter, wife, sister, aunt, friend and mother; she too, entertained the dance of duality. However, instead of getting caught up with the steps, she decided to create her own.

First, I must awake from this dance of duality. Once I realize we are all one, I will no longer step forward into jealousy. If I open my heart, I will halt the backward motion into hatred. And when I finally chip away this ugly ego, it will lose its power over me and I will stop turning in circles. Then I can naturally soar in this beautiful state of Oneness. My movements will be natural, for there will be harmony in my every breath. I am Him, and He is me; and now ends the dance of duality. ■



The Indivisible One

Dr. Rakesh Joshi, Delhi, India

Let us think about the Indivisible One. It is not light, which can be fragmented; it is not numbers, and it is certainly not some physical quantity. What we are talking about is the Formless, and that which is One. This Formless exists beyond all limitations of time and space. Therefore, it can be said to be eternal and omnipresent.

These two virtues are obvious because of the very definition of the Indivisible One - Omnipresence and perpetuity. Almighty God is present everywhere and at all times, and this essentially means that He must be formless.

To make it crystal clear, take the example of the pen in my hand. Suppose at one point of time I have it in my left hand. I cannot have it simultaneously in my right at that very same moment in time. This is because it has a shape, a size, a form, a colour, and some physical attributes attached to it. Anything that is attached to the characteristics of form, colour, size, volume, area and shape, becomes confined to a specific place and time in space.

On the other hand, God is everywhere and present at all times. For God to be everywhere and all-pervasive infinite power, it has to be formless. It is the indivisible one.

This Formless One has infinite dimensions and even after all that, it is one and only one. Why? Whatever we do in our lives is done on a single dimension, be it art, literature, science, culture, philosophy or anything for that

matter; and those who delve deep into any of these single dimensions, find this One and only One Formless God at that highest state of philosophy of any knowledge. This is a universal principle.

It is often asked, if God is one indivisible being, then why is there duality and dualism in this world?

Dualism is something we practice in our daily lives – i.e. the Creator on the one side and His creation, on the other. Why are men unequal; why are some rich and the others, poor; why are some fair and others, dark; why are there differences? Why can't every dimension be one with this universal principle of the indivisible one?

If I may refer to the principle of duality postulated by De Broglie, it clearly states that it is not a particle; it is not a wave. Its properties are conspicuous of what we are looking at. We also practise dualism. For example, a class of children taught by the same teacher are taken occasionally to play soccer. On the playing field, the children are divided to form two teams, and both teams compete with each other to win. Once the game is over, they go back to the same one class. The duality only existed for the duration of the game.

When we watch the game, we observe and practise duality. Those who understand this concept can clearly visualise its underlying principle, to the extent that they transcend the distinction between the formless and the form.

Let me support this with another example. Hunger is without a specific form. How can I offset or satisfy this hunger. I take in the food, which has a form, with the aid of cutlery and crockery which also have form and shape. The food moves through the digestive tract, the stomach, intestines, all of which have form. But ultimately my hunger is sated only when this food, in physical form, is converted into the formless energy. The formless, the indivisible one, manifests through form, but ultimately remains as the indivisible one.

Let us now look at the visible aspect of the Formless One. When I stand in front of the mirror, I see something that is not me, but a reflection of me. It is merely my image that I see in the mirror. There is an object, my physical body, and its image. But it's all me. Here, the observer appears to be the observed. Whatever I am looking at in this world, is nothing but a reflection of the indivisible one. Indirectly it is also my own reflection, as the self in me is part of the indivisible one. And ultimately, the individual One remains and prevails over and beyond duality. ■

The Journey of Becoming...

DAVE DHANOA, TORONTO, CANADA

The words Oneness union and merger all conjure up images of melting into one identity. This identity is the realm of spirituality, the merger of the individual spirit with the supreme Spirit. With this ultimate union, there are no longer two identities, but one, exemplifying the water drop becoming the ocean.

From the Indian perspective, the word union is often called yoga (or yog) in Sanskrit, which means 'to unite'. The ancient Indian seers and sages developed techniques to master the body and mind in the hope of uniting the spirit with the supreme Spirit. This essentially led these seers to discard their micro self (the ego) to become the macro self (the universal self), which is in all things of the universe.

In fact, they were trying to become God Himself. For they knew that the real aspect of all human, and living beings, is this Spirit, which is clouded by the mind, intellect and ego.

This clouding of the mind is what is called Illusion (Maya), which is responsible for every individual believing that they are the gross physical body, and not the spirit. But for wisdom to

be awakened in the individual, this veil of illusion has to be removed. It is only then that we can merge with the universe to rise above pleasure and pain, loss and gain, and heat and cold. It can lead us to a sense of bliss at all times.

How can this veil be removed? How can one really merge with the Primordial Energy (Nirankar)? Many have tried on their own to enter within and without, but in vain. However, the method to adopt is to get in touch with an enlightened personage, who is already awake. Such a person is known as a teacher or guru, who is normally also an accomplished saint and sage.

When you meet such a teacher, you will be guided towards a path of real living, which is conducive to achieving universal Oneness. In such a state, we become party to the Universal Spirit, which differentiates not between high and low, and big or small.

Let us, therefore, be more than we are, because we really are more than we think we are. We are, at our deepest core, one and the same with the Universal Spirit. ■

Oneness is a Scientific Reality!

Kel Kalyan, Bedford, UK

The message of Oneness or global unity has been the hallmark of spirituality since antiquity, and this quest is destined to march on with the times. However, this enduring pursuit could be misconstrued as a far-fetched romantic notion. Hence, it is the intention herein to endorse that spirituality and the quest for universal Oneness are scientific necessities that significantly affect each and every one of us.

This is because science and spirituality are unified. To be exact science is simply a derivative of spirituality. Spirituality proves that all human actions have a positive or negative influence on the universe. Hence, the law of spirituality can be explained within a scientific analysis. Any faith or action performed in the name of God must be scientifically viable and produce the desired positive outcome. Consequently, spiritual actions follow a systematic method - one must do X in order to achieve Y.

The academic world regards the study of science as secular to spirituality. Therefore, the academics consider the answer to the universe exists within physics and mathematics. Yet, spiritual truth has long revealed that science itself has a soul. This is because everything has a divine purpose and a function. Every aspect of creation performs in a motion of harmony, signifying universal Oneness.

The Scriptures of all faiths truly express the mandate on how to establish universal Oneness within human beings. True religion is an expression of divine character which represents a positive action. Such an action

has a constructive impact on our own destiny and the universe. Therefore, spirituality encourages one to self-create a better life for one self and for others. This way of living conforms to the physical laws of Nature, accordingly all actions and thoughts, good or bad, have a direct consequence on the world. For this reason every human being acts as a building block, creating the chain of love and universal Oneness, or conversely hate and disunion.

The Scriptures further declare that one must have a perception of formless God in order to truly worship Him. It is therefore essential to attain the science of spirituality – God-consciousness, which illumined Masters bestow in every age. This knowledge empowers one to connect and perform in sync with formless God. Without the divine initiation of such Masters, our actions albeit in the name of God are unscientific to the laws of spirituality. Consequently, there is nothing mythical or unfounded about spiritual living. This is proven no differently to how laboratory science monitors the results of trials and events. Spiritual actions are also proven and measured by a God-realised

saint. For example, a devotee dwells in a state of Oneness and peace, thus enjoying the effects of past actions.

Furthermore, the scientific process of spirituality follows suits with liberation, which can be simplified as a transformation from the material to the non-material life. This highly sought-after phenomenon follows a controlled process as per the instruction of True Masters. Their benign touch further empowers humankind to remove the veil of the physical world by dissolving the sense of superiority and racial differences, and unite all humans as one global family. It is this heavenly perception that transpires universal Oneness and aligns human beings to work in sync with Nature.

Science states that the human body is part and parcel of the universe. Everything in the cosmos is composed of five basic elements, although the cosmos as a whole is one single Entity. Everything is in total synergy and integration.

For example, the sun is perfectly poised to orbit the earth submitting an accurate amount of light and heat for us to survive. Too much

“...a flower is in a state of universal Oneness as it utilises the precise amount of light and water to survive.”

or too little would be catastrophic. Equally, the moon and our planet are attracted to each other like two magnets; the gravitational force between them rotates our sea levels. If the moon was any closer to the earth, our planet would be submerged in water. Yet, they all perform in perfect harmony and Oneness, in other words they perform as they were created. In addition, a flower is in a state of universal Oneness as it utilises the precise amount of light and water to survive. Equally, a butterfly, a deer and an octopus are too are in a state of Oneness, as they behave as they were created, in complete harmony and one with nature.

However, humans who are an essential part of this whole process do not conform to this divine pattern. This is because we do not live up to the status of being human. Our ego has stayed so far off course it is incongruous to the laws of nature. Our precious homeland was created a perfect world, and accordingly humans were created to love and serve one another. Consequently, anything imperfect in our world is self-created. Hence, our shortcomings have shaped a landscape of disunion and inequality. We are over producing and over consuming when there are other nations that go without. If Oneness truly existed it would mean equal proportion and opportunity for every human being, a practical ethos for social, racial, gender, and economic policy.

What is more, without knowing the Formless One, universal peace and equality will forever remain a farfetched romantic notion. In other words, Oneness can only be attained by knowing the One. In fact, any sense of human law must conform to the essence out of which our entire being and universe is created. This way of life is termed ‘becoming one with the universe.’

It is clear that spiritual awareness is prerequisite to human life; any action outside this discipline is incompatible to the cosmos. The formless One is the unseen, cosmic all-pervading Entity, which permeates all material creation. Therefore, one should never feel isolated from our most distant star or galaxy, and be no stranger to our closest neighbour. Through the formless One, we all have a direct connection with the whole of creation. ■



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