

The Significance of the Heart in the Field of Spiritual Living: Divine Life Society

Pearls gathered from Swami Krishnananda's (1922- 2001) Satsang Sunday Night on January 24, 1982) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_Life_Society.

One of the seekers made a request for Swamiji to speak on the significance of the heart in the field of spiritual living: His Response in excerpts.

'Heart' is a word which has been used with many meanings and referred to often in religious scriptures and spiritual instructions. The heart is the centre of the person. This is a magnificent theme delineated upon in some of the Upanishads such as the Chandogya and the Taittiriya, wherein they speak of what is known as the *hridaya guha*, or the cave of the heart, in which resides the Supreme Reality. "Go into the cave and you find the treasures of heaven," says the Chandogya Upanishad particularly in its eighth chapter.

Chandogya Upanishad tells us about **the glories that are enshrined in our own hearts**; the human being is not as he appears on the surface. To repeat the words in the Chandogya Upanishad, he said: "The sun and the moon and the stars, the very space and the clouds and the lightning and the rains—**all this miracle of creation is within the heart of man.**" When it rains outside, it rains inside also, and the stellar regions shine resplendently within the heart of man.

The key to the **door of the secrets of life; and the secret is man himself.**

There is a heart which doctors operate upon and which physicians transplant, there is a heart which is deeply hurt when a person is insulted, there is a heart which is elated when a person is praised, and **there is a heart wherein resides the centrality of the universe.**

By the word 'heart' we mean the centre of anything. The core, the substance, the vitality, the very being of anything whatsoever, is the heart of that thing. Now, this heart, this centre, this core, this vitality, this substantiality, or the being of anything, is incapable of description.

When the heart speaks, everything is hushed. The voice of the heart is often regarded as the final word. **All arguments cease to function when the heart speaks**, which means to say the **reality operates when the heart begins to function and express itself** in any manner.

We are also told that **a meditation on the heart** is one of the principal methods prescribed. People gaze inwardly into their own feelings and conceive of a lotus, a resplendent rising sun of golden hue, and so on, in their meditations.

It is also told to us in the Upanishads that the **heart is the centre of the mind**; it is the abode of all psychological operations. The mind goes to sleep in the heart. In meditation, in swoon, in death, in sleep, the mind is in the heart.

In dream, the mind is supposed to be operating somewhere near the throat. And in the waking state, it is in the brain. The mind is active in the brain cells, and so we are predominantly intellectual in our outlook during our waking hours. We are **translucently conscious when we are dreaming, and totally unconscious in the state of deep sleep.** The mind subsides and enters its own nest, like a bird going back to its house at the close of the day, and winds up all its activities.

But there is another significance in what we mean by 'the heart' as far as spiritual seekers are concerned. The heart of the matter is the root thereof, which is incapable of objectivity or externalisation; the heart cannot become other than what it is. The **heart is the person. It is identified with the very soul of the individual.** When we speak of the spiritual significance behind the word 'heart', we have to go a little deeper than the mere physiological concept of it.

The **pranamaya kosha, or the vital sheath** which is inside the physical sheath, is the cave as far as the physical body is concerned. But the mind is the cave as far as the vital sheath is concerned, because the **mind is internal to the vital sheath and more pervasive** than the vital sheath.

The **intellect is the cave even to the mind**, because it is interior to the mind. And the **soul is the deepest because it is interior to the mind.** The **soul is the deepest essence of everything. It is the cave even to the intellect.**

It is prior to the operation of the intellect, and therefore, man cannot think the heart, and cannot conceive the soul. The meditation on the heart, therefore, becomes an unintelligible difficulty inasmuch as it cannot become an object of intellectual activity.

If meditation is a thinking process or even an intellectual operation, such a **meditation cannot touch the soul, because the soul is not an object of the intellect.** It is not something that the mind can think because it is prior to the mind's thinking and the intellectual understanding of man.

What we call **the heart is that which is prior to everything that we can imagine in our minds or understand through our intellects.** The very presupposition of our very existence is the heart of ours. And **there is a heart in everything.** It is not an object to itself; it is a subject.

The **heart is what we call the subject, incapable of description**, again. It is indefinable by characteristics of any external object, because it is the subject. The subject cannot be compared to any other thing. There is no other thing for the heart, the centre, or the subject.

This pure subjectivity, which is the heart of things, is present in every entity in the cosmos. If the heart is the centre of anything and everything, it has to be present everywhere. Everything has a heart, a core. This something that remains, divested

of every association, characterisation and relationship, is the heart, which is supposed to be the object of meditation.

True subjectivity is the character of everything, everywhere, the whole world is filled with heart. There is nothing else in this world. It is only feeling, throbbing, pulsating, and demanding recognition in the way to be recognised and not by way of a description.

Every meditation is a characterisation; it is a definition; it is a description of a notional ideal the object of our meditation. All life is a movement towards this centre. Every step, or stage, in the process of the evolution of things is a tendency of converging towards this centre which is, and which has to be, everywhere. Such a centre is the object of our meditation; that is the heart.

It is in us, no doubt, and when we speak about the meditation on the heart as the centre of all things, we are not concentrating our mind within this physical body merely, because God, the omnipresent kingdom of heaven, cannot be contained within a six-foot physical frame. This is something well known to everybody.

So there is a larger meaning in this great Upanishadic declaration that whatever is outside is also inside.

Subjectivity undergoes Seven Stages:

All sacred things are counted in sevens.

There are seven stages of knowledge, seven stages in everything. The eighth thing behind the seven stages, or bordering upon the edge of the seventh, is the core, the centre, the true subject.

We have lost that subjectivity in us by entangling ourselves in objectivity. We are objects, and no more subjects. There is no use merely parading our subjectivity and announcing our pride that we are independent persons. No more are we independent when we have converted ourselves into objects which are visible to the senses.

This body is an object of sense perception, and therefore, if the body is the 'I' or the 'me', it is no more a subject. Everything, has become an object, and everyone has entered into phenomena, and lost the true reality that is behind phenomena.

Meditation is the reversal of the phenomenal process into the true subjectivity that is the cave behind phenomena—the heart of things. It is a basic expanse as the transcendental unity of apperception.. It is knowledge not of an object, but knowledge of knowledge itself.

Such is a requirement in the deeper reaches of meditation. It is not enough if we merely struggle to get over this shackle of entanglement in the physical body.

There is a greater difficulty in freeing ourselves from the bondage of involvement in mental operations also.. The body is shed, and it has to be shed one day or the other, yet bondage does not cease. Our bondage does not end with the shedding of the body because bondage is not the physical encasement, but the way in which we think..

We think that we are one among many things. We are not one among the many. There is something in us, which defies comparison. A subject that we are is not one in a large crowd of noises made by the senses. It is an independence, a true independence, aloneness, which is not a physical, but the psychological, or rather, the spiritual aloneness where we stand above even the limitations imposed upon us by the dimension of space and the movement of time.

The meditation on the heart is, therefore, the concentration of consciousness on itself, because it is the deepest cave.

Pure *chaitanya*, or consciousness, is the true subject behind every person and everything, and even the so-called material objectivity gets reduced into this pure consciousness when it is investigated into, to its core.

Thus goes man with his body, and thus goes the whole universe with its contents. Something remains, which is the heart, the true 'I', the creator, the sustainer, and the transformer of all things, the God of religions.

This is the Absolute. It is the Absolute because it is not relative. It cannot be compared to something else. Anything that is capable of being described or characterised is not absolute. This is the reason why sometimes people say God is *nirguna*; the Absolute is without characteristics, without qualities.

What does humankind carry?

He carries nothing substantial, nothing of this world. No man, nothing, carries anything other than himself or itself. I carry myself, you carry yourself, everything carries itself, and nobody can carry anything other than one's own self.

So I am my property, you are your property, and everything is its own property.

Nobody can have anything else other than what one is, because the largest, the greatest, and the most valuable property is Pure Being itself.

This is why there is a struggle for existence, finally, and every struggle is a struggle for existence. Every effort, every adventure, every project, every activity, everything that anyone does in any manner is a struggle to exist somehow, finally.

Existence is the supreme value, and minus consciousness, existence is not.

Therefore, consciousness, existence, is the supreme value.

That is the heart of things.

Here is the freedom of the individual, the freedom of all beings; and freedom is bliss. Thus, existence and consciousness and freedom go together, and if freedom is bliss, ***sat-chit-ananda***, **Existence-Knowledge-Bliss** is the heart of things.

On this may we meditate.

He recommended meditation on the Symbol of OM.