

Swami Omkarananda

NEW ASCETICISM FOR DAILY LIFE



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The Timeless Treasures

An Interpretation of the New Testament Asceticism for Our Times:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where it grows rusty and moth-eaten, and thieves break in to steal it. Store up treasures in heaven, where there is no moth and no rust to spoil it, no thieves to break in and steal."

Matth. 6:19-20

A tree which seeks to gather restlessly leaves from the other trees, and struggles hard to acquire fruits externally, is laying up treasures upon earth, and will soon wither up. But a tree which seeks to turn its gaze into the Kingdom of Life within itself, and draws its sustenance from the earth, the air and the space, is laying up treasures in Heaven. It grows; it endures. It is being enriched, and it will yield year after year, thousands of fruits and flowers, and be a blessing to itself and to others. It is a treasure in itself, and is a treasure to others. It is a heaven unto itself, it is a heaven to others.

From within, we grow. In the scheme of daily life, action and pursuits, put the Kingdom of Heaven always first. Let God come first, and then the outer life will be full of devotion, faith, goodness, sweetness, intelligence, and all the higher capacities and talents will unfold themselves, and grant you an inner oneness with the inexhaustible treasures of the infinite Consciousness, the divine Presence within.

Do not give the boy plenty of money. It will all be over soon. It is laying up treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt. Instead use the money in educating the boy, and he will learn to earn his own money, in all circumstances and conditions. In this context, this is laying up treasures in Heaven. Having perennial resources in trained intelligence and skills for earning money, is not adequate to make one secure, happy and perfect. Therefore, the education of the inner soul, consciousness, will, is necessary. The development of the higher qualities of the latent divine nature in us, is laying up treasures in Heaven. Moral and spiritual enrichment and growth is essential, and should receive first importance in daily life.

Though we work to maintain the body which is a certain victim of death, and is slowly aging and decaying, we can make this work itself a field in which the qualities of the inner Self can find expression, - and these are the treasures of Heaven which are imperishable.

The divine qualities find expression in the treasures of time and the world and the earth.

"Where your treasures be, there
will your heart be also."

Matth. 6:20

A miser has his heart on money. For, money is his treasure. A person dominated by love of physical pleasures has his heart upon objects of the sense and bodily pleasures. Wealth, body and such other material things are subject to corruption, decay, destruction, and can be stolen also by thieves, whereas the treasures laid up in Heaven, - that is, the divine qualities of nature developed, the excellences of the heaven of divine Consciousness within unfolded, - cannot be robbed by anybody, cannot be corrupted or destroyed. They are the qualities of the immortal image of God in us, and therefore they too are imperishable.

The asceticism implied in this passage lies in the control of our senses, our misleading inclinations, our unhelpful and negative desires.

As the growth in goodness is not easy for the beginners, as the progress on the path of spiritual evolution is a difficult affair, merely to be good and keep progressing on the path is an adequate asceticism.

The development and enrichment of the soul, of the inner Consciousness, is emphasized in this passage of the New Testament.

"He who loves father and mother
more than Me is not worthy of
Me, and he who loves son or
daughter more than Me is not
worthy of Me"

Matth. 10:37

This passage does not imply that asceticism consists in giving up one's parents, or in not loving them sufficiently. It only means that one becomes unworthy of Jesus, the embodiment of Love and Light, when one misses His Presence in the inner heart of the father and of the mother, and loves them for their own sake instead of the Presence of divine Love and Light of the Christ in them. We have to love father and mother immensely, truly, sincerely, in all circumstances. But, we should take care that we love in them that which is imperishable, unchanging, eternal, heavenly, and

that is the Image of God in them, the Light of Christ in them.

A person who loves his mother and father more than this Light of Christ in them, is unworthy of Jesus Christ. The first place in love has always to be given to that which is divine, imperishable, unfailing in Grace, and that is Jesus Christ in the father and mother, in oneself, in all, in everything. We prosper when we put Christ above all things and all persons; only then, we love father, mother and all persons truly, immensely, in an everlasting way. It is then that our love for father and mother becomes true, endures and is blessed.

Trials will always be there in life. Many rich people have lost their wealth. Many happy people have been forced by factors beyond their control into unhappy circumstances. Sorrows and tragedies in the lives of the many have come even from their own daughters and sons or wives. Fortune constantly changes hands with misfortune. Good and bad, pleasures and pain, succeed one another endlessly. Life is always condemned to imperfection, and we cannot conquer life with something which is implied in this imperfection. We can conquer life only by touching that which, while indwelling life, is above life, and apart from life, that which is infinite, - God. Experience in yourself that which transcends your thoughts, that which is not involved in your life, that which is untouched by your activity, - the divine all-observing Consciousness in you. With that experience, all trials, limitations and imperfections of life come to an end. How do you see the stain on your hand? With the eye. What enables the eye to see? The operation of the intelligence behind. Who observes the intelligence in operation? Something deep in you, - the observing Consciousness! That Consciousness transcends your bodily experiences, and your mental, emotional, social, sensuous operations. By knowing it, by experiencing it, by being it, by expressing its Strength, its Peace, its Light, its qualities, you conquer life's circumstances, trials, difficulties, problems, limitations. That all-transcending Consciousness in you which observes your intelligence in operation, is the Kingdom of Heaven, and therefore is forever all-perfect and unconditioned in its Beauty, Love, Light, Peace, Perfection. Inner intuitive and direct experience shows that it is infinite Happiness and Blessedness.

That Consciousness divine which observes the workings of your intelligence, is the same Consciousness that is in the others. Though your mental activities, your bodily experiences, your personal traits, appearance, actions, are different from those of others, yet the all-transcending divine Consciousness in you and in the others is one and the same. The observing Consciousness in you is the same as the observing Consciousness in the others, in the birds, in the beasts, in all creatures, great and small; therefore, you are one with them all, in your inner observing Consciousness, in your inner Kingdom of Heaven.

Everything that is done in order to gain an increasing and many-sided experience of this Kingdom of Heaven within, this Father in Heaven, this Image of God in you, is asceticism. Everything that is contrary to inner spiritual progress on the path of Truth, Love, Peace, Joy, Perfection, is set aside, and all that furthers on this path is resorted to. Such a life is the noblest life of inexhaustible inner wealth.



The Real Meaning of the Term 'Renunciation'

Renunciation does not mean giving up something, but being detached in mind from that thing. True renunciation is getting ready to receive the Kingdom, the Infinite, into one's daily life. When a person wishes to enjoy a fine dinner, he naturally gives up, for the time being, not only many little things he is attending to, but also his important works. Even so, when one wants to listen to the infinite Stillness, Silence, Peace of God, or taste His boundless Love, one naturally gives up, for the time being, the awareness of worldly things. But once a contact is established with the infinite Kingdom of the divine Consciousness, one pours the treasures of that Kingdom into the life in this world, or receives back the world with unflinching joy, boundless love, and with the eyes and the heart of the infinite Light and Being.

Renunciation is a corollary of spiritual maturity and a necessity and act of ripened wisdom. It is an obligation imposed upon man, for a person who is striving to live his life from the standpoint, from the nature of the Infinite which transcends all the opulence of individual excellence and cosmic richness.

A rejection of all that hinders the true flowering of life into its full stature, dignity, value, significance, is unavoidable. The life of such wise and noble renunciation is indispensable, as the most effective condition for breaking one's way through the barriers of separative existence, divided experiences, finitising tendencies and relative values built by the individual.

The life of real renunciation is principally a life in which thought is not extinguished but freed from every distraction incidental to disorderly worldly living. Here, thought is given an upward turn and rendered into the power of a highly vigilant discrimination and an all-embracing divine knowledge.

The ascetic life does not abolish feeling but lifts it above the compulsions of instinct and desire. Here, feeling is absorbed into the culture of devotion, the delights of the rich inner spiritual life, - and is made a fixed light of conative awareness of the Infinite.

Action is not abandoned, but its energies are drawn up and diverted to sustain the intensities of a life dedicated to the pursuit of its destiny beyond the bourne of time-eternity! The world is perceived in the context of the Absolute which shrinks the very vastness of the interstellar spaces into a petty canvas.

The ascetic, as we know him, does not shy away from the pleasures, the realities and the values of a splendid social world, but is sloughing off the limitations which restrict the freedom of Consciousness. He has sought his liberation from the subjection to an endless inconsequential swing between a tear and a smile, attraction and repulsion, content and discontent. Like a scientist engrossed in his experiments in the closed laboratory, he is engrossed in approaching the truths and the values of the Infinity of Bliss which is inalienable from the Infinity of Being and Knowledge.

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