

# The Art of Living

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“The Art of Living” means to live in this Drama of Life in the best possible way. That’s all “The Art of Living” is, how to do that; how to live in this Drama of Life in the best possible way.

Now we have discussed from time to time the art of concentration – the high art of concentration. And that which the Master gives is superior, because it goes to the cause of things. It goes to the instrument necessary to give us the highest concentration, and that is Life Force, as you will remember. So, in dealing with this subject this morning, we have to go to the fundamentals of the question. Not according to ordinary conceptions, but what is, what is life for? Why are we here, what is the purpose? So we must know first the purpose of life. And the purpose of life is that all of us return home to God from whence we have come.

Now, that’s the purpose of our being here. That’s the chief reason. That’s why Ramakrishna said – the great Indian saint – “All will return home to God.” So you haven’t anything to worry; you’re gonna get there. The only problem is, in what length of time? So, if we know “The Art of Living,” you’re apt to get there sooner, and I’m sure that’s what we want. So the thing is to understand the purpose of life, the main thing is that we are here for the sole purpose of once more returning to our home in Cosmic Consciousness.

Now, the second point in the purpose of life is that we have a definite part to play. We have a part to play in this Drama of Life which is God’s Dream. And we have to play that, whether we want to or not. We *have* to play it! We must play it correctly! And “The Art of Living” is to find out what that part is and how to play it correctly, because even the smallest part in a play, if played incorrectly, will sometimes ruin the whole play, will it not? And so, our part, even though it seems insignificant, must be played properly in order that the whole Play of God’s be understood. We must play it. We must *enjoy* this part which we have. God wanted us to enjoy it. He wants us to enjoy it, but He does not want us to forget our Immortal Nature. That’s the thing.

So there you have the purpose of life. As I have said, to go home to God from whence we have come; and secondly, while we are here, we have to do our part in His Great Drama of Life – enjoying it, not being engulfed in it, not being

attached to it – but never forgetting our Immortal Nature as a part of His One Great Consciousness. So, I think if we understand clearly the purpose of life, then we can approach the problem in a sensible way, understanding these two main things. How many people say, “I don’t know what life’s all about; I don’t know why I’m here.” Well, know God and you’ll know why. “I don’t know where I’m going.” Know God and you’ll know where you’re going.

So, we have to know the purpose of life to understand and deal with the problem this morning in a sensible way. If we do that, if we adhere to God’s Purpose, and especially, that which applies to our part in the Drama of Life, the end can only be happiness and peace and joy. But, if we are side-tracked by Satan, who wants us not to remember our Immortal Nature – not to wait and return to God at the end of the Play – but he says, “Enjoy it right now. Enjoy the fruits of material things. Why wait?” And so, through desire, we begin to enjoy them. Then the trouble begins. There’s no end to it. But, if we follow God’s Purpose, we must know what God had in mind; and that’s what He had in mind that we return home to Him, and while playing the part, we enjoy it, just like a movie – not become attached to it – enjoy it and then return to our Immortal Nature, oneness with Him. We must not forget that one thing, that when you enjoy the Play, and then enjoy it so much that you become attached to it, then you begin to suffer, because you have forgotten that it’s a Play, it’s a Drama. It’s too much of a reality for you in outward consciousness.

Now, going on just a bit; perhaps, a little elaboration of these two points in the purpose of life is this: that in the first purpose of life, the Cosmic Plan must be satisfied. That is, there are two demands of the Cosmic Plan. The first is that we attain that happiness and bliss which comes from Union with God, God-contact. In other words, we go back home to Him, which is simply becoming one with God, isn’t it? There’s no time, or space, or distance, or position, where God is. God is. So that first part of the purpose is to merge in Him, and through God-contact, know your oneness with Him.

So the Cosmic Plan demands that. That you first establish in your heart that Great Love, and Peace, and Joy of His Presence. That’s the first and greatest Commandment, isn’t it? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, thy heart and thy strength.<sup>1</sup> That means nothing else but being one with Him. So

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 22:37, “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

that's the first thing we have to do. That's the first Cosmic, the first demand of the Cosmic Plan.

The second is that we not only are satisfied by creating in our hearts that Joy and Bliss, but we have to, we have to establish it, or make others feel that same thing which we feel. The Cosmic Plan demine, demands that, that you plant Happiness, and Joy, and Peace also in your brother's heart. That's the Second Commandment. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,<sup>2</sup> is simply the same thing when you realize that neighbor, as the same as you are – a part of the Great One God. Then you can plant in his heart encouragement, and peace, and joy as he too travels homeward, playing his part in God's Drama of Life.

And so, remember, the Cosmic Plan. And you can't escape, nor I can't escape – we might as well face it – as those two demands, that we first establish in ourselves, that oneness with God, that oneness with His Peace, and Joy, and Happiness; and secondly, that we also plant that same in the hearts of our brothers and sisters – that same Joy and Peace – inspire them so that as they travel homeward to God playing their part, they will feel that Great Peace and Joy of His Presence.

And so, that's why Jesus said these two Commandments are the ones, the First and the Second. Thou shalt love God first, with all your strength and power and soul. You must know Him to do that. Secondly, you must instill that same desire in the hearts of your brothers and sisters, your neighbors – and your neighbors are those with whom you come in contact. And when you know they are from the One Father, the One Common Father, then, you will know them really as neighbors, rays of the One Eternal Light of God.

Now, going on just a little bit – still about the first part of the purpose of life that we must know God through God-contact – if you're gonna live rightly, that's the first thing to know in "The Art of Living." Get hold of God. Know Him. Contact Him. So, what must me, what must we do? We must take God with us in every action. Everything we do we must feel Him. How can you do it unless you know Him? You cannot. But, if you know Him through God-contact, then you can be guided right. Then life will be all right for you. You will carry through life with a proper Spirit; a proper technique; a proper art. Why – because is there any better guidance than the Guidance of God Himself?

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 22:29, "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

So, you can see, the first thing we must do in carrying out the Cosmic Plan, in carrying out what God wants done, is to know Him through God-contact. How is that done? By proper meditation, right meditation. Right meditation is absolutely necessary. Meditation that does not give you theory, but takes you right to God, takes you to the Presence of God in you as the Holy Vibration. That's right meditation, and Self-Realization techniques will do that. The Om technique of Self-Realization Fellowship, the highest technique of meditation, will take you and give you contact with the Presence of God within you as the Great Word of God, the Holy Vibration, the Comforter of which Jesus had spoken.<sup>3</sup>

And so, that's why meditation is so necessary, because it enables us to live rightly, to carry out God's Purpose, to know Him first. Then, by His Guidance, we can find our part in the Drama of Life, and carry out successfully. Meditation is the greatest thing. God-contact is the greatest thing. That's why Jesus said, Bread the men of the world seek after, but seek ye the kingdom of God first and His righteousness and all things shall be added unto you.<sup>4</sup> It couldn't be any plainer. How're ya gonna do it? By right meditation; contacting God by the right method. That's why – and that's how.

And in the Bhagavad Gita<sup>5</sup> we read the same thing in the 5<sup>th</sup> Discourse, first three lines. Arjuna asked Lord Krishna – I'll give you the gist of it. Arjuna asked Lord Krishna, "Renunciation of the fruits of action thou praiseth, O Arjuna, but also thou praiseth yoga." Yoga means union. So he says, "Of the two, which one is better? Tell me conclusively."<sup>6</sup> (*Sic*)

And so, Lord Krishna, who was simply King Jadava, a great Hindu King, who had realized Christ Consciousness – that's why he was called "Jadava, the Krishna," Krishna means Christ Consciousness – he answered this way. "Renunciation of the fruits of action and yoga by action, both lead to the highest bliss; of the two, yoga by action is verily better than renunciation of action."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> St. John 14:16-17, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;" "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

<sup>4</sup> Luke 12:30-31, "For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."

<sup>5</sup> The Bhagavad Gita or The Lord's Song, Translated by Dr. Annie Besant, 1939.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 5<sup>th</sup> Discourse 1<sup>st</sup> Line, "Renunciation of actions Thou praisest, O Kṛiṣṇa and then also yoga. Of the two which one is the better? That tell me conclusively."

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 2<sup>nd</sup> Line, "Renunciation and yoga by action both lead to the highest bliss; of the two, yoga by action is verily better than renunciation of action."

*(Sic)* Now, what is yoga of action? Yoga means union. By action means "meditation" doesn't it? Union with God by proper action is the greatest way to attain God-contact. That's the greatest thing you can do. So, to live rightly, to know "The Art of Living," first, get that God-contact by right yoga, which is meditation. Remember, yoga means union, that's all; union with God in you, as the Holy Vibration. So that's why meditation is so important, because it gives us God-contact.

Now, the second part of God's Purpose, let us just say a word or two about The Art of playing our part in the Cosmic Dream. Most people haven't any idea of what they're doing, or what part they're playing. And most people drift along without any purpose in life. "Millions of children are born," the Master says, "without having any direction in life, any purpose at all." They just simply go from one thing to another. As he says, "aimless journeys in life, is the lot of most people." How true that is.

And most people they do not even know what part, the part they are to play. And not only that, they do not know how to harmonize with the Cosmic Plan. They may, perhaps, be good salesmen, and they take that path; they are successful; they may make lots of money; but is that in accordance with their part they should play according to the Cosmic Plan? They don't know that. That's why they are never happy, until they join also, not only with their own happiness, but with the happiness of all, through God's Cosmic Plan.

Now, going on with a few practical suggestions about "The Art of Living" – I think the practical aspect is the greatest thing. Idealism is all right, but we have to balance it, as I will point out. So, let us take first a few practice, practical suggestions. There are only four, so you just bear with me now, and I won't keep you long, and the dinner'll taste just as good after we get through with these practical things. So, a few practical suggestions about "The Art of Living."

First, the Master used to say, "Learn to behave." Learn to behave. Just think; if you learned how to behave with me, and I learned how to behave with you, most of the trouble would vanish. Learn to behave. That is we must take, we must take a wide perspective, not a narrow, little persect, perspective. "This fella did that to me. I'll get him." No. That isn't right. "Father, he's in... You are in him just as I am. He may be sleeping, perhaps, or I may be sleeping – who knows – but we are both Thy children." In that way, we learn to behave with one another. That's the greatest thing. That's one of the greatest things we must know. And that comes how? Through the wisdom of discrimination. And how

does discrimination come? By God-contact. That's why I keep coming back to that one thing: God-contact is the greatest thing. And if we have that, then we know how to behave with people. That's the first practical suggestion.

Now, another one I have is this. That is, we must balance our idealism with practical living. We must balance our idealism with practical living. A little story comes to my mind, just for a moment that will illustrate that point – practicality with idealism.

These two boys were driving their car, and they came down over a hill. At the bottom of the hill it stopped. And beside the street was a fence enclosing a place known as a place where they put people who are, in plain words, crazy. So that car stopped there – they were fixing it. They lifted the hood up and tried to fix it. They did this, and they did that – they couldn't get it going – and one of the inmates came close to the fence, and they said, "You know anything about this?" "Well," he said, "You do this and you do that." They did it; suddenly the car started. So one fellow went over and he said, "Well, now," he said, "how did you, how did that happen, you being in here for the reason you are?" "Well," he says, "I may be crazy, but I'm not stupid."

We must balance our idealism with practicality. In other words, we must use business, money-making methods in business, as the Master used to say, use money-making busi, methods in business – but not at the sacrifice of your idealism. I think that's a wonderful axiom. Use money-making methods in business, but do not sacrifice your principles. Now you can do that. And if you cling to God, He'll show you how to do it in the face of adversity and all sorts of things. Balance your activity; balance your idealism, with practical living. That's the first thing.

And another thing is this. If the idea, idealism is too prominent, then the practicality will be lost. And what's the result? You're not leading a balanced life at all. You're not leading a balanced life, if you shift your responsibility. So, remember those two things in this second practical suggestion. Balance your idealism. Know that God is the Sole Doer of all things, and as all people are your brothers and sisters, but when they walk on you, and jump on you, don't permit it. That's not practicality, you must balance that. But that does not mean, when a man is down, that you jump on him, and make it worse for him. We must balance our idealism with our practicality.

And I think, at this point, we might point out Lahiri Mahasaya's life, which is the greatest example of balancing idealism with practical living. If we do not do that, then we show weakness, do we not? Many come to me, or quite a few come to me, and they have been married, and, of course, the problems come. So, they wanna run right away. I say, "Come right back; come back; face the problem. God will work it out for you." And those who have done that have found that they can balance their idealism with practical living, even in married life. So that's a great thing.

Now going on...Oh, I was gonna tell you about Lahiri Mahasaya's admonitions...What did he say? He admonished us that every man, every man, should be self-supporting; that he should work and be independent; carrying on his duties in life, be they marital life, or what sort of a life. They should be independent. They should work and have independence, attain independence, and then in the privacy of your own room or home, practice meditation. Practice Kriya Yoga. He said to his way of thinking, that that's true Self-Realization, and that's the real art of living – to be independent. Not dependent on others. God will give you that independence, but if you think you can't do it, you will stay thinking you can't do it. But if you realize that God is your Father and you are a child of His as all others are, then He will give you that independence. So remember that practical suggestion of being practical, as well as clinging to your ideals.

Now we have one other point, two other points, and then I'm through. And this is very important, that's why I have to take it up. We must follow our innate heart's desire. In the heart of each one of us is something planted there by God, which, until it is consummated, we will not attain peace and happiness. It is necessary to follow the innate heart's desire.

Now most people, most people, find this innate heart's desire between the ages of 3 and 12 years of age. There are certain "Samskaras"<sup>8</sup> which are brought over and which we, affect us in this life. Those are "latent tendencies" – Samskaras. Now they come up, and in early life we will pick out the right one, the one founded on God-contact, and it will affect us. And if you will look back in your life you will see there, that there are certain innate desires that were born in your

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<sup>8</sup> Excerpt from a talk given by RadhaKrishna Dasaji of the Golden Age Foundation at the Oneness Festival, 16-22 of February 2004. "Samskaras are the fundamental impressions left on the heart of an individual, which are acquired in the present and the previous lives through various experiences. These samskaras prove to be the coded form of the entire life of an individual and therefore the success or failure of a person fully depends on the kind of Samskaras in him."

heart, so to speak, lifted up into outward consciousness, and until you follow your natural bent, you will not be living life as it should be lived, you will not have peace and happiness. Now that's an important thing.

I remember, just to take a personal case, when I was somewhere between that age – forgotten now – that in my father's house, a voice came, and spoke to me. I was doing things I shouldn't – spoke to me out of the Ether. I never forgot it. That started, that started my search toward that innate heart's desire. That made me realize that there was something more than outward living, there was a Presence of God all around me. And so, I have always held that, even through my life – professional life – I have held that. Until now, through the Grace of God and the Master's efforts, I have consummated it, and am doing the work I am. Now that's, that's that. That innate heart's desire must be consummated, if you are to have peace and happiness. And, if you watch and look within, underneath, the under, the undercurrent is running there, beneath the superficial desires in your heart, you will find that "something" that keeps at you, and it will keep at you until you consummate it.

There was one salesman – he was a wonderful salesman – he could sell anything. But he traveled here and there, here and there. Made lots of money, but he wasn't satisfied, because in his heart was that innate desire to have a little farm where he could have some chickens, and cows, a little place to plant some things, and above all, to sit and think of God, and be calm. And although he was very successful, he did not become truly successful until he did that one thing; until that innate heart's desire was consummated.

Now, you will find that, every one of you, you wouldn't be here unless that innate heart's desire was poking you. Get busy! Get busy, get that God-contact. And until that is done, you will not be happy – you will not be free.

That brings us to the final practical suggestion about "The Art of Living," which I can give, and which is perhaps the greatest. It is this. Realize, realize that you have to play a part in the Drama of Life, whether you want to or not. That's the thing. We *have* to play it. Whether we desire it or not, we must play that part. And God wants us to play that part in the best possible way, as I pointed out in the beginning. Because any part, no matter how small, if not played correctly, affects the whole of His Plan. So we must play that part. That's the first thing to remember – the part that God has given us, and why we are here – that must be played.

Therefore, secondly, we must analyze our self, analyze ourselves. And through God-contact we can do that. Through God-contact we can analyze ourselves and find out what that part is – what that part is – and then play it. Play it to the best of your ability. Play it, realizing, realizing that you are not playing that part for a selfish reason. That it is not to satisfy your little self. Play it. Play it to the best of your ability. But play it this way, realizing, realizing that you, you are God's actor in this Great Drama of Life. You are playing God's, as God's actor. And, as such, there is no joy that will equal that which will come to you when playing the part that way, you help others to play their part, just as you are playing yours, as we all creep back, step-by-step, to our home with God.

Now, "will" is the key. The key is will. We can do it, if we join ourselves to God's Will. His Will is Omnipotent. If we join ourselves to God's Will, then, we not only can find out what our part is, we can know what we have to play, but we can play it – play it, play it right. And playing it with the help of God, how can we fail? That is the key. God-contact to "The Art of Living."