

## **Freedom from the Self**

(Original)

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Life is a living prayer to God and God is the pinnacle of peace. Lord Krishna is my God, my friend, philosopher and guide. Let me begin this essay with a thought-provoking episode of his childhood. One day Lord Krishna was playing with his brother Balarama and other friends. As a playful toddler, Krishna was busy feasting on mud. Balarama and other friends caught him red-handed and complained about this to his mother Yashoda. Mother Yashoda rushed to the scene and questioned him if he was snacking on mud. He naively replied that he never consumed mud. He further added that Balarama and other friends were lying to her, and requested his mother to check his mouth by herself. Captivated by his naivety, mother Yashoda asked him to open his mouth. The little one took his mother's breath away as he opened his mouth and his mother was enthralled to see the entire universe in his little mouth.

Why could only mother Yashoda see the entire universe in the mouth of a little child, and why not the rest of us? Were her eyes special? Indeed, mother Yashoda's eyes were special because her eyes had triumphed over ego and the 'I'. She had gained mastery over the art of appreciation which is a fundamental prerequisite for a peaceful world. She could see the entire universe in the mouth of a little child and appreciate its magnificence because she had sacrificed her ego – the false ego that prevents us from appreciating the universal magnificence which is omnipresent and omnipotent to the extent that it manifests itself even in a little child and a tiny chunk of mud.

A peaceful world is the abode of appreciation and blessings where dwellers not only appreciate but also seek blessings from everyone and everything that's usually taken for granted – such as the service offered by our unsung heroes, the charisma of a little flower, and even the perseverance of an ant in carrying a single piece of grain to its destination. Young people can collaborate with one another in organizing and contributing their best in

activities that allow them to appreciate mother nature such as planting trees, taking care of animals, nursing the sick, and looking after fellow human beings. This approach towards life will enable them to discover the secrets of the universe and let them know how the universe works.

The universe operates through the principle of Bhakti. Bhakti is a Sanskrit term which means devotion. Bhakti is the summit where power and peace complement each other to finally merge with the divine. We can cultivate this precious quality by gaining mastery over the art of appreciation, as appreciation nurtures the quality of gratitude and Bhakti is the zenith of gratitude.

Peace is empowerment through empathy. A peaceful world is a kingdom of empowerment where peace and power complement each other to bring forth the best in everyone. It is the kingdom where there is no discrimination except the discrimination between the right and the wrong. Here people not only strive to empower themselves but also strive to empower others.

To realize a peaceful future together, people should contribute their mite in shaping a world devoid of materialism and superficiality. Success should be measured not by the number of superficial achievements but by the proximity of an individual to the core human values of love, empathy, service, righteousness and forgiveness.

Peace is freedom from the shackles of the past. The fate of a peaceful world rests on the talent of saying sorry. We should learn the art of forgiveness and gain mastery over the skill of saying sorry, because a 'sorry' sets us free from the shackles of the past.

A peaceful world is where people are not blinded by ambition. Here people inhale righteousness, love and empathy as organically as they inhale Oxygen. It is the abode of acceptance where everyone is free to express one's true self. Here no one is afraid to oppose the wrong and there are no filters needed because everyone is freed from the self. Thus, to realize a peaceful future, life must be lived like a living prayer – the prayer to be freed from the self.