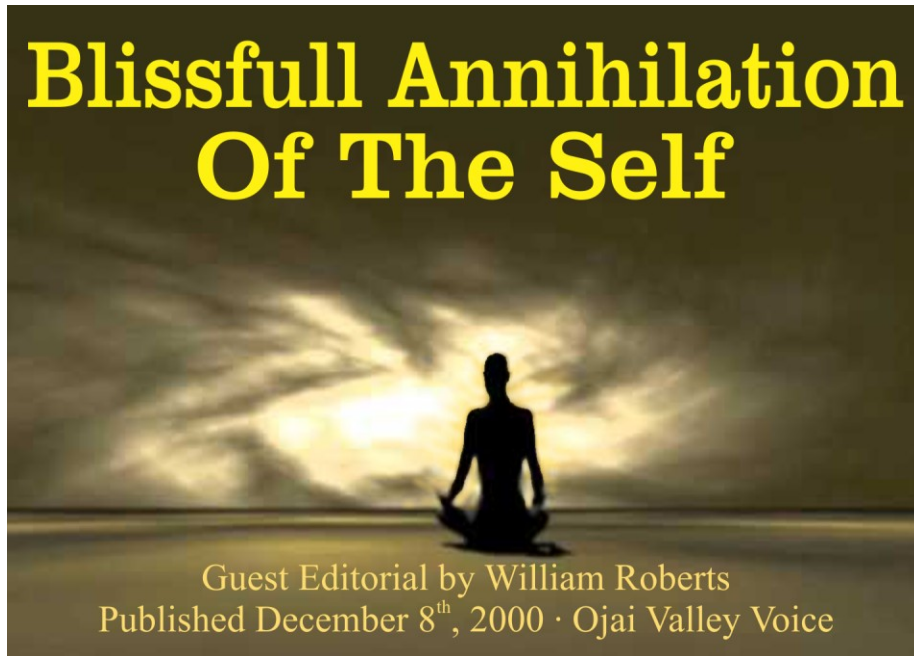


Blissful Annihilation Of The Self



Guest Editorial by William Roberts
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The soul's quest for freedom leads individuals into some of the most bizarre and controversial religions, philosophies, and new age metaphysics but I must admit that nothing comes close to the one which was advocated by John Sherman this weekend here in Ojai. John is a disciple of GungaJi, one of the most prominent people to rise up recently in a response to man's desperate search for purpose and meaning. GungaJi has quickly accumulated a large following by espousing a philosophy quite similar to Krishnamurti of Ojai fame.

The essence of John's message was that our suffering is a result of giving our monkey like mind too much attention. The teaching is profoundly simple. The reason why something disturbs us is because we let it do so. What one must grasp to experience real freedom is that the world is perfect and complete exactly the way it is right now and there is absolutely nothing you need to do about anything!

Neighbor hates you? Lost your job? Kid's on heroin? Wife was raped? Don't worry...be Happy! It's all a big cosmic illusion and you are a fool if you give it any significant meaning or importance! Just remember that it is all the product of a capricious mind that is perpetually working to confirm it's own self-importance in a conditional world. Ignore it and relax!

John implored the audience not to interpret the silent meditation he began each meeting with as an endorsement of some strategy for peace or the attainment of anything. That was consistent with other reoccurring themes in his presentation: *"There is nothing in circumstance or moral rules that can guide you,.. I have no advice to offer,.. 'Why' is a useless question, and in the final analysis everything is insignificant and meaningless anyway including everything I may attempt to say!"*

GangaJi has trained her disciples well in the most ambidextrous display of hypnotic word juggling double talk. Never have I heard so many direct and obvious contradictions greeted with such glassy eyed group think enthusiasm. At one moment we are told that

experience means absolutely nothing, and then later we learn that it was the *experience* that John had as a student of GangaJi that led him to his own non-dual epiphany. After insisting that ultimately nothing has any real significance John said in relation to karma that our actions do affect us. He even acknowledged that the body we are awarded is in some mystical way a result of our own doing but he also admitted that he had no knowledge of the mechanics of how that occurred. For a man who had so many warnings about the machinations of the mind he then proceeded to speculate about the process of reincarnation with numerous sentences that began with “*I Think...*”. In all fairness however he did concede that he had no knowledge about the science of reincarnation but then went right on to insist that it doesn’t make any difference what we do!

John was reticent about commenting on the source of his lineage beyond three generations. This is often the case with those who attempt to speak about the unspeakable goal of this non-goal state of non-consciousness! What many of the groupies who are attracted to this balderdash don’t know is that they are being indoctrinated into a watered down, “*made for the west*” version of the impersonal mayavadi philosophy. It originated in India 1300 years ago by a great pundit known as Sankara and it is traditionally referred to as Vedanta or non-dual Advaita.

There are two great spiritual traditions that spring from India and from them we can trace all the various forms of yoga and metaphysical wisdom that has found its way from that nation to the west. The two traditions are conveniently distinguished by the terms Jnani and Bhakti. The former is based on liberation via rigorous self-inquiry whereas Bhakti is dependent on loving devotion to God. Both of these paths are elaborately described in the ancient sacred text called the Bhagavad Gita, which literally means the “*Song of God*” and is the equivalent of the Bible for over 900 million devoted Hindus.

The origins of GangaJi’s teachings are not new or unique and the process of self-inquiry that she teaches is found in chapter six of the Bhagavad Gita. That is why it appeals to so many people and it explains for her popularity. But unfortunately, as is often the case with many of the representatives who draw from the wisdom of the east, what John Sherman presented last weekend was carefully extrapolated portions of that sacred text.

John insisted that the Jnani and Bhakti lead to the same conclusion. But what he did not point out is that Arjuna, the exalted personality that Krishna chose to speak the Gita to, rejected the Jnani yoga process of controlling the mind because it was “*...more difficult then controlling the wind*” -Bg 6.34 Later Krishna specifically states that for “*...those who are attracted to the impersonal feature of the Supreme advancement is very troublesome.*” -Bg. 12.5. So an intelligent person will conclude that if the great heroic prince Arjuna rejected Jnani yoga what makes anyone else think they can follow it?

One need not hang out long with the GungaJi crowd to see proof of just how difficult it is to attain the Blissful State of Non-Self. The question is why are so many people attracted to this form of spiritual-masochism?

The answer is lodged deeply in our envious nature and it culminates in our envy of God. For those who are too proud to surrender to the personality of Godhead, He has kindly provided the process of Jnani yoga. Consequently, the Jnani is left to struggle on the slippery slope of the mind’s incessant chatter all by himself. The bhakti yogi doesn’t

have such an arduous task. Instead of attempting to perform his own metaphysical lobotomy, he happily engages his mind all day long in the service of God.

Technically speaking, the goal of each system may appear to be the same but to teach like that is deceitfully misleading. The Jnani yogi is like the foolish child that is too proud to ask for help and is left to struggle on his own to control his mind. But for the devotee God has promised: *“To those who are constantly devoted and worship me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.”* -Bg. 10.10

Tagline:

William Roberts is a Computer Systems Analyst who works at the Port Hueneme Navy Base. He spent over three years in India studying Vedic culture and philosophy. He is and ordained Brahmin priest and been sharing his training in the science of Bhakti Yoga for over 25 years. Mr. Roberts can be contacted at (805) 640-0405 and welcomes all questions or comments.

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