

# Dialogues with The Masters

## Sadhvi Bhagwati



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**JANET ATTWOOD:** This is Janet Attwood. Welcome to the Dialogues with the Masters call. This morning we have a wonderful, wonderful guest. Actually, she's going to be our co-host for these series of calls, and I am so honored. She's my dear friend, and she's revered all over India. Her name is Sadhvi Saraswati Bhagwati. You've all been sent a bio of Sadhvi so you know her background; I won't go through it again.

I just want to say, and I told this to Sadhvi, that I was just speaking in March at the International Conference on Yoga. Every night we would sit on the banks of the Ganges River and have a discourse from her master Swami Pujya Swamiji. He would be talking, and afterwards we would all go to the stage. It was actually in a different order, but I won't go through it.

We would sit on the stage and do what's called aarti, a fire ceremony. We would chant and sing these wonderful [bajongs] together. Every night that we were together, there were many, many saints. They would come and address the group that was there and be special guests. They had these long Indian names. I remember one night when we probably had about 16 of them; Sadhvi gets up and every night she introduces everyone.

She starts out, "This is Swami [indiscernible] from Brindavan," and then the next one and the next one with no notes. She went through it all with so much grace, never missing a beat and never, ever having to stop to think, "What is this person's name?" There was always this really sharp focus and clarity with absolutely everything she did. She's actually in charge at Parmarth Niketan Ashram of all the things going on there.

Here is the thing that always so impressed me about Sadhvi; she never looked like she needed any sleep, and yet she got up at 3:00 every morning to start her morning program. When she went to bed, she was always one of the last people in the offices at night. Whenever anyone would come in needing something from her, she always had a smile and love and kindness.

I just can't say enough about Sadhvi. I'm just so happy to introduce you to her. Sadhvi, I apologize. Do you want to tell everyone a little bit about Parmarth Niketan before we begin and your wonderful master? I'd love you to share that with them. They know nothing of your master.

**SADHVI BHAGWATI:** First of all, it's wonderful to be here, and good morning to all of you. Thank you, Janet, for your effusive introduction. It truly is Swamiji's grace. You've asked me to begin by speaking about him and yet it's so difficult because the words that we use to describe someone cannot actually begin to give someone a feeling of what it is like to be in his presence.

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Introducing him while he's sitting there somehow seems okay because everyone has the ability to look at him, to see him. They'll be listening to him speak in a few minutes. Yet, introducing him when he's not there to people who are not going to be listening to him speak in a little while feels like a horribly daunting task. He is one of India's most revered spiritual masters.

At the age of eight, he left his home. He was called to a spiritual path from the time he was a very, very young child, even before eight. He was always the one in the family making everybody stay peaceful, sitting in the midst of it all and never getting hyper, never getting upset. Talking to members of his family, they said it never seemed like he was a child. His nature was such that they knew it from the beginning.

In fact, the Hindu word for saint is [sant] and 'ji' is used as a kind of reverence to put on the end of people's names. For example, we'll say swamiji instead of swami, the 'ji' being a term of [sant]. In his home as a very young child, they used to call him [santiji]. Even when he was three, four and five years old they would say, "Where is [santiji]" and "Call [santiji] the way they talk about children. He knew, and everyone knew that he was not an ordinary child.

He left his home at eight, spending the next nine years living in the forest and jungle doing very intense [indiscernible] with spiritual exercises, meditation, silence, fasting, and all of that living up in the Himalayan Mountains. Today, he's truly revered all over the world as a spiritual leader to individual devotees and yet, he's also the one who is called by organizations like the United Nations, like the Parliament of World Religions, like the World Economic Forum and all of these huge international organizations whenever they need a representative of Hinduism or from India.

He's always the one called. In fact, he's just leaving for Japan in August for a summit there because his vision and his ability to transmit that vision to other people are so universal. Even though he may have been born in India into the Hindu tradition, his message is universal. It doesn't matter at all what culture you're from, what religion you are. All of these organizations know that to really help them teach in the world a method is required, whether it's in the General Assembly of the United Nations or at the Waldorf Astoria at the World Economic Forum or wherever it is.

But his message is going to be something that is important, understood and applicable to everybody. That's who Swamiji is, truly an amazing guru, guide, teacher, master, and all of that. When you meet him, you'd have no idea that he is somebody who has spoken from the state at the General Assembly Hall in the United Nations. He seems like the

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most humble, the most simple, the most down-to-earth child of God you've ever met. There is no arrogance. There are not airs.

There is no [indiscernible] Everybody from young children to old people, Indians and non-Indians, rich and poor, are so comfortable in his presence that people frequently will leave from his room and say things to me like, "Oh, my God! I can't believe I just told Swamiji that!" Everybody opens up to him instinctively. It's really been a great blessing for me to have been brought into his presence and to be allowed through the universal plan to be able to say that.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** I wanted to have you just say a little about that because I wanted to share with everyone who is on the call this morning about your master. She travels all over the world with him and is as much in the forefront. Truly, Sadhvi, I've been with you and seen the range of work that you do and the skill with which you do it. When I was there last time, I was sitting in the room and they were calling the president of India because he had a meeting in the next few days with the president of India.

It's the fact that you are this right hand who seems to be the glue that holds everything together. So much is going on because he is a world master, and that is truly amazing. Some of the questions that we have this morning are wonderful. I wanted to start with the first one, which is: You were a student at Stanford with so many possibilities. Why did you choose to leave it all and move into a life of service to humanity in India?

**SADHVI BHAGWATI:** The question implies that there was some level of rational decision-making, which is not really what happened. It was a decision that was actually made in two phases. The first was a decision made by my heart. I don't feel like I made the decision, to be honest. I feel that God made the decision, that I didn't have a choice. When I came to India when I was traveling, I was in the middle of my PhD program.

When I came there the experience was so overwhelming [indiscernible] that instantaneously I knew that this was where I needed to stay. It was an epiphany moment like none I had ever heard about or read about or, certainly, ever experienced in my life. I was 25. For 25 years of my life everybody I knew, every goal I had, everything I had learned, and all my family, friends, and possessions were in one hand, and moving here was in the other hand.

The balance was overwhelmingly weighed to staying here. It was literally, as I mentioned, as though nothing else mattered. People talk about the difficulties of renunciation, nonattachment, and having to go through so much difficulty really in breaking those ties. For me it was as though God knew that he wanted me to stay here

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and came through and just broke anything within me that would have been a hindrance to me staying here.

Whatever attachment it was, whatever goal it was, whatever desire it was, it just was instantaneously as though a vacuum cleaner had come through me and had just scooped out anything that was not conducive to living this life. Immediately, my heart knew. Literally, it was within the first 10 minutes of being here. The question then for me had to do with how, where, and why. When I met Swamiji, which was about a week later, it all fell into place.

I was raised in the Jewish tradition, and the Jewish tradition teaches that God is nameless, God is formless, God cannot be known, God cannot be seen. One of the greatest sins of the Jewish tradition is to worship God in form, to see God in form, to put a form on God. It was the sort of sin that I had never questioned. One rarely questions that which one is raised with unless we need to for some reason. As soon as I met him, I walked into the room and it was palpable.

I knew beyond any doubt whatsoever. I mean, I was a scientist. I was a Stanford pediatric nurse, student nurse, psychology student, so I wasn't a mystic. I wasn't somebody who had visions. I wasn't prone to these sorts of experiences or even thoughts on this level. If you would have asked me, I would have said, "I'm not a religious person. I'm a scientist." And yet, I walked into the room and I knew. I absolutely knew, and it was truer than anything else I knew in the world, that I was sitting in the presence of God.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** That's beautiful. Thank you, Sadhvi.

**SADHVI BHAGWATI:** Somehow that turned my whole world upside down to realize that if they're wrong about something as important as God, and I don't mean wrong in an objective sense. I mean wrong in terms of my experience. If I'd been taught something for 25 years that now has been completely undermined by an actual experience I'm having, experiences belying what I've taught, then maybe so much else of what I've been taught also doesn't pertain to my life.

Maybe so much else is also going to be belied by experiences I'm going to have. Suddenly, the whole world just turned upside down and there was absolutely nothing that I could truly rely on except the experience of that moment, which was "I'm sitting in the presence of God." Once you have seen the truth, it's very difficult to go back unless you're the type of person whom I'm not, who could just live with falsehood all the time.

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I was never like that, even as a very, very young person. Once I had seen that, there was really no alternative for me. I could not deny that I had seen that. And yet, once I had seen it, there was no way for me not to embrace it. Then, in terms of deciding to live here, my heart had decided. My heart knew that I wasn't going anywhere. Ultimately, Janet, what we're looking for in life on some level is peace.

Everybody is looking for peace. Everybody is looking for happiness. Everybody is looking for some meaning in their life, some grace so that at the end of the day they know that it was worth getting out of bed in the morning. And everybody's looking for a deep connection, something that transcends the normal relationship. Whether you call it with self, whether you call it with God, whether you call it a higher power, it doesn't matter.

We're all looking for that, and those things were handed to me. I was more peaceful, more happy, more deeply connected than I had ever dreamed possible. Then I found out, also, about all of the amazing projects that Swamiji is involved in, in terms of really saving the world and making such an amazing impact on children, ladies, sick people, disaster victims, and everything like that.

I was doing my PhD to help children; that was the whole point. It was pediatric psychology. Any yet, I didn't feel that I was really benefiting anybody. And here I was given an opportunity to be part of something that really made a difference. My heart made the decision first, but my brain became convinced really soon thereafter.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** That brings us to this next question, which is a great one for a follow-up. At this stage of my life, I yearn to live a monastic life, yet I am married and still have a child to raise. How do I manage my dilemma—what is calling me and my practical responsibilities?

**SADHVI BHAGWATI:** Good question. Prior to coming to India, and still now, I practice Iyengar yoga. This is the yoga that I was taught and that I studied in San Francisco before I came. There is a story that is told about Mr. Iyengar, which I just love and which I'll share with you. People who practice Iyengar yoga, people who practice any form of [indiscernible] yoga seriously, tend to practice—or they're suggested to practice—at least 45 minutes to one-and-a-half hours a day.

The story is told of a woman in a question-and-answer session asking B.K.S. Iyengar, "I've just given birth to a child a few months ago, and my practice is really suffering because I am too tired. Every time I start to practice, the child is crying, the child needs something. How do I maintain my yoga practice and also be a mother at the same time?" He looked at her and said, "Right now, being a mother is your yoga practice."

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I love that story because those of us Western people on a spiritual path tend to really box things up. We tend to have a box that says ‘these are my duties.’ Then there is a box that says, ‘this is my spiritual practice.’ What the Eastern tradition really does is it breaks those boxes. It says, “Doing your duty is your practice.” Being the best mother, being the best wife, being the best friend, being the best at whatever your career is—whether a doctor, engineer, psychologist, writer—being the best at that is your practice.

Doing that to the utmost of your ability, that’s the spiritual path. So I think one of the important things is to break through these boxes of personal responsibility versus our spiritual path. Tons of people yearn to live a monastic life, but it really depends on a personal level of where they are. No guru worth anything is going to give somebody permission to leave a family of dependents behind and take a spiritual, monastic path.

They all would say to leave those who are dependent upon you is such a great sin that you’re never going to get anywhere on your spiritual path. First, fulfill your duties to the family, to your career or whatever it is, and then, if you’re still pulled to leave that, no problem. The goal is within that life. So frequently we hear people talk about “just another five years, just another ten years, just another two years, and then I can devote myself to my spiritual practice.”

It’s such a mistake that people make because we never know how much time we have left. This keeps coming up, and every two years it becomes another two years. The goal is to take what you’re doing, whatever your responsibility is, and find the spirituality within that. How can I be a spiritual teacher rather than just a school teacher? Or, how can I be a spiritual engineer? How can I be a spiritual doctor or a spiritual psychologist or a spiritual writer or even a spiritual gas-station attendant?

Who cares? It doesn’t matter what you do or what your duty is. The goal is to find God and to find your practice. It’s in every minute of what you’re doing, whether it’s driving the car on the freeway or sitting in meditation. One of the things that Swamiji always talks about—and, in fact, he says it in a very lighthearted way but he frequently scolds people for this—is they’ll be sitting in their temple in the morning, doing the prayers, doing the meditation.

Simultaneously, they will be yelling at the housekeeper, the children, the husband, or whoever it is for a variety of things: take this sweater, pack the lunchbox, clean this up, be quiet, I’m meditating or whatever. He says there is no point to that. That’s not the way to live. That’s not what a spiritual practice is. You’re not getting the benefit of that practice. Better that you’re making lunch for your child, better that you’re cleaning

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something up yourself, better that you're sitting in traffic on the freeway, and doing it in a spiritual way.

That's really the goal. That's why the Indians worship the lotus flower. That is why the lotus is their most sacred flower, because it grows in mud. They say that the goal is not to turn the mud to water; the goal is to be the lotus, to be this divine flower that grows up out of the mud.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** That is great. I love that. I love that story of Iyengar also. Thank you. The next question, Sadhvi, is how do you get past—and this is perfect as it's going in wonderful synchronicity this morning—the 'I want' stage in life and into the 'I can give' stage?

**SADHVI BHAGWATI:** Good point. Our desires and wants are truly our greatest obstacles. The sad part, Janet, is that they are never fulfilled. People think, and you hear it all the time, "Just when I get this, just when this happens, just after this, then I'll be peaceful, then I'll be calm, then I'll be spiritual, then whatever." And it never happens because there is never an end to it.

There is nobody I know who can say, "Okay. Yes, I now have enough. I'm done. I'm totally satisfied. Everything is perfect. I want nothing." That's the nature of desire; it keeps going and keeps going and keeps going. The goal is, as you say, how to get beyond it. What I have seen from my personal experience is that no matter how much one vows, pledges, promises, or tries to stop wanting things, you can't do it.

Desire is not something that is so conscious that our conscious mind can override it. The only way that I have found to do it is to become aware of the uselessness of attaining these things, to become aware of the fact that no matter how much we get, no matter how much we achieve, we're no closer to peace, meaning, and happiness. We're no closer to what we want.

Yet people continue to feel like, "If I just get this," or "If I just buy this," or "If I just look like this, own that, go here, marry this person, fit into these clothes, or whatever, then I'll be happy." The only way, I think, to move beyond that is to truly sit and introspect and think. Make a list of all the last 10 big things that you wanted, the last 10 big desires that have been fulfilled.

Then ask yourself, after it was fulfilled—but not immediately after because there is always that temporary high that comes with getting something—maybe 24 hours later, a week later, a month later, "Am I actually any closer to being who I want to be than I was a month before I got it? Am I actually any farther along at all?" What we'll find is 'no.' It

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is only through that awareness, which comes through time, through practice, and through forcing ourselves to be aware of the fact that I had this desire for a new pair of shoes, or I had this desire for a new coat, or I had this desire to look more beautiful and so I had plastic surgery, or I had this desire to go on this vacation.

Now I've done it. Now it's a month later. Now it's two months later. Am I a different person? Am I more peaceful? Am I more deeply happy? When we realize that the answer is no over and over and over again, by themselves the desires drop off because we realize we're not getting anything. You realize, again, that the same thing is going to happen. Then the desire to serve comes, the desire to give comes because when you give, and we've all had this experience, everybody, that joy stay with you.

When we give something of ourselves to somebody who needs it, that joy stays with us and that does change us. You can ask yourself, as you're giving, "How do I feel? Am I different?" And the answer is always yes.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** That was so amazing. I love how you shared that. Each one of us, Sadhvi, who are on the phone today, can look at all of the desires that we have, even what we wake up to in the morning. Today I desire this. I want this and this and this. When we start looking at that, it's a beautiful question that you raised for everyone, asking, "How do I feel when I get this? Now, how do I feel when I give?"

That's beautiful. Thank you. The next question is this: There is a seeming paradox between the traditional Western concept of 'work hard to make it happen' versus the Eastern approach of 'align with the flow and let it happen.' How can we best resolve that seeming conflict to bring peace and productivity into our daily lives?

**SADHVI BHAGWATI:** That's a very good question. I think a lot of people tend to misunderstand some of the Eastern or, at least, the Indian philosophies. I'm not that aware of other Eastern philosophies, but in terms of the Indian philosophy, he says 'the concept of align with the flow and let it happen,' and yet you also have to work.

The people in the East who don't understand that are failing just as badly as the people in the West who don't know how to align with the flow. Effort is required. If you are aligned with the flow, but you don't work, the opportunity will pass you by. Simply being aligned is not enough. But if you work and you're not aligned, your work will not bear fruit.

It will be like Swamiji always says, "perspiration with no inspiration." He always says that the goal is to make your life 90% inspiration and 10% perspiration, because typically it's the opposite. Typically, it's 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration because



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we're not aligned. We don't know what God's will is. We don't want to let it happen. We're so stuck with our own will that it is pushing and pushing and pushing, perspiration and perspiration, to make something happen.

If you say, "If we're not aligned, it's not going to happen, that 10% perspiration, even if you are aligned with the flow, still needs to be that. God is not there to do our work for us. People in the East and people in the West who misunderstand that Eastern philosophy miss the boat just as much. Those are the people whom life really passes by. They may be peaceful, they may be calm, but they're not successful.

This is because they're not taking advantage of the opportunities, the abilities, the gifts, the potentials, and the talents that God has given to them. So I think that the goal really is to be both. To be aligned, to be quiet, to be still enough to know what is God's will, what is meant to happen. You used the words 'the flow.' Which way is the flow going? But then, we also work.

We're meant to row the boat. It's not just that you put your boat in the current and then just let it go. You'll wind up on shore. Even if you're going the direction of the current, if you don't use your paddles, if you don't steer, if you don't keep your eyes open, that boat is going to capsize or wash up on shore and you're not going to get anywhere. It's much easier to go with the current than against the current.

On the flip side, if you try to paddle your boat upstream, no matter how much you work you're not going to get very far either. You're going against the current. So the goal is to go with the current, go with the flow, align yourself with the will, but keep your eyes open, keep the paddles in your hand, keep steering, keep doing whatever is required to make sure that you're going in a direction that you want to go.

The goal is, along with that—and this is the difficult part really—is to figure out what is God's will. Which way is the flow going? The only way I can tell you to do it is only through quiet, only through being still, only through trying, even for short moments of time, to get our desire and our own will out of the way. It doesn't mean we have to throw it in the trash can. It just means be able to ascertain, be able to discriminate.

It's the power of discrimination. Be able to use that to figure out: This is my desire. This may also be God's will, but it also may not be God's will. Let me put that aside for a minute and try to just figure out what are the messages here? Am I really perspiring over and over and over again, trying and trying and trying, and nothing is happening? Maybe that means it's not supposed to happen.

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According really to divine law, if you're working, and you're working with a pure heart and a pure intention and a pure motive, working with integrity, and you're not working with selfish motives, then you should bear fruit. That's the divine plan; that's the divine drama, as they say. If you're working with a pure heart and with pure intentions, with integrity, with honesty, and nothing is bearing fruit, that means the work that you're doing, whatever direction you're trying to row that boat, is not the direction that God wants you to go.

That's the time for us to step back and to say, "Wait. What is the message here?" The message is not 'don't work,' or if you have to work, it doesn't mean that it's wrong. But we all know; we all get signals and messages, and we just don't listen because our own will is in the way. Our own fears, desires and attachments, whatever it is, don't let us see what is the flow, what is the divine will.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** Sometimes wouldn't you also say that when you come to that point where you're pushing, pushing, pushing and you know, "Okay, I have to let go," it's in the letting go that everything that you were working towards starts to manifest, as well.

**SADHVI BHAGWATI:** Very frequently, very frequently. Absolutely. One of the reasons for it is when you let go, that's when you are aligning yourself. As soon as you become aligned, things start to fall in place.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** It's kind of like work hard to make it happen, align with the flow, and let it happen.

**SADHVI BHAGWATI:** Exactly. One of the great teachings, one of the fundamental teachings of Bhagavadgita—this is Swamiji's Cliffs Notes of the Bhagavadgita—is do your best and leave the rest to God.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** That's great. Do your best and leave the rest to God. Chris, how are we doing on our time?

**CHRIS ATTWOOD:** We have about 10 more minutes.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** Okay, great. That's wonderful. The next question is, I have a hard time sitting to meditate. What else can I do that will bring me closer to myself?

**SADHVI BHAGWATI:** If somebody asked me that question personally, sitting in front of me, I would look at them and I would say, "What are you running from? Why can't you sit? What is hard for you?" This is what you're looking for, to get close to

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yourself, to get close to God, to be spiritual. You're prepared to allot the time, and if I said to you instead of meditating, go for a jog or do jumping jacks or talk on the phone to your mother, you'd do the time.

If I said 15 minutes of reading the newspaper is going to get you close to God, you'd put in the 15 minutes. So it's not the time. You're prepared to do the time. But if you're not prepared to sit, I'd ask you why not. What is it that happens to you that is so terrifying and so uncomfortable that you're looking for another way? If spiritual master after spiritual master after spiritual master of every single tradition in the world says meditate, sit down and be quiet—if that is what every single master says—then why are you looking for another way?

What is it that's difficult about that? If the spiritual master said that the only way to get close to God is to swim in the ocean, but you don't know how to swim and you're afraid of water, you say, "Okay, I need another way. I can't swim." But sitting down, closing your eyes and meditating is something that anyone can do. If someone said to me, "It's really hard for me," I'd say then it's even more important for you to sit.

I'd say that you're exactly the type of person who should sit. One of the tips that I give to people about meditation who say, "I feel like nothing happens. I get restless. I just want to jump up," is to set an alarm clock for however much time you've decided you're going to sit for meditation. Whether it's 20 minutes or one hour, it doesn't matter. Set that clock and say to yourself aloud that until that alarm goes off, "I'm neither opening my eyes, nor getting up."

The benefit of the clock is that, as we're sitting, the restlessness in us tells us, "Okay, I'm done. I must be done. My time must be over." And so we keep having this excuse to open our eyes and look at the clock. But if you know that an alarm clock has been set, then you have no excuse. I would absolutely say to that person to sit down, close your eyes, and let come up whatever it is that made you ask that question in the first place.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** For the person who sent in this question, if you're on the line today, make sure you get a really sweet, soft alarm or you're going to be bolted and jolted out of your meditation! I know of some alarms they sell in India that you can come out of your meditation with [om Namaha Shivaia], which is really great because that means 'I surrender to the will of God.' So that's wonderful.

Here is another question: I'm not clear on how to reconcile the idea of accepting the world lovingly just as it is versus creating positive change in the world and fighting against injustices. Can you help?

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**SADHVI BHAGWATI:** That's a great question. Let us talk for a minute about the word 'acceptance.' Accepting something does not mean you don't want to change it. Acceptance is not a passive, apathetic, sit-back-and-let-it-happen kind of thing. Acceptance is for ourselves. Acceptance means 'I am at peace. I am not [indiscernible]. But it doesn't mean 'I think it's perfect just the way it is, and I don't need to work to change it.'

Think about a mother, for example, not a neurotic mother filled with her own issues, but let us conjure up in our minds the image of the perfect mother, a divine mother who doesn't have any of her own issues. I know it's impossible, but let's just conjure up the image for a moment. She accepts her child unconditionally. She unconditionally loves him and unconditionally accepts him, but that doesn't mean that if his room is a mess, she's not going to keep telling him to clean it up until he does.

It doesn't mean she's going to let him get away with eating nothing but chocolate cake for dinner or not doing his homework. She accepts the child as he is fully, but she's still going to work, still remind, and still try and still do whatever she can do to make sure that his room is clean, that he eats his vegetables, and that his homework is done. In terms of the world, we have to accept it, Janet. We have no option.

What are you going to do? If you say, "I don't accept the world," then what? Where are you? You're stuck. You're setting yourself up for a life of frustration and disappointment. We don't have the power to change the whole world through hating it. Sitting there grumbling about it in discontent is not going to change anything. For our own sanity, for our own peace, for our own ability to go to sleep at night, we have to accept it. Otherwise, we can't do anything.

We will be sleepless, we will be restless, we will be upset, we will take out our restlessness on those we love, and we'll make more of a mess in the world rather than helping to change anything in the world. The first step is that you just have to accept that, on this date, July 20, 2006, the world is as it is. It's not up to me to accept it or not accept it. It just is.

I can pretend I don't accept it. I can live in an illusion. I can say this isn't okay. But that doesn't change anything. All that does is excuse me from doing anything about it. It makes me say, "I don't like the world, and this is not acceptable to me." But it doesn't help, neither us nor the world. The first step is to simply say, "Okay, on this date, as of now, for whatever reason, for whatever plan of God's or the Devil's—depending on how we look at it—the world is as it is.

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Now, what can I do to help it be different on July 20, 2007? Then we work towards it. Those two things have to go hand-in-hand. If we cannot accept how things are right now with love in our hearts, then where is the power to help change going to come from? The power to change comes from love. People act out of anger. They may fight out of anger, they may go on strike out of anger, they may shout out of anger, they may write angry articles out of anger, they may do 100 things out of anger.

But they're not actually going to change the world out of anger and [indiscernible]. I don't know of any example in history where any peaceful movement or beneficial change was brought about through anger. It's brought about through love with a realization that things need to be changed. We channel that love, we channel that positive energy into putting our hours, our abilities, and our energy into making positive changes.

It's the only thing we can do. Imagine just for a second; let's say you're married and it's not America where you can just get divorced. It's being married in a situation where we're stuck. We're married to the world. We're stuck. We can't divorce the world. We can't say, "I don't accept you, therefore I divorce you." Imagine you're in a marriage where you are totally stuck and there is absolutely no option of divorce.

If you don't accept that person you're married to, your life is just going to be miserable. You have no way out. You cannot divorce him. Your only option to be at peace with yourself is to accept it. Then, once you've really, deeply accepted the situation, as horrible as it may be, then, with that peace and that love in your heart, you work slowly but steadily [indiscernible].

I feel like we just have to think of the world as though we've gotten married to someone who is far from perfect and in whom we'd like to see a lot of changes. But being angry and yelling is not going to make that person [indiscernible]. The only way we can do it is to love, I think.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** Thank you so much, Sadhvi. It's so wonderful to sit with you this morning. I'm so excited that you're going to be co-sponsoring these calls with us and co-hosting them. It's so wonderful. I thought it would be great if you could talk for just a moment about the wonderful International Yoga Festival, which I was able to be a guest at last March, which is going to happen again from March 1 through March 7 at Parmarth Niketan in Rishikesh.

**SADHVI BHAGWATI:** Sure. Every year our ashram hosts a one-week yoga festival. It has changed a great deal over the years. It will continue to change a great deal. It is a time in which students, teachers, and people from all over the world come together. Its

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theme is yoga, but there is so much else that is offered, as well. We have so many different types of yoga.

We have [indiscernible]. We have acupressure. We have all the different types of yoga, whether it's [indiscernible], whether it's [indiscernible], whether it's meditation. We have chanting. We have great lectures from some revered saints. It's a full week with every day full of really, really inspiring, wonderful activities. Everybody is invited, and it's right on the banks of Ganga.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** I hope all of you are hearing that you just got an invitation. I'm also taking many people to India in March. Part of that spiritual journey is going to be at the wonderful, wonderful yoga festival in Rishikesh, India. So it will be either three weeks or two weeks with me and one week at the yoga festival, which would be wonderful. If you're interested in knowing more about it, you can email me at [Janet@StayingInLove.com](mailto:Janet@StayingInLove.com).

Thank you again, Sadhvi. Also, before we say goodbye to Sadhvi, if you would like to know more about her ashram, her master and what they do, you can go to [Parmarth.com](http://Parmarth.com) or [IHRF.com](http://IHRF.com), which stands for India Heritage Research Foundation. Chris, would you like to give us some of the wonderful, beautiful points that Sadhvi shared with us this morning?

**CHRIS ATTWOOD:** I would love to, Janet. Thank you. This morning, Sadhvi began by talking about her teacher and spiritual master, Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, who is also known as Pujya Swamiji. He is revered throughout India. He was a saint from a very young age, and spent many years in the forest and away from the world. These days, he's called by international organizations all over the world whenever a representative from India is desired.

His vision and his ability to transmit that are so universal that anyone from any culture or religion is able to appreciate it. For those of you who have listened to these calls from the beginning, you know that we interviewed Swamiji. He was the first interview in this series. Those of you who are members of the Healthy Wealthy nWise Real Life Legends Club have access to the recordings and can go back to listen to the really beautiful, inspiring, uplifting, amazing interview.

As Sadhvi said, Pujya Swamiji's message is so simple, so straightforward, so universal, and so easily accessible, and that really came across in that interview. Janet then asked Sadhvi how she made the choice to leave everything and live in total service in India. She said the question implied there was some level of rational decision-making, and that's not what happened.

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Her experience was that God made the decision. She came to India on her PhD program and had such an extraordinary experience. It was an epiphany moment that she had never experienced before. She had been raised in the Jewish tradition and had been told that one doesn't worship God in form, that this was wrong. Yet she came, she had the experience, and when she met Swamiji, she had the experience that here was God in form, and there was no way that she could deny it.

When she had that experience, she said it made her question everything that she had been taught. If this wasn't true, then maybe other things were also not true. She said, "It turned my world upside down." She said it left her with nothing to rely on except the experience in that moment, and her experience was that she was sitting in the presence of God.

Once she had that experience, she said, once one experiences truth then it's very difficult to go back. Once one has seen that, then there is no alternative, and that was the way it was for her. There was just no way not to embrace it. She said her heart immediately made the decision, and her mind came along shortly thereafter. I'm sure many of us can relate to that.

Janet then asked her the question from one of our listeners: I yearn to live a monastic life, yet I'm married and still have a child to raise. Sadhvi said that there was a story from Iyengar yoga. Mr. Iyengar was once asked, because people were taught to do their yoga practice 45 to 60 minutes a day, by a woman, after having a child, who said that her practice was suffering.

She was tired, her child needs her, and how does she maintain her yoga practice and be a mother at the same time? Mr. Iyengar told her, "Right now, being a mother is your practice." Sadhvi said that people in the West tend to box things up and say, "These are my duties and this is my spiritual practice." In the East, the boxes are broken, and it's understood that doing your duty is your practice.

Being the best friend, the best writer, the best psychologist, or being the best at whatever it is that you're doing, and doing the very best you're able to do in that, is your path. She said it's time for us to break out of the boxes and to make every moment that we're living our spiritual path, our spiritual discipline. She said that to live a monastic life depends on where you are in your life, and there is no guru anywhere who will tell someone to leave their family behind.

To leave those who depend on you and who need you will not produce the results that one is looking for, when one is drawn to that monastic life. She said first fulfill your duty

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and then, if there is still the desire, look at that again. The real aim is to take what you're doing and find the spirituality within that. Ask yourself, "Can I be a spiritual teacher and not just a school teacher? Can I be a spiritual psychologist and not just a psychologist? Can I even be a spiritual gas-station attendant and not just a gas-station attendant?"

There is actually a side note here; there is a wonderful movie out based on the book by Dan Millman called *Way of the Peaceful Warrior*. It is, in fact, about a gas-station attendant who is living that spiritual life as a gas-station attendant, and who teaches a young man who is very successful as an athlete but who is running up against the issues of desire, what it really means to live a spiritual life in every moment as Sadhvi was telling us this morning.

She mentioned that Swamiji often has said that when people are sitting in spiritual practice while simultaneously yelling at their children or at their family, this is not the way to live. It's better to be doing whatever you're doing and do that in a spiritual way. She said the reason the lotus is the most sacred flower in India is because it grows in the mud. It's not that we try to change the mud.

The goal is to be the divine flower. It grows out of that mud. Janet asked Sadhvi how one gets past the 'I want' stage in life and into the 'I can give' stage. Sadhvi said that our desires and wants are truly our greatest obstacles. The bad part is that those desires and wants never get fulfilled, and we tend to think, "When I get this, then I'll be peaceful and spiritual. When I get that, then I'll have what I'm really looking for in life."

And yet, it never happens. That is all of our experience. There is no one who ever says, "Okay, now I'm satisfied. Now I don't need anything else." No matter how much one tries to stop desiring, it doesn't stop. We can only become aware of the uselessness of achieving things. She gave us a very practical exercise to do. She said to sit, introspect, and begin by making a list of 10 of the biggest things that you have really wanted in your life that got fulfilled.

Then ask yourself sometime later—a month, a year—"Am I actually closer to being who I want to be than I was before I got it?" What you'll discover is that the answer is no, of course not. It's only through that awareness, through practice and reflection, that the experience of peace comes. Otherwise, we notice, "I have the desire for a vacation or for plastic surgery or for this or that, to have this car or this house."

Now, some time has passed and I have that. "Am I more deeply happy?" No. The happiness hasn't changed. It may be there momentarily but on that deeper level, that level of deep inner peace, nothing has changed just by having these outer desires fulfilled. Yet, when we realize that the answer to that question, "Am I happier, am I



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more fulfilled?” by having these things is no over and over again, then gradually the desire to serve comes.

What all of us notice is that when we serve, there is a joy that arises in the heart. With that joy, then there is that peace, that deep inner fulfillment. When we give something of ourselves, then that joy stays with us. That inner peace begins to grow and expand, and that does change us. That is permanent. Then you can ask yourself, “Am I different?” And the answer is always yes, absolutely yes.

Then Janet told Sadhvi there is a seeming paradox between this traditional Western concept of working hard to make it happen and the Eastern approach of aligning with the flow and letting it happen. Sadhvi said a lot of people tend to misunderstand some of Indian philosophy. There is this idea of aligning with the flow and letting it happen, and yet you also have to work.

She said the prescription really is 10% perspiration and 90% inspiration. That really is the goal, to make life 90% inspiration, and yet there is still that aspect of 10% that requires our work, our focus, our attention. God is not there to do our work for us. For those who misunderstand this idea, life passes them by. They’re not successful in their lives because they’re not taking advantage of the natural talent that God has given them to allow them to truly enjoy and be fulfilled in their life.

The goal is to be still enough to know what is God’s will. What way is the flow going? But if you don’t steer, if you don’t use your paddles and you’re just in the flow of the river, then the boat will end up capsized or it will go up on the shore. On the other hand, if we try to paddle up the stream, then we’ll only get exhausted and fall down in a heap. The thing to do is to keep our eyes open, to be alert, to be awake, to keep our paddles in hand and to keep steering.

But in that, to get our own desires and our own will out of the way, it requires the ability to discriminate, to see the messages that are appearing. All of us have messages every day. If I see that I’m working over and over and nothing is happening, then maybe it’s not supposed to happen because according to divine law, if you’re working with pure motive, with pure heart, with integrity, with honesty and yet there are no results, then it means that this is not the direction of God’s will.

When we don’t listen to the messages and signals that we’re getting because we’re intent on our own will, our own desires and our own attachments, then we miss that flow. Those things don’t allow us to see the divine will. Janet mentioned that often it happens that we get to the point where we just throw up our hands and let go. And in that letting go, things begin to manifest.

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Sadhvi said that one of the fundamental messages of the Bhagavadgita is to do your best and then leave the rest to God. Lastly, when someone was having a hard time sitting to meditate, then Sadhvi said to ask yourself what you are running for and from? Why is it hard to sit? If you're prepared to put in the time, then why not? If you were told you need to go into the ocean and that you have to swim, but you don't know how to swim, then you could say, "I need another way."

But anyone can just sit, and so she gave us this tip. She said that if this is difficult, then set an alarm clock. Set it for the time you are committed to. Then make a vow you'll sit until the clock is done. When you know that you're going to be alerted, then there is no excuse. You just sit, close your eyes, and let come up whatever it was that made you feel that in the first place. Janet, I'll turn it over to you. There are a couple of other points I would love to share.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** How is our time? I was looking at my clock here, but it might be a little fast. Go ahead. We just need a couple of minutes at the end.

**CHRIS ATTWOOD:** There was a beautiful point that Sadhvi gave about accepting the world lovingly as it is. It's not a passive, apathetic state. It doesn't mean that I think the world is perfect the way it is and I don't need to change it. She said to image a divine, perfect mother. She unconditionally accepts the child, but it doesn't mean she doesn't have him clean his room, eat his vegetables or do his homework.

She gave this beautiful example. She said imagine that you are married and you can't get a divorce, because we truly are married to the world and we can't get divorced from it. We have no option but to accept the world as it is. If you don't accept the person you're married to, then you're going to be miserable. So the only option is to accept that person no matter how they are.

Then, and only then, are we in a position to be able to do whatever we can to help them, to help that world be all that it can be. Being angry isn't going to help. Anger never created any positive, lasting change in the world. The only way we can truly create positive lasting change is by being in love and giving that love.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** Thank you so much, Chris. It's so beautiful how you always seem to get these points so perfectly. Thank you. Sadhvi, are you still with us? No, she's left, but again, thank you to Sadhvi Saraswati Bhagwati from Parmarth Niketan Ashram, who will be co-hosting these calls, the Dialogues with the Masters calls, with Chris and me. I'm so happy.

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You can all see that the quality of these calls just went up about 100% by adding Sadhvi's beautiful, pure nature. I'm so happy she'll be with us again and again on these calls. Our next call will be August 17<sup>th</sup> with Swami [?] from Brindavan, and I hope I said that properly. That will be hosted by Sadhvi Saraswati Bhagwati. Again, for more information on Pujya Swamiji, Parmarth Niketan Ashram, and the wonderful International Yoga Festival go to [Parmarth.com](http://Parmarth.com).

If any of you are interested in joining me on Janet's Spiritual Journey to India in March 2007, please email me at [Janet@StayingInLove.com](mailto:Janet@StayingInLove.com). Chris, is there anything else that you would like to add?

**CHRIS ATTWOOD:** No, should we just open up the lines?

**JANET ATTWOOD:** Yes, let's open up the lines. For all of us, we'll be counting our blessings today, I'm sure of it. We've started our morning great. Thank you, everyone, for being on the call this morning. Goodbye, everyone.

**CHRIS ATTWOOD:** Goodbye.