

FAQs - Vital Questions on Religion Answered

Excerpts from Religion in Practice by Swami Prabhavananda

Q - What is the ultimate goal for a follower of the Hindu religion?

A - The ultimate goal for a follower of the Hindu religion is the same as that for a follower of any religion it is the attainment of perfection in Godhead. Whether you are a Hindu, a Christian, a Buddhist, a Jew, a Muslim, or a Zoroastrian, the ideal is the same whether you call it the beatific vision, illumination, samadhi, or nirvana.

The goal, as both Hindus and Buddhists emphasize, is to be realized here and now, in this very life.

Q The realization of God seems to me like swimming the English Channel reserved for the very few. What can the rest of us get out of religion?

A - It may seem that way, but you are absolutely wrong. You see, it is possible for every human being to realize God. And you don't have to have strong muscles. But one very important thing you must have: an earnest desire for that realization.

Why do we see only a few illumined souls? Because only very few desire and seek that illumination. What trouble we go through in order to pass a college examination or even just to buy a hat! But we don't bring that interest when it comes to praying and meditating.

So the main thing is to create the desire for God by reading scriptures, praying to God, chanting his praises. Eventually there will come a time in your life when you feel that God alone is real, and you seek him and him only. Then you will find illumination.

Q - Is a spiritual aspirant justified in taking a human life in defense of country, home or person?

A - That is a very complex question, and it cannot be answered categorically. All I can say is this, It depends upon the spiritual growth of the individual.

There are people who must protect other persons, who must defend their homes and their country. If they didn't, human society could not continue. But if a spiritual aspirant has reached a stage of unfoldment in which he is constantly absorbed in the thought of God, then it becomes impossible for him to take arms. He sees no enemy. So I would say that for some persons killing in defense is justified; for others, not.

Q - Please explain what is meant by purification of the heart, and what is the best way to attain it?

A - From a negative standpoint, purity of heart is freedom from lust and greed, freedom from craving for the things of the world. But in its positive aspect, purity means that your heart is filled with divine consciousness.

Now the method to purify the heart is that of concentration and meditation. There are also other means selfless service, for instance.

Q - How can a householder be detached from work he dislikes?

A - Why do you dislike your work? Because you are not concentrated on it. Learn to attach your mind completely to your work while you are doing it, and you will find joy in it.

But then, don't remain attached; learn to detach your mind from your work at a moment's notice. But this detachment is not indifference. My master said, "Everyone wants to do the work he best likes to do, but that is not the secret of work. Whatever work you do, whether you like it or not, know that it is the Lord's work, and adjust yourself accordingly. Remember this, all work must be done as worship of God ... It is easy to do great deeds, the deeds that bring name and fame. But it is by his small, everyday actions that a person's character is known. The true karma yogi does not work to gain publicity. No matter how insignificant his work may be, he throws himself wholeheartedly into the task, because, for him, his work has become worship of God."

Q - Suppose we want to do God's will? How can we be sure what that will is?

A - Actually, we cannot know in any given situation what God's will is until we become spiritually illumined. Only he who has known God intimately, who lives in His consciousness all the time, can do His will, because his will has become merged in the divine will. Throughout the ages there have been a few rare souls who live in such a state of union with God.

But there are many people who do exactly what they want to do and proclaim that it is God's will. And so we must analyze ourselves: Are our thoughts and actions selfish or unselfish? All selfishness must be eliminated from our hearts before we can do God's will.

In our ignorance, what we can and should do is to follow the teachings of the scriptures and the examples of perfected souls. And we can pray, "Lord, I don't know what your will is. Guide me! May I be a tool in your hand!"

Q - Can anyone have the vision of God?

A - Yes, if the following three conditions are fulfilled: human birth, longing for God, and the society of the holy. When the first two conditions are met, the third fulfils itself. It is the desire for God which is lacking in us and which we must develop.

Whenever Sri Ramakrishna was asked, "What is the way to find God?" he used to answer, "Yearn for Him with a longing heart." Or he would say, "People shed streams of tears because sons are not born to them. Others eat away their hearts in sorrow

because they cannot get rich. But how many weep for not having seen God? Very few indeed! Verily, he who seeks the Lord, who weeps for Him, attains Him."

Q - Is there any preservation of personality when one experiences samadhi, or transcendental consciousness?

A - I will answer that question if you can tell me what personality is.

Q - Well, anything that would be attributable to the uniqueness of an individual. Is there such a uniqueness?

A - That's what I am questioning! No, what we normally call personality is not real. We are hugging a shadow. Take the personality of a thief, Does he have to remain a thief in order to keep his personality? Everybody's personality is changing each moment. If one remained the same, it would be unfortunate. Where lies our real personality? In the Atman, in God. When we reach our union with God, we become true persons.

Q - I should like to think of the personal aspect of God, but how is this done?

A - All right. You know what the love of a father, or a mother, or a friend, or a sweetheart is. Any of these relationships may be established with God. On the human plane, these loves may fail you. But God is the one Person who will never fail you.

You see, all such questions arise as long as we are on the fringe of religion. But do something! Think of Christ or Krishna and see what happens! Nobody can love Christ or establish a relationship with him immediately; but think of him and go on thinking. Then you begin to realize what perfection means, what love means. It is an experimental process.

Q - Would you comment on the part sex plays in religion? Are not many of our modern-day symbols really phallic signs for which a meaning is now lost?

A - The sex energy, if it is not dissipated, plays a great part in religion. It becomes transmuted into spiritual energy when it is conserved. What does conservation mean? Overcoming lust.

You see, there is one great obstacle to spiritual life; that is lust. He who has conquered lust has gained mastery over himself and the world. Now a wall has no lust; but that does not mean that this wall is a saint! But there is lust in man in order that he may overcome it and become a saint.

Now to the next part of your question. What the Western scholar considers a phallic symbol is not so regarded by the Hindu devotee. The word lingam, which has been translated as phallus, actually means symbol. A devotee who worships the lingam or the yoni is thinking of the fatherhood or motherhood of the universe, the source of creation, preservation, and dissolution. He does not think of these as symbols of sex. Oil and water do not mix; similarly, sex and religion don't mix. Remember that! If you feel lustful, admit your weakness. Don't try to cover the dirty spot with rose petals.

Q - If everything about us is God, what of that harsh noise or unkind word that breaks in on our meditation? And what of the pains and base desires that distract us?

A - Everything is God, that's very true. But it is a matter of experience. If I consider this physical and mental universe as God, I will be mistaken. So first we must say, "All is not, God is."

While we live in the domain of maya, of name and form, there are base desires and harsh words, good desires and sweet words. But as spiritual aspirants we must avoid the former. When we go to pray, we must try not to let any distractions arise. If they come, we have to avoid them.

Sri Ramakrishna once said to a young disciple, "

"You may say, 'There is no thorn,' but put out your hand and it will prick you. As long as the world is so real to us we cannot say, 'All is God.' But once we have been given divine sight we actually see God as the material and efficient cause of the universe. Then we see that he is everything. Then there are no more harsh words, no more base desires. But that is a high state of attainment."

Q - I am discouraged about my spiritual life. I don't seem to be making any progress. What shall I do?

A - Keep up the struggle! You see, there is no such thing as progress in a straight line. In spiritual life, too, there are ups and downs. But there is no failure as long as you make an effort.

Swami Brahmananda, my master, used to give the following illustration. The calf tries to get up on its feet within a very short time of its birth, but it falls down. For fifteen minutes, half an hour, or one hour the calf tries to get up, but it keeps falling down. Still it doesn't relinquish the struggle. Later, it not only stands but begins to run.

It is the same in spiritual life. You make a resolution that you will do so much meditation. Then laziness gets hold of you, "Oh, I'll skip it for today." Or restlessness and passion distract you, and all your good intentions are forgotten for the time being. But if you have fallen, get up again. Struggle! Promise yourself, "I will try to do better." You see? You will fail many times, but don't give up. That's how we grow.

Q - How would you define mysticism?

A - Mysticism is the essence of religion. It is the conviction that God can be seen; that he can be directly known and realized; and that to have this realization is the only purpose of life.

Q - Does Vedanta accept the Indian caste system or does it reject it as incompatible with religious ideals?

A - Caste, as described in the Gita, is concerned with the division of work according to a man's temperament and capacity. In this sense, caste will always exist not only in India but everywhere in the world. There will always be spiritual leaders and teachers, politicians and soldiers, traders and artisans, and laborers. The Gita says that,

regardless of caste, all mankind is born for perfection. Each shall attain it by following the duty of his own nature, if this duty is performed as worship of God.

What is usually thought of as the caste system some castes regard others as inferior and discriminate against them is a degeneration of the original idea. As you know, since India gained independence, caste has been practically abolished. But traditionally, monks have been regarded as beyond caste; and they have often been instrumental in teaching harmony and understanding to the prejudiced and intolerant. This reminds me of an incident which I will tell you.

It happened in our Ramakrishna monastery at Madras while Swami Ramakrishnananda was the abbot. On Sri Ramakrishna's birthday, a group of Brahmins and a group of untouchables came to attend the special worship.

The two groups stayed at opposite sides of the prayer hall. Then hymns were sung, and Swami Ramakrishnananda went into an ecstatic mood. He began to dance, first toward one group, then toward the other. An intense spiritual atmosphere was created.

Responding to it, the Brahmins and untouchables forgot themselves, and moved closer to one another. Finally, all were dancing together, united in the thought of God.

This is what happens when you give people true spirituality: ignorance and prejudice leave of themselves. Reform by legislation does little; we must begin reform at the roots.

Q - I have come across the term sahaja yoga repeatedly in Vedantic literature. Would you please explain what it is?

A - Literally, sahaja yoga means "easy yoga" the easy way to union with God. It is the way of constant recollectedness. While you are sitting, or lying down, or walking, or working, think of the presence of God. Let a current toward God flow in your heart at all times. You don't have to close your eyes or ears to do this. Remember him always, while you are busy and while you are idle and you will see him.

Q - If God is all good, how do you explain the evil in this world?

A - Both evil forces and good forces are working in this relative world. God, the Absolute, remains unaffected by them. If he were affected by evil, he would not be God. If he needed man to remove the world's evil, he would not be God. Evil and good both belong to him, but he is beyond them.

God is playing, and in our ignorance we see his creation as evil or good. We are dreaming this dream of good and evil. When our dream breaks, when we have the wisdom of God, then we realize that he alone exists. Then we realize that everything is his play.

This does not mean that we should do nothing. Shall we sit quietly and let the evil forces win out? As long as we see wickedness, it is our duty to struggle against it; and we must use the forces of good in order to overcome the evil we perceive. But let us not go and fight wickedness with the idea that we are helping God! We are worshiping him.

What is evil, after all? It is ignorance nothing else. A veil of ignorance covers the truth of God. How to remove the veil? Pray that the ignorance may be removed from your sight and from the sight of all mankind, so that God within may shine forth. Pray that

everyone may find peace and illumination in God. Work for that, and you will help yourself and everybody.

Q - I have concentrated all my mental energy on overcoming asthma, but so far have had little success. What would be your advice?

A - My advice is to go to a doctor.

Q - Doesn't Vedanta believe in healing?

A - It depends on what you mean by healing. Vedanta teaches how to overcome illness for eternity. By eternity I don't mean continuity in time, but absolute existence beyond time, space, and relativity. If you use Vedanta philosophy in this sense, you will rise above all illness and death, although your body will pass through these modifications. You are not the body, the mind or the senses. You are the Self, the Spirit one with God. When you realize this truth in transcendental vision, death won't frighten you. Dying will be like throwing away a worn-out garment, that's all. The real you won't be affected. Of course, if you wish, you may get health by praying for it but suppose you are healed today? Tomorrow you may be sick again; and some day you will have to face death. So heal yourself in such a way as to gain eternal life. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . "

Q - Does vicarious atonement have a place in Vedanta?

A - Yes. In every religion there are examples of saints who suffered vicariously. I will give you an instance from the life of the Holy Mother, Sri Ramakrishna's wife. Whenever she came to Calcutta, hundreds of people would line up at the Udbodhan Office, her residence, for the privilege of touching her feet. And she took upon herself the sins of those who prostrated before her. Afterwards her feet would burn, and she would have to bathe them in the cool water of the Ganges to get relief. One day a disciple said to her, "Mother, we give you pain when we touch your feet. We should not do it any more, nor should we allow others to touch your feet." Holy Mother's answer was wonderful. She said,

"What is this? Did the Lord come only to eat rasagollas?" Her meaning was that Sri Ramakrishna was born for the purpose of taking the sins of mankind on himself, and her mission was to help him in his work. They were not born to eat rasagollas, a kind of sweetmeat; in other words, they were not born for their own enjoyment.

But only great saints and divine incarnations can take the karmas of others upon themselves.

Q - How does one get rid of spiritual pride?

A - I will tell you a story. Radha, one of the shepherdesses whom Krishna loved best, became apparently very egotistical. The other shepherdesses complained to Krishna about her, so Krishna suggested that they ask Radha about her ego. Radha told them,

"Certainly I have an ego. But whose ego is it? It is not mine, for everything I have belongs to Krishna."

The way to overcome pride or any of the passions is to turn them over to God. If you must be vain, be vain that you are a child of God. But at the same time feel that everyone else is a child of God just as much as you are.

Q - Should you tell anyone about your spiritual experiences?

A - No, only your guru. In India we have a saying that a man should keep his spiritual experiences as secret as he would keep secret the fact that his mother was unchaste. Your experience may not be a spiritual experience at all. Now if you go and talk about some vision you have had to someone else, that person may feel he should have such an experience too. And so confusion will be created. One should never make a show of spiritual matters.

Your guru alone should hear of your spiritual experiences. He will tell you whether they are genuine or not. Of course, you may not always like what he tells you!

Q - In order to progress in spiritual life, should I give up my comforts?

A - It is possible to live in a most uncomfortable way and think lustful thoughts, and it is possible to live in comfort and think of God.

You don't have to lie on a bed of nails in order to meditate; you may sit on a cushioned chair, if you wish. Externals are not important. The Lord looks into your mind and heart. If you are sincere in your desire for him, he will reveal himself to you.

So don't worry about giving up your comforts; but learn to devote yourself to contemplation of God, and you will progress on the spiritual .

Q - What is grace?

A - It is the divine power which operates in man to transform him, to make him attuned to God so that he can feel his unbounded love. Divine grace can be tangibly felt at a certain stage of spiritual unfoldment. Of course you have to struggle before you can feel it. These two ideas of grace and of self-effort are not contradictory. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "The breeze of grace is always blowing, but you have to set your sail to catch that breeze of grace." "Setting sail" means that you have to put forth some effort. What effort? To keep your mind in God, to struggle to meditate, to pray earnestly for divine love. Then what happens? Suddenly, one day, you will feel a power striking you and drawing your mind to itself, as the magnet draws the needle. Then the vision of God will open before you. This experience cannot really be expressed in words. All I can say about it is that you will feel God's love overwhelming you and lifting you up.

Q - If God is present in everyone, how does one explain people like Hitler?

A - God dwells everywhere. God dwells in the heart of the tiger too, but that doesn't mean that you have to hug the tiger. It is like this: The self-luminous sun is shining, but rain clouds have gathered and it seems to us the sun has disappeared. Actually the clouds have not affected the luminosity of the sun. It continues to shine behind the

clouds. Similarly, God dwells in a Hitler too and remains unaffected by the thoughts and deeds of the man. The man reaps the fruits of his karmas (the consequences of his thoughts and deeds), and suffers. But through such suffering his character will be purified, and in some life he will wake and realize his divinity.

Q - How can we live successfully in the world but not be of it?

A - Everybody has to live in the world. We monks also have to live in the world. I remember a disciple once asked Maharaj whether anybody can find God while living in the world. Maharaj answered, "Where else would one live?"

But remember, let not worldliness attach itself to you. How do you keep worldliness away? By attaching your mind to something greater, something higher. The only way to live in the world and not be attached to it is to attach yourself to God. Let your hands work, go about your business; but keep a part of your mind in God, knowing him to be the one reality, the eternal truth. He alone is your very own. We have to convince ourselves that there is one object of love, one being who really loves us. That is the Lord. He is your very own. You belong to him. Have that awareness. Then you can live in the world and nothing will touch you.

Q - Swami, how can we learn to distinguish between what is the Lord's will and what is our will?

A - There is just one way. Do you feel the presence of God and remember him? If you do something and consider it God's will and have forgotten God, then you may be sure it is your own will.

Q - How can we learn to keep the mind in God?

A - Practice! Practice! Then one day you'll look at someone. Suddenly you'll think, There is the presence of God. You'll look at the sky and feel, Oh, there is God! Someone will be talking to you and you'll know: That's God's voice!

One can do this when one begins to fall in love with God. Then recollection of him comes automatically, as when you were young and had a sweetheart. It was no trouble then for you to think of him or her. Your mind did it automatically. In the same way, when your heart is filled with love for God you think of him.

Q - How can feelings of lust be controlled?

A - Keep your mind engaged in chanting the name of the Lord. If lust persists, go into your room and clap your hands and chant the name of the Lord loudly. This will free you from lust. Of course you have to have the desire to be free. Prayer is answered, but you must be sincere.

Q - Why is it easier to meditate at certain hours of the day?

A - There are four times during the day and night which are considered especially conducive to meditation: dawn, midday, sunset, and midnight. At these hours, nature takes on an attitude of calmness. Take advantage of these hours whenever you can.

But after all, where do we meditate? In our own minds. Therefore, any time you meditate is beneficial. Later on you will be successful in your meditation wherever and whenever you meditate. But in order to reach the stage where you can become absorbed in God regardless of external circumstances, it is very important that you practice the spiritual disciplines regularly at the same time every day.

Q - How can fear be overcome?

A - It is very difficult. We fear so many things for so many reasons, imaginary and real - and most of the time imaginary. We fear things that will never happen. A man becomes fearless when he has the love of God in his heart. We have a saying in India, "Fear is fearful to approach Him."

Q - Are there any particular disciplines that can lessen fear?

A - The only discipline I know is to keep the mind fixed in God. In order to fix your mind in God, chant his name as often as you can. When you think of God you are in the sanctuary. Nothing can touch you.

Q - What constitutes the difference between thinking about God and meditating on him? Is it a degree of intensity?

A - Thinking about God gradually leads one to meditation. Meditation is the state when the mind flows continuously toward God. There is a consciousness of the presence of God. Meditation, in fact, is next to samadhi. It is a state attained through practice of purity of heart and concentration upon God. To quote the Bhagavad-Gita, "The light of a lamp does not flicker in a windless place." That is the simile which describes a yogi of one-pointed mind, one who meditates on the Atman. When, through the practice of yoga, the mind ceases its restless movements and becomes still, the Atman is realized."

Q - I have read that one's thoughts at the time of death determine the road he is to travel in the hereafter; therefore, God recollectedness is vitally important at this time. Yet, what of legitimate drugs or an intense pain that might keep one's mind from God at this moment?

A - It is the thought most prevalent during a person's lifetime that comes to him at the moment of death, regardless of drugs, pain, or any other abnormal condition. That is why the Gita tells us to think of Him constantly.

"At the hour of death, when a man leaves his body, he must depart with his consciousness absorbed in me. Then he will be united with me. Be certain of that. Whatever a man remembers at the last, when he is leaving the body, will be realized by him in the hereafter; because that will be what his mind has most constantly dwelt on, during this life."

Q - What is the Vedantic attitude towards the use of LSD and other such drugs to induce a "mystical" state? It seems that such use would run contrary to spiritual life.

A - Mystical states can never be induced by drugs. If salvation could be produced chemically, Krishna, Christ, and Ramakrishna would have opened drugstores instead of preaching! Drugs may induce psychic visions, which, to a man ignorant of mystical visions, may appear as spiritual.

Those who have had both drug-induced visions as well as genuine spiritual visions through the grace of God, know the two to be as different as night and day. We must also understand that it is not enough to have only mystical visions. They are only an index of spiritual growth. The ultimate is to be established in Satchitananda (existence-consciousness-bliss). This experience cannot be expressed in words.

Q - We are so far from illumination. How can we maintain this long uphill climb to the final purification of our minds?

A - You are not far from illumination. You are carrying Brahman within you all the time. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Your Christian scriptures tell you that! Why does God seem far away? Because you don't think of him. In reality, he is nearer than the nearest.

Q - How do we become convinced that God loves us?

A - It is very difficult. Let me give you an illustration. It is a hot day and you find yourself walking toward the ocean. Suddenly you feel a breeze, and you know it is from the ocean. It is a feeling, a sensation that comes to you before you arrive at the ocean. God is love, so we begin to feel his love as we approach nearer to him. Before we have seen him, we begin to feel his presence, we begin to receive the bliss of his grace. However, there must be a certain unfoldment within you before you feel this. Sometimes, too, as you practice the presence of God through meditation or by chanting his name, you begin to gain a little in concentration and start to feel his love. These are all experiences of spiritual aspirants.

Q - How is it possible to love those who hate you?

A - This is an ideal presented by all religions through their avatars and through all men of God. Christ, Buddha, Krishna, and Ramakrishna and many others exemplified it in their lives. Yes, you can love even those who hate you by seeing God in them not their external expressions; know that they also are God. See God in a wicked person behind the mask of wickedness, and you can change that person. Love does conquer hatred. The changed lives of numerous individuals, through their association with the holy, attest to this truth.

Q - When we are feeling spiritually dry, is this an indication that we are backsliding?

A - No. Spiritual growth doesn't develop along a straight line. When you travel in the mountains, you find yourself climbing up and down constantly but you are steadily gaining in elevation. Remember that in spiritual life there is never any failure so long as

you keep up the struggle. Maharaj used to give the illustration of the newborn calf, though it keeps falling down in many attempts to walk, it eventually stands and runs. It is the same with spiritual aspirants. You may fall many times in the beginning you may not be able to live up to your ideal for five minutes but finally you arrive at the stage where you don't fall down. Don't be depressed if you fall from your ideal, but at the same time don't compromise. Continually tell yourself, "I will never lower my ideal."

Q - What compels a person to move towards God? What makes him struggle for realization?

A - Discrimination. He loves to think of God. In order for one to think of God and to love him, one must be discriminating. Try to understand that God alone is the Reality. Hold on to God. Make your life God-centered.

Think of him as often as you can, discriminate then you will become dispassionate. That is, your attachment, your craving for things of the world will become less and less. You will realize God only when you become completely desireless. Holy Mother told us to pray for desirelessness in order that we may intensely desire the Lord. The more you think of God, the more will other desires begin to drop away. To desire anything else is vain, because it is like trying to bid the clouds to stay.

Q - You mentioned that Swami Vivekananda said to "accept" and not just "tolerate" other points of view about religion. What did he mean?

A - All roads lead to Rome if your destination is Rome. All roads and sects and denominations lead to God if your destination is God. But are they talking about realizing God through their particular sect or denomination? That is the crucial point. One time I heard a Christian minister speak. He said, "I don't like your ideas of renunciation and contemplation. What we believe in is doing good." He believed only in humanism. He had forgotten what Christ taught. Remember the rich man who came to Christ seeking a better life? Christ told him to sell all he had and follow Him. But he couldn't do it.

The main truth that Christianity has taught is to love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and all thy heart. If you love God that way you will be contemplating him. The goal is the important thing. If God is your goal, and you are on a with that intention, it will lead you to Him. All religions, if properly understood, have that one goal to realize God.

Now to come to the point of your question. Vivekananda believed in accepting the truth of all religions. To "tolerate" means that I alone have the truth I only endure your religion.

Q - If we are divine, why then are we so weak and perverse? What is the matter with us?

A - Yes, you are divine; but you are also ignorant. It is the nature of the diamond to shine, but it cannot if it is covered with dirt. However, as soon as the dirt is removed it will shine again. We are like that diamond. The blissfulness of the Atman is covered by

ignorance. Whatever you think you become; so if you think you are a mortal human being and a sinner, you will stay that way.

But, instead, if you tell yourself, "I am free perfect, and divine," how then, can anything evil come from you? But this is very difficult because we have an ego.

Let your Atman become your Lord, your chosen ideal, and keep your mind and heart concentrated on him. The simplest method given us is to chant the name of God the mantra. The Name and his Being are identical.

When you repeat your mantra, the Presence is there immediately. That is because Brahman is everywhere. If you can't do anything else, chant the name of the Lord. Make it a habit. You will receive great benefit from it. But you must struggle.

Q - It has been said that for us to see God we must "go within". If I decide to meditate twice a day, for say three years, what can I expect to happen? Will I get definite results?

A - You don't have to wait three years. Do a half-hour of meditation a day, but true meditation is like the pouring of water from one vessel to another, with the current of your mind flowing toward God. If you can do that for half an hour, then you will attain samadhi. But to reach that state it might take three years or three lives, depending upon how much effort you put into it: Usually our minds run away somewhere else.

We don't work hard enough to stop our mind in its wandering. It all depends on how much effort we employ. It's the quality that counts, not the quantity. If you think of God for even five seconds, those are five blessed moments in your life.

The other moments are in vain, wasted moments. So make your life blessed every moment by thinking of the Lord every moment. We must have purity of heart. What is the sign of this purity? It is when the natural tendency of your mind is to flow toward God. When you attain this state, you will see God.

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