

OUTREACH

VOLUME 9 EDITION 1



Zeroing Our Inner Debt

Dr. Matthieu Ricard, a Buddhist monk and French translator who is the right-hand man for the Dalai Lama, has been declared the “Happiest Man in the World”. When asked about this, he humbly smiled and completely shunned the declaration. He jokingly mentioned, “It is better than being labeled as the unhappiest man in the world!”

Dr. Ricard, who is now 69, has been a celibate monk since he was 30. In the early 1970’s, he was thought to be one of the most promising biologists. He earned his PhD from the Pasteur Institute in Paris, under the supervision of Nobel Prize winner Francois Jacob. Soon thereafter, in a



shocking move, he abandoned his scientific career and moved to Darjeeling, India to study Buddhism—which ultimately led him to discover his true self.



Why would a person, who was clearly a rising star with everything going for him in the world, give it all up to become a monk? Perhaps one reason is his unique perspective on

attaining happiness. Dr. Ricard mentions, “we constantly look externally for happiness and have deluded ideas about what would make us happy—fame, power, money, and whatever else we crave. We yearn for happiness by turning our backs to it, and we fear suffering but seem to be addicted to the course of suffering.”



This is in no way to suggest that we give up our lives and become monks or saints. But if we want to experience true happiness, this inward journey, introspection, is imperative. One way to accomplish this is by reflecting upon our actions at the end of the day.

It is only by introspecting that we can identify our faults and recalculate our approach. We can figure out what we did wrong:



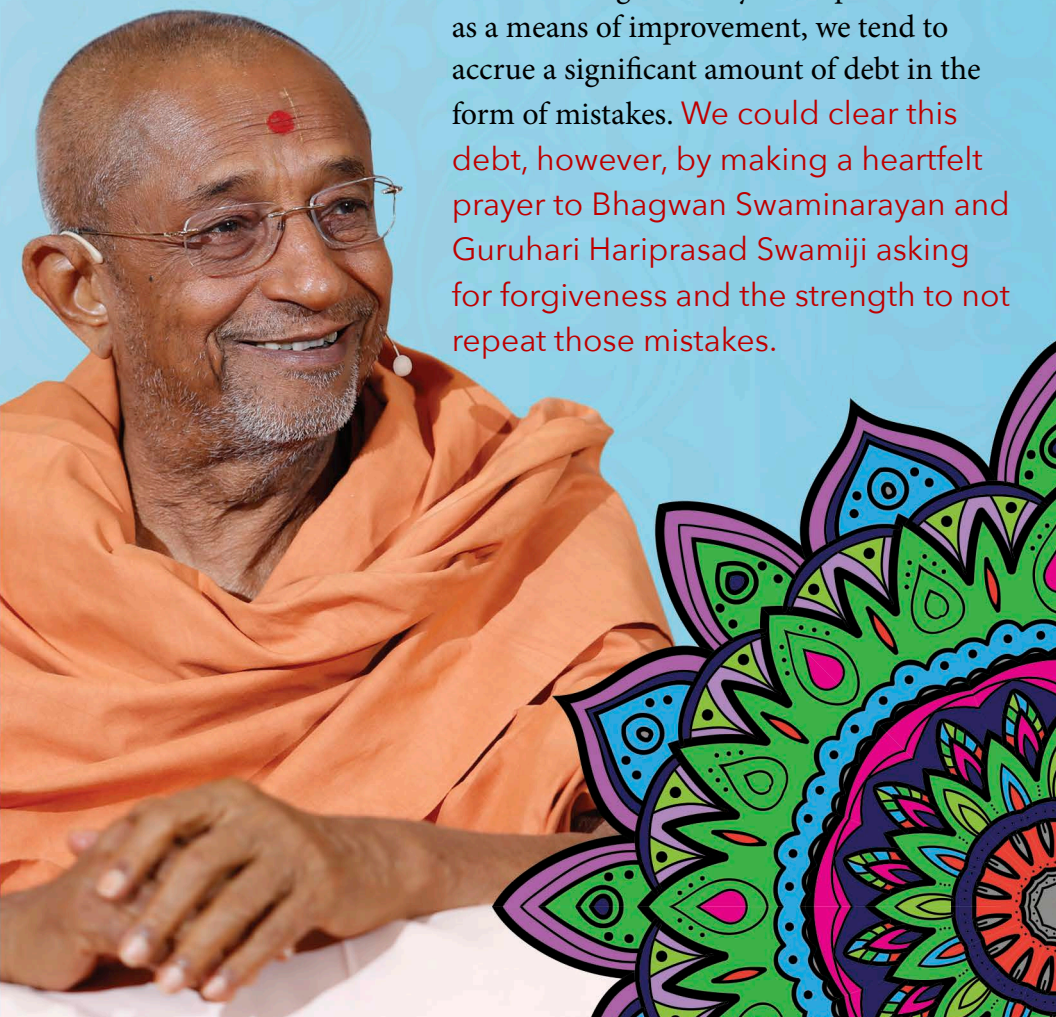
- Did we misuse our senses?
- Did we indulge excessively?
- Did we hurt someone by our words?
- Did we judge someone?
- Did we disrespect our parents in any manner?
- Did we treat others the way we want to be treated?





Just as we need to sweep the floor every night to remove the small trash that tends to accumulate, seemingly out of nowhere, we need to introspect at night to thoroughly analyze the day's situations and remove any negative thoughts that have accumulated. It's a unique way to atone for any mistakes or sins we may knowingly or unknowingly have committed.

Sometimes we also forget to thank God for our success and we may, out of frustration, even blame Him for our failures. By making mistakes such as these, and not doing our daily introspection as a means of improvement, we tend to accrue a significant amount of debt in the form of mistakes. **We could clear this debt, however, by making a heartfelt prayer to Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji asking for forgiveness and the strength to not repeat those mistakes.**



No Time is Too Late

As we carry on our routine, day-to-day lives, we make numerous small mistakes without even realizing it. Perhaps we raised our voice with a friend or judged someone negatively. Or perhaps we got angry at our elders or misused our senses. Whatever our mistakes are, one way to account for them, and consciously improve upon them is through daily introspection in the form of *bhajan-swadhyay*. Regardless of any circumstance, even if we are exhausted, Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji stresses the importance of taking time for *bhajan-swadhyay*. One such exemplary instance is of a youth in Chicago, IL (USA).

Swamiji has completed vichran in hundreds of centers across the world and still continues to do so even today! Prior to Swamiji's arrival at an any location, the local devotees are filled with tremendous joy and excitement. The local devotees all work together and strive to ensure that preparations are as perfect as possible to provide the maximum comfort for Swamiji and the other saints and devotees who typically accompany Him.

On one such occasion, when Swamiji was visiting Chicago in early August 2013, His overnight stay had been arranged at the farmhouse of a devotee. The farmhouse, which had only been recently purchased, was large enough to accommodate many devotees. Therefore, two *sabhas* had also been organized at the farmhouse during Swamiji's stay. Needless to say, immense preparation was required for organizing the two *sabhas* as well as the accommodations for Swamiji and the saints. Hence, a local group of energetic youths were sent to the farmhouse in the morning prior to Swamiji's arrival at night.

Upon arrival, the youths broke up into teams and began working on the various *sevas* such as decorations, sleeping accommodations, and *sabha* preparations. All the youths worked with great effort, enthusiasm, and vigor to ensure that nothing was overlooked. However, morning quickly turned to afternoon, and afternoon quickly turned to evening. But there was still a lot of work left to accomplish! By the time the all of the preparations were complete, it was 2:00 AM!

Though all the youths thoroughly enjoyed the day, many of them had not eaten and were tremendously tired from the long day. In fact, by the time all the *sevas* had been completed, some of the youths were having a hard time even keeping their eyes open! Hence, the youths began to make sleeping arrangements in one of the rooms in the farmhouse.

At this point, one youth named Suchetanbhai, did not go to sleep right away. Instead, he sat on the floor and was silently praying. After 30 minutes, Suchetanbhai finished praying and got up to make his sleeping arrangements. By this time, another youth, who had noticed Suchetanbhai praying, was curious as to why Suchetanbhai just spent 30 minutes praying at two in the morning after a long, grueling day. After all, all the youths had just completed hours and hours of *seva* and doing prayer on top of all that seemed a little excessive.

Hence, the youth asked Suchetanbhai if everything was alright. Suchetanbhai smiled



and calmly replied, “Yes, everything is perfect! I was just doing my *bhajan-swadhyay*.”

Upon hearing Suchetanbhai’s response, the youth was astounded by his dedication and commitment to Swamiji’s wish of completing daily *bhajan-swadhyay* without fail! Even though Suchetanbhai was extremely tired he did not let his laziness overpower him.

For many years, Swamiji has stressed the importance of introspection on a daily basis. Swamiji has repeatedly stated that 30 minutes of prayer, or *bhajan-swadhyay*, right before going to sleep is one easy way for us to remain spiritually debt free. In these 30 minutes, we should first mentally review our day and try to identify any mistakes we may have made. Then we should pray to God to forgive our mistakes and to give us the strength to not repeat the same mistakes again. It is also important to spend some time contemplating on the glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Swamiji, and how truly fortunate we are to have their constant guidance.



Introspection is a topic very close to Swamiji’s heart. In fact, Swamiji even has a slogan which signifies the importance of introspection to remain spiritually debt free.

“Roj nu devu
roj jukvi devu”

So just as Suchetanbhai did his daily *bhajan-swadhyay*, let us also sincerely make a commitment of conducting our own introspection on a daily basis—no matter how tired or busy we are—so that we can remain debt free!

COOL FACT

Dr. Judd Blaslotto of the University of Chicago conducted a study on basketball players. One group was told to practice free throws for 30 minutes every day. The other group was told to visualize themselves making the free throw in. A third control group did nothing.

After a month of this training, the first group improved by 24%. But surprisingly, the second group who just visualized themselves making the shot improved by a comparable 23%. The last group did not improve at all. It seems that just taking out some time to plan, strategize, and envision yourself doing something can actually help you achieve it.



Laugh out Loud

Boy: Our principal is so unfair and stupid.

Girl: Don't you know who I am?

Boy: No.

Girl: I am the principal's daughter.

Boy: Do you know who I am?

Girl: No.

Boy: Good.
(Walks away)



A Fresh Start

The New Year is a great time for great beginnings. It's a time to make resolutions. A time to finally decide to do all those things you always wanted to do, but could not gather enough motivation to actually accomplish.

As one year comes to a close and a new year begins, merchants and entrepreneurs tend to close their business accounts for the year and begin with a new book of accounts for the upcoming year. Just like we start anew with clothes, foods, and business accounts, Guruhari Swamiji emphasizes that we should also start our new year by introspecting our spiritual progress—how much did we grow spiritually and where did we fall back?

As a result of introspecting, coupled with *bhajan* and prayer, we will not only be able to energize our mind and reorient our priorities, but God will provide the internal strength and willpower to accomplish our personal and spiritual goals. In addition, because introspecting is something so dear to Swamiji, we will earn not only His blessings, but something much greater.

Once at Vasna farm in India, Guruhari Swamiji was getting ready for his aaram at night. The assisting saints, Sarvanaman Swami and Haridarshan Swami, were next to Swamiji singing the *chesta*. Midway through the *chesta*, they sang the line

“Prem ke paryank par Prabhu
karat sukh aaram.”

“God blissfully rests on a
bed of devotional love”

At that moment, the assisting saints got a thought, ‘Does Swamiji reside and sleep within our hearts?’

Swamiji, just as if he were reading their every thought, quietly



said, “I don’t sleep on a mattress, I sleep in the hearts of devotees.”

Then Haridarshan Swami, asked, “What do we need to do so you can always rest in our hearts?”

This question is extremely important for all us because we all wish to progress steadily on the spiritual path. Swamiji earnestly replied, “If you introspect and clean your hearts by doing *bhajan-swadhyay* on a daily basis then I will rest in your hearts. It’s not pleasant to rest in a heart filled with filth.”

Swamiji is eager to forever reside within our hearts and minds, but we need to make the proper arrangements within ourselves. By introspecting, identifying the dirt and negativity we may accumulate throughout the day, and doing wholehearted *bhajan*, we can create the perfect environment within us, so that Bhagwan and Swamiji can reside.

In a recent sermon, Swamiji mentioned that He does not sleep without doing an hour of *bhajan-swadhyay* on a daily basis. If our beloved Swamiji manages to make time for an hour of *bhajan-swadhyay* amidst a very hectic schedule, that too on a daily basis, what excuse do we have to not follow His example? We must strive to make time for our introspection through *bhajan-swadhyay* so that we are able to take one step towards Him!





Four things to keep in mind while Introspecting

- 1. Set your ego aside** - Oftentimes we tend to view ourselves with 'rose-tinted lenses' meaning that we are too forgiving of our own mistakes and, in turn, very harsh on mistakes made by others. By setting our ego aside, we can begin to actually see all of the mistakes we make on a daily basis.
- 2. Remember these mistakes** - While we should not keep our mistakes in the forefront of our minds, we should try to remember our daily mistakes, at least until we can sit and introspect. If we forget all of our mistakes, then even trying to notice them in the first place becomes a worthless exercise.
- 3. Take time out at the end of every day to do *bhajan*** - Once we know what we have done wrong, we can do *bhajan* and ask for forgiveness from God, so that we can wipe our daily slate clean of mistakes. Additionally, we should ask for the guidance and strength that will allow us to not repeat these mistakes again, thereby furthering our spiritual progress.
- 4. Talk to a Bhagwadi** - If you find yourself making the same mistakes repeatedly to the point where you are stuck, you should take time to take to a Bhagwadi and share with them where you are getting stuck. By talking to our leaders and learning from them, we can make our progress that much speedier.



"During the day, you may accidentally fail through the senses by either seeing immoral things, listening to negative talk, or by eating or speaking inappropriately. But if you introspect at night, think about the inspirational lives of Gunatit Purusho [who have never failed], perform *bhajan*, and wholeheartedly pray for strength and alertness, then you have not failed, but you have passed."

- Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji

A Divine Glimpse

On December 26th, 2016, Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji was at the Haridham temple in India. He was interacting and meeting with many devotees and youths. That evening, Swamiji called everyone into the hall and performed a discourse (below are a few key points).



If you fail with your senses in any way, then doing a heartfelt prayer and sincere *bhajan* at night is the only way to prevent that action from staining your mind and soul.



Please, under any circumstance, do not watch movies. Those who watch movies will never attain spiritual enlightenment this birth.



Pratham-16 is an extremely important *Vachanamrut* for all. If you, even accidentally, hear gossip or negative talks of others, then immediately tell the person to stop speaking and that you are not interested. Else, you will share responsibility of that sin.

