

## MODERN SPIRITUAL MASTERS

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MODERN SPIRITUAL MASTERS SERIES

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Essential Writings



*Selected with an Introduction by*  
CHARLES E. MOORE

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# I

## Conversations



### DARSHANA • *THE DIVINE PRESENCE*

*Seeker:* Sadhu-ji, I am searching for inner peace, but the many religions and philosophies I have studied fill me only with doubts and questions. I am no longer even sure if God exists. Can you help me find spiritual truth?

*Sadhu:* Only the fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” Such a thought says nothing about the existence or nonexistence of God, but only about the skeptic’s own spiritual blindness and inability to recognize God. Indeed, atheists deny the existence of God altogether, but they cannot prove their claim that God does not exist. Even if we assume for the sake of argument that they are correct, we would only further the cause of ignorance, not the cause of truth, because what could be a greater waste of time than to try and prove the nonexistence of something that doesn’t even exist? Time would be better spent on more worthwhile pursuits. Yet if God does exist, as all spiritually enlightened souls know, then it would be still greater foolishness to try and prove God’s nonexistence. Though many argue that the belief in God is a

harmful superstition that must be eliminated for the sake of human progress, the opposite is the case. Uncounted spiritual blessings have enriched the lives of those who believe.

Unlike atheists, agnostics believe neither in the existence nor in the nonexistence of God. They claim that we cannot know whether God exists. But again this is a mistake. We have an innate longing in our hearts to know God, and every race in every age has shown in some form or another its deep craving for God. Is God simply a human invention, as an ancient philosopher once said? He argued the following: "In the primeval age of disorder and violence, as always, laws could punish crimes committed in the open day, but they could not touch the secret crimes hidden in the gloomy depths of conscience. So the best way to make people lead moral lives was to make them afraid by inventing gods who could see and hear all things, not only all human actions, but also the inmost thoughts and intentions of the human heart." Yet, even this argument actually acknowledges that the human soul is incomplete and unfulfilled without God.

Some claim that God is unknowable, but this is utter nonsense. Such an assertion can only be made on the basis of some kind of limited knowledge of God. If God is completely beyond our knowing, how can we know that he is unknowable?

*Seeker:* Can no one prove to me whether God exists, so that I can know the truth?

*Sadhu:* God has no need or desire for anyone to prove his existence. Our arguments are feeble, our minds limited. God could have provided proofs convincing enough, way beyond anything we could imagine. God desires rather that we

should enjoy his life-giving presence and so bear witness to something far more sublime and convincing than anything the rational mind can produce.

Our spirits live and grow in our human bodies much like the chick develops inside the egg. If it were possible for the chick to be told that a great world waits beyond its shell, that this world is filled with fruits and flowers, rivers and great mountains, and that its own mother is also there waiting for it to be set free and to experience this splendor, the chick could still neither comprehend nor believe it. Even if one explained that its feathers and wings and eyes were developing so that it could fly and see, still it would not be able to believe it, nor would any proof be possible, until it broke through its shell.

In the same way, there are many people who cannot comprehend the spiritual life or the existence of God because they cannot see beyond the confines of their bodily sense. Their thoughts — like delicate wings — cannot yet carry them beyond the narrow confines of logic. Their weak eyes cannot yet make out those eternal treasures that God has prepared for his children. The only condition necessary for us to break out of our material limitations and attain spiritual life is that we accept the life-giving warmth of God's spirit, just as the chick receives its mother's warmth. Without that warmth, we will not take on the nature of the Spirit, and we may die without ever hatching out of this material body.

We have been endowed with spiritual senses so that we can feel and enjoy God's presence. But the influence of irreverence and sin deadens these senses till we are no longer able to see beyond ourselves, nor beyond the material world. As long as we follow this path, we cannot believe that God exists, and so we starve ourselves until in the end we have

committed spiritual suicide. Our end is total enslavement to the material world.

*Seeker:* If we cannot prove that God exists, then how can we ever know God or any spiritual truth?

*Sadhu:* God is the author of creation and provides all that is necessary for our well-being. If it were helpful or necessary for us to know God perfectly already now, then God would have provided the means to meet that need. Quite the contrary, it is important for our own spiritual growth that we persevere in trying to know more of God. True and satisfying knowledge of anything is always the fruit of mental exertion and the exercise of our own consciousness.

God is infinite while we are finite. We can never fully comprehend the infinite, but we do have within us a spiritual sense that allows us to recognize and enjoy God's presence. The ocean is vast beyond our imagining, and it would never be possible for a person to fathom it or take in all its great treasures. But with the tip of our tongues we can recognize at once that the ocean is salty. We have not understood even a fraction of all there is to know about the ocean, but with our sense of taste we can experience its essence.

In the end, how can we expect to have full knowledge of the creator, when even our knowledge of created things is limited? We know a little about the physical characteristics of the created world, but we know next to nothing about the unseen spiritual world. Indeed, we know next to nothing about our own spiritual lives. If we had complete knowledge of our own spiritual nature, then perhaps we would be capable of knowing the nature of God, for we were created in his image.

From the moment of birth, every child loves its mother dearly in its own way, but the child cannot know and love the mother as the mother loves the child. With age, the child grows to know the mother better and to enjoy her company in new, fulfilling ways. Our knowledge and age would have to be infinite if we were to truly comprehend God who is infinite. But at every age and level of knowledge we can appreciate and enjoy some aspect of God's presence. Why do we need to know more than this? As we grow spiritually, we will come to know more and more of God, but there is no need to be impatient. Eternity stretches before us.

One day I saw a flower and began to contemplate its fragrance and beauty. As I thought more deeply, I recognized the creator of such wonders — not with my mortal eyes but with my spiritual eyes. This filled my heart with joy, but my joy was still greater when I recognized that same creator at work within my own soul. How wonderful is God, separate from creation and yet ever filling it with his glorious presence.

*Seeker:* Since we know so little about God's nature, how is it even possible to recognize his divine presence?

*Sadhu:* Many people experience the Master's presence without actually seeing him. When we apply medicine drops to our eyes, we experience the healing effect, but we cannot see the drops. In the same way, we recognize the presence of the Master and his work of cleansing our inner eyes and aiding our spiritual sight even though we cannot see him.

Those who turn to the Master with open hearts will feel his power and experience peace. It is like something sweet on the tongue. Both our sense of taste and the sweetness of the sugar are invisible to the eye. Similarly, the Master sustains

us with unseen nourishment — wisdom that the five senses cannot grasp.

God is revealed in the book of nature for God is its author. Yet we comprehend this book only if we have the necessary spiritual insight. Without reverence and perception we go astray. We cannot judge the truthfulness of any book merely by reading it. Agnostics and skeptics, for example, find only defects instead of perfection. Skeptics ask, “If there is an almighty creator, why then are there hurricanes, earthquakes, pain, suffering, death, etc.?” This is like criticizing an unfinished building or incomplete painting. When we see them fully finished, we are embarrassed at our own folly and praise the skill of the artist. God did not shape the world into its present form in a single day, nor will it be perfected in a single day. The whole creation moves toward completion, and if we see it with the eyes of God moving toward the perfect world without fault or blemish, then we can only bow humbly before our creator and exclaim, “It is very good.”

*Seeker:* From what you say, Sadhu, it seems to require patience and great effort to recognize God’s presence. What do we actually gain by seeking God?

*Sadhu:* A mother once left her child for a time playing in the garden. When her little son noticed she was not there, he searched the whole garden over. He looked everywhere but could not find her. Finally he cried and called out, but still she did not appear. The gardener saw him crying and tried to calm him, saying: “Do not cry! Look at these beautiful flowers and delicious mangoes. Shall I pick some for you?” But the child answered: “No! No! My mother has bet-

ter food than these mangoes and her love is far sweeter than all these flowers. I want my mother.” When his mother heard these words, she rushed out, embraced him, and smothered him with kisses. At that moment, the garden became a paradise. This world is like a great garden full of wonderful and beautiful flowers, but we cannot find true joy in it until we meet God.

*Seeker:* So how do I find the path to spiritual truth and to knowledge of God?

*Sadhu:* God never discourages a seeker by judging his or her beliefs to be wrong. Rather, God allows each person to recognize spiritual error or truth by degrees. The story is told of a poor grass cutter who found a beautiful stone in the jungle. He had often heard of people finding valuable diamonds and thought this must be one. He took it to a jeweler and showed it to him with delight. Being a kind and sympathetic man, the jeweler knew that if he bluntly told the grass cutter that his stone was worthless glass, the man would either refuse to believe it or else fall into a state of depression. So instead, the jeweler offered the grass cutter some work in his shop so that he might become better acquainted with precious stones and their value.

Meanwhile, the man kept his stone safely locked away in a strongbox. Several weeks later, the jeweler encouraged the man to bring out his own stone and examine it. As soon as he took it out of the chest and looked at it more closely, he immediately saw that it was worthless. His disappointment was great, but he went to the jeweler and said: “I thank you that you did not destroy my hope but aided me instead to see my mistake on my own. If you will have me, I will stay

with you and faithfully serve you, as you are a good and kind master.” In the same way, God leads back to truth those who have wandered into error. When they recognize the truth for themselves, they gladly and joyfully give themselves in obedient service.

Some say that desire is the root cause of all pain and sorrow. According to this philosophy, salvation consists in eliminating all desire, including any desire for eternal bliss or communion with God. But when someone is thirsty, do we tell him to kill his thirst instead of giving him water to drink? To drive out thirst without quenching it with life-sustaining water is to drive out life itself. The result is death, not salvation. Thirst is an expression of our need for water and a sign of hope that somewhere there is water that can satisfy our thirst. Similarly, the deep longing in our soul is a clear sign of hope that spiritual peace exists. Something can satisfy our thirsty souls. When the soul finds God, the author of that spiritual thirst, it receives far greater satisfaction than any thirsty man who receives water. When the soul’s desire is satisfied, we have found heaven.

The water of a river that has its source in one country may flow through many different countries before it reaches the sea. It passes within the domain of many chiefs, rajahs, and princes. Yet no country has the right to stop it and keep it within its territory. It is the common property of all, and wherever it goes, it quenches the thirst of all. In the same way, the stream of life comes forth from the ocean of God’s love, streaming to earth again as rain and then flowing as a river through the channels of the prophets and holy ones to irrigate the world. In this way, it quenches thirsty souls, enriching and restoring the lives of people and nations

everywhere. Whoever desires it can freely take of this gift of life.

*Seeker:* If this life is freely given, then does God expect nothing from us? Don't we owe him some kind of worship?

*Sadhu:* People are foolish to believe that they confer some favor on God by their worship. Those who approach worship with such an attitude know nothing of the true nature of God. If we love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and if we love our neighbor as ourselves, then we will experience God's presence. This is worship. Eternal life will spring forth in our hearts; the fire of love will melt and forge us anew into the image of our creator.

The Master has said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." It is not hard to live for a few days in peace with someone—even one who is unfriendly. But if someone lives near us and annoys us day in and day out, then it becomes a difficult task even to endure—much less to love—that person. Yet if we can win through this great struggle, then we will find it all the easier to love others.

God is love, and the ability to love is inborn in every living creature, most especially in human beings. It is only right therefore that the Lover who has given us life and love itself should also receive love from us. God's love is creative and selfless, giving itself for the joy and benefit of creation. If we do not love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength and if we do not love others freely and selflessly, then the love within us loses its divine character and turns to selfishness. Love then becomes a curse. Ironically, those who are selfish end up destroying themselves.