

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AS VEDA

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Sai Baba has said that in its original form, the Bible was *sruti*, a direct transmission from God. Perhaps nowhere is that more evident than in the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In the Bible we are told that the Ten Commandments were considered so important that God Himself inscribed them with His finger on two tablets of stone. Here is a portion of the Bible passage:

"In the morning there were peals of thunder and lightning, and a heavy cloud came over the mountain. Then there was a very loud trumpet blast so that all the people in the camp trembled. Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God, and stationed himself at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was all wrapped in smoke, for the Lord had come down upon it in fire. The trumpet blast grew louder and louder, and the whole mountain shook violently, while Moses was speaking and God was answering with thunder... Then God gave the commandments:"

1. I am the Lord, your God. You shall have no other gods besides Me.

Let us consider this first commandment. What is the deeper meaning of this direction given importance here, overshadowing every other injunction regulating human life? It is the realization that for all our lives and for all time, we are bathed in the continuous presence of the One God, a God who has no second. He fills the whole Universe and all other worlds that we could possibly conceive of, with his conscious, magnificent presence, and at the same time resides as the indwelling Spirit and motivator in all hearts. Baba said to Dr. Hislop, "It is my direct experience that I live in the heart of every being." That is the essence of this commandment... the Unity of God. When Jesus was asked what is the first commandment, he answered that God is one, there is no other, and therefore we must love Him with all our hearts and all our minds. This is the essence of every major religion... speaking of the One Divine life expressing itself in endless varieties of form; but all these seemingly separate lives are just one in Him. It follows, therefore, that we are forever children in our Father's house, and so we are all brothers.

Therefore, the starting point for the journey is to know and experience the Unity of God. We must reach the deep conviction that there is no place on this Earth or anywhere in the Universe, or anywhere in the highest heaven of our dreams or the worst hell of our fears, where we can go and be outside of this all-embracing circle of Divine Unity. We cannot hide from It. We cannot escape It. That Unity, the one God, is everywhere, and there is nowhere and in no one where He is not.

2. You shall not take the Name of the Lord, your God, in vain.

To get to the essence meaning of the second commandment, let us inquire into His Name; what truly is this Name that we must not use in vain? Moses asked God directly, "What is Your Name, Lord? Please tell me Your Name." And God answered him from out of the burning bush, "I AM... that is My Name... I AM Who AM." In 'I am' we find the vital link between God and ourselves; it is these very words that we use as subject to describe ourselves. If I were to say, "I am Drucker", I would be calling out the name of God. The 'I am' of this statement is about God, and the 'Drucker' is about some changing name and form.

'I am' is eternally unchanging, exquisitely potent and free from all limitations... capable of being transformed into an infinity of 'others'. 'Drucker' or any other such appellation is finite, limited, transient, and impotent, for it has no existence of its own. Without the 'I am' it is essentially nothing but a mirage. 'I am' or just 'I', is the one divine essence in everyone and everything. In the evening, Baba says, a thousand husbands return from work and knock on their respective house doors. A thousand wives ask, "Who is it?" and all answer, "It is I." Everyone uses the same 'I' to relate to himself. Whatever

state he is in, waking, dreaming, deep sleep, or the deepest spiritual rapture, the 'I' remains, for it is changeless, universal and eternal.

Sai Baba has spoken of this 'I am' as the divine sweetness that pervades everything in the Universe, being the unchanging substratum that underlies all the changing names and forms...it is the 'I' that makes up His shining existence and presence in all Creation; "I am the Self in the heart of all beings". Krishna says in the Gita, "I am the beginning, the middle, and the end." Every time we say 'I' or 'I am' we are confirming that God exists; what's more, it proclaims that He exists in us, for that is what we call ourselves.

To say, "I am just a wretched sinner, a lowly, unimportant nobody", has to be a falsehood and therefore is taking the name of the Lord in vain. Here then is the deeper essence meaning of this commandment. "Say, 'I am a child of immortality' or 'I am the embodiment of love and peace and bliss.' And not only say so, but live your life accordingly." says Baba. That is the way to glorify the Name. "Let your life be your message, just as My life is My message. Live in love, Live in God, for truly That you are." In the Bible He says, "Be a holy people. Be a light onto the nations. Be an example to all." So we must let the 'I am' that we claim for ourselves, and that is always part of us, be only associated with that which It truly is, namely the Divinity itself, manifested through the goodness in us.

3. Remember and keep the holy Sabbath day. Six days you can labor but on the seventh day you must rest and keep the day holy.

As indicated in the previous section, our principal mission on Earth is to make our lives a message of purity and godliness, just as His life, when He incarnates as man, is a message of purity and perfection. By filling our lives with devotion and dedication, and by engaging in activities that create new order and harmony around us, we are naturally led step by step, to the realization of the Unity. Then as our exemplar spreads to others in the society we will find a steady gravitation towards that ideal universal condition which is called the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God. This is the Unity which becomes our personal and collective goal. But, this Unity cannot be realized as long as we know ourselves only as body and mind, rather than as Spirit.

When man knows himself as Spirit, he realizes that sharing and giving is the condition of growth. Spiritual riches increase in the using; they don't perish. Even as they are given away they multiply in our hands. Even as they are shared they are more fully possessed. Therefore the feeling of Unity encompassing all life, must have its roots in Spirit. There are two laws for the Soul's evolution. One concerns its temporary clothing, the body and mind, and the other concerns the Spirit. The law for the material body is the law of action and reaction, or the Law of Karma, in which every action gives rise to a reaction. By these interactions the coarser part of our being evolves. Therefore, the body thrives by wisely-directed activity. In the same way the Spirit within these outer bodies and minds, lives and thrives by sacrifice. This is the second law, the law of renunciation. Sacrifice yourself and live. Give and you will receive.

Being in step with the law of life means working hard and well in the world, creating order and harmony by our activity, serving life everywhere, and dedicating the fruit of our labors to God. Being in step with the law of Spirit is to renounce worldly activities and attachments and devote ourselves to holy communion with God. One foot in the world, the other in the Spirit; on the one hand hard work, on the other hand surrender and faith in God; the Bible teaches us this two-part path of the Soul's evolution towards perfection and Unity.

We are enjoined to engage ourselves fully and meaningfully in hard work for six days, and then rest on the seventh day, devoting that day in thanksgiving to the Lord. It is not necessary to take the commandment literally, rather it is the underlying sentiment that counts... we are to spend most of our available time actively involved in the world and renounce the fruit of our actions and dedicate them to the Lord; but in addition to and separate from our work, we must also regularly set aside a given time

when we completely withdraw from worldly activity and devote ourselves with full absorption in God alone. That is the meaning of this third commandment. It can refer to a daily spiritual practice consisting of meditation, prayer, devotional singing, or mantra, as well as a weekly day of rest and devotion as would be taken from the literal meaning.

4. Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long and prosperous life.

This, of course, is directly in line with Sai Baba's directions and the ancient wisdom teachings, that mother and father are to be considered divine, and to be loved and honored and respected. This is but a token repayment in gratitude for the sacrifice they have undergone in bringing us into the world, and lovingly nurturing us and raising us, while denying themselves many of their own interests and comforts. Here is a straight-forward statement of the Law of Karma... love your parents and you will be loved as a parent... love your parents, and through your loving attention help them to achieve a long and fulfilling life, then you too will reach a long and prosperous life.

In some ways we are our own parents. As a result of our actions in other bodies and in other lives we have come into birth again in these bodies. To pay our dues in suffering and enjoyment for these ancient actions we have chosen the circumstances for our incarnation, including our parents. They are our finest instruments for clearing our debts and reaching God. For us they are love itself. And when through thick and thin, through good times and bad, they become the embodiment of all that is loving within us, then the differences vanish... father becomes a dear older version of myself, mother becomes the sweet, divine, mothering, and giving aspect of myself... whatever the outer form, my love sees not the differences but the essential oneness, recognizing in them another manifestation of myself. In that way, we win the first victory on an expanding cycle traveling outwards from the little selfish self to the one selfless Self. Eventually this wave of self-recognition encompasses the whole Universe, as our self discovers itself in all, and thereby knows itself to be one with God. That is the great promise of this fourth commandment... divinity through Unity, reached through love of parents and God.

5. You shall not kill.

This is a short, simple statement, but this commandment may be responsible, more than any other pronouncement ever made, for the small but nevertheless significant changes in social attitudes that have come about in the Western world in the past 3500 years, and which have given rise to the slow but steady elevation of the world conscience. This is a social and ethical injunction. It commands us to adjudicate our quarrels and differences by turning to law rather than resorting to the sword. In effect it says, 'Keep your anger and your passions in check. Be patient and cool and equanimous; think before you act. Live as civilized, self-regulated and disciplined human beings. If you willfully, needlessly or wantonly destroy life, then you will darken your discrimination, heap sin upon yourself and thereby further separate yourself from yourself and God. Even within your own being you will become a stranger in a strange land, remaining tightly bound-up by chains of your own making.' In its broadest context this is a statement of Ahimsa; it is a commandment to honor and respect all life. For the evolving soul the truth given in this commandment is to cherish all life, for all are manifestations of the One Divine Life.

We find the Prophets and Psalmists singing of a world steeped in peace, where even the strong nations will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and nations shall not lift up their sword against nation and they shall make war no more... and every man will sit under his vine and fig tree and not be afraid... and the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion shall frolic together. This is Ahimsa in its deepest sense. Perhaps its most beautiful expression is embedded in the lyrical poetry of the 23rd Psalm:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters." This is the pastoral image, a vision of a world free of violence, a heaven on Earth that is our soul's natural home.

6. You shall not commit adultery.

This commandment instructs us to honor the institution of marriage, and thereby protect the sanctity of the family and the home. It goes directly with the fourth commandment, for how can we truly honor and revere our father and mother unless their marriage vows of mutual fidelity to each other remain sacred, and the marriage, the home and family that they have created is secure.

Sai Baba has spoken of marriage as the union of two souls for the purpose of gaining self-control and selflessness. He said, "Ego is very harmful. It is for killing the ego that a man and woman are brought together in marriage, so that they can learn to adjust to one another and forget their egos. Marriage is a sacred bond; each become half. Half plus half becomes one, not two. I plus I becomes we. For human beings who are governed by the senses, God has created this union of marriage to satisfy them and help them develop their self-control." So we see that marriage is an important spiritual workshop for gaining mastery over selfishness, sensuality and the other lower qualities in our makeup; at the same time, it helps us develop the higher qualities such as charity, understanding, compassion, selflessness, and sacrifice. Adultery is the principal enemy that breaks up marriage and with it robs each soul of the opportunity for gaining crucial victories over its lower nature.

There is a deeper essence teaching contained in this commandment that deals not with the physical marriage of two individuals, but the inner spiritual marriage between the male and female aspects of our own nature... the two selves within us that are destined to be united as one Self. We are speaking of the natural marriage between the individual and the Universal, between man and God, between Jiva and Atma, between Nature and Spirit or mind and heart.

The duty of the mind is to serve, love and cherish its source, the spiritual heart. When mind turns its attention outwards to the attraction of the senses as they roam in the world, instead of turning its focus inwards to serve its master, then to the extent that we are identified with that wayward mind we are committing adultery and betraying our marriage vows and abandoning our birthright. For this is the one marriage that is truly made in heaven. We come into this sacred human birth for only one purpose and that is to realize our Reality. Mind is given to us as an instrument to take us to that goal. Baba has often said, "Mind alone is the key to liberation or bondage." Mind must only be allowed to follow the dictates of the heart, which knows the true mission of this life. If mind follows desires outwards, our life becomes a waste. That is one of the greatest sins we can commit, for we will have sold out this rare opportunity given to us to realize the Unity, and merge with our Divine Source.

7. You shall not steal.

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

10. You shall not desire your neighbor's house or field or anything that belongs to him.

These, as well as the previous two commandments, in their simplest and most obvious form, can be summarized by the one dictum: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself!' Jesus took this one step further by directing us to love our enemies as we love ourselves, and so it follows that we will love all without exception, doing unto others as we would have others do unto us. Then we cannot help but be honest; we cannot help but be truthful; we cannot help but be protective and supportive of others' rights to a peaceful and happy life; we cannot help but honor the integrity of our fellow man's home, his family, his property and his freedom; we cannot help but restrain any impulses to interfere in his personal life. We treat him as we treat ourselves, for he is our self, sacred and holy, one with God.

To steal is to claim what doesn't belong to us and call it ours. Does the body which we call 'our body' and this mind which we call 'our mind' really belong to us? Swami reminds us that the mind is like a mad monkey, we can't control it for even a moment. And the body is just a water bubble; we have no real control over it either. So they are really not ours. They have been given on loan for the purpose of achieving our mission here on Earth. In this context 'Do not steal' means do not claim ownership of that which doesn't belong to you; do not make false claims. What we truly can surrender to the Lord is this false sense of ownership, we can offer up this ego and its need to steal credit, to claim possession, to steal fame and worldly importance, and parade all these illusory claims as making up our real self.

There is still another aspect of stealing which is referred to in the Gita. He who is not grateful; he who enjoys what is given to him by the bountiful Nature without giving thanks, and offering sacrifices; such a one is verily a thief. 'The good, eating only what is left over from sacrifice, are freed from all sin; but they who prepare and consume only for themselves without offering and sharing, those sinful ones eat sin.' A similar thought is expressed in the first verse of the Isha Upanishad where we are told that only that which we have renounced and offered up can be enjoyed; and it adds, 'Lust not after any man's possession.' Even claiming the rewards for our labors and fruits of our actions is stealing, for rightfully these belong to God, to award as He sees fit. By dedicating our acts to God and renouncing the fruit of our actions, we are freed of their consequences; and in the process we also purify our discrimination and deepen our faith.

Stealing then, in its deeper sense, is non-sacrifice, ungratefulness and selfishness, all of which create separation and disunity. And so these are enemies which keep the Soul from reaching its goal.

Do no lie, do not cheat, do not cavil, do not slander, do not gossip, do not malign, do not bear false witness... all of these are contained in the eighth commandment. They are sins against Unity for they speak of disharmony between word, thought and deed. To bear false witness is the modus-operandi of the ego; illusion, delusion and false representation are its constant outputs. Ego lives by creating a separate illusory personality and steadily feeding and catering to it. Only when we completely wipe out all traces of this false messiah will we be able to truly obey this eighth commandment and gain some measure of inner peace. Baba tells us that ego is just an impostor who has no legitimate role to play in our being. Like an unwelcome guest, he is there under false pretences, and we will get no rest until we have rooted him out.

The last two commandments say, 'Do not desire, do not covet that which isn't yours.' This underscores the necessity of valuing the sanctity of the family, the property and the prosperity of your brother man, treating these with the same regard as you do for yourself. 'Property' means proper-tie, says Baba; and that proper tie is love. Love is the currency that connects us with all our fellow beings in a bond of mutual support. We are all at different stages in the Soul's evolution; each is working out his own Karma and each is directed to live his own Dharma, in other words, do his own assigned duty, and do it well. The grass may look greener in our neighbor's garden, but if we covet it, we do so at the cost of losing our spiritual attainments. For then, the scripture warns us, we will surely fall off our path and end up in the by-ways, lost and forlorn.

In the Gita, Krishna instructs Arjuna, "Better one's own dharma (duty) done poorly than another's done well. Another's dharma is fraught with danger." And then He adds, "But best to abandon all dharmas and surrender yourself in complete devotion to Me. I will look after all your needs." So that is the ultimate instruction for life in the world... if we surrender ourselves fully, He will take care of everything we need in the way of worldly goods and props, in order for the Soul to finish its task. Give up the little self and all its attachments and desires. Hold on to only one attachment and one desire, and that is to reach His Lotus Feet. Hanker after Him; desire Him; covet Him; crave Him; attach to Him... that way and only that way, will we reach our goal and make this life worthwhile.

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