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The Spiritual Side

Hinduism Today: Can you share with us a little about your preparation for initiation by the Ramakrishna Order?

Bob Kindler: It's definitely an inner process. The tree is always in the seed, but the seed must be planted and watered for the tree to grow. In a spiritual initiation, both the Guru and the disciple have to be ready. If the initiation is successful, the disciple has the Guru's grace. But still, he must measure up, and this requires self-effort. This involves the practice of the four yogas. They are all tied up in a one process, and they all help to fulfill a need to get deeper in the depth of our being. Aside from all of this, the Ramaskrishna Order is not easy to get initiated into. You have to take it seriously.

Q: Can you say something more about grace?

A: Sri Ramakrishna used to say the breeze of God is always blowing, but you have to raise your sail to catch it. Raising the sail is the sadhana. If we are not continually practicing sadhana, the mirror of the mind becomes dusty. Grace and self-effort must work together.

Q: Why is self-effort important?

A: We put forth a lot of self-effort until we realize that it is not the effort that is

getting us anywhere. We still feel we have to strive, but the striving becomes surrender. At that point we begin to realize there was something that was there all of the time that never changed. It was our very Self.

Q: What Is your major spiritual challenge?

A: Rooting out samskaras. Meditation and discrimination removes samskaras, both good and bad. Raja Yoga is the royal road to reality.

Q: What is the spiritual goal of your life?

A: There have been several. First, it was to help others. Then, it was jivanmukti. Yet, even that seemed to be selfish. Finally, it was just being fully satisfied and happy where the Divine Mother put me. Now, it's total surrender.

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