

3. God As Guide

God is Supreme Energy (*Mahasakthi*) and the individual being is deluding power (*mayasakthi*); He is the genuine, the individual being is but the shadow, the appearance, the delusion. Even I have to put on deluding power to come into your midst, like the policeman who is compelled to wear the dress of the thief so that he can get entry into the gang of thieves to apprehend them and bring them to book! The Lord cannot come down with His Supreme Energy unimpaired; He has to come with diminished splendour and limited effulgence, so that He can become the object of devotion and dedicated service.

In this world, which is impermanent and ever transforming, the Immanent Power of the Lord is the only permanent and fixed entity. In order to realise the eternal and the true, one has perforce to attach oneself to that Source and Sustenance. There is no escape from this path. It is the destiny of one and all, irrespective of age or scholarship, clime or caste, sex or status.

While proceeding along the road, you can watch your shadow falling on mud or dirt, hollow or mound, thorn or sand, wet or dry patches of land. You are unaffected by the fate of your shadow, is it not? Nor is the shadow made dirty thereby. It does not worry in the least where it falls or what it wades through. We know that the shadow and its experiences are not eternal or true. Similarly, you must get convinced that “you” are but the shadow of the Absolute; you are essentially not this “you” but the absolute itself. That is the remedy for sorrow, travail, and pain.

The first step in spiritual discipline

Of course, it is only at the end of a long and systematic process of spiritual practice that you will get fixed in the truth; until then, you are apt to identify yourself with this body and forget that the body, which casts a shadow, is itself a shadow. The first step in spiritual practice is adherence to *dharma* (righteousness) in every individual and social act. The *dharma* that is followed in relation to the objective world will automatically lead on to *dharma* in the spiritual field also; only you must stick to it through thick and thin.

When Aswathama in the blindness of his fury slaughtered the children of the Pandavas, Arjuna, who caught him prisoner, threatened to cut off his head; but Droupadi, the bereaved mother, interceded to save him! She said it was not *dharma* to return murder for murder, to slay the son of one’s own guru. Such steadfastness is needed in the path of *dharma*; that alone is the sign of true surrender: “Let the Will of the Lord prevail; one’s duty is but to connect oneself with the current of His Grace.”

While in jail, the prisoner cannot call even his clothes his own; so too, while in this jail serving your term, what can you call your own? He gives you food and clothing. He lets you go when the sentence ends, or perhaps sooner if He is pleased by your behaviour while in prison.

Keep the faith in the Lord undiminished

The greatest obstacle on the path of surrender is egoism and mineness or possessiveness. It is something that has been inhering in your personality since ages, sending its tentacles deeper and deeper with the experience of every succeeding life. It can be removed only by the twin detergents of discrimination and renunciation. Devotion is the water to wash away this dirt of ages and the soap of repetition of God’s name, meditation, and communion

(*yoga*) will help to remove it quicker and more effectively.

The slow and the steady will surely win this race; walking is the safest method of travel, though it may be condemned as slow. Quicker means of travel mean disaster; the quicker the means, the greater the risk of disaster. You should eat only as much as you feel hunger, for more will cause disorder. So proceed step by step in spiritual effort; making sure of one step before you take another. Do not slide back two paces when you go one pace forward. But even the first step will be unsteady if you have no faith. So cultivate faith.

Sathyabama once asked Krishna, “Why are you, doing things like ordinary men? Yudhistira, the eldest of the Pandavas is the best of the brothers, but you hobnob always with Arjuna, whose reputation is not above board.” Her faith was not steady! What do people know of the motives that prompt the Lord and His actions? Some found fault with Narada for repeating the name of the Lord, always, without intermission. But until merging in the Absolute occurs, the name has to be used. The idea of separation will end only with mergence, not before that.

Do not waver or doubt when once you are convinced. Seek to understand and satisfy yourself. After that, do not be misled. When the sun is over your head there will be no shadow; similarly when faith is steady in your head it should not cast any shadow of doubt.

When man loses his way and strays into the wilderness, believing that he is the body or the qualities or the object, then the *Avatar* comes to warn and guide. Keep the faith in the Lord undiminished; you can then safely move about in the world. No harm can come to you! Be like the village women with pots over their heads, one over the other, keeping balance even while talking and walking along the winding lane. They do not forget or ignore the burden or the goal. They are vigilant, conscious of the hardships on the way, the stones and the pits; it is inner concentration that pays dividends.

One should depart the world with a smile

Everyone has to make their exit some day. That moment should not be a moment of anguish; one should depart gracefully, with a smile and a bow. In order to do that, a lot of preparation is necessary. To depart, leaving all that has been accumulated during a long lifetime, is a hard task; so prepare for it by discarding attachment to one thing after another from now on.

You see many things in dreams, and many things are acquired by you during dreams: power, pelf, status, reputation. But when you awake, you do not weep over the loss, even though for the duration of the dream all that was very real and gave you real satisfaction and joy. That was a “dream”, you tell yourself; what prevents you from treating with similar nonchalance the possessions gathered during the waking stage of your life? Cultivate that attitude, and you can depart with a smile whenever the curtain falls on this dreamland stage.

Pray to the Lord to show you the way

In order to bring conviction to you in all this, it is best you approach a guru (spiritual preceptor) who knows the truth by experience and whose daily activities, words, and thoughts reflect this realisation. The guru is called so because the letter *GU* signifies *gunatheetha* — one who has transcended the three *gunas* (qualities), the *thamasic*, the *rajasic*, and even the *sathwic* (ignorant, passionate, and virtuous) — and the letter *RU* signifies one who is *rupa varjitha* (one who has grasped the formless aspect of God-head). Of course, one could come to that stage only through the sublimation of the lower into the higher qualities and the steady and conscious ignoring of the

part played by mere name and form.

In the preliminary stages of spiritual discipline, name, form, and quality all have their part to play in the moulding of the spirit. The guru destroys the illusion and sheds light; his presence is cool and comforting. That is why this day, a full-moon day, is allotted for paying due honour to the guru. Moreover, the moon is the presiding deity of the mind, and the full-moon day is the day on which the mind has become fully beneficent. Of course, you must know what you have lost, so that you may start on the search to recover it! The guru has very often to tell you that you have forgotten your real name or that you have lost the most precious part of yourself and yet are unaware of the loss. The guru is the physician for the illness that brings about the suffering of alternate birth and death. He is an adept at the treatment needed for the cure. If you do not get such a guru, pray to the Lord Himself to show you the way and He will surely come to your rescue.

Prasanthi Nilayam, Guru Purnami, 1956-08-01

The mind must become the servant of the intellect, not the slave of the senses. It must discriminate and detach itself from the body. Like the ripe tamarind fruit, which becomes loose inside the shell, it must be unattached to this shell, this case-ment called body.

Strike a green tamarind fruit with a stone and you cause harm to the pulp inside, but strike the ripe fruit and see what happens. It is the dry rind that falls off; nothing affects the pulp or the seed. The ripe aspirant does not feel the blows of fate or fortune; it is the unripe man who is wounded by every blow.

Sathya Sai Baba