

5. Meditation On The Lord's Form And Fame

The devotee who spoke first here now was, let me tell you, denying God for 25 years, and it is only since five years, after seeing Me, that he has changed. Of course, many people have had no experience that could change them, so they are not to be blamed for their want of faith. So too, this Seshagiri Rao here was finding fault with his son and daughters for coming to Puttapparthi, and himself for long refusing to come!

One day at Bangalore, there was a function in the house opposite his, for I had gone there. During *bhajans* (group singing of devotional songs), this man hesitantly crossed the road and peeped into the hall, and I went forward and called him and made him sit near Me. I asked him to come to Puttapparthi and invited him to “examine” and “experience”. He has been with Me ever since; it is now 18 years since he first came here.

This is just the reason I came to sow the seeds of faith, in religion and in God. You might have heard some people say that I became Sai Baba when a scorpion stung me! Well, I challenge any one of you to get stung by scorpions and transform yourself into Sai Baba. No, the scorpion had nothing to do with it! In fact, there was no scorpion at all! I came in response to the prayers of sages, saints, and spiritual aspirants for the restoration of *dharma* (righteousness).

The root cause of all this restlessness

When there is a sign of a little unrest, the police constable appears on the scene; if the mob gets unruly, the Inspector rushes in; and if it becomes violent, the Superintendent of Police has to be personally present on the scene to quell it. If, however, the situation waxes hot, the Inspector General has to make himself available, is it not? This is a situation in which the I-G is taking over-all charge of the situation. The sages, savants, saints, yogis, and divine personalities have had their try, and they will all be cooperating in the task of reestablishing righteousness and clearing the path for the world attaining absolute peace (*santhi*).

The greatest defect today is the absence of inquiry into the nature of the Self. That is the root cause of all this restlessness. If you are eager to know the truth about yourself, then, even if you do not believe in God, you will not go astray. The pots are all of mud, the ornaments are all of gold, the clothes are all of yarn. There is unity where one saw only diversity; the basic substance is one and indivisible. That is Brahman (Supreme Reality), that is the *Atma*, which is your own basic substance too.

This inquiry into the nature of the Self is best found in the *Upanishads*. Just as a river's flow is regulated by bunds and the flood waters are directed to the sea, so too the *Upanishads* regulate and restrict the senses, the mind, and the intellect and help one to reach the sea and merge individuality in the Absolute. Study the *Upanishads* with a view to act accordingly, to put the advice into practice.

Scanning a map or turning over a guide-book will not give you the thrill of the actual visit, nor will it give you a fraction of the joy and knowledge of a journey through that land. The *Upanishads* and the *Gita* are only maps and guide-books, remember.

Call upon the Lord in your own heart

There is the story of a rustic who sat among a gathering of devotees and listened to the exposition of the *Gita*

by a great scholar. All were wonder-struck by the scholarly commentary the learned disquisition on each word and phrase. The rustic, though the exposition was very much over his head, seemed to attend very closely for he was all the time in tears! When at last the scholar asked him why he was weeping, he surprised everybody by the sincerity of his devotion. He said that he wept at the predicament of the Lord, who had to sit at the head of the chariot and, half turning his neck, hold forth so long to convince the dull-witted Arjuna. “How much pain must He be suffering in His neck?,” he asked and wept. That was real devotion, a sure passport to spiritual victory. He had identified himself with the participants in the episode, and the whole setting had become alive for him.

You need not even read the *Gita* or the *Upanishads*. You will hear a *Gita* specially designed for you if you call upon the Lord in your own heart. He is there, installed as your own charioteer. Ask Him and He will answer. Have the Form of the Lord before you when you sit quietly in a place for meditation, and have His Name, that is, any Name, when you do repetition of a holy Name. If you do that repetition without that Picture or Form before you, who is to give the answer? You cannot be talking all the time to yourself. The Form will hear, and the Form will respond.

All agitations must cease one day, is it not? Meditation on the Form and repetition of the Name — that is the only means for this task.

Stick to the Name and Form you like the most

The secret is: you should “be”, but not be as in sleep, when you are aware deep down within you, that you are. Sleep is enveloped in delusion (*maya*). Awake from that delusion, but immerse yourself in this sleep that is the real super-conscious state of bliss (*samadhi*). Repetition of the Name and meditation are means by which you can compel even the concretisation of the divine Grace, in the Form and with the Name you yearn for. The Lord has to assume the Form you choose, the Name you fancy; in fact, you shape Him so. Therefore, do not change these two, but stick to the ones that please you most, whatever the delay or the difficulty.

Do not get discouraged that you are not able to concentrate for long from the very beginning. When you learn to ride a bicycle, you do not get the skill of keeping the balance immediately. You push the cycle along to an open maidan and hop and skip, leaning now to one side and now to the other and even fall with the cycle upon you on many an attempt, before you are able to ride with skill and never again to worry about the balance. Automatically, you are able to make the necessary adjustments to correct the balance, is it not? After getting this skill, you can ride through the narrow streets and lanes, and you do not need an open road. You can negotiate your vehicle through the most crowded thoroughfares. So, too, practice will equip you with a concentration that will sustain you in the densest of surroundings and the most difficult situations.

The best spiritual discipline for the beginners

Do not be under the impression that I will be angry with you if you do not accept Me as the Form for meditation! I am not concerned at all; you have perfect freedom to select the Name and Form that give you necessary encouragement.

When you meditate, the mind often runs after something else, it takes another road. You have then to plug that outlet by means of the Name and the Form and see that the even flow of your thoughts toward the Lord is not interrupted; if it happens again, use the Name and the Form again, quickly. Do not allow the mind to go beyond

the twin bunds, this side Name and that side Form! Then it will not stray into a third place.

First, when you sit for meditation, recite a few verses on the glory of God, so that the thoughts that are scattered could be collected. Then gradually, while doing repetition of the name, draw before the mind's eye the Form that that Name represents. When your mind wanders away from the recital of the Name, take it on to the picture of the Form. When it wanders away from the picture, lead it on to the Name. Let it dwell either on that sweetness or this. Treated thus, it can be easily tamed. The imaginary picture you have drawn will get transmuted into the emotional picture, dear to the heart and fixed in the memory; gradually will come the time when the Lord assumes that Form in order to fulfil your desire.

Use the body as an instrument for spiritual practice

This spiritual practice is called meditation on the Lord's Name and Form, and I advise you all to take it up, for it is the best for beginners. Within a few days, you will fall in line and you will taste the joy of concentration. After about ten or fifteen minutes in the initial stages and longer after some time of this meditation, have some inward contemplation on the peace and contentment you had during the meditation; that is to say, bring back into your memory the joy you experienced. This will help your faith and earnestness. Then, do not get up suddenly and start moving about, resuming your avocations. Loosen the limbs slowly, deliberately, gradually, and then enter upon your usual duties. Taste the fruits of meditation and learn to relish them; that is what I mean by this process of repeated reflection.

Be careful about your physical health also. Satisfy the demands of nature; the car must be given the petrol that it needs. Otherwise, your head might reel and your eyes might get blurred through sheer exhaustion. How can thoughts of the Lord be stabilised in a weak frame? Only, do not forget the purpose of this body when you are tending it. A road-roller is fed with oil and coal and other types of fuel. But why is it kept in good trim? In order to mend the road, is it not? Similarly, remember that you have come embodied so that you might realise the end of this cycle of birth and death. For that sake, use the body as an instrument.

Flying hither and thither, higher and higher, the bird has at last to perch on a tree for rest. So too, even the richest and the most powerful man seeks rest, peace (*santhi*). Peace can be got only in one shop, in inner reality. The senses will drag you along into a mire, which submerges you deeper and deeper in alternate joy and grief, that is to say, prolonged discontent. Only contemplation of unity can remove fear, rivalry, envy, greed, desire — all feelings that prompt discontent. Every other avenue can give only pseudo-contentment, and a day will come when you will throw away all these playthings and toys and cry, "Lord! Grant Me unruffled peace." The bandit Valmiki prayed so; the confirmed atheist too has one day to pray for peace and rest.

Engage yourself in good thoughts and deeds

People hug brass pots and take them to be gold, but they have to polish them so that they may appear bright. One day, they will get disgusted with this constant polishing and scrubbing; they will pray, "Release me from this scrubbing, this birth, this suffering and this agony." Life is short; time is fleeting: your spiritual practice is creeping at tortoise speed. When will you decide to proceed a little faster? Your spiritual practice is like the answers you write at the examination. If you get only 5 or 6 marks, the examiner will strike out even that, saying, "What is the use of these few marks: it will take you neither here nor there." If you get somewhere near the passing marks, then Grace will give you just a little more so that you may pass, provided you have been a diligent, well behaved

student.

Engage yourselves in good deeds, good company, and good thoughts. Fix your attention on the goal. You have not realised yet the secret of this Advent. You are indeed lucky, more fortunate than many others. It is only when Yasoda found every length of rope a little short to go round His belly that she discovered that He was the Lord. So to, you will realise every description of My Divine Glory a little too short of the actuality, and then you will get convinced. Meanwhile if you study the spiritual texts and know the characteristics of the *Avatar* of the Lord, you might get a glimpse of the Truth regarding Me.

You will know the truth when you experience

There is no use arguing and quarrelling among yourselves. Examine, experience; then you will know the truth. Do not proclaim before you are convinced. Be silent while you are still undecided or engaged in evaluating. Of course, you must discard all evil in you before you can attempt to evaluate the mystery. And, when faith dawns, fence it around with discipline and self-control, so that the tender shoot might be guarded against the goats and cattle, the motley crowd of cynics and unbelievers. When your faith grows into a big tree, those very cattle can lie down in the shade that it will spread.

Chithravathi River Bed, Puttaparthi, 1958-02-23