

8. Many Roads

I have not come to you to “lecture”, for I do not believe in the value of mere words, however scholarly or pompous or profuse. I have come only to share with you My *Prema* (Love) and partake in turn of your *prema*. It is that which I value most. That is the real gain.

Today, the typhoon of hatred and falsehood is scattering the clouds of virtue, justice, and truth to the far corners of the sky, and people feel that *Sanathana Dharma* (Eternal Universal Religion) itself is in danger of extinction. But that can happen only if the Lord wills, and the Lord who has laid down *dharma* will not allow it to be destroyed. Wherever truth, right conduct, peace, and love (*sathya, dharma, santhi, and prema*) are emphasised, in whatever religion or language, by whichever teacher, wherever the teacher may be, there we have *Sanathana Dharma*.

As long as man is capable of *prema*, *dharma* will exist, do not doubt it. When that *prema* is fixed on the Lord, your mental make-up will slowly and steadily undergo a revolutionary change; then, man will share in the sorrows and joys of his fellow-beings; thereafter, he contacts the very source of the bliss, which is beyond the temporary gains and losses of this world. *Prema* directed to the Lord is called devotion, and it is the easiest of all the paths to realise the goal.

For treading the path of devotion, one needs only Love

Devotion can be spoken of as having several stages. There is the stage where service of the Lord alone matters and is its own reward; the devotee does not seek anything more than just the service of the highest, done to the utmost of capacity. This gradually becomes the stage where nothing except the Name and Form of the Beloved is cognised. Again, there is devotion coloured by the three inner qualities (*gunas*): the attitude of the afflicted, the seeker of worldly comfort, the sincere inquirer, and the wise man, who is silent and content with the realisation that all is He.

For treading the path of devotion, one needs no scholarship, nor wealth nor riches, nor ascetic rigours. Tell Me, what was the lineage of Valmiki, the wealth of Kuchela, the scholarship of Sabari, the age of Prahlada, the status of Gajaraja, the attainments of Vidura? *Prema* — that was all they had, and that was all they needed. The Grace of the Lord is as the Ocean: vast, limitless. By your spiritual disciplines, your repetition of a Name of God, meditation, and systematic cultivation of virtue, this Grace is converted into clouds of truth; and they rain on humanity as *prema* showers, which collect and flow as the flood of bliss (*ananda*), back again into the Ocean — the Ocean of the Lord’s Grace. When *prema* embraces humanity, we call it compassion, the quality not of pity but of sympathy — sympathy that makes one happy when others are happy and miserable when others are unhappy.

You have seen beggars singing in the streets, is it not? They have each of them a pair of cymbals in one hand by which they mark time and a single-stringed instrument in the other, to the twang of which they tune their singing. The song will be harsh if it is out of tune, and it will be confusing medley if the timing is not kept up. The song of life has to be similar; keep up the daily tasks and sing away in joy to the tune of *prema*. Then only is the music worthwhile.

Two main principles to follow in life

It is the mind that makes or mars a person. If it is immersed in things of the world, it leads to bondage; if it treats the world as but temporary, then by that detachment it becomes free and light. Train the mind not to feel attached to things that change for better or for worse. Do not hold before it the tinsels of worldly fame and riches; attract it toward lasting joys derived from springs inside you. That will bring big rewards. The mind itself will then become the guru, for it leads you on and on, once it has tasted the sweets of listening, recapitulating, and repeated steady meditation. It is the mind that fills the image made by the potter with the Divinity that the devotee sees in it; it is the mind that fills the shrine room with the fragrance of holiness.

It is practice, one reads, that imparts strength, as food does when digested and as exercise does to promote health. Saint Thyagaraja sang that the Lord is the inner motive force within the ant as well as the Universe; but though you may intellectually agree, when an ant bites, you do not feel that you have come in contact with the Lord in that form, do you? Do not proclaim great truths aloud; instead, show by your conduct that you attach value to them and that you are guided by them.

Be careful of at least this: do not yourself commit those faults of which you accuse others, and do not ask others to reach a standard that you are loathe to climb up to! If you live according to these two principles, then even if you do not fall before an image or attend the temple ritual or worship as per schedule, you can secure the Lord's Grace.

It is possible to see the Lord dwell in every being

There are many roads through which you can reach Madras; so also there are many roads to Godhead: love, truth, service, compassion, and remembrance of the Lord's Name. There is also the non-dualist who discovers himself as the basic substance of all creation, as Brahman itself. All paths are right; only some are easier, some more circuitous, some harder. The easiest way to grasp the basic reality is to see the Lord in every creature, the Lord sporting in all this multiplicity, as the underlying reality of all, the Indweller in all Beings.

You might wonder and even doubt how it is possible for the Lord to dwell in every being. But have you not seen one single mango seed grow into a tree that gives thousands of fruits, in each of which there is to be found a seed identical to the one which was first planted? So too, the one Lord can be found in every being created by His Will.

Ask only for devotion and spiritual wisdom from Me

Remember, your real nature is the same as the other person's; the other is yourself known by another name. When you do a good deed, you are doing it to yourself; when you do a bad turn to someone, remember, you are injuring yourself, so avoid doing evil to others.

I am reminded of what Hussain, the son of Rabbia Malik of Persia, used to do. He rose early and went to the mosque for prayers with great diligence and devotion. When he came back, he found the servants of the house still sleeping on their mats, and he grew wild at them. He swore and cursed them for neglect of religious duties.

Then his father chastised him, "Son, why do you get angry with those poor souls, who are too tired to wake up early. Do not wipe off the good results of your adherence to the rule of God by falling foul of these innocent slaves. I would much rather you rise late and abstain from the mosque, for now you have grown proud that you

are more religious than these others, and you dare blame them for faults for which they are not themselves responsible.”

You must pay attention to these small details also, for devotion is not just a pose; it is a series of little acts, directed by the attitude of reverence for the Divinity in all beings. Watch for the lie that lurks on the tongue, the violence that lurks behind the fist, the ego that lurks behind the deed. Restrain them before they grow into habits and settle down as character to warp your destiny.

Ramaswami Reddy said that I work many miracles and that you are all lucky to have had this opportunity of hearing Me. Well, I am like a shop-keeper whose shop is stocked with all things one needs. But, like the man behind the counter, I give you only what you ask for. If the customer asks for a towel, how can I give them a skirt (*dhothi*)? But these material things are not important at all. Ask for devotion and for spiritual wisdom, and I shall be happy. Many do not crave for such things now; it is their misfortune. They are merely wasting their precious chance.

Perhaps the elders are to be blamed for this situation. For it is the duty of the elders to show the rising generation by their lives that spiritual discipline and study have made them more joyful and courageous in the adventure of life. Youths always imitate the elders; they quarrel if they find the elders deriving joy from quarrels; they cavil at holiness if the elders do not honour holy men and institutions. So I will not blame the young men as much as the elders.

Piety is not weakness but strength

Faith in God and in spiritual discipline has declined due to want of enthusiasm among the elders in these matters. It is the responsibility of all pious men to demonstrate in and through their lives that piety is not weakness but strength, that it opens up a vast spring of power, and that a person with faith in God can overcome obstacles much more easily than one who has not.

I do not insist that a person should have faith in God. I refuse to call any person an atheist. Beings exist as a result of His Will, in accordance with His Plan, so no one is beyond His Grace. Besides, everyone has love toward some one thing or other, and that love is a spark of the Divine. Everyone has ultimately to base their life on some one Truth; that Truth is God. No life can be lived out in complete defiance of Truth; one has to pay heed to truth and speak the truth to some one in order to make life worth living. Now, that moment is God’s moment, and at the moment when one utters the truth, or loves, or serves or bends, one is a theist.

So, it is not even devotion that is essential. It is love, truth, virtue, the eagerness to progress, to serve, to expand one’s heart, to take in the whole of humanity in one’s love, to see all as Forms of the Divine Consciousness.

Y.M.I.A., Mylapore, Madras, 1958-03-24

There is no living being without the spark of love; even a mad man loves something or somebody intensely. But you must recognise this love as a reflection of the Embodiment of Love, that is, your reality, of the God who is residing in your heart. Without that spring of Love that bubbles in your heart, you will not be prompted to love at all. Recognise that spring, rely on it more and more, develop its possibilities, try to irrigate the whole world with it, discard all touch of self from it, do not seek

anything in return for it from those to whom you extend it.

Sathya Sai Baba