

9. Examine, Experience

I have come to comfort *your* life, not to describe Mine! So I did not like Ramanatha Reddy and Kasturi speaking about Me and the incidents of My life! Your lives are more important for Me, for My purpose is to see that you live more happily and with greater contentment. All beings have to do *karma* (sanctified activity); it is a universal inescapable obligation. Some feel that only meritorious and sinful, or virtuous and vicious, deeds are entitled to be called *karma*. But your very breathing is *karma*. There are certain *karmas* whose fruits you cannot give up! There are physical, mental, and spiritual *karmas*, and doing each of these for the good of the Self is called dedication.

Mention was made of Puttaparthi, and you were advised to go there and draw inspiration from the *bhajans* (devotional singing) there. Please do not incur the expense; for wherever you are, whenever you call on Me, your room can become Prasanthi Nilayam, your village can be made Puttaparthi. I am ever alert to respond, ever ready to listen and reply.

I want you to be active, fully engaged, for if you have no activities, time will hang heavily on your hands. Do not waste a single moment of the allotted span of life, for time is the body of God. He is known as the Form of Time. It is a crime to misuse time or to waste it in idleness. So too, the physical and mental talents given to you by the Lord as capital for the business of living should not be frittered away.

Social service must be done gladly and reverentially

Like the force of gravitation, which drags everything down, the pull of sloth will drag you relentlessly down, so you must be ever on the watch, be ever active. Like the brass vessel that has to be scrubbed to a nice shine, the mind of man has also to be scrubbed by means of spiritual discipline, that is to say, activity like repetition of the Name and meditation. *Karma* (activity) that is natural and automatic, like breathing, becomes an impious act when it is done consciously, with a definite result in view.

A Hindu and his British friend once happened to come to the bank of the Godavari. The Hindu said, “I will bathe in this sacred water.” He recited the name “Hari” as he plunged in and came out refreshed in mind as well as body. He felt great happiness that he got the rare chance of a bath in the holy river. The Britisher laughed and said, “This is mere H₂O; how can you get unspeakable joy by dipping into it? It is all superstition. But the Hindu replied, “Leave me to my superstition; you can stick to your superstition.” The cynic got only physical cleanliness but the believer got mental purity also.

When you prostrate before elders, the mind too must be humble; it is not the body alone that should bend. Now, many social workers in Madras visit hospitals and do service to the patients there. Most of the work they do is mechanical, like fanning the patients, writing letters for them, and singing *bhajans*, without paying heed to the actual requirements of the patients. Many do this work because it is the current mode of social service. But it must be *karma* done with the full cooperation of the mind, gladly, intelligently, reverentially. The patient should not feel disgusted at the fussiness of the social worker; the patient should be looking forward to the arrival of the person, of someone who is very near and dear.

If you do not like that type of work, you need not engage in it. Do not burden your mind by the unpleasantness of the task. Work done mechanically is like the flame of an oilless wick; the oil is mental enthusiasm; pour

it, and the lamp will burn clear and long.

Karma should not be done anticipating any result

In fact, *karma* (activity) becomes *yoga* (union with God) when it is done without any attachment. A monk should not even remember what he does; he should not do any *karma* anticipating any result. That is the desireless ideal at its highest. The best *karma* is that which is done at the call of duty; because it has to be done, not because it is advantageous to do it. The monk should have no anger, anxiety, envy, or greed, but your experience must be telling you that monks who are free from these are very rare today.

Do not even cast your glance at a monk who is so false to his vow that he craves for name and fame or indulges in calumny or competition. Do not be led away by such persons into disbelieving the spiritual texts and the *Vedas*. One who is firmly fixed in the faith that this world is a mirage of the mind — that one alone is the *swami*; the others are mere Ramaswamis or Krishnaswamis, entitled to have the epithet *swami* at the end of the name and not at the beginning.

Nature is *purathana* — a very ancient entity. The individual soul is also *purathana*, having had many previous entries and exits. But now it has come in with a new dress; it is *nuthana* (modern), come like a pilgrim to a holy place for going the rounds. The individual soul must have a guide who will show the sacred spots and help fulfill the pilgrimage. That Guide is the Lord Himself: the Guide books are *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the spiritual texts. The essence of the scriptures lies in this one rule: Repeat the name of the Lord, keeping His Glory always before the mind.

Earn the right to approach God without fear

The Lord is as the divine wish-fulfilling tree, which gives whatever is asked. But you have to go near the tree and wish for the thing you want. The atheist is the person who keeps far away from the tree; the theist is the one who has come near; that is the difference. The tree does not make any distinction; it grants boons to all. The Lord will not punish or take revenge if you do not recognise Him or revere Him. He has no special type of worship that alone can please him.

If you have the ear, you can hear “*Om*” announcing the Lord’s Presence in every sound. All five elements produce this sound, “*Om*”. The bell in the temple is intended to convey the *Om* as the symbol of the Omnipresent God. When the bell sounds “*Om*”, the Godhead within you will awaken, and you will be aware of His Presence. That is the meaning of the bell that is rung in front of the inner shrine in the temple.

Earn the right to approach the Lord without fear and the right to ask for your heritage. You must become so free that praise will not emanate from you when you approach the Lord. Praise is a sign of distance and fear. You must have heard the Kalidasa story. He said that he would get liberation, “as soon as I go,” that is to say, as soon as the ego disappears, for then he shines in his native splendour, as Brahman (as the indestructible *Atma*). The I, when crossed out, becomes the symbol of cross; what is crucified is the ego, remember. Then, the divine nature manifests itself unhampered.

Do spiritual practices in an atmosphere of joy

The ego is most easily destroyed by devotion, by dwelling on the magnificence of the Lord, and by rendering

service to others as children of the Lord. You can call on the Lord by any name, for all names are His; select the Name and Form that appeals to you most. That is why 1000 names are composed for the various forms of God; you have the freedom and the right to select any one of the thousand. The guru will give you the Name and Form suited to your temperament and meritorious acts.

If the guru commands you under a threat and orders you to adopt a line of spiritual exercise, declaring “This is my command,” tell him that the main thing is your satisfaction, not his. You have to do the spiritual exercise in an atmosphere of joy and contentment. The guru should not force the disciple to grow with a bent in the direction that the guru prefers; disciples have the right to develop on their own lines, according to their impressions from the past and bent of mind.

The old relationship of guru and pupil has today become topsy-turvy; rich and influential pupils now rule the guru and dictate how he should behave. The gurus also, keen on accumulating fame and wealth, stoop to the tactics recommended by the pupils and thus lower their status. So, examine the guru and his credentials, his ideals and practice, before accepting him.

Even in My case, do not be attracted simply by stories of what I “create” by a wave of the hand. Do not jump to conclusions with closed eyes; watch, study, and weigh. Never yield to anyone unless you feel the inner satisfaction that you are on the right path. Above all, do not talk ill of great men and sages. That is a sign of gross egoism and the childish impertinence born of that conceit.

My suggestion to you today is this: just as you attend to the needs of the body, feeding it three times a day, in order to keep it in good running condition, so too spend some time regularly every day to keep your Inner Consciousness in good trim. Spend one hour in the morning, another at night, and a third in the early hours of dawn, the *Brahma-muhurtha* as it is called, for repetition of the name and meditation on the Lord. You will find great peace descending on you and great new sources of strength welling up within you as you progress in this spiritual discipline. After some time, the mind will dwell on the Name wherever you are and whatever you are engaged in, and peace and joy will be your inseparable companions.

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