

21. The Base And The Burden

OF course, you all like this daily programme of speeches and discourses, for you feel that it is this and not the wearing of new clothes or the eating of extra dishes that really makes a festival; this is a spiritual banquet that you are relishing. But you must listen carefully, and, later, you should dwell upon what you have heard in the silence of your own heart and try sincerely to act upon at least a few of the precepts that you have gathered. That is the wise person's way of benefitting by pilgrimage to a holy place—their way of making themselves holier.

Bhadhran, in his speech, quoted some verses where some types of men were laughed at as “asses and dogs”. I do not like such verses, for they are cruel and wrong. It is wrong to talk about the children of immortality, the embodiments of Divinity, with such degrading terms. Do not develop this kind of habit; do not descend to such sacrilege. A person may have obstinacy or humility or patience, but that does not make him an ass. He may have a sweet voice, but that does not give him wings. Poetic fancies make things more confused; they make everything glitter and cause doubt; sometimes, they even spread a curtain of fog!

Impressions of many past lives warp the mind

People can reach the height of Madhava (Krishna, God) only by trampling down the mind and making it ineffective. The nature of mind is pure; the sensory impressions colour it and soil it with likes and dislikes. The mind of the animal is unaffected by the many attachments and attractions, the aversions and dislikes that hamper and haunt the human mind. These latent impressions (*vasanas*) warp the mind, already bent by blows and buffetings suffered in birth after birth.

It is no use laying all the blame on the mind. It is like a watchman. Impress upon the watchman that the Lord is the paymaster, and he will obey not only the Lord who is his master but even the Lord's friends and companions. Join the group divine and see whether the mind continues to be intransigent. It will not disobey you then. It is all a question of proper training; if the watchman comes to know that you are unrelated to the Lord, he will disobey you and take to his own misadventures! If the Lord is on your side, the watchman is also your man. Then you can tell the Lord that His servant is exceeding his limits and draw upon His Grace to bend him to your side.

Bhadhran tried to give the meaning of the name *Narayana* in a very round about manner, saying *Na* meant this and *Ra* meant that and so on. It all sounded very learned and is really very clever; but one can go on endlessly in this way, saying *Na* means either this or that according to the fancy of the moment or the taste of the other. *Naram* means “water” and *nayanam* means “eye,” and the implication is that only tears can win God for you. That is the inner purpose and meaning of the Narayana mantra.

Other mantras also have their own latent meaning, like this one. Just as G and O and D add up not to the sound Gee O Dee but to God, so also A, U, and M, meaning the physical, mental, and spiritual worlds, the three planes of existence and consciousness (*bhur*, *bhuvah*, and *suvah*), add up to *OM* (the *Pranava*). So too, Narayana is the Lord of the *naram* in the *nayana* (water in the eye), who is won by tears of repentance and who rewards you with tears of joy. Win Him and He becomes as visible as all this—in fact, He is all this, only you do not see it so.

Only tears can win God for you

He is the *base (adhara)*. You are generally carried away by the burden (*adheya*), not the bearer. Samartha Ramdas says that when Sri Rama returned to Ayodhya, everyone acclaimed with unbearable joy the sight of the flag on the horizon, for that was the signal for the arrival of the Lord back to His city. But Ramdas says that, in their exultation, the populace forgot how thankful they had to be for the flagstaff; for if Rama was the flag, certainly Lakshmana was the staff that held it aloft against the fiercest storm. You cannot have a flag without a staff, a burden without an base; a thing contained without a container.

Grief is the container; what is the thing contained? It is joy, remember. A smile is the rose that grows on the thorn of a sigh. Shed tears, but only for joy, joy that you are released from the chain of desire. Durvasa was a formidable ascetic, no doubt, but he was afflicted with pride and envy. He tried to pull Ambarisha down from the pedestal of glory only to have his anger recoil on himself with serious results. Desire leads you to doom.

External insignia are not essential for aspirants

Of what avail is shaving the scalp while leaving inside it a multitude of desires clamouring for satisfaction? This kind of renunciation or asceticism is a fraud on the person doing it and on society. No *Avatar*, you will note, has granted monkhood to any aspirant. These external insignia are not essential or even necessary. Non-attachment born out of wisdom and fostered by the Grace of the Lord — that is the precious capital for spiritual advance.

Some gurus take pride in the number of monks they have launched on society, as if that is an achievement to be congratulated upon! If monkhood is heaped upon a head that has not received the qualification of non-attachment, it is a burden on the recipient and a blot on the giver. The guru and the disciple are both prisoners of their incompetence. When both are prisoners of their desires, who is to release whom? Only he who put them in can grant reprieve or pardon.

The monk (*sanyasi*) has to declare his death and perform obsequies for himself and bury his past. He destroys all that binds him to the rest and to his past: his name, history, and fame. He avoids any reminder of his erstwhile adventures in pursuit of sensory joy. He flees from his friends and foes, his habits and habiliments, his hobbies and prejudices. But we find people who have taken the vow of monkhood still clinging to their long-established practices and habits. Instead, they must completely break with the past.

That is why, in the *Gita*, renunciation of action and not other types of renunciation is prescribed. Renunciation of action leads to mental renunciation. To teach people, then as now, the assurance is, “I shall look after the well being of all who renounce the ego and take refuge in Me (*Yogakshemam vahaamyaham*).”

Remember this is not a partnership, it is either you or I. If the dancer trips, he blames the drummer, as the saying goes. That is not right in the spiritual field. You have to climb the peak alone. The I comes up at the first provocation; “I am blamed,” “I am neglected.” The ego is up in arms against the world. To put it down, you must see Krishna in everyone, everyone who is blaming, praising, neglecting, or honouring you.

Some of you quote the Telugu stanza of the *Sumathi Shathakam*, which advises you to give up “relatives who do not come to your help, horses that do not gallop as soon as you are in the saddle, and Gods who do not shower blessings when you fall at their Feet.” But remember the person to whom the poem is addressed! Who is to do as advised? Sumathi, right? *Sumathi* means “a person whose intelligence is mellowed by wisdom.” Such a person will certainly be helped by relatives and will certainly be blessed by the Gods. So, the advice is unnecessary for Sumathi. The contingencies contemplated will never arise for a *sumathi*.

The ‘furnitures’ that are left in charge of man

Wait for that grace, in readiness. That is to say, do not cling too fast to things that please the senses or get caught in the coils of the attractive and the pleasant. Bhadhram spoke of the headmaster of a school. Yes. He is a good example of the attitude you should develop. He knows all the time that the chairs, tables, and benches are not his but, nevertheless, he knows that it is his duty to see that no item of furniture or equipment is lost or damaged, that everything is handed over intact when he leaves.

Therefore, he keeps vigilant watch, though unattached. The senses, the intelligence, the heart, the mind — these are the furnitures put in your charge. Look after them with care. If any is damaged by oversight, make the appropriate entry in the list, explain the circumstances, and crave grace.

Reference was made by Bhadhram to women having devotion, spiritual wisdom, and detachment equal to men. Still, I know that many are worried when they hear women reciting the *Pranava* (*OM*) during the auspicious time before sunrise (*brahma-muhurtham*) every day at the Nilayam. They forget that sound itself is fundamentally *Pranava*, that all breath has *Pranava* immanent in it. Can women avoid or keep away from *OM*, which is ever-present in the ether (*akasa*) and which their breath is reciting every moment?

As a matter of fact, the feminine principle (nature, *prakriti*) comes first and the Masculine Principle (God, *Purusha*) is second. You say Sita-Rama, Lakshmi-Narayana and Gauri-Sankara, not putting nature in the second place. Women have equal chances and equal rights to attain Godhead.

Make your life a mountain of auspiciousness

Just as every breath reminds you of *OM*, every little act is an act of worship, remember. Every tiny thought, every faint whisper has to be so directed that it may curb the vagaries of the mind and help in guiding it Godward. A hundred little naye paise add up to a round rupee. Distill Divinity into every moment. Like the uninterrupted line of river Ganga water that flows on the *Sivalinga* when consecrating the *Sivalinga* with repetition of *Rudra* (*Rudra japam*; *Rudra* is a name for Siva) during *Rudra-abhisheka*, let every moment be hallowed by the thought of Siva. Perform that *Vedic* hymn in praise of Siva (that *Rudram*) and make your life safe (*bhadram*); why, let it become an unshakeable Mountain of Safety.

I find you reading and appreciating the love (*prema*) of the sages, milk-maids (*gopis*) of Dwaraka, and monkeys (*vanaras*) of past ages; but you ignore your present responsibility. For example, examine, each one of you, how far you have put into practice what you have heard from Me. How far have you profited by coming to Puttaparthi now or so often in previous years? How far have you shown love to others, the love that you find to be My all. Remembering the Lord’s name, I have told you often, is the best exercise to acquire love toward God and all that is great. But have you tried that recipe? Has it become as essential for you as the very breath? That is the test of your sincerity and of the success of your pilgrimage to Puttaparthi this Dasara.

Prasanthi Nilayam, 1961-10-24

To find out what is righteous (*dharma*) and what is unrighteous, apply this one test: If it goes counter to Truth and Love, it is unrighteous. If it promotes Truth and Love or is full of both, it is righteous.

Sathya Sai Baba