

23. Primers Of Spiritual Education

These discourses have now become a daily event, so perhaps you may be developing a headache. A feast should come only rarely; it should not be frequent. If it is a daily affair, it loses its charm, its savour. If I speak to you every evening, at the end of the speeches by others, even though you may all like it, still I am afraid it may add up to a big burden. Moderation (*mitha*) is desirable in food and drinks and in exercise, both physical and spiritual; that is the best cure (*hitha*); then only can you advance in position (*gathi*).

However, as regards God, there is no question of overdose or underdose; any dose should be welcomed. But I do not recommend such mixtures as Thirumalachar administered to you now! His speech was full of the family affairs of Gods, their family quarrels and family problems. When even the devotee should get over the likes and dislikes of kith and kin in order to deserve the grace of God, how can anyone talk of the Gods themselves being entangled in these low knots? These only drag Divinity down to the dirt of your sensory minds. The only kith and kin the Lord has are the devotees who have dedicated themselves to Him, those who have attuned their heart-strings to His melody.

To ascribe the material relationships of the human family to Godhead is sheer nonsense. The Lord, who is beyond time and space prior to the Beginning and subsequent to the End, can never be described in terms of the mushroom memories of humanity, the temporary phenomena of human family and human society. Such descriptions cannot make any sense to those who have experienced the glory that is God.

Do not make God modern to suit your fancy. He is neither ancient nor modern; His countenance never changes, nor His glory. Present Him, if you must, in a modern manner, in a modern style, so that He might be understood today. If a child is reluctant to swallow a pill, insert it in a plantain and offer him the fruit; he will swallow both fruit and pill. But do not change the pill itself to suit the whims and fancies of the child's taste, because then the illness cannot be cured!

Come with empty hands to carry away my Love

Take the Lord to be your father or mother, but only as a first step to your overstepping that relationship and merging in the absolute. Do not stop on the steps; enter the mansion to which they lead. The connection with the soul (*Atmasambandha*) is the everlasting unchanging association (*sambandha*). As a first step, you use the flower, the lamp, the incense, etc. to worship the attributeful form. Soon, your devotion moves on to newer forms of dedication, newer offerings, purer and more valuable and worthier of your Lord. No one sticks to the slate for long; you feel that you should place before the Lord something more lasting than mere flowers and something more yours than incense. You feel like purifying yourselves and making your entire life one fragrant flame. That is real worship, real devotion. Do not come to Me with your hands full of trash, for how can I fill them with Grace when they are already full? Come with empty hands and carry away My treasure, My love (*prema*).

Human impulses and emotions have to be guided

Those who get their feet worshipped by their devotees and those who think that it is a great boon so to worship them are both lacking in sense. Ritual worship of the guru's feet has an atmosphere of publicity, both for the

guru and the pupil. Besides, why worship the body, which is decaying every moment? It is also very wrong to offer cash or gold or other articles, whether they are from surplus wealth or from hard-earned property. For, after all, even these trinkets have no intrinsic value. Obey the guru, follow his instructions, progress along the spiritual road—these are the best means of worshipping the guru's feet. When you achieve some success in these, the craving for worshipping the guru's feet itself will disappear, must disappear.

Nowadays, the worship is done by people who feel it is a cheap substitute for sincere devotion that the guru too welcomes and prefers! Offer the heart, clean and pure, broadened by spiritual practices to include all living beings in its grasp. Offer this to the guru, and seek only gurus who do not indulge in declamations about themselves or in derisive attacks on their rivals.

Worship is just a means of educating the emotions. Human impulses and emotions have to be guided and controlled. Just as the raging waters of the Godavari river have to be curbed by dikes, halted by dams, tamed by canals, and led quietly to the ocean, which can swallow all floods without a trace, so too the age-long instincts of man have to be trained and transmuted by contact with higher ideals and powers.

When the fruit is ripe, it will fall off the branch of its own accord. Similarly, when renunciation saturates your heart, you lose contact with the world and slip into the lap of the Lord.

Three types of approaches toward the Lord

There are three types of approaches toward the Lord: the eagle type, which swoops down on the target with a greedy swiftness and suddenness that, by its very impact, fails to secure the object coveted. The monkey type, which flits hither and thither, from one fruit to another, unable to decide which is tasty. And the ant type, which moves steadily but slowly toward the desirable object. The ant does not hit the fruit hard and make it fall away; it does not pluck all the fruits it sees; it appropriates just as much as it can assimilate and no more.

Do not fritter away the time allotted to you for sojourning on each in foolish foppery and fanciful foible, which always keep you outdoors. When are you to walk indoors into the warmth and quiet of your own interior? Retire into solitude and silence now and then; experience the joy derivable only from them.

Since you can't swim across the flooded stream, you board a raft. So also, since you can't master the Formless, you resort to the Form with attributes and struggle to swim across to the Formless through worship and contemplation. But it is not advisable to remain ever on the raft, amidst the currents and whirlpools, is it? You must discard this conventional worship some day and reach higher. The leaf, flower, fruit, water (*pathram, pushpam, phalam, thoyam*) are all primers for the initial stages when children join schools. Clean the mind of all the animal and primitive impulses that have shaped it from birth to birth. Otherwise, just as milk poured into a pot used for keeping buttermilk curdles quickly, all the finer experiences of truth, beauty, and goodness will get tarnished beyond recognition. Do not postpone this duty to yourself, especially now, when you have the chance to contact Me.

I do not find you offering Me the thing I look for; you bring things that are unworthy and impure. I feel very much when I find you so agitated and troubled with the cure so near at hand.

Reduce your wants; minimise your desires. All these material knickknacks are short-lived. When death deprives you of resistance, your kith and kin take off the nose-stud, and, in their haste, they may even cut the nose to retrieve it! If you go on heaping desire upon desire, it will be impossible to depart gladly when the call comes. Rather, become rich in virtue, in the spirit of service, in devotion to the Higher Power. That is what pleases Me

and saves you.

Prasanthi Nilayam, 1961-10-26

Pleasure is the head; pain is the foot. You cannot welcome pleasure without at the same time inviting pain. They are both always together, inseparable. Understanding this live always in peace.

Sathya Sai Baba