

27. Spiritual Academy Of Man

The study of sacred books and listening to religious discourses are meant to develop self-control and peace. But, from the confusion here, which you seem to enjoy, I find that your study and listening have all been a waste, You cannot put forward as excuse the hugeness of the gathering, because if each one of you stops talking or clamouring or complaining, silence can be established that very second. Again, you cannot say that you have been waiting since early morning and therefore you have become restless. Well, what is to be said of the earnestness that melts away just when the event for which you were waiting so long has started? If each one keeps silent, though there are lakhs of people here, it would appear as if there is none. Try to keep silent. Remember why you have come and why you have waited, whom you have come to listen to.

Now it is better. That is good. That is why I always say that one's real nature is peace, equanimity (*santham*); that, if one only tries, one can rediscover one's nature in a moment. One has only to pull oneself up, to recollect the origins from Brahman, one's identity with the changeless *Atma*. People may err in an uproar or be right in quiet-calm, as you are now. Your own enthusiasm has caused this delay; for the road to the temple is, as the organisers say, completely packed and even there, in the temple, there is not a square inch of vacant space! So it was suggested that the idol could be brought to this bungalow for consecration, and it could be taken later and placed in position at the temple.

Do not dishonour the heritage of India

Remember, Sai does not live in structures of stone or brick and mortar! He lives in soft hearts, warm with sympathy and fragrant with universal Love. Temples and image-worship have some value in stimulating one's higher impulses, of diverting instincts along more socially useful channels. That is why in India no chance was lost to lead people Godward. All arts were utilised to that end. Even a drunkard sways to the tune of a faintly remembered music composition that proclaims the Glory of God or the joy of self-realisation. Everyone, whatever the stage of spiritual advance they may have attained, is prompted, gently nudged, to move forward. This has made India the spiritual academy of humanity. You are privileged to live out this life in the lap of India; that is, in the lap of *Vedanta*. Remember this heritage, and live in such a way that you do not dishonour it.

Do not envy countries that are attempting to reach the moon and Mars and to explore the reaches of outer space. Of what avail is it to master those regions while remaining slaves of every gust of malice or fear? Of what avail is it to travel at ten thousand miles per hour with a mind weighed down by dark impulses of the savage past? Inquire into the causes of the lack of peace that prevails even in the most advanced communities of the West and you will find the reason to be the wild growth of pride and greed, vice and sin. There is no fear of God or respect for age or dread of sin. They attach meaning and value only to the external symbols of riches or power, the container, not the thing contained.

For example, this marble image is only a container. The thing contained is the essential nature (*Sai Thathwa*). Just as a cup is the base support and the milk in it is the supported, you pour *Sai Thathwa* in this Form and you call it Sai Baba; you pour it in another vessel of a different form and call it Srinivasa or Siva or Krishna or Rama.

Idol worship is just the beginning of spiritual practice

For those in the kindergarten of spiritual practice, an idol is necessary, like pictures in a spelling book. Until you are able to recall instantly the image of a horse as soon as you see the letters h, o, r, s, and e, one after another, the drawing of a picture must be held before you with those letters underneath it. So also, you must have a form like the idol, called Sai, prominently before you in order to give shape to your loose and indefinite conception of the True State (divine *Thathwa*). Once you can conceive the True State independently, without any form, or as all forms and names, the idol is superfluous and can be dispensed with.

Installing this marble image in the temple yonder does not mean the end of all effort for you. In fact, it is just the beginning. A large number of temples all over this country are in various stages of ruin. Not only here but in other countries also, the same thing holds true. Why make all this noise and build another temple to be added to the list? New temples rise and old temples fade from memory and fall into decay. This is because you do not realise that the substance is the same, though it is presented in different forms and under different names. One chapter of your penance (*tapas*) is over; you have this idol and you have this function, but the next chapter is to pour your devotion into this idol and make it ever alive, to shape your own lives so that you are fit to stand before Sai with folded hands. Only the pure and the holy can offer themselves fully to God.

Do your best first and seek God's help

I do not like people wasting the precious moments of their limited years of life in idle talk of vain pursuits. Nor do I like cowardly hesitation. Act, act with all your might and with all your mind; make full use of the skill, capacity, courage, and confidence with which you are endowed. Then God will bless you. You must have heard of the devotee of Rama who sat on the roadside by his upturned cart, wailing his bad luck and calling on Rama to lift the cart into position. Rama did not appear to raise the cart and fix the wheel. He therefore began chiding his faith itself and to doubt the experience of the sages who described Rama as the Ocean of Mercy. Rama came into his presence then, but only to tell him, “You fool, I entrusted you with some intelligence and strength. Use them. Put your shoulder to the task now before you. When you have done your best and that best is found not enough, then call on Me; I am ever ready to reinforce your exertions with My grace.” The devotees of Rama, with His name on their lips and His Form before their eyes, lifted mountains and bridged the sea. You who call yourselves devotees of *Atma* are too weak even to carry about your bodies, not to speak of the burden of your kith and kin.

Having installed Sai in your village, you must grow in love (*prema*), for Sai is love personified (*Prema-swarupam*). *Sa* means *Sarvasakthi* (All-powerful) and *Sarvasakshi* (the Witness in All); *Ayi* means mother; *Baba* means father. The Love (*Prema*) of Sai is the love characteristic of the Father and the Mother —not the earthly father and mother but the Father and Mother who are the Witness of every thought, word, and deed in every being. Respect the father and mother who are concrete, and then transfer that type of respect to the Abstract Father or Mother or Guardian — God. Learn to install the unseen Lord in your heart by installing the see-able image in the temple. Proceed from the gross to the subtle.

Discover Truth by exercising discrimination

Just as patients require a doctor, devotees require some name and form to which they can run for consolation and courage and advice. So it is for your sake, as a great step in your spiritual practices, in your progress toward internal peace and harmony, that this installation is made by Me now. “Wherever My name is sung, there I install Myself,” it has been said.

You ignore the Divinity you have as the core of your being; at the same time, you seek it in others. That is the tragedy. You insult yourself by feeling helpless, weak, and inferior. Cowardice and self-condemnation — these do not become a spark of the divine Flame. You can discover your Truth (*Sathya*) by a little exercise of discrimination. Born in delusion, breathing in delusion, groveling in delusion, people are unaware of their heritage and feel incapable of attaining it. People are desperate, seeing no means of escape; every effort to achieve peace entangles them further and tighter in the coils of delusion and of restlessness. Like flowers of variegated hue, each redolent with fragrance, people are all basically of the same genus of Brahman. The fragrance arises from the divine Essence, which is the real reason for existence, for everyone has to realise that Essence and thus end the series of births and deaths. Like a student leaving college once the degree is awarded, once the Truth is realised, one has liberation. One can leave the college and study and all that bother.

You have to rely on your own resources

But you must get the degree. Why are you averse to making the effort needed to pass? Instead of that, you run after this teacher or that. You extol him to the sky and call yourselves his followers. Of what avail is his victory to you? He has achieved — well what about you? His achievement is entered in his account at the bank as his deposit and he can draw cheques upon it. But can you draw from it?

Even today there are great sages in the Himalayas, I know, who are witnesses of everything and whose love embraces the whole of humanity, but that does not help you. You have to trek the path alone and rely on your own resources. They can provide only guide maps and encouragement. You have come to Repalle today from a hundred distant villages, and you know that you have to go back to the places from where you came. So too, it is inevitable that you have to return to the place from where this journey through birth and death started, namely, Brahman.

There is only one sun, but it is reflected in a million tanks and wells and pots. God is One, and His reflections are the individuals (*jivis*), each with the sole (*Atma*) apparent therein. There are lakhs of people here now, and in each one of you now, Swami is shining in your heart. That is the real Soul full bliss (*Atmanandam*). Keep it fresh forever and foster it carefully. That is the secret of peace.

Installation of Sri Sai Baba idol in the Mandir, Repalle, 1961-12-02