

32. Welcome The Tests

While Bairagi Shastri and Narasaraju were speaking, I observed many of you were clearing your throats aloud. Your attention should have been devoted to clearing the ears and removing the cobwebs from the heart. What has the throat to do with imbibing the lessons their speeches conveyed? Just as this mike should be right in front of me, near me but not too near the mouth, to transmit the voice, so too, the heart should be held right, straight, and open to receive the teachings transmitted. If the heart is turned in some other direction, the teaching will not be recorded clearly and distinctly; it gets warped.

Narasaraju reminds Me of Shyamakavi from Bangalore, who died some years ago. He had deep scholarship, vast spiritual experience, poetic talent, and steady devotion. Whatever he touched ended in failure, but never for an instant did he throw the blame on the Lord. On the other hand, he became more intimately attached to Him. The blows of fate did not shake his faith; he stood like a rock amidst the angry waves. The mind was trained by him to pass through joy and grief unscathed.

The real nature of man is equanimity

The discovery of Truth — that is the unique mission of humanity. Humanity is a mixture of *maya* (illusion) and Madhava (God); the illusion throws a mist, which hides God. But, through the action of the healthy impulses inherited from acts performed while in previous bodies, through the cleansing by austerities in this body, or through the grace of the Lord Himself, illusion melts away; for it is just a mist, which flees before the sun. Then *nara* (human) is transformed into Narayana (God) and this world is elevated into a place of tranquility — a *Prasanthi Nilayam*.

The illumination of discrimination will remove the darkness that hides the divine essence of humanity. Today, one hopes to dispel darkness by the sword, the gun, and the bomb, while what is wanted is just a lamp. How can darkness be swept away by darkness, hatred by hatred, ignorance by deeper and vaster ignorance? The very lust for victory promotes darkness. Leave all thoughts of conquest aside. Strive to know the Truth, and when that is known, false notions fondly held by you will fall off of their own accord.

See clearly the lovely image that is hidden in the rock. Release it from that stony prison, remove all the extra stone that is encrusting the idol — that is the task for you. Do not worry about illusion (*maya*); concentrate on God (Madhava), and you are certain to succeed. A tree on the Godavari Canal dike will not go dry; it will have a crown of green, for its roots are fed by the underground water. Similarly, be a tree with the roots in perpetual contact with the flowing waters of the grace of the Lord, and you need not worry about drought.

The dull-wired man runs about madly in pursuit of “peace of mind”, trying this prescription for some time and preferring another afterward. He is on the wrong path, the path of catering to the senses, the path beset by form, name, and quality, the path of the temporary and the apparent. But the seeker of liberation (*moksha*) gets that peace quite easily. In fact, the real nature of a person is equanimity (*prasanthi*) — steadiness, unshakable resolution, peace.

Nature is a great store, where all things that help you to grasp the truth are found. That truth is first cognised as, “All this is imbued with Brahman, directed by Brahman, composed of Brahman (*Samam Brahma Mayam*)!”

Then the seeker rises to a greater awareness, the awareness of “All this is Brahman (*Sarvam Brahman*),” only it appears as something else for a time to the unopened eyes! The final state is one where there is not even an “All this (*Sarvam*)” to be posited as Brahman; there is just Brahman: the one and only.

Obey nature’s commands and listen to the warnings

The lesson is learnt by people when they study nature, analysing it and trying to understand it. It is at the mother’s lap that the child learns the art of living; so also it is nature (*prakriti*) that teaches one how to succeed in the hard struggle and win the supreme peace (*prasanthi*). Break the laws of nature, and she boxes you in the ear; obey her commands and listen to Her warnings, and she will pass on to you your heritage of immortality.

That is to say, have the Lord as your guide and guardian, and adhere to the rules of righteousness (*dharma*). Let the dull-witted man hug his delusion that happiness and peace can be secured through slavery to the senses. Those who know that the world is a mixture of truth and falsehood, and therefore a big conundrum or false, will leave off the outer attractions and concentrate on the inner joy of attachment to God. If you are declared “passed”, you have peace; if you are declared “failed”, that too solves the problem for some little time and puts a stop to worry. However, if your results are not announced but withheld (for it is not quite certain whether you have passed or failed), you suffer the maximum restlessness, is it not? So also, this world, which is neither truth (*sathya*) nor unreal (*asathya*) but false, breeds profuse restlessness in the mind.

Suffering entitles you more to the Lord’s Grace

Only non-attachment can grant supreme peace. The company of the pious and visits to holy places and holy people promote that attitude and habit. Kuchela was prompted to visit Dwaraka by his wife, who had deep devotion; so too, unless your merit of action is good and your inclinations are elevated, and elevating, you will not get the idea of coming to Puttaparthi.

I called Narasaraju and his wife here for this Sivarathri, and they have come. I know him for thirty years, him and his plans and yearnings and trials and troubles. The Lord responds not merely to the sweet voiced cuckoo and its song; He gives ear to the warbles of other birds, too. He gives ear to the wailings of every being. In fact, suffering entitles you more to the grace of the Lord. When suffering comes in waves, one behind the other, be glad that the shore is near: bear them bravely; do not, like cowards, throw the blame on some outside power or develop dislike for the Lord.

Remembrance (*smarana*) of the Self (*Atma*) is the spring of joy; remembrance of the non-self is the source of sorrow. Welcome the test because thereafter you are awarded the certificate. It is to measure your progress that tests are imposed. So do not flinch in the face of grief. The Lord bestows a favour when He decides to test you, for He is impressed by your achievement and wants to put upon it the seal of His approval. Rise up to the demands of the test — that is the way to please the Lord.

The ways of the Lord are inscrutable

A great devotee once failed the test and therefore could not get the certificate. Every day at noon, he used to look out for a needy guest whom he could feed lavishly. Thus, he spent years. But one day, a frail old figure toddled into the house and sat for dinner. He had crossed the century mark in years. The host had the steadiness of

the vow, but he did not have the discrimination to derive the fruit of that vow. Like water poured on a dry sandbed, it did not add to its fertility. His heart still remained a dry sandbed, though the waters of charity were poured on it every noon. The discrimination-less heart drank up the charity, and he was the same strict ritualist. The decrepit guest was overwhelmed by hunger, so, as soon as the first dish was served, he swallowed a big morsel without reciting the Name of God. Annoyed at this atheism, the host cursed the old man and pushed him outside to starve or beg in the hot sun.

That night, he had a dream in which the Lord chastised him for the cruelty of his behaviour. The Lord said, “For more than a hundred years, I nourished that man lovingly as the apple of My eye, though he never once took a single one of My many Names. My dear man, could you not have suffered him for a few minutes?”

Thiruthondar in Tamilnadu showed how to stand up to this kind of test when the Lord comes as a hungry guest to the house of the devotee. The feeling of surrender is the best for success in all such instances. Let His will be done. He is every One. Seeking refuge for protection (*saranagathi*) is like grass on the ground, unaffected by storms; egoism is the palmyra tree that sways in the wind but breaks when it blows suddenly in a gust. The ways of the Lord are inscrutable; your duty is to submit to them faithfully, thankfully, and joyfully.

Prasanthi Nilayam, 1962-03-06

The human body has been given to you for a grand purpose: realising the Lord within.

If you have a fully equipped car in good running condition, would you keep it in the garage? The car is primarily for going on a journey, so get into it and go. Only then is it worthwhile to own it.

So, too, with the body. Proceed, go forward to the goal. Learn how to use the faculties of the body, the senses, the intellect, the mind, for achieving the goal and march on.

Sathya Sai Baba