

33. Near And Far

I must address you now as embodiments of patience (*santha-swarupalara*), for you have sat very patiently through the two-hour speech given by the *pandit*.

There are many types of food — for the body, for the mind, for the intellect, and for the spirit. But whatever the food, taking it in moderate doses at regular intervals is the best rule. Hunger is the best appetiser; without it, you develop indigestion and all its dire consequences. Of course, what the *pandit* served is food of the highest quality, but I see you are all still hungry! You wish to hear Me also, though it is the same food that I give. The rain from the clouds falls on the roof and might flow through a pipe or gargoyle, but it is the same water, whatever the shape of the exit. Your love toward Me has made you hungry for My speech, though I have but to repeat the *pandit's* words, perhaps in a simpler style. He himself strove to make it as simple as he could, and I know he had to make a great effort, unusual effort, to communicate those difficult ideas to you.

What the *pandit* was trying to tell you by means of all those Sanskrit verses is just this: Be attached under all conditions to the source, substance, and sum of all power: the Lord. Then you can draw from that source all the power that you need. This attachment is called devotion.

The Name of the Lord has vast potentiality

For the bird in mid-ocean flying over the dark deep blue waters, the only resting place is the mast of a ship that sails across. In the same way, the Lord is the only refuge for man who is swept by storms over a restless sea. However far the bird may fly, it knows where it can rest; that knowledge gives it confidence. It has the picture of that mast steady in its mind; its form is fixed in the eye. The name of the Lord is the mast for you; remember it ever. Associate it with the form, and have that form fixed in the mind's eye. It is a lamp shedding light in the recesses of your heart. Have the Name on the tongue, and it will drive away the inner as well as the outer darkness. Peace within, brotherliness without — that is the sign of a person engaged in repeating the name of the Lord.

The name of the Lord has vast potentiality. Let me tell you an incident about this. Once Jnanadhev and Naamdhev together walked across a forest tract, and both were afflicted with unbearable thirst. They discovered a well, but they found no rope or vessel with which they could draw the precious liquid within reach. It was a deep well, with no steps, and the water was far far beneath. Jnanadhev, who had attained knowledge of the Supreme Being (*Brahmajnana*), identified himself with a bird that flew down the well and drank its fill. His thirst was quenched that way. Naamdhev called upon the Lord by name; the Lord answered, the water in the well rose — yes, rose — until he could reach it with his hands and slake his thirst.

You consider the world as very near, as around you and behind you, but when you have to point out the Lord, you show Him far away from you, up and above, or at a vast distance. This is a mistake. The Lord is near; the world is far. You are believing that it is the other way because you are afraid of the truth and you like to deceive yourself.

An army captain once went with the minister and the king in a small ferry-boat across a flooded river. He was very frightened to be in the boat and began to shake nervously. So the minister just threw him into the flooded river. At once, he cried out for a place in the boat! He knew then the comfort of the boat, the value of the boat, the

value of the basis (*adhara*), in fact.

Do not pay attention to mind's vagaries

The Lord is the the basis, the support (*adhara*); the world is the supported, the superimposed (*adheya*). The basis is in oneself, the nearest entity, the closest companion, the very breath and life of the individual. How then can you point to the distance when you are asked about the Lord? His name, the name that appeals to you, is shaped by the intimateness of feeling and its depth, so far as you are concerned.

Atheism is when the sun of sacred knowledge (*jnana*) has set; theism is when it rises. Inertia (*thamas*) is ignorance (*a-jnana*); religious austerity (*tapas*) is spiritual wisdom (*jnana*). If the mind is neglected and allowed to run wild, dullness and delusion (*thamas*) will hold sway. Some persons advise you to watch each step of the mind and note down all the false steps and evil intentions it encounters. No, that is a dangerous practice. Do not pay attention to its vagaries; strive for what you need and not for what you have to avoid. Count the false steps, and you will be led to commit them again. Resolve to walk right, and your steps will not falter or fail.

The Lord is won by sincere agony

The fact is that you should have a guru who has the highest spiritual experience. Otherwise, you will be misled by amateurs who prescribe patent remedies, irrespective of your personal history and needs. Above all, you must yourself be engaged in listening to holy names (*sravanam*), recapitulation on what you heard (*mananam*), and singing of Lord's name and glory (*bhajanam*) — the Yamuna, Saraswathi, and Ganga of the three-fold river of Life. *Sravanam* is the path of devotion, *mananam* is the path of spiritual wisdom, and *bhajanam* is the path of action. All paths of seeking union with God (*yogas*) lead to one goal: the surrender of the self in the All-Self (the *Paramatma*, the *Parabrahman*), the merging of the river in the sea. Give Me the reins; trust in Me, and be directed by Me. I shall take full responsibility. Only, you must accept without demur whatever comes as *prasadham* or grace!

Grief is the feet and joy the head; both are part of the same entity. You cannot welcome joy and reject grief at the same time. You cannot have the obverse without the reverse; you must take and accept the other side of the sheet of paper, along with this side. It is inevitable. The diamond is first just a dull piece of stone, a hard pebble. Only when it is cut by a skilful artisan does it become a multi-faceted flame of fire! Allow yourselves to be so treated, so that all your dullness disappears and you emerge as a resplendent diamond.

You must have that yearning, the yearning of the stone to become a diamond. You must hold the hand of the Mother and walk safely by Her side. You must hold fast and not give up.. Be like the infant-monkey, who clings to the mother and is thus guarded and guided by her superior strength and wisdom. The Lord is won by sincere agony, steady yearning. There are some places where Sai Baba, the previous body, is worshipped but where this 'yearning' is not considered important! The person who goes to that place is asked by the man in charge to come for seven Thursdays or eleven Thursdays or forty-one-days and worship Sai Baba in order to get His full Grace, as if it is just a matter of arithmetic. No. That is but a stratagem to gather a sizeable crowd, so that the shrine may be taken to be famous! Devotion does not lend itself to such treatment.

“Become parts of My History”

True devotion will overcome all obstacles and, like a swollen river, leap over dikes and banks and over-

whelm all by the strength. Difficulties are created to increase the 'yearning' and to sift the sincere devotee from the rest. By the alchemy of constant remembrance of God, even a rock is turned into clay. It cannot become soft by merely carrying it on a specified number of journeys into a shrine.

Another point. Have you ever before or anywhere else sat so long, listening or waiting to listen to a speech; sat with such patience, such single-minded ardour? Why have you borne all this? In order to hear My words, is it not? Now, do not let all that ardour go to waste once the listening is over. Take earnestly to the path of Absolute Reality (*Brahma-marga*) as well as the path of Righteousness (*Dharma-marga*). After your life has been transmuted into a never-ending prayer by the silent effect of the path of Righteousness, forget all in the ecstasy of the path of Absolute Reality. Do not allow the illusion (*maya*) that lies in wait for you on the other bank of the Chitravathi to pounce upon you or entice you to the wordly life you led so far. Be like the tongue in the midst of the teeth — carefully, confidently, courageously going about its task, without getting bitten.

Study well the disciplinary rules laid down for all who wish to be in Prasanthi Nilayam. These rules are for your own good. Wherever you are, you can make the place a *Prasanthi Nilayam* (Abode of Supreme Peace). Become parts of My history. Do not get far from Me. You have acquired nearness through the accumulated good fortune of many births. If you cut this contact and get away, a time will come when you will weep outside the gates clamouring for entry. Be free from silly delusions and doubts, be free from tawdry desires — and I shall take you into Me.

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The mind flutters about and squats on all and sundry objects in the universe. It refuses to stay on only one idea, God. Like the fly that sits on fair and foul but denies itself the pleasure of sitting on a hot cinder, the mind too flees from all thought of God.

The fly will be destroyed if it sits on fire; the mind is also destroyed when it dwells on God, for the mind is but a pattern of desire woven with the warp and woof of the same material.

Sathya Sai Baba