

5. Sweeten And Lighten Life

Perhaps this feast of repeating Rama's name (*Ramanama*) is cloying to some tastes, but it is something that is ever fresh, that gives undying sweetness to the heart that is filled with the love of God. One single Name will yield fresh sweetness, fresh joy, every time it is rolled on the tongue.

I have to tell you the things I told you often before, for until digestion is well established, medicine has to be taken. The face has to be washed day after day. One meal is not the end of the story; you have to eat again and again.

To get angry is but the effort of a moment, but to get peace, to become unaffected by the ups and downs of life, is the result of years of training in *Vedanta*. It can be well established only on the basis of the belief that all material things that fall within the range of sensuous experience are fundamentally non-existent. They are products of illusion (*maya*), of the tendency to see many where only One exists. You see corpses proceeding one after the other to the graveyard, but you move about unconcerned. You feel you are eternal.

In fact, you are. That is the real you, I mean. Just as the water you drink is eliminated as perspiration, the *karma* that you accumulate is eliminated through *karma* that is gladly borne. So, bear both "mirth and moan" with equal calm. Like the space (*akasa*) in the pot merging with the space outside the pot, silently, fully, with no trace of separation or distinctness, merge with the Universal. That is real surrender, salvation, liberation (*saranagathi*).

Today is the fastest friend, hold fast to it

Rama is extolled as the ideal son, who acted according to his father's wish regardless of his own happiness. But Bhishma is a better example in this respect. He acceded to a whim of his father and in so doing made even a greater sacrifice than Rama. Dasaratha made Rama an exile in the forest for fourteen years to satisfy the claims of Truth, while Shantanu made his son Bhishma give up the throne as well as wedded life to satisfy a sensual desire of his senile body.

As a matter of fact, it is not obedience to the father's whim that is important; it is adherence to *sathya* and *dharma*, which is Rama's forte.

Dheekshith said that kings, because they have to compromise with justice and truth some time or other, usually go to the nether regions. His kingdom is, really speaking, his body. He must evince as much interest in the proper upkeep of the most distant part of his kingdom as he does in the upkeep of his toe or scalp. Pain anywhere must be felt and remedied as quickly as pain in any part of his body. Such a king never goes to the nether regions. He is indeed thrice blessed. Janaka, for example, felt that all was His, not his. Though he had a body and all the commitments of kingship, he felt as if he was without a body and without a family.

It requires all the strength one can collect to carry a load uphill. The gear, the accelerator, have both to operate to haul a car up a steep hill. The *guru* who taught you cannot do anything to haul it; he can only guide you. Control of the senses, changing the mode of life and the habits of thought —these have to be done by you. The senses say, "Why struggle? Eat, drink, and be merry while you can," but the *guru* says, "Death lands on you without notice; overcome its fear now, before he calls. Now is the true friend; yesterday has deceived you and gone; tomorrow is a doubtful visitor. Today is the fastest friend; hold fast to it."

Be tranquil amidst the storms

Once when his eldest brother, Dharmaraja, promised a mendicant yogi some help for a ritual sacrifice and asked him to call the next day, Bhima ordered all drums to beat and all flags to fly, for, “My brother is certain to live until tomorrow! At least, that is what he believes will happen.”

Death stalks your footsteps like a tiger in the bush. So without further waste of time, try to give up sloth and anger; be tranquil amidst the storms; mix in tranquil company. Let the fragrant aroma of divine thoughts, full of love to all, rise around you; why try to scatter fragrance from scent-sticks available in the market? The flame of experiential knowledge of Supreme Reality (*jnana*) can reduce to cinders the impulses inherited through many births and many experiences. In the heat of that crucible, dross is burnt and precious metal is isolated.

The Lord is sweet in every one of His actions

Spiritual effort requires regular habits and moderation in food, sleep, and exercise. Fasting weakens the intellect and reduces the strength of discrimination. The body, the mind, and the spirit—all three must be equally looked after. Unless you have “muscles of iron and nerves of steel,” you cannot contain in your head the tremendously transforming idea of monism (*advaita*), of your being the universal itself, the Eternal Reality itself! Lesser strength can think only in terms of servitude or subsidiary roles. To see truth as truth and untruth as untruth, clarity of vision and courage of vision are both needed.

The seven-walled fort—the feeling of mind and mine (*mamakara*) and the six evil tendencies of lust, anger, greed, infatuation, arrogance, and jealousy (*kama, krodha, lobha, moha, madha, and maatsarya*)—has a garden in the centre and a lake, where the divine bird (*hamsa*) plays. It is the image of your own true self; become aware of it and you are saved. You have come into this world (*lokha*) to enter the presence of the Lord of the world (*Loksha*), so do not tarry in wayside inns, mistaking them to be the goal. The Lord too will be longing for the arrival of the lost. He is like a cow yearning for its calf.

Once Krishna was in a fix; it was Rukmini’s birthday, and it was also the anniversary of his marriage with Sathyabama! Both queens were awaiting His arrival in their palaces, but Krishna, to the great mortification of the proud Sathyabama, went to Rukmini first. After sharing the feast with her, He entered Sathyabama’s palace. Sathyabama was in an inconsolable mood of resentment, but, though she did not offer anything to Krishna out of pique, Krishna Himself picked up a few jambu fruits from the garden and ate them, appreciating all the while the care with which the queen was looking after the garden and the extraordinarily fine taste of every fruit that grew in it! Sathyabama was thus encouraged to forget the sense of injury. The Lord is sweet in every one of His actions, movements, words, gestures. He is sweetness itself.

This life is a dream you have taken to be true

Take the instance of Rama. Bairagi Sastry recited a poem about the lotus feet of Rama treading the stony, thorny jungle regions. But Kaikeyi had not realised this when she asked that Rama should go into exile. She learnt about it and was horrified at what she had done only when she saw Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana in the hermitage, as she watched her son plead with Rama to return to His throne. Rama never felt the thorn or the stone, for He had devised the jungle Himself in order to infuse faith in the sages and nip their fears.

As a matter of fact, what functions have those feet other than warding off the hurdles on the path of devo-

tees? The bearer alone knows the weight of the load on his shoulder. The tiniest suffering in you causes the same suffering here also.

An old woman from Salem is here, since a week. Her son, a young man of twenty-five years, is insane and cannot attend to his needs. She does not know how much I was affected, but I was inquiring, “Did he take his morning coffee?” And telling her, “Carry food to him and feed him, he is hungry.” Her anxiety was just one-sixty-fourth of Mine! You think that I pay attention only to those who sit in front? I see all and I am with all, wherever they may be. Only those who have been blessed will know, not the rest.

No fuel, no fire. No spiritual practice, no subconsciousness desire. Pour oil and light the wick. You are on a pilgrimage to the beyond, so you cannot long dwell in this beneath. Some time or other, sooner or later, this birth or the next, you have to realise that this is but a dream you took to be true; you have to pack up and march. This is non-Being (*asath*) going toward the Being (*Sath*). This is darkness (*thamas*): this is the realm of death. Proceed toward the effulgent light (*jyothi*); proceed toward the realm where immortality reigns.

Let the desire to be saved sprout in you

The tree might appear to be dry, but it will bloom, it will bear fruit; do not despair. I shall make it sprout provided the sap of repentance is still running. Come just one step forward, and I shall take a hundred toward you. Shed just one tear, I shall wipe a hundred from your eyes. I bless only thus! May your bliss (*ananda*) grow.

When the night grows chill, you draw the rug tighter around you, is it not? So too, when grief assails you, draw the warmth of the name of the Lord closer round your mind. Out of all the hundreds of thousands of Indians, you alone have gained this contact through your good luck. Let at least the desire to be saved sprout in you, and I shall see that it grows and gives fruit, provided you yearn and try. To pour the nectar of grace, the vessel must be cleansed. Clean it and demand the nectar; do not grieve later that you missed the chance, since it has come within reach. You will not know Me in a trice, or even in days. It is something that has to be realised by stages, in due course, through discrimination, non-attachment, and clear-sightedness.

You have been squatting for four hours, and some of you might be squirming and feeling an ache in the back. But it is no ache. Pray that you may get this feeling all through life, for you have been receiving the teaching that will sweeten and lighten life itself.

Prasanthi Nilayam, 1963-02-06

Each has their allotted task, according to the status, taste, tendency, and earned merit. Do your task with the fear of God and of sin deep in your heart. Welcome pain and grief, so that you take both success and failure as hammer strokes to shape you into a sturdy spiritual aspirant. Inner content is more important than outer prosperity.

Sathya Sai Baba