

20. The tree of life

I am glad that this Primary Health Centre has brought us all together today. This is a source of great joy to the villagers and so I am also happy. The rulers of our States, of whom the minister and the legislators now on this platform are the representatives, declare that they are trying their best to develop the resources, natural and human, of this country and to provide on the basis of those resources, food, clothing, shelter, education, employment, security and health in ample measure to the people.

But the development of the moral and spiritual resources of men is neglected and the provision of peace and spiritual happiness is ignored. Happiness and peace do not follow when man is fed well, clothed well, housed well and even educated up to a high standard and employed under comfortable conditions, with no injury to health or security. There are many who have all these in plenty but who are yet worried or in pain or discontented. They depend on the inner equipment of man, not on his outer skill or riches.

Man is fundamentally Divine, and so, naturally, the more he manifests the Divine attributes of Love, Justice, Truth and Peace, the more *aanandha* he is able to enjoy and impart. The less he manifests them, the more ashamed he ought to be, that he is living counter to his heritage.

The tree of Life has to be watered at the roots, but now, those who plan to raise the standard of living, water the branches, the leaves and the blossoms. The roots are the virtues; they have to be fostered so that the flowers of actions, words and thoughts may bloom in fragrance and yield the fruit of *seva* (service), full of the sweet juice of *aanandha*. Planning for food, clothing and shelter is only promoting the well-being of the cart; plan also for the horse, the mind of man which has to use the food, the clothing, the shelter and other material instruments for the high purpose of 'escaping from the ego into the universal'.

Loss of self-confidence is the chief defect

The distressing poverty of the Rayalaseema district was also described by some speakers; I would ask you not to be carried away by despair or lose faith in man or God. Mention was made of Emperoi Shibi who offered his own flesh to an eagle whose prey he had rescued from his talons. There is also the supreme example of Karna whose sacrifices were so spontaneous and self-effacing. Donors imbued with this spirit of detachment are even now not absent amidst us. Their services should not be lightly cast aside or forgotten. When a few tiny stones get mixed in rice and get between the teeth, you say in disgust that the plate of rice is but a plate of stones. It is human nature to exaggerate in order to create an impression. We treat joy as incidental and insignificant and dwell more on grief and pain.

The chief defect of which these are but manifestations is the loss of self-confidence and enthusiasm among the villagers. They give themselves up at the slightest sign of loss or danger. They do not know that the secret of strength and courage lies in themselves. Villagers have lost the art of living together in peace and harmony. Factions have taken deep root to the detriment of the peaceful pursuit of professions. Besides, the children of the village who receive the kind of education imparted in the schools develop con--erupt for agriculture and other rural occupations and flock towards towns where the outward pomp of modern civilisation attracts them. They then become victims to the vanities of the western ways of life, and are weaned away from the culture of their ancestors.

Regulation must come from within

The Doctor in charge of this Primary Health Centre spoke of Family Planning and of the artificial methods popularised here for the limitation of children. Though such methods may appear to succeed, they are fraught with much danger; they will inevitably lead to large-scale demoralisation of character and weakening of moral stamina; stamina on which the ultimate strength of a people depends. The regulation must come from within, not from without; people must control themselves through their own innate strength, not get controlled through fear of some one or desire for temporary gain.

Self-control promotes self-reliance, self-knowledge and self-advancement. Only the immediate consequence is considered by the partisans of family planning; the long-term consequence is ignored. It is like a bus owner who overloads the bus in order to gain a few chips, but when the tyre bursts as a result and he has to replace it, he will rue the greed which caused the loss.

If only half the prayers addressed to Government are addressed to God, you can win His Grace and solve the food problem, for God alone can give the rains that fill the tanks and reservoirs to irrigate the fields where the crops are grown. Have sincere faith in God and surrender to Him, acting, speaking and thinking in such a way that He is pleased. Be pure, be simple, be sincere and He will answer your agonising call.

Glorify God and walk in His path

What can the Government do when the monsoon fails and the tanks are dry? Even the Chief Engineer for Electricity says that he cannot give you power for working pump-sets for well-irrigation, because the rains have failed! So, instead of indulging in vain prattle, glorify God and walk in His path and pray to Him. Spend the allotted span of years in the contemplation and the adoration of the Almighty, not in servile praise of the feeble, the futile and the weak. Life is an opportunity afforded to each not to eat and drink, but to achieve something nobler and grander: to master oneself and merge in the Reality

Three quarters of your attention should be paid to the *dehi*---the occupant of the *deha* or body--- who always speaks of the body and its components as 'mine'. For this body and all experiences which one gains through it are as unreal as dreams.

You have now seen and experienced the procession through the streets of your village of Swami and the Minister; you have seen Me and heard My speech; but when you go to bed within a few hours and dream during sleep, you are not aware of all this; you see and experience a new set of events, which at the time are as real, as impressive, as significant as these; and when you have deep sleep, nothing 'is', except probably the inner consciousness that you are you. When you dream, the dream is real; when you wake, the waking experience is as real as the dream was. The fact is, it is all a dream, a creation of the mind when the *aathma* (the true self) is reflected in it. Remove that Mind, have nothing on which the *aathma* reflects and then the *aathma* shines in its own splendour in its own solitariness.

Effort is essential for contacting God

Once you attain *this jnaana*, the waking experience of fifty years will appear as of five seconds only, as in a two seconds dream one passes from childhood to grandparenthood and experiences passage of 50 years of *time*! *Jnaana* is as passing from *swapna* (dream) stage to *the jaagrath*

(waking) stage which judges the dream stage as unreal. Seek the springs of *aanandha* (bliss) within you and happiness will be your lot, here and for ever. Believe that the *aanandha* within you is derived from God who is your Reality.

Effort is essential for contacting God and deriving *aanandha* therefrom, just as effort is needed to listen to the radio programmes that are everywhere around us. A *yanthra* (instrument) must be procured for the reception of that music or talk; a *manthra* (a sacred formula) is needed for the concretisation of that abstract entity, God, and for sharing the Bliss that He is. A little of that Bliss will wipe out all trace of pettiness and passion from man.

Now, relations between men are vitiated by malice and hatred. The Government, the administration and the people (*prabhuthwam*, *adhikaaris* and *praja*) are as the three blades in the electric fan; when all three rotate together in the same direction and at the same speed, they conduce to comfort. Anger, malice, greed, envy---all these are obstacles in the path of love and co-operation. They lower man from the Divine to the animal level. Bear with others with patience and understanding; practise *sahana* (forbearance) and sympathy. Try to discover points of contact, not of conflict. Spread brotherliness and deepen kindness through knowledge. Then life becomes worth while, without fail.

Time is a prime factor for good fortunes

The reason for the very long time which has elapsed since I came to this village last, a village which is within a few miles of Puttaparthi, is to be sought, not in the attitude of individuals, but in the *kaala*, *karma* and *kaarana* which must coincide before such an event can come about. The *kaala* (time) must ripen; the *karma* (occasion) must also arise; and the *kaarana* (circumstances necessitating My presence) must occur. Then alone is this possible, is it not? It takes time for a fruit to mature and acquire sweetness and become eatable; time is a prime factor for most good fortunes. Make full use of Me, that is all that I ask of you. I have at no time any feeling of separateness. I invite all to come and know and derive benefit from Me. Dive and know the depth; watch and discriminate; eat and know the taste. I long for people who do that.

We shall close with some songs reciting the Name of God. It is My general practice to induce people to learn the sweetness of the Name. I begin My discourses with the recitation of a spiritual poem and end them with these *Naamaavalis* (series of divine names), and in between I give the lesson I love to teach. It is like a tasty health-giving meal, which I serve you on a plate (the poem) covering it with a lid (the *Naamaavalis*). That is how you may take it.

Kothacheruvu Village, Opening of the Primary Health Centre, 3-8-1966