

37. Meaning of mendicancy

IN the background of mountains that bear sun and rain with equal unconcern, of the sea and sky that are unaffected by storms and clouds, it looks ridiculous that man alone is subject to anxiety and fear; in the company of birds and beasts that do not store food for another day, but are content to leave it to Providence to provide for them, it looks absurd that man alone should spend all his days, calculating and accumulating. No bird casts seed on land to grow food for itself; nor do beasts plough and enclose fields, claiming 'this is mine, this is for my children and children's children.' *Nishkaama-karma* (selfless action) is the natural face of activity for the children of God, the progeny of Immortality. They sing and swim, they dance and dive, they talk and walk, they pray and pine, because they must; it is their nature too. They do not know what will happen; as a consequence, they do not care; they do not anticipate any result. They are just themselves, when they do these things. It is *sahaja-lak-shana* (their innate nature) their inborn characteristic.

You have not taken birth in order to feel the gnawing of hunger and to perform activities which will alleviate the gnawing, for a few hours every time. In fact, hunger has been allotted to you so that you may grow and develop intelligence, to discover your ultimate goal. Education is for life, not for a living! And, life is just a chance to see for yourselves your beginning and your end. Every clock has some one who has made it and who is winding it, so that it may work' You too have One, who has the key and who winds. Discover Him. The clock shows the time for all who need. It looks for no reward, it does not care why you are anxious to know the time; it ticks unceasingly, night or day, fair weather or foul. Be like the clock.

Cultivate God's friendship and kinship

You are only actors on the stage, before the footlights. The Director who knows the play, who assigns the roles, who gives the cues, who calls you in and puts you on---He is behind the curtain. You are a puppet; He holds the strings. If He must be seen, you have to be His *sakha* (friend) or *bandhu* (kinsman). Merely being an onlooker will not entitle you to approach Him and be in His holy company. Cultivate His friendship or kinship, by the attitude of Love and Dedicated Service. If you serve a king, for the sake of your wife and children, you are devoted to them and not to the king, however arduous and complete your service may be. So also, if you do ceremonial worship or observe vows, for the sake of material prosperity so that you can keep your family in comfort, you are devoted and dedicated to them and not to your own best interest. Complete surrender, unsullied dedication---that is the acid test He imposes and accepts.

A man, let us say, has three wives; when he dies, all the three become widows and have to wear widow's weeds, remove jewellery, and put on the outer symbols of mourning. That is the convention. But, if one wife is pregnant, this convention does not apply; it is only after the child is delivered, that she can be declared as a widow! She knows until then that she is a widow, but the world will think, on seeing her that her husband is alive! This is the position of the *jnaani* too. He knows that the world is transient, that God is all, that dedicated activity alone can save him from consequences that bind---but the world thinks, on seeing him, that he is one like themselves! He is like a lotus blossom on water, wherein it grew, above the mud, where its roots lie, unaffected and untouched by either.

The agony to know God is the jewel to be proud of This *jnaana* is not an attribute of the Universal Absolute (*Param-aathma*); it is *Paramaathma* itself. The *Upanishaths* declare; *Sathyam, jnaanam, anantham Brahma* (Truth, Wisdom, infinity is *Brahman*). *Jnaana* is the

fulfilment, it is the goal, the consummation. Man is as ugly as a noseless face, if he has no wisdom, whatever other attainments he may decorate himself with! The yearning, the agony, the endeavour, to know Him and His Might and Mystery is the jewel to be proud of. The consciousness that God is the Indweller, who prompts and executes all that we feel, think and do, that gives the inspiration to surrender the strength to dedicate, the urge to be but an instrument in His Hands for His purposes, is *jnaana*.

There was a King who led his mighty army across the snowy peaks that bounded his kingdom, into his neighbour's realm. On a lofty pass thick with snow, he saw a mendicant or ascetic sitting on a bare rock, with his head between his knees evidently to protect it from the chill wind that blew through the gap in the peak. He had no clothes on his body. The King was overcome with pity; he took off his own shawl and coat and offered them to the *yogi* (ascetic, one who has mastered the senses and the mind). The *yogi* refused to accept them, for, he said, "God has given enough clothing to guard me against heat and cold. He gives me all that I need. Please give these to some one who is poor." The King was surprised at these words. He asked him where that clothing was. The *yogi* replied, "God has Himself woven it for me; I am wearing it since birth and will wear it until the grave. Here it is, my skin! Give this coat and shawl to some mendicant beggar, some poor man."

Contentment is the most precious treasure

The King smiled for who could be poorer than he, he thought. He asked him, "But, where can I find a poor man?" The *yogi* asked him, where he was going and why. He said, "I am going into the realm of my enemy so that I can add his kingdom to my own." The *yogi* it was who smiled now. He said, "If you are not satisfied with the kingdom you have and if you are prepared to sacrifice your life and the lives of these thousands to get a few more square miles of land, certainly you are much poorer than I. So, offer the clothes to yourself. You need them more than I do." At this the King was greatly ashamed; he realised the futility of fame and fortune; he returned to his own capital, thanking the *yogi* for opening his eyes to his innate poverty. Contentment is the most precious treasure, he realised. Great men spread the light of their wisdom through every word and deed of theirs. Of course, one must use his own discretion and higher reasoning in order to discriminate the real from the unreal.

There was an old merchant who used to attend all religious discourses in the town, especially when they were musical as well. For thirty years, he never missed a single one and people wondered at his steadiness and faith. One day, he took with him his son also, a boy of sixteen. That day, the *Pandith* spoke of the sacred cow and of her being the Fourth Mother of man after the Scripture Mother, Earth Mother and one's own Mother. He exhorted the listeners to revere the cow and refrain from the slightest ill-treatment, in spite of the strongest provocation.

Constant practice alone is rewarded by Grace

The next day, the merchant had to go to another village on some urgent work and so, he posted his son in the shop and left. By noon, a cow entered the shop and started eating large mouthfuls of grain, jaggery and other articles, delicious to her taste, from the open containers ranged round the stool where the boy sat. He did not stir a finger, because it was the Sacred Cow. By evening, the father came back and beholding the damage, he reprimanded his son severely. "You should not take those discourses to heart; when you come away from the place, while shaking off the dust from the carpet on which you sat, you must shake off from your brain any idea that might

have stuck therein from the discourse of the *Pandith*. If I had not done so every day during these thirty years, you and I and all of us would have died of starvation."

Detachment is a plant of slow growth; if you pluck the tender plant to look for the pods, you will be disappointed. So, too, long and constant practise alone is rewarded by the peace that Grace offers. Grace is acquired by surrender, as Krishna has declared in the Geetha.

When the Geetha directs you to give up all *dharma* (set codes of morality), it does not ask you also to give up all *karma* (activity), that is to say, you have to do *karma*, and, when you do it for God, through God and by God, the *dharma* of it does not matter; it has to be acceptable and it is bound to benefit you. The statement is not an invitation to licentiousness, or complete inactivity; it is a call for dedication and surrender to the highest in Man, viz., God.

God is pleased only by genuine endeavour

There was once a wicked commentator who said that this direction removes the need to discriminate between right and wrong! He must have been the same person who said, "The Lord says in the Geetha that He will be pleased even if a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or a little water is offered to Him; well, this hookah contains all four' the tobacco leaf, the red flower denoted by the cinders; the shell of the coconut fruit and water through which the smoke bubble bubbles!" Impertinence and irrelevance cannot hide irreverence from the eyes of God.

The Lord will not be moved by strict scholarly commentary. He is pleased only by actual practice; by genuine endeavour; by honest sincere effort; by the tireless striving to cleanse the mind. The striving must be alert and active, until the goal is reached. Some one asked Ramana Maharishi, "How long am I to engage myself in *dhyaana*?" The Maharishi replied, "Until you lose all awareness of the experience of *dhyaana*."

In the play 'Dhruva' which these boys enacted, the boy who was Dhruva sat straight and tense, giving us the impression that he was lost in *dhyaana*; but, such histrionics cannot claim consideration. In real *dhyaana*, you soon get over the consciousness that 'you are doing *dhyaana*. It fact every moment in life must be a moment utilised for *dhyaana*. That is the best way to live. When you sweep your rooms clean, tell yourselves that your hearts too have to be swept likewise; when you cut vegetables feel that lust and greed too have to be cut into pieces; when you press *chapaathis* wider and wider, desire in addition that your love may take in wider and wider circles, and expand even into the regions of strangers and foes.

This is the means by which you can make your home a hermitage, and the routine of living into a route to Liberation.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 29-9-1968

Some people raise the question, "How can we make a living if we adhere to Truth?" Well, you cannot escape death, whatever way you spend your days. It is far better to die, adhering to Truth, than die, sliding into falsehood. Do this duty to yourself first; then, consider the rights of others.

Shri Sathya Sai