

## 8. The middle path

THROUGH *saadhana* (spiritual discipline), continuous and consistent, man can control the vagaries of the mind, which by their variety and vanity cause disappointment and distress. "*Saadhana* can achieve what appears impossible," says a Telugu proverb.

What is required is the awareness of the vicious game that the mind plays. It presents before the attention, one source after another of temporary pleasure; it does not allow any interval for you to weigh the pros and cons. When hunger for food is appeased, it holds before the eye the attraction of the film, it reminds the ear of the charm of music, and it makes the tongue water for the pleasant taste of something that it craves for. The wish becomes very soon the urge for action, the urge soon gathers strength and the yearning becomes uncontrollable. The burden of desires gradually becomes too heavy and man gets dispirited and sad. Train the mind to turn towards the intelligence for inspiration and guidance, not towards the senses for adventures and achievements. That will make it an instrument for reducing your vagaries and saving time and energy for more vital matters.

### **You are all 'living cells' in the Body of God**

Desires when fulfilled breed further desires; when unfulfilled, they lead to further instalments of life on earth, in order to calm the urge. The only method by which the delusion of desire can be destroyed is to dedicate all activities to God and engage in them in a spirit of worship; leaving the consequences to Him and ceasing to attach yourselves to them, Look upon everyone as the embodiment of the Divine and worship each, as such, by offering love, understanding, and service. Only the blind will be indifferent to the dismal condition of others; only the deaf will be unaffected by the sobs of others. In fact, there are no 'others!' You are all, 'living cells' in the body of God, each performing its individual function to promote His Will.

The joy one gets while promoting another's joy is incomparable. Your heart must melt in compassion when the eye sees another person suffering. That is the sign of the *Saathwik* (pure or noble) individual; the *Thaamasik* (Ignorant) individual will be Indifferent, he is too dull, too bovine, to be affected. The *Raajasik* (passionate) man will rush to punish the person who caused the suffering and might even forget to relieve the misery of the person affected! Callousness is the root cause of all the cruelty that defaces the Divine Nature of Man, in all the lands on the earth.

There are thousands of *Bhajana Mandalis* (groups for devotional singing), under the auspices of the Sathya Sai Seva Samithis active all over the world. They hold *Bhajana* Sessions for about an hour, once or twice a week, and disperse thereafter. They sing the glory of God, under various Names and in various forms, and are elated by that experience.

### **Avoid excess in all places**

The purpose of this type of loud, congregational prayers is different from the silent individual prayers. It is a joint, concerted and mutually helpful effort of *Saadhana* to overcome the six internal foes of man-Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, Conceit and Hatred. These nocturnal birds infest the tree of life and foul the heart where they build their nests. When we sing aloud the Glory of God, the heart is illumined and they cannot bear the light. Besides, the voice that rises from many throats frightens them and they fly away.

It is advisable to all to allow the Middle Path. "*Ati Sarvathra Varjayeth*" is an ancient axiom; it means, "Avoid excess, in all places." You must respect the limits set by the experience of ages in the sacred texts. They act like embankments that curb the flood waters; they direct the raging passions towards harmless channels and save you from ruin. Of course, man has elementary needs- Physical, Mental and Intellectual, these have to be fulfilled in some measure. But, there is no need to encumber oneself with unwanted food, superfluous furniture and multi-roomed mansions. Luxury enervates and enslaves.

Leaders of people have to set an example in this respect, for men usually try to imitate and emulate. Example is more effective than precept. An ounce of practice is worth more than a ton of preaching. That is why I declare "My life is My message." You must transform your lives into examples of the ideal you preach. Parents must set good examples for children; teachers must set good examples for students; leaders must set good examples for those whom they expect to follow them. Preaching austerity and practicing luxury will only reveal one's hollowness.

### **Choose God as your leader and guide**

Parents talk of honesty but they utter lies in the presence of children and even encourage them to speak falsehood. The father, while at home, asks the child to tell the unwelcome visitor that he is not at home! The child is thus taught his first lesson in prevarication, by the father himself. There is no use blaming him if he grows into a social menace.

Really speaking, the best way to gain happiness is to choose God as the leader and guide. Then, He will guide and guard, from the heart itself. Emperor Shivaaji once sent some persons from the Court to Saamartha Raamdhaas, his preceptor, with a large quantity of provisions---grains, clothes, sweets and vessels. He asked them, "For whom have you brought these and why?" They replied, "For you. You have no one who can provide for you, and so, Shivaaji Maharaj has sent all this." Raamdhaas laughed and said, "I have Providence itself to provide for me; God alone has no one to provide for Him. Ask Shivaaji to send these things to God!"

Now, there is a wave of anxiety spreading over the world as a result of rising prices, and attempts are being made frantically to bring down the level. The fundamental cause for the rise in prices is the decline in the price of man. Man must realise his pricelessness; he should not regard himself as a cheap nut or bolt, that has no higher purpose in life. He should know that he is the imperishable unconquerable, *Aathma* (Soul) and the body is only a vehicle for the *Aathma*.

### **Love based on the innate Divinity is absent**

Everyone should respect all others as one's own kin, having the same Divine spark, and the same Divine Nature. Then, there will be effective production, economic consumption and equitable distribution, resulting in peace and promotion of love. Now, love based on the Innate Divinity is absent and so, there is exploitation, deceit, greed and cruelty. If man becomes aware of all men being 'cells' in the Divine body, then, there will be no more 'devaluation' of man. Man is a diamond; but, he is now treated by other men and by himself as a piece of glass!

Man can realise his mission on the earth only when he knows himself as Divine and when he reveres all others as Divine. And, man has to worship God in the form of Man. God appears before him as blind beggar, an idiot, a leper, a child, a decrepit old man, a criminal or a madman. You must see even behind those veils, the divine embodiment of love, power and wisdom, the Sai, and worship Him through *seva* (selfless service).

God cannot be identified with one Name and one Form. He is all Names and all Forms. All Names are His; all forms are His. Your Names too are His, you are His Forms. You appear as separate individual bodies because the eye that sees them seeks only bodies, the outer encasement. When you clarify and sanctify your vision and look at them through the *Aathmic* eye, the eye that penetrates behind the physical (with all its attributes and appurtenances), then, you will see others as waves on the ocean of the Absolute, as the "thousand heads, the thousand eyes, thousand feet" of the *Viraat Purusha* (Supreme Sovereign Person) sung in the *Rigvedha*. Strive to win that Vision and to saturate yourself with that Bliss.

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*You come to Puttaparthi, secure a picture, and taking it home, begin worshipping it every day or every Thursday; but, all that is simply sathkarma---good activity. They won't take you far.*

*You must also develop sath-guna---virtues, good habits, good attitudes, good characteristics, a good character. Otherwise your life is a chain of pluses and minuses, one cancelling the other out, totalling up to a mere zero.*

*Sri Sathya Sai*