

7. Teaching is a saadhana

THESE days India is fast advancing in the field of science and technology. No wonder there are many who lay excessive faith by the conclusions of the physical sciences and ridicule the science of the spirit. These science-minded people would answer the question, 'Who are you?' by saying "I am a body which contains about 10 gallons of water, 1 gallon of lime, lead enough to make 9,000 pencils, phosphorus enough to make 11,000 matches and as much iron as there is in a nail two inches long." All this stuff would seem to cost only about a hundred rupees, but actually even if you spend ten million rupees, you cannot make a human body. For, as spiritualists would put it, the human body has arisen out of Divine Will, it is alive on account of Divine Power and it is able to act as a result of Divine Grace.

Man must realize the immensity of the play of the Divine Will which manifests Itself in such abundant variety. But what does science say of this Will? It only declares that we should not believe things that we do not see. The Divine Will is beyond our power to see, so It cannot be testified to be real! This attitude is not correct. Take this kerchief which I drop from my hand. It falls to the ground instead of going up in the air. We attribute this to the gravitational pull even though we do not see the pull.

The mind is only a bundle of desires

Today man is found of accumulating information by studying books. He likes to indulge in argument and explanation. He can analyse matter and talk along about it. But in the field of the spirit, study, experiment and analysis do not take you a long way. What is required is inner experience resulting from actual practice. When we have before us a plateful of eatables, of what use is it to simply recite the names of the different items? What is needed to benefit from their goodness is to eat them. So also for cognizing the Divine, the mind needs to be used, it being the instrument that can either bind or liberate.

But when we use the instrument called mind, we must know all about it. Science would testify that the nature of the mind depends upon the food we consume. The gross material of food we excrete, but the more subtle part is used by our system to feed the intelligence and the most subtle part becomes the mind. In *Vedhaanthic* parlance we can illustrate this by an example: "What have I in my hand?"---"A piece of cloth." "What does the cloth contain?"---"Yarn." "Where did the yarn come from?"---"From cotton." First cotton, then yarn and, finally, cloth---the names and forms are different, but the basic material is the same. Without the more basic cotton and yarn, we cannot have cloth. So also without food, we cannot have mind to exercise discrimination, mind to exercise preferences and judge do's and don'ts. When every yarn is pulled out, the cloth becomes non-existent. So also when there are no do's and don'ts, the mind cannot exist. For the mind is only a bundle of desires, it is no real entity, it has no power of its own.

Thoughts of 'I and mine' result in bondage

Take another example. In whichever direction a camera is turned while its film is exposed, the resultant picture will be of the things in that direction. It; all depends on the turn of the lens. Similarly, the mind reflects the nature of things that we are attracted by. When some one blames us we get into fury and behave madly. When some one praises us we leap with joy and think well of the person who does so. In either case the reason is our emotional perturbation. We must

understand the secrets of the mind and the ways in which it plays with us. We must learn to be unruffled and steady, whether we are praised or blamed.

Another little example. When the mind is turned towards God or goodness, it becomes human. If it is turned towards evil thoughts and wicked egoism, it becomes demonic. When we turn the key to the right, it opens the lock; when we turn it to the left, it fastens it. The same key does the two opposite operations, according to the direction of turning. If mind is turned towards good thoughts, it establishes detachment. Turned towards thoughts of 'I' and 'mine' it causes attachment. Attachment means bondage; detachment, liberation.

In Thelugu we have fifty letters and each letter has its special form, name and sound. The pronunciation of each letter has to be learnt from those who know it. Similarly we may have a heap of flowers and a length of thread, but some one has to string them into a garland. We may have a lamp with oil and a wick, but some one must light it to make it glow. We may have gems in plenty and all the gold that is necessary, but without a jeweller they cannot be turned into an ornament. Similarly man has in his body bones, muscles, blood, brain, etc., but there must be some power which can make them all work in concert. That is possible only for God to do.

How one God can have many names & forms

The sages and seers who have from time to time investigated the nature of God from the ancient past to modern times, have discovered that "there is only one God and that He is known by various names and say forms." '*Ekam Sath, viprah bahudha vadhanthi*', say the *Vedhas* (revealed ancient sacred scriptures). How can the One have so many names and forms? Well, don't we prepare sweets with various names and shapes, though they all have sugar and taste sweet because of it? When this fact of the One supporting all names and forms is firmly believed in, there is no more scope for delusion.

To recognise this Unity one needs training, though to be deluded by diversity one doesn't need any. For grass to grow rankly no effort on our part is needed, but if grain is to be harvested, the field must be ploughed, weeded, watered, manured and fenced. So also to get a harvest of virtue, intense *saadhana* (spiritual discipline) is needed, though no such effort is necessary to contract vices. Man has to struggle hard in order to attain the higher Stages of spiritual development. He has to overcome many hurdles and put up with many difficulties and disappointments.

Man can change his nature by disciplined effort

Man alone can rise through effort to higher stages of spiritual evolution. No other animal can do so. Animal tamers of the circus can train a tiger to perform various tricks, but they cannot change its nature. They cannot make it live on grass and completely deprive it of meat. But man is different. His nature can be changed by means of his own disciplined effort. He can control, by his will, the 'evil thoughts and ideas that arise in his mind. This is why birth 'as a human being is considered a rare gift.

Man is indeed the highest among living beings. The *Vedhas* proclaim four great truths about man: "Thou art That" (*Thath thwam asi*); "The Highest Wisdom is You" (*Prajnaanam Brahman*); "This You is Brahman" (*Ayam Aathma Brahman*); "I am Brahman" (*Aham Brahmaasmi*). How are we to prove the correctness of the assertion, "Thou art That"? Suppose there is a boulder on a hill. A sculptor spots it there and carves out of it a beautiful idol of Krishna which is installed in a temple and adored ceremonially with every prescribed rite. The

flaked pieces of the same boulder are 'lying about in heaps on the hill at the site where the sculptor chiselled the idol. These flakes are worthless---no temple is built to install any one of them as an idol, for they have undergone no transformation. Yet the flakes declare, "We are That: We are the same as that Idol there," though they have been discarded by the sculptor.

All is stone---we build with stone, we worship stone, we break stone with metal. Square stones are building blocks, fiat ones are used as steps and round ones are carved into figures. Stone is the substance and we use it according to its shape and structure. We can similarly recognise the Divinity that is latent in man. We imagine that the eye sees and the tongue eats but, in truth, the eye does not see, nor does the tongue eat. It is the Divine Will within us that operates every one of the senses. For example, at the moment you are all supposed to be sitting in the *Kalyaanamantap* of Brindhaavan listening to Me, but some of you are thinking about your family back in your village and not listening to Me at all. My words fall on your ears, but your minds are not here.

We have to check up our faith off and on

What is the place of the mind with respect to the other faculties of man? Consider our body to be a car designed by God and having the four wheels *dharma*, *artha*, *kaama* and *moksha* (duty, wealth, desire and liberation). The car has two lights in the eyes. It has a loud horn, the mouth. It is equipped with a steering wheel, the mind, and a switch, the intellect. The four wheels outside are managed by the steering wheel within. The car travels in society along the road of life. The wheels have to be properly filled with the air of faith. We have to check up the faith off and on. If it is more in one wheel or less in another, it will spell danger. There must be a balance between the four goals in man's life.

Only a volunteer can grow into a leader

We have to cultivate some qualities and destroy others. We must do this with an eye to becoming eligible for *seva* (voluntary service). We are born into this world for carrying on *seva*. In this context, I intend to give you some advice. But teaching is primarily an act of *seva* along with which you have to practise a little renunciation. When you return to the schools in your charge you will have to exert yourselves more than hitherto, and so you will feel like asking for more pay. It is not wrong to do so. But let Me tell you that whether you ask it or not and whether you get it or not, you must take up this task in the spirit of *seva*. Only a *sevak* (volunteer) can grow into a *naayak* (leader); serve, and thereby gain the position of a leader. Only a *kimkara* can become a *Shankara*---only a good servant can become a great master.

During our lives we have to accept help rendered by many thousands. We have to pay back this debt by helping at least as many people as we can. With a genuine keenness or readiness to serve others, you can be happy in any group or community. Derive bliss through *seva* that is not done with any desire to get something in return. When you get a chance to help someone, rejoice at your good fortune. The very eagerness to serve others will endow you with the power and skill necessary for the required service.

Today we regard it derogatory to 'serve.' We ridicule those who wish to serve others. But in service is great worth. Service helps us uproot the egotism that burdens us. Egotism is an evil that brings downfall in its trail. We all know the ultimate fate of the seemingly high and mighty demons like Hiranyaaksha, Hiranyakashipu, Raavana, and Kumbhakarana. These people had undergone severe ascetic discipline and thus earned many skills and powers, but they were

ruined by the ego. The ego brings about the fall of man. When egoism is absent, the *Aathman* shines in its native splendour. The *Aathman* is bliss, it is beauty and wisdom, but we allow It to be tarnished by the ego. Engage in humble service and egotism will fade away.

Life is like a football ground and each one of you a ball. Your good qualities like truth, righteousness, peace and love are on one side, and bad qualities like attachment, pride and hatred on the other. Both sides kick the ball and try to score a goal. The poor ball must suffer these kicks so long as it is bloated with the air of egoism in it. But once the air is let out, the kicks also stop.

Is the 'I', this body or mind or intellect?

We must investigate what is meant by "I." When I ask your name you say, "Raamanna, Lakshmayya, Venkanna, Krishnamurthy," etc. When you are asked who this Raamanna or Lakshmayya is, you raise your hands and say, "I, I." I ask a number of people and use a number of names, but the answer is always 'I.' Where does this 'I' come from? It is found in everyone. Has this 'I' got a form? Is it this body or mind or intellect or consciousness? It is not any of these. The 'I' is not this body.

When I say my kerchief I imply that I am different from the kerchief. I say my table or my chair, because I am not the table or the chair. Now, if we have this 'I' in everyone, it must be the same in everyone. It is the One among the many. $1 + 1 + 1 + 1$ is equal to 4. But $I + I + I + I$ is equal to only 'I' for, the 'I' is, the same in everyone. To recognise this is to truly know one's real identity, the One, the *Aathman*. Without this knowledge, life is a waste.

Keep a balance between pleasure and pain

My dear students and teachers! You might have understood a little of My truth or you might not have, but if you grasp the truth of what I say, you will be free from anxiety and fear. Believe Me or disbelieve Me, it does not matter. I must reveal to you the Truth.

The castles and towers you see in dreams

They melt into nothing when you open your eyes.

I am now talking to you and you are all hearing Me. You look at Me with your eyes. You feel all this to be true. Certain things are happening to you, and to you this appears to be real and no dream. Later you proceed to the canteen, eat your dinner and go to bed. Then you experience a dream in which you are talking to someone in your village. While you dream, the thing is very real, but when you wake up it turns out to be unreal and the waking stage seems to be real. But both are dreams---one, a night dream and the other, a day dream. During both dreams you are present and you experience the events. So you alone are real; the rest is a mixture of true and false. Understand this and keep a balance between pleasure and pain, joy and grief.

You may think that Swami keeps a balanced mind because unlike you He has no responsibilities. But remember, teaching in this college and various other kinds of work are going on in an ideal manner only because I am directing the show. You think that Sai Baba is comfortably sleeping in the *mandhir* (temple). Do you know where I find happiness? I am happy when I am with you. That is the reason why I declare "My life is My message." I am constantly engaged in some work or another at all hours. I do not get attached to anything nor do I need to detach myself from anything. I am ever in full *Aanandha* (divine bliss). Why? Because what happens must happen. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. Joy can never be derived from

joy. It can come only from pain and sorrow. If a person is always in an airconditioned room, he can never know what coolness means. He has to go, at least once, into the hot sun to realize the value of airconditioning. No lamp can glow brightly in daylight. Night alone can reveal its value.

All the dualities are part of Nature

Many people come to Me wailing, "Swaami! We are in great grief; we are suffering from deep anxiety." When I hear these words I know what is happening to them. I never had the experience of either grief or anxiety. I know that these are but dream experiences. They are not real. Some persons may praise you, others may blame you: both are in fact unreal.

When a well is sunk, the soil that is dug out becomes a mound by its side. Some pay attention to the pit, others to the mound. I consider both with indifference. The soil that was the well has now become the soil that is the mound. This is the eternal see-saw. The Sun sets in West when the Moon rises in the East. These dualities are part of Nature. So long as you are here, try to practise equanimity.

Embodiments of Love! Man has become prey to several bad habits, willingly or unwillingly, which are injurious to his health. It is rightly said that health is the first requisite for realising any one or all of the four *purusharthas* (supreme goals of life). But these bad habits will weaken him and rob him of his honourable status in society. On account of his being enslaved by them, he cannot discharge his duties properly. His wife and children suffer from neglect. This new educational venture also can succeed only if you are healthy. What can plans and projects of the government achieve? One flower cannot make a garland; all flowers must come together to make one. So you must equip yourselves with strong bodies, sacred ideals and unselfish intentions in order to serve your country. You can achieve any high ideal provided you are co-operative, well-disciplined, soaked in service and sacrifice and fully determined to succeed. The government can only then be properly guided by you.

Only the dedicated come by Wisdom

Thyaagaraaja sang: "Raama! Let me have the strength of Your *Anugraha* (Divine Grace) that will force all the *grahas* (planets) to augur well. Let us also be heroes full of the spirit of service and sacrifice. Is it ever possible for us to practise what we preach?" Without a seed in the past there can be no plant in the future. Do not feel that there is no seed of devotion or dedication in you. This seminar has been arranged in order to make you aware of the good that you possess and tell you the methods by which this good can be developed and cultivated. Do not be misled into the cynical thinking that you are sent here just for some training and that there is nothing here for you to learn. '*Shraddhaavaan labhathe jnaanam*' (Only the dedicated come by Wisdom).

Take the example of the eagle. It has big, strong wings, but until it has the will to fly it cannot move even an inch. And look at the ant, which can move something even ten times its own weight. Faith moves, doubt deters. When we develop faith and strength of will we can execute any kind of work, but when we feel we need not act, no activity is possible. A hundred men may carry a horse to the shore of a lake, but they cannot make it drink. It alone must will to do so. I desire that: you should develop faith and strength to foster the sacred ideals of Indian culture and spirituality in the children under your care, and cultivate in them the right priorities of life.

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Hunger is the disease for which food is the medicine: thirst is the illness/or which drink is the medicine.

Food and drink, housing and clothing must be subsidiary to the needs of the spirit, the education of the emotions and passion, and impulses. They must take the place that salt and pepper take on the dining table today; uppu must be subsidiary to pappu; that is, salt must be little and dhal must be more; you cannot have more salt than the quantity of dhal, not even as much.

So too, efforts to achieve health, comfort, etc. must be just enough for the purpose of sustaining the saadhana, not more, not less.

Sri Sathya Sai