

11. Students and Seva

THE process of education involves the process of self-control and self-denial. No person is free to live as his impulses prod him. Even the impulses are the products of unseen and unknown impacts, of previous lives and the pressures--social, cultural and economic---of this life. The impulse for action and the nature of action are determined by various hidden factors. As a result, when one claims that he has achieved or accomplished something, he is only revealing his pride and his ignorance. Man is so bound by circumstances and conditions that he cannot act independently of society, of cultural traits and of the will of the Supreme.

This world belongs to God. It has not been mortgaged to Man to be used as he likes. It has to be used for advancing His glory and demonstrating His Love and Power. Man has been endowed with senses, mind and intellect for this very duty. He has therefore to keep them pure and efficient. Of the eight steps laid down by the science of *Yoga* in order to succeed in this effort, *Sama* is the first and foremost.

Sama means mind-control; the mind, if properly trained and directed, can liberate man; or else, it can degrade him to the level of beasts. *Sama* is a great exercise in *tapas* or asceticism. An ascetic is not a person who flees into forests, lives on leaves, and spends his time in God-centered thoughts. True *tapas* lies in the mastery over the intellect, the mind and the senses. Now, why are they to be mastered? For achieving constant awareness of Brahman, and be immersed in the Ananda which It is.

Examine every thought rigorously

The *Sadhana* for achieving this goal is to concentrate on co-ordinating one's thoughts, words and deeds and directing them along holy paths. Every thought has to be examined rigorously., can it promote love, joy, peace in us, in the society, in the nation, in the world? Thoughts arise from bursts of emotion or passion. These must be tested and rejected if they would cause evil later or bring ill-fame, if acted upon. *Dhyana* (meditation) is the only saviour for such.

Meditation is of two types--meditation on the Personal and on the Impersonal. The first is centered on an idol or picture or an object with form. The mind, while engaged in such meditation, is liable to waver or wander. The second type does not depend on name and form. It dwells on the Universal and the Infinite Cosmic Consciousness, *Brahman*. Its consummation lies in mergence, as heat penetrates an iron ball, immanent, totally and inseparably. Mergence is the result of selfless surrender, as gold surrenders to the smith who melts and rolls, hammers and hits to turn it into a jewel.

Service activity opens the mind and heart

Education has to endow you with this eagerness to surrender. The uneducated may assert that his desire must prevail, he must be allowed to correct himself and he ought to shape his career as he wills. But the learned must be humble and eager to follow the Lord's will. These virtues can be discovered in man only when he engages himself in some activity, say, service of his fellowmen. The activity will reveal to him his plus points and faults and help him to improve himself and advance spiritually.

Since you are entering upon intensive social service in the villages of the Sathya Sai Taluk, I must tell you that this activity must open the doors of your minds and hearts, in order to let in the Divine Light. Your minds and hearts are now moved by gusts of emotion and waves of thought.

There is no stability or fixed loyal. You are led hither and thither by desires that delude and pleasures that are phantoms. So, you must take refuge in the Divine and recognise the Divine in every object and event.

Know that nothing can exist or happen without being willed by God. Egoism and envy are blinding men from this Truth. Bhakti (devotion) is defined as the awareness of the Lord being one's Reality (*Swa swarupa anusandhaanam*). The ego prevents the awareness of this fact. Utilise the time allotted to you in attempts to acquire the awareness and live in that ecstasy. Time flows fast, regardless of circumstance. Time has no friend or foe, no kith and kin, no favourite or competitor. So long as man is bound to the relative world of name and form, he is bound to the wheel of time. But, he can transcend the relative world, if he sanctifies time by good *Karma*.

Seva is the best of all good deeds

of all good deeds, the best is *Seva*, intelligent and loving service to those in need. The body is the Temple of God. He resides therein; the intellect, the mind and the senses which constitute the Temple are His, not ours to be handled as our whims dictate. They are His Instruments, to be used by Him, for Him. In the Gurukulams of ancient India, the sages, saints and scholars communicated this message to their pupils and imprinted it on their hearts.

They implanted the seed of dedication to the Divine in the heart, ploughed by faith. The sapling was to be helped to grow by seasonal showers of *Dhyana*. In time, the flower of Shanthi (peace) turns into the sweet fruit of Ananda. The seed has to be firm; the dedication has to be unconditional. Really speaking what right has man to desecrate the Temple of God? His duty lies in maintaining the holiness of the Temple and use it for puja prayer, dhyana and devotion. The intellect, mind and senses are the furniture that belongs to the Temple. They have to be revered as such and used with care. God, residing therein, is the master, the maker and the motivator. You have to worship Him with pure unblemished thoughts, words and deeds.

How can a person escape from blemish? By watching the antics of the mind as a witness and not allowing the body to assist the mind to fulfil its foul desires. The mind by itself cannot commit theft; when it longs to commit it, do not allow the body to obey. When the mind is foiled in this way when it calls upon the body, the mind will give up its evil tendencies. When the child runs forward, the mother tries to catch up. Hence, the child tries to elude her grasp and, falling, hurts itself. Instead, if the mother turns her back, the child too will return to her side. Cultivate this *Sadhana*. You can master the mind and keep it on the Godward path.

Make good use of mind and intellect

When a festival involves large-scale feeding, people borrow for the occasion cooking vessels from rich persons. After using them, they clean the vessels spic and span before returning them. The rich man will be greatly disturbed and disappointed if the vessels are returned, damaged and unclean. God has lent us, for use in the festival of life, vessels like intellect, mind and senses. We have to use them with gratitude and return them in clean condition.

While in the stage of earning *Vidya*, you should not yearn for *Vishaya*. *Vidya* (study) is spiritual exercise. *Vishaya* (objects) allure and deceive. Cultivate a steady mind and a fixed vision. This is the *Tapas* that has to supplement studies. *Vidya* and *Tapas* are the very breath, the sadhana of inhaling and exhaling, the proper Pranayama.

Social service is also a *tapas*, a spiritual exercise. It promotes the practical application of your knowledge, skills and virtues. Wealth, scholarship, power and prestige are all despicable if they

are not directed towards moral ends. Ravana tried to win Sita by parading before her, while she was a captive, his might and wealth. But, Sita threw a blade of grass in his direction and said that he was worth much less. For, he had no mastery over his mind. The mind had rendered him a mean coward and a thief.

Youth alone can transform youth. The youth of the villages will be inspired when they find you, graduate and post-graduate students, in Khaki work clothes, evincing practical interest in the cleanliness of the environs, the health of the villagers and in fulfilling their needs. You must bring the youth together and form them into a group which can, with the guidance of the elders, maintain and expand the work done by you. Discover what their needs are, so that you can attend to them. We can, for instance, open gruel centers for the aged poor and their dependents. You have to win their hearts through love. When Love is planted and fostered, factions will disappear from the villages.

Villagers are basically good-natured, God-fearing folk. But politics as well as attractions for city life, have led them to the present impasse. When they hear wise counsel from the lips of the children, they are bound to be affected. Train yourselves to speak in their own language to gatherings of villagers.

When you have offered service for some days, I shall proceed to those villages with you and bless your work and the villagers you have served.

Address to the students of the Sathya Sai Institute, at the Mandir.

Prashaanthi Nilayam on 13-5-1985.