

12. Experiencing the Omnipresence

THE SPRING that has gone, will come again. The waning moon will wax again. But one's youth and the flowing water in a river will not come back. It is essential for students in the precious period of their youth to cultivate pure thoughts and good habits. Among the gifts of God, time is the most important. Only when time is properly utilised in sacred acts will the body and the deeds get sanctified.

At present, half a life-time of man is spent in eating and sleeping. Much of the remainder is wasted in useless talk and simian pranks or in back-biting and slanderous gossip. Little time is devoted to thinking about how he can improve himself or serve others. No attempt is made to understand the purpose of life, despite the preciousness and sacredness of human birth. Man has to discover, as enjoined in the Bhagavatam, how he can get back to the source from which he came. This is the natural destiny of all beings. The secret of human existence is to know how to make the best use of time to realise one's Divine destiny.

Modern man has no idea of sense-control. He has no conception of self restraint. He leads the life of a libertine. This kind of licentious living can only result in degradation and ruin.

The aim of sense-control is to achieve one-pointed concentration. It helps also to steady the mind. Without mental steadiness man gets dehumanised.

Three things are essential for every one recognition of the goal, understanding the truth (about human life) and realising the Eternal. Today, students should realise the importance of the goal they have to aim at. Ignoring the goal students are leading aimless lives without achieving peace or joy. In spite of being near to the Divine, they are forgetting the Divine and taking to wrong paths. However many years they may have studied here, there is no change in their thoughts and behaviour.

The Lord and *Maya* are twins

This is because they have not really understood spirituality, though they profess to know all about it. It is because they are completely wrapped up in the body-consciousness, they cannot grasp the nature of divinity. The body consciousness is the product of *Maya* (illusion) or ignorance. It is not easy to get rid of this *Maya*.

There is a story to illustrate the hold of *Maya*. Once, Bhagavan summoned *Maya* and told her! "*Maya!* I am acquiring a great deal of bad name on account of you. Every man blames God as *Mayopadhi* (wearing the disguise of *Maya*). I am getting into disrepute because you are always following me. Hence do not any longer remain with me. Get away from me." In all humility, *Maya* bowed to the Lord and said: "Oh Lord! I shall certainly carry out your command. But, please tell me any place where you are not present and I shall go there." The Lord had a hearty laugh and said: "There is no place where I am not present. You and I are twins. I put you this poser only to get your reply."

Every individual today declares that God is omnipresent. But no one conducts himself as having realised the truth of this omnipresence. It is not clear whether they are using this word with any understanding of its meaning or experience of its truth or out of ignorance. Every student similarly speaks breezily about Swami's omnipresence and omniscience. It may be based on book-knowledge.

Omnipresence and self-control

God's omnipresence is certainly true. But one gets the right to speak about it only when he has experienced it at least to a small extent. Even if a few drops of nectar are swallowed, a modicum of purity may be achieved. Of what use are potsful of nectar which remain untouched? Hence, one should strive, in however small measure, to experience the omnipresence of God. Merely talking about it would amount to practising a deception on God. It is a grievous sin.

Some high-souled beings have striven to experience the omnipresence of the Divine. But the prevailing educational system cannot enable any student to get this experience. This is because they have lost the capacity to control the senses, which is the prerequisite for experiencing the Divine. The first step is control of desires. There must be unity in word and deed. You have also to enquire by what means you can experience the omnipresence of the Divine.

Take the example of a tree. One fruit cannot nourish another. All fruits are nourished by the tree. The tree is sustained by its roots. It is only when you look after the roots, you will have the tree and its fruits. When you nourish the roots by supplying manure and water, the tree comes up well. Likewise, it is only when you realise that the entire cosmos is sustained by the Divine that you can experience the omnipresence of the Divine.

The three spiritual giants

In the Andhra country, there were three "Rajus"--Potharaju, Thyagaraju and Goparaju. All the three were spiritual giants. Potharaju is Pothana, the great author of the Telugu Bhagavatam. Seeing the extreme poverty of Pothana, his brother-in-law, Srinadha, appealed to him to dedicate his Bhagavatam to some ruler who will reward him with material riches. Srinadha said that by dedicating his work to Sri Rama, Pothana was getting no visible benefit and was steeped in poverty. Pothana felt that rather than seek material rewards from petty earthly rulers, it was far better to dedicate his work to God even if it meant living a life of penury. He declared that he would not choose to live on the largesse of proud and unrighteous rulers. He preferred to lead a godly life as a farmer living on the fruits of his toil. Because Pothana chose to dedicate his work to the Lord, his Bhagavatam has earned undying fame. From the moment he started composing the Bhagavatam, Pothana recognised that it was entirely the work of Sri Rama and should be dedicated to Him as a pious offering. He regarded Rama as the inspirer, the writer and enjoyer of the poem. Pothana told Srinadha that God was the Lord of everything in creation--the creator, the protector and destroyer. "Instead of offering the work to the Supreme Lord, it is not fitting to dedicate it to worldly men clothed in pomp and pride," he said.

Coming to Thyagaraja: Seeing the plight of the saint-composer, the Raja of Tanjore sent him many valuables in a palanquin. Looking at these presents, Thyagaraja smiled and prayed to his mind to declare truly whether these treasures would bring him real happiness or the constant vision of Sri Rama. He felt that proximity to Rama was his greatest wealth and turned back the presents sent by the Raja. Thyagaraja lived upto his name by renouncing all worldly things. He declared that God alone was all that he needed and he sought nothing from anybody.

God is the supreme protector of all

The third devotee is Goparaju, who worshipped Sri Rama installed in the Bhadrachalam temple. He offered all his earnings and possessions to Sri Rama. He devoted even the dues collected by him as a revenue official to constructing the temple for Rama and making ornaments for the

deities in the temple. When the Thanisha harassed him he declared that he had offered everything to Rama and nourished no desires of his own. "I have surrendered to Rama totally," he declared.

These three saints had recognised the omnipresence of God. They firmly believed that God is the supreme protector of all. They are verily *Bhagavathas*---devotees of God. Many who claim to be devotees today are not real devotees at all. The so-called devotees are only seeking external security--security from the authorities, from marauders, and similar external dangers. These are mercenary devotees and not genuine devotees.

The Bhagavathas of the old days lived a care-free life, placing their full trust in God as the supreme protector. Because of this faith, they were fully competent to declare that God is omnipresent. Those who use that epithet today are simply mouthing what seems expedient for the occasion. You can find God everywhere today, but you can find few true devotees of God. Today's devotees are not devotees who have totally surrendered to God.

A sinner's corpse

Once a traveller going on his journey approached an *ashram* near which there was a cemetery. He sought shelter in the *ashram* from the heat of the day. The *Guru* of the *ashram* was giving a talk to his disciples. The traveller welcomed the opportunity to listen to a sacred discourse. At sunset the *Guru* and the disciples came out of the *ashram*. They saw a strange spectacle and the disciples asked the *Guru* what was happening. *The Guru* smilingly said that what they were seeing was a corpse which jackals and dogs were trying to carry off. They had dug up the body that was buried in the morning and were trying to make a meal of it.

Just then a big jackal came there and conveyed some message to the other jackals. Immediately all the jackals abandoned the body and retired into the jungle.

The disciples asked the *Guru* why the jackals abandoned the body that had come their way. The *Guru* meditated for a time and then explained to the disciples the reason

for the strange phenomenon. The *Guru* said: "The life-story of this corpse is a remarkable one. This man during his entire lifetime had not listened to the words of elders or the name of God. Even if he heard something, he never cared to follow them. He never did any good deed in his life. His eyes never turned towards anything holy. His hands were never used for anything sacred. He was greedy after other people's wealth, but never once fed a hungry man in his life. His feet never went to a temple or any holy shrine. The elder jackal which came to the cemetery told the other animals that the dead body of such a person was unfit for consumption even by animals. The sins of the dead man would infect them also if they touched the body of such a sinner. The jackals abandoned the body on getting this warning." The moral of this story is that we should not think that it does not matter what happens to the body after death. Even the body should be sanctified and for that purpose good deeds should be done during one's lifetime. Every limb of the body should be devoted to sacred purposes. A body that has not been sanctified in this way will be despised even by jackals. Remember the preciousness of the human body that has been given to you. Use it for rendering service to others. See that every organ in the body is utilised for doing sacred acts.

Duty of senior students

There is an appropriate time for doing anything. Krishna chose Kurukshetra battlefield for imparting the message of the Gita to Arjuna, though they had been moving together closely for many decades. Remember that Swami knows all that is happening though He may appear as if he

knew nothing. Recognise the difference between the Divine and the human. Divinity, although all-knowing and all-powerful, acts as if, It does not know anything. The human being, though he is totally ignorant and incompetent, pretends to be all-knowing and all-powerful.

Students should realise that Swami knows all about their misbehaviour. Because individual warnings in the past have had no effect, Swami has chosen to reprove them in public. Most of the students are well-behaved. It is the few undisciplined spoilt ones who are setting a bad example to the rest. If they do not reform themselves, they have no place in this Institute. We are not concerned about numbers. We are content, even if we have a few good students.

Aim of Sai Institute

This Institute has been established for rejuvenating the nation and promoting the *Dharmic* way of life in the country through a generation of righteously educated students. It has no commercial aims. You must see that the good name of the Institute is preserved. Each one should examine himself. The senior students should be exemplary in their behaviour. If all of you behaved well, what a change would there be in the world!

I am devoting 75 percent of my time to the students and giving only 25 percent to the devotees from all parts of the world. Realise how much love I am lavishing on you. If you waste this sacred opportunity, you will not get it again. Conduct yourselves as the children of one mother. The elder students should be an inspiration to the younger ones. Be more concerned about acquiring good character than getting degrees. When parents and teachers are indifferent to their responsibilities, Swami cannot evade His obligation to highlight your lapses and to correct you. The good students will be helped in every way. But the bad ones will be given no quarter. Always bear in mind that the Sathya Sai Institute is a sacred institution. It has been set up for promoting the welfare of the world. Only good students can serve to improve the nation. We will be content even if we have a handful of them.

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No one who is filled with pride and conceit is fit to wield power. It is only the person who is imbued with humility and appears to be not very knowledgeable that is fittest to wield authority. Hanuman is an example of such a person. Although he was endowed with enormous prowess, he appeared as a simple person. This humility enabled him to leap over the ocean. Socrates, who was hailed as the wisest man among the Greeks, always professed that he knew nothing.

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