

10. Sanctify the body

STUDENTS! Embodiments of Divine Love! The body, the senses, the mind and the intellect are vestures worn by man. Only when you understand the significance and purpose of these activities can you make proper use of them. You wear trousers, coat, banian, shirt etc. Only when you know how to use each of these items can you use them in the right way and get the benefit thereof. Otherwise you may make bizarre use of them, like putting on the banian over the shirt. Hence, you see to it that the clothes are worn properly. Likewise, your body is a garment. It is only when you know how it should be worn and how it should be used that you can make good use of it and get the best out of it.

"Dahyati iti deha" (The body is that which is burnt). This is the derived meaning of the word *deha* (the body). It is well known that the body is burnt after death. But the body experiences burning even when it is alive. This is because of worries. "The body is inert. It is contaminated and riddled with disease. It is a bundle of bones. It will not save you from the ocean of birth and death. Therefore, cling to the lotus feet of Hari, Oh mind!" This was the prayer of the sages. The body is made up of the five elements and is impermanent. Only the Indwelling Spirit is eternal and unchanging. You may accept the body that you have assumed and even enjoy it. But you should know how to guard it and enjoy it.

Another name for the body is *Sarira*. The word is derived from the term, *"Siryathi iti sariraha"* (That which is liable to decay). At birth the body is a lump of flesh and blood. As it grows it acquires beauty of form in youth. Then it is overtaken by the ravages of old age. The body is thus subject to many changes.

View the body as a Temple

A third name for the body is *Mandir* (temple or shrine). It is described as a temple enshrining the eternal *divine Atma* (individual soul). Viewed as a temple, it has to be regarded as the sacred and pure abode of the Divine. As such it should not be misused. This implies that the body is intended to be used for having good thoughts and good deeds.

Because the body is given for performing right actions, it has to be maintained in a fit condition. It is the instrument for all activity and therefore should be maintained well.

Every time before you do anything, you have to put to yourself this question: *"I am the indwelling divine Atma in this body. As such, is it proper for me to do this action or not?"* You have also to determine whether the particular action is proper or improper. Only then you will be using the body in the right way. You dare not use the body according to your whims just because you have got it.

Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna

The body has also been called *Kshetra*. The Gita enjoins that one should know what is *kshetra* and who is the *Kshetrajna*. You are the Knower of the field dwelling within the *kshetra* (body). You have to remain as a witness and see that the body is properly used.

We describe Kasi (Varanasi), Badrinath, Tirupathi as *Kshetras*, because they are associated with the Divine and enjoy a holy atmosphere. Sacred actions like worship are performed in these places. Similarly, in the *kshetra* of the body, good thoughts and good actions should prevail. This is the inner meaning of the appellation *kshetra* (holy place).

The other meaning of the term *kshetra* is field. In this field of the body, the fruits we reap are dependent on the seeds we sow. If you sow good thoughts, you reap the fruit of good actions. Evil thoughts will yield only bad results. The body is thus a field in which the seeds of merit and sin are sown. In cultivating a field for growing crops, we wait for the right season and the appropriate conditions to sow particular seeds. The suitability of a land for growing a particular crop has to be decided. Sowing cannot be done indiscriminately. However, for this body, considered as a field, there are no such constraints. It can be cultivated in all conditions and at all times. It can be utilised night and day. When you sow seeds on cultivable land, you may get a good crop or a poor crop. You may not realise your expectations.

But in the case of the human body, you are bound to reap the fruits of the good or the bad thoughts you sow as seeds. You will have cent percent return. As you sow, so will you reap. The crop depends on your thoughts and the harvest will be determined by your actions. You must therefore ensure that only seeds in the form of good thoughts are sown. You should not misuse the body as you like.

Role of food in maintaining thoughts

Those who wish to use the body properly and see that they have good thoughts and perform good acts, have to take note of two factors--regulation of diet and regulation of their environments.

You must seek to know what kind of food you should eat. You should not consume any kind of food merely to appease hunger. You must take only *Satwic* food. Our thoughts are determined by the kind of food we consume. The body is cleansed by water. The mind is purified by Truth. It is only when what is conducive to truth is taken that you can pursue the path of Truth.

As the body is a sacred shrine you should not take in any intoxicating substances. Articles of food which promote *Rajasic* qualities (like anger) should be eschewed.

What is *Satwic* food? The prevalent view is that fruits and milk constitute *Satwic* food. This is not all. What is consumed by the mouth is not the only thing that goes into the body. The other sense organs like the eyes, the ears, the nose and the hands also "consume" objects from the outside world. Through the eyes you have to see only what is pure. To see all kinds of things indiscriminately is fraught with dangers. The power of sight should be used only for sacred purposes. Unfortunately the vision of youth today is getting increasingly perverted (*Keechaka Drishti*). The result is they meet with the same fate as Keechaka (in the Mahabharata) who was destroyed by Bhima. Students should be particularly careful in this regard. It is only when they use the eyes in a pure and godly way will they be receiving *Satwic* impressions through the eyes.

The ears also need pure food. This means that you should listen only to sacred speech and hear only matters about the Divine. Always hear good and pleasant things about others. In this way you must safeguard the ears from pollution. Only then will you be "consuming" *Satwic* food through the ears.

Only fragrant and sweet smelling scents should be absorbed through the nose. When foul smell is inhaled disease sets in. If you inhale foul air, you are likely to breathe in disease-producing germs. You must inhale pure air in a clean open space.

Even the hands must "consume" pure food. This means that you must perform good acts with your hands. That is the way to treat the body as a temple.

Five gates for the temple of body

When you get rid of the evils associated with pollution of speech, hearing, sight, thought and action (arising from the misuse of the five sense organs), you will be able to become the *Paramatma* (Divinise yourself). If the senses are fed with polluted stuff, you cannot become pure merely by taking milk and fruit. You must take in pure *Satwic* food through all the five sense organs.

There are many doors to a temple. They are intended to let in devotees who seek to worship God. Gateways in temples are intended only for devotees to enter. Similarly there are for this temple of the body five gates. What is the purpose of these doorways? If we build a house and erect doors in it, they are for the use of our kith and kin and not for all stray animals to walk in. If such animals enter, the doors are shut against them. Likewise, the doors in this sacred body should be kept open only for sacred and Divine entrants. Only then it deserves the name *Kshetra* (shrine). It ceases to be a temple if unholy objects are allowed to enter it.

Eschew all bad company

Next comes *Vihara* (moving in different places). You will have to consider seriously what sort of places you should visit, what kind of environment in which you should live and what type of persons with whom you should associate yourselves. You should eschew all bad company, because your thoughts are related to the company you keep. Young people today are cultivating bad company. They take easily to bad ways. This is an affront to the human body. The sages of yore chose to live in solitude for directing their thoughts towards God. But even this is a sign of weakness. For instance, if you want to subdue anger, can you do it by any amount of penance in a forest? As your anger arises in the midst of people, it has to be conquered only in the same milieu and not in an unpeopled forest. You may remain tranquil as long as you are in the forest but when you come back to a crowd, you will be the same old irate person.

If you want to control your senses, it is a delusion to imagine that this can be done by some kind of rigorous penance. It can be achieved easily if you understand the subtle workings of the body. You can utilise your new car well, for instance, only if you know all about its working and how it should be run.

Ensure proper use of the body

All the troubles of man are due to the fact that he does not know how to make proper use of his body. Hence, he is a prey to sorrow and disease. One thing should be remembered: No one can go against the Divine Will. No one can alter the Lord's law. It should be realised that the body functions because of the *chaitanya* (consciousness) within it. Just as the lights, the horn and the engine in a car, though inert in themselves, begin to function when the power is supplied to them from the battery, likewise the organs in the vehicle that is the human body (the eyes, the ears, etc.,) can function well only *if the Atmic* consciousness animates and activates them. Just as a magnet attracts iron filings by its magnetic power, the *Atma* is responsible for the operation of all the organs which are inert by themselves.

Man is prone to three kinds of mistaken ideas. One is to consider what does not belong to him as his own. Another is to regard persons who do not belong to him as his own. The third is to regard the evanescent as the eternal. Man considers the body as his real self. If that is the case, why should he say, "This is my body." The statement clearly implies that he is different from the

body. (The owner is different from what he owns). When a man says, "This is my kerchief," he is apart from the kerchief, which he can cast away. Hence, how can one say that he is the body? This is the first mistake.

Secondly, in worldly affairs man is misled by the belief that he is the owner of properties of various kinds--houses, vehicles, etc. You build a house and call it yours. You sell it and it is no longer yours. Likewise, you buy a car and call it "Mine." When you sell it, it ceases to be yours. So, it is yours as long as you use it. Forgetting that all these possessions are temporary, you develop attachments for them. Nothing is yours. How can those which belong to the body be yours? All these are caused by *Maya* (delusion), the sense of possessiveness and the aberrations of the mind. All of them are passing clouds.

Before marriage, no one can say who is the husband and who is the wife. Before birth, no one can say who is the mother and who is the child. Only after birth, you declare, "He is my son." Only after marriage, you say, "This is my wife." All these relationships are associated with the body. The same person is called in different ways according to various relationships.

Realise that the body is not permanent

You have to do your duty to your kith and kin. But while discharging your duties, you have to keep the Supreme always in mind. The worldly life has to be led, with spiritual relation as the goal. As long as you live in the world, you have to conform to the ways of the world. But the ideal must be based on the recognition that nothing belongs to you--neither mother, nor father, kinsmen or wealth. All these are related to the changing body, which is the basis for all mental aberrations. It is wrong to regard the body as permanent. But it is essential to keep the body in good health as long as there is life, just as you must ensure that your boat does not spring a leak till you cross the river. The body has to be kept clean and for this purpose you have to practise chanting the Lord's name and doing *japa*. The Divine cleanses the heart, when you offer it to God.

Students/Besides the body, you have to reckon with the sense organs, the mind and the *Buddhi*. It is only when their nature is properly understood will one be able to lead a full human life. In the absence of such understandings, man becomes a prey to many difficulties.

There is constant talk about *Sadhana* but no special *sadhana* is needed if one gets at the Truth. All *sadhana* is aimed at perceiving the Truth.

During the ensuing fortnight, if you are able to grasp the nature of the body, the senses, the mind, the *Buddhi*, and the *Atma*, which is the Supreme Witness presiding over all of them, you will be able to master the mystery of the cosmos (which is made up of the five basic elements, the *Pancha Bhutas*). As God is the basis of everything, you have to develop faith in God.

Discourse at Brindavan Campus on 20-5-1990.

If each one does his duty, in the spirit of dedication, the Light can illumine all. But, if the doors of the heart are shut against the Light, how can darkness disappear?

BABA