

23. Book Learning Is Useless: Practical Knowledge Is Useful

Oh man! Just as you cannot see the stars during the day, you cannot see God in the midst of your ignorance. Because of that, do not say that He does not exist. With faith, you can earn His grace and become prosperous.

If you do not have the necessary patience and control, what can come out of any *karma* that you do? What can come out of the *yoga* you undertake? What can come out of even *japa* if you do not have the peace of mind during your *japa*? What can come out of salty land, even if you cultivate it and sow seeds into it.

Prema Swarupas:

Between God and God's words, there is an inextricable connection. God and God's utterances are not different things. They are one and the same. When you have faith and belief in God, it follows that you accept God's utterances and put them into your mind. Having believed that persons like Rama and Krishna are *Avathars* in this world, if you do not pay any attention to the injunctions they gave us, it is disrespecting them.

In the case of God and in the case of *manthras* and places of pilgrimage, the amount of faith that you develop, as in the case of the doctor that treats you, will determine the nature of the results that you can get out of them. The amount of confidence that you have in the person, who is teaching you

what you are learning, will determine the manner in which what you learn will imprint itself on your mind. In trying to absorb the essentials of a spiritual path, the body that absorbs the same should be clean.

When the mind is attracted by so many different worldly matters and gets entangled in them, the good things that you listen to may not enter your mind freely. In that context, it is necessary that in the first instance, you turn your mind away from worldly matters and turn it towards spiritual and Godly matters. In your daily life, at all times, you are attracted by worldly matters and worldly issues. Sometimes you may have the opportunity of listening to sacred things, but it will not be possible for them to enter your mind because of the prior presence of worldly issues therein. In the world today, there are many people who are believers in God and who have studied texts like *Bhagavad Gita*, *Puranas*, *Ithihasas*, *Vedas* and *Sastras*. But how many of them have been able to put into practice what they preach? How can one expect to experience the bliss simply by preaching and not practising what he preaches?

Divya Atma Swarupas:

We do not find even one of that kind in a million. Many people who continuously perform *japa* and meditation and who read such spiritual texts do not appear to have any practical experience of this at all. Truly, practices, which we only listen to and text which we merely read without any practical experience, are all a waste of time. It is not possible for us to purify ourselves merely by reading books. Today the book and the head appear to have become one. You are learning how to convert your head into a book, but you are not learning how to convert the narrow ideas in your head into useful practical knowledge. The words that one utters are very

peaceful words, but the actions that one indulges in are very violent actions. Such people who deceive others have become very large in number and this is the reason why our motherland has been suffering.

Saying one thing and doing yet another thing is deceiving one's own *Atma*. Such actions bring disgrace and shame on human beings. Just by listening to things, we are not going to get any benefit. What we listen to, we should carefully recapitulate. What we have recapitulated, we should digest and absorb. Mere listening is like cooking in the kitchen. Just by looking at the food that has been cooked in the kitchen, our hunger is not going to be satisfied. We should eat that food. Just by eating that food, the substance that is contained in the food is not going to strengthen the body. You should also digest the food that you have taken. *Sravana*, or listening, is like cooking the food. *Manana*, or recapitulating, is like eating the food and *nididhyasa* is like digesting and absorbing the food. It is only when we can co-ordinate these three processes that we get the best out of the situation, and benefits will come to us.

Young people should make attempts by which the essence of the three stages in the process are not missed so that what we do is of service. Today, just listening has become a disease. Man has become proud and thinks that he knows everything no sooner than he has listened to something. This is wrong and as long as such pride and ego exist in you, you become unfit for learning spiritual matters. The heart of the individual, who makes an attempt to put into practice the good things he has listened to, becomes the temple of God.

Krishna and Arjuna, ever since they were born, were living together, playing with and talking to each other. This

process continued for nearly eighty years. However, the sacred *Bhagavad Gita* was taught to Arjuna just at the time of the battle of Mahabharatha and not earlier. It is not as if there were no occasions before that, when Arjuna and Krishna were spending time together. We must understand the reason for this. Arjuna's mind was not prepared, and he was not very deserving of such a preaching earlier. During the battle of Mahabharatha, Arjuna said that he was not interested in the pleasures of the kingdom and fell at the feet of Krishna. It is only at that instant of time when Arjuna sought *saranagathi* that he deserved to be taught the *Bhagavad Gita*. It is only then that Krishna was prepared to teach the *Gita*. We must acquire the right for receiving a particular thing before aspiring to receive the same. Today, in the moral sphere, ethical sphere and political sphere, people are wanting to enjoy positions even if they have no right to enjoy such positions. They are only looking at the authority and power that go with the position, but are not giving the slightest thought to whether they deserve to occupy and have the right to occupy that position.

Students:

In respect of anything that you want to do, you must first of all be prepared to ask the question whether you have a right to do that. It is only when you clean your mind and prepare it to accept sacred things, should you undertake to put sacred things into it. You may have read many texts but so long as you do not put into practice what you have learnt, all your learning becomes useless. Whether they are the words that you utter or actions that you indulge in, they will all look as if they are emanating from a gramophone record or an automatic machine.

It is the duty of young students to take care that even one or two things that you learn are put into practice, and you

should become ideal examples to others by practising what you preach. Good things which you do not put into practice, even after knowing them, will become useless. Why do you feel proud that you have read books, that you have gone through the *Sastras* and that you have acquired education? What is the use of all these if you cannot put their essence into practice? If you do not put your hands together and pay homage to God, what is the use of being born as a human being in this world? Having been born, you should take care to see that some use comes out of your birth in the world.

From the time you get up from your sleep, till the time you go back to sleep again, you spend all your time, all your resources merely for eking out a livelihood. In this way, by forgetting all things about God, by forgetting what is most important, what is it that you have acquired?

As mentioned in the story of the *Ramayana*, one should become an ideal human being, an ideal king, an ideal father, an ideal husband, and so on. It is only when you can demonstrate an ideal life, can you say that you have justified having been born as a human being. On the other hand, if you become a slave to your senses, you become a slave to the whole world around you. Even if you live a short life, lead a good and ideal life. A long life with contaminated and impure thoughts is no good. It is very necessary that you recognise that real education means development of character.

Divya Atma Swarupas:

During the past one month, from several people and several scholars, you have acquired education that is necessary for understanding the spiritual traditions of this country. You should make an attempt to experience and enjoy the bliss that is contained in what you have learnt. Our wealth is knowledge. Our prosperity lies in the good qualities that are in us. Our

riches are our *dharma*. An individual who has got faith in God must put his faith into practice. By believing in God and yet by ignoring God's utterances and commands, you are contradicting yourselves. Faith is not a cloak that is worn outside for deceiving others. Such people are deceiving themselves.

The essence of education is to recognise the truth. All branches of learning are like the rivers. The spiritual learning is like the ocean. All rivers go and merge into the ocean. When they merge in the ocean, the rivers lose their individuality completely. Under no circumstances should we give room to excitement, to ego and to anger.

There is one little example for this. In one village, there was a village head who did not like Buddha. The moment he heard any words uttered by Buddha, he used to get angry. He was always suffering from uncontrolled anger. One day, he learnt the news that Buddha was coming to that village with his disciples. Since he was the head of the village, he issued a certain order. The order was that when Buddha came asking for alms, no one should give him alms and all should close their doors. Following this order, all the people in the village closed the doors of their respective houses when Buddha came. The head of the village also closed the doors and was sitting in the veranda outside the door.

Buddha was all-knowing and he knew what was happening. With his disciples, he came to the very house in which the village head was living. Great people will never be affected either by praise or by blame. Such people, having developed equal-mindedness, will go right in front of those who are suffering from jealousy and ego. This village head was suffering from such ignorance and pride, and Buddha went

straight to him and asked for alms. The village head, who was waiting for such an opportunity, became even more excited. A person who is sick will always want to take several medicines. Certain birds will always be wanting to look at cool moonshine. Good people will always want to help the bad people and to see that the badness in them is removed and they are cleansed. It is only one who has a disease and is sick, that wants a doctor. A healthy man does not want a doctor. Similarly, people who are suffering from the disease of disbelief can be cured by good people.

With such noble ideas, Buddha, along with his disciples, went to the house of the village headman and said, "*Bhavati, bhikshan dehi,*" I have come to ask for alms. When he saw Buddha and the disciples accompanying him, the headman became very angry. He addressed Buddha and said, "You lazy man, you have collected all these people in your company, and they have become lazy. You are taking them round because they do not want to work. Not only are you ruining your own life, you are also ruining the lives of your disciples. This is wrong. In that manner, he abused Buddha and the disciples who came with him.

Buddha smiled at all this, and smiling, asked the head of the village if he could clarify a doubt for him. The headman said in a very loud voice, "What is your doubt? Let me know." Buddha said, "I have come to ask for alms from you. You have brought something in order to give it to me. If I do not accept what you wish to give to me, where will it go?" The village head-man laughingly replied, "What a big question have you asked! If you do not wish to take what I have brought for you, I will take it back myself." Buddha said that he was very happy. "I have come here along with my disciples for taking alms from you. You have brought abuse and you want to give it to

me as alms. But I have not accepted the *bhiksha* you brought for me in the form of abuse. To whom will it go back?" With this, the ego of that village headman subsided. In this manner, great people and great saints go to several persons, and with a view to enlighten them, adopt different methods. By such things, we should not let our mind become impure. At all times, we should make an attempt to cleanse our mind and make it pure. The house which we use everyday, we undertake to clean it day after day. So also if this mind of ours, which we have to use every moment, is not cleaned often, great damage will result. Our mind is like a copper vessel. This copper vessel will gather rust from moment to moment. We are using it every moment. We should make an attempt to use the water of repentance to cleanse this pot of our mind from time to time.

If anyone abuses you or accuses you, you should not get excited. With equanimity you should be prepared to take what they give you. In this sacred age of yours, excitement is a very harmful thing. If you think of the Lord for five minutes, all that excitement will vanish. These states of excitement are transient and temporary and are not permanent. If anyone amongst you, with an inimical feeling, accuses others, you must be prepared to repent. One can also think of another method of understanding this situation. Suppose some friend of yours sends you a registered letter through the post. According to the rules of the postal department, if you wish to receive it, you have to sign on a receipt. If you do not agree to sign, where does that registered letter go? It will go back to the address from which it has come. In this manner, whatever others may say, yet, if you feel that they are not for you, and if you are only a witness, then nothing will come to you.

Divya Atma Swarupas:

You are truly only witnessing persons. Not only in regard to worldly matters but also in regard to spiritual matters, you should remain as witnesses only. But you should ask the question, such of us who are only to witness, wherefrom have we come? Where do we go? If you cannot obtain an answer to these two questions, then what is the purpose of this life? We post an envelope in the postbox. On that envelope, either there must be a from address or the address to which it has to go. If both of them are not present, where will the envelope go? It will simply be removed from the postbox and burnt. As in that analogy, if we do not know from where we have come and where we have to go, we will be discarded as useless and thrown away. If any group teacher comes and asks one of you, wherefrom have you come? If you are not in a position to reply, then he asks you, where are you going? And if you are not in a position to reply to that also, what will then happen to you? We have come into this world which is a *mithya*. Everything in this world is asking you, "Wherefrom have you come?" All the *Upanishads* are asking you, "Where are you going? What is your destination?" The *Upanishads* tell you that you are the child of immortality. You must have a firm belief that you have come from the aspect of *Atma*, and that you will be going back to immortality.

Students:

In order to cleanse your minds, you should promote sacred *prema* in yourselves. To just keep talking of devotion does not fulfil the purpose of devotion. It is a mistake to think that you can control your future and go on praising yourselves that you have devotion. Love of God is the main symptom of *bhakti* or devotion.

The love between a mother and her child has been called *vatsalya*. The *prema* you have between each other can

be called *anuraga*. The *prema* that exists between a husband and a wife is called *moha*. The attachment which you develop towards your material possessions has been called *iccha*. The same *prema* towards God is called *bhakthi*. In all these aspects, what is common is *prema*, but all of them cannot be called *bhakthi*. There may be love or *prema* towards a son, towards a husband, towards friends, towards God. If you can spread the *prema* that you have for God and widen that *prema* towards all human beings, this will enable you to develop equal-mindedness towards all human beings. This is what has been described by saying that the entire creation you see around you should be covered by *iccha*. This *iccha* by which you can spread your *prema* towards every individual must be developed by you. If you keep on talking of *prema* and devotion and direct them towards unholy objects, you will be deceiving God. Students should realise this.

Students:

It is not as if you do not know the situation in which our country is today. The train of our community has become very large and is moving fast. In this train, there are several different people, old people, young people, and they are all a part of it. The older people drop out at the next railway station because of their old age. The young people undertake a long journey. All the pains and pleasures that are consequent to such a long journey will be experienced only by the young people. You must, therefore, recognise the problems that will be caused in this train and solve them for yourselves. Then only you can travel in this train with some comfort.

Students:

You are truly the future citizens of this country. If at least ten or twenty from amongst you, who have joined the Summer Course, can get good ideas and put them into practice,

there is no doubt that this motherland of ours will enjoy great glory. The great things that you are listening to, and the sacred ideals that you are absorbing should not be forgotten when you go out of this hall. Imprint these ideals permanently in your mind and I am hoping that by so doing, you will serve the people and regard service to the people as service to God.