

21. Self-control and Self-realisation

DEAR STUDENTS! All things in the cosmos are the gifts of God. They are manifestations of His Will. Some of them, however, have to be used carefully. When they are used intelligently after due enquiry, they can serve as boon-companions and give us happiness. Indiscriminate and reckless use of these things may turn them into our worst enemies.

For example, there are objects like fire, a knife and electric current. It is only when they are used in the right way that you can benefit from them. If fire is not handled properly, it can cause great harm. A knife is helpful only when it is used carefully. Electricity serves us in many ways--by lighting bulbs, running fans, etc. Because of its multifarious uses, if one tries to be friendly towards it by touching a live wire he will get a shock. In the same manner, man's sense organs have to be used extremely carefully. When the senses are used on right lines, they are of immense help. But if they are used in the wrong way, they can cause great harm.

Control of two functions of the tongue

Among the senses, the tongue is a very important organ. Each sense organ has a specific function to perform. But the tongue has two functions: speech and taste. Jayadeva praised the tongue as the author of all sweetness and declared that he would use it only to chant the names of the Lord: "Govinda, Damodara, Madhava," and not misuse it for any unholy purposes. "I will use the tongue only for speaking the truth and the good," he said. In the Gita also it has been laid down that whatever is spoken should be soft, truthful and well-meaning. The tongue is thus endowed with sacred qualities. You have to be ever vigilant in the use of the tongue. It can be the means of liberation or bondage. Hence it has been accorded pride of place among the sense organs.

The ancient sages attached great importance to control of the senses and evolved various practices to achieve this. For instance, the tongue should not be allowed to have its way with regard to food. If it is pampered by being given whatever it desires, ultimately it will swallow up the man himself.

To control the palate, the ancient sages prescribed various regulations. Chief among them is the "*Chaturmaasya vrata*" (ritual observance for four months). The purpose of this *vrata* is to impose severe discipline on the tongue. This *vrata* is observed each year for four months commencing from the month of *Ashada*. There is another reason for this observance. As the next three months are a season of heavy rains, it will be difficult for *sanyasins* (renunciants) to move from place to place. Hence they are enjoined to stay in one place and devote themselves to meditation for four months. Living in a forest for these four months, they had to live on fruits and roots. Thereby the tongue was brought under control.

At the present time, because of perversions of the *Kali* Age, this ancient four-month ritual of austerity has become an ostentatious observance. The *sanyasins* ask for tasty edibles. While staying in a village, they expect each devotee by turns to provide a feast. This is done in the name of "*bhiksha*"---- pious offering by a devotee. With the change in the character of the religious observance, people's conduct also changes.

The real purpose of *vrata*

The *sanyasins* of today should realise that the real purpose of these observances is to achieve-control over the palate. How can they expect to realise the Divine without achieving mastery of the senses? If your house is on fire, you may try to escape by running out of it. But if your sense

organs are on fire, how can you hope to escape from it? Today what is happening in the case of spiritual aspirants is their sense organs are on fire. Today's *sanyasins* and *sadhaks* are allowing their sense organs to burn like a blazing fire.

In a temple in Jerusalem, pigeons were being sold. Jesus entered the temple and objected to the traffic in birds in a sacred temple. The priests jointly questioned Jesus about his authority to raise such an objection. Jesus then related the following parable: A farmer had two sons. He ordered the elder son to go and keep watch over the crops in the field. He said he could not go. The younger son was asked to go and he agreed to go to keep watch at the field. The elder son, though he had at first declined to go, felt it was not right to disobey his father and so went to the field. The second son, despite his promise, did not go to the field. Jesus asked the priests: "As between these two sons, who do you think obeyed the father's command?" They replied, "The elder son. He acted up to his father's command. The second son promised to go but did not go."

"Priests and teachers are proclaiming that they are adhering to the injunctions of the scripture, but in actual practice are not following them. All of you are acting in the same manner," declared Jesus.

The priests got angry and levelled a number of charges against Jesus that he was preaching against the established creed and promoting disaffection against the authorities.

Truth is not always pleasant

There is an old saying, "Truth creates enemies. Falsehood pleases many." Truth is not always pleasant and hence provokes enmity. Lies and falsehood appear attractive and pleasing. Nevertheless, people must adhere to truth for its own sake. To say one thing and act differently is destructive of the Self. It is opposed to the scriptures. One should try to practise at least one or two of the precepts one professes.

The ancient sages betook themselves to the forest for practising *yoga*. Can self-realisation be got through *yoga*? No. The *rishis* practised *yoga* for the sake of acquiring control over the senses. Patanjali declared: "*Yogah chittavritti nirodhah*" (Yoga is control of the movements of the mind). It is believed that by controlling the senses life can be prolonged. Who should live longer? Good persons, righteous persons, kind-hearted persons, if they live long, the world will benefit. The world will only suffer more if the wicked and evil-minded live longer. For this reason, the ancients laid down that only selfless and dedicated persons should practise *yoga* for living long. Society benefits immensely from their longevity. They prescribed disciplines for this purpose. Students should take note of these disciplines.

Breathing and longevity are related

The physical body is subject to certain limitations. For instance, there is the continuous process of inhaling and exhaling air. It has been found that by slowing down the time taken for inhaling and exhaling, life can be prolonged. The faster the process of respiration, the shorter becomes the life span. There are examples of how this rule operates. Elephants and men inhale and exhale 12-13 times a minute. By adhering to this time-scale man can expect to live for 100 years. Snakes and tortoises breathe at the rate of 7-8 times per minute. Consequently their average life-span extends to 200-300 years. Monkeys, dogs and cats breathe at the rate of 30-40 times per minute. Hence their average life does not last beyond 12-13 years. The rabbit breathes at the rate of 40-50 times per minute. Its life-span is barely 5-6 years.

The faster the rate of respiration, the shorter is the life-span and vice versa. How is breathing to be regulated? Breathing should be so slow that if soft powder is kept near the nostrils the powder will not be disturbed.

The practice of *yoga* helps to slow down the rate of breathing in this manner.

Dharana, dhyana, samadhi

How is meditation to be done? The first step is *Dharana*. Twelve *Dharanas* amount to one *Dhyana*. Twelve *Dhyanas* equal one *Samadhi*. *Dharana* is steady concentrated viewing of any object for twelve seconds. You have to look at any object, a flame, a picture or an idol for twelve seconds only with total concentration, without winking the eyelids. This is *Dharana*.

Practising *Dharana* is a preparation for *Dhyana*. The duration of *Dhyana* is twelve *Dharanas*. This means *Dhyana* should last $12 \times 12 = 144$ seconds, that is, two minutes and twenty four seconds. *Dhyana* does not call for sitting in "meditation" for hours. Proper *Dhyana* need not last more than 2 minutes 24 seconds. It is only after *Dharana* has been practised well that one can do *Dhyana* (meditation) well.

Twelve *Dhyanas* equal one *Samadhi*. This means 144×12 seconds, that is, 28 minutes and 48 seconds--very much less than an hour. If *Samadhi* is prolonged, it may prove fatal.

These are the disciplines the *yogis* practised. These disciplines are not explained in any of the *sastras*. If you want to proceed correctly in the practice of these disciplines, you have to begin with *Dharana*. Start practising *Dharana* for 12 seconds a day from now on. This is very important for students. In the past, *yogis* like Aurobindo and Ramana Maharishi practised these disciplines. Ramana Maharishi used to go up to the terrace and concentrate on a particular star for twelve seconds. In that state, the mind also was still and steady.

By continuing this practice of *Dharana*, you develop the capacity to perform *Dhyana* for 2 min. 24 seconds. Continuing the practice of *Dhyana* in this way, you develop the capacity to be in a state of *Samadhi* for 28 minutes and 48 seconds.

Equanimity is the real fruit of meditation

What is the inner meaning of *Samadhi*? It is not a state of unconsciousness or some other kind of consciousness. It is nothing of the kind. The correct meaning of *Samadhi* is "*Sama-Dhi*" -the state in which the intellect has achieved equanimity. Whether in pleasure or pain, in praise or blame, in gain or loss, in heat or cold, to be able to maintain an equal mind is *Samadhi*. That is the real fruit of "meditation."

This is a sacred day on which you can begin this *yogic* practice. This will enable you to sharpen your minds and develop the keenness of your intellect. I have not revealed all this to anyone hitherto.

Likewise, *Dhyana* is an extremely easy process. *Samadhi* is even more easy. But because of improper understanding of the methods, aspirants get involved in difficulties. Many imagine that all that *Dhyana* (meditation) calls for is sitting in the *padmasana* (lotus pose). But one does not know where his mind is wandering at the time. The concentration is disturbed by a mosquito sitting on the nose. When the mosquito repeats its attacks, the man loses his patience and the entire purpose of the meditation is defeated.

To maintain one's calmness and concentration during meditation, unaffected by any disturbing elements, *Dharana* has to be practised. Through *Dharana*, control of the senses is also achieved. Purity of mind is also secured. Through mental purity, the Divine is experienced.

Students! Practise *Dharana* and *Dhyana* and experience the results. Your joy, your purity and your brightness will be enhanced beyond measure. Now, you look sickly because of all sorts of impurities in you. There is no shine on your faces. It is purity that imparts effulgence to the face. When there is purity in you, your face shines brightly. I am now 64 years. (The clock in the *Mandir* chimed the hours and Swami remarked, "It is saying yes, yes, yes.") Look at Me and look at yourselves, who are in your teens. You look worn out. You lose your brightness because of impure thoughts. The more you develop your purity, the more youthful you will be. No illness will affect you. This is what you should aim at. And it should be achieved through love.

***Dhyana* means absorption in thought**

Meditation in these days is often confined to the *puja* room. As soon as one emerges from the shrine, one is filled with all sorts of mental agitations. Hence, it has been declared: "*Sathatham yoginah*" (Be established in yoga all the time). This does not mean giving up all worldly affairs. Pursue your studies. Fulfill your duties. But in all these activities, use your *Dharana* power (the power of concentration). In the process, you develop your powers of *Dhyana* (meditation). *Dhyana* means single-pointed contemplation. Even in daily life, when one is in a reflective mood, he is asked: "What is the *Dhyana* you are doing?" *Dhyana* means absorption in thought. It should be centred on only one specific subject. This is described in *Vedantic* parlance as *Saalokyam*. This means concentrating your thought on what you desire, whatever is the object or the subject. If it is a person, your thought is centred on the person. "*Saa*" comprehends every aspect of Divinity. *Saalokya* means absorption in the thoughts of Divinity.

Through *Dhyana* you have to achieve the sense of oneness with the Divine. The various types of meditation practised today are concerned with the trivial. Through these methods the Divine cannot be realized. The very first requisite is control of the vagaries of the mind. Only then meditation can be effective.

Creeds may vary, but spiritual process is one

Students must first practise *Dharana*. They may choose any object for the purpose of concentrating on it---a picture or a physical object. There is also an internal method of practising *Dharana*. When you close your eyes, a small dark spot appears before the inner eye. You may concentrate on this spot for 12 seconds without letting it move. By this practice, the power of meditation can be developed.

The practice of meditation leads to *Sameepyam* (proximity to the Lord). This leads to the next stage ----*Saroopyam* (experience of the Vision of the Lord). This may be compared to the arrival of a river to merge in the ocean. At first the ocean repels the advance of the river. After repeated attempts of the river to merge in the ocean, the latter allows the river to pass under its waves. Spiritually, this process of merger of *the jivatma* with the *Paramatma* is described as *Saayujyam* (mergence in the Divine).

The first stage in the process is *Salokyam*--continuous contemplation of the Divine. Think about the Lord in whatever action you do. Then you achieve

Sameepyam--nearness to the Lord. Coming nearer, develop closer relations with the Divine. In due course, the state of *Saroopyam* is attained. The realisation that "you and I are one" dawns. Then *Sayujyam* is experienced--complete oneness with the Divine.

This fourfold approach to the Divine is to be found in any philosophy or religion. The creeds may vary, but the spiritual process is one.

Discourse in the Prashanthi Mandir on 29-6-1989.

Bhakti is not to be calculated on the basis of the institutions one has started or helped, the temples one has built or renovated, the donations one has given away, nor does it depend on the number of times one has written the Name of the Lord or on the time and energy one has spent in the worship of the Lord. These are not vital at all, no, not even secondary. Bhakti is Prema, unsullied by any tinge of desire for the benefit that flows from it or the fruit or consequence of that love.

BABA