

10. Worship A Picture As God But Not God As A Picture

దిన యామి శ్వా - సాయం క్రమః
- శత్రవ సంకార - పునరావృతః
కాలక్రమణ - సప్తార్షయః
అదృష్ట వ ముఖ త్సాహాయః

రోయి పసళా సాయంప్రొద్దులు
వలవేసశ్రేణు సారకుమారును
కాలక్రమణ సక్రమణయశ్ర
వివావదలద ఆశాశాయశ్ర

*Night follows day and day follows night,
summer follows winter and winter follows
summer. Thus time marches on, engulfing
us and making our lives shorter. In spite of
this, we cling to our desires.*

Truth is something which people do not like. They look at it as if it is inimical to them. Untruth is something which people like. They look at it in a friendly manner. People like to buy intoxicating drinks like toddy and liquor even if they have to pay a high price. They do not go in for health-giving things like buttermilk and curds even when they are quite cheap. This is what generally happens in most families.

Divyatma Swarupas, students!

Time is moving away fast like the wind. The duration of our life is melting away like a block of ice. We will drop the body sometime or the other and leave this world without knowing the purpose of life. When life departs, the body will either be buried or cremated. What is distinctive of human life? Man must recognise the sacred task for which he has taken birth. If he spends his time only in fulfilling his sensuous desires, he will be wasting his life. The duration of a life is an important factor. Therefore, time should be used properly. Man is relying very much on his physical and mental strength. He is not making the slightest attempt to fall back on divine strength.

Today, in the human heart, there is a huge fire. The fire of anger, the fire of lust, the fire of greed and the fire of attachment are always burning in his heart. He does not seem to realise that all these fires can completely consume him and reduce him to ashes. Unmindful of this, he carries on his life and makes grandiose plans for his future.

If a snake has entered the house, no one will dare to eat, move about or sleep in that house. It is only after the snake is killed that the inmates can live in peace. In this body of ours which is like our home, the snake of desires is living. Not only is the snake of desires living but it is also giving birth to its own offspring in the form of many further desires. While this snake, in the form of so many desires, is living, growing and flourishing in our body, one wonders how man can live in peace. He must have a lot of courage to live in a house full of such snakes. One does not understand if he does this knowingly or unknowingly.

Our birth, our life, our growth, our decadence and our destruction are all a result of passing time. Night following the day and day following the night are also a consequence of passing time. When it is day time for us in India, it is night time for people in America. For half the earth, it appears as day while for the other half, it is night. The earth itself is teaching us a good lesson by exchanging the darkness, of one half with the brightness of the other half. In spite of this lesson, we believe that our life is unchanging and permanent. This is ridiculous. That we change from boyhood to youth, from youth to old age is illustrative of the fact that passage of time brings about changes in us.

This time can be referred to as Goddess Kalika or *Kala*. This Goddess is dancing on the stage of our life and as she dances, time moves on and the span of our life is shortening. The time that has gone behind is

called the past, the time that is now current is called the present and the time that is ahead is called the future. By remembering what has happened in the past and by thinking of what is happening now, we go on imagining several successes and wish to do many things in the future. The past, present and future are all coming because of changing time. They are not something which are specially created. Our primary objective should be to recognise the nature of time and utilise it in a sacred manner.

That is the lesson that all the *Sastras* and the *Vedas* teach us. When time itself is swallowing every individual, to grieve and to think that an individual is permanent is not the right thing. The Goddess of time is swallowing everyone. It is possible that the beautiful spring season that has gone may come again. It is also possible that the phases of the moon that have gone may come again. But the water that has once flown in the river and the youth that has gone behind you, will never come back. Since life is a stream moving in one direction only, it is necessary for us to spend our life in a purposeful manner.

In many parts of our country, when we see wealthy people, we say that they had helped others in their previous births and therefore they have got wealth in this birth. This is a common way of talking. We say that one who had led a righteous life, gave to many charities, and made several sacrifices in his previous life will be born in a wealthy family in this life. Sometimes, people

are born in a poor family and go into a wealthy family by adoption. One may be born as a very poor man and as time goes on, he may become a very wealthy person by his luck. Further, even after being born a poor man, one may get good education, get into a good job, earn plenty of money and end up as a wealthy person. In the modern age, it is also quite possible that one who is born poor can acquire lakhs of rupees by winning a prize in a lottery, if he has luck. Above all, one may have God's grace and as a result of this grace he may become a very wealthy person. For all this happiness and good luck, his actions in his previous life are responsible. His attempts during this life are not the causes.

If our vision is directed outwards, then we are not able to see ourselves. The true vision of Self will be available to us only when we turn our vision away from the material things. Our intellect is like a torch light. So long as you turn this torch light outwards, you will be able to see the road and the people on the road, but you will not be able to see yourself. When this torch is turned towards yourself, your form can be seen by you. God has given you a clean mirror in the form of intellect. Instead of looking at yourself in this mirror, you are keeping the mirror facing others. If you want to have *Atmasakshatkara* or look at yourself, you must put the mirror in front of your face.

Sankara has given this verse of *Bhaja Govindam* in order to make us realise that time is sacred and that

we should respect the God of time. Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to spend his entire time in the direction of securing the vision of God. As the night approached, he used to think that he had not had the good fortune of having the vision of God during the whole of that day and he used to shed tears thinking that another day was wasted. Today, young people seem to acquire expertise in wasting time. They talk about unnecessary things for hours together. If they have no other work, they read silly story books and waste time in engaging themselves in useless avocations. Any work, which has no specific purpose or use in daily life, means wasting time. If you have no specific work to do, make it a habit to read sacred books concerning our culture. Read books like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharatha*, *Bhagavad Gita* and so on. Your mind is like a lens. If you read impure thoughts, then that impurity will get imprinted on the plate of your heart through the lens of your mind. Therefore, you must make an attempt to do good, be good and see good. Thus, you must turn your mind in the right direction. Today, you have been told that you will become a realised soul if you feel that “I and you are one.” This is not possible since “I and you” can never be one. They always remain as two. You will become a true *Adwaitin* when you realise that “I and I” are one or that “you and you” are one.

There is a small story to illustrate this. When a *guru* was sitting and teaching his disciples, one day he

said, “*Guru Brahma, Sishya Brahma, Sarvam Brahma.*” Thus the *guru* was implying that everything in the universe was *Brahman*. Every day, one disciple was accustomed to greet the *guru* respectfully on his arrival, but after this particular event, he did not do so, and he never got up from his seat. The *guru* questioned him on this strange behaviour and the disciple replied that the previous day, the *guru* said that everything is *Brahman* and therefore there was no difference between them. Then the teacher thought that what he had said had come back to him as a boomerang and he wanted to teach the student a good lesson. He went to the board and wrote “*Guru Brahma*” as two different words. He also wrote “*Sishya Brahma*” and “*Sarvam Brahma*”. When you look at these three, though *Brahma* is occurring as the same in all the three, the *guru*, *sishya* and *sarvam* are different. Only when these three words also become one, can you say that all are one. Thus, until you are able to experience this oneness of all in practice, the student will remain a student and a teacher will remain a teacher and there is no escape from the need for the student having to respect the teacher. The basis is one but the containers are different.

There is another example for this. There is a big stone on a hill and an artisan chisels this into the form of a Krishna statue. Then he takes this statue and puts it in a temple and worships it. After the statue is prepared, there will be some bits of stone left over and these bits may say, “*Thath Thwam Asi*”, that they are the same as

the basic stone from which the figure of Krishna was carved. But no one will pay homage or worship those bits of stone. All will worship only the statue of Krishna. When we take the significant meaning and look at the basis, the material of the statue and the left over pieces are one and the same. But, for a superficial assessment, the Krishna statue is different from the stone bits and we worship only the Krishna statue.

Such is the relationship between the world and its Creator. The *prakruthi* and the *Purusha* are different from each other. Oneness between them will be evident only when there is an amalgamation of the two in your thoughts. You cannot see non-dualism in them so long as you feel they are distinct from each other. In our mind, we should be able to move from *prakruthi* to *Purusha* and join them together. We should make an attempt to join these two by taking *prakruthi* to *Purusha*. On the contrary, we are dragging *Purusha* down to the level of *prakruthi*. You may worship a picture as God but not God as a picture. You can elevate a piece of stone a piece of mud or a bit of paper to the position of God and worship it, but do not bring down God to the position of a piece of stone or a bit of paper.

In our Indian culture, it has been said, “*Easwarah Sarva Bhutanam*” that is, *Easwara* is present in all things. You may thus think of a stone as *Easwara*, but not *Easwara* as a stone. Sometimes, westerners ridicule us by saying that we worship a stone and imagine it to be

God. The correct interpretation is that we are accustomed to believe that God is present in everything in this world. Therefore, we worship *tulasi* leaves, we worship the cow, the *aswatha* tree, the lion, the tiger, the snake and, in fact, all the creation in this world, because God is present in everything in this world. Indian youth should not think that we are doing this in blind faith. The young people should read the great texts which portray our traditions and also know the lives of great people who lived in our country. This is the purpose with which we have started these summer classes.