

Forget the Non-Self and Contemplate on the Self

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Oh man! Lead your life by
Performing meritorious deeds,
Undertaking acts of sacrifice,
Developing love,
Curbing demonic tendencies, and
Taking to the path of devotion.

(Telugu poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Human birth is very rare to attain. It is all the more rare to attain peace in human life.

From birth to death, one's life is subject to many changes. But it is strange that one does not realise this truth.

In childhood, one develops absorbing interest in play and enjoys the company of one's playmates.

In youth and middle age, one is engrossed in cultivating worldly relations and earning money.

In old age, one repents for not having this and that, and one still craves for money without contemplating on God even at that ripe age.

In this way, one wastes their precious human birth.

(Telugu poem)

Consider your duty as a spiritual discipline

People are endowed with great power of intelligence. Since they do not know how to make proper use of it, they take to the wrong path.

They know what is right and what is wrong. When you ask someone why they took to the wrong path, they would give excuses such as, "All this is due to the influence of illusion (*maya*)."

People think that all the delusion that prevails in this world is the play of *maya*. What is *maya*? It is only a name but has no real existence. Learned

people and scholars call *maya* a dancer (*nartaki*). Who makes them dance to her tune.

Then, how can you bring this dancer under your control? If you reverse the letters of the word *nartaki*, you get the word *kirtana* (singing the glories of God). That is to say, you can subjugate illusion (*maya*) by taking to the path of devotion and singing the glories of God.

A person who is totally immersed in love cannot describe their experience, just as a person totally submerged in water cannot say anything. Only the one who experiences love at superficial level can talk about love. It is very funny that people who have never tasted love and never experienced it give lectures on the principle of love.

What spiritual discipline (*sadhana*) should one undertake to experience love? What really is the meaning of *sadhana*? Real *sadhana* means to forget the non-self (*anatma*) and contemplate on the Self (*Atma*), forget ignorance (*avidya*) and pursue knowledge (*vidya*), forget all that is ephemeral and think only of that which is eternal.

Spiritual discipline (*sadhana*) is not just limited to performance of chanting, penance, meditation, and sacrifice.

Many women perform their household duties with dedication and look after the needs of their husband and children. Some of them feel bad that they are not able to participate in spiritual activities like *satsang* (being in good company) and listening to spiritual talks because they have to spend all their time in the performance of their household duties. What is the great merit that accrues when you take part in spiritual practices when your household duties are neglected? The real spiritual discipline for a woman lies in look-

ing after her children, making her husband happy, keeping the house clean and leading an ideal family life. Preparing food for the husband and children in the morning and evening, sending the children to school and helping the husband to go to office, and looking after the house well is also a great spiritual discipline.

Perform spiritual disciplines for spiritual growth

Even the performance of day-to-day household duties like cooking can become the highest spiritual practice. Picking out small stones from the rice and making the rice free from impurities can be compared to the yoga of discrimination between the field (or life) and the knower of the field (*kshetra kshetrajna vibhaga yoga*) and the yoga of classification of the three qualities of purity, passion, and sloth, as described in the *Bhagavad Gita*. This can also be considered as the yoga of discrimination between the *Atma* and the *anatma*.

In this context, the stones that are separated from rice stand for field or life (*kshetra*) and rice represents the knower of the truth of life (*kshetrajna*).

Women in the house also cook vegetables. While cutting vegetables with a knife they should think, “I am not cutting the vegetables but cutting the evil qualities that are present in me with the knife of wisdom.” Thereafter while washing vegetables, they should think that they are washing them in the water of love. While putting them on fire and adding salt and spices, they should think that they are putting them on the fire of discrimination and adding the salt and spices of steadfast faith and devotion. This is the spiritual exercise (*sadhana*) that can promote their spiritual growth.

The mother in the house prepares light meal (*tiffin*) of *puris* (light, fried wheat cake) for children in the evening. While preparing *puris*, she need not feel bad that she is unable to go for devotional songs (*bhajans*) and that all her time is spent in the kitchen. While pressing the ball of flour for making it flat in the shape of *puris*, she should have the sacred feeling that she is broadening her heart. Similarly, while sweeping the house, she should think, “I am not merely cleaning my house but am making my heart pure and clean”. The

body is a temple and the indweller is God (*Deho devalaya proktho jivo Deva Sanathana*). To develop sacred feelings is the real spiritual exercise.

There is no use going to spiritual congregations, listening to spiritual talks, and forgetting everything on reaching home. Instead of that, staying at home and performing household duties in a sacred way is the best spiritual exercise (*sadhana*). To perform one’s duty is the highest spiritual discipline. What else can be the greater spiritual discipline than following this sacred path?

Don’t you come across so many people who don ochre robes and pretend that they have renounced the world but are unable to get rid of their ego and attachment?

Giving up evil qualities is true renunciation

During the course of his triumphant tour of the country to disseminate the knowledge of the *Vedas*, Adi Sankara met a great *vedic* scholar, Mandana Misra, and had a debate with him.

Mandana Misra’s wife was also a great scholar and a woman of great wisdom. Living in an ashram, she used to teach the principles of righteous conduct to her disciples.

One day, she was going along with her disciples to the river Ganga for taking bath in the river. On the way, she observed a renunciant (*sanyasi*) lying in the shade of a tree, keeping a dried bottle gourd under his head, which he used for storing drinking water. He was preserving it very carefully so that nobody should take it away.

Ubhayabharati (Mandana Misra’s wife) saw this renunciant’s attachment to the bottle gourd and said to her disciples, “Look! This man calls himself a renunciant, but he has great attachment to a bottle gourd. How can a person with so much attachment attain renunciation?”

The renunciant heard this comment but did not say anything then. While Ubhayabharati and her disciples were returning from the river, he threw the bottle gourd in front of them in order to demonstrate that he was not attached to it.

Observing this, Ubhayabharati aptly remarked, “I thought he was beset only with attachment (*abhimana*), but he also has ego (ahamkara).”

Throwing away his bottle gourd does not show his sense of renunciation; it demonstrates his ego. How can one with attachment and ego become a wise person (*jnana*) and a renunciant? What benefit can such a person derive by performing spiritual practices?

Ubhayabharati said to the renunciant (*sanyasi*), “When you have renounced everything in life, why should you have ego and attachment? This is not good.”

In this way, she imparted the knowledge of true renunciation to the renunciant and showed him the path of wisdom. The renunciant fell at her feet and promised her that he would henceforward give up his ego and attachment and would lead a life of true renunciation.

In the same way, many people are deluded to think that they have renounced everything. But, what have they renounced? What is the real meaning of renunciation?

Renunciation does not merely lie in giving up wealth and family and going to the forest.
Real renunciation lies in giving up evil qualities.
This is real renunciation (*thyaga*) and yoga.
(Telugu Poem)

Many people renounce certain worldly and material possessions. But that is not renunciation in the true sense. Instead, give up evil qualities, evil practices, ego, and unsacred feelings that are present in you. This is true renunciation.

It is quite easy and not very difficult to leave one's hearth and home. What you should give up is your evil qualities, which take you to the wrong path and cause immense suffering.

People worry about the effect of the nine planets (*navagrahas*) on their life. But what really causes suffering are not the *navagrahas* but only the two *grahas* of attachment and hatred (*raga* and *dwe-sha*). People can attain peace when they give up these two.

There is no need for you to undertake any special spiritual practice for the sake of peace. You will attain peace when you discharge your duties with earnestness. If you are a householder, discharge the duties prescribed for a householder. If you are a celibate (*brahmachari*), follow the principle of *brahmacharya*. In this manner, all should adhere

to the duty (*dharma*) prescribed for their stage of life and sanctify their time by contemplating on God.

But strange are the ways of the people in this world. They are not receptive to talks on sacred and ideal matters, but they listen with great interest to talks on all sorts of evil matters. Two ears are not enough for them to listen to evil talk. They even borrow the ears of others to listen to it.

People do not listen to good words spoken wholeheartedly.

On the other hand, they are all ears when evil words are spoken.

How can such people comprehend My Divinity?
What is the use of all their education?

(Telugu poem)

This is the way in which people conduct themselves today. They have no liking for seeing anything good; they crave to see all that is bad. Their minds are not receptive to anything good but are ever ready to get engrossed in all that is evil. If asked to think of something good, their minds become totally blank. On the other hand, no effort is needed on their part to entertain evil thoughts; they come to them automatically.

What is the reason? People have become accustomed to this type of behavior in their lives. Therefore, they should change their ways and develop good practices.

The body undergoes changes, not the Atma

The principle of Divinity is one, but it is seen in many diverse forms. See this garland of flowers. There are flowers of many colours in it, but the thread in them is one. The thread does not undergo any change. It was the same thread yesterday and will be the same tomorrow. But the flowers were buds yesterday, they have blossomed today and they will wither away tomorrow.

The human body is like these flowers. Today you are young, like a fully blossomed flower, but tomorrow you will become old, like a withered flower.

The body undergoes all these changes, but the principle of the *Atma* in the body is changeless in all the three periods of time.

The principle of Brahman (*Brahma Sutra*) is like the single thread that runs through all the flowers of the garland. It is present in all beings. Beings undergo change, but the principle of Brahman remains the same always.

Do not worry about the body, which is subject to continuous change. Try earnestly to attain that which is eternal. This is the spiritual practice (*sadhana*) that you should perform. Make proper use of the mind and the intellect given to you by God to perform this spiritual practice.

Suppose, there is water in a tumbler and there is sugar at its bottom. You cannot have the taste of sugar when you drink water from the surface of the tumbler. When you thoroughly stir the water with a spoon, the sweetness of sugar will permeate the entire water.

In the same way, the sugar of Divinity is present at the bottom of your heart. If you stir the water of your thoughts with the spoon of intellect (*buddhi*), Divinity will permeate your entire heart. This is the spiritual practice that you have to perform.

You need not go anywhere to perform this spiritual practice. The vessel of heart is with you; so is the sugar of Divinity and the spoon of intellect. Then, where is the need to search? Where to search? Where has one to go? It is mere ignorance to search for Divinity elsewhere.

God resides in your heart

Thyagaraja was in search of Lord Rama everywhere, but ultimately he realised that there was no need to search for the One who was always with him.

The king of Thanjavur invited Thyagaraja to his court to play his compositions. Thyagaraja noticed so many eminent personalities in the court and, in all humility, he started his concert with the composition, “There are many great souls; I prostrate before all of them (*Endaro mahanubhavulu, andariki vandanamulu ...*)”. Listening to his sweet song, the entire assembly was spellbound.

In order to reward him, the king offered him some money. Seeing this, Thyagaraja asked himself, “Oh mind! Tell me whether there is happiness in money or in the divine proximity.” After due reflection, he declined to accept the money offered

by the king. Then the king sent him back to his village in a palanquin, with due honours.

Seeing Thyagaraja going in a royal palanquin, some thieves followed him, thinking he must be carrying a lot of money with him. Noticing the thieves, the bearers of palanquin told Thyagaraja, “Swami, we are being chased by thieves. They might even kill us.”

Thyagaraja said, “Why should you be afraid? You don’t have any money, which is the cause of fear. Only those who possess money have fear. Why should those who have only the wealth of virtues be afraid of thieves? You have only virtues and no money. Therefore, have no fear.”

After a while, the thieves came running to Thyagaraja, fell at his feet, and prayed, “Kindly protect us, protect us.”

Thyagaraja asked them, “From whom should I save you? Why do you ask me to save you? What calamity has befallen you?”

They told Thyagaraja that two young men armed with bows and arrows were threatening to punish them.

On hearing this, Thyagaraja, who had earlier gone in search of Rama here and there, realised that Rama was always with him. He sang this song in praise of Rama, “Oh Rama! You are in front of me, behind me, and on my either side (*Munduvēnaka iruprakkala todai unnava, oh Rama*)”. Rama made him realise His omnipresence by giving him this experience.

God is always with such noble souls and protects them in every way in times of difficulties. Extolling the compassion of Rama, Thyagaraja sang this song and was lost in ecstasy, “Rama, please be my protector (*Rama nannu brovara*)”.

Till the time a spiritual seeker realises the truth that God is within him, the seeker keeps on searching for Him in the external world. Once one realises that God is in one, there is no need to perform any spiritual practice.

Everyone should try to understand this principle of omnipresence of God. In fact, you yourself are God. Your body is the temple of God and your heart is the sanctum sanctorum. God is the resident of your heart. You should realise this truth.

You commit sin when you criticise others.
You can never escape from its consequences,
because others are none but God Himself.

(Telugu poem)

Those whom you consider as others are not really so. They are verily the embodiments of Divinity. Therefore, do not criticise, abuse, or disrespect anyone. Why? God is present in all. Once you realise this principle of Divinity, you will have no worry. Whoever you come across, love and respect him. Here is a small example.

All powers are immanent in love

The boy who spoke earlier is from Shimla. When he joined our primary school ten years ago, he was a small child. His brother is also studying here. Their father brought their mother to Brindavan on a stretcher from Himachal Pradesh. I told their mother, "From now onward, they are My children. Do not worry about them."

Handing over these children to Me, their mother said, "Oh Sai Ma! I leave my children under Your care." Saying so, she closed her eyes and breathed her last.

I brought these children to Prasanthi Nilayam and admitted them in primary school. At that time, this boy said, "Sai is my real mother." Their father also was happy to put them under My care.

Right from that day, these boys never shed tears. Though they are tender-hearted, they firmly adhered to the promise they made to Swami.

Once you offer yourself to God, you will never come to grief in life. That is true surrender. Their mother died. Even their father does not come here often, because he knows that Swami is taking care of them.

Every day, I see them, talk to them, and ask about their welfare. Their tender hearts are full of firm faith.

Today this boy spoke very well on the topic of faith because his heart is suffused with faith. They do not suffer from the pangs of separation from their mother.

Once when this boy remembered his mother and started crying, the warden brought him to Me. She

said, "Swami! He is not eating food, and he is crying all the time."

At that time, he was in First Standard. Swami took him into the interview room, created a ring for him, spoke to him sweetly, and made him happy. From that day onward, he always has a smiling face (prolonged applause).

Children have a sacred heart, and that is why they are able to experience divine love. Elders, on the other hand, are not able to experience this love. Love is highly sacred, and it can impart immense courage and fortitude.

These boys have been able to stay here happily because they are with Swami. Would they be happy if they had to stay somewhere else? No. Swami gives them more than the love of a thousand mothers.

Even those who call themselves renunciants are not able to understand this truth. They perform spiritual practices like chanting and meditation, but what is the use? Their mind is overpowered by ego and attachment.

A person can lead life in this world without any worries by adopting one principle. What is that principle? It is the principle of love. If you have love, you can have everything. You will have physical prowess, intellectual power, and all other powers. All types of powers that you require in this world are present in love.

When you have gold with you, you can get any ornaments made out of it. Similarly, when you have God's grace, you can attain everything. When God becomes your own, what else do you require? What is there greater than that? Therefore, understand this principle of Divinity and act accordingly.

It is enough if you give up all your evil qualities. If you do so, you do not need to do any spiritual practice. Develop the faith that the God whom you worship is present in all.

Students should cultivate the principle of oneness. When you develop the principle of oneness, you can achieve everything. Wealth and riches are like passing clouds; they come and go. However, they are also required to some extent to live in this world.

I take personal care of all matters, whether big or small. You feel bad that Swami has not spoken to you because you are not aware of this truth. I call the warden and discuss with him even small matters. Though I have got so many other responsibilities, I ask about each and every student (loud applause).

But those students who are narrow-minded think, “Alas! Swami has not spoken to me, He has not looked at me.” But I see all and ask about their welfare.

The boy who spoke earlier said, “I lost one mother but gained the love of a thousand mothers.” How many can have such great good fortune? How many can speak in this manner with such conviction? That is why he addressed Me as “My Mother Sai” in the beginning of his speech.

People who are endowed with such firm faith are protected by faith. Their faith alone confers on them all types of success. Similarly, love bestows all types of success. Therefore, develop love. You will be victorious in all your endeavours if you develop love alone.

Observe silence and maintain discipline

I want to tell you another important thing. That is, you should observe discipline. As I told you yesterday, always speak sweetly with love. I have also told you not to use harsh words while talking to others.

But during the last few months, there has been some laxity in discipline at Prasanthi Nilayam. People make a lot of noise as they get up after the *bhajan* is over. After I select devotees for interview and take them inside, people on the verandah and also outside get up and create a lot of commotion, as if it is a marketplace. After the programme is over in the temple, you should go back silently, contemplating on what Swami has said, instead of indulging in unnecessary talk with each other.

On one side, the ladies make a lot of noise, and on the other, gents do so. All along, they are talking, talking and talking!

Not only here in this temple (*mandir*) or Prasanthi Nilayam, even on the road or wherever you are, do not indulge in excessive talk.

Discipline should be like your shadow. It should follow you wherever you go. Not only in this campus, even while you walk on the road outside, adhere to discipline.

Most importantly, what God expects from you is discipline. At the conclusion of the programme or *bhajans*, go back to your places silently. You can talk only after you go back to your homes.

Whether you are at Prasanthi Nilayam or anywhere else, you have no business indulging in excessive talk. You waste a lot of energy by talking too much. Listening to unnecessary talk also disturbs your peace of mind. You suffer from nervousness when you talk too much. You also suffer from loss of memory. Therefore, strictly observe discipline and remain silent.

Men and women should not talk to each other in the temple (*mandir*). They may do so after going home, but do not talk to each other unnecessarily either in the bazaar or in the temple or anywhere else.

Not only this. Some elders indulge in unnecessary talk in front of students and set a bad example to them. Elders should conduct themselves in an exemplary manner. You can hear cosmic sound (*sabda Brahman*) when you observe silence. Therefore, at least from today onward, observe silence and follow discipline. Moreover, don't use harsh words while talking to others, as I told you yesterday.

Lead your life with love, considering love as your life-breath. Have faith that love is God. Forgetting love amounts to forgetting God. Suffuse your speech with love. Lead your life with compassion and forbearance. Attain the state in which you even forget time in the contemplation of God.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the *bhajan*, “Govinda Krishna Jai...”.)

—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam, on 4 July 1996.