

## 6. Steps In Spiritual Practice

The Governor of Uttar Pradesh said just now that he does not see signs of moral revival, though much is being talked about achievements in the field of economic revival. Let Me assure him that the moral revival is already there and is gaining volume every moment. Indeed, the reconstruction of humanity on moral foundations is today a world problem, not merely an Indian problem. In all countries the emphasis is on the standard of life, not on the way of living. Once you turn toward the path of worldly happiness, you will be led on and on to greater and greater discontent, competition, pride, and jealousy. Just stop for a moment and examine your own experience; whether you are happier when you grow richer and whether you get more peace as and when your wants are satisfied. Then you will bear witness to the truth that an improved standard, of living is no guarantee of happiness. Nor is education or the mastery of information and the acquisition of skills any guarantee of mental equanimity. As a matter of fact, you find the educated man everywhere more discontented and more competitive than the uneducated. So the reestablishment of righteousness (*dharma*), which is the task of the *Avatar*, is as urgent in other parts of the world as, according to the Governor, it is in this country.

The motive force for that revival has to come from this country itself, for India has been proclaiming the Truth fearlessly and without intermission. It is on account of that breath that this land is still alive, in spite of typhoons and earthquakes in the cultural sphere. Indians have a greater responsibility than people of other countries to live in such a way that others may get inspiration for spiritual practices from them.

### Duties have to be done as worship

Yours is a splendid chance to become the guides of mankind. You who belong to the Sathya Sai Society have this responsibility in an even greater measure, since you must lead model lives of sincere striving. Having taken the Name, you are bound to act according to My command and to shed the light of devotion on all who come near you. I am really moved by love (*prema*), seeing such a vast gathering and hearing the Governor praising your orderliness and discipline.

The root of all trouble is the uncontrolled ill-directed mind. Like the river Godavari in floods, the mind rolls along, causing slips and slides and devastating vast areas on both banks. Discrimination and non-attachment are the two dikes that tame the mad energy of the flood and lead the raging waters into the sea, which is, after all, the destination they seek.

“After this the discussion on the nature of Brahman ... (*Athaatho Brahma Jijnaasa ...*),” —says the *Brahmasutra* (*Aphorisms on the Supreme Reality*). After what? After the cultivation of discrimination and non-attachment, naturally. How can they be implanted? By the first three primary goals of life: righteousness, wealth, and desire-fulfillment (*dharma, artha, and kama*). The practice of *dharma* is the Art of Living. That is why, in the *Gita*, Krishna taught Arjuna about giving up the fruits of action, not about giving up the body.

No attempt need be made to run away from the duties of one's station and status. Remember, those duties have to be done as worship, as offerings of one's intelligence and skill, qualities, and thoughts and feelings to the Feet of the Lord in a spirit of thankfulness for the chance given, without a trace of egoism or a sense of attachment to the fruits of the actions. Obligatory actions have to be carried out, wherever you are, with care and sincerity. They award the needed discrimination and non-attachment.

## **Only steady effort will bring success**

Sankaracharya got that discrimination and non-attachment without passing through the experience of the world. Others do not get it even after going through endless travail. That is the difference. You see death snatching away persons from all around you, but you do not train yourself to meet it calmly, bravely, and gladly when it comes to you. Sankaracharya said that an alligator had grasped his legs, meaning that the world (*samsara*) had caught him in its coils; he told his mother that the alligator would release its hold only if she agreed to his becoming a monk! Strange alligator, that! It only meant: that if he renounced all bonds, he would be free to proceed to the Truth. To take the vow of renunciation (*sanyasa*), the consent of the mother has to be obtained. So, by this symbolic incident, Sankara persuaded her to say, “Take, take the vow of renunciation. You have my permission, it is enough for me that you live unharmed.”

Of course, the majority of people get glimpses of discrimination and detachment off and on, but they soon forget the call and ignore it and cover it up by excess or excuses. One step forward and one step back — the journey does not take them far. Even if some do take up spiritual practices, steadiness is absent. Like a ball of thread that slips out of the hand on to the floor, it all comes off because the grasp is not firm. Only steady effort will bring success here, as in every other case. How can you expect quick success in the control of the mind? It is very difficult to overcome its vagaries, for it is many-faced and very adamant.

## **The first step in the spiritual effort**

You are unable to understand nature (*prakriti*), which is a reflection of, a shadow of God. How then can you understand God himself?. No. Steady perseverance alone will tame your mind, and it is only through a tamed mind that you can experience God. In this case, you must become your own tutor. Train yourself by using the spark of wisdom that has been implanted in you. Once you try with all your might, the Lord’s Grace will be there to help you forward.

The first step in the spiritual discipline is the cleansing of the speech. Talk sweet without anger. Do not boast of your scholarship or attainments. Be humble, eager to serve. Conserve your speech. Practise silence. That will save you from squabbles, idle thoughts, and factions.

Again, practise the attitude of joy when others are joyful and of grief when others around you are grieved. Let your heart move in sympathy. But the joy and grief have to be translated into service; they should not be mere emotions. It is not by your wearing the “bush coat” that all others wear that you should demonstrate the principle of equality — that is very easy, that is external uniformity. How are all equal? Because they all have the same divine Consciousness (*Chaithanya*) within them.

When the sun rises, not all lotuses in the lake bloom; only the grown buds open their petals. The others await their time. It is the same with people. Differences do exist because of unripeness, though all fruits have to ripen and fall some day. Every being has to reach the Goal, however slowly they walk or circuitous their road.

## **Elders are not providing good examples**

To reach the Goal quickly, without passing through the ordeals of the long journey and stopping at one caravanserai after another, passing from birth to birth, learn spiritual practices — especially the easiest and quickest: repetition of God’s Name (*namasmarana*). This microphone can work and bring My voice even to people sitting

far in the distance only when the connection is correctly made. So, attach yourself to Me, and the current will flow through you and get things done for your good. The light you get from the current that flows always along the copper wire depends on the power of the bulb you use; increase the candle power and you get stronger light. It rests with you how you make use of Me. The rain falls of its own accord uniformly on the land; the lands bring forth the fruit according to the quality of soil and seed.

Why blame the boys and girls that they do not respect the elders or obey their parents or believe in God or adhere to high principles of character? The elders are not providing them examples to show that those traits of character are useful or valuable or essential. They themselves do not know the secret of happiness; they offer to guide the children in the darkness, but their torches have no cells! Teachers, gurus, leaders of youth — all are in the same predicament.

Very few have solid faith in the Scriptures or in God; very few have the steadiness to stick to righteousness (*dharma*) and brave the temptation to stray from the straight path. Love (*prema*), too, is a very difficult virtue to cultivate, though it is a very valuable asset. Peace (*santhi*) is the one thing that makes life worth while. Therefore, I bless the Sathya Sai Society of Perambur, that it may grow in these virtues more and more with every passing day. You will have your building ready next year. I shall come every year to you and shower on you the Bliss (*Ananda*) that is my property, the Love that is my gift.

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You need not escape into a forest to gain silence and the chance of uninterrupted spiritual practice.

You can make the place where you are a citadel of silence; shut off the senses, and let them not run after objects.

Your home becomes a hermitage; your spiritual practices will then move on, without any obstacle.

**Sathya Sai Baba**