

21. Sravana and Smarana

THE first among the nine forms of devotion is *sravana* (hearing) and today, we have installed here at the Prashaanthi Nilayam this instrument for *sravana*, namely, the telephone. I am used to hearing not the talk that comes through this instrument, but the cries of agony; the call of pining hearts hungering for grace. Still since it gladdens the hearts of devotees and I am never against anything that makes them glad and full-hearted, I have agreed for this installation. Just now, sitting in this hall, on this chair, you heard Me speak to Kanjilal at New Delhi and only he and I know how happy he is at the present moment, for he was able to speak to Baaba direct and to hear My voice, while in his own house.

Just see how this telephone itself came to be installed. The engineering staff were working day and night to fix it, but heavy rains interfered and even this noon, they were afraid that a connection with Delhi had become next to impossible. I had fixed the time as 5-30; but they pleaded with Me to postpone My coming into the hall for a few minutes at least, so that they could make sure that Delhi was coming through fine and clear. I said that we could speak to Delhi later, if they felt that would be better.

***Sravana* can transform the individual**

But, you saw how, as soon as I sat on this chair, Kanjilal could be heard clearly and I could inaugurate the service. It is given to these men who are here today to share in this achievement and this joy; they have the luck, the chance. Many times, people search far and wide for a groom for their daughter; but all the while, the young man might be in the neighbouring house itself. The engineers may say that they only did their duty and they might not look for any gratitude; but I am sure, you will thank them for the service they rendered, in these rains and under high pressure of work.

Sravana, hearing the voice of God, hearing about God, these are important events in life, events that transform the individual. Arjuna "heard" the Bhagavadh Geetha; Pareekshit "heard" the *Bhaagavatha*; both were liberated from bondage thereby. In the Mahaabhaaratha, Karna, meaning the Ear (!) is the most outstanding character; it is called *Karnarasaayana*, (sweet medicine to be "heard") and assimilated into daily life. The *Sabdha* (Sound), the *Pranava* (*Om*) are all very important keys to bliss; the *Vedhas* are to be "heard" and "recited." They are *Shruthi*, that which was heard, in moments of supraconscious ecstasy, by purified scholars doing saadhana. I am reminded of all this in the presence of this contrivance for *Doora-sravana*, hearing people who are far away.

Bhaagavatha-sravana (listening to *Bhaagavatha*) leads to *Bhaagavatha-smarana* (the constant remembrance of the Lord), and detachment from the ties of the objective world. There was famous dacoit once who advised his son while initiating him into the ancestral profession, never for a moment listen to stories of the Lord. "Do not stay to listen to any *Puraana* (mythological stories) or any reading of the *Bhaagavatha*," (tales of incarnations of Vishnu), he exhorted the young aspirant. The son scrupulously observed this injunction for years and amassed a good fortune.

Effect of hearing the *Bhaagavatha*

One night, however, while running with his loot on his shoulder through a side lane of the city to avoid the police, a piece of glass cut into his sole; he sat for a while to pull it off and stop the

flow of blood. He was then behind a house, where some one was reading and explaining the *Bhaagavatha* to a small group of listeners; he listened perforce for a short two minutes. The spark fell on the heap of cotton. During that short period, he heard the Pandith explaining the nature of God. He has no ears, no eyes, no limbs; He has a thousand forms; He is without form. "*Sarvathah paani-paadham,*" (with hands and feet every here) as the Geetha says. That description got fixed in his heart. He could not shake it.

A few days later the police came to know of the depredations made by him as well as his associates and kinsmen. In order to know more about their activities they entered the area incognito, one constable as *Goddess Kaali* and some others as the worshippers and priests. They shouted and yelled, cursed and terrified the dacoits and called upon them to come out of their homes and fall at the feet of *Kaali*.

Many did so, but the son who heard the *Bhaagavatha* albeit for two minutes knew just enough to save his skin. He was not terrified at all. He challenged the constable who was acting the role of *Kaali* and tore off his makeup and exposed the plot and instilled courage into the hearts of the gang. Then, when the police left discomfited he argued within himself thus: "If two minutes of the forbidden fruit could help me so much, what can I not gain if I devote myself entirely to the stories of the glories of God?" He left off the evil path and became a *saadhaka* (spiritual practitioner).

Tongue is man's biggest weapon of offence

The grace of God descends upon the eager *saadhaka*, who listens attentively to the story of that grace. The name of God, if recited with love and faith, has that power. Once the mother of Agasthya boasted that her son drank all the waters of the ocean; but the mother of Hanumaan, who was there, said: "Why go to that extent? My son leaped over it in a trice." But there was the mother of Raama with them. She said, "Your son leaped over the ocean, uttering my son's name. Without it, he was helpless." The name has that overmastering power. It can award unheard of, unimagined strength and courage. The other two women disputed the fact that it was Raamanaama that strengthened Hanumaan for the enterprise. So, Kaushalya asked Raama Himself. He said, "Why, it was because this body was called Raama, the name that combines *the beejaaksharas* (mystic letters) of both Shiva and Vishnu, that I Myself was able to conquer Raavana and his hordes!"

The name has much efficacy. By repeating the name, the Lord and His attributes can be easily identified. The tongue must be sanctified by the repetition of the name. It has also to use sweet expressions which will spread contentment and joy. Be very careful about your speech. Animals have horns, insects have stings, beasts have claws and fangs. But, man's biggest weapon of offence is his tongue. The wounds that his tongue inflicts can scarce be healed; they fester in the heart for long. They are capable of more damage than even an atom bomb.

When Bheema went to bring the Saugandhika flower for his beloved, he saw Hanumaan with his tail lying across the road. Bheema talked rudely to Hanumaan, ordering him to remove the tail, for he thought it mean to walk over some one else's appendage. The rudeness made Hanumaan refuse the demand and so, Bheema was humiliated for he could not lift the tail and set it aside. He learned the need for politeness in conversation.

Speak so that your language is as sweet as your feelings are. Make the words true and pleasing. (*Sathyam broth; priyam brooyath*). But, for the sake of pleasing another, do not speak falsehood

or exaggerate. Cynicism which leads you to speak about a thing in a carping manner and in order to bring it into disrepute is as bad as flattery which makes you exaggerate and cross the boundaries of truth.

Bliss is man's native character

You can give *Aanandha* by your speech, only if you have attained the state of *Aanandha* yourself. A lamp burning under a pot with five holes: that is the symbol of man, who has the Flame of Wisdom shining through five senses. Cover the pot with a thick cloth and no light emerges. The cloth is the cover of *ajnaana* (ignorance), of *thamas* (inaction). Remove it; it shines feebly through the senses, that is the symbol of *rajas* (passion and activity). Remove the pot itself, that is to say, remove the identification with the body, (the *dhehaathma-buddhi*); then the *Aathmajyothi* (light of the Self) shines full and bright. The *jyothi* or *Aanandha* (*Divine light* or *Divine Bliss*) is ever there but, it was obstructed by the pot and the cloth. *Aanandha* is your native character, your real stamp, your very reality.

The patient must himself drink the drug. There is no vicarious cure. The balm must be applied where the pain is. The cause of the illness and of the misery is in your mental vision, for, you see many, when there is only One. You say "My God," "Their God," "Your Baaba," as if there are so many Gods existing to help you quarrel and right among yourselves' Ask the Lord for the removal of your earthly troubles; there is no mistake in that. It is much better than asking other men, and losing self-respect and honour. For the sake of votes, people catch hold of the feet of all and sundry; if they fall at the feet of the Lord, that will bring them more votes, for the people will plead with Him to lead them as a great servant of God.

Communicate from heart to heart

You can call Me on the phone, but I will not be available for all those who do not have the sincere and steady yearning for the Lord. For those who say "No! You are not my Lord," I say "No." For those who say, "Yes," I too echo "Yes." If I am available in your heart, I will be available over the phone. But, remember, I have My own special postal and telephone systems. They operate from the heart straight to the heart. There are rules and regulations for the operation of that system, which the *Shaasthras* (scriptures) declare. You can find them there. I am glad that devotees have today acquired this new convenience at Prashaanthi Nilayam.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 29-7-1964

Difficulties are created to increase the yearning and to sift the sincere devotee from the rest.

SHRI SATHYA SAI