

## 26. Soldiers and Generals

GOD has given you this great chance, this wonderful world to be used as a gymnasium for the development of mental peace, and as a mint to transmute your base metal into valuable currency. You should therefore offer gratitude to Him for the shower of Grace. Even insects have this sense of gratefulness! An ant was caught on a dry leaf that was being carried down a flooded river and it called out from its tiny heart to God for succour.

prompted a kite that was flying over the river to dive and rise up, with the leaf on its beak; for He made the bird mistake it for a fish or frog! The bird was sorely disappointed, but, the ant was delighted to land on hard ground! God came as a kite and rescued me, it felt. I must be grateful to the bird, to all birds, it resolved. One day, while on its morning round, it saw a hunter aim an arrow at a bird; it bit the heel of the hunter, just when he was releasing the mortal shaft; the aim failed; the bird flew off, and was saved. The ant had paid its debt.

Man too has to pay his debts. He is heavily indebted to for all the good, the true and the beautiful, with which he is endowed. He must pay the debt he incurs when he hears a discourse; this is done by ruminating over what has been told and practising at least a few of the ways of life that have been recommended. The meal that is eaten has to be digested, so that it may strengthen the bloodstream and transform itself into courage, skill and stamina. The world into which he is born has to be watched and studied with care and discrimination; the word, 'world,' means all that is not I, everything that the I calls mine: body, senses, mind, intelligence.

### **Spirituality cannot thrive in loveless hearts**

God is everywhere, He is everything; so, it appears as if He is nowhere, and He is not in anything! For, to know Him you have to identify Him as someone foreign and something unique. We forget that everything is foreign to us, everything has a uniqueness of its own! On what authority can you deny? On what authority do you accept? You cannot deny Love, or Truth or Wisdom. He is Love, Power, Truth, Wisdom, Beauty. When you accept Love, you accept God. The tender plant of spirituality can grow only in the field of Love. It cannot thrive in the dehydrated loveless land of human hearts.

Remove all traces of salinity from your hearts adding to the soil the precious complement of the Name of the Lord. Water it with Faith. Then plant the seedlings of Divinity; have discipline as the fence, and steadfastness as the pesticide to be sprayed. Then, you can reap the rich harvest of *Jnaana*, which will free you from the task of cultivation forever. Those who laugh at people doing *Bhajan* or visiting temples or attending Divine discourses have not tasted the nectar, and are therefore, prejudiced against it. Pity them, for they do not know what they miss.

But, these people do help the aspirant, by hindering his aspiration! People pray to me, "Baaba! Put an end to the machinations of these unbelievers!" But I know how useful these traducers are. When the millet has grown to a certain height, you can see the ryot taking a prong and digging the soil, all round the stem; you may fear that he is damaging the plant by hurting its roots. No, that operation only helps to make that plant grow better, and sturdier! Certain fruit trees too have to be pruned often! Opposition, criticism, even downright condemnation are necessary to confirm consolidate and promote real faith. The tests only deepen the conviction. What is the good in having a nose that falls off at the first sneeze?

### **Yearn to see the resident in the Body**

Some call on God only for help in distress. As the Telugu saying goes, "*Sankatam vasthe, Venkataramana!*" (When suffering comes, you call on God Venkataramana!) Until recently, pilgrims who climbed the series of steps that lead them up the seven hills to the shrine of Venkataramana, used to shout 'Govindha! Govindha!' so that their legs may not ache; now, roads are laid right up to the temple door, and cars and buses take pilgrims straight to the very Presence! So, the only ache people have nowadays is ache in the stomach, due to overeating and want of exercise!

How will God reveal Himself when the seeker rides to His Presence smooth in a swell car, and sticks to his regular routine of luxury? Yearn to see the resident in the temple of your body, do not yearn for keeping the body safe, trim and coddled, in costly comfort. There are some ultra-modern Saadhakas(!) who do not want to cross their thresholds, or spend a paisa, or move a muscle, but, who yet demand that Self-realisation must drop lightly on their laps, from the *Guru* or from God, whom he should be able to persuade or manipulate! And, there are *Gurus* who cater to such(!) so that they can collect a pile!

You may complain that God is hard and heartless, since He does not respond to prayer, give signs from His pictures, speak from 'nowhere' in clear unambiguous terms, assuaging, assuring, advising--but, let Me tell you, God is Love; Love is God. His *Aakara* (Form) is *Prema* (Love); His *swabhaava* (essential nature) is *Aanandha* (Bliss); His *Raktha* (life-blood) is *Sathyam* (Truth). When even the stony cliff echoes your voice and responds when you cry, will not the softest, sweetest, love-filled heart of respond? When there is no response, infer that there is something wanting in the cry. Perhaps the cry is hollow, insincere, mere play acting, set to a pattern, addressed to some one alien to oneself, taken to be far away and distant, as a tyrant or taskmaster.

### **Ignore trivial matters for the larger interests**

Know that God is the One that is dearest and nearest to you, as dear and as near as your own heart and pray to Him; surely, His answer will be vouchsafed immediately. A hundred such individuals will leaven the whole earth. You may have huge hordes of men in the army, but they are useful only when the few generals who lead them know where they are and whether they should proceed, and how overcome the enemy, whose strength and weakness they have comprehended. Hordes of people sing, recite, adore, worship, praise, prostrate--but, these are the soldiers. Those who believe, who have faith and who practise the discipline, these are the Generals in whom the Master confides.

The future of this holy land lies with few who practise spiritual disciplines and set an example to others of the bliss one can acquire by those means. They alone can establish *Prashaanthi* and destroy *Ashaanthi* (anxiety and restlessness). I harp, day after day, on the need to practise steady faith and discipline. This may be irksome for some of you. Sometimes I feel I have spoken enough, that it is time I gave you some rest. But, soon, that resolution is overcome by compassion! And I am here, addressing you again! My belief is that, as the music master says, You master the melody by constant effort to reproduce it, not otherwise. In the corner of a few hearts at least a portion of what I advise may get stuck and from thence, it is bound to transform the daily lives, attitudes and emotions of the persons so affected.

When the rains pour, many feel miserable; they complain of bad weather, of not being able to move about! But, consider the lasting benefits that rains confer! We had good rains during the last three days. Some people told me, "Swaami! Why don't you will that rains should not disturb the even tenor of the activities here?" Well, these are trivial matters, for which the larger interests should not be set aside. As a matter of fact, the *Yajna* that was celebrated is to persuade the Gods to shower rains! And, it has succeeded in that aim! Rains promote harvests and prosperity. The *Yajna* is done here by the priests in strict conformity with *Vedhic* injunctions and so, even while the rite is on, the winds gather clouds of rain!

*Prashaanthi Nilayam, 18.10.1969*