

13. The basic error

You may have cows of different breeds and bands, colours and continents, but the milk they give is everywhere the same in composition! You may get gold from different places and engage different goldsmiths to make for you different types of ornaments but the basic substance does not undergo any diminution in value. It remains gold for all time. Living beings belong to widely different species but, the Spark of Life, the *Jeeva* (individual being) in each is the same. God is the goal of every prayer, in whatever language or dialect it is spoken. You may see people kneeling or prostrating, with folded palms or arms extended, in church or mosque or temple but they are all asking for help, succour, strength, wisdom, security or happiness from the inexhaustible reservoir of happiness, wisdom and power, God. But, people in their pettiness, do not recognise this basic truth, they pride themselves on their holiness and disparage the others, as having gone astray! They do not have mental peace themselves, nor do they allow others to live in peace. Such is the stupidity of the fanatics.

It is good and helpful to have an enemy

Ignoring the unity of all mankind in the *Aathma* (divine soul), man relishes in quarrels and factions. He classifies some among his contemporaries as his friends and some as his foes. He manufactures duality where basically there is only unity. It is his own likes and dislikes, prejudices and passions that is reflected back, that creates all this reaction of love and hatred, all this resounding echo of factiousness and friction. Friendship and enmity arise from your heart; they are labels fixed by you, not marks which other people are born with. The same person is the thickest friend of one man and the mortal enemy of another---both because of his one act or one word!

Of course, it is best that you do not develop too much attachment with others and get entangled either through the silken bonds of friendship or the iron chain of hatred. But, if you ask Me, it is more beneficial to cultivate enemies. Kabeer has stated many times that it is good and very helpful to have an enemy that is ever eager to criticise you for your faults than a friend who will cast a blind eye on them. The enemy takes delight in abusing you and it is said in the *Puraanas* (mythological legends) that, as a consequence, he goes on diminishing and wiping off from your account the demerits you have to live out in misery. The faster and fouler his abuse, the sooner and better are your future prospects brightened. The enemy absorbs your sins and their effects.

Moreover, since you are always aware of the enemy and his tactics, you are alert not to give him any chance to point his finger of scorn at you. He is your censor, corrector and conscience. Be thankful to him who talks ill of you, for surely, he is doing you very great service by examining your every act on the touchstone of morality, truth and righteousness.

Most people live superficial lives

But, the best path for *Saadhak* (spiritual aspirant) is to transcend all dualities and recognise the oneness of the *Aathma* behind and beyond the diversities of Nature. Mistaking the One to be the Many is the basic error that has led man into pain and misery. He sees multiplicity, he engages himself in manifold activities, he is pulled in many directions, he is distracted and distressed. He has no time to meditate on the One Basic Truth. He is confused by the kaleidoscopic transformations. He is tossed between hate and love, attachment and repulsion.

Only recently when I was touring the Delhi area I asked some persons who came to Me with the complaint that, since they did not attend 60% of the *bhajans*, the Committee meetings, etc., their names are threatened to be removed from membership. "Why could you not attend even that number of meetings?" You will be surprised at the reply they gave Me. "Swaamiji! We have no time even to die!" That is the plight to which this fundamental ignorance of the One (that appears as Many) has driven people.

Man does not delve deep into the significance of all that happens around him. Siddhaatha, who became the Buddha, had that urge to know and inquire. Most people live superficial lives. They are like logs of wood tossed up and down by the waves of the sea, insensitive, dull, *Thaamasik*. Haste lands them in waste; waste increases worry. They have no time to sit and meditate on the reality of their own existence, their own knowledge and their own joy. If that is done, they can contact the source of all existence, all knowledge and all bliss. They don't take even the first step towards their self-inquiry. How then can they derive self-satisfaction, at their vastness, indestructibility, infinite power and wisdom?

Duty must be done with skill, sincerity and love

You have it in your power to make your days on earth a path of flowers, instead of a path of thorns. Recognise the Sai resident in every heart and all will be smoothness, softness and sweetness for you. Sai will be the fountain of Love in your heart and in the hearts of all with whom you come in contact. Know that Sai is Omnipresent and so, He is present in every living thing and you. Adore everyone as you adore Sai. Allow the other man as 'much freedom as you like to enjoy; do unto him just as you would like to be done to you. Don't do unto him anything you don't like to be done unto you. That is the sum and substance of *Saadhana* (spiritual effort).

One individual goes along the road swinging his walking stick merrily. He is quite happy with himself and his conditions. He has every right to do so. But, he has to remember that others are also walking along the road and have every right to do so. So, his stick should be so swung that no harm or injury is inflicted on other rightful users of the road. Your freedom is restricted by the freedoms you have to grant to other members of the Society in which you live and thrive. As a matter of fact, if there was no other person, you have no duties at all. Duty arises when you have another person to deal with. You have a duty so far as the other person is concerned and he has the responsibility to see that he deserves that duty which you feel bound to fulfil towards him. Duty must be deserved by the other; it must be done with skill and sincerity and love. This is easy if you feel that your duty is part of your worship, that you are offering it to the Sai in the other person. Your duty is to your own self, the Sai that is your real core.

Be aware of both your duties and responsibilities

You will be false to Sai if you delay doing it, or do it clumsily or half-heartedly. Your station in life, your position of authority, your account, your kinship with others, your status as father or son, husband or wife, master or servant, teacher or pupil, each has its own *Swadharna* (individual morality and duty)--both of duties and responsibilities. Abide by them; be aware of them always. Bhaaratheeya Culture has emphasised this in every scripture and every epic.

Begin your *Saadhana* by offering the joy of the *Jeeva* (individual being) to the *Dheva* (divine being)! Of course, *Dheva* does not need the offering of joy made by the *Jeeva*. The waters of the lake do not need fish swimming in it; its joy is not lessened by their absence. But the fish need the waters. Do not be led to believe that God will be feeling a void, if there are no devotees or

worshippers! The person with devotion in the heart, with the thirst for Truth in his brain, with the yearning for surrender in his mind, will certainly feel lost if there is no God whom he can approach and adore.

Be eager to do your duty as best as you can

Faith in God is to be translated into action. It is an imperative act of worship to discharge faithfully all one's duties and responsibilities. It will be dangerous if the right work is not done by the right person at the right time. You must be eager to do your duty as best as you can. Maintain your own self-respect, by this attitude and by this sense of obligation. You must also be vigilant about the honour and reputation of your family and fore-fathers.

There was a washerman in a village, who belonged to the family that washed the clothes of its residents, since generations. It was his hereditary profession. Every one, high and low, rich and poor, gave their clothes to him for cleaning and ironing. He had two donkeys to bring the soiled clothes from the house to the river and to carry the burden of the washed clothes from the river to the streets and the houses of his customers. He had also a dog to watch over the washed clothes hung for drying in the open spaces by the side of the river.

One day, the washerman had to wash a big lot of silken sarees and dhothis because of a marriage in the house of the richest man of the village and he had kept them all nicely washed and ironed, in one of the rooms in the hut. It was night. The dog and the donkeys were in the backyard, of the house, dozing off. The washerman had, in his anxiety to get all the clothes washed, had forgotten to feed the dog that evening and the poor animal was both hungry and angry. So, when a thief stole past him in the darkness and began breaking into the hut to steal the silken clothes, he kept mum.

The donkeys noted this and were upset because their master was being robbed right before their eyes. So, they raised a hue and cry, braying their loudest. The washerman was awakened by the noise; he came out of the house, red in the face, because the donkeys had disturbed his sleep. He took up a cudgel and beat up the donkeys mercilessly! They suffered because they took upon themselves a duty that did not rightfully belong to them. It was not their *Swadharma*.

Humility, Forbearance, Sincerity---these are the primary virtues of a genuine son or daughter of Bhaarath. Your duty is to cultivate these and make the City of Bombay, which is the stomach of Bhaarath, healthy and clean. Then only can Bhaarath be happy. That is why the *Dharma kshethra* (Mansion of Morality) and the *Dharma Stupa* (Monument of Morality) have both been erected first in your City.

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More than listening to a hundred lectures or delivering them to others, offering one act as genuine service attracts the Grace of God.

Sri Sathya Sai