

2. The daily prayer

Without giving up sloth, how can Truth be known? Without giving up passion, can devotion take root? Be serene and calm, in stress and storm, That is the Saathwik Road to win the Lord, the Truth.

THE mind is a wonder, its antics are even more surprising. It has no distinct form or shape. It assumes the shape or form of the thing it is involved in. Wandering from wish to wish, flitting from one desire to another, is its nature. So, it is the cause of loss and grief, of elation and depression. Its effects are both positive and negative.

It is worth while for man to know the characteristics of the mind and the ways to master it for one's ultimate benefit. The mind is prone to gather experiences and store them in the memory. It does not know the art of giving up. Nothing is cast away by the mind. As a consequence, grief, anxiety and misery continue simmering in it. If only the mind can be taught *thyaaga* (sacrifice), one can become a *yogi* (spiritually serene person).

Dhyaana provides rest for the wayward mind

The clock, to all appearances, keeps on ticking away continuously. But this is really not the case. It is not continuous, for there is, one can notice, a short pause between one tick and the next. That is the interval of rest. But, the mind does not have even this short interval between one thought and the next. And in the continuous succession of thoughts, there is no order or relationship. This adds to the confusion and concern. This is the main source of ill-health in man. We are at present planning and preparing for physical rest and recreation and we know that even machines need hours of rest! But, we have neglected the duty of ensuring rest for the mind. *Dhyaana* (meditation) is the name for the period of rest we provide for the busy and wayward mind.

The heart is engaged, like the ticking of the clock, in beats but, a new pulse of energy is generated between one beat and another. It makes for the flow, regardless of the past or the future moments. It is a constant flux towards a goal.

The swimmer in the river has to push aside the waters in front to the sides and to kick the waters to the back so that he can move forward straight and fast. Forcing the water back is the act that takes him forward. That is to say, do not attach importance to it, throw it back, give it up, renounce; that alone can help you to progress, even an inch. Instead, man collects and stores, accumulates and takes pride in what he holds firm, regardless of the preciousness of the human trait of renunciation. So, we sink in material possessions, victories and vagaries. We do not float or swim across the temptations.

We must try to discover and learn the means of progress. A poet sang, "Can canines conceive of colourful poetry? Or, donkeys know of the taste of the parched grains that we load on them? Or, a blind man admire the charm of the full moon?" We may well ask, how can a man sunk in relative knowledge become aware of *Aathma* (the Absolute)? But there is no reason for despair, or for condemning ourselves as mean and low. For, when small men take big decisions, they earn encouragement from the great. When the tiny squirrel decided to share in building the passage across the sea, did it not receive the blessings of Lord Raama? The squirrel knew that its help could only be infinitesimal, but the feeling of dedication which prompted it won the grace of God.

Devotion has to fill and overflow the heart

Men, however, generally do not sublimate small *saadhana* (spiritual effort) through high purpose. They engage in *Bhajan* (congregational chant), *Puuja* and *Dhyaana* (ritualistic worship and meditation) but these are but physical exercises! The mind does not elevate them into sincerity. The heart does not pour forth or vibrate in them. So, they remain at the human level. They do not rise to the Divine. "Can the lake be filled when there is only a sprinkle of rain? Can thirst be relieved, when saliva gets in? Can the belly be full, if breathing is held tight? Can live cinders be secured by the burning of blades of grass?" asks the poet. Logs have to be burned if charcoal is needed: only sheets of rain can fill a lake to the brim; a glass of cold water alone can cure a person of thirst, nothing less. The heart has to be offered in full.

Devotion has to fill and overflow the heart. Look at the lotus; its roots are in under-water slush. It grows through water and floats on it. But, it does not get tarnished by slush or wetted by water! The wonder is, it cannot survive without slush and water, but it rises up to the air and the sun, nevertheless! Our life has its roots in the *Aathma* and it grows through the agitated waves of living. It can never uproot itself from its *Aathmic* source.

Grief has three sources and three characteristics

Man has, through the ages, sought liberation, struggled for freedom from bondage. But, he has no correct appreciation of what he has to liberate himself from, what the bondage is from which he has to be freed. Many are not even aware that they are imprisoned and are bound. So, they do not even try to free themselves. Is the family, the wife and children, the prison? Are riches, properties and possessions the bonds? Are attractions and aversions the bonds that curb him? No. No one of these binds him. The tightest bond that limits his feelings and deeds is his ignorance of who he really is.

Until one is aware of the *Aathma* (divine soul), one is certain to be tossed from grief to grief, with intervals of joy. The grief has three sources and so, it has three characteristics: (1) grief caused by the unreality of the apparent, (2) grief caused by want of knowledge or wrong apprehension on account of the limitations of our instruments of perception and inference or on account of the mystery of the Divine phenomenon that subsists in everything, and (3) the grief caused by the death, disintegration or dissolution of things which we held to be real! When one is established in the awareness of the truth of the *Jeevi* (the individual being), the *jagath* (Cosmos) and God, the Creator, he need have no grief or fear any more.

Let us consider *Jagath*---The visible cosmos around us, which we can cognise. The filings we experience in dreams disappear when we wake. The things we see when awake are also short-lived. During sleep, we are not aware of the world at all. Though the body is in the bedroom, we dream, and the dream is direct and dramatic, that we are busy shopping in Mount Road, Madras! So, the waking, dreaming and sleeping stages are all only relatively real, deludingly real. When you come towards the hostel at dusk singing *Bhajans*, the boy in the front row shouts in fear, "Snake! Snake!" fear overtakes all. Fear made them step back. But, was it a snake? A boy looked at it with a lit torch, and found that it is only a rope! Ignorance caused it, knowledge removed it. When the torch lights up the world, it is seen to be really God, Vishnu, the Divine Body, sacred substance, Sath-Chit-Aanandha (Existence, Awareness, Bliss Absolute). The *Asath* (unreal) is realised as *Sath* (Real).

Faith is life, absence of faith is death

The process of living is the swinging of a pendulum from smile to tear. Childhood is too tender and innocent; youth is too full of folly and faults, middle age is muddled with problems and possible remedies; old age is spent in regret over past failings and falterings. When can man taste some little sincere joy? Nature is the vesture of God. It images the Supreme. It shines through the machinations of the mind. The inner core of each living thing is God. Joys and sorrows are the results of the mind's involvement in the transient and the trivial. Like the Sun, divine grace falls. The Sun is not tarnished by anything harmful which it falls upon. The Self too is unaffected by the effects of the mind pursuing the senses wherever they lead it. When one becomes aware that the Self is God, there can be no fear of death haunting him. The building may collapse, but the basis is safe. When does man die? Every moment he dies; every moment, he is born. When the next tick does not happen, it is death. When it beats again, one is born anew. Faith is life; absence of faith is death. Only the body dies; the *Aathma* (Divine Self) is beyond birth and death. Aware of this, one is soaked in *Aanandha* (Divine Bliss).

Death affects only the body-mind complex

Give up what has to be cast away, know what has to be attained, then, *Aanandha* becomes your unruffled nature. So give up the idea of the world being valid; know the reality of the Self and attain the Source, the *Brahman*. This is the significance of the *Upanishathic* Prayer, which you use every day before the lessons start at the Institute:

Asatho maa sath gamaya (Lead me from the Unreal to the Real)

Thamaso maa Jyothir gamaya (Lead me from darkness to light)

Mruthyor maa amrutham gamaya (Lead me from death to immortality)

This is a prayer asking to be led from the *Jagath* (mundane world), which is constantly being built and rebuilt, resolved and dissolved, into the Divine whose Being undergoes no change. The darkness symbolises the ignorance which induces identification with the body-senses-mind-reason complex. The light reveals the Divine core, over which all the rest is superimposed by the fog of faulty vision. Death affects only the body-mind complex. When we are led into the light, we become aware that we are the undying *Aathma*, and so we become immortal.

The human heart is an ocean, whose depth none can gauge nor can anyone limit its horizon. The ocean has countless pearls and precious corals but it has also sharks and crocodiles. One has to explore continuously and boldly for the gems and pearls of good thoughts and feelings, and cultivate them more and more.

Source and the goal are God and God only

There are two obstacles which prevent man in this valuable effort. The first is the tendency to compare yourselves with others. This is very wrong. No two things or no two men are identical. Even identical twins grow in distinct ways of life. No one of the millions of leaves on a tree is exactly the same as another. Botanists are aware of this feature. Billions of human beings are on the earth, but which is the press which has given each of them a novel imprint? This is the glory of God. Millions of boxes are manufactured by a company; all are identical; all can be locked and opened by the same set of keys. Man is created by God, each with his distinct nature, quality, potentiality and destiny. How, then, can any one compare himself with another and either exult

or despair? We say he is tall and feel dejected because we are short. We are proud that we are better than others. All this is very silly when we come to think of it.

Secondly, we are in the habit of justifying our faults, rationalising our errors and avoiding the responsibility of facing them squarely and correcting them. These two attitudes thicken man's ignorance and breed further failings. Every one has God as the source. No one is higher or lower. We are all kin, through God from Whom we have come. Parents and other physical kith and kin are those whose impact we feel on the way. But, the Source and the Goal are God and God only.

"Keeping the child on her hip, the mother roamed in search of the child, which she thought had wandered far. She was peering into the face of every child to discover whether it was hers. Poor unripe fruit! Incompletely wise" laments the poet. One can ripen only when the Divine in us is developed, after its discovery. Live in God, with God, live on God and for God. Drink God, eat God, see God, reach God. God is the Truth, the substance, the Heart of Man. "I am the occupant of your heart", says Krishna. Every cell in the human body is God, though under a microscope you cannot find Him. You are now recording my speech in the cassette. But can you see my voice or words now on the cassette? No. When you play it back, you can hear the words. So too, the body is the tape, the voice of God is immanent. Equip it with faith and tune it with Love. Then, you can imbibe My voice and words. A pure heart, a cleansed mind, a God-filled consciousness will help you to listen to the voice of the God within you.'

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 8-1-1983