

The Path OF Love Is The Noblest

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Listening, singing, contemplating on Vishnu, serving His Lotus Feet, salutation, worship, servitude, friendship, and self-surrender (*sravanam, kirtanam, Vishnusmaranam, Padasevanam, vandanam, archanam, dasyam, sneham, Atmanivedanam*). These are the nine paths of devotion. Though the paths are many, the goal is one.

Similarly, there are countless human beings, but the *Atma* in all of them is the same. There are countless waves in the vast ocean. No two waves are alike. Waves assume different forms, but in all the waves, the water of the ocean is the same. In this infinite, vast universe there are countless beings, but the Divinity in the form of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute (*Sat-Chit-Ananda*) is the same in all.

People don't recognise this broad principle of humanness. They consider themselves separate and call themselves themselves individuals. They lead self-centred lives, indulging in selfishness (*swartha*). *Swartha* means living for one's own sake.

People should recognise their reality

Human life is ephemeral, like a water bubble. No one knows at what moment this water bubble may burst.

People suffer disappointment in life because they consider the body permanent. So, the *Upanishads* call upon all, "Arise! Awake! Stop not till the goal is reached." They urge people to wake up from the slumber of ignorance, visualise the sunrise of wisdom (*prajnana*), and uphold humanness.

Though people today acquire knowledge of the *Vedas*, undertake spiritual practices, attain scientific knowledge, make investigations and enquiries, yet they are not able to know who they are.

They face so many problems because they do not understand their own reality.

One is not merely a human, though one has a body of a human. One's reality is the *Atma*, which is enshrined in the body. So, in relation to the body, one is just a human, but from the point of view of the *Atma*, one is divine.

The body is the temple of God. Consider the body as a temple. When can you call the body a temple? You can call it a temple when God is in it. It cannot be a temple without God. So, in this body. God is present in the form of eternal *Atma*.

Reduce desires to make your will power strong

One should have good thoughts. Desires originate from thoughts. These desires chain and bind. One's will power (*ichchha shakti*) also emerges from thoughts. This will power is very important, like the life principle of humanity. All other powers like power of intellect, of understanding, of determination, of speech, etc., come out of it.

This will power is like the king of all other powers. It will lead one to the sacred path if one makes proper use of it. On the contrary, if one makes improper use of will power, one will become wicked. Will power affects the thoughts, and thoughts influence will power. Bad thoughts make will power weak. Decline in will power makes the desires stronger and stronger.

Here is a small example. Suppose a man has the habit of drinking too much coffee or tea, smoking cigarettes, etc. His bad habits will certainly weaken his will power. If he has 20 such bad habits, and if he gives up one habit after another, his will power will become stronger and stronger. If you

give up coffee or tea, the power of your intellect will increase.

Whether you are a student, businessman, or any other, when your desires increase you lose even your memory power. As you develop your will power and reduce your desires, your power of discrimination will also increase.

That is why it is said, less luggage more comfort. Desires are the luggage. As you reduce your desires, your will power and intellectual power will increase more and more.

You sit in meditation, but your mind doesn't stay still even for a moment. Why? Because your will power has become weak. Wherefrom do you get will power? It is the gift of God to humanity.

Many people talk about free will. People have no free will. Only God has free will, none else. People lose all their powers and freedom because they are bound by their desires. People say freedom, freedom. No one has freedom. People are deluded to think that they can act as they want. No, not at all.

Here is a small example. There is a main road. A young man wants to do exercise in the middle of that broad road with a big stick in his hand. If he really wants to do exercise, he can do at his home on the terrace. He has every right there. But if he tries to do exercise on a public road, immediately police will come and arrest him. Why? Because his freedom interferes with the freedom of others.

What do you mean by freedom? True freedom lies in not interfering with the freedom of others. If you think you have to exercise freely on a public road, another person has also got equal freedom to save themselves from your stick and lead their own life. So, you should have that freedom which does not interfere with the freedom of others.

But no one bothers today about the freedom of others. People think of their self-interest and selfishness. Therefore, man today has no *Swechchha*. What does *Swechchha* mean?

Swa + ichchha = Swechchha.

Swa means *Atma* and *ichchha* means desire. So, the desire of the *Atma* is *ichchha*. It is not the desire of the mind; it is not the desire of the intellect. It is the desire of the *Atma*.

Do not allow negative thoughts to enter your mind

What is there in the mind? The mind is like a mad monkey. There is no mind as such, but we create it ourselves.

(Swami showing handkerchief.) What is this? This is a cloth. It is not a cloth but a bundle of threads. No, it is not a bundle of threads either; it is cotton. First cotton, second threads, third cloth. So, this cloth has threads and cotton in it.

What is the mind? First thoughts, second desires, third mind. Mind is nothing but a bundle of desires. Desires constitute the mind.

If you want to make this cloth disappear, what should you do? Separate out the threads; then there will be no cloth. Similarly, if you remove the desires one after the other, there will be no mind. In *Vedanta*, this is called a state devoid of mind (*amanaska*). We ourselves create the mind out of desires.

The mind, which is our own creation, harms us. How? It harms through its bad thoughts. If we have good thoughts, they will protect us. The development of good thoughts is called *dharma* (good conduct). When we protect *dharma*, *dharma* will protect us in turn. If you protect *dharma*, you will be protected by *dharma* (*Dharma rakshati rakshitah*). If you harm *dharma*, you will be harmed in turn.

Hence, our mind is responsible for all our difficulties, troubles, and miseries. So, we should keep our mind pure and free from bad thoughts.

Do not allow all sorts of thoughts to enter your mind. The moment a thought arises in your mind, use your discrimination to know: is it good or bad? When you begin such analysis, the speed of your thoughts will decrease. If, on the other hand, you immediately act as per your thoughts, their speed will increase.

Therefore, take the time to control the thought process after thorough enquiry. First enquire, then act. *Start early, drive slowly, reach safely*. If you slow down your thoughts, you can reach safely.

But people today are in a great hurry. Undue hurry can put one in danger. Therefore, don't make

haste. Peace, peace, peace (*santhi, santhi, santhi*). For everything, you need peace.

Do a little enquiry. Suppose anger overtakes you. Immediately, you start uttering all sorts of things. Sometimes, you try to hit the other person with your hands. This is very dangerous. The anger is caused by temporary emotion. When you understand the truth later, you feel bad and repent at your mistake. Then what is the use?

Enquire beforehand as to where the mistake lies? Is it your fault or that of someone else? If you act as per the whims of your mind, you are bound to commit mistakes. These are the things that require rectification in daily life.

True spiritual practice

When you exercise control of your thoughts and ideas in this manner, you will attain peace and also progress on the spiritual path. On both the worldly and spiritual paths, it is the mind that plays the pivotal role. The paths are different, but the mind is one. Therefore, first of all, control your mind.

You can understand Divinity only when you control your mind. Without understanding Divinity, if you have mere imagination and plans, you will get only negative results. So, don't give scope to imagination.

Make efforts to know the truth. Whatever is said to you, let it be imprinted on your heart, and it should satisfy your conscience. That is true spiritual practice (*sadhana*).

What is the most important spiritual practice? The most important spiritual practice is to get rid of the feelings of non-Self (*anatma*). Keep away from all that prevents you from pursuing the path of the *Atma*.

What are non-Self feelings? The feelings related to the mind, intellect, and mind-stuff (*chitta*) are all non-Self feelings. *Atma* is one and is present in everyone. Develop these sacred thoughts.

Sometimes, people are subjected to depression and confusion. An aspirant suffers from depression when getting negative results while performing certain spiritual practices. This depression gives rise to anger. Anger is a weakness. You may

lose even the positive results in store for you because of this anger.

Aspirants should have love. Anger, ego, jealousy, hatred are not *Atmic* feelings. The *Atmic* qualities are love and truth. Truth is God, Love is God. They are subtler than the atom. Truth is more fundamental than the atom. Love is more fundamental than the atom.

You can see the atom with the help of some instruments, but you cannot see love. Love has no form, it has only name. That love should come out of your heart.

Don't direct your anger toward God when you meet with failures in your spiritual practice. In spite of your failures, you should always love God. Even in the face of troubles, problems, and difficulties, you should say: it is good for me, it is good for me, it is good for me.

Always pray to God, "Whatever You say, whatever You do, it is good for me." When you develop that spirit of equanimity, you will be at peace.

We say, peace, peace, peace (*santhi, santhi, santhi*). In prayer, we repeat this word *santhi* thrice. Why should we say it three times? Why not once, twice, or four times? The purpose of repeating it three times is to pray for peace at the physical plane, the mental plane, and the *Atmic* plane. We should have peace at all these three levels. If you have peace at physical level and no peace at the mental level, then what is the use? All the three are essential.

You are not one person but three: the one you think you are (that is, physical body), the one others think you are (that is, mental body), and the one you really are (that is, the *Atma*).

All religions teach good things

Vedanta also underscores the need for peace at three levels:¹ (*adibhauthika, adidaivika, and adhyatmika*). These are the three levels of humanity's evolution.

¹ These pertain to the physical, material world; to divinity or fate, e.g. natural disasters like earthquakes; and to the individual soul or spirit.

Jesus first said, “I am the messenger of God.” That means: my Master is separate and I am only a messenger. Then there is no connection between the Master and the messenger. He only brings the message.

After more practice, he said, “I am the son of God.” What does it mean? It means that a relationship is established between the son and the Father.

He practised further and realised the principle of unity. Then he said, “I and my Father are one.”

Similarly, Zoroaster first said, “I am in the light.” There is no freedom at this stage. This is equal to: “I am the messenger of God.” He practised for some more time and said, “The light is in me.” Then he had authority. After practising further, he declared, “I am the light.”

“I am in the light” is the first step. “The light is in me” is the second step. The third state of evolution is, “I am the light.” In *Bharatiya* (Indian) culture, these three stages of evolution of man are dualism, qualified non-dualism, and non-dualism (*dwaitha*, *visishtadwaitha*, *adwaitha*). All three paths are similar in all religions.

All religions impart only good teachings.
One should understand this truth and act accordingly.

If *mati* (mind) is good, how can any *mata* (religion) be bad?

Listen! Oh valiant sons of Bharat.

(Telugu poem)

It is the mind that is bad, not religion. Differences lie in the mind of people, not in religions.

There is only one caste, the caste of humanity.
There is only one religion, the religion of love.
There is only one language, the language of the heart.

There is no better principle of unity than these three principles. The *Vedas* also propound the principle of togetherness.

May the Lord protect and nourish us!
May we grow in intelligence and valour working together!
May we live in friendship without any conflict!

*Saha navavatu,
Saha nau bhunaktu,
Saha veeryam karavavahai,
Tejaswinavadheetamastu,
Ma vidvishavahai.*

(Sanskrit verse)

How should we live? Let us grow together, let us move together, let us learn together, let us develop intelligence together, let us attain noble goals together without any conflict, let us live in friendship. This is the true meaning of equality. This equality gives peace.

Have friendship with God

Without equality, there is only enmity, differences, and duality. You say peace (*santhi*), peace, peace three times —you should say it softly.

When there is enmity in the heart, the chanting of this Peace Mantra is of no use. If you chant it harshly, then the chanting loses its effect. Words are not important, the heart is important. Hence, perform all spiritual practices with purity of heart. The path of love is the noblest.

It may not be possible for you to do chanting of God’s Name (*japa*). You may not be able to make the mind steady in meditation. You may not know the path of yoga. But you can develop love in your heart. It is the path of love that is easy and shortcut. So, you have to develop love.

When you develop love, you can merge in God, who is the embodiment of love. You may have many qualities, emotions, and habits, but once you merge in God, you become one with Him, losing your individual identity.

There are so many rivers with different names, forms, and tastes. When once they merge in the ocean, they will have the name, form, and taste of the ocean. As long as you live as individuals, you have your identity as human beings. When once you merge in God with love, you will lose your separate form.

You are also God. You are not separate from God. You and God are one. You should come up to that level.

Many people give different interpretations of this path. That is all bookish knowledge. That is not important. Develop practical knowledge. It is the

easy, divine, noble, and royal path. Don't distract your mind by following this path and that path.

Many teachers teach many paths. All of them are artificial. Art is outside, heart is inside. Follow your heart, never follow art. This will satisfy your conscience. Perform spiritual practice with love.

There is nothing in this world greater than love. Some people are endowed with many qualities, and they may accomplish anything with their qualities. Some others may be devoid of good qualities and may have bad qualities, like anger and hatred. But there is no one in the world who is without love. Love is life. Live in love. Everyone is endowed with love.

You are directing your love in different directions. Unify your love and focus it only on God. Then you will experience true happiness. Wherefrom do you get happiness? Happiness lies in union with God. You get happiness by closeness.

With whom should you be close? Not with classmates, not with friends. The real friend is only God.

Modern friends come close to you as long as there is money in your pocket and your father has a high position. They say, hello, hello to you. When your pocket is empty and your father has retired, they will leave you without even saying goodbye.

God is not like that. God is always with you, in you, above you, below you. He is your real friend. It is only God who will protect you in difficulties. Your relatives will follow you up to the burial ground. But God will always be with you. He will never forsake you.

Have friendship with such a true friend. Then only will your life as a human being become worthwhile. When you have such a friend, you will never fall short of anything. Troubles and difficulties will never come near you. You will always be blissful.

God is the embodiment of eternal bliss, wisdom absolute, beyond the pair of opposites, expansive and pervasive like the sky, the goal indicated by the great aphorism "You are That (*That twam asi*), one without a second, eternal, pure, unchanging, witness of all functions of the intellect, beyond all mental conditions and the three attributes of purity, passion, and sloth (*nityanandam, parama su-*

khadam, kevalam jnanamurtim, dwandwateetam, gagana sadrisham, tattwamasyadi Lakshyam, ekam, nityam, vimalam, achalam, sarvadhee saksibhutam, bhavateetam, trigunarahitam). Friendship with God will give you pure bliss.

When you have that bliss, you will attain everything in this world. If you have an army, you can be a king of a kingdom. But if you conquer your senses, you will be the king of kings; you will be the emperor of the world.

Therefore, control your senses. Offer all your senses to God and do all actions to please God, saying, "I offer it back to You, all that You have given me."

You enter the Ganga (river), collect water in your palms, and offer it to Ganga while chanting the mantras: *Keshavaya Namah, Narayanaya Namah*. You offer back to inner Ganga what she has given to you. It is not your property.

What is your property? Your heart is your property. You offer to God what is your own property. If you offer someone else's, it would amount to cheating. You should offer what is your own.

You have right only to your heart. Offer it to God and offer it with love. Then you will have total fulfillment. Do not make your life and time unsacred by going onto an unsacred path. Time is God. Don't waste time. Time waste is life waste. Lead your life with love.

—Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Sruthi, Kodaikanal on 7 April 1993.