

21. Pleasure and Pain

You cannot kill a snake by just beating on your ankle with a stick.

Without conquering your body, you cannot know the truth.

Without conquering hunger and thirst you cannot know the supreme reality.

If you do not have knowledge of the self, you cannot be called human.

Young students!

For the last one month you have been listening to very inspiring discourses and sacred talks. This month must be a golden chapter and a memorable period in your lives. You should not think that merely by listening to all these discourses, you have God's grace in full measure and that it will enable you to attain spirituality. You must preserve all the gems of truth in the casket of your hearts, cherish them and safeguard them forever. It is not enough if you are satisfied that you had the good luck to be admitted to this course. Though all the birds may be green, can all of them twitter like parrots? There may be many worms crawling on flowers, but can you call all of them bees? If an ass covers itself with the skin of a tiger, can that ass become a *yogi*? Alas, it cannot become even a tiger.

There is nothing in the world of today that one cannot fathom or comprehend and that one cannot understand. One can purify his life, his body and his time through the teachings that you had the good fortune to hear. But if man does not realise his real nature, if he is simply engrossed in his worldly activities that make him forget his real identity, he will not be able to gain anything at all. Man must first try to know who he is. Only then can he easily acquire the fruits of his endeavours.

You may have seen cows in your house. As soon as the tether is loosened, the cow immediately goes to the place where there

is green grass and tries to fill its belly with the grass. During the time of feeding, the animal wastes no time at all; it eats up quickly all that is available. This does not mean that the food is digested simultaneously. Only when it returns to the cattle shed does it try to chew the food it had eaten before. Only after it chews the cud, that food gets assimilated into the system. The cow first eats as much as it can and later digests the food. In the same manner, all those who had the privilege of benefiting from the Summer Course from morning to night, have been taking in eagerly all that they can lay their hands on. During the last month, you have been eating and eating. But it is not the ordinary food which one can eat at an eating place. For the past month, you have been supplied with a wonderful diet called the *sathwik* diet in the shape of several discourses from learned elders.

When you go back to your own places, you must try to ruminate over this sacred spiritual diet. This process of rumination may be described as *manana*, that is, thinking of it over and over again. Even in the case of the animal, if it does not ruminate, it is considered to be ill. You must enjoy all that you have amassed in this one month and make it your own through the process of *manana*. Then your stay here will be regarded as having been fruitful. On the other hand, if you leave what you have heard here itself, return to your homes and relapse into the old ways of your life, then your life will be futile. The youth of today are in such a state that they do not know the difference between good and evil, between pure and impure, between truth and untruth. Not only young men but all human beings born in this *Kali Yuga* are getting confused because they do not know how to differentiate between good and evil, between sin and virtue and between joy and sorrow. The sense of discrimination is being put to a severe test in us because what seems to be good at one time seems to be bad at another time; what seems to be desirable at one time seems undesirable at another; what seems to be conducive to our health at one time seems to be dangerous to our health at another, and so on.

We consume pure food and water; but in a very short time, it gets converted into impure matter fit only for excretion. It is not easy to distinguish between what is pure food and pure water and what is not. We should not leave it at that, considering it to be *prakruthi dharma* or a natural phenomenon. In nature, there will be impurities at first and we have to transform them by suitable processes. Scientists, especially those belonging to the geological department, know this very well. When they prospect for gold, they find out the spot where gold occurs, then dig deep into the earth and find gold-bearing quartz. In its natural state, gold is found to be in the company of other impurities. At a later stage, they purify the impure mass and get pure gold from it.

All natural laws will be like this. It is a natural law to answer calls of nature to sleep, to feed, and so on. But by just following these laws of nature, we will not be able to go anywhere or reach any higher destinations. From the same heart we find two emotions: anger and mercy. We find it difficult to understand this nature in which two contradicting emotions emanate from the same heart. Because the heart is the source of both good and evil, it is the bounden duty of students to understand how our ancestors were able constantly to focus their attention on good alone. Some people argue that man is born just for the gratification of his senses. Some people think that they should amass food and wealth for the sake of joy and happiness only. If man simply consumes food like the other animals, how does man differ from them? Is it necessary to be born as a man to amass food? The bird, which is hungry and has not stored food, just goes straight to the food to satisfy its hunger. On the other hand, man stores food for the sake of future gratification. Man is not born to go in quest of food. He is born to go in quest of the *Atma*.

We should develop intelligence, because our intelligence enables us to distinguish good from bad through the process of constant thought and discrimination. We should not stuff our heads with all worldly matters. We must implement the good principles that we have stored in our minds. The discourses of elders and the

messages of great books point out the great principle of finding unity in diversity. But this principle remains only theoretical if it is not implemented in our daily lives. Several holy texts are exhorting us to find unity in diversity and recognise diversity in unity. This is being preached; but we cannot find one person who, by his action, is able to drive home the truth into our hearts. If we want to recognise unity in diversity, we must first know the meaning of three words. We may glibly say that the elimination of sorrow and acquisition of joy is the simple path that leads to spiritual illumination. Even in this regard, we must know the nature of sorrow. Only then can we destroy or eliminate it. Sometimes, when we consider one experience to be sorrowful, after some time it may turn out to be a pleasurable one. And when we consider an experience to be a surfeit of joy, it may turn out to be one of sorrow or anguish in due course.

I shall illustrate this by a small example. A mother longed for the birth of a son and her wish was granted. She gave birth to a son but unfortunately the next day he developed high temperature and died. Is this a matter of joy or sorrow? That birth which was considered the source of joy turned out to be a cause for her anguish. Before the birth, she had undergone the pangs of birth. The same mother, when she looked at the face of her baby, forgot all her pain and was happy. What she considered to be a source of joy turned out to be one of sorrow and what she considered to be sorrow turned out to be delight.

We read in the papers about several incidents that happen in the world. A young couple who are enjoying the thrill of their first day of wedded life are traveling on a bus with some friends and relatives. Unfortunately, the bus meets with an accident and their joy is turned into sorrow. We exult in winning a lottery and feel very happy about the one lakh of rupees we have won. But the same night, it may be pilfered by a robber. Sometimes we are perturbed, not knowing how to spend the money. There is joy on the one hand in having the money but also anxiety on the other hand.

Several businessmen rejoice over the profits they have but are miserable about the heavy income tax that will be levied. Therefore, life is a symphony of joy and sorrow, a mixture of pleasure and pain. Man cannot decide for himself the difference between joy and sorrow. It is not possible for us to have joy without sorrow or sorrow without joy. We must develop the attitude that all sorrow leads to happiness and that all happiness leads to sorrow. Because man cannot choose for himself only joy or only sorrow, he must cultivate the attitude of equanimity towards joy and sorrow. He should not be exhilarated by pleasure, nor should he be depressed by pain.

It is possible for us to develop the sense of oneness and develop the right attitude towards joy and sorrow. Though you have come from several parts of the country, you are able to mingle together like brothers and sisters, because there is that undercurrent of unity generated by the feeling that you are all Sai devotees. Here, Sai is one, but the individuals are many. Devotion helps us to recognise unity in diversity among the people here. In this baffling multiplicity is the shining unity of Sai. This garland in my hand may be regarded as one of the flowers consisting of various colours and perfumes. The flowers are many but the thread that binds the flowers together is one. Sai is the thread. You are all the flowers of various colours. We must take into consideration another aspect. Some flowers may be buds today. Tomorrow they will blossom and the day after, they will be full blown. You are young today, and after ten years you may become householders, and after thirty years you will become old. This process of evolution is inevitable. The flowers undergo change but the thread remains the same. This thread is the eternal unchanging thread called the *Brahma Suthra*. That principle which is changeless is *Brahma Thathwa*.

Human life is made up of several stages. Birth, growth, ageing, getting debilitated, and death are the various stages of the changing body. In this field, which is full of change, the principle that remains unchanged is Divinity. The body is full of *vikaras* but the *Atma* is the *nirvikara*. These are referred to in the *Gita* as

kshetra and *Kshetrajna*. *Kshetra* is the body, which is the field, and the *Kshetrajna* is *Paramatma*. We question ourselves as to why we visit the field. It is not to see the field but to see the master of the field. When we go on a pilgrimage to Kasi, it is not to see Kasi but to have the *darshan* of Lord Viswanath of Kasi. Because Viswanath is in Kasi, it becomes a place of pilgrimage. Why do we nourish and protect the body, which is the *kshetra*? It is only for the *Kshetrajna* residing in this body. Those who lose sight of *Kshetrajna* and those who are engrossed only in the *kshetra* should be termed businessmen. Several businessmen go to Benares to buy saris and never visit the temple of Viswanath. But he who goes to Benares for *darshan* goes to the shrine of the Lord and then visits the market. Therefore, every individual must clearly bear in mind that the ultimate aim of the *kshetra* is to enable the *darshan* of the *Kshetrajna* residing in him.

In the *Gita*, Lord Krishna says He is both the *kshetra* and the *Kshetrajna*. The *kshetra* is not purposeful without the *Kshetrajna* and vice versa. Both are interdependent. Because of this, Lord Krishna said that He is both the *kshetra* and *Kshetrajna*. He said that He is all-pervading through both. But there is a little distinction between these two. It is clear that when we consider the letters of *kshetra*, which are two syllables, we can see that it is different from *Kshetrajna*, which has three syllables. The vital difference is in the syllable *jna*, which means *Jnana Swarupa*! *Kshetrajna* is that which is *Jnana Swarupa* and without that it is merely *kshetra*. We will never enter into bad ways and have evil thoughts when we bear in mind that *kshetra*, which is almost inert, becomes sanctified by the residence of *Kshetrajna*, which is *Jnana Swarupa*.

When somebody says that he is God, we expect him to be above all other human beings. When God does anything wrong, we wonder if he is God and if he could do that, because we think of God as one who always does right. Even in the case of a human being, when we consider him to be gentle by temperament, even if he is once motivated by anger, we begin to doubt his gentle nature. Could we call him never *sathwik*? Then we condemn him and think that if

he is really good, he would not have done this at all. Will you ever take to bad deeds when you feel that God resides in this body? When you recognise the sacred principle dwelling within you, you will always do good and take to good actions.

You must also recognise this body as a temple and feel that God resides in that temple. It is said that this body is your temple and within this body, God, the eternal principle, dwells. But today this body has, unfortunately, degenerated into a dwelling place of the devil. You must understand the difference between the dwelling place of God and the dwelling place of the devil. In the house of God, there will always be an eternal flame, shining forever. Where there is light, you will find no bats. Where there is darkness, you will find bats befouling the place. If you do not kindle the flame of pure thoughts in the temple of your body, then bats will befoul it and it will be densely dark. You must see that this sacred flame burns eternally. Kindle the flame of love, the flame of knowledge and the flame of devotion in your hearts.

We have accepted the *namasankirtan* as one of our main programmes of Sai activities. The name of the Lord must dance on your tongues forever. *Namasankirtan* and *nagarasankirtan* are given a prominent place in our activities. There are some amongst you who ask why we should utter the name of God with our tongue. Is it not enough to think of God in our mind? The Lord's name is like an effulgent lamp. The form of the holy name can be compared to the great sacred cow that confers on us all that we desire. The form of God, with the help of the name, which is like the rope, must be tied to your heart. The heart is like a pillar where it should be bound. Your mouth is the main entrance to the house of the body. When you have a lantern at the main gate, the light can be seen without and within. So the sacred flame of the holy name sheds light inward and outward.

If we compare our life to a tree, even as many birds perch on the branch of a tree, we can conceive of several birds perching on the branches of this tree of life. These birds come to eat food, to rest or

to foul the place. When we see a number of birds making noise on the tree in our courtyard, we go out, clap our hands and shout to scare the birds away. The birds that perch on the tree of our life are the bad tendencies that wish to foul our thoughts. We should drive them away with the *Nama* and the *Tala*. But in doing this what do we gain? When the birds remain on the tree, the shade below the tree is befouled. When the birds go away, the precincts become pure and clean.

Probably, you may be wondering what you should do if the birds come again. If you continue to make the sound with your hands and with your mouth, the birds will not return to the tree at all. To purify your minds and to prevent these bad tendencies from entering your thoughts must be the aim of your life. You must continuously chant the name of the Lord so that these birds may not return. The tongue of man is the holiest instrument because it can utter the sweet and sacred name of God. Therefore, you must never feed this tongue with impure sounds because the tongue by itself is sacred and holy. It is one of the most sacred and holy things for you to learn from the summer classes—that you should feed your tongue with sacred sounds and words. You must also not use your eyes to look at harmful things. You should look at good and useful things only.

Many may be familiar with the story of Suradas. He was blind. In His infinite mercy, Lord Krishna asked him if he wanted vision, so that he could look at Him. Suradas said, “Though people have eyes, they are filled with ignorance and are not able to recognise your grand form. Though people have ears, they are deaf and cannot appreciate the sweetness of your holy name. Many people have eyes and ears, but they do not use them to look at your scintillating form and listen to your name. But I want eyes which will always visualise your grand form and ears which will always listen to the harmony of your song.” Prahlada used to say, “What is the use of these ears if they are like the caves in the mountain of the human body? What is the use of eyes being always wide open like the goat’s eyes if they

do not have the light of knowledge and eagerness to know the real truth of the world? We should not use our eyes for looking at things of a pretty nature but we should use them to look at our parents, at God, at our elders and at all good things. Today the eyes of our young men are focused on the banners and posters of film stars pasted on the walls in the street. If you focus your attention on such objects, you get lost. Thereby your hearts will be devoid of human qualities. If you give place to evil thoughts, if you degrade the temple of your body, then the very purpose of your life will be lost.

Dear students!

When you return to your places, avoid bad friends and fill your minds with noble and elevating things. Chant the name of God and practise *namasankirtan* in the early hours of the day and remember the name of God throughout the day. Though you have now developed the habit of getting up at 4 or 5 o'clock, you may relapse into the habit of getting up at 9 o'clock at home. Then there is no person more idle than you. You will be humiliating yourself. When you get up in the morning, sit on your bed and think of the Lord. Think that your getting up from the bed is like rising from the womb, that you are just born. As soon as you get up, throw your troubles and burdens at the feet of the Lord and pray to Him to guide you through life and give you only good thoughts and noble ideas which always serve as uplifting factors in life. When you go back to bed at night, imagine that to be a state of death. Tell yourself that during the day, you have acted according to the Lord's orders. Ask for forgiveness if there is anything wrong and ask to be led on the path of righteousness. If you begin and end your day with such prayers, it will help you reach higher attitudes of living. Even during your bath, if you remember the name of God, it will be like bathing the form of God.

When you take food, all the evils are eliminated if you offer the first morsel to God. The food then becomes *prasad* of the Lord bestowed on man. *Prasad* is the very embodiment of elixir. It may

not be possible to insist that the vessel be pure, that the man who cooks the food be pure and that the food be pure, but if you offer the first morsel to God, it becomes utterly pure.

When you return to your homes, you may find *seva samithis* and *seva dals* in your places. Take active part in them. Always try to help those who are in distress, those who are suffering and the poor. Once upon a time, there lived in Tamil Nadu a poet and holy man who used to sit on a veranda in his house in front of the Lord's picture and chant beautiful songs. One day, it was raining heavily and he sought shelter in another little veranda in the village. One other man came and asked him if he could also take shelter there. The *bhaktha* said he could. He said, "There was place only for me to stretch out, but now that you are here we will sit up." Later, another man came and asked for shelter. The *bhaktha* consented saying, "There was place for the two of us to sit. Now that you also have come, let us all stand." He thus taught the principle of helping one another and not sending anyone away who needed help. If you have three morsels of food and you find another man with no food, you must cultivate the spirit of serving and parting with one morsel of food for the other man. You must cultivate this attitude of sharing with others the good things you have. Then only can you put into practice the great principle of finding Easwara in every creature. You must practise this principle in daily life.

All of you have great love and adore Swami, but that love and adoration are of no use if you ignore the teachings of Swami. Even if you do not adore, if you believe in the truth of the word and enforce it in your daily life, Swami's grace will always be with you in your life. It is no use if you simply utter the name of the Lord and do not follow the good things that go with the Lord. It is just like uttering the name of penicillin when you are running a high temperature. Only when you take in the penicillin will the temperature come down. When you are hungry, the hunger cannot be satisfied by uttering words like potato and *chapati*. If you eat them, it will be satisfied. It is no use if you only listen. You must try to remember the

discourses you have listened to during this month, put them into practice and judge for yourself how far you have acted according to the word. Your parents must be able to recognise the transformation in you. When you return home, try to give evidence of the changes that have come about in you and make your people realise that you uphold the great culture of India.