

Chapter II. Listen to Yourself, Not to Disbelievers

Devotee: A reverential salutation to you, Swami.

Swami: Happy to see you. You seem very tired, and in this summer, travel is even more exhausting. Rest for a little while; we can converse thereafter.

Devotee: When there is no peace of mind, where can rest be got?

Swami: Well my boy, rest is for the sake of peace of mind. Once you have that peace, where is the need for rest? There is need for a bandage until the wound heals; after that, what is its use?

Devotee: Swami, just now my mind is restless. I cannot decide upon anything. I don't know what or why. What shall I do?

Swami: Well, no effect can take place without a cause. You do certainly know the cause of your present condition. Well, nothing else need be done. At such times of mental pain, do repetition of the name (*nama-smarana*) for a while, sitting in a solitary place, or sing devotional songs (*bhajans*) loudly in a raised voice. If that isn't possible, spread the bed and sleep for some time. Thereafter you can think about all this.

Devotee: You have told us that in this world, each one has some dearly loved thing or other, and that if any harm came to that thing, peace of mind could not be had. Then how can I have peace of mind when something like this happens —someone either disrespecting my dearly loved thing or finding fault with it? What am I to do then?

Swami: Well. Good people who have understood what inquiry into the *Atma* (*Atma-vichara*) is will not blame the things that others love. Nor will they even associate with such people. For they would argue within themselves that when they blame another's beloved, they will feel as much pain as one feels when one's own beloved is blamed. Therefore, be at peace with yourself, realising that people who abuse like this are ignorant of inquiry into the *Atma*. Engaged as you are in inquiry into the *Atma*, you have nothing to do with ignorant persons who don't know about such inquiry. Well. Let it go. What has really happened to cause all this? The whole trouble will end if what is inside comes out.

Devotee: The world knows well how You are vouchsafing courage and daring and guiding men to do good spiritually, physically, and mentally. The world knows how You have rendered educational and medical help. You have never done any harm or caused harm to anyone in any form. How can we suppress the people who invent and spread all kinds of silly stories about such as You? Do they gain anything by this?

Swami: Oh. So this is the story! Well don't you know that good and bad are of the very nature of the world? If all are engaged in selling, who will buy? With regard to God, fault finding has come down from the beginning of time; it is not new. But present-day people might manufacture some new tales. Well, why should you take such abuse to heart? Take it that they are remembering Swami by this means!

Memories of love and memories of hatred are two types. The latter are ignorance-based illusion (*a-vidya-maya*) and are related to the quality of passion (*rajoguna*). The former are knowledge-based illusion (*vidya-maya*) and are related to the quality of serenity (*sathwa-guna*). Ignorance-based illusion results in grief; knowledge-based illusion results in bliss (*ananda*). Their results are indicated there itself.

Now, why should you suppress? You asked about the gain, right? They don't need any gain; finding fault with others has become their habit; they do it as their duty. As the saying goes, "What does the moth care or gain whether the sari costs a hundred tankas or is cheap? To gnaw and tear is its nature." The moth tears a costly sari or a rag equally. Does it know the value of things? Its work is such. So be at peace, realising that the work of these fault-finders is the same as the work of these moths.

Devotee: Swami! What You said is the truth. We can take it that ignorant people, when they behave like this, are of the brood of moths. But when people who are well educated, who are great, who know —when these devote themselves to spreading such stories, how can it be endured?

Swami: Learning means learning about the *Atma* (*Atma-jnana*); it is not the knowledge of things related to the world, which trains for a living and is useful as basis for a living. To compare learning about the *Atma* with such knowledge (*vidya*) is a great mistake. Great men are those who don't abuse others, who search for the reality with good intentions. Spiritual matters cannot be understood by those without the power of discrimination, by those who are puffed up with the authority they have, or by those who are unaware of any knowledge of the *Atma*. So consider those whom you described as educated and great as belonging to the brood mentioned above and, without yielding place to such ideas and worries, engage yourself in strengthening your belief.

Devotee: Many believers (*asthikas*) in this world are changing into atheists (*nasthikas*) on account of such people, aren't they, Swami? Is there no weapon to put down these people, who, without any regard for their own learning and without any effort to know the reality, abuse the outstanding sages?

Swami: Why? There is. "A load of rags is placed on a ragged saddle," is the saying. The words of such people will be listened to only by such people; no real believer will associate with them. Even if they do, they will move far away as soon as they understand that those stories are fictitious. So, the weapon to put down these people is in their own hands. Haven't you heard the story of Bhasmasura? He placed his hand on everyone's head and reduced them to ashes; finally, he placed his hand on his own head and reduced himself to ashes! Similarly, accusing others, they themselves will be finally accused by their own words.

Those who find fault with the Lord are of four types:

1. People who have no interest at all in matters related to God.
2. People who, on account of individual spite, cannot endure another's greatness.
3. People who have neither personal experience nor contact nor knowledge of anything and so merely manufacture stories based on hearsay to which they have become enslaved.
4. People who come with some worldly desire and who accuse the Lord, as an excuse for the failure caused by their own destiny.

Only these four types of people clamour as you say; the others won't shout or jump about like puppets. Even if they don't have personal experience, when they hear such stories, they will just analyse them within themselves and arrive at conclusions for their own satisfaction. They won't abuse others.

It is not the correct path to disbelieve one's own mind and give room therein to another's words. Besides, there is no profit in discussing with those who don't know the Reality. As a matter of fact, Reality does not admit of any discussion at all. To argue with those who don't know either but who are in the intermediate stage is like seeing the trunk and believing it to be the entire body, as in the story of the blind men and the elephant.

Well. Note this! It is not good to spend time in this type of conversation. Abuse and fault-finding are natural and common. Knowing this, those who aspire to become true devotees should search only for bases on which to build their bliss (*ananda*). All available time should be used for holy purposes; it should not be wasted. You have nothing to do with the good and the bad in others. Instead of wasting time, utilise it to discard the bad and develop the good in you.

Ask me about some spiritual exercise or instruction that you need, and seek something that is worthwhile. Hereafter don't bring me such stories of fault-finding indulged in by others. You shouldn't take in such things.

Devotee: All this happened because we also have the same human nature. But now that I understand the subject from your answers, courage and joy have entered into me, driving away the doubt and sorrow I had. Through the talk of such men, even the little faith, devotion, and earnestness that men have are being reduced. That was why I asked you these questions. Otherwise, I have also nothing to do with such topics. Pardon me; hereafter I won't talk along these lines to you.

Swami: Very good! During the little time available, if you don't think of some good subject, but merely recollect the ignorant prattle of others, it is as if you joined in blaming those people. That is harmful to devotees. Whatever others may say, don't give up your faith. Once you are firmly established in that, you will not be in want any day. One word following another produces anger and pain. The path of devotion (*bhakti-marga*) is designed to suppress, not develop, these qualities.

You tell me that devotion and faith disappear because people listen to such accusers—but for how long? As soon as the truth is discovered, will they be trusted again? Will their words be valued again?

The talk of those fault-finders is as the sound of bronze. Cheap metals make more sound; gold, which does not make sound, is very valuable. True devotees will be mute. They will follow the path of silence. Their tongues will be fully engaged in the repetition of the essential greatness of the Lord. It is best that they have no respite for any other word. So, don't permit the words of the bronze-voiced people to enter your ears, but fill them with the name of the Lord, which is the *Om (pranava)* sound itself.

Next month, if you get any problems regarding such useful topics as spiritual exercise or action (*anushtana*), come here and have them solved. But don't bring with you bundles of such doubts!

Devotee: I am indeed blessed this day. On account of them, You have vouchsafed to me the light of wisdom. Seeing all this, I feel that the saying, "All is for our good," is true. Henceforth, whatever anyone may say, I will be patient and won't take it in because "All is for our good." Salutations (*namaskaram*). Allow me to take leave.