

27. Spiritual academy of man

THE study of sacred books and listening to religious discourses are meant to develop self-control and peace; but, from the confusion here which you seem to enjoy. I find that your study and listening have all been a waste, You cannot put forward as excuse the hugeness of the gathering, because if each one of you stops talking or clamouring or complaining, silence can be established that very second. Again, you cannot say that you have been waiting since early morning and therefore you have become restless. Well, what is to be said of the earnestness that melts away just when the event for which you were waiting so long has started? If each one keeps silent, though there are lakhs of people here, it would appear as if there is none. Try to keep silent. Remember why you have come and why you have waited, whom you have come to listen.

Now it is better. That is good. That is why I always say that man's real nature is *Shaantham* (peace, equanimity); that, if only he tries, he can re-discover his nature in a moment. He has only to pull himself up, to recollect his origins from *Brahman*, his identity with the changeless *Aathma*. Man may err in an uproar or be in a fight in quiet-calm, as you are now. Your own enthusiasm has caused this delay; for the road to the *Mandhir* (hall of worship) as the organisers say, completely packed and even there, in the *Mandhir* there is not a square inch of vacant space! So, it was suggested that the idol could be brought to this bungalow for consecration, it could be taken later and placed in position at the *Mandhir*.

Do not dishonour the heritage of India

Remember, Sai does not live in structures of stone or brick and mortar! He lives in soft hearts, warm with sympathy and fragrant with universal Love. Temples and image-worship have some value in stimulating the higher impulses of man, of diverting his instincts along more socially useful channels. That is why in India no chance was lost to lead man Godward. All arts were utilised to that end. Even a drunkard sways to the tune of a faintly remembered *keerthana* (music composition), proclaiming the Glory of God or the joy of self-realisation. Every one, 'whatever the stage of spiritual advance he may have attained, is prompted, gently nudged, to move forward. This has made India the Spiritual academy of humanity. You are privileged to live out this life in the lap of India; that is, in the lap of *Vedhaantha*. Remember this heritage and live in such a way that you do not dishonour it.

Do not envy the countries that are attempting to reach the Moon and Mars and to explore the reaches of outer space. Of what avail is it to master those regions while remaining slaves of every gust of malice or fear? Of what avail is it to travel at ten thousand miles per hour with a mind weighed down by dark impulses of the savage past? Inquire into the causes of the *a-shaanthi* (lack of peace) that prevails even in the most advanced communities of the West and you will find the reason to be the wild growth of pride and greed, vice and sin. There is no fear of God or respect for age or dread of sin. They attach meaning and value only to the external symbols of riches or power; the container, not the thing contained.

For example this marble image is only a container. The thing contained is Sai *thathwa* (essential nature). Just as a cup is the *aadhaara* (base support) and the milk in it is the *aadheya* (supported), you pour Sai *thathwa* in this Form and you call it Sai Baaba; you pour it in another vessel of a different form and call it Shrinivaasa, or Shiva or Krishna or Raama.

Idol worship is just the beginning of saadhana

For those in the Kindergarten of *saadhana*, an idol is as necessary as pictures in a spelling book. Until you are able to recall instantly the image of a horse as soon as you see the letters h, o, r, s and e, one after another, the drawing of a picture must be held before you with those letters underneath it. So also, you must have a Form like the idol, called Sai, prominently before you in order to give shape to your loose and indefinite conception of the Divine *thathwa* (true state). Once you can conceive the Sai *thathwa* independently without any form, or as all Forms and Names, the idol is superfluous; it can be dispensed with.

Installing this marble image in the *Mandhir* yonder does not mean the end of all effort for you. In fact, it is just the beginning. There are a large number of temples all over this country in various stages of ruin; not only here, but in other countries also, the same thing holds true. Why make all this noise and build another temple to be added to the list? New temples rise and old temples fade from memory and fall into decay. This is because you do not realise that the substance is the same, though it is presented in different forms and under different names. One chapter of your *thapas* (penance) is over; you have got this idol and you have got up this function but the next chapter is to pour your *bhakthi* into this idol and make it ever alive; to shape your own lives, so that you are fit to stand before Sai with folded hands. Only the pure and the holy can offer themselves fully to God.

Do your best first and seek God's help

I do not like people wasting the precious moments of their limited years of life in idle talk of vain pursuits Nor do I like cowardly hesitation. Act; act with all your might and with all your mind; make full use of the skill, capacity courage and confidence that you are endowed with. Then God will bless you. You must have heard of a *Raamabhaktha* (devotee of Raama) who sat on the road side by his upturned cart, wailing his bad luck and calling on Raama to lift the cart into position. Raama did not appear to raise the cart and fix the wheel. He therefore began chiding his faith itself and to doubt the experience of the sages who describe Him as the Ocean of Mercy. Raama came into his presence then; but only to tell him. "You fool, I have entrusted you with some intelligence and strength. Use them. Put your shoulder to the task now before you. When you have done your best and that best is found not enough, then call on Me; I am ever ready to reinforce your exertions with My Grace." The *Bhaktas* of Raama, with His Name on their lips and His Form before their eyes, lifted mountains and bridged the sea. You who call yourselves *Aatmabhaktas* are too weak even to carry about your bodies, not to speak of the burden of your kith and kin.

Having installed Sai in your village, you must grow in *prema* (love), for Sai is *Premaswaruupam* (love personified). Sa---means *Sarvashakthi* (All-powerful), *Sarvasaakshi* (the Witness in All); *Ayi* means mother; *Baaba* means father. The *Prema* of Sai is the *prema* characteristic of the Father and the Mother; not the earthly Father and Mother but of the Father and Mother who are the Witness of every thought, word and deed in every being. Respect the Father and Mother who are concrete and then you transfer that type of respect to the Abstract Father or Mother or Guardian---God. Learn to instal the unseen Lord in your heart by installing the see-able image in the *Mandhir*. Proceed from the *sthoola* (gross) to the *sookshma* (subtle).

Discover Truth by exercise of discrimination

Just as patients require a doctor, *bhaktas* require some Name and Form to which they can run for consolation and courage and advice. So it is for your sake, as a great step in your *saadhana*, in your progress towards internal peace and harmony, that this installation is made by Me now. "Wherever My name is sung, there I instal Myself" it has been said.

The Divinity you have as the core of your being, you ignore; at the same time, you seek it in others. That is the tragedy. You insult yourself by feeling helpless, weak and inferior. Cowardice and self-condemnation - these do not become a spark of the Divine Flame. Your *Sathya* can be discovered by you by a little exercise of *viveka* (discrimination). Born in delusion, breathing in delusion, grovelling in delusion man is unaware of his heritage and feels incapable of attaining it. He is desperate, seeing no means of escape; every effort to achieve *shaanthi* (peace) entangles him further and tighter in the coils and of *a-shaanthi*. Like flowers of variegated hue, each redolent with fragrance, men are all basically of the same genus of *Brahmam*. The fragrance arises from the Divine Essence which is the real reason for existence; for every one has to realise that Essence and thus end the series of births and deaths. Like a student leaving college once the degree is awarded, once the Truth is realised, man has liberation. He can leave his college and his study and all that bother.

You have to rely on your own resources

But you must get the Degree. Why are you averse to making the effort needed to pass? Instead of that, you run after this teacher or that. You extol him to the sky and call yourselves his followers. Of what avail is his victory to you? He has achieved; well what about you? His achievement is entered in his account at the bank as his deposit and he can draw cheques upon it. But can you draw from it?

There are even today great sages in the Himaalayas, I know, who are Witnesses of everything and whose *prema* embraces the whole of Humanity but that does not help you; you have to trek the path alone and rely on your own resources. They can provide only guide maps and encouragement. You have come to Repalle today from the hundred distant villages and you know that you have to go back to the places from where you came. So too, it is inevitable that you have to return to the place from where this journey through birth and death started, namely, *Brahman*.

There is only one Sun, but he is reflected in a million tanks and wells and pots. *Paramaatma* (God) is One and His reflections, are the Jeevis (individuals, each with the *Aathma* (soul) apparent therein. There are lakhs of people here now and in each one of you now, Swaami is shining in the heart. That is the real Aathmaanandham (Soul full bliss). Keep it fresh for ever and foster it carefully. That is the secret of Shaanthi.

Installation of Shri Sai Baaba idol in the Mandhir, Repalle, 2- 12-1961