

31. Spend your days with Shiva

LOOKING at this vast sea of faces, I do not feel like speaking to you; I wish to derive *Aanandha* by just looking at you from here; looking at your devotion and your faith. Your looking at Me, Me looking at you; what else is needed for *aanandha* (bliss) to well up?

You yearn to hear my words and listen to My Voice also. That is the measure of your Love. You are so accustomed to hear people speak, that if you do not hear, your ears ache! If they do not speak, their tongues become restless and even restive. They are both so used to activity that it has now become difficult for you to sit quietly for a few minutes, communing with the silence within you!

Man is called so because he has the capacity to enjoy *manana* or inward contemplation of the meaning and significance of what he has heard: not only this capacity, but also the urge to the inner life. But you have not yet emerged out of the stage of *shravana*, (listening); the teachers too have not progressed beyond the stage of *pravachana* (talks); and so you crave for My *sambhaashana* (discourse) today.

Raama Sharma recited some fine stanzas composed by him on Shiva and on the means of winning His Grace, evidently because the day is *Shivaraathri*. The poems are so full of sweetness that you should not discard even the rind. He described the Lord as the indwelling spirit of every living thing and called upon you to practise the unremitting chanting of the Name of the Lord.

Judge your own saadhana unaided

However, some of you might question, why. Some have come to Me and asked this very question: "We have been engaged in this *saadhana* (spiritual practice) for years now; we have written the Name lakhs of times, we have repeated it ceaselessly for many years, but we have not succeeded! Why have we not reached the goal?" I want each one of you to search within yourself for the answer; examine your own effort and achievement and judge your own *saadhana*, unaided by Me. Have you yearned, have you pined, have you wept for the Lord as Thyaagaraaja did, for example? Have you shed tears of contrition tears of exultation, while repeating His Name so full of sweetness and beauty; while visualising His Form so full of loveliness and charm? You might have wept; but who knows for what; who knows the impulse that swept you into that sadness? Were they tears shed out of fear or greed or pride, or because the Lord was not near?

A little child sits with a book of the *Upanishads* on its lap and turns over the pages, intent on the printed lines and watching the curious types, deliberately, slowly and with great care; a *saadhu* (monk) too does the same. Can you equate the two and say they are both engaged in the same act? The boy is unaware of the treasure he holds in his hand; the *saadhu* gets into immediate contact with the spiritual power the lines convey. Find out for yourself whether your *saadhana* too has been purposeful and sincere, wakeful and worth-while.

Raama Sharma in his poem sang of *Saayeesha*, the *Saayi* as *Isha* or *Ishwara* or *Shiva Saayi* as he is fond of addressing Me; he spoke of the great, well-nigh immeasurable, indescribable joy of merging with *Shiva-Saayi* and of the *bhakthi* and *prema* necessary for that consummation. When he was describing it all, I could see that you were thrilled. The exhilaration out of which that song was born and the joy he himself experienced while reading, it before Me and you, is a sure

means of attaining that goal, let Me assure you. Whoever has the enthusiasm, the steadfastness, the determination to reach the goal will certainly succeed. Cultivate that faith in ultimate success; never despair or cavil or doubt. That is My advice to one and all. Success is your birthright and you must get it, sooner rather than later.

Be concerned about your goal and. your ideal

Above all, do not give room for the cancer of doubt. Why argue over Me, over this point or that concerning Me? Who exactly is the Baaba, you discuss and debate! What does it matter to you who I happen to be? You are concerned about your goal, your ideal, your experience, your effort is it not? Why then worry about My Origin, My Nature, My Mystery, My Miracle? The basic thing is the hand, the cup it holds is secondary. The *Aadheya* (supported) is less in importance than the *Aadhaara* (support), the Basic Reality, the Pure Existence. When you cannot reach down to your own Basic Reality, why waste time in exploring the essence of Godhead? As a matter of fact, you can understand Me only when you have understood yourself, your own Basic Truth.

The gross can grasp only the gross; its categories of knowledge can proceed only as far as that. Fish die when they have to breathe the air above the water. Children can learn the alphabet only with the help of boards, slates, pencils and pieces of chalk. *Saadhakas* (spiritual aspirants), going through the primers of spirituality, need symbols, images and rituals. You cannot discard Name and Form until you transmute yourself into the Nameless and Formless; just as the fish needed water and could not come up into the atmosphere, so long as they did not transmute themselves into land animals, giving up their aquatic nature. That is the reason why the Nameless and Formless has often to assume Name and Form, and come before humanity with limitations imposed by its own Will, so that it may be loved, respected, worshipped, listened to and followed; so that the purpose of humanity may be fulfilled.

"I give only one thing, Bliss through Love"

A wooden elephant, however artistically perfect and lifelike, is but a toy; it cannot create the awareness of the genuine elephant. A library stacked with books is incapable of imparting the authentic touch of the living *guru*; you may trek to ten temples and then, at last, arrive here, believing this to be the eleventh. That is as fruitless as wandering from the tenth library to an eleventh. You must see, hear, study, observe, experience, reflect; then only can you understand Me.

You will learn then that I am *prema* itself; that I give only one thing, *Aanandha*, through the *prema*. My task is to distribute solace, courage and *shaanthi*. That is to say, My characteristics are the ancient authentic ones; only the Manifested Form is new. My desire---if I can put it in so many words---is this: More and more should yearn for Me. The desire could be realised only if I assume this Form and come among you.

Those among you who have been following the unfolding of My story will have discovered this by now; though even to the best of you only a fraction of the mystery is revealed. You are like a Telugu audience sitting through a Tamil picture, or vice versa. The nuances, the subtler significances, the deeper meanings are all beyond the grasp. My language, My role, My career, My purpose can be understood in a general way only by sitting through the entire film, watching earnestly and vigilantly and trying to get at the meaning of every word and act with patient attention.

Attaining good character is very important

As a matter of fact, language is an impediment in dealing with Me. All languages have a place in the concourse of men, bringing out their feelings, hiding their weaknesses, shaping their thoughts etc., but I speak and listen to the language of the soul. The words uttered by the tongues of men confuse and confound; they breed factions and sects; they erect walls; the words that emanate from the soul radiate love and concord.

Saadhana has to be done after attaining a good character; that is very important. In the midst of impurity, wickedness and evil, spiritual effort will be fruitless. It is as the jewel in the head of the cobra, in the centre of poison and cruelty. There are some who come here and earn peace and joy, but after years of sharing and serving, they fall a prey to waywardness and fall back into the old morass, declining to such an extent that they deny their very experience and play false to their own conscience! Not that I am anxious that they should worship Me or adhere to Me; far from it. I only ask that Truth must be proclaimed, regardless of the company you have fallen into; there must be courage of conviction, which will help you to overcome the temptation to deny your cherished joys.

The Lord is like the diamond

There are again some others who are swept off their feet by hysterical demonstrations by certain weak minded individuals, which are described as My speaking through them or acting through them! Take it from Me, I am not given to such absurdities! I do not use others as My media; I have no need to. I do not swing from side to side and prattle! Why, even those who torture their bodies and suffer the pains of asceticism for years, until ant hills overwhelm them and they become as stiff as tree-stumps, find it difficult to realise the Lord. How then can these idlers, who eat their fill and wander about as slaves of their senses, earn that status so cheap? Their gestures, words and actions are hollow and vain; those who burn incense before them and revere them are turning away from Me and running after falsehood.

For, how can the Full ever dally with the paltry and wear the habiliment of the trifling? When God has come assuming Form, take it from Me, it will not fill inferior vessels or embellish tawdry stuff or enter impure bodies. So, do not extol these falsities and ruin those unfortunates. Deal with them severely and they will be cured. Those who have seen the brilliance of the diamond will not be misled by glass trinkets. The Lord is like the diamond, call it by any name. But a trinket cannot be turned into a diamond, however loud the praise and however adamant the claim.

Uddhalaka, a contemporary of Chaithanya, chose to worship the Lord as the Manifested, as *Prakrithi* (Nature). The Creator he chose to worship through his creation; he adored the container for the thing contained. In short, he adored Raadha, or *Dhara* (mother earth) in reverse, the *Prakrithi* aspect, the feminine principle of Krishna, the *Purusha*, the inseparable other! His yearning was so moving, his *thapas* (penance) was so compelling that one day, while a bangle-seller was trudging along the bank of the Saraswathi River by the side of the village, he found a damsel washing clothes in the bathing ghat.

The Lord is anxious to assuage your pain

The Lord is as anxious to assuage your pain as you are anxious to secure his Grace to get rid of it. You may not know this but I know, for I feel it. She called him near and selecting many pairs of bangles, she wore them all. At last, when he asked for the cash, she said, "Oh, I forgot all

about the money that is due to you; please go to the house of Uddhalaka in the village; any one will point it out to you. Ask him; tell him that his daughter purchased them and he will surely pay. Or, wait, you may tell him that he will find the cash behind the picture of Raadha in his shrine room."

The man took her at her word and hurried to the village and the house of her parents. Uddalaka was amazed at the tale for he had no children. In fact, he had not even married. But the bangle-seller insisted on his looking behind the picture of Radha because he said the girl was incapable of deceit. Uddalaka denied having ever placed any cash there. How could he use that space of all places for keeping cash! But just to satisfy the bangle-seller, he peeped there and, lo! he got a knotted piece of cloth containing just the cash needed to pay for the bangles. Then, in a flash, he realised that it must be Raadha herself who had sent the man and he fell at the feet of the pedlar and ran with him to the bathing ghat, overcome with joy and thankfulness. For an instant he saw a glorious vision above the waters: the right arm of Raadha, with the bangles scintillating in the morning sun. He knew the arm was raised to bless him; he felt it was calling him; he flew out of the mortal coil into her Lap.

You can worship even *Prakrithi* (Nature); there is no harm, provided you realise that the Lord is immanent in it, giving it name and form and value; that the cloth is just yarn, the pot is just mud, the jewel is just gold. Why, you can worship your parents and realise the Lord through that *saadhana*. They are your creators and guides and teachers and protectors and by idealising them, you can grasp the Truth of the Lord, the Primeval Parent.

God is all Love at all times

Even if you are not able to conceive the idea of a Lord or a God, you must be able to know what Love is by experience, is it not? You have experienced the love of your parents, of a friend, of a partner or of a brother or sister, or towards your own children. That love is itself a spark of God, who is all Love, who is all the Love in all the worlds at all times. Call upon your mother and the love she bears towards you and even if your physical mother cannot come to your rescue, some Mother or the Supreme Mother herself will certainly hurry towards you.

There is a fine story to illustrate this: One dark night when Shiva and Paarvathi were journeying through the sky, they saw a man perched on the branch of a tree, about to fall on the ground through, sheer exhaustion of limbs. Paarvathi pleaded on his behalf and wanted that Shiva should save him; and Shiva preferred that She should save him, instead! Meanwhile, the fall became imminent and so they decided that if while falling the man shouted "*Amma* (mother) ," Paarvathi should hasten to arrest his fall and if he shouted, "*Appa* (father)," Shiva should help and see that no bones are broken. The man fell, but he shouted neither *Amma* nor *Appa*, but *Ayyo* (sigh of misery)! And so he had to be left severely alone!

"Do not be false to yourself or to Me"

Of coupe, it is all a question of deep-rooted taints or traits or attitudes. You draw from the bank only according to what you have put in; you have to study your pass-book before you write out a cheque or calculate your assets. Go on, pile up your assets; do not feverishly exhaust them by recklessness. People, unfortunately, take greater pleasure in liquidating their assets than in building them up. It is the bane of the times that they revel in destruction and recoil from construction.

When a Committee is engaged in some constructive work, members find the work uninteresting and they stay away. If the task set is to pull down some one or other institution, more members are eager to join the fray.-So, you should keep your *viveka* (wisdom) intact and discriminate between the destructive and constructive impulses. Do not listen to destructive criticisms and cynicisms, which are the poisons eating into the vitals of spiritual life today. Bear witness to the truth of your own experience; do not be false to yourself, or to Me. My name is *Sathya Sai*; it means, "He Who reclines on Truth."

I am reminded now of past events, events in my previous body. Even then, I had *Sathya* or Truth as my Support. A wrestler challenged Me then for a fight and he was defeated before a large gathering of villagers. Pained by the insult, he invited Baaba for a second tussle the next day, so that he might win back his lost reputation. The man swore that if defeated again, he would wear a long rough *kafni* and move about with his head covered in cloth. He dared Baaba too to swear likewise. Baaba was in no mood to enter the arena again and he was quite prepared to concede the fellow the victory he craved. So he accepted defeat and himself donned the *kafni* and the kerchief. The wrestler felt great remorse and his insolence melted away. He appealed to Baaba to resume his usual style of dress and released him from the obligation. But Baaba stuck to his word. He was *Sathya* Itself, then, as He is now. He wore the new attire.

Truth is the very nature of Sai

I am reminded also of another instance. Some friends of Justice Rege came one day, a mother and her little son. After an hour or so at the *Dwaarakamaayi*, they went to a *Puraanic* recital in the village where the *Pandith*, much to the exasperation of the child, described Baaba as an impostor and a fraud. The child insisted on the mother coming away from the place; it ran towards Baaba and told him the whole story, when Baaba asked them why they came back in such a hurry from the recital. Baaba laughed and said, "Yes, I am an ordinary man, not the Divine Power that you take me to be." But the child could not be put off. It declared that Baaba was God. Baaba replied, "I am not God, little chap. See, my clothes are torn; I have only two hands; God should have four, isn't it?" But the boy was in no mood to agree. He declared that He was God, in spite of the two hands which He then seemed to lack. Even while they were arguing thus some others arrived, exulting over a miracle which they witnessed. A child had slipped from the top floor of a house and escaped unhurt. Baaba told them, "Yes, I held it in my four arms." The boy jumped at the words and said, "Now you yourself agree that you have four hands and so you are God." Baaba clasped the child to His bosom and taking it inside, He gave him a Vision of the Lord with four hands. Such was the adherence to Truth even in the previous body. It is not adherence, it is the very Nature of Sai.

Spiritual endeavour is an inescapable task for all

You must learn the significance not only of My name, but even of yours. You are all given names redolent with Divine Fragrance and you should draw inspiration and strength from them. Swaami Abhedaanandha said this evening at the meeting that he would prefer to be called Sathya Sai Charanaanandha and that he had written to Me about that desire a fortnight ago. But his name teaches that he should not posit any distinction between him and Me. It must be an *abheda* (non-distinct) relationship. He has to practise unity, non-distinction. This is what I wrote to him; "Learn the Lesson your present name teaches, that is enough." So too, you should accept your names, not as labels or means of identification or distinction, but as guides for conduct, as focuses for spiritual endeavour.

Endeavour. That is the main thing, that is the inescapable task for all mortals. Even those who deny God today will have one day to tread the pilgrim road, melting their hearts out in tears of travail. If you make the slightest effort to progress along the path of liberation, the Lord will help you a hundred-fold. *Shivaraathri* conveys that hope to you. The Moon, which is the presiding deity of the mind of man, wanes, until on the fourteenth day after Full Moon, it is just a tiny curve of glimmering glow. The mind too must be starved into that condition, so that man becomes free. Spend all the days with Shiva and the conquest of the mind is easy. Spend the fourteenth day of the waning moon with Shiva, reaching the climax of spiritual effort on that final day, and success is yours. That is why all the *Chaturdasis* (Fourteenth days of the dark half of every month) are called *Shivaraathris* (Shiva's nights); that is why the *Chaturdasi* of the *Magha* month is called *Mahaa Shivaraathri*. This is a day of special dedication to Shiva, and since so many of you here and elsewhere pray to Shiva. The *Lingha* is emanating from Me for you all to receive the Grace and the Bliss of the Great Moment of *Linghodbhava* (Emergence of the *Linga*).

Prashaanthi Nilayam, Mahaa Shivaraathri, 4-3-1962

Discover for yourself your stage of spiritual development, to which class in the school you would fit in. Then determine to proceed from that class to the next higher one. Strive your best and you will win the Grace of God.

Do not bargain or despair. One step at a time is enough, provided it is towards the goal, not away from it.

Beware of the pride of wealth, of scholarship, of status, that drag you into egoism. Do not seek the faults of others; seek your own. Be happy when you see others prosper; share your joy with others.