

34. Questions answered

THE fulfilment of man's life on earth consists in filling oneself with Love of God and transmuting that love into acts of service, service of man who is the embodiment of God. If man has no love in him and if he does not share it with all beings, he is but a burden to the earth.

Make your emotions pure; make your mind strong to resist the force of ignorance and the wiles of the senses---then you are assured of peace and joy. You maintain health by physical exercise, so too, you must maintain mental health (for the mind can lead you into bondage or liberation) by means of certain exercises.

By means of pure food, the mind can be rendered subtle and sharp; it can then cut through obstacles and temptations, rend the veil of misconception. You must also try to be constantly in a good environment, a good company, a Spiritual Organisation.

In the Spiritual Organisation, members do not discuss about what can be seen or heard, or touched and tasted; they are interested in the investigation of the Unseen, the basic Truth beyond the senses (outer and inner), the processes by which the mind helps or hinders the individual's journey to God.

Mind has to be subordinated to *buddhi*

The mind is called a *karana* (an instrument). The senses are instruments, which are used to contact nature and gather information about objects. Mind is the overall instrument, which controls and directs the senses. It is called the *Anthahkarana* (the Inner instrument). Higher than the mind is the *buddhi* (intellect) which analyses and categorises the impressions as gathered by the mind, through the senses. The *buddhi* is subordinate to *chiththa* (consciousness, as such) and the ego, or the I-sense, which is fundamental for the individual. The mind has to be subordinate to *buddhi* but usually it serves the senses, which are but its servants. That is how the mind leads man into bondage.

A number of people have handed over questions to Me regarding the nature of the mind. So, though I have often explained this in my discourses, i shall speak about it again. You are all now in Prashanthi Nilayam, gathered in this hall; but, if your mind is wandering in Madras or Calcutta, you will not be seeing the man sitting in the line before yours, or hear Me speak, though I am speaking so loud! Though your eyes and ears are present here, effective and sound, if your mind is not controlling them and directing them, the senses are powerless, they cannot transmit any information to the *Anthah-karana*! The operations of hearing, smelling, seeing, tasting and getting the feel of touch, cannot be done effectively and meaningfully if the mind is engaged otherwise!

The body is as a torch; the eyes are its bulbs. Intellect is the switch. But, the essential cell is the mind. You may have fresh bulbs, the switch may be on, the torch may be brand new---but, if the cell is not in position, the torch will not emit light.

But, beyond the mind, and beyond reason and consciousness and the I-sense, is the *Aathma*, the reality, the Cosmic I or God.

Rational knowledge is illusory knowledge

Rational knowledge or knowledge accumulated by the exercise of the senses and stored and sifted by reason, is but illusory knowledge. It is worldly material knowledge, subject to

correction or modification. The knowledge about the five elements (earth, water, fire, wind and space) derived through the five senses which are so flamed that each can sense the special attribute of each element (earth---smell; water---taste; fire---form; wind---touch and space---sound) is illusory. How can you be content, living in this illusory world, gathering and relying on this illusory knowledge? Realise the person beyond all illusion, who is the Creator of this illusion, who is revealed in and through this illusion. Worldly knowledge is of the temporary, the particular, the finite, the individual; how can it reveal the Eternal, the Universal, the Infinite, the Absolute? The *Vedha* has the answer.

It asks us to analyse our dream-experience. Dreams are unreal, they are illusory. But yet, for as long as we are dreaming, the experience is real and valid often in the dreams as a result of the illusory experience itself, awareness of such extreme is created through fear or horror or pain or excitement, that the person dreaming wakes and the dream is destroyed. What has caused the awakening? The dream itself helped in the destruction of the dream. So too in this "wakeful dream"---in the illusory world where every wakeful experience is deemed true and valid--some experience or the roar of the *Vedhas* in the *Mahaavaakyas* (Divine axioms, which ring through the sacred texts) wakes man into the higher awareness.

The Universe is only relatively real

Some questions handed over to Me relate to Creation and how it came into being. Well, if you can understand how your dream comes into being, you can know how this creation came into being. Sleep causes dreams; the *maaya* (the deluding power) of the Divine has caused this Creation! This Universe is as unreal as the dream. It is only relatively real; it is not absolutely real.

The *Vedhic* sages, out of the illumination of their purified intellects, declared in Bliss, for all mankind to know: *Thath Thwam Asi* (Thou art That); *Prajnaanam Brahma* (Wisdom is That). *Ayam Aathma Brahman* (This I is That). *Aham Brahmaasmi* (I am That); I am everything, I am the Supreme; I am the One, without a second. When these depth-stirring declarations reverberate in the heart, men awaken to the vision of Truth. The realisation that you are the *Aathman* and that there is nothing except the *Aathman* anywhere at any time---this is Self-realisation; it is the *Aathma-Saakshaathkaara*, the realisation of the *Aathma* by the *aathma* of yourself by yourself as the Self.

This is also called *bhoomaa*, the vast limitless, the changeless, the unaffected-by-time-and-space; the *bhoomi* (this earth) is limited; it has a past and a future different from the present. So, it can never reveal the Truth. *Bhoomaa* alone can reveal it. So, live in the *bhoomaa*, breathe the *bhoomaa*, think, plan and act in the limitless, the changeless that is in you!

You desire God not for God's sake

You are the very centre of your desires and activity. You crave happiness for your own sake. Your Truth is in your own self. Even when you try to make others happy, it is your own happiness that you are after! You love a terylene shirt, not for the sake of the shirt but for your own sake. You desire a sweet dish not for the dish's sake, certainly. The mother fondles the child for her own satisfaction. You desire God, not for God's sake, but for your own sake. And what is this "You" which desires, which serves, which tries, which yearns and which is satisfied or pleased or happy. It is the 'I' which makes you and every other conscious being declare 'I' 'I' 'I'.

Now, you ignore this 'I' and you affirm that you are the body with its equipment, its implements, its instruments.

This ignorance, this misconception, has originated from the very principle which endows you with wisdom and light! The Sun produces light, as well as the cloud that hides it from view! The eye that sees produces the cataract which clouds and often closes that Vision. From the same *Aathmic* principle which illumines and vitalises, is born the *maaya* (illusion) that hides and confuses! The fire from the embers creates ashes which cover up the embers!

But we can blow off the ashes and reveal the cinders; the cataract can be removed; clouds are wafted away by winds. So too, *saadhana* can remove the veil of illusion which hides the inner 'I' from consciousness, the *Aathma* from our awareness.

As regards *saadhana*, I have here a number of questions. They ask: We are serving others relieving their pain or misery. We are feeding the hungry, poor; we are engaged in many good acts; are these not *saadhana*? But, this is not service to others, it is service to yourself. A person may invite all of you Office-bearers for a dinner! And he may declare afterwards, "I gave a dinner to all the delegates." He too sat and ate with all the delegates and so, he served himself too, when he served the others, did not he? He derived joy as a result of the dinner he arranged and so, it was a piece of service rendered to himself ultimately.

Good thoughts will get desires in good forms

When you feel that it is not the 'other' whom you are serving---but, yourself then, your service will be better and more effective. Establish this attitude more and more firmly in your mind.

If you do good, you get good from those around you and from the universal entity, God. If you do bad, you get bad. Divinity but resounds, reflects, reacts! God has no favourites, no prejudices. The thought creates a desire, the desire creates a form through which it is expressed. Have good thoughts, you get desires in good forms.

Ahalya was lying as a stone, for many years, as a result of the curse of her husband. Inside the stone, there persisted human thought, which was again turned into human form with the touch of Raama's feet. If Ahalya had become a stone, with no trace of 'Thought,' she would not have emerged as a woman from it. So, unless all trace of 'Thought' is destroyed, the form will sprout and grow and decline; that is to say, birth and death are inevitable.

The Raamaayana gives another example of the power of 'Thought.' Raavana was a great person who had mastered the Scriptural Texts and who was earnest in Spiritual Observances. Every morning, he used to go the round of many temples of Shiva. He had mastered the four *Vedhas* and the six *Shaasthras* and so he was praised and depicted as having ten heads! His Queen, Mandodhari lamented over her husband's defeat and death, at the hands of a mere man leading a host of monkeys! She had learnt from the *Shaasthras* that death caused by drowning or by the fall from a tree or through monkeys converts the dead into ghosts that wander in the realms of darkness. So, she wondered why such a fate overtook the great scholar, the pious devotee, that Raavana was. Then she remembered that the spark of lust that he harboured in his heart had burnt all that scholarship and all that piety into ash! He was not able to control his senses or sublimate the sensory urges. A bullock that does not yield to the yoke, a horse that resists the reins, a car without brakes and a person who knows no self-control, are all equally heading towards disaster!

Have your Vision steady and your Will strong

Follow regular *saadhana* in order to control the senses and the emotions. Do not pay heed to others who may ridicule you, for your changed way of life. They may point you to others and laugh, "Look at this man! He has become a great Sai *Bhaktha*!" "Look at him with his *japa* and *bhajan*!" But have your Vision steady and your Will strong. Do not deviate; march straight on.

There are some questions among those handed over to me, on the Name to be used in *japa*, whether *Raamnaam* or the five-lettered *Namashivaaya* or the eight-lettered *Om Namo Naaraayana* or whether I would suggest some other Name. The Scriptures have given a good answer for this: God is one without a second. You can adore Him according to your own fancy and pleasure. He does not change. He is not changed, when the Names you adore Him by are changed or the Forms you picture Him by, are changed. We have many kinds of sweets---many Names and Forms. But sugar is the One substance that makes each one sweet. You may prefer one sweet thing more than another; you are welcome to prefer it, but, do not condemn or prevent others preferences.

God will assume the Form for which you thirst

You may adore Krishna, for that name and form gives you the greatest joy, the maximum thrill; but, do not find fault with a brother who worships the same God through another Name-Form: Raama, Shiva or Vishnu, or any such other. He has as much fight as you, to worship God in the form he likes. The effectiveness lies not in the *Manthra* or in the Name and Form it is centred upon. It lies in the heart, in the yearning, in the thirst. God will assume the form and 'answer to the Name for which you thirst! That is the measure of His Grace.

When the child in the cradle starts weeping and wailing, the mother who is on the terrace of the house will run down the steps to fondle it and feed it. She will not stop to discover whether the wail was in the correct key or on the proper note! So also, the Supreme Mother of the Universe will come down from Her Sovereign Throne to fondle, caress and console Her child, provided the yearning comes spontaneously from a full heart, a pure heart. She will not investigate the correctness or otherwise of the pronunciation of the *manthra* or the perfection of the picture formed in the mind of the Divine Ideal yearned for. It is the feeling in the heart that is the crucial test--not the length of time devoted or the amount of money spent.

Be sincere in *saadhana*; do not attempt to imitate others; let it arise out of your own genuine yearning. You should not also be urged by competitiveness or the desire to show off. "That *bhajan mandali* is conducting *Nagarasankeerthan* twice a week; let us also do twice a week; or, let us do thrice a week." This kind of rivalry or exhibitionism has to be given up. There are others who desire to bring down units that are doing good work, for, they cannot tolerate or suffer the fame those units earn! So, out of sheer malice, they try to harm or injure the units so that their good work may suffer.

But there is another way of bringing those units down and making your unit more liked. The teacher draws a line on the blackboard and asks any one of his pupils to come up to the board and, without touching the line drawn, make it shorter! The pupils are puzzled but the teacher shows them the way; draw a longer line a little distance above it; the line is now the shorter of the two! Let your unit do more acts of service more efficiently to more people. That is the proper way to carry on the activities---not calumny or criticism, but work.

Prema-yoga alone can lead you to God

What I am about to say in answer to another question handed over to Me might pain some of you---but, I feel the truth must be told. There are some who are attracted by various systems and methods like *Hathayoga*, *Kriyaayoga*, or *Raajayoga*, which claim to help people to realise the self. But, I must tell you that no one of these can make you realise God. I am saying this most emphatically. The *Premayoga*---*Discipline of Love*---alone can lead you to God. Those *yogas* may calm the mind's agitations temporarily and may improve health and prolong life for a few more years---but that is all that they can do. What is the good you hope to achieve with that body in those extra years? If Love is absent, they weigh you down like big burdens; if Love is cultivated, then, the body can be used for serving others, without regard for the interests of the body.

Dharma guards those who guard dharma

The body should be guarded and sustained for the service one can do with it to others, or for realising the *Aathma*, while in it. There are some who observe strict discipline in spiritual practices, who follow a rigorous time-table of *japam*, *dhyaanam*, etc. Of course, this is good practice, but do not stick to this time-table or that programme, even when you have a call to go to the help of some person, whose need for service is great and urgent. If you give up your *dhyana* and serve him, you will benefit more, from the service than what you may gain from the *dhyana*.

If you feel that the person next to you suffering pain, needing relief, is a nuisance and move on to some place where your *dhyana* will not be disturbed, you surely are not going to get the merit of that *dhyana*. It is certainly a wrong you have committed and you do not deserve Grace. When God Himself comes down and has come down to serve man, He will indeed be pleased if you too serve man.

Engage in those activities which will please God, which you feel and know will please God, rather than in activities which will please you. God is pleased with Truth, with *dharma*. *Dharma* (righteousness) guards those who guard *dharma*. Know your *dharma* and observe it.

Do not put forward false claims and boast that you are *bhaktas* (devotees). There is a proverb in Telugu about such devotee being good strict conformists so long as they listen to sermons and admonitions---but, as soon as they leave off listening, the old evil tendencies and habits seize their minds and mould their behaviour. When you move away from this atmosphere of love, tolerance, humility and reverence, there is the risk of losing these qualities. So, hold fast to them, be firm. The desire to please others, to win their esteem, or to create in their minds a false picture of yourselves should not arise and grow in your minds.

No text-book or class can teach meditation

When you attempt to deceive another, remember there will emerge some one who can deceive even you. There was a thief once who was skilled in all the stratagems and tricks of that profession. There was not a single one that he had not mastered. One day, after collecting a large number of costly articles and bundling them up, he was moving along a lonely road with the booty on his shoulder. He saw a child standing on the bank of a wayside tank, weeping aloud, in great distress. The thief went near and asked, "Why are you weeping? What has happened to you?" The child said, (and here, you have to remember that it does not matter how old or how

young a person is, it is the intelligence that matters) "I came here for a bath, my golden necklace fell into the waters, right there, where I tried to have a dip. The place is too deep for me."

The thief thought that he could get away with this necklace too, for it was a little child that stood between him and the jewel. So, placing his bundle on the bank, he went down into the waters to retrieve the necklace. Meanwhile, the child lifted the thief's bundle and running a short distance, disappeared into the jungle. The thief came up disappointed, for the necklace was but a fiction, only to find that he had been robbed! Whoever deceives another will have some one cleverer, to outwit him.

There is a suggestion mentioned in a chit handed over to Me by a delegate: regular classes for training members in *dhyaana* should be held in Prashanthi Nilayam, for, through these trainees, *dhyaana* can be spread all over the country. I laughed when I read this suggestion. Can any one train another in meditation? Or claim to train? It may be possible to teach a person the posture, the pose, the position of the legs, feet or hands, neck, head, or back, the style of breathing or its speed. But, meditation is a function of the inner man; it involves deep subjective quiet, the emptying of the mind and filling oneself with the Light that emerges from the Divine Spark within. This is a discipline which no text-book can teach and no class can communicate. *Dhyaana* classes! Those who handle them do not know what *dhyaana* is; those who attend them do not care to know! Purify your emotions; clarify your impulses; cultivate love. Then only can you become master of yourself. That mastery is the purpose, the process of meditation or *dhyaana*.

Mind is pervasive, wanders far and wide

The mother can sit near her child and utter words to encourage the child to speak; but, the child has to use its own tongue and put in its own efforts. So too, a person can teach you how to sit and keep the torso erect, the legs folded, the hands straight, the fingers crossed, the breathing steady and slow--but, who can teach you how to control the wayward mind?

The mind is very subtle and expansive. It is very light and pervasive, floating hither and thither, on any gust of desire. It behaves like a ball of cotton, with no weight of seed to hold it down. It is much lighter than fluff; it wanders far and wide. So, if you must control it you must attach something heavy to it. The body which houses the mind is heavy, no doubt, but, the mind is fickle and free. It flees afar as it fancies.

All faiths are mutually indebted to each other

The mind must be allotted some heavy piece of work to hold it down. This work is called *dhyaana*. Keep the mind above the upper lip, between the two nostrils, right: in front of the bridge of the nose. Inhale through the left' nostril, closing the right with the right thumb. As the breath goes in, it utters *So* (meaning, He); then exhale through the right nostril, closing the left nostril. As the breath goes out, it utters *ham* (meaning, I). Inhale and exhale slowly and deliberately, conscious of the identity of He (the Lord) and I (yourself) which it asserts, until the breathing and the awareness grow into an unnoticed process. Keep the mind as a watchman, to note the incoming and outgoing breaths, to listen with the inner ear to the *Soham* that the breath whispers, and to witness the assertion of your being the Divine, which is the core of the Universe. This is the *dhyaanam* that will give victory.

When this *Soham dhyaana* has stabilised itself, you may start stabilising in your mind the *ruupa* (form) of your *Ishtadhevatha* (the Lord of your choice). Picture the Form from head to foot,

taking at least 15 to 20 minutes for it, dwelling on each part of the body and imprinting it clearly on the heart and then, proceed from foot to head in similar way. This will help to fix the form in the altar of the heart. Then, you will see in everyone that Form only; in all beings, you will find Him only. You will realise the One manifold as many. *Shivoham, Soham, I am Shiva, I am He, Only He is.*

Here is another question from a Muslim who is the Vice-President of the *Sathya Sai Seva Samithi*, in his town. He asks whether he can partake in the *Nagarasankeerthan, dhyaana, puuja*, etc., that the *Samithi* is having on its programme. If he desires, he can; if he feels that it goes against his inner conviction, he need not. One should not give up his conviction in the face of ridicule or persecution. He can carry on *dhyaana* (worship) according to his conviction in the privacy of his own home; there is no compulsion that he should thrust them on the attention of others, outside. All faiths are inter-related and mutually indebted to each other for the principles they teach, and the disciplines they recommend.' The *Vedhic* religion was the first in time; Buddhism which appeared about 2500 years ago, was its son; Christianity, which was influenced much by the Orient was its grandson. And Islam, which has the Prophets of Christianity at its base was like the great-grandson. All have Love as the Fundamental Discipline of the Mind, in order to chasten it and merge man with the Divine.

Prashanthi Nilayam, All-India Conference, 22-11-1970

Bhakthi is the foundation for all religions. Of course, japa or homa or offering of flowers, or going on pilgrimages to holy places cannot be taken as bhakthi! They are good acts that help promote bhakthi. True bhakthi opens the door of jnaana.

Sathya Sai Baba