

20. Qualities of the *Sadhaka*

When the "Sanathana Sarathi" was launched in 1957, Bhagavan 'began a series of articles entitled "Prema Vahini". The message which He gave to spiritual sadhaks then are even more relevant today. The following extracts show how vital Bhagavan's message is to all aspirants and seekers.

THE *Sadhaka* should note the distinction between the conduct of the natural man and the aspirant. *Sahaja* man is one without. *Sahana* (Fortitude), with *aham-kara* (conceit), and one who is full of desires relating to the *Jagath* by which he is trying to have a contented *Janma*. The *Sadhana* man is he who is engaged in *Sarveswarchintha* as ceaselessly as the waves of the *Sagara* (sea), who accumulates the *DHANA* (treasure) of Equality and Equal love to all, who is content in the thought that all is the Lord's and nothing is his. The *Sadhana* man will not, like the *Sahaja* man, easily bend before grief or loss, anger or hatred or selfishness, hunger, thirst or fickleness. One should master all the above things as much as possible, and journey through life with fortitude, courage, joy, peace, chatty and humility.

***Sadhana* is necessary to realise God**

Realising that the tending of the body is not all important, one has to bear patiently even' hunger and thirst and be engaged uninterruptedly in the contemplation of the Lord. Instead, quarrelling for every tiny little thing, losing one's temper, becoming sad at the slightest provocation, getting angry at the smallest insult, worried at thirst, hunger and loss of sleep, these can never be the characteristics of a *Sadhaka*.

Rice in its natural state and rice that is boiled, can these two be the same? The hardness of natural rice is absent in the boiled one. The boiled grain is soft, harmless and sweet. The unboiled grain is hard, conceited and full of delusion. Both types are *Jivis* and Men, no doubt, those who are immersed in external illusions and *Avidyamaya* are "Men"; those who are immersed in internal illusions or *Vidya Maya* are "Sadhakas", and God is immersed in neither, devoid of both. He who has no external illusions, becomes a *Sadhaka* and when he is devoid of even the internal illusions, he can be termed a God. Such a person's heart becomes the seat of God. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that all is pervaded by God. Though, of course, the Lord is situated in every heart, *Sadhana* is necessary so that they may discover it for themselves. It is not possible for us to see our own face! We must have a mirror to show us its image! So too, a basic *Marga* (Path), a *sadhana* (method) is necessary to become devoid of Gunas.

Lord Himself is the harvest of a *Saadhaka*

There is, in this world, no *tapas* higher than fortitude, no happiness greater than contentment, no *Punya* holier than mercy, no weapon more effective than patience.

Bhaktas should consider the body as the field, good deeds as seeds and cultivate the Name of the Lord, with the help of the Heart as the ryot, in order to get the harvest, the Lord Himself. How can one get the crop without the cultivation? Like cream in milk, like fire in fuel, the Lord is in everything, more or less. Have full faith in this. As the milk, so the cream; as the fuel, so the fire; so also, as the *Sadhana*, so the *Saakshaathkaara*. Even if the attainment of Mukti is not directly realised as a consequence of taking up the Lord's name, four fruits are clearly evident to those who have had the experience. They are: (1) The company of the great, (2) Truth, (3)

Contentment, (4) The control of the senses. Through whichever of these gates one may enter, whether he be a householder or recluse, or a member of any other class, he can reach the Lord without fail. This is certain. Men crave for worldly happiness. Analysed properly, this itself is the disease and sufferings are but the drugs we take. In the midst of these worldly pleasures, one rarely entertains the desire for attaining the Lord.

Anger is the first enemy of a *sadhaka*

Besides, it is necessary to analyse and discriminate every act of man for, the spirit of renunciation is born out of such analysis. Without it, renunciation is difficult to get. Miserliness is like the behaviour of a dog; it has to be transformed. Anger is enemy No. 1 of the *Sadhaka*; it is like spittle and has to be treated as such. And untruth? It is even more disgusting; through untruth, the vital powers of all are destroyed. It should be treated as scavenging itself. Theft ruins life; it makes the priceless human life cheaper than a pie; it is like rotten smelling flesh. Moderate food, moderate sleep, Prema, Fortitude, these will help in the upkeep of the health of both body and mind.

Whoever he may be, in whatever condition he may be, if he gives no room for dispiritedness, if he has no fear at all, and if he remembers the Lord with unshaken faith and without any ulterior motive, all suffering and sorrow will fall away from him. The Lord will never enquire at any time the caste to which he belongs or the *Acharya* which he traditionally follows.

Bhakti does not consist in wearing *Kashaya* cloth, the organisation of *Uthsavas*, the performance of *Yajnas*, the shaving of hair, the carrying of *Kamandalu* or *Danda*, the matting of the hair etc. With a pure *Anthah-karana*, uninterruptedly contemplating on God (whatever one may be doing), feeling that everything is the Lord's creation and therefore One, unattached to sense objects, embracing all in equal Love, dedicated to True Speech, this is indeed, the characteristic of *Bhakti*.

Of the various types of *Bhakti*, *Namasmarana bhakti* is the best. In the *Kaliyuga*, the name is the Path for saving oneself, Jayadeva, Gouranga, Thyagayya, Tukaram, Kabir, Ramdas, all these great Bhaktas attained the Lord through just this one Nama. Why speak of a thousand things? Even Prahlada and Dhruva were able to enjoy the *Darshan*, *Sparsan* and *Sambhashana* of the Lord through *Nama* only.

Ensure that evil is minimised

Therefore, if every *Sadhaka* will consider the name of the Lord as the very breath of his life and have complete faith in good deeds and good thoughts, if he will develop the spirit of service and equal Love for all, then there can be no better Path for *Mukthi*. Instead of this, if one sits in some solitary nook and holds his breath, how can he master his innate qualities? How is he to know that he has mastered them? Ambarisha Bhakti, and Durvasa activities, the combination of these two will result in the fate of Durvasa himself; at least, in the end, Durvasa must fall at the feet of Ambarisha. May you avoid becoming such Thrisankus; may you experience the eternal Truth, achieving the genuine State.

Every person is apt to commit mistakes, without being aware of it. However bright the fire or light, some smoke will emanate from it. So also., whatever, good deed a man might do, there will be mixed with it a minute trace of evil. But, efforts should be made to

ensure that the evil is minimised, that the good is more and bad, less. Of course, in the present atmosphere, you may not succeed in the very first attempt. You must carefully think over the consequences of whatever you do, talk, or execute.

You must be, as you want others to be

In whatever way you want others to honour you, or to behave with you, in the same way, you should first behave with others and love and honour them. Then only will those honour you. Instead, without yourself honouring and loving others, if you complain that they are not treating you properly, it is surely a wrong conclusion. Besides, if only those who advise others about "Which principles are right, which are true and good, which conduct is best etc," themselves follow the advice they give, there would then be no need for giving that advice to all. Others will learn the lesson simply by observing their actual behaviour. On the other hand, if Vedantha is spoken parrot like to others, without any attempt to put into practice in one's own conduct, it is not only deceiving others, it is even worse: it is deceiving oneself. Therefore you must be, as you want *others* to be.

It is not the nature of a *Sadhaka* to search for faults in others and hide one's own. If your faults are pointed out to you by any one, do not argue and try to prove that it is right or do not bear a grudge against him for it. Reason out within yourself how it is a fault and set right your own behaviour. Instead, rationalising it for your own satisfaction or wreaking vengeance on the person who pointed it out—these are certainly not the traits of a *Sadhaka* or *Bhakta*.

The *Sadhaka* should always seek the truthful and joyful; he must avoid all thoughts of the nature of the sad and the depressing. Depression, doubt, conceit, these are Rahu and Kethu to the spiritual aspirant. When one's devotion is well established, even if these appear they can be easily discarded. They will only harm one's *Sadhana*. Above all, it is best that the *Sadhaka* should be under all circumstances joyful, smiling-and enthusiastic. Even more than *Bhakti* and *Jnana*, this pure attitude is desirable. Those who have acquired it deserve to reach the goal first. This quality of joy at all times is the fruit of the good done in past births. When a person is ever worried, depressed, doubting, he can never attain bliss, whatever *Sadhana* he may do. The first task of a *Sadhaka* is the cultivation of enthusiasm. Through that enthusiasm, he can derive any variety of Ananda. Never get inflated when you are praised; never get deflated when you are blamed. Be a spiritual Lion, regardless of both. One must oneself analyse and correct one's faults; this is most important.

Use one Name and Form for meditation

Now, even in matters relating to the realisation of God, one has to be careful. Whatever inconveniences one may encounter, one must try to carry on one's *Sadhana*, without any break or modification in the disciplines. One should not be changing the Name that one has loved and cherished and selected for Smarana. Concentration is impossible if the Name is changed once every few days. The mind will not attain one-pointedness. All *Sadhana* has this one-pointedness as its ultimate aim; so avoiding constant adoption and rejection of Names and Forms of the Lord, one single name must be used throughout for *Japam* and *Dhyanam*. And, one has also to get the strong conviction that all the Lord's Names and all the Lord's Forms are but the Name and the Form which one is repeating in Japam and meditating on, during Dhyanam. That Name and that Form must not give any slightest feeling of dislike or disaffection.

Taking all worldly losses, sufferings and worries as merely temporal and transitory, and realising that all his *Japam* and *Dhyanam* is only to overcome such grief. the *Sadhaka* should keep the two things separate, without mixing up that with this, and this with that. He must understand that the loss, suffering and worry are external, belonging to this world, and that *Japam* and *Dhyanam* are internal, belonging to the realm of the love for the Lord. This is what is called *Pathivratha Bhakti* (Chaste Devotion); the other valery, where the *Sadhaka* selects one Name and Form and after sometime discards them for another Name and Form, is called *Vyabhichara Bhakti* (Unchaste devotion).

Stick to the time and place for *Dhyanam*

It is not a fault if it is done in ignorance; but having once known that it is wrong and harmful, and after continuing *Dhyanam* and *Japam* with that Name and *Rupa* faithfully, if they are subsequently changed, it certainly is wrong. Sticking faithfully to the Name and *Rupa* is the highest vow, and the highest austerity. Even if elders advise you, do not give up the Path approved by your mind! Of course, which elder will suggest to you that you should change the Name of the Lord and give up the Name that you adore? Do not consider those who tell you to do so as an elder: consider them as dullards. Again, see that as far as possible, the time and place of *Dhyanam* and *Japam* are not changed and shifted. Sometimes, as while travelling, even if it becomes necessary to change the venue the time at least should be kept unaltered. Even if one is in a railway train, or a bus, or some such inconvenient surrounding, at the specified time, one must, at least, recall to one's mind the *Dhyanam* and the *Japam* done by oneself at the same time in the past.

In this way, accumulating spiritual wealth, one can surely become the master, and attain the Atma.

The *Dharma* of Man

Every man should so lead his life that no pain is caused by him to any living thing. That is his supreme duty. Also, it is prime duty of every one, who has had the chance of this human birth, to spare a part of his energies occasionally for prayer, repetition of the Lord's Name, meditation etc. and must devote himself to living with Truth, Rightfulness, Peacefulness and to good works which are of service to others. One must be as afraid of doing acts that are harmful to others or deeds that are sinful, as one is afraid to touch fire or disturb a cobra. One must have as much attachment and as much steadfastness in carrying out good works, in making others happy, and in worshipping the Lord as he now has in accumulating gold and riches. This is the *Dharma* of Man. It is to strengthen this type of goodness that the Lord incarnates Himself in human form. But the question may arise, how can non-existent thing be strengthened and developed? Indeed, these qualities are not non-existent; they are there in man! When these existing qualities decline and whither, the Lord comes with the purpose of promoting them and bringing about the decline of the forces that work in the opposite direction. It is to make clear this purpose that Sri Krishna, in the *Dwapara Yuga* while teaching Arjuna, said:

Parithraanaaya saadhunaam

Vinaasaaya cha dushkrithaam

Dharma-sam-sthaapanarthaya

Sambhavaami yuge yuge.

That is to say, all incarnations of the Lord are for the protection and promotion of *Sadhus*. This word *Sadhu* does not rear to any single religion, caste, or family or stage or life, or community or even any single species, like the human! It refers to all religions, all stages of life, all races, and all creatures. The Lord has revealed in the Gita His Universal Mind. It is because of this universal message that the Gita has become so essential and so famous.

Why! Sri Krishna Himself has declared in plenty of situations and places that He is the dutiful servant of His devotees. An example of this is His accepting to be the Charioteer of Arjuna.

If the culture of the ordinary man himself results in such elevation, each one can judge for himself how much more purified and holy will be the character of those who are engaged in spiritual exercises and the incessant contemplation of God! For both these types of people, the quality of the character is the important criterion.