

**GRACE IS ALWAYS
FLOWING**

Volume 2

**Select Talks by
Dr.K.Subrahmanian
(Dr.KS)**

**SRI RAMANA KENDRAM
HYDERABAD**

GRACE IS ALWAYS FLOWING VOLUME 2

Select Talks by Dr.K.Subrahmanian

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Preface

In January 2020, Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad had the opportunity of presenting a publication, putting together some select talks of Dr.K.Subrahmanian (Dr.KS), the Kendram's founder President. Titled *Grace is Always Flowing*, the compilation received a good response from the readers. We are now presenting Volume 2 of *Grace is Always Flowing*. The book will be available in e-form also in the website of Sri Ramana Kendram. It will be the endeavour of the Kendram to bring out volumes 3, 4 & 5 of *Grace is Always Flowing* in due course of time.

This volume includes some more talks of Dr.KS emphasising a wide range of subjects of spiritual value. They are expertly camouflaged in the narration of happenings that one comes across in day to day life - a feat which Dr.KS achieves marvellously. The topics included in this volume reflect the values Dr.KS treasured throughout his life. Compassion towards all - particularly women, was a favourite subject that Dr.KS always cherished. Similarly, truth and honesty at work and in everyday life, ascertaining the characteristics of a real Guru, understanding the life patterns of the great devotees of Bhagavan were relentlessly emphasised by him. It is hoped that readers will find the message communicated by him worthy of emulation. For the benefit of new devotees, a short life sketch of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is included in this volume.

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Dr. V. Ramadas Murthy

President, Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad

January 11, 2021

Sri Ramana Maharshi – A Life Sketch

Birth and Early Years

Venkataraman (later known as Sri Ramana Maharshi) was born on December 30, 1879 at Tiruchuzhi, a small village in Tamil Nadu, some thirty miles off Madurai, and eighteen miles from Virudhunagar, the nearest railway station. Venkataraman's mother, Alagamma, was a pious, devoted person and his father Sundaram Ayyar was a pleader, who practised mostly before the local magistrate. Venkataraman had a brother, two years his senior. His other brother and his sister were both younger to him by a few years. It was a happy, well-to-do middle-class family.

When Venkataraman was twelve, Sundaram Ayyar died, and the family was broken up. He and his elder brother were sent to live with their paternal uncle, Subbier, who had a house in Madurai. Here, Venkataraman first attended the Scott's Middle School, and then joined the American Mission High School for his ninth standard. At school, his one asset was an amazingly retentive memory, which enabled him to repeat a lesson after hearing it just once. Endowed with a stronger constitution than most of his classmates, and with a spirit of independence that marked him off from other students, Venkataraman found school games and outdoor life more congenial than studies and reading books. In his boyhood years, Venkataraman was prone to abnormally deep sleep. Speaking about it in later years, he said: "The boys didn't dare to touch me when I was awake; but if they had any grudge against me, they would come when I was asleep, carry me wherever they liked, beat me, paint my face with charcoal, and then put me back, and I would know nothing about how it happened until they told me next morning."

The Origin of his Awakening

In November 1895, an elderly relation spoke to Venkataraman about his visit to Arunachala, the sacred hill in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu. The word ‘Arunachala’ somehow had evoked in him since childhood an inexplicable awe and love. He enquired from the relative the whereabouts of Arunachala, and ever afterwards found himself haunted by its thoughts. A little later, a copy of the *Periapuranam* fell into Venkataraman’s hands. This *purana* contains stories of sixty-three Tamil saints who could secure Lord Siva’s grace by their exemplary devotion. As Venkataraman read the book, he was overwhelmed with ecstatic wonder that such faith, such love and such divine fervour was at all possible. The tales of renunciation leading to Divine union filled him with awe and admiration. Something greater than all dreamlands was proclaimed real and possible in the book. From that time onwards, the spiritual current of awareness began to waken up in the young boy. This grew ever stronger with the passage of time, and after a few months, sometime in the middle of July 1896, when he was just sixteen and a half years old, Venkataraman realised the Self in a miraculous manner. Years later, he described the event himself in the following words:

“About six weeks before I left Madurai for good, a great change took place in my life. It was quite sudden. I was sitting alone in a room in my uncle’s house, when a sudden fear of death overtook me. There was nothing in my state of health to account for it. I just felt, ‘I am going to die,’ and began thinking about it. The fear of death drove my mind inwards, and I said to myself mentally, ‘Now that death has come, what does it mean? What is it that is dying? Only this body dies.’ And at once, I dramatised the occurrence of death. I held my breath and kept my lips tightly closed and said to myself, ‘This body is dead. It will be carried to the cremation ground and reduced to ashes. But with the death of this body am I

dead? Is this body ‘I’? I am the spirit transcending the body. That means I am the deathless *atman*.”

What happened next is difficult to comprehend, though easy to describe. Venkataraman seemed to fall into a profound conscious trance, wherein he became merged into the very source of selfhood, the very essence of Being. He quite clearly perceived and imbibed the truth that the body was a thing apart from the *atman* that remained untouched by death. Venkataraman emerged from this amazing experience an utterly changed person. He lost interest in studies, sports, friends and so on. His chief interest now centred in the sublime consciousness of the true Self, which he had found so unexpectedly. He enjoyed an inward serenity and a spiritual strength, which never left him. The new mode of consciousness transformed Venkataraman’s sense of values and his habits. Things he esteemed earlier had now lost their appeal. In his words: “Another change that came over me was that I no longer had any likes or dislikes with regard to food. Whatever was given to me, tasty or insipid, I would swallow with total indifference.”

Leaving the House for Arunachala

Venkataraman’s uncle and elder brother became critical of his changed mode of life, which seemed to them utterly impractical. Then came the tangible crisis on August 29, 1896. Venkataraman was then studying in tenth standard, preparing for his public examination. His teacher had given him an exercise in English grammar to be written three times. He copied it out twice, and was about to do so for the third time, when the futility of it struck him so forcibly that he pushed the papers away, and sitting cross-legged, abandoned himself to meditation. His elder brother who was watching this, scolded him for behaving like a *yogi* while still staying in the family and pretending to study. Such remarks had been made constantly during the last few weeks, and had gone

unnoticed. But this time, they went home. “Yes,” thought Venkataraman, “What business have I here?” And immediately came the thought of Arunachala that had caused such a thrill in him a few months ago. He decided then and there, to discover the fabulous and legendary Arunachala of his dreams. Venkataraman knew that it was necessary to use some guile because his family would never otherwise let him go. So, he told his brother that he had to attend a special class at the school. Unintentionally providing him with funds for the journey, his brother said, “Take five rupees from the box and pay my college fees.” Venkataraman took only three rupees, no more than what he thought was necessary for reaching Tiruvannamalai. In the note he left (which fortunately is preserved), he wrote in Tamil: “I have set out in quest of my Father in accordance with His command. It is on a virtuous enterprise that ‘this’ has embarked, therefore, let none grieve over this act and let no money be spent in search of ‘this’. Your college fees have not been paid. Two rupees are enclosed.” The note ended with the word ‘Thus’, and a dash -- in place of his signature.

It is significant that the opening sentence in the note began with ‘I’, but later Venkataraman used ‘this’ in reference to himself. Thus, what left Madurai for Tiruvannamalai was not the spirit, which had already got absorbed in the Lord, but the body, now viewed as distinct from the spirit. The personality which began with ‘I’, got merged into ‘this’, and at the end there was no person left to sign; hence the note remained unsigned. The note made it clear that the writer was driven by a Divine command, which had to be obeyed.

Reaching Tiruvannamalai on the early morning of September 1, 1896, after a series of trials and tribulations, Venkataraman went straight to the great Arunachaleswara temple and stood before his

Father. His cup of bliss was now full to the brim. It was the journey's end, and his homecoming.

Tranced Years and Fresh Moorings

Coming out of the temple, the youth got his head shaven, and threw away all his belongings and clothes except for a strip he tore off his *dhoti* to serve as a loincloth. Thus renouncing everything, he went back to the temple complex, and got immersed in the Bliss of Being, sitting motionless, day after day, night after night.

One Seshadri Swami, a learned ascetic of high spiritual attainment, took it upon himself to look after Brahmana Swami, as Venkataraman began to be called. Some schoolboys started throwing stones at him as they were intrigued to see someone not much older than themselves sitting like a statue. And, as one of them put it later, he wanted to find out whether he was real or not. To avoid the situation, Brahmana Swami took shelter in the *Patala Lingam*, an underground small Siva shrine within the enormous temple complex, where ants and vermin fed on his flesh during the weeks he spent there. But the young Swami, absorbed in bliss, remained unmoved. When some devotees discovered the Swami in the vault, oblivious of the dreadful condition he was in, with worm-infested wounds and oozing pus, they removed him to a nearby shrine within the temple complex. From then on, he continued to move within the complex to various other shrines and groves away from curious onlookers. In all these places, he was looked after by mendicants, devotees from the town, temple functionaries and others. He continued to remain absorbed in the Self, and was virtually dead to the world: he had to be shaken by the shoulders before he would accept water or food, which some devotees brought for him.

Years later, the Maharshi recalled how he had been forcibly administered a bath by a motherly devotee, the first in four months

after his arrival in Tiruvannamalai. It was twelve months later that another such devotee gave him a second bath. Likewise, his hair remained uncut and his face unshaven for some eighteen months. He told Suri Nagamma: “The hair had got matted and woven like a basket. Small stones and dust had settled in it, and the head used to feel heavy. I had long nails and a frightful appearance. When some people pressed me to have a shave, I yielded. When my head was shaven clean, I began to wonder whether I had a head or not, I felt so light.”

In February 1897, the young Swami was removed to the Gurumurtam – a *math*, some distance away from the town, where he lived for about nineteen months. He continued to remain Self-absorbed, and was looked after mainly by a *sadhu* named Uddandi Nayanar, and his friend Annamalai Thambiran. Pilgrims and sightseers began to throng the *math*, and many would prostrate themselves before the Swami, some with prayers for boons, and some out of pure reverence.

As the crowd became large, a bamboo fence was put around the Swami’s seat to prevent the public from touching him. There was no difficulty about food, as several devotees wished to supply it regularly; the more pressing need was to keep away the crowd of sightseers and visitors.

About this time, a Malayalee *sadhu*, named Palaniswami, living in great austerity, was devoting his life to the worship of Lord Vinayaka. One day, his friend, Srinivasa Iyer, told him, “Why do you spend your life with this stone *swami*? There is a young *swami* in flesh and blood at the Gurumurtam. He is steeped in tapas like the young Dhruva. If you go there and attach yourself to him, your life will attain its purpose.” When Palaniswami went to the *math*, he was stirred to his depths at the very sight of the Swami, and felt that he had discovered his saviour. He devoted the remaining twenty-one years of his life serving the Maharshi as his attendant.

As the Swami's body was utterly neglected, it got weakened to the limits of endurance. When he needed to go out, he had barely the strength to rise. Many times, it so happened that he would raise himself by a few inches and then sink back again.

One Venkatarama Iyer, head accountant in a government office in the town, used to visit the Swami every day before going to his work. One day, he placed before him a sheet of paper and a pencil, and besought him to write his name and place of origin. When the Swami made no response to his pleading, he declared that he would neither eat nor go to office till he received the desired information. Then Sri Ramana wrote in English 'Venkataraman, Tiruchuzhi'. His knowledge of English came as a surprise.

Some Early Visitors

Sivaprakasam Pillai, an officer in the Revenue Department, and an intellectual, heard of the young Swami residing on the hill. At his very first visit in 1902, he was captivated by the Swami's aura, and became his life-long devotee. As the Swami was maintaining silence, he answered fourteen questions of Pillai by writing on a slate. These were later expanded and arranged in a book form *Who am I?* This is perhaps the most widely appreciated prose exposition of the Maharshi's philosophy.

Ganapati Muni, a renowned Sanskrit scholar and poet, was another devotee who visited the Swami from 1903 onwards, and accepted him as his *guru* in 1907. It was the grateful Muni who named the Swami as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, and sang of him as an incarnation of Subrahmanya, son of Lord Siva. The Maharishi's answers to the questions put by the Muni and his disciples, largely constitute the well-known work *Ramana Gita*. The most quoted *sloka* of this book (II. 2) tells us: In the interior of the Heart-Cave [right hand side of the Sri Ramana Maharshi – A Life Sketch 8 Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi chest, not left] *Brahman*

alone shines in the form of *atman*. Enter deep into the Heart with a questioning mind, or by diving deep within, or with breath under check, and abide in the *atman*.

The earliest Western seeker to come under the Swami's influence (in 1911) was F.H. Humphreys. When he asked how he could help the world, Sri Ramana replied, "Help yourself, and you will help the world. You are not different from the world, nor is the world different from you."

The number of devotees increased greatly over a period of time. The text provides a record of experiences of a large number of such of those devotees who felt inclined to write or communicate through others.

Skandasramam and Sri Ramanasramam

In 1916, as the number of resident devotees increased, Sri Ramana shifted to the more commodious Skandasramam, named so, as it was built through the Herculean efforts of his staunch devotee, Kandaswami.

After the death of his mother in 1922 (who had come to stay with her ascetic son six years before, and had got *nirvana* in his hands), her body was laid to rest at the foot of the Arunachala hill. The present Ashram, named Sri Ramanasramam, has developed around the mother's *samadhi* called Matrubhuteswara, God in the form of Mother.

The Ashram, which began with a single thatched shed over the mother's *samadhi*, has developed into a fairly large complex of buildings, the most important of which, according to many *sadhakas*, is the Old Hall where Sri Ramana spent most of his living time for over twenty years on a couch gifted by a devotee. The shrine over Sri Ramana's *samadhi*, which has a large, bright,

and airy meditation hall attached to it, regularly draws a large number of devotees and visitors throughout the year.

After Sri Ramana came down to live in the Ashram at the foot of the hill, he made it clear, though not explicitly, that giving *darshan* and communicating with people through silence or brief messages of deliverance was his sole goal in life. A large number of seekers, in various stages of spiritual evolution, came to him and found peace, clarity and strength of mind in his presence.

Some Characteristics and Approach of Sri Ramana

Among the qualities that endeared Sri Ramana to thousands, was his *soulabhya* – easy accessibility. He sacrificed all privacy of time, and sat in the hall day in and day out, and even slept in the presence of all. He did everything possible to make himself available to the devotees. With advancing age, the Ashram management thought of some rest for him after lunch by closing the doors of the hall for two hours. When Sri Ramana learnt about it, he sat outside the hall after lunch, saying: “To see me, people come from different parts of the world. They may have some other urgent work. The management is welcome to close the doors, but I am free to meet the visitors outside.” It took a lot of persuasion to make him relent.

Equally charming was his *sahajata* – the utter normality of behaviour. His manners were so natural that the newcomer immediately felt at ease with him. By a single glance, a nod of the head or by a simple enquiry from him, the visitor felt that Sri Ramana was his very own, and that he cared for him. He was extremely humble and unassuming. There was no pontifical solemnity in his expositions; on the contrary, his speech was lively. When a devotee asked why his prayers were not being answered, Sri Ramana laughingly said, “If they were, you might stop praying.”

Much could be written about the way Sri Ramana practised *samatva* – equality. In his presence all were alike: high or low, rich or poor, man or woman, child or adult, human or animal. He would never tolerate any consideration or attention being shown to him more than to any other in the Ashram. Sri Ramana opposed any physical concession to himself. If some little excess was served to him of any dish or any delicacy, above the quantity served to others, he would chide whoever was responsible.

Sri Ramana had compassion for all species of life. His love for plants and his love for animals are found in many narrations of devotees. Sri Ramana taught the Ashram inmates more by example, than precept. Sri Ramana stressed that the path to peace is through service, and he himself set an example in the daily life at the Ashram. He would diligently correct manuscripts and proofs, cut vegetables, clean grain, shell nuts, stitch leaf-plates and assist in cooking, thus exemplifying the dignity of labour and charm of simplicity. *Karma* was, for him, not some special ritualistic action, but the daily tasks that are our common lot.

Sri Ramana’s teachings were mirrored to perfection in his life. He declared that to abide in the Self was the highest attainment, and it was in this State Transcendent that one found him at all times. He had the characteristics of a *jivanmukta* – emancipated, while yet in the physical body. According to the Yoga Vasistha, to such a person: “Pleasures do not delight, pains do not distress. He does not work to get anything for himself. There is nothing which he has to achieve. He is full of mercy and magnanimity. He rests unagitated in Supreme Bliss.”

Sri Ramana always laid stress on *maunam* – the silence, which is not meant to be negation of activity. It is something very positive. It is Supreme Peace, immutable like a rock that supports all activities, all movements. Answering the puzzlement of her Western friends about the ‘inactivity’ of Sri Ramana, Ella Maillart

writes: "Having identified ourselves with our bodies, we are convinced that one has got to be visibly active. We forget that inactivity is the basis of its corollary activity; that the useful wheel could not exist or move without a motionless base.

Sri Ramana never consciously did anything to make an impact or to carve out a niche for himself in the annals of history. He shunned all publicity and image building. He had successfully effaced himself. Paul Brunton, a British journalist, who lived near Sri Ramana for a few weeks in 1930, writes: "I like him greatly because he is so simple and modest, when an atmosphere of authentic greatness lies so palpably around him; and also because he is so totally without any traces of pretension, and he strongly resists every effort to canonize him during his lifetime."

Sri Ramana never gave discourses, much less went on lecture tours. After leaving home, he lived continuously for fifty-four years on or near the Arunachala hill. When people went to him and put questions, he answered them in his own simple way, devoid of solemn discourses.

Sri Ramana was much against miracles. He once said, "A magician deludes others by his tricks, but he himself is never deluded. A siddha who manifests his siddhis is inferior to the magician as he is deceiving others as much as himself." The 'miracles', which used to happen from time to time looked like coincidences, and if brought to Sri Ramana's attention, he would just laugh them away. Sri Ramana would use the term 'Automatic Divine Action' for the 'miracles', and he made the devotee believe that he had no part to play in the matter.

Sri Ramana did not found a new cult or religion. He did not insist on compliance with any established religious mode, ritual or line of conduct. He emphasized the unity of Being and its accessibility through one's own efforts. According to him, the practical path to

realization is *atma-vichara*, the search for the Self, through constant and deep meditation on the question *Who am I ?* The approach is neither a religion nor a philosophy. It entails no belief, no scholarship and no psychological doctrine.

In Sri Ramana's view, the trouble afflicts us due to the mistake of limiting ourselves to the body. Constant self-questioning helps us to understand and imbibe the true knowledge about our identity, which is our Higher Self (*atman*), residing in the body.

Sri Ramana clarified that *Who am I?* is not a mantra to be repeated. The purpose of asking the question is to withdraw the mind from going outward and diving deep within one's own Self. The monkey mind which is only a bundle of thoughts, would eventually vanish through persistent and serious meditation on the question *Who am I?*

Sri Ramana maintained that we become unhappy because we have failed to appreciate our true nature, which is happiness, and which is inborn in the True Self. The constant urge of all of us to secure happiness in life is an unconscious search for our True Self.

The Last Days

Towards the end of 1948, a small nodule appeared above the left elbow of Sri Ramana. Operations were performed, but the malignant tumour appeared again. The disease did not yield to any treatment. The sage was quite unconcerned, and remained supremely indifferent to his suffering.

Sri Ramana allowed himself to be operated to satisfy his devotees. Major Chadwick writes: "The night before the last operation, I went to see Bhagavan, and on my knees begged him not to have it. It was obvious that it could do no good. Each time the tumour had grown bigger and bigger. I prayed that this extra suffering was useless and that he would let us be spared of the strain. But he

refused, for, as he said, the doctors had taken so much trouble, it would be a shame to disappoint them now. Bhagavan's attitude had all along been to let everybody have a chance; no one should be disappointed."

Sri Ramana had compassion for those who grieved over his 'suffering' and he sought to comfort them by referring to the basic truth, the core of his message, that we are not the body. In his unique way, he would ask whether we ever retained the leaf-plate after the meal was over. The end came on April 14, 1950 at 8.47 p.m. At that very moment, a bright comet moved slowly across the sky, reached the summit of hill Arunachala and disappeared high in the sky. The super soul reached its source.

(Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*)

1. Complete Understanding of Yourself

At the time of the wedding, when you pour *ghee* into the *agni*, you say, “*Agnaye swaha.*” Then you say, “*Agnaye idam na mama.*” As you pour *ghee* into the *agni*, you are humble because you don’t understand the meaning of the *mantra*. What you are actually saying is, “O *Agni*, I have given you this *ghee*. What I have given is not mine; it is what you once gave me.” Once you give something to another person, don’t expect anything in return. Secondly, don’t even think that you have given it. You have not given anything to anyone. God has placed you in a position to give something that he has given you. Since what you’re giving is not yours, you’re not really giving anything to anyone.

Bhagavan always used to say, “What you give to other people, you are giving to yourself.” In other words, do not think that you are helping others, because you are only helping yourself. The moment I give something to another, without expecting anything in return, the entire *punya* goes to me. The moment I expect something in return, it becomes a mere business transaction. For example, you come to my house because I have invited you for a meal. You wait for the right moment, and invite me in return. In that case, I have done something for you, and you have done something in return. Here, there is no *punya*. Most of the time, we invite those people for a meal who suffer from indigestion and who don’t really need your food. We never invite a beggar to our home for a meal. Even if we did invite him, a beggar may be embarrassed to come to our home. That is why poor feeding is important.

Vyasa says,

na jaatu kamah kaamaanam upabhogena shamyati

Is *agni* satisfied with the *ghee* that we pour? As we pour *ghee* into *agni*, it leaps up. When we pour more *ghee* into it, the flame leaps higher. Similarly, if we try to fulfill one desire, another one comes up. If we fulfill that desire, another one soon replaces it. There is always some desire to be fulfilled.

Bhagavan used to say, “Try to limit your desires.” We believe that once we kill all our desires, we can begin to focus on *moksha* and *sadhana*. We tell ourselves, “Why should I worry about *sadhana* when I am twenty or twenty-five years old? I will think about it at the age of fifty or so.” Bhagavan and Sri Ramakrishna used to say that if we do not have this inclination at the age of eighteen, twenty or twenty-five, we will never have the inclination at the age of fifty or sixty. The important thing to do is to start doing *sadhana* very early. Another thing Bhagavan said was there is no point in trying to kill desires by fulfilling them. Yayati used the term *havis*; Bhagavan used the modern term and said, “If you think you can put out your desires by fulfilling them, it is like trying to extinguish a fire by pouring petrol into it. If the petrol is too much, you yourself may be completely burnt.”

Shankara says,

*vedaanta vakyeshu sadaa ramanto bhikshanna matrena cha
tushtimantah*

Some people don't own anything. They appear to be like any one of us as they sit under a tree without worrying about anything. Looking at them, we think they are wasting their time. Can we sit under a tree like that even for one hour and waste time like that? Probably not! But don't think that they're wasting time. What has been said in the *Vedaantas* is,

aham brahmaasmi sadaa aanandam

They are always happy; not just for one or two hours. These people are *vedanta vakyeshu sada ramantah*. As a result, they have no *shoka* of any kind; therefore, they are always happy. While people like us are wandering outside, they are always within (*atmaraamo*), and they find supreme happiness, not from outside, but from within. Who are these people?

na karmana na prajaya dhanena tyagenaike amritatva manashuh

What kind of *tyagas*? *Tyaga* of all desires. So much so, they don't have any desire of any kind, whatsoever. They have only a great compassion for all of us (*loka kalyanam*), and therefore, they choose to do so much for us. They meditate on the Supreme Being within.

*dahram vipapam paramesmbhutam
yat pundarikam puramadhya sagastham*

Such rare people focus on the *Maheshwara* within. Is it possible for us to have the same experience that these people have? We can't experience anything on our own; only the Lord can give us the experience. We can't do *sadhana*; only he can make us do *sadhana*.

In the *Bhagavata*, the Gopikas said, "We can't do anything without you. We can't even think of you without you. If we think we can do this on our own, we are mistaken."

*yatraivva yatraiva mano madiyam tatraiva tatraiva tava
swaroopam
yatraivva yatraivva shiro madiyam tatraiva tatraiva padadwayam
te*

O Lord, I can't think of your *swaroopam*. I am a useless fellow, so don't expect me to think of you. You must do something for me.

What is that? My mind is wandering in so many places, thinking of so many things. So, my Lord, I request you to do this: wherever my mind is, show me your *swaroopam*. In other words, I can't think of you, O Lord. You have got to make the effort to save this poor fellow, because I can't make myself think of you. I am such a useless fellow that I cannot bow down to you. So, wherever my head is, put your feet on it. If I can think of the Lord, it is because of his grace. That is the humility.

The Gopikas tell Krishna, "We are not educated; we don't know anything about the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. We are very simple, but we have given our hearts to you. If we don't see you, we feel miserable. That's all we know." Krishna replies, "You have given your hearts to me, and therefore, I am your slave. I have to obey you. I know people who are great scholars, but they have not given their hearts to me. Why do I run away from you from time to time? Occasionally, I go away from you, so that you can still think of me. I don't want you to become proud that I am with you all the time." The Gopikas, as the result of their experience, say,

*tava kathamrutam tapta jeevanam
kavibhir iditam kalmashaapaham
shravana mangalam srimad aatatam
bhuvi grihnanti te bhuridaa janaah*

tava kathamrutam: O Lord, when we hear stories about you, what do we hear?

tapta jeevanam: For all those who are fried in this *samsaara*, listening to your *katha* is *amritam*.

kavibhir iditam: O Lord, you have been praised by *kavis*.

kalmashaapaham: When we listen to these great stories, our *paapa* is removed; at least temporarily, we become rich.

When we listen to the stories of Krishna or Rama, or any one of the saints, they remove our *kathaya nijaya kalusham harata* - this is what Kavyakantha said about Bhagavan. When people listen to the lives of great people, their *paapam* is removed, and they become pure, at least, temporarily.

sravana mangalam srimad aatatham

It is auspicious (*mangala*) to listen to such stories, and while we are listening, all sorrows are removed, and we are filled with joy.

bhuvi grihnanti te bhuridaa janaah

The people who listen to these stories are blessed, and so are the people who narrate them.

The last seventeen *slokas* in the second chapter of the *Gita* discuss the characteristics of a *sthitaprajna*. In the last but one *sloka*, Krishna asks, “Who is a *sthitaprajna*?” He answers,

*aapuryamaanam achala prathistham
samudram apah pravishanti yadvat
tadvat kama yam pravishanti sarve
sa shantim apnoti na kama kaami*

Krishna himself was a great *jnani*, and it is very difficult to understand him. You can understand Krishna only if you are Krishna. After all, is it possible for anyone to understand you completely? You say many things to me, but I can understand only one part of you. We know the person who is closest to you is your wife. Can you say that you understand your wife? Can your wife say that she understands you? You understand your wife much better than most other people understand her, but you can't say that you have perfect understanding. Perfect understanding is

possible only when I become you; to understand you completely, I must become you. You can understand a great *jnani* like Krishna, only when you become a *jnani* yourself. Why is this? I cannot understand anyone in this world completely because I don't even understand myself. When I cannot understand myself, is it possible to understand someone else? Any understanding that takes place of another person is only partial understanding - there is no complete understanding. Based on my limited experience with an individual, I will know only one aspect. This explains why people see the same person very differently - he appears good to some people, and to other people, he appears bad. Complete understanding of an individual is possible only when there is no ego of any kind, whatsoever.

Only a *jnani* can understand all of us, because a *jnani* has a body, but he has no mind. It is the mind that separates you from me. When I have no mind, I become you. What links you to me is my consciousness. We all have the same chip, but the *ahamkara* is different. If the ego is removed, the chip is the same, and the consciousness is the same. Krishna says that only a *jnani* can define a *jnani* because he is a *jnani*.

aapuryamaanam: The *samudra* is always full.

achala pratishtam: Its level neither rises nor falls.

The Godavari enters the ocean, and the Krishna enters the ocean. Once the water enters the ocean, what happens to these rivers? They cease to exist. The moment the Godavari enters the ocean, there is no Godavari. The Godavari exists only until it enters the ocean. We cannot say this is the water from the Godavari, and this is the water from the Krishna; they have become one with the ocean.

A *jnani* is not a piece of wood; he is a human being. When we desire something, we want to get it, and when we don't get it, we become angry. When we become angry, then all sense of proportion is lost, and we are a completely different person. For the *jnani*, desires from outside come to him and join him; though they become a part of him, they do not affect him. He is calm like the ocean, unaffected by the rivers that flow into it. Once the river enters the ocean, its identity or ego is lost. Vedanta Desikar used to say to the Lord, "I have written about you; I talk about you. Is it possible for me to write about you and describe you? I am a useless fellow, but still I have talked about you. Why is this?" He himself answers, "O Lord, it is like this. The drainage water sometimes flows through Varanasi and then joins the Ganga. Once the drainage water, which people consider awful and won't even touch, joins the Ganga, it also becomes the Ganga. People then drink it because it is no longer drainage water. I am like the drainage water. O Lord, when I think about you and write about you, I too become like you. I feel I am like drainage water - I am repulsive and useless. Nobody will come anywhere near me because of the dirt and the smell. But because I write about you and speak about you, I become the Ganga. I am like the drainage water that has joined the Ganga."

These things must give us faith and hope. There is no place for despair of any kind, whatsoever, because even the greatest *bhaktas* have talked about their inadequacies. In the *Periya Puranam*, we read about Thondaradippodi Alwar, who was extraordinarily humble. He got this name because he was a devotee (*tondar*) even of the dust (*podu*) from the feet (*adi*) of the Lord's worshippers. He said, "My Lord, I can't come anywhere near you. I can't serve you because I am incompetent." That is humility.
(Talk 4 B)

2. Perfect Communication

In the word *Iswara*, there is *shabda* (word) and also, *artha* (meaning). You can't separate the two. When *shabda* has no *artha*, you say it is noise. Noise is disorganized sound. When we speak, the other person is not only able to hear, he is also able to understand. When I say, "Get me a cup of coffee," I make sounds, and these sounds make sense. The sounds and the sense go together. You cannot separate the meaning of a word from the sound.

When I want to communicate, I say something, then you understand; then, you say something, and I understand. When I meet you for the first time, I may ask questions about you, your family, your children, etc. You then answer these questions. But when I get to know you very well, I don't have to ask all the questions. I may ask you one or two, and then after that, we can be together without talking. On the other hand, if I don't know you, silence becomes unbearable. If I do not know you well, and you remain silent, I may mistake it for arrogance. You expect a stranger to say something to you, and that you say something in return. This is *loukika*.

When a couple is newly married, they talk to each other a great deal in order to understand each other. After some years, they can be together in the same room without any talking. If I know you very well, I won't feel uncomfortable when we are in the same room without talking. You won't have to tell me that you're unhappy; I would know that you are unhappy because our wavelength will be the same. Similarly, people in the family know that there is something wrong with the child even when the child does not. The greater the understanding between people, the less the need to speak. Where there is perfect understanding, there is perfect communication. In other words, if I understand you

completely, there is no need for me to communicate to you through language. You would know how I feel about you; I don't have to tell you. It becomes possible for me to communicate with you through silence.

When I say 'silence', I am not talking about the silence of the tongue. I may remain silent by not talking for some time, but that is not real silence. Real silence is the silence of the mind. When the mind is quiet, when the mind is still, there is perfect communication with other people - not just with one individual. What is more, this peace or stillness of the mind that you have, is communicated to others - they can feel it too. This is why, when we go to meet *sadhus* and sages, we don't ask them to talk to us. We want to have a *darshan* of saints and *sadhus*; we do not go for an interview. When a *sadhu* 'sees' you, you enjoy peace. When you attend a lecture on peace, however, you may come away feeling disturbed or even dissatisfied.

The *sadhu* does not talk about peace; he is silent. He embodies peace, and in his presence, you enjoy an extraordinary calm. What is more, this peace stays with you for a long time. In fact, even when you merely think of the occasions you were in the *sadhu's* presence, your mind is filled with peace. In other words, a person who talks about peace doesn't give you peace. A sage who doesn't talk about peace is calm and quiet; his mind is still, and through his stillness, he is able to communicate with you without using words.

mauna vyaakhyaa prakatitha para brahma tattvam yuvaanam

Lord Dakshinamurthy, the *jnana swaroopa*, taught through silence or *mauna*. The reality, the truth was communicated through silence or *mauna*. What do we mean by *mauna*? It is the *mauna* of the mind; a mind that is not seeking anything. It is a mind that is at peace with itself; that is beyond all duality, and is content with

what it has. It is not disturbed by *sukha* or *dukkha*. This is the state in which all sages are. For people like us, it is difficult to imagine a mind that is free from all dualities. Whenever Sri Ramakrishna or the Maharshi was asked, "What is that state? Can you explain it to us?", they would say, "How can you? It's a state beyond the mind." But it's possible to experience this state to some extent when you are in the presence of sages and saints. They don't say anything, and yet, when you are in their presence, you enjoy a peace that cannot be explained. Even when you think of them deeply and earnestly, you enjoy a sense of peace.

If that is so at the ordinary level, how much more is it at the divine level? It's not something that can be easily explained. If somebody asks you how much you love the other person, is it possible to explain how much you love or hate the person? The person may understand from your behaviour how much you love or hate him. You can write ten books on how much you love the other person, but it is not equivalent to the amount of love that you have for the other person. Similarly, is it possible to explain to a person who has never tasted *jalebi*, what it tastes like? The best way is to give the person a *jalebi* because no amount of explanation is equivalent to having a taste of it. If that is so at the ordinary level, how much more would it be at a level where sages and saints operate without the kind of mind that we have?

Who is a *guru*? A *guru* is one who will give you, not ordinary pleasures, but *Brahmanandam*, or the joy that you get by realizing *Brahman*. *Brahmanandam* literally means the *ananda* that you get by realizing *Brahman*. It is not ordinary *sukha*, but extraordinary *sukha*. Bhagavan says, "In this state, even if you are doing a number of things, you will not get the feeling that you are doing them. Even when you are awake, you will be in the state that you are in when you are in deep sleep." This is because the sense of individuality is gone.

We often experience this state in deep sleep - when we don't do anything, and there is no consciousness. When we are in deep sleep, we are not conscious of our body, our family or our possessions. That's why, when we get up in the morning, we sometimes say, "I slept beautifully! It was *Brahmanandam*." In this state, there is total absence of ego, of *ahamkara*; there is complete annihilation of the mind. What we feel is absolute peace. And what is this peace? It is a feeling of peace that results from the complete destruction and absence of the ego, and complete absence of individuality. That is why we say that a person who is a *jnana swaropa* communicates his peace to other people through his silence. He doesn't have to talk. Dakshinamurthy is *jnana swaropa*; he will give us *jnana*. If one has *jnana*, then one has everything in this world. He communicates his peace to others through his silence. His silence is not physical silence; it is the result of the silence of the mind. He is the embodiment of pure *Brahman*.

shuddha jnaanaika murthaye

The *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and various sages and saints have instructed us to get rid of our *ahamkara*, because when the *ahamkara* is gone, there is only happiness. Without the feeling of *aham*, we become humble. Why is it that we like people who are humble? What does it mean when we say someone is humble? It means that he doesn't have any *ahamkara*. We feel happy and peaceful in the company of those who have no *ahamkara* because they communicate their peace to us. A humble person does not hurt our ego. When we go to an ordinary man, we are afraid of what he might say to hurt our ego. When we are in the company of a man who is humble, we are comfortable because our ego will not be hurt. Even in ordinary life, we like to interact with people who are humble because they are not a threat to us.

In this context, I would like to mention Lord Rama, who had the ability to make everyone feel happy and comfortable when he talked to them. This is an art that not everyone has, and it is something we can have only when there is humility - when we don't have the feeling that we are important. Sri Rama is described as *purva bhaashi*. He would not wait for someone to speak first; he would start the conversation. The moment an important person talks to us, we feel happy and comfortable. Sri Rama was also *mrudu bhaashi*. He was soft spoken and made people comfortable. Rama did not assert himself; he always made people comfortable by talking to them first, and then talking in a very soft way.

(Talk 5)

3. Bhagavan's Compassion

Bhagavan's compassion for the poor was extraordinary. Once, an old half-blind woman came to see him. Many people were seated in the hall, and Bhagavan himself was busy reading the newspaper. People saw her torn, dirty sari and ignored her. Bhagavan turned around, saw her, and called her by her name. He said, "Please come." She went close to look at him since she was half-blind. He continued, "How is the family? How are your sons?" Normally, Bhagavan didn't ask such questions. Because of his great compassion for the poor, he asked all these questions. She said, "You know Swami, I am not very happy. My children are not doing what they should be doing. I thought I should come and see you because I haven't seen you for a very long time." Bhagavan said, "You wouldn't have come empty-handed; you must have brought something for me." The old woman stood quietly for she was too shy to give him what she had brought. When Bhagavan insisted, the old woman took out two *dosas* and gave them to him. Someone sitting very close said, "Bhagavan, I

think they are stale *dosas*. Please don't eat them. They will not agree with you." Bhagavan said, "Is that so? Then I don't want to give these *dosas* to anyone here because it will upset your stomach. However, I will eat all the *dosas* myself." He ate both the *dosas*. Normally, he distributed everything, but this time, he didn't.

The compassion that he had for this old woman was such that he ate the two *dosas* that were considered stale by others. Bhagavan also added, "This woman has brought the *dosas* out of great affection." When Bhagavan's mother passed away, he came down to the foot of the hill to sit before the mother's *samadhi*. This old woman used to come almost every day. She said that Bhagavan should not sit on the floor, and so, she made a platform out of mud with her own hands. Bhagavan said, "She was the first person to make a platform for me." It has been recorded that for one whole hour he talked about the old woman, what she did for him, and how she looked after him.

This incident reminds us of Kuchela, who went to see his friend, Krishna, who was a king. Kuchela was reluctant to give what he had brought with him. But Krishna said, "Your wife would not have sent you empty-handed." Even then, Kuchela did not give the puffed rice he had brought. Instead, Krishna himself put his hand into the little bag, took the puffed rice and started eating it.

Another person, who was poor and dirty, came and talked to Bhagavan. The Maharshi asked him about his welfare, and about his family. The bell rang for lunch, so Bhagavan got up. He turned around to this person and said, "I don't think you would have come empty-handed. I'm sure you have something to give me." The man had brought some gruel in a pot. He said, "This is all I have brought for you." Standing there, in front of all the people, Bhagavan didn't say, "Get me a tumbler." Instead, he said, "Is that so? You used to give me gruel in those days." He just folded his

hands and said, "Now pour it." He drank the gruel in this manner. Everyone was stunned. There were people who came, who didn't get even a single word from Bhagavan, and here was a poor man, who was a nobody from our point of view. The compassion and the consideration that Bhagavan had for him was extraordinary. When Bhagavan went to the dining hall, somebody said, "Bhagavan, you are late today. What happened?" Bhagavan said, "Yes, I am late, but you see, I had to spend time with a person who brought me some gruel. I had to drink it." Then he said, "The taste of all the items that you have prepared is nothing compared to what he brought me. When I was at the foot of the hill, he used to bring so much."

On another occasion, when Bhagavan was going around the hill, he suddenly changed direction. People wondered at the change in direction. He went inside a farmer's house, and the others followed him. Bhagavan told the farmer, "Every time I go round the hill, you would bring something for me. Today, you did not come. So, I thought you might not be well; that's why I've come to see you." The man was in tears. Bhagavan asked, "Why didn't you come?" The farmer said, "I am ashamed, Bhagavan. Today, I don't have anything to offer you." Bhagavan asked, "You have nothing today?" The farmer said, "I have only yesterday's left-over food that I have boiled in a little water." Bhagavan asked the farmer to bring it. He then made it into a paste, and asked the farmer to get some buttermilk, and put some ginger into it. The whole thing was made into a liquid. Bhagavan gave him one glass of this, took the other glass, and said, "So delicious! You could have brought this." He told the other people, "You have the laddus; this thing may not agree with you." It seems he drank two or three tumblers. This is compassion. That is, he always used to have concern for those who were not treated well in society. It is not what I have that is going to impress Bhagavan. His grace will be unbound and limitless for those who have compassion, and for

the poor. Bhagavan identified himself with the poor. That kind of compassion is very difficult because it is very easy to treat our rich relations with great respect, and ignore the poor ones. Everywhere, it is like this.

On *Jayanthi* day, seeing the huge crowd, the *Sarvaadhikaari*, Chinnaswami, said, “All *sadhus* will be fed later; so you can all go to Palakottu and wait.” When everyone went to the dining hall to eat, Bhagavan was missing. They looked for Bhagavan, and after some time they found him sitting with the beggars. Somebody asked, “Bhagavan, they are all waiting for you. Why are you sitting here?” Bhagavan very politely said, “You said *sadhus* will be fed later. What you mean is that all beggars will be fed later on. I am also a beggar. I want to keep them company.” Chinnaswami was taken aback. Some people were in tears at what they had done, and they said that it would not happen again.

Wherever you go, you find the previous night’s food is usually given to beggars. But in Ramanasramam, because of Bhagavan’s insistence, food was prepared at about ten o’clock in the morning. This fresh food was first fed to dogs and birds; then, it was given to beggars. The devotees, along with Bhagavan, used to eat last. That tradition continues at the *Ashram* even today. Bhagavan always used to say, “Do not give left-overs to beggars.” What is more, he did not want anything to be wasted. If anything was left over, Bhagavan used to make something out of it for breakfast. He did not have even a cup of coffee in private. What you had, he had; he ate along with others.

aatmanyeva aatmanaatushtah
sthita prajnas tadocyate

In other words, he did not find any satisfaction from anything outside the self; he was a *sthitaprajnya* who was extremely happy within.

So, what we should learn from the life of Bhagavan is compassion. When giving to others, we should do so with *shraddha*. Bhagavan says, “He has given me; what is the difficulty in giving to other people? And when you give to other people, do not behave as if you are giving something, because you are in fact, giving to yourself.”

(Talk 9)

4. Freedom from Giving Advice

We all want to be free. There is hardly anyone who doesn't want to be free. The main reason we are unhappy is because we are not allowed to be what we want to be. Each one wants to be free from interference from other people - not just from people outside the family, but also from people within the family. Nobody wants to be in the control of another. The children want to be free, the wife wants to be free, and you want to be free. When you want to be free, you take certain steps, but you don't give the same freedom to other people. You want to impose your views on them. Right or wrong, you tell your children and wife to behave in a particular way. A time comes when you realise that they do not accept what you are saying. They might not quarrel with you, but they just won't listen to you - they don't or won't behave the way you want them to. At that time, you feel deeply distressed because they are not following the good advice you are giving them. Because of your attachment to them, you want them to follow your advice. When they don't, you feel very upset. When an outsider doesn't follow your advice, you don't get upset. You are able to look at it with a certain measure of detachment. You give advice, and that is

the end of it. But when it comes to your own family, you're not able to look at it with any detachment.

You would like your children and wife to behave in a particular fashion because you feel that it's the correct thing to do. You refuse to give them the same freedom that you would like to have for yourself. When somebody comes and tells you what you're doing is wrong, you say that it's not true, and you try to justify what you're doing. You don't want any kind of interference from other people, so you say, "What I am doing is right." This is exactly what the wife says and the children say. You want your son to do engineering and he says, "No." So, there is a lot of tension at home as you go on telling him why it is important to do engineering. Finally, what happens in most cases is that he does what he wants to. But as the head of the family, you feel, "Why is it that they are not listening to me when what I am saying is right?"

You want your family to be happy in the way that you want them to be happy, not in the way they want to be happy. Children, these days, like rock music, western music, etc. But you may not, and so, you say, "Don't play that music. It is rotten music." They have been brought up in a different atmosphere, so they like it. When you talk about Thyagaraja, the children don't like it. In fact, they may not even have heard about the saint. If you haven't talked about Thyagaraja and his music with them, you cannot expect them to know about him. The influence must come from you - the parent. Sometimes, even if you talk about Carnatic music with the children, if the *prarabdha* is such that they have to undergo a different kind of experience, it will happen - they will listen to only rock music, and not Carnatic. No amount of effort and advice on your part will prevent it from happening - there is a divine hand in all this.

The most extraordinary thing is, there is no way we can really reform other people. Therefore, advice must be offered only when asked; we should not offer it when it is not asked for. Not just to people outside the family, but within the family, as well. The commodity that is available freely everywhere in the world is advice. People are always interested in giving advice, but nobody is interested in taking it - especially, when the advice is not asked for. We all want to advise our sons and daughters even when they're thirty or forty years old. There are certain situations when it's our duty to advise someone. If it's not asked for, however, and if it's not our duty, then we should not offer advice. It's not going to help. In fact, many people get irritated when we give unsolicited advice. "Why can't he keep quiet?" they ask. But we continue to give the same old advice because we are concerned about our family. We think it is right on our part to give advice when something is going on. But the thing to remember is, what is going to happen will happen.

What is it that everyone is seeking? Everyone wants to be free, so that he can have peace of mind. You can have real freedom only when there is detachment. Detachment means the sense of me and mine is absent. Somebody comes to you for some help, you help him. Out of gratitude, he comes and sees you for some time, and then, he stops coming. You tell yourself, "Oh, he has become very ungrateful!" By thinking this way, you want to bind him to you. When somebody comes to you for help, give it, and then forget about it. You should not expect him to come to you to express his gratitude. It's true that through your help, he succeeded, but that doesn't mean that you should bind him to you. In fact, it is good if he does not come. You should discourage people from coming.

You should be the same way with your children and wife as well. You should not give them the impression that after you are gone, there will be chaos. Even when you are alive, you should give

them the freedom which will make them believe that they will be able to stand on their own two feet. In other words, avoid giving the impression that if you cease to exist, the members of your family will come to grief. Nobody is indispensable, least of all you. When Sri Rama left, the world didn't collapse. Lord Krishna left, Gandhiji passed away, but the country is still here, the world continues to exist. If the members of your family feel that they can get on with life without you, then you have been a successful head. The sooner you give them independence, the better. And because of the independence and detachment, they will be able to do things without consulting you. As a result, they will be able to stand on their own feet when you are no more. This is very important. Therefore, you should be happy when your children don't consult you; they're becoming independent. Furthermore, you will have time for yourself. Why should you let others pass on their worries to you? Don't bind people to yourself, and don't bind yourself to others.

As we grow older, we realise that we have no control over anyone - sometimes, even ourselves. Gandhiji was selfless. He was extraordinary in so many ways, but surprisingly, his control over his own children was not as great as it was over the country. One of his sons hated him; he died a beggar in Mumbai. His hatred for his father was such that he went about telling all kinds of nasty things about him. Gandhiji did all possible things to change him, but nothing worked. Why such a thing should happen, we do not know. Sri Ramakrishna's nephew was very similar to Gandhi's son - the young man who was staying with the saint for some time, would insult him in public. He would say all kinds of things against the saint, and devotees used to complain against him to the *Paramahansa*. Sri Ramakrishna used to reply, "What can I do? You have to learn to live with him. His nature is like that." Why Sri Ramakrishna chose not to transform his nephew, there's no explanation for that.

There is no point in advising people because after a particular age, we have no control over anybody. How can we have control over them when we have no control over ourselves? How can we expect people to follow our advice when we ourselves find it difficult to? On New Year's Eve, we all make resolutions. Sometimes, we say that we will stop drinking coffee in the morning or that we will stop reading the newspaper. These are two minor changes in our life, but we find it difficult to carry them out. If the coffee is delayed by a few minutes, we become terribly upset; we want it as soon as we get up. This tells us how dependent we are on small things, and how difficult it is for us to change. If we find it difficult to follow our own advice, how can we expect others to follow ours? Why do we expect them to? Why do we get upset when people don't listen? It's because we are afraid. We think of the harm that could come to our children if they don't follow our advice, the harm that could come to our family prestige, etc. Instead of being detached, we begin to look at the problem from our angle - it then becomes a question of our prestige, our position in society, etc.

We are always thinking only of our family, our culture, our country, and so on. But the world is a big place; we have to think about everything. We consider some countries primitive because of our superiority complex. What we eat is better than what people in other countries eat. But those very same countries may consider us very primitive. So, there is no way we can make a final judgment about anyone. Therefore, if we have detachment, if we don't think in terms of me or mine, there will be peace of mind. We will act effectively because we won't worry about what other people will say when we offer them the kind of advice that we feel they should be offered - and once given, we won't interfere, unnecessarily. We will be merely doing our duty.

The *Bhagavad Gita* talks about this,

This is not a spiritual statement totally unrelated to life. It is a statement that is one hundred percent true. What is spirituality? It means having the right kind of relationship in our day-to-day life. When your children don't listen to your advice, should you let them be? Have you done your duty as a parent by merely advising them? This is what I have learnt from my own experience. You can advise your children once or twice on a matter. If they don't follow your advice, you should have the satisfaction that you have done your duty. Don't expect that they will listen to you all the time. Your wife, who has lived with you for twenty or thirty years, may refuse to listen to you on certain issues. Can you force her? You can't, because she is another entity; she wants to be free in her own way. If she says no to your advice, then it is all right; you accept it. Acceptance, after doing your duty, is the important thing.

Spirituality is something that must be practised. For example, we may say, "I have faith in God." Just because we say it, does it mean we believe in God? If we are one hundred percent convinced that everything is happening according to his will, we will be totally silent. Not only mentally, but also emotionally. If something happens, whether it's good or bad, we will accept it. But not all of us have reached this stage. Therefore, when something good happens, we think it was because of our ability. When something bad happens, we blame God and the lack of grace on his part. In other words, what is good, we accept; when something bad happens, we blame God, and say that he does not have eyes to see.

But if a person truly feels that nothing can happen without his will, he will accept everything. This state of mind is something that only he can give. But even such a person is sometimes forced to act very differently from what he feels or thinks. Let me give you an example. Suppose your son has applied for a job, and you tell

yourself, "Whatever has to happen will happen." You firmly believe in this. Then, you look around, and you find that everyone else is getting some recommendation or the other. For the sake of your son, you too get a recommendation letter from a minister. You tell others, "He is the most important minister in the Cabinet. So, I have taken his recommendation." You are confident that your son will get the job. But he does not get it; later on, you find out that even though this minister is powerful, the Chief Minister himself was interested in so and so. You know what you did was wrong, but the situation demanded it. In a situation like this, you find it difficult to act the way you want to; you end up acting in a way that contradicts your beliefs. But there are some occasions when you do what you believe in - even when people are telling you that it's the wrong thing to do.

I will give you an example. All my life, I have not gone to anyone for my promotion, and anything else regarding my job - even when I was asked to approach so and so. When I went to the States in September 1965, I went alone. After going there, I wanted to bring my family. Everyone said that I couldn't because I didn't have enough money in my bank account. You had to have at least four hundred dollars in those days if you wanted to bring your wife and children. My niece was there, and she said she would immediately transfer six hundred dollars into my account, and I could get a certificate from the bank. "You send the certificate to India, and the American Consulate will give the visa," she said. What I thought was, "This is not my money. I would be lying to the Consulate by sending such a certificate." Everyone said, "Why are you worried? Everyone is doing it." I, however, was uncomfortable. I took the certificate from my niece and wrote a letter to the Consulate in Chennai saying:

I want to bring my wife and children here, but I am getting only two hundred dollars a month as stipend. The stipulation is that I must have at least four hundred dollars in order to maintain

myself. Maybe, your assessment is based on what an average American does - he smokes, eats non-vegetarian food, drinks, etc. I don't do any of these things, so I believe that my family and I can live on two hundred dollars. On the basis of this letter, if you grant the visa, I will be grateful. Otherwise, it is all right.

I didn't enclose the bank certificate. I sent a copy of the letter to my brother-in-law, and he was very upset. He gave the letter to my student who worked in the passport office. The student went to the Consulate and spoke to the people there. The Consul said he had also received my letter, and requested that my wife come and see him.

The Consul asked my wife a number of questions. Then he said, "I have received a very interesting letter from your husband. He says that he is getting only two hundred dollars, and he wants his wife and children to come. Do you think he can manage?" She said, "I have not been to the States, but if he says he can manage, he can manage." The Consul smiled and said, "I am issuing the visa because your husband is honest. We get a number of letters from the US saying I have this much bank balance. We know how the bank balance is got. If I had got a letter like that, I wouldn't have issued the visa. But your husband has been absolutely frank, and that has moved me. So, I am issuing the visa." The visa was immediately issued.

Sometimes, when you act in the right way like this, you may have to go through a lot of difficulties; but through all these difficulties, there will be an undercurrent of peace. The satisfaction that you get out of this is more than the satisfaction that you'll get when you do something wrong. When you do something which you think is right, when you tread the correct path, you must remember that it is God who is making you do this. Your intelligence has nothing to do with it. If you are good even for a few minutes, you must be grateful to God.

*yatraiva yatraiva mano madeeyam tatraiva tatraiva tava
svarupam
yatraiva yatraiva siro madeeyam tatraiva tatraiva padadvayam te*

That's why we say, "O Lord, I can't prostrate before you; so, wherever my head is, you put your feet there. I can't think of you; so, wherever my mind wanders, you show your *swaroopam*."

What God will give us is the kind of mind that will accept everything as his will. The greatest thing about God is that he will give freedom, and he won't come and bother us every minute. We think that we have the freedom to do everything. It takes us a long time to realise that he has been behind everything that's happened in our life. The moment we accept everything as his will, we no longer want to control others. We like freedom, and we would like to give the same freedom to others. In fact, in life, we realise that we like the company of people who give us this freedom. And so, to our family members and to other people, we must give the same freedom we want for ourselves. Do not interfere too much; leave them to themselves, and do not give advice, unsought. When it is sought, we must give our suggestions. We should not bind people to us. When they come to us, they must have a sense of joy that they will not be bound. All this is possible only through his grace.

(Talk 11)

5. Practising What We Preach

Everybody has some problem or the other. It may be considered a minor problem by others, but for the person who is experiencing it, the problem is major, and very difficult to solve. When we are really depressed, for some reason or the other, we feel there is really no *saara* in this *samsara*. We ask, “There are millions of people in this world, but of all the people, why should this happen to me?” We can tell the person to ignore the problem, but he will find it difficult to do so. Despite the problems we all have, each one of us wants to continue living in this world. We don't wish to die. Nobody says they would like to leave this world because of the suffering and sorrow.

Whatever problems we may have, whatever we may say, the fact is, we are all attached to life. We would like to live as long as we possibly can because in the midst of all the sorrow, there is a little bit of joy and a little bit of pleasure. We forget our sorrows in those moments when we experience them. Vyasa narrates the following story in the *Mahabharata*.

A tiger was chasing a man. The man ran, and soon came across a dry well. He started climbing down the well, and thought he had escaped the tiger. As he was slowly climbing down, he saw that at the bottom of the well, there was a huge cobra. He thought to himself, “I wanted to escape from the tiger. Now, there is a cobra at the bottom of the well!” He told himself, “It’s all right! I won’t go right to the bottom. I will stand at the side of the well.” He caught hold of some grass that was growing there for support. He thought, “I am lucky that there is some grass that I can hold on to.” Suddenly, he heard a noise. He found that a rat was trying to gnaw away at the root of the grass that he was holding on to. He then looked up, and complained loudly to the Lord, “O God! Is there no hope for me? There is a tiger above me, and a cobra below me. I

want to cling to this grass for support, but it's being eaten by a rat. I might fall into the well at any moment. Why are you treating me like this?" As he was complaining loudly, with his mouth wide open, a drop of honey from a beehive close by fell on his tongue. The man thought, "How sweet this is!" For a moment, he forgot all his problems - the tiger, the snake and the rat. Vyasa says that this is what our life is all about. We are surrounded by dangers and problems of various kinds, but a little bit of honey, every now and then, makes us forget about them.

All our saints and sages have told us about the various ways in which we can overcome these dangers. One may read the scriptures and learn from them about how to overcome problems. We should, however, not think that just because we have studied spiritual matters, we will become better at dealing with problems. When we study these things, we must ask for the Lord's grace, because mere *shastra jnana* will not save us. Theoretical and practical knowledge are two different things. Even though we may have studied a great deal, when it comes to actual practice, we cannot practise all these unless we have the grace of the Lord. Most people, after listening to a great discourse, feel that they should read the *Upanishads*, the *Vedas*, the *Gita*, and so on. It is good to read these books. We won't, however, necessarily become a better *sadhaka*, merely by reading them. If we read these books, we will be able to explain these things better, but we may not be able to relate the newly acquired knowledge to our day-to-day life. As Shankara reminds us repeatedly in his *Bhaja Govindam*,

*nahi nahi rakshati dukrumkarane
bhaja Govindam bhaja Govindam
Govindam bhaja moodamathe*

Only through worship, and only through his grace, can we be saved. Even great sages and saints failed in times of crisis to practise what they preached.

I have told you the story of Parikshit several times in our *satsangs*. He was the son of Abhimanyu, and the grandson of the great Arjuna. He was a well-read, pious and just king. But one day, when he went hunting, this pious king lost his temper with a *rishi* who was deep in meditation. To teach the *rishi* a lesson, Parikshit draped a dead snake around the *rishi's* neck. Parikshit was a learned man, but in this situation, his actions did not reflect his learning. This happens to all of us - even the great *rishis*. It happened to Janamejaya, Prarikshit's son, as well.

Janamejaya was a child when his father died. Like his father, he grew up to be a great scholar, and was greatly interested in spiritual matters. Janamejaya was aware how his father had died. One day, he said to himself, "My father did not harm any snake. Yet, Takshaka killed my father. My father only took a dead snake and put it around the neck of a *rishi*. For that, the *rishi's* son cursed him, and said that he would die of snakebite. I will kill all the snakes in this world. I will see to it that there are no snakes left in this world."

Janamejaya consulted all his *purohits* saying, "I want to conduct a *yajna*. You must help me in this. There should not be a single snake left in this world!" When a king or a minister asks for something to be done, there are generally very few people who will voice their dissent; they are afraid of what may happen if they don't follow orders. Most people are merely interested in flattering the person in power. This is not a recent thing; it has always been like this. No one had the courage to ask Janamejaya, "Why do you want to kill all the snakes in this world? Don't kill the serpents because they are a part of this world." Even those who had *shastra jnana* were ready to conduct the *yajna*. They said, "We know the

mantras. With the power of these mantras, we will draw all the snakes into the holy fire.” There was only one person who said, “You will not succeed because a small boy will prevent it.” On hearing this, Janamejaya said to his guards, “See to it that all the entrances are blocked. Don’t allow anyone into this *yajnasala*.”

Vyasa has described the *yajna* beautifully, giving the names of the various snakes. One by one, they all fell into the fire, screaming. Janamejaya was very happy. When he knew that all snakes had been burnt in the fire, he asked the *purohits*, “Where is Takshaka, the king of the serpents? He has not come. He must be hiding somewhere.” The *purohits* said, “The power of the *mantra* is dragging him here, so he has gone to Indra now. We can see Indra sitting on his throne, and Takshaka is on his lap, pleading with him.” Janamejaya said, “If that is so, you utter a more powerful *mantra* which will drag Indra also along with the snake!” When they started doing this, Indra was also dragged towards the fire. Indra screamed, as did Takshaka. It was then that the King of Heaven sent a message to the son of Jaratkaaru, Astika.

Jaratkaaru was a *rishi* and a great *jnani*. He was not interested in worldly affairs. One day, he saw some spirits hanging upside down from the trees. Jaratkaaru went to them and asked, “Why are you all hanging upside down?” Then the spirits said, “We are your ancestors. We are all suffering because there is no one to do *tarpanas* and *shraadh*s for us. You are not married, and so, there is nobody to do them.” They continued, “If you get married and have one or two children, then, we will all be saved.” The *rishi* told his ancestors, “If I meet a girl who has the same name as I do, I will marry her.”

Jaratkaaru went in search of such a girl. He told anyone he met that he would marry a girl with the same name as his. Vasuki, the King of Serpents, had a sister by the very same name. He went to Jaratkaaru Maharishi, and asked, “Why don’t you marry my sister?”

She has the same name as you.” Jaratkaaru was very surprised. He married her saying, “I am marrying you because the spirits asked me to get married. If you displease me in any way, I will go away.”

One day, as the sun was about to set, Jaratkaaru was sleeping with his head on his wife’s lap. She was upset because in our *shastras*, it is said one should not lie in bed either at sunset or sunrise. It is considered a great sin to sleep when the sun is setting. *Sandhyaakaal* is considered to be very important. *Sandhya* actually means a gap - that small period between darkness and light is called *sandhya*. We have a *sandhya* in the morning, and one in the evening. The *rishi's* wife woke him up since there is a *niyati* in all these things. Jaratkaaru was angry, and he said to his wife, “I never wanted you to wake me up. I know these things. You have displeased me, so I am leaving.” She said, “It is not good for you to sleep at this time, and that is why I woke you up.” He said, “My job is over. You are pregnant. You're a remarkable person; you are a *tapasvini*. Go to Kailash.” So, she went to Kailash through his grace, and she delivered a child. She named him Astika. It is said, he was brought up by Shiva and Parvati.

As Indra was being pulled down, he realised that he would also fall into the fire and die. He sent a message to Astika, “Takshaka is going to fall into the fire. He is dragging me with him. Only you can save us.” Astika, Vasuki’s sister’s son, managed to get into the *yajnashala*. Once somebody enters the *yajnashala*, they cannot be asked to leave; it is a matter of etiquette. When Janamejaya saw Astika, he was very impressed. He completely forgot that he'd been told a young boy would stop the *yajna*. Astika praised Janamejaya, “What a *yajna*! Nobody has performed such a *yajna* till now. You have so many *purohits* performing the *yajna*.” Janamejaya said, “What do you want? Tell me, and I will give it to you.” Astika said, “You have made a promise. You should not go

back on it.” Janamejaya said, “Why would I do that? Your face is brilliant, so full of *tejas*. Tell me what you want. I will definitely give it to you.” Astika said, “Stop this *yajna*!” The stunned Janamejaya said, “I will give you anything, any other boon. Don’t ask me to stop this. Almost all the serpents have been killed. I am only waiting for Takshaka.” Astika asked, “What harm have the snakes done? Why have you killed so many serpents? Why do you want to kill Takshaka? Remember, your father, Parikshit, was destined to die. What he did was not correct. He should not have done what he did to a *muni*. But he accepted his mistake, and because of him, we have the *Bhagavata*. Shuka narrated to him the story of the various *avatars*. Do not, in any way, be vindictive; it is not good for you.” Janamejaya realised his mistake, and asked the *purohitas* to stop the *yajna*. Indra and Takshaka escaped the fire. Later, through his extraordinary power, Astika brought back to life all the serpents that had fallen into the fire.

Janamejaya was not an ordinary person, yet he wanted to take vengeance on the snakes; he wanted to kill all of them. Like his father, Parikshit, Janamejaya’s *shastra jnana* was extraordinary, but when it came to practice, he was like an ordinary person. Our ancestors have told us a number of such stories to show us that mere intellectual appreciation is not enough. The story of Garuda is another such example.

Kashyapa *Muni* had two wives - Vinata and Kadru. He told them, “I was asked to marry. It is my *prarabdha*. But once you conceive, I will go away.” The wives argued, but the *Muni* said, “I have no interest in this kind of life.” He asked each, “How many children do you want?” Kadru said, “I want one thousand children who will be very strong and who will support me.” Vinata replied, “I want only two children, but they must be stronger than all the one thousand children put together.” Kadru was surprised and wondered why she hadn't thought of it. Kashyapa *Muni* granted

each their boon. Kadru had one thousand eggs and Vinata had two eggs. Kadru's eggs resulted in the birth of one thousand snakes. Vinata was worried because her two eggs did not show any sign of hatching. One day, out of sheer frustration, she broke open one of the eggs, only to find a half-developed child. From the hip downward, there was no development. The child came out of the shell, bright and glorious, and said, "Mother, because of your impatience, I am half-formed. I will leave now. I won't stay with you. From that other egg will come out someone who will be the most powerful in this world." Saying this, the child went into the sky. And that child is Anooa, the one who drives the chariot of the sun.

Much later, from the other egg, came Garuda. Kadru, who had one thousand snakes, found it difficult to accept that Garuda was stronger. When the ocean was churned, many things came out of it, including the white horse, Uchchaihshravas, Lakshmi and finally *amrut*. The beautiful horse was absolutely white. One day, Kadru asked Vinata, "What is the colour of the horse's tail?" Vinata said, "What is so difficult about that? It is white." Kadru said, "Let's make a bet. I say it is black, and you say it is white. If you win, I will be your slave; if I win, you will be my slave." Vinata agreed, and they both went to look at the horse's tail from a distance. Kadru had asked some of the snakes to wind themselves around the horse's tail; so, when Vinata saw the animal from a distance, its tail appeared black. Vinata immediately said, "I'm wrong. It is black; I thought it was white." Then Kadru told her, "You must be my slave."

When Garuda grew up, he was very upset that his mother was Kadru's slave. He told Kadru, "I don't want my mother to be your slave. What can I do to free her from your bondage?" Kadru replied, "If you bring *amrut* from heaven for us, then I will free her." He said, "I will bring *amrut* from heaven. That is no

problem.” Then, as you all know, Garuda went to heaven, returned along with Indra with the *amrut*. He put the vessel containing the *amrut* on *darbha* grass, and said to Kadru, "I have brought the *amrut*. From now onwards, my mother will not be your slave.” Kadru agreed. The snakes were asked to take a bath before drinking the nectar. When they went for a bath, Indra took away the *amrut*. When the snakes returned and found no *amrut*, they were very upset. They were angry that Indra had played a trick on them. Human nature being what it is, the snakes said, “Let us at least lick the place where *amrut* was kept so that we will become immortal.” They started licking the *darbha* grass. What happened? Their tongue got split. That is why they say that the snake has a forked tongue.

Why this story? This is a story of jealousy. Kadru was the daughter of Daksha - the son of Lord Brahma. She was a *shastra jnani*, yet she acted very pettily; she tricked her sister into becoming her slave. She was extremely jealous of her sibling's son. Though very learned, when it came to practising what she had learnt in real life, Kadru's *prarabdha* was like anybody else's. The same is true of learned kings like Parikshit and Janamejaya. What does all this mean for us? It means that reading books, reading the *shastras* and the *Vedas* is good, but it is an intellectual activity. Mere intellectual appreciation is not enough; ten minutes of *sadhana* is better than ten hours of reading the *Vedas* or the *Upanishads*. If we are able to achieve this, it is because of the extraordinary grace of the *guru*. That is why Bhagavan says that *guru krupa* is something extraordinary.

When we have this *krupa*, we will have peace of mind, for he will give us the strength to bear everything. Bhagavan had to face so many problems. A boy urinated on him, but he remained totally indifferent. He accepted everything because of the absence of

dehatma buddhi. When we control the mind, we are always in a state of happiness.

sat chit ananda

There is then no *aham*, no *mama kaara*; no ego or sense of individuality. We are *sat chit ananda*, where the heart has swallowed the mind. When there is real *sadhana*, the mind is churned and cooked in the heart.

khabalitam manastava vibho hridaa
tvamasi santatam vilasito mudaa

Kavyakantha says, “Bhagavan, what an extraordinary thing you have done. We take a handful of rice and then swallow it. You have done the same thing with the mind. You have cooked our mind in our heart, and it has disappeared.”

Some people go around the *Navagrahas* every day because they think that this *graham* may harm them otherwise. However, when we have the *anugraha* of our *guru*, no *Navagrahas* can touch us.

(Talk 17)

6. A True Guru

There are those who consider themselves great *gurus*, and expect their *shishyas* to call on them every day. If the *shishyas* don't come, they are very upset. Bhagavan never asked anyone to come, and never asked anyone to leave. That kind of attitude is possible only if we wish to be free; and unless I myself am totally free, I will not be able to give this freedom to others. What kind of

freedom are we all seeking? We want the freedom to do what we want, not being bound to anyone, including the people we like. You like your husband, but you don't want to be bound to him. Similarly, you like your wife, but you don't wish to be bound to her. You love your children, but you don't want to be bound to them either. The children, too, don't want to be bound to their parents. But the problem is, we bind ourselves to others, and would like them to be bound to us. We don't have any freedom because of our attachment to innumerable things. We want other people to obey us, bind themselves to us; that is why, we are not free. Only someone like a Krishna can give us that freedom.

Krishna says, *yoga* literally means, *karmasu kaushalam*, that is, excellence in action. In other words, whatever your duty is, you do it to the best of your ability, without expecting anything in return. The result, whether you succeed or not, is not important. It is, in fact, immaterial. You are a true *yogi* when you do things to the best of your ability, and without expectations. That is, you ask yourself, "What is my duty at this particular moment?" Consider every piece of work that you have to do as important - it could be something as trivial as affixing a stamp or going from one place to another. Krishna says, "Don't consider any work to be great or small; when you have a duty to perform, put your heart and soul into it." When we work in this fashion, the Lord will give us the strength to perform the action. I can't give myself the strength, only he can give the strength that is needed.

Sometimes, when we plan to do a particular thing on a particular day, we fall ill. There is no way we can explain this strange occurrence. Why we should have fever on that particular day, there is no way to explain it. So, Krishna says, "When you remain unaffected by whatever is happening, and you do your duty to the best of your ability, without expecting anything in return, your mind will be purified." We can attain that kind of attitude,

provided we remain detached; and detachment is something that only the Lord can give us. So, when a person doesn't follow your advice, don't get upset, because he has every right to think for himself - the final decision is his. You should not be upset with his decision.

This is what happens with some *gurus*; they want their *shishyas* to follow them implicitly, and become very upset when the *shishyas* do not follow their each and every word. The *guru* wants to bind the *shishyas* to him; that is the reason he does not wish to give them the freedom to do what they want. A true *guru*, however, gives you this freedom; we must learn this from the lives of Bhagavan and Sri Krishna. Bhagavan neither gave advice nor asked anyone to follow him. If he was asked a question, he gave an answer; he never asked the person if he was following his advice.

When a *shishya* informs his *guru* that he would like to do something different, the *guru* gets very upset. Sometimes, when the *shishya* has spent sufficient time with the *guru*, he informs his master, "I don't like you. I will start my own *ashram*." That is what is happening nowadays; these are the realities of life. A real *guru* is one who gives advice when he is asked, and does not ask the *shishya* whether he is following it or not. He will give the *shishya* total freedom, and the *shishya* will have no fear of the consequences as a result of following or not following him. Such a *guru*, we will get only if we are extraordinarily lucky. There is a great difference between *bodha gurus* and *badha gurus*. *Badha gurus* are those who would like to tie themselves to you. A real *jnana guru* is one who will give you tremendous freedom to do what you want. Krishna was a *bodha guru*, and that is why he says at the end of the *Gita*, "O Arjuna, I have told you so much; do what you consider best. Do what you like."

To say, "I have done my duty, and that is the end of it," is the most difficult thing to do. We cannot remain that detached, unless we have the grace of the Lord. We have to remember that we cannot change people, but we can change ourselves. God has given us the complete freedom to do what we want. If, through his grace, we think more and more of him, he will also give us the state where we will be able to watch others with great compassion and without condemnation. Bhagavan says, "When you change yourself, people around you will change in the way you want them to change." When we ask people to change, there will be very little reaction; but when we ourselves change, we will stop worrying about whether we are influencing others or not. Bhagavan says, "When you are good, things around you will be good." So he says, self-reform will lead to social reform. If you do not reform yourself, you cannot reform others. If you reform yourself to some extent, to that extent there will be reform in the other person. When you reform yourself, and people come to you, they will have good thoughts for some time. But if you yourself are not good, and you tell other people to be good, you are not going to have any impact, whatsoever.

This is what we should remember all the time; especially, when we give advice to other people. Give them the freedom to do what they want after listening to you. It is their responsibility to do the right thing; if they have to suffer, they will suffer. A real parent is one who will give their grown-up children total freedom to do what they want. When asked, give them advice, but don't worry if the advice is followed or not. We must remember that our values and those of our children are very different. Our values are thirty or forty years old.

In the *Gita*, Lord Krishna, after talking to Arjuna for a long time (nearly 700 verses) concludes by saying, *yathechhasi thathaa kuru*. This half a line is most extraordinary; it is something that we

should always remember. Krishna says, "I have told you the secret of all of life; something that I have not told anyone, O Arjuna, I have told you! Reflect on what I have said, and do what you like." How many of us would say this? If I were a *guru*, I would say, "Follow me, follow my instructions." Krishna, however, gives Arjuna the freedom to do whatever he wants. After listening to the Lord, Arjuna replies,

karishye vachanam tava

"My *moha*, my illusion is gone. I see things clearly now, and I have decided to do what you want me to do."

People think that spiritual life is different from ordinary life. This, however, is not true, for they are closely related. We can learn so much from the *Gita* and from Bhagavan about how to conduct ourselves in our day-to-day world. *Moksha* literally means freedom, and we all want *moksha*. We want freedom for ourselves - we don't want to be bothered by others. If this is our feeling, we must realise that others also feel the same way. Others also would like to have the same freedom; they don't wish to be bothered by you and me. What is more, Krishna says renunciation does not mean renunciation of compassion for others or the renunciation of gifts for other people. When giving to others, one must give without expecting gratitude from them. The important thing is, if we are doing all this, we must not make people think that we are doing this for them. They should not feel that if we are not there, they will be helpless. We must give them the freedom to do what they want to do; if our advice is not followed, we must not be upset.

(Talk 51 A)

7. Money, Work and Happiness

Some of you may like to know the meaning of the verse we recite at the end of our *satsang*. It is a *sloka* that is recited at the end of all functions. After doing *puja*, *japa*, *dhyana*, performing a wedding ceremony or a *shraadh*, the last verse is very often,

*na karmanaa na prajayaa dhanena tyagenaike
amrutatvamaanasuh*

Why is it recited? What does it mean? We all want to live permanently in this world, but we cannot. The body will drop away one day or the other. Whenever we remember great people for their great achievements - books, speeches, sacrifices - we feel we should also be as great as those people. Every human being wants to be considered great in some way or the other. We would like to be remembered by posterity. We want immortality, *amrutattvam*. This is a human failing, a weakness which most people have. Some become famous, and some don't. We think that we can become immortal in one way or the other. But who are the people whom we actually remember? There must have been so many rich people, great kings, etc. We don't remember all of them. In this *sloka*, it says a few people attained immortality, *amrutatva*. How?

na karmanaa na prajayaa dhanena

They attained immortality, not by getting wealth (*dhanena*), not by doing any kind of work (*karmana*), or through children (*prajayaa*). They became famous and attained immortality through their sacrifice, *tyaga*.

tyagenaike amrutatvamaanasuh

They did not attain immortality through *bhoga*, but by *tyaga*; that is, renunciation. We think that by doing things, we will be rewarded; and that by doing a variety of things, we will become immortal. This verse says that it is not by doing work that we become immortal.

Almost everybody wants to work, nobody wants to remain quiet. We always criticize a person who is idle; he is one who doesn't do what he is expected to. We want him to do some work, but he goes and sees a movie instead. He is wasting his time; we would like him to spend his time usefully by doing things that we would like him to do. We expect an ordinary person to earn his livelihood. We don't want him to depend on other people for his livelihood. When he takes our money, or his parents' money, and then lives the way he wants to live, we say that he is an idle fellow. It is not that he is not doing anything, he is not doing the kind of things that we want him to. According to us, his life is not fruitful. When a person does not do the kind of work that you and I do, we say that he is a lazy fellow, and is wasting his time. This is the attitude of people all over the world.

In fact, this would be our attitude to a *jnani* if we didn't understand him. We would say a *jnani* is wasting his time. Some people used to tell Bhagavan that he was wasting his time. They used to ask, "Why don't you do something? Why are you sitting in one place? You are idle, you are lazy!" Do you have any idea how difficult it is to sit in one place even for half an hour? Movement of the body is due to the movement of the mind. Where there is *chalana* of the mind, there is *chalana* of the body. But, when we are extraordinarily active in a way that others can't see that we are active, then, people would say that we are not doing anything. When the fan moves at top speed, we can't see its blades. We are able to see the individual blades only when the fan stops moving. When we see the extraordinary swiftness of the movement of the

fan, we feel the breeze, but we don't see the blades. A *jnani* works in a similar fashion; we cannot see his actual working because he does it in a manner that you and I cannot see. He appears to be still, but like the fan, he is moving at extraordinary speed.

We ordinary human beings are used to working. We go from place to place, read, speak, etc. We are very happy because we think we are doing something useful. But a *jnani* does the same without appearing to do anything. It is a state where there is complete action in inaction. Even though there is extraordinary action, we don't see that action - we only see the inaction.

We have certain ambitions in life. We would like to fulfil them, but for some strange reason if we cannot, we feel disappointed. We feel sorry that we could not become an engineer, an IAS officer, a scientist or whatever it is we worked towards. Therefore, we decide to have children in the hope that we can leave behind something which will remind others of our existence. We would like our children to live our dream. If you did not have the opportunity to become an engineer or a doctor, you would like them to become one. Your daughter or son, however, may have no interest in the job. They might become what you want them to, but one day, you suddenly realise that they don't appreciate all that you have done for them; they don't have the same kind of appreciation for you, as you have for them. They might even have the feeling that they are better than you without realising that there were circumstances that were responsible for you not becoming what you wanted to become. Instead of showing appreciation and gratitude, they may display contempt for you. I have seen very simple and orthodox parents send their children to posh public schools. The children become very westernized, and by the time they are thirteen or fourteen, they tell their parents they don't have manners because they use their hands while eating. They look

down on, and very often, ignore their parents who have sacrificed many things in order to educate them.

Shankara says,

*kaate kaanta kaste putrah samsaroyamativa vicitrah
kasya tvam vaa kuta aayaatah tattvam cintaya tadiha bhraatah*

Each one of our children has an aptitude, and they want to do something; sometimes, they succeed, sometimes, they don't. We advise them, but they don't listen to us always. We must realise that we don't have any control over our children or money. What is the control that we have when our children are young? Very little. Even when they disobey us, what do we do? We take pleasure in it and laugh. But when the child grows up, and does the same thing, we say he is obstinate, or that he doesn't have respect for elders.

That is why reading the *Ramayana* is so important. In the *Ramayana*, we have everything. Vishwamitra took Rama and Lakshmana to the forest and ordered them to kill the *rakshashas* that were troubling him. When the brothers completed the task successfully, Vishwamitra took them to Mythila. Rama and Lakshmana did not know the reason. Only after they went, Vishwamitra asked Janaka to show them the Shiva *dhanush*. You know the rest of the story. When Rama broke the bow, Janaka was very happy. He announced to Rama, "You know, I told myself I would give my daughter only to a person who could lift this bow and break it." Then he said, "I would like you to marry my daughter." Rama replied, "I cannot marry Sita. First of all, you must send word to my father. If my father comes here, and gives me the permission to marry, only then, will I marry Sita." This is an extraordinary thing to say. Rama was never carried away by anything; he was always conscious of his duty. What is my duty at this particular moment? That is why it is said, if you want *moksha*,

worship Krishna; if you want to do your duty properly, you must worship Rama because in every act of his, *vigrahavaan dharmah*, there was *dharma*. He never did anything against *dharma*.

kaate kaanta kaste putrah samsaroyamativa vicitrah

Shankara says that we must have a sense of proportion for everything. This world is a very strange place. For twenty-three or twenty-four years, we have brothers, sisters, parents, and so on. After we get married, for the rest of our life, we are so attached to the woman we've just met. We don't have the same consideration for our sister, brother, or parents, anymore. Then, when we have children, we become far more attached to them than to anyone else. Shankara asks, "Who is this woman who came late into your life and swept aside your affection for your parents, brothers and sisters?"

kasya tvam vaa kuta aayaatah tattvam cintaya tadiha bhraatah

Who is your wife and who is your son? Think about it; to whom do you belong? Was there any effort on your part to change your affections? Did you say you wanted to be born? Did you choose your parents? Did you have any choice in the kind of children you wanted? The moment you are born into a family, your mother, your father, your grandfather, grandmother, sisters and brothers are determined. Your whole environment is determined. You can ask, "Why should I be brought up in this environment instead of another environment?" There is no logical answer to this question.

We don't have the freedom to be born to a particular mother or father. We all talk about freedom or choice, but we don't have the freedom to choose the environment we want. Our ancestors looked at things from a larger perspective. When they were asked why is it that I have this particular mother, father, sister and so on, they said, "It is your *prarabdha*." Shankara says that this is an

extraordinary thing. All these people come in the middle of one's life and we get attached to them. *Kasya tvam vaa?* Whom do you belong to? *Kuta aayaatah?* Where did you come from? *Tattvam cintaya tadiha bhraatah.* Think about this, *bhraatah* or brother. He says, "Don't get excited about this, and become too attached to your wife, children, and grandchildren. You must have affection for them, but not attachment. Do not think your life will be miserable when you leave them or they leave you. It is attachment that makes you believe that life without them will be miserable." Shankara says in another verse,

bhaaryaa bibhyati tasminkaaye

He wants us to understand that though the husband and the wife may be close, it must not be mistaken for love. When there is real love, there is no attachment; we will not bind the person to us. When there is attachment, we would like the other person to do what we want him to do. This is the difference between love and attachment. I would like my son to listen to me, to do whatever I say. When he doesn't, I'm upset. Where there is real love, there will be freedom. An ordinary *guru* would say, "Come to me, I will give you this." He binds us to him. A *jnani*, on the other hand, would not give us the impression that he is running our life. He would guide us without binding us to him. He would do everything possible to guide us, and what is more, we would get the impression that we can live without him. A true *jnani* would give us the freedom to do what we want to do, even though what we do is the result of his unseen hands. He guides us without telling us. An ordinary person would say, "Do this and this; if you don't listen to me, this is what will happen to you." Freedom goes with real love; bondage goes with attachment.

It is our attachment to things and to people that we need to overcome. We are all attached to money. We earn in order to be happy, but our desire to make more and more is never satisfied.

Money is slow poison; it kills a man, without any external manifestation. That is precisely the reason why saints and sages won't ever touch money. None of them ever asked us to give up money. They said, "Don't spend your entire life running after it. Limit your wants; don't spend your whole life earning more and more." This is a lesson for us.

Gandhiji did not come from an ordinary family; his father was a *dewan*, and so he could afford to send Gandhiji to England in those days. At the age of forty, Gandhiji felt he should lead a simple life. He could have minted money, but he said, "I have to do something for other people. I should not spend my time earning money." So, he decided to suffer for other people. He said, "He who has created me will look after me."

*varumbadi solilai
vanden padiyala
varundidun talavidhi
Arunaachalaa!*

Similarly, Bhagavan came all the way from Madurai to Tiruvannamalai at the age of seventeen. He threw away all the money and sweets he had, on the very first day, because he felt that hereafter, it was the responsibility of Arunachala to look after him. He did not have any doubt that the Lord would take care of him. Otherwise, he would have taken five rupees when he left home - you and I would have done so. But Bhagavan took only three rupees, which was the train fare from Madurai to Tiruvannamalai. This is *sharanagati*.

Bhagavan says, "Why do you worry? There is a higher power that will look after you in the way you have to be looked after." Why is it that he and Sri Ramakrishna suffered from cancer? You and I

would say that the higher power did not look after them properly. But look at the way they dealt with cancer - they dismissed it. We all have problems, physical and mental; there will never be a time when there will be no problems. But through the Lord's grace, we will be able to face them without worrying too much.

So, Shankara says,

arthamanartham bhaavaya nityam

Be careful - money is important, but do not think that money will give you happiness. Money is necessary, but do not think that more money will give you more happiness.

putraadapi dhana bhaajaam bhith

He says that if we have a lot of money in this world, we will have lots of problems. We will even be afraid of our own children. The moment we have more than what we need, we will have all kinds problems. So, he says, have a sense of proportion; we must decide how much we need, and be satisfied with it. That is, what we get with our own *vittam tena vinodaya chittam*, be satisfied with the money that we get by doing work, *nijakarmopaattam*. In this verse, Shankara says that we are not going to become important by getting more money, by having children, or by doing more and more work.

Bhagavan says,

*krtimahodadhau patanakaaranam
phalamasasvatam gatinirodhakam*

Don't fall into this great ocean of work. Do what you have got to do, and if you have some leisure, do *puja* or *japa*, and meditate on the Supreme Being. Do not think that you should be doing work all the time. Meditate on him. This world is a great ocean - *krtimahodadhau patanakaaranam*. Do not think that by doing

more and more work, you will be happy. It is not so, because happiness, *karmaphala*, is given by the Lord.

karturaajnyayaa praapyate phalam

Do what you've got to do, to the best of your ability, and leave the rest to him. If we think that by doing more and more work, and by making more and more money, we will get happiness, then we are mistaken. Work will itself become a hindrance to happiness, a hindrance to our *santosa* and our *ananda*.

*na karmanaa na prajayaa dhanena tyagenaike
amrutatvamaanasuh*

The sages and saints who attained immortality, did not attain it through work, through children or through wealth. So, *na karma, praja, dhana* - do not think that you will get *ananda*, joy or supreme happiness through any one of these. They attained bliss, not through these, but through renunciation. What is renunciation? It is not the renunciation of family and friends; it does not mean that you give up your job, and go to the forest. Renunciation means renunciation of the ego, giving up the sense of individuality, bidding goodbye to *ahamkara* and *mamakara*.

(Talk 85)

8. Rein in the Mind

nirmalaaya prashaantaaya Dakssinnaamurtaye namah

All *gurus* are the same, but because we do not know enough, we talk about them in order to know more. When we listen, no matter who your *guru* is, we are moved, and then we think of our own *guru*. If you have a particular *guru*, you don't have to become

somebody else's disciple; you can continue to be with your own *guru*. I say this because you should not have any conflict in your mind. Some of you come and ask me what you should do. Do not worry about it. The Maharshi is not an ordinary human being to become upset if you stop going to him. *Jnanis* are not like that. They don't want to bind us to anybody - themselves, included. Anyone who binds us to them is not a *guru*. Anyone who says, "If you don't come to me for two days, you will be ruined," is not a *guru* - whatever else he may be. Someone who feels that his son should not take any decisions without consulting him is not a good parent. A good parent is one who allows his children to make their own decisions after they become adults.

We have problems because we want as many people as possible to tell us that they can't exist without us. If somebody tells me, "Sir, I depend entirely on you," then I have failed, because one day or the other, I will be gone. A real *guru* is one who gives total freedom because he is free. Only people who have freedom will give freedom to other people. A parent who is free will give freedom to his children. It doesn't mean he is indifferent. He is very happy when his children take decisions on their own. He will give advice when asked, irrespective of what the children might think. Sometimes, we wonder what will happen to our children when we are not there. We give advice that we think is right, and do not worry if they do not follow what we tell them to do. They are entities in themselves. The greatest thing about God is that he gives us, from time to time, the freedom not to think of him. Sometimes, he gives us the freedom to question his very existence: "Is there a God? Can there be a God?" No human being would give us the freedom not to believe in him, but God gives us this freedom. The great thing about God, a *jnani* and Bhagavan is the freedom they give us. We must give the same freedom to other people. The Ramana Kendram is a place where people should feel

free; it should not be a place where people feel they have to listen to somebody or the other speaking.

When Swami Vivekananda went to Almora, he was so impressed with the beauty of the place that he felt that an *Advaita Ashram* must be founded there. He asked the monks to go there to meditate. He said that there should no pictures of anyone there, including that of Sri Ramakrishna, because people coming there should meditate on the Supreme Being within. When this was reported to Sharada Devi, she said that he had done the right thing. The monks who went there did not meditate on any *roopa*.

*tatrapi dahram gaganam visokas
tasmin yadantastadupasithavyam
yo vedaadau svava proktah vedante ca pratistitaha
tasya prakriti linasya yah parahssa Mahesvaraha*

When Swami Vivekananda came back to the *Ashram* after a year, he found that there were pictures of Gods and Goddesses, and also of Sri Ramakrishna. He, however, did not react. Some people asked him, “Why don’t you ask them to take down the pictures?” He replied, “I have already told them; I am not going to tell them again. The time has not come. I should not force anything on them.” The *Advaita Ashram* continues to have all the pictures. Swami Vivekananda did not say, “How dare you disobey me?” He also did not tell the people there that they were not really monks.

When people asked Bhagavan for advice, he always hesitated. However, when pressed, he would give advice. He, however, never asked them whether they followed the advice he had given. Very often, when we ask for advice, we hope that the person will give the kind of advice that we can follow. In fact, what we are really doing is seeking a confirmation from somebody that what we are doing is right. We also go from one *guru* to another because we seek a *guru* who will say that what we are doing is

right. We don't want to do anything different because it is difficult.

This shows that we are not serious. That is why all our saints and sages say that we cannot choose a *guru*, he chooses us; and once he chooses us, it is our duty to follow what he says. But because of our human weaknesses, we feel that a particular *guru* is too exacting, and therefore, we go to another *guru* who is not so tough on us. We have doubts; we have our own misgivings. What I would like to say is, don't have doubts. What we think is impossible, is made possible; what we think is possible, is made impossible.

I would like to tell you about an incident that happened about six months ago. Someone whom I have known for some time said he had some money, and he wanted to spend it on something useful. He asked if I could suggest something. He said he would like to give me the money, and I could spend it the way I thought right; he also said that he would not question my decision. This is where the whole thing is so unpredictable. I have been going to Shankara Vidyalaya, a school in Marredpally, from time to time. The two hundred students there are all very poor; they are the children of the maids working in that area. There are a few Muslims and Christians, but the majority of the students are Hindus. It appeared to me that these children could be given uniforms because they were wearing rags. So, I told him that we could perhaps give these children school uniforms. With the help of Mr B Pandurangam here, we got the uniforms made. There was some delay in getting it done. Another friend from Bangalore, who heard about this, offered to foot part of the bill. The day it was ready, I told them to come and distribute the uniforms, and see for themselves the happiness on the faces of the children. They came on the 18th of this month, specially for this, and left on the 19th. Some of the people in the Kendram also came to the school. Srinath has been

distributing biscuits to the school children for the last three or four years, but on that day, these two people came and distributed the uniforms. The best material was used for the uniform, and so the total expenses came to about fifty thousand rupees. We know how difficult it is to get even ten paise from another person. Fifty thousand rupees came unasked, and it went to the children who never asked for these things. How does such a thing happen? This is what we should always remember. Bhagavan says, "Don't ask for anything; he knows what is best for you." We will get what we need, but not for our greed. I know what my need is; I also know what my greed is.

Fifty thousand rupees is a lot of money; it went to people who never asked for it. In our own lives, such things happen, and on those occasions, we think that God has been very kind, but we don't think of these things for long, because we feel that we somehow deserve it. We should, however, keep it in mind all the time. Why do we come here to the Kendram? We come here because we are mentally disturbed. What do we need? We need peace of mind. There are so many ways to get this peace of mind. Some people try so many things, and then say that they experience peace for a little while, but not all the time. The thing that we have to remember is the state which we are seeking. What would happen if Bhagavan's grace were fully on us? Each one has some idea. The thing is, whatever idea we may have of that state is true and not true. The mind cannot understand that state where it has to disappear. So, all our ideas of that state are true, but only partially. Through Bhagavan's grace, let us do what we have to do, and wait with hope and faith. Any preconceived idea about that state is not going to give us happiness. We expect something, and we are disappointed. If we don't get what we expected, the chances are, we are going to get something far better than we imagined.

So, sometimes people ask, “I have been doing this for some time, but I don’t have peace of mind. What is wrong?” I have been hesitating to talk about these things all these years, but I think I should, because some of you feel that there is no progress. Do not despair. We don’t have to despair. I will tell you something which we can all follow; it is very easy, and also very difficult. If I tell you, then you will say that it is very, very easy. Apart from the enquiry ‘Who am I?’, Bhagavan had also suggested this. You can follow this, if you are comfortable with it. This is a technique adopted by all Buddhist monks. You can do it any time you like, and on any day you like. You don’t have to go to anyone to learn it.

What is that which we do most unconsciously? It is breathing. All we have to do is to become conscious of our breathing. One of the most extraordinary things in God’s creation is that we all breathe. We cannot exist without breathing, and the extraordinary thing is, we are not conscious of the fact that we are breathing. We are only conscious of our breathing when we become breathless. The Buddha says, “Be conscious of everything that you do.” Start with breathing. Sit straight; whether you are in *padmasana* or not, it doesn’t matter. Observe your inhalation and your exhalation. This appears easy, but we will discover that we are conscious of our breathing only for a few seconds, and then the mind wanders. There should be total focus on the breathing. When we do this even for five minutes, we realise how extraordinary it is.

(Talk 88)

9. The Extraordinary Balarama Reddy *Garu*

Balarama Reddy *garu* was a pillar of strength for a number of us in Hyderabad. People used to go to him for advice and consolation. His was an extraordinary life. For fifty-seven years, he was in Ramanasramam, and whoever went there, made it a point to meet him. He infused cheer and hope in those who went to see him. Much of the time, he meditated, and his devotion to the Maharshi was total. He stayed in Tiruvannamalai most of his life, and wasn't interested in going from place to place. It is our good fortune that Balarama Reddy *garu* had very great affection for the devotees from Hyderabad. If today, the Ramanasramam authorities treat the devotees from the Hyderabad Kendram with great consideration and affection, it is largely due to the influence of Balarama Reddy *garu*.

We are sorry that he is no more physically, but we will always be influenced by him, because by leaving his body, he has merged into our hearts. We will miss his bodily presence, but given his state of health, he would have felt miserable if he had continued to live for a longer period. If he did not suffer for long, it is due to the grace of Bhagavan. Sri Keshava Reddy and his wife, Sri Ramanaiah and Sri Srinath left this morning for Nellore to attend Balarama Reddy *garu's* funeral. Balarama Reddy *garu's* sister informed us that the body would be taken to a village near Nellore around 7:00 or 7:30 in the morning.

Balarama Reddy *garu* helped a number of people silently, but forcefully. He never asked for anything, and would never accept anything from other people. He only gave. The only place where he stayed for about six weeks or so was in Hyderabad. It was the good fortune of the people of Hyderabad to have had him for so long. About thirty to forty people used to go to him every day, and everyone who went, was treated to coffee and snacks. When the

Kendram offered to meet part of his expenses, he refused. That was Balarama Reddy *garu* - always giving, never taking.

Balarama Reddy *garu* went to Ramanasramam in 1938; he was there for fifty-seven years. His was a life of great *sadhana*, a very rare thing. Shankara says in *Bhaja Govindam*,

*baalastaavat kreedasaktaha tarunastaavat taruneesaktaha
vrriddhastavath chintasaktaha pare brahmani kopi na sakta*

Talking about human beings, Shankara says,

baalastaavat kreedasaktaha: When we are young, we spend our time playing.

tarunastaavat taruneesaktaha: As a young man, we spend our time with people of the opposite sex.

vrriddhastavath chintasaktaha: When we are old, we think about what we should have done when we were young. We have all kinds of thoughts. Sometimes, we say to ourselves that we have wasted our life or that we have done wonderful things. Our time is spent in thinking of the past or the future, of our children or grandchildren. That is how life is spent.

pare brahmani kopi na sakta: Nobody has the time to think of *pare brahmani* or the Lord because everybody thinks that the end is far away. Even though we know that we can be overtaken by death at any time, we somehow think that the day is far off. Sometimes, we feel we would like to fulfill certain desires before we die. We make plans to fulfill them, and we try to ensure that the plans are carried out.

You know the story of Yayati. He was a great king and a good king. He married Shukracharya's daughter, and then subsequently, without her knowledge, he married another woman. When

Shukracharya heard this, he cursed Yayati. He said, “You have deceived my daughter. Because of your arrogance, you have married another woman; this woman married you because you are young. I curse you to become old immediately!” Yayati lost his youth and became an old man. He was upset. He went to Shukracharya and asked, “How can you do this? I have suddenly become old! I want to enjoy life for some more time. Please give me back my youth, at least for some time.”

Shukracharya said, “I have cursed you; I cannot take it back. You have six sons. If one of these sons is willing to take your old age, and give his youth in return, then you can enjoy your life for some more years.” Yayati went to each one of his sons and asked them for their youth. Five of his sons laughed at him and said, “How can we become old? How can you ask for our youth?” The sixth son, however, said, “I will give my youth to you, and you can give me your old age. You can enjoy yourself for as long as you like. I am not interested in being young.” The moment the son said that, he became old, and Yayati became young.

After a number of years, Yayati went back to his son and said, “My son, take back your youth. Give me back my old age.” The son said, “I am not interested in becoming young. You keep my youth for some more years. I am content with old age.” Yayati, greatly surprised at this reply, said, “My son, I had your youth for a number of years. I thought a time would come when I could say that I have enjoyed myself enough in this world, and I don’t want anything more. Son, I have enjoyed a lot of things in this world, but there is no satisfaction. I have come to realise that in this life, if you think that a time will come when you can tell yourself that you have enjoyed everything, then you are mistaken. Such a time will never come. If you enjoy a few things, you would like to enjoy a few more. When you fulfill one desire, other desires crop up. There will never be a time in the life of a human being when

he can tell himself it is enough. I am tired of all this enjoyment. So, I am returning your youth to you. I don't want to have your youth any longer because I have reached a stage where I can never tell myself honestly that I have had enough. It is like this, my son,

*na jaatu kaamah kaamaanaam upabhogena samyati
havisaa krsna vartmeva bhuya evaabhivardhate*

na jaatu: never, never

kaamah: Our desires don't disappear by fulfilling them. We think by fulfilling one desire, we won't have any more desires.

upabhogena samyati: The more we fulfill our desires, the more desires we will have.

havisaa krsna vartmeva bhuya evaabhivardhate: There is no end to this. The only way in which we can put out our desires is by not fulfilling them.

He gives a beautiful example. In any *yajna*, there is *agni*, and into the *agni*, we pour *ghee*. What happens when we pour *ghee*? When we pour it, the flame leaps up. The *agni* is not satisfied with the *ghee* that we have given it. It shoots up, and therefore we get the impression it wants more. The more the *ghee*, the higher the flame leaps. We cannot satisfy *agni* by pouring *ghee* into it. It is like trying to put out a fire using petrol, instead of water. It will not be put out. In the same way, once we have fulfilled one desire, what happens? We are not satisfied with it, and we want to have something more. So, Yayati returns his son his youth and takes back his old age.

Don't increase your wants; reduce them, if possible. If we try to reduce them, they will certainly decrease the desires. The more desires we have, the more problems we have. Who is a real emperor? Who is a real king? A real king or emperor is one who

has contentment. Contentment is the result of an attitude which says, “This is enough for me; I don’t want to increase my wants because my neighbour has something new.” In other words, we don’t want to increase our standard of living any further. This is very difficult, because when we watch TV or read the newspapers, we think we should have the new soap or the TV that has been advertised. We may buy it, and then after some time, we decide we need a different model. There is no end to this. We should not say to ourselves that our happiness depends on getting what our neighbours have.

If we don’t spend a lot on unnecessary things, we will be able to save something and help those who are in need. Our ancestors said we should not waste money - that we should not spend unnecessarily. They didn’t say this because they felt we should be misers; they felt this is the only way we could help other people, quietly. If we think of improving our standard of living all the time, we won’t have any concern for other people. Real happiness lies in sharing what we have with other people. If we keep on thinking of what more we should buy, we won’t have enough to give to other people.

If we think we will start thinking about God after we are sixty or seventy years old, that time might never come. If we think that we will do it after we fulfill all our desires, that time might never come either. There will always be a few desires that remain unfulfilled. That is why Yayati says,

*na jaatu kaamah kaamaanaam upabhogena samyati
havisaa krsna vartmeva bhuya evaabhivardhate*

In that respect, Balarama Reddy *garu* was extraordinary. Whatever he had - money and knowledge - he shared happily with others. He was well-read in Sanskrit, Telugu and English, and shared his views on many things, including the books he had read. He was a

great devotee of Bhagavan and Sri Rama, and one of his very favourite books was the *Ramayana*. He was always thrilled to talk about Rama, the very embodiment of *dharma*. He used to quote extensively from the *Valmiki Ramayana*, from Shankara and the *Gita*. It is his knowledge that made people go to him over and over again; he used to advise people appropriately, without expecting anything in return. In other words, he was a giver, a *daatha*. Anything that is given, expecting something in return, is not real giving. People used to go to Bhagavan and put before him whatever they had brought - fruit, cashew, whatever. Once a devotee said, “Bhagavan, we are bringing all these things. But we have a feeling that some of these things don’t actually reach you. Some people in the *Ashram* take these things away, and so we are upset.” Bhagavan said, “You come here with fruit. You put the fruit before me. Once you have put whatever you have brought before me, that is the end of the connection between you and the fruit. Once you have given something to another person, that is the end of it.” Balarama Reddy *garu* did exactly that!

(Talk 131)

10. The Champion of Women

I was telling someone recently that Rajaji once said that the bravest person in the world is not a soldier or anyone else, but a newly married girl or woman who leaves for her husband’s place - leaving behind familiar surroundings, her parents, her brothers and sisters, and then going to a totally unknown family. This is the bravest thing because she alone has to live with the other family. The mixed bundle of feelings she must experience on the day she leaves for her husband’s place, and the trauma she experiences after reaching it, cannot be described. We don’t pay much

attention to this move of the girl, because in our society, it is a daily occurrence. When a girl gets married and moves into her in-law's place, we think it is her duty to adjust to the new people and the new surroundings. What a lot of adjustment it is!

When we read in the newspaper that some bride, a newly married girl, burned herself, we say it is unfortunate. We then begin to talk about the responsibility of the in-laws, and so on. I have seen several cases where the marriage broke up, and the girl concerned either committed suicide or left the husband and educated herself to stand on her own feet. Whenever we hear such stories, we feel sorry. In fact, when we think deeply about this, we must realise that it is not just the husband's parents who are responsible for the girl's death - the whole society is responsible. We are all responsible because while we talk about the rights of women, there are people who just don't have any respect for them. There are men who think that women only exist to serve them. Some who profess to do *sadhana*, think it is the responsibility of the wife to bring the coffee to them. They don't even bother to take the tumbler and put it in the sink, or wherever else it is to be placed - they believe it is the wife's job.

In the *Ramayana*, when Rama broke the bow, the wedding of Sita and Rama was arranged. Janaka (*ya patyam stri*), Sita's father, said,

*iyam seetaa mama sutaa saha dharma chaaree tava
praticcha chainaam bhadram te paanim grihneeshva paaninaa*

"The person who is going to marry you is my daughter, Sita."

saha dharma charee tava: She is going to perform the *dharmic* duty of a wife. She will help you in performing your duty, and therefore, you call her *sahadharmini*.

Most people think a woman has no role to play. It, however, is not true. If we think that we can order about our women as we like, we are greatly mistaken. The way Bhagavan treated women must be an example for us. His consideration for women was extraordinary. One morning, he found a woman standing outside the *Ashram* after 11:30 - when lunch was over. He enquired why she was standing there, and if she had had her lunch. The people standing nearby said, "No, but she will have it soon." Bhagavan asked them why she hadn't had lunch with everyone else, and they informed him that since she had her monthly periods, she would be eating after everyone else had eaten. They said, "We have to prepare some special food for her. According to the *shastras*, she cannot eat the food that had been prepared for us." Bhagavan asked them, "Is it a sin to have periods? This is *sthree dharma*. In fact, they should be the people to be asked to eat first. And you are asking her to eat after all of us have eaten. That is very wrong." He also said that they should not continue the practice of preparing special food for women who were having their periods, and then insisting that they eat after everyone else had eaten. He said, "Please ask her to come in. I want you to feed her now from the food we have eaten. She should not be kept waiting."

Some very orthodox people present said it was wrong to serve her the food that everyone else had eaten. They also said, "If you do this, Bhagavan, some people will stop coming to the *Ashram*." Bhagavan replied, "It doesn't matter. I am not interested in people coming to the *Ashram*. What we are doing is grossly unfair. Religion which has no compassion, spirituality which has no consideration for human beings, is not spirituality. I will not leave this place until you serve her in my presence." Everyone was embarrassed. They could not do anything. The woman was asked to come; a leaf was laid for her, and the cooks were asked to serve. She was almost in tears.

The orthodox people who were present were very unhappy with the stand that Bhagavan had taken. Someone suggested, “Don’t tell other people what happened today.” Bhagavan overheard this, turned around, and asked, “Why not? We have not committed any sin. You tell everyone that this is what happened. Don't keep it a secret.” Another person remarked that it would bring a bad name to the *Ashram*. Bhagavan told them not to worry about the bad name; they were doing the right thing, and they would continue to do it. Bhagavan said, “Hereafter, you should not treat any woman like this.” This is something truly extraordinary.

People often used to debate on whether women could do *japa*, and whether they could become *sanyasis*. Even at that time, there were some people in the *Ashram* who would oppose the ideas of Bhagavan, but he would ignore them. Bhagavan maintained that there should be no distinction between men and women in certain matters. He said that women could do self-enquiry (*ko aham*), and women *sanyasinis* should be given the same burial as men *sanyasis*. Some said that *sanyasinis* should not have a *samadhi*. Bhagavan said there is no distinction between a realised man and a realised woman. Whenever somebody said something bad about women, Bhagavan would say that they are not in any way inferior to men. Because of what he practised, people ultimately accepted it.

Bhagavan’s concern for women was touching. When the *Ashram* was established, people had to be given breakfast at 7:00, lunch at 11:30, and then dinner at 7:30, day after day. There was no holiday. Bhagavan used to get up at 3:00 in the morning every day, go to the kitchen, and help the people with the cooking until 4:00. He used to do the difficult manual tasks like grinding chutney, and would never allow the women to do anything that was difficult. He would ask them to stir the *sambar* or the *rasam*. At 4:00, he would go to sit on his couch.

Some women were unhappy about this because they had to cook in the kitchen, while the men conversed with Bhagavan in the hall. Bhagavan would ask them why they worried about it. The women used to say, “We are unable to sit in the hall with the other people and meditate. We have to cook in the morning and in the evening. We are unhappy that we are not allowed to sit before Bhagavan.” He used to say, “You are very lucky. Without you, how can we all eat? You are doing a great service. Don’t think that everyone has to do meditation. You are serving the devotees.” Then he said to one of the women devotees, “You don’t have to come to the hall to meditate. You can also mediate while working in the kitchen. You may be cutting vegetables, but your mind can meditate. Think of God and recite some verse or the other. You will be doing the same thing as the other people in the hall will be doing; but you will be doing something extra because you will also be doing work. These two need not be separated.”

Spirituality that doesn’t have concern for other people is not spirituality. There should be a sense of equality, and there should be mutual help. This also doesn’t mean that one should help all the time, and the other should accept it. Bhagavan used to lift the big vessels with *sambar* and *rasam*; he would never have the womenfolk do that. He told them to do the smaller tasks. That was his concern for them. He never talked about this a great deal, but he set an example. Bhagavan used to help all the cooks, irrespective of whether they were men or women. He would never ask anything from anyone. Whatever he could do himself, he would do. This is something we should keep in mind - there must be cooperation.

Manu had the highest regard for women, and he felt that society too should have a similar view. He believed where women are not treated with respect, the Goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, will not dwell. Swami Vivekananda used to say that we are a great country

where we worship God not just as a he, but as a she as well - Amba. But unfortunately, we have not progressed as a country because in our day-to-day life, we don't pay enough respect to our women. Whatever might be the drawbacks of western countries, the important thing is that there is mutual respect for everybody, not just a few people.

Gandhiji was an extraordinary person, and there is not going to be another like him for several centuries. But even he, with all his greatness, for various reasons, was most unreasonable in the first few years of his married life. He has written that he was most unfair in the treatment of his wife, Kasturba, especially, when they were in South Africa - a foreign country where she had no relatives of her own. Once, when Kasturba refused to clean the lavatory, Gandhiji was so upset that he asked her to get out of the house. Later on, he did repent and learnt from the experience. He championed women's causes. The man who had had conventional notions of a wife, changed completely, and felt that women should be given greater freedom. Perhaps because of Gandhiji's influence, thousands of women joined the freedom struggle, and some of them became great leaders.

In the last ten years of Kasturba's life, Gandhiji was extraordinarily kind to her. Kasturba died in the Aga Khan Palace in Pune. If you go Pune, you must visit this place where Gandhiji and his wife spent a few years. The palace grounds are huge, and Kasturba was cremated at 6:00 in the evening in one section of the palace grounds. The body burned for a long time, and Gandhiji was sitting outside in the cold. Somebody went to him and said, "Bapuji, why don't you sit inside? It might take some more time for the body to burn completely. I don't want you to expose yourself to the cold." Gandhiji said, "I don't mind. She and I have been together for about 60 years. Why do you want to deprive me

of my being with her for a few more minutes?” The person was deeply touched.

Unfortunately, some people treat their wives as if they were there just to work for them - and we criticize them for their behaviour. There is no point in criticizing society or the people responsible for this; what we need to realise is that we are all responsible for this behaviour. Each one, in his own way, is responsible, and we will understand this, if we look within. Ultimately, it is a cumulative effect of all our individual feelings. Every now and then, we talk about communal tension and communal trouble. These things take place regularly, but each one of us has a responsibility. If I have hatred for a particular group of people, and you also have the same hatred, what happens is, over a period of time, the internal violence that others cannot see, erupts externally. Once the eruption takes place, we give it various labels. So, it is important to see that there is no mental violence against certain people or individuals.

This is why our ancestors said that there must be peace within. If we are at peace with ourselves, there will be peace all around us. If we harbour violent thoughts and violent feelings inside of us, they might find release in some form of action, sometime or the other. Therefore, there is need for internal peace, and each one adopts his own method to achieve this internal peace. Some resort to *puja*, others to *japa* and *dhyana*. They all help.

What I would like to say is - and I say it every year - our attitude towards women must change. It is pointless to complain, because individually, like it or not, we are also responsible for what takes place - for the violence, and the other things that happen to women. In this, we have a great example in Bhagavan because he would never allow anyone to say anything bad about women. He is, to my knowledge, the only person who has not said even a single thing about women in general. Our scriptures have warned

us about women. But not, Bhagavan. The way he respected his own mother, allowed her to live with him at Skandashram, and looked after her, are examples of his respect for women. These are rather unconventional, for no *sanyasi* is expected to live with his mother. In fact, some say that once you become a *sanyasi*, you should not look at women - not even your mother. In spite of much opposition from the people around him, Bhagavan said that his mother could live in Skandashram. She lived there for only six years. After her death, there was the *samadhi*, and on that, there now stands a temple. A lot of people objected to the temple, but Bhagavan neither said it should be built, nor did he say that it should not be built. He left it to others.

There are so many aspects of Bhagavan, and what I consider to be unique, is his great concern and consideration for women. He has not uttered a single statement against women in general. If we keep this in mind from time to time, our own attitude will become the correct attitude. We must remember that at the highest level, the *atman*, the self, is beyond gender. There is no male or female *atman*. There is no duality of any kind at this level, whatsoever. When we say there is no duality, it includes the difference in gender. At our level, however, we think in terms of gender. This, we should keep in mind as often as possible, so that we may never make the mistake of considering women to be inferior to men.

(139B)

11. The Kingdom of Happiness is Within

In our daily lives, we are busy with something or the other; we keep ourselves constantly occupied. In general, we are dissatisfied with ourselves and our life, and look forward to a time when we shall be free from all responsibilities. Everyone has this feeling of

being harassed almost every day. Even on the few occasions when we are enjoying ourselves, and are very happy, we suddenly wonder how long the happiness will last. We also pray that we should always be as happy as we are today.

When we are unhappy, we seek happiness; but when we are happy, we don't seek unhappiness. Even though we are unhappy much of the time, we look forward to a time when we will be really happy. A happy man will look forward to happiness, but an unhappy one, seeks happiness. Each person seeks it in his own way; some seek happiness through money, some through fame, some through their children, their wife, etc. It varies from person to person. All of us seek happiness because happiness is our true nature. Unhappiness, according to Bhagavan, is an aberration; bliss is our true nature, and we can all experience it without having to read the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, etc. He said the moment we don't seek any pleasure from anything in this world, we will realise ourselves. We realise that when we seek happiness through anything outside of us, that happiness is temporary; it doesn't last long. When our happiness depends on something external, when the attitude of the thing outside of us changes, then our happiness also becomes our source of unhappiness. Bhagavan, therefore says, "The most important thing is to seek happiness within you." Unfortunately, we seldom go within; the nature of the mind is to go outside.

The mind is an extraordinarily subtle thing, and its subtleties are difficult for us to comprehend. After all, what is the mind? It is merely a bundle of thoughts. There is no such thing as the mind; we can't point to something in the head and say, this is the mind. In deep sleep, when we have no thoughts, we say the mind has disappeared somewhere. We are not conscious of the absence of thoughts in deep sleep, but when we wake up, we say, "I slept very well last night." The mind was absent, it had merged in the Self;

but when we wake up, the mind emerges from the Self, and we say that we slept well. When we are in deep sleep, we are not aware of our body, name, fame, etc. But when we wake up, the moment the mind emerges from the Self, we become conscious of our body and the outside world. The mind, the world, and the body appear together, and all three of them disappear at the same time in deep sleep. When the mind disappears, the body also disappears. If the mind was not there during sleep, what was it that was experiencing this sleep?

What is sleep? It is a state where there are no thoughts, where there are no differences of any kind that we normally see when we are awake. Sleep is both a state of happiness, and a state of ignorance - we are ignorant or not aware of our happiness in that state. We are able to explain what happened to us only when we wake up. Also, the sense of individuality is completely lost in deep sleep. Bhagavan says that when the sense of doership, when the ego is completely gone, there is a sense of happiness that we can enjoy every day. A person can be extremely happy, not when he asserts himself, but in the total absence of the ego. In the total absence of the ego, there is total absence of individuality.

Bhagavan maintains that it is possible for people to experience the same state of happiness in the waking state as well. There is something present in all the three states - waking, dream and sleep. In our waking state, the mind is present - we are aware of it because it tells us what is right, wrong, etc. The mind is present in the dream state as well - it takes a subtle form. All the dreams that we have, are the activities of the subtle mind. But in the deep sleep state, the mind is not there; there is no restlessness, and the sense of individuality is not there. In all the three states, there is something that is ever present, and that is the Self. Bhagavan has given us guidance on what to do as we emerge from sleep. As you wake up, don't jump out of bed. As the mind emerges from the

Self, it will be easier for you to put it back in the Self. As you wake up, don't think about the activities that you have to do - *japa*, *puja*, brushing your teeth, etc. - just cling to your Self. Meditate on the Self. As the mind emerges, it will consciously go back into the Self. In sleep, the mind is put back into the Self, unconsciously. Bhagavan says that when you are awake, you should consciously try to put back the mind into the Self.

This, however, is difficult to do. Controlling the mind is a tricky thing, for it plants all kinds of thoughts and ideas in our head. For example, whenever things go wrong, we think that God is punishing us for some wrong that we have done. What we have to remember is that God is not a tyrant; it is completely absurd to think that he is punishing us for something. He doesn't say, "You did not obey me; therefore, I am punishing you." God is not somebody we should be afraid of; we should not fear him. Bhagavan says we must try to accept everything as God's will, instead of concluding he is punishing me. What you consider good, what you consider bad, why certain things happen, we do not know. There are many things we fail to understand. We cannot, with our limited mind, comprehend why God makes good people suffer. Christ was crucified, Bhagavan, Ramakrishna and J Krishnamurthy had cancer, Vivekananda passed away in his thirties, Gandhiji was shot dead, and so was Kennedy. One can keep adding to the list. Why these things should happen to such good people, we do not know. The only thing we can do is learn from their experience.

These individuals did not complain about what was happening to them - they merely accepted everything as part of his will. This is possible - to accept everything as his will - only when you don't have the sense of doership, or totally surrender to another person. Bhagavan says that when you surrender, you are merely surrendering to your Self. And who is the Self? The Self is the

guru and God. In other words, you are not surrendering to anyone outside of you; he is within you. Is this believable? Can we believe that we can be happy if we surrender ourselves to the Self? Bhagavan says we do it every day. We surrender our minds to our Self in deep sleep. In deep sleep, there is no mind. The mind is completely merged in the Self. When this happens, there is no restlessness, as there are no thoughts.

You may say all this sounds interesting, but is there proof? Yes, there is. Even when we are in intense pain, and we go to sleep, there is no pain because the mind is absent. And therefore, both Shankara and Bhagavan say that the ego disappears when the mind disappears, and when the sense of individuality is gone, there is no body consciousness. When there is no body consciousness, there is no pain. Bhagavan had cancer, but he did not feel the pain because he had detached himself from the body. How do we detach ourselves from the body? We detach ourselves from the body when the sense of the individual is completely gone, when the ego is completely gone. That is the state we are in every day when we are in deep sleep. We may have a lot of problems, but all are forgotten when the mind merges in the Self in deep sleep. In that state, there is no body consciousness and no pain.

When we are unhappy, we sometimes tell ourselves, “From tomorrow onwards I will do *puja*.” Doing *puja* is a very good thing, but it is only a temporary solution. The most important thing while doing it is to concentrate on the person who is doing the *puja* - one must try to find out who it is that is doing the *puja*. If we're not focused on the doer, there will be lots of distractions - the mind, instead of being quiet, will be a jumble of thoughts. Doing *puja* has a certain purpose, but it is not an end in itself. It is like this - initially, you want to go to various places such as temples, *punya tirthas* and so on. Now, visiting these places is good, but going to them is not an end in itself. The transformation

that should take place should be within ourselves - we should be able to experience these places within us. In other words, a time should come when we should feel that Tiruvannamalai is within us. Similarly, the *pujas* and the other rituals that we perform, will drop of their own accord when there is ripeness. What is this ripeness? It is the moment we ask the question, "Who is it that is doing the *puja*?" and realise that there is no sense of doership - that we are not doing the *puja*. We then begin to accept everything as his will, and discover the kingdom of happiness that is within.

(Talk 55)

12. The Power of Silence

Sometimes, we ask ourselves, "Why should I think of any *guru* when I myself am very competent? There is no need to think of any *guru*. In what way is a *guru* different from me? He is also a human being; I am also a human being, and therefore the distinction is artificial. I can also say what he says, and it will have the same power." We realise, however, that even in our everyday life, if we utter a sentence, and then we ask two other people to utter the same sentence, we find that the impact is very different. Even though the sentence is the same, the effect it has on other people is not the same. For example, when the husband utters a sentence, it has one kind of effect on the members of the family; when the wife utters the same sentence, it has a totally different effect.

What is the effect of the *guru* on other people? A *guru* is a *guru* because of his extraordinary *tapas* over a number of years; therefore, his *upadesa* has a certain potency. He may say

something ordinary, but its effect will be extraordinary. Some of us may wonder what it is that is extraordinary. What is extraordinary is the power behind the words – not merely the words, but the power behind them. What does this mean? You may be a very rich person and have all the power in the world. You may go to the police station, and ask the constable to arrest a particular person. The constable will ask a number of questions to know the reason for the arrest. After listening to you, he may or may not arrest the person. While the two of you are talking, if a Sub-Inspector walks in, and orders the constable to arrest the person, the constable will not argue - he will arrest him. Your words and the Sub-Inspector's words were the same - *arrest him* - but the effect was different. Why? Because the Sub-Inspector has certain powers, and these powers have the effect of getting the person arrested immediately. It is obvious that you yourself do not have these powers. However, if you associate yourself with the Sub-Inspector, and the constable comes to know that you are a close friend of the Sub-Inspector, he may not argue with you, and do what you tell him to - at least, detain the person for some time. That is, if you associate with people who have power, you too get some of the power.

The Chief Minister of any state is very important. He has enormous powers, and if we want to see the Chief Minister, his peon, who regulates visitors, has to allow us to see him. If the peon tells us to wait, we need to wait. We can't argue with him. We see this happening everywhere; the peon of the CM can even stop another Minister. We often hear complaints that the peon misuses his position. But there is no way that we can make a complaint against him because the person in power would like to have somebody who can regulate visitors. You may be a Birla or a Tata, but if you are driving your car, and a constable asks you to stop, you have to stop. The constable may be getting only a thousand rupees; whereas, you are a millionaire. What is your

power at that moment? Practically nothing. You cannot tell the constable to look the other way and let you go. You have to stop the car. Where does the lowly-paid constable get his power from? He gets this power from the government, and therefore, when he is on duty, we obey him. If the constable is not on duty, he will not have the same power. So again, the action is the same, but the effect is different.

The same thing happens when we associate ourselves with a *guru*. He is someone who constantly meditates on God; he is a *jnani* who is one with the Lord himself. When such people say something, it has enormous power which is derived from their association with the Lord. If a constable and a peon can have so much power because of their association with a few people, how much more power will a *guru* have? This is the reason we say that if a person wants some *upadesa*, he must go to a real *guru* because it is not merely the words that are important. What the person says, carries enormous power, and that is the reason we say, “I seek the blessings of my *guru*.” If the *guru* says something, then it is bound to happen. Does it mean that we will always be successful in whatever we do? No - but nothing will upset us, for there will always be *shanthi*, peace. This is the most important thing - nobody succeeds all the time, and nobody fails all the time, either.

That is why it is said the words of a *guru* have a tremendous significance. Do not assume that we can say the same words and expect them to have the same result. It is said that when a *guru* says something, we should obey him implicitly because he knows what is best for us. When a *guru* says, “It will be all right,” or he chooses to remain silent, what it means is that whatever happens, our mind will be all right. We will not be upset by whatever happens; instead, there will be tremendous peace, whether we succeed or fail.

The Pandavas were so upright and so honest, but they suffered most of their lives. However, they experienced a *shanthi* that the Kauravas did not have. And so, when a *guru* says something, we get a *shanthi* that we do not get from anyone else. Others may say something which may or may not happen. The power of the words of a *guru* mean something, and this is the result of their extraordinary *tapas* and contemplation on God.

Every day, we see that different people are good at different things. Some people can speak beautifully, and that has its own effect.

jihvagre varthathe Lakshmi
jihvagre mithra bandhava
jihvagre bandhanam prapthi
jihvagre maranam dhruvam

We say that Lakshmi resides on the tip of our tongue. What does it mean? Our wealth, and our capacity to make money, depends on how we speak. Most people buy things from the shop where the salesperson is kind. The prices may be a bit high, but people choose to go to that particular shop because the salesperson makes them feel comfortable. In fact, a businessman told me that he encouraged his salespeople to be kind and considerate. This helps in the growth of sales, he said.

In the 1950's, when I was in London, they advertised a new kind of shirt called drip dry. The idea was that if you washed your shirt and hung it to dry, it would dry in six hours, and there would be no need to iron it. I bought a shirt from Marks and Spenser, a huge chain of stores. They had said in the advertisement that the shirts wouldn't shrink. I used my shirt for about three months, and then it shrank. I wrote a letter to the Manager explaining that my shirt, which I had been told would not shrink, had shrunk. In my letter, I

said that it was not the shirt I was worried about, but their reputation, since they had a very good one all over the country. I did not say that I wanted an exchange or any such thing. I merely stated that their reputation was at stake. Within four days, I received a reply from the Manager asking me to bring the shirt to their office. When I went there, I was taken to the Manager. He took the shirt from me and looked at it for a couple of minutes and said, "You are right. This shirt should not have been passed on as a good one. You may meet the salesman, and choose any shirt you like." I did choose another shirt. This happened in 1958, and I am still talking about it. If such a thing had happened in our country, and I wrote to them, what would have been the response? They would have asked me how I had washed it, whether I had beat it against a stone, etc. They would have also said that I cannot complain about a product after three months of use. The person would have also dismissed the whole thing as absurd, and passed comments like, "The crazy customer who comes to return a shirt after three months." Even today, Marks and Spencer has branches all over Europe, and they always take back their product if the quality is not good.

jihvagre varthathe Lakshmi
jihvagre mithra bandhava

Everything, including our capacity to retain friends and relatives, depends on our capacity to speak well. If we abuse people, they will leave us. If we don't exercise control over our tongue, we can even go to jail. What is more, if we are totally indiscreet, then our words can even lead us to death.

Our everyday experience tells us that what we say, affects other people. And when other people are affected, we are also affected. What we say depends upon the silence that we enjoy every day. If the mind is silent every day, the words that we utter will have a

certain power. When words come out of the silence of the *guru* or a *jnani*, then the words become extraordinarily powerful. The more the silence, the greater the power of the words. What is more, this power will be unconscious power, not conscious power. When there is mental silence, the words acquire tremendous power, and it is unconscious power - conscious power leads to arrogance and to pride. With unconscious power, even in our day-to-day speech, we will be able to say the right thing.

We all have different languages through which we express ourselves. But there is one thing that we all enjoy from time to time, some for a longer period, and some for a shorter period - silence. In fact, the source of speech is silence; and the greater, the longer the silence, the more powerful our words become. And what is more, a time will come, when occasionally, we will be able to communicate to other people through this silence, as in the case of a *jnani*, like Bhagavan.

When I meet you for the first time, I ask you many questions about you and your family. The second time I meet you, we talk, and I don't ask as many questions. After sometime, when we've become friends, even a little smile of recognition will do; we can sit together silently, and no conversation is necessary. In other words, silence becomes companionable when we know the other person very well. Husband and wife, after some time, can remain in the same room without talking because the more the understanding between the couple, the less the need for speech. I can understand what is going on within you, even from a slight gesture on your part. You don't have to tell me because I know you, and I can communicate with you through silence. When there is greater understanding, there is less need for the kind of communication we indulge in. And if you take it to a logical conclusion, where there is perfect understanding, there is no need for speech.

Jnanis can communicate with other people without the use of words. For example, when I sit in the presence of a *jnani*, or when I look at the picture of a *jnani* or a *guru* intensely, something happens to me. When there is intense communication, the *guru* can communicate peace to me without the medium of words. When I console people with words, they may sometimes not be consoled. If there is great sympathy, understanding and real compassion, I don't have to say anything - the other person will be consoled because the consolation springs from the silence of the mind. When I have tremendous compassion or sympathy for a person, I don't think of myself; when I don't think of myself, then my ego is gone. *Jnanis* don't have any ego. Therefore, they are able to communicate peace to us because they are at peace.

When we are in the presence of a person who is pure consciousness, then we are affected by the peace that he has. There is no need for him to say anything. When we apply some perfume on ourselves, we enjoy a pleasant feeling. Although we don't make any attempt to spread the scent, others also enjoy it. This is at the ordinary level. In the case of a person who is pure consciousness, we enjoy a peace that surpasses all understanding because the person concerned is at peace. When we think of him, when we see him or when we meditate on him, we become peaceful because we realise, after sometime, that he is not outside of us, he is inside. We realise that he is none other than the Self, God, or the *Guru*.

(Talk 62)

13. Bhagavan and Gandhiji

Some of you tell me that sometimes I look through you, and that I don't talk to you even though I see you standing in front of me. I would like to repeat what I said some time ago. I can see only those things clearly which are five feet or so in front of me. Anything beyond that is blurred. I see a shape, I know somebody is standing or sitting, but I don't recognise the person. If I saw you and didn't talk to you, I would like to apologise to you in this regard. It is not because I did not want to talk to you; it's because I did not recognise you. I've had this problem for a year now, and as far as I am concerned, I've stopped worrying about it.

I decided to talk about Bhagavan as I know him out of a sense of duty and gratitude to him. We cannot imagine, even in our wildest dreams, what Bhagavan can do for us. When you listen to this talk, I would like your attention to be on Bhagavan, and not on the person who is speaking. As I have told you many times, I was brought up in a family totally devoted to Bhagavan. At the same time, from the age of twelve, I was also profoundly influenced by Gandhiji. I used to read his speeches and listened to other people discussing him. At the *Ashram*, I was in the company of a few people who had been profoundly influenced by Gandhiji. Some of you may know that both Muruganar and Viswanatha Swami were greatly influenced by him; both always wore *khadi*. A lot of things at the *Ashram* were made of *khadi* - the sheets that were spread on Bhagavan's sofa were *khadi*, and so was Bhagavan's *kaupina*. In the hall, whenever the subject of Gandhiji was brought up, Bhagavan used to speak very highly of him. Gandhiji, too, had the highest regard for Bhagavan, and he would frequently tell the tired and exhausted Congress workers to go to Ramanasramam to charge their spiritual batteries. Sarojini Naidu, Rajendra Prasad, and many other freedom fighters went there to have their batteries charged.

At the age of eighteen or so, when I was doing my BA (Hons), I developed utter disgust for things that were considered fashionable. I thought I should live a very simple life, and as a result, I stopped wearing shirt, banian and chappals. Gandhiji always wore chappals, but Bhagavan did not. I used to go to college in a *dhoti* and nothing else; people used to think that I was slightly mad. My professors, who were from England, used to ask me why I was coming to class dressed in that fashion. When I explained, they said, "That's all right! But when you're inside the classroom, at least put on a towel." From then on, for the next six months, I draped a towel around my chest and went to class.

One day, I was sitting before Bhagavan, when an Englishman wearing a *kavi* coloured attire prostrated before Bhagavan. Somebody pointed to the attire, and Bhagavan said, "Why do you have to change your dress to prove that you have given up this world, and that you've become a *sanyasi*? Your dress does not make any difference. If there is internal change, it is fine. This change need not be reflected in the way you dress." What Bhagavan said about the way we dress bothered me for about two weeks or so. I wondered why he'd said what he did, and why I felt I had been singled out. I felt it was not wrong to discard one's shirt and chappals. Then, two or three weeks after the incident, a thought suddenly came to me: "Aren't you doing all these things to prove that you are like Gandhiji or like Bhagavan?" The moment I had that thought, I was ashamed of myself, and was also terrified. I was doing something that might eventually inflate my ego. This thought was something extraordinary; earlier I had never looked at my way of dressing in this way. Soon, I returned to my usual way of dressing - I started wearing a shirt and chappals.

How subtle the mind is, and how a person, of his own accord, cannot really understand the implications of what he has done!

Sometimes, what we consider to be insignificant, becomes very significant.

Once, during the days when I wasn't wearing chappals, I was walking to the station after visiting Ramanasramam. It was a very hot day, and after walking for about a hundred yards, I found it difficult to walk because the ground was extremely hot. In those days, there were no autos or rickshaws, there were only *jatkas*. I felt miserable and thought I should run back to the *Ashram*, take rest, and then in the evening, take another train. Suddenly, at the edge of the road, I saw some straw. Looking further ahead, I saw that there was straw everywhere. Some cart must have carried hay, and these bits must have fallen off. When I put my feet on the straw, they didn't feel the heat from the ground. Normally, we don't pay attention to straw on the road because we consider it to be insignificant. On that day, it proved to be invaluable, for it enabled me to walk to the station without seriously injuring my foot.

Whenever I visited Ramanasramam as a young man, I was greatly troubled by the *Ashram's* attitude towards harijans - Bhagavan's attitude towards them seemed to be very different from that of Gandhiji's. Looking at Bhagavan, I used to ask this question in my mind, "Everything is so marvellous here, Bhagavan. But why is it that you have a screen in the dining hall separating the brahmins from the harijans? Why is it that brahmins sit on one side, and the others on the other? How can such a thing happen in your presence, Bhagavan?" This separation used to bother me a great deal. As far as Bhagavan was concerned, he sat in the middle, a little away from the brahmins, and was seen by all in the dining hall - but the screen still bothered me.

A lot of people used to ask me the reason for the screen, and I used to say I had no answer. Even the great devotees of Bhagavan used to pose the same question, but Bhagavan chose not to answer it

directly. As far as Bhagavan was concerned, he made no distinction between the people who came to see him. He also said, if you make no distinction between people, you can sit wherever you like; but, don't use Ramanasramam as an excuse to break the rules that you observe at home. That is, if you have that feeling of difference within you, and you choose to ignore it, then you are being a hypocrite. So, as long as Bhagavan was alive, the practice of using the screen was maintained.

About ten years ago, I met Morarji Desai when I was in Bombay. In my letter, I said that I was interested in meeting him, not because he was a politician, but as someone who had met the Maharshi. I said that I would like to know his experience with the Maharshi. As you know, Morarji was a very principled person. If you wrote to him, you were sure to get a reply during the course of the week. I got a reply, and he said, "I got your letter, and you are most welcome to come and see me anytime between ten and five." In those days, there was no security of any kind, whatsoever. When I went in, I found him sitting on a cot, and there was a telephone nearby. There was practically no other furniture in the room.

I asked him, "I heard you went to see the Maharshi. What can you say about him?" He said, "What can I say about the Maharshi? What is it that the Maharshi did not know? He is Shiva himself." He added, "Subrahmanian, believe it or not, he had this extraordinary capacity to talk to animals and birds, and they understood him. This I have not seen anywhere else. When I took leave of him, the Maharshi said, 'Eat and go!'" Morarji almost broke down when he said, "I always considered myself blessed."

Talking about the presence of the screen in the dining hall, Morarji said, "Subrahmanian, what is extraordinary about Bhagavan is this. He was the Lord himself; he was beyond caste and creed, but in his *Ashram*, brahmins sat on one side, and the others, on the

other. That kind of attitude is possible if you do not have any trace of ego." He said, "Bhagavan was above all these things, but if some people chose to observe these things, he was not going to say that they should not do it. He let the people do what they felt like doing." We must realise what an extraordinary thing it is to allow people to do what they want to do, against your own teachings. If I say something to you for one month, and I find that you're doing the exact opposite, I'll get very angry. I will ask you, "What is the point in coming to me?" But to let you have the freedom to do what you want to do, and to continue to talk to you in the same fashion, that is possible only when you are Bhagavan. If people did not understand what Bhagavan stood for, he was not going to ask them to do what should be done. In other words, they have met Bhagavan, they have read so much, and yet, they have chosen to make the distinction. Morarji Desai added, "Gandhiji was an extraordinary person, and I had the highest regard for him. I moved with him very closely. I tell you, Subrahmanian, he was not an ordinary person. But when it came to principles, when he felt something had been broached, he used to insist that others follow what he had said. In other words, the Mahatma was an extraordinary person, but he had a mind of his own. A pure mind, by and large. He used to be very upset if others didn't follow what he had said. You see the difference? When I feel that something is good, I want others to follow what I consider to be good."

From this, you can see the difference between the Mahatma and Bhagavan. Gandhiji had a pure mind; Bhagavan, on the other hand, had no mind. So, there is no question of imposing it on other people; Bhagavan was free, so he gave that same freedom to others. While Gandhiji was a man who had a mission to fulfill, Bhagavan was the Lord himself. Bhagavan never asked anyone, "Why are you speaking falsehood? Why are you telling lies?" He accepted everybody as he was. He never tried to change people by telling them to change; he transformed people without telling them

he was transforming them. Bhagavan was not an ordinary *mataadhipathi*, he was above all these things. He didn't worry about having the screen in the dining hall because there was no mind to think; he was totally free, and he gave the same freedom to other people. We may publicly say we should not have such a screen, but in our heart of hearts, we may want it there. People forget that those who took care of, and were very close to Bhagavan in the beginning, were all harijans.

There is a controversy, even now, whether women can be considered true *jnanis*, and whether they're entitled to a *samadhi*. There are some people who don't like Bhagavan because he categorically stated that there is no difference between a male and female *sanyasi*. Bhagavan, however, never said that there should be a *samadhi* for his mother. It was Kavyakantha who argued that there should be a *samadhi* as Bhagavan had said years earlier that women who are *jnanis* should be treated the same way as men. It was Kavyakantha who wanted the *samadhi* to be built; Bhagavan himself did not have any *sankalpa*. Once the *samadhi* came up, people felt that it should be housed in a temple - Matrubhuteswara temple - *Mathru bhuta Eshwara*. The extraordinary thing about the temple is that it honours a woman who was a widow. This was not acceptable to many. When this fact was brought to the notice of Bhagavan, he said, "Why do you worry about these things? Each one has his own view. Why do you argue? It is a temple and that is it." We can acquire such an attitude only through the grace of the Lord.

It is very difficult for us with our limited mind to really understand the teachings of Bhagavan. Out of great compassion for us, Shankara wrote *Soundarya Lahari*, *Shivananda Lahari*, *Bhaja Govindam*, and many other hymns. He said that he saw himself in others and others in him. In one of his *slokas*, he says, "O Lord, you must forgive me for going to temples, knowing fully well that

you are everywhere. You must forgive me for saying I am meditating on you; for, what is there to meditate? If there is an object of meditation, you can meditate. You are the Self, and are everywhere. I do what I do for the sake of the world."

When we go to temples, we see the Lord there; we fail, however, to see or feel him in our own hearts. Shankara did what he did, not for himself, but for our sake. He did not wish for any name or fame. So, people like Shankara and Bhagavan come down to the earth to set an example for us. Morarji concluded by saying, "This freedom is the greatest thing; this is the type of thing that no ordinary human can ever have. This kind of freedom can be given by a person who is totally free." He added, "I actually saw it, I did not hear it from others. Bhagavan was above all things; he did not impose his views on others. This is an extraordinary thing. We must always remember, when we try to reform people, when we try to impose our views, we should think of the extraordinary Himalayan heights of Bhagavan. It is he, who gives us this attitude. This is not something that we can get of our own accord; this is something that he gives us."

(Talk 65)

14. Valmiki Ramayana

*nidhaye sarva vidyaanaam bhishaje bhava roginnaam
gurave sarva lokaanaam Dakssinnaamurtaye namah*

*gurur Brahma gurur Vishnu
gurur devo Maheshwaraha
guru saakshaat parabrahma
tasmai sri gurave namaha*

*koojantham rama ramethi madhuram madhuraaksharam
aaruhya kavitaashaakhaam vande valmiki kokilam*

*mangalam kosalendraya
mahaneeya gunaathmane
chakravarthi thanujaaya
saarva bhoomaya mangalam*

*yatra yatra Raghunaatha kirtanam
tatra tatra krta mastaka anjalim
bhashpa vaari paripuurna lochanam
Maaruthim namatha raakhsa antakam*

*mano javam Maaruta tulya vegam
jitendriyam buddhi mataam varishtham
vaata atmajam vaanara yutha mukhyam
shriraama dutam shirasaa namaami*

I have known Dr Venkataratnam for some years, and he is a great Rama *bhakta*. When he asked me to speak on Sri Rama today, I told him I would be grateful if he could ask someone else. But he insisted, and that is why I am here today. I generally don't address public meetings, especially on religious subjects, because I believe that I am not competent to talk about spiritual matters. At Ramana Kendram, I talk about Bhagavan and my experience, valid or invalid. I believe that what is most important is one's personal experience. Today, I am here despite my resistance; it is the devotion of Dr Venkataratnam that has made me accept this invitation.

The subject of today's talk is Rama, the embodiment of *dharma*,
Ramo vigrahavaan dharmaha

We have all read the *Ramayana*; it is in the blood of almost everybody in the country. The extraordinary thing about Sri Rama was his adherence to *dharma* at all costs. As far as Krishna was concerned, he was the *purna avatara*. He knew he was an *avatara*, and therefore, he did many things to prove that he was an *avatara*. As far as the Rama *avatara* is concerned, Valmiki depicts him as a model human being. Rama himself said,

aatmaanam maanusham manye Ramam Dasharathaatmajam

“I am Rama. I consider myself a human being. I am the son of Dasharatha.”

We learn so much from the *Ramayana* because a person who considers himself a human being did extraordinary things, while adhering to *dharma* at all costs. Right from the beginning, Rama was a good and kind person. Valmiki lists all the qualities of Rama, and asks whether any human being has all these qualities. The very first word in Valmiki *Ramayana* is *tapas*. The entire *Ramayana* is about *tapas* - the *tapas* of Rama for Sita, the *tapas* of Sita for Rama, the *tapas* of Dasharatha for Rama, of Bharata for Rama, etc. Each one does *tapas* to get something or the other.

What is the *Ramayana*? The *Ramayana* is the story of the sorrows and sufferings of Sri Rama. There are hardly any incidents of joy in the *Ramayana*. The *Ramayana* also tells the story of the sorrows and sufferings of Sita,

Sitaayaas charitham mahaha

Valmiki asks Narada,

*konvasmin sampratam loke gunavaan kascha veeryavaan
dharmajnascha kritagjascha satyavaakyo dhridavratah
chaaritrenacha ko yuktah sarva bhooteshu ko hitaha
vidvaan kah kah samardhascha kaschaika priya darshanah
aatmavaan ko jitakrodho dyutimaan ko anasoyakah
kasya bibhyati devaascha jaata roshhasya samyuge*

“I would like to know if there is any person with all the following qualities. I want to know if there is anyone who is far above the good qualities, not just mere *gunavaan* (goodness), but *veeryavaan* (valour).”

Rama was a person who was good and extremely competent.

dharmajnascha: Rama was a person who knew what *dharma* was, and who could distinguish between *dharma* and *adharma*.

kritagnascha: One of the greatest qualities of Sri Rama was his *kritagyata*, or gratitude, which is a very rare virtue in the real world. Even if you give a lakh of rupees to a person, there will be no gratitude because the other person will feel that since you have so much money, you could have given more. This is why our ancestors said that the best thing is to do is *annadaanam* or feed a person. When you feed a person, a time comes when he says, “*Triptosmi*,” meaning that the person is full; he cannot eat any more, and is grateful.

Dharmaputra once told Bheeshma, “You asked me to do *annadaanam*. I found that there were some people who are just lazy, and who are interested in living off the earnings of other people. Now, what is the point in feeding these people? I don’t think they are doing what they should be doing. *Annadaanam* is a waste; you are only encouraging people to be lazy.” Bheeshma replied, “It is true that some people are lazy, and live off of other people. It is also true that we encourage this. But, if we try to determine whether the person to whom we give something deserves it, it will be impossible for us to do *annadaanam*. If we do *annadaanam* for about one thousand people, there may be one or two people, who are good people, who may even be saints and *sadhus* - and they need our food. If we feed them, and they bless us from the fullness of their hearts - not only we, but six generations before, and six generations after, will be blessed. So, don’t be calculative in these matters; if we are calculative, we will find that nobody deserves our *daana*.”

Rama's *kritagnyata* was extraordinary. Gratitude is something that we should have for people who have helped us. Hanuman, on returning from Lanka, gave Rama the good news that Sita was safe. When Rama heard this, he said, "Hanuman! How can I repay you for the news that you have brought? I have nothing to offer - I am in the forest. What I could have given you if I had been in Ayodhya!" Rama then embraced Hanuman and said, "I can only give you myself." This is what we should learn from the life of Sri Rama. Hanuman was overwhelmed, and shed tears. Subsequently, after the return to Ayodhya, and after the *pattabhishekam*, Sri Rama gave Sita a pearl necklace, saying, "I have given it to you, but if you want to give this to anyone else, I give you permission to do so." Sita looked at everyone, and finally gave it to Hanuman. Hanuman took it, and with tears in his eyes, turned to Rama and said, "O Lord! I am very grateful, but I don't need it. I don't need anything from you. I serve you because I love you. If there is one boon you can give me, I will ask that nobody should be greater than me in my devotion to you, O Lord! This is all I ask." Any one of us, in the position of Rama would have said, "Granted, I give it to you." But this is not what he told his *dasa*.

Hanuman considered himself a Rama *dasa*. In the whole of the *Ramayana*, there is not a single incident where Hanuman did something for himself. He was totally devoted to Rama. In spite of his devotion, he had to undergo so many difficulties, but he never complained. He did not say, "O Lord! I am doing so many things for you, why is it that you are giving me so many problems?" Because we are devoted to God, we should not think that we will not have any problems. If we are devoted to the Lord, we will get the necessary strength to face the problems, and when we solve them, we will experience a peace we can't describe.

The lesson we learn from the life of Hanuman is that we should do what we can to the best of our ability, without worrying about the

results. If we fail, we must start again; there is no point in complaining or in blaming people for it. When Hanuman said, “O Lord! Nobody should be greater than me in my devotion to you,” Rama said, “Hanuman! You have done so much for me! Nobody could have done even one of those things. Hanuman, I should give my life for each one of the things you have done for me. If I give my life for the first great thing you have done, what about the other things you have done? For these, I will be eternally indebted to you.” Rama is called *vigrahavaan dharma* because he has all the qualities. Hanuman considered himself the *dasa* of Rama, but Rama, because he was extraordinary, told Hanuman that it was he (Rama) who would always be indebted to him.

Rama was *satyavarthatha*: He was truthful, and when he was determined to do something, nobody could persuade him not to do it. Arrangements were already made for the *pattabhishekha* of Sri Rama, when Kaikeyi told Dasharatha to send Rama to the forest for fourteen years (*navapancha varshatha*, meaning nine years plus five years) and make Bharata king. When Rama went to Kausalya to inform her about this, she fainted. As we are familiar with the story, sometimes, some important things escape our attention. I myself am over sixty, and my mother is eighty. However, even now, whenever I go out, my mother asks me, “Where are you going? How are you going? When will you be returning?” If I say that I will be back by 12:00 in the afternoon, and it is her lunchtime, she will not eat. She will wait for me. This is not something that is unique of my mother - this is characteristic of all mothers.

In the Valmiki *Ramayana*, there is a long discussion between Rama and Kausalya. She says, “How can you say you are going to the forest? You don’t understand my position.” She pleads with him to listen to her. But Rama firmly says, “Mother, father has asked me to go to the forest. I can't go back on my word.”

Kausalya tries to persuade Rama, “Your father does whatever Kaikeyi wants him to do. Some people know that your father is more attached to her, and therefore, they don’t pay as much attention to me as they do to her. This is the position now. After you leave, please remember that the little respect that people have for me now, will also be gone. Even the servants will not respect me once you are gone. Would you like to see your mother in this fashion? Please do not go!”

You and I would have taken it as a great excuse, and said, “In the interest of my mother, I’ll stay back.” However, Rama says, “I know all these things, but how can I go back on my word? Mother, I want you to realise that these fourteen years will fly, and I will be back with you, and you will be happy to see me. I will be happy to see you. Do not ask me to stay back.”

But she goes on, “I don’t know whether I will be alive when you get back. Consider all these things, and stay back.” Rama says, “That is impossible, mother! I have to go.” At that time, Kausalya says, “I have tried to persuade you, but I have failed. So, may everything in this universe bless you; may the trees bless you, may the flowers bless you, and wherever you go, may you not be disturbed by anything internal or external. My son, I want you to have a safe journey in the forest and be back.” Kausalya then breaks down, blesses him and says, “I bless you, my son. You are going to the forest. You are going to see that *dharma* is protected. What is your *dharma* now? *Pitru vaakya paripaalana*. You are intent on protecting *dharma*.

yatpalayasi dharma twam dhritya cha niyamena cha

With great discipline and determination, you are protecting *dharma*. May that *dharma* protect you wherever you go.” This is an extraordinary statement from a mother in deep distress. How

many mothers would say this? After listening to this, and after taking the blessings of his mother, Rama leaves for the forest.

When he was in Chitrakoota, Bharata came with his mother's army, and you know how Lakshmana suspected him, and told Rama, "My brother, Bharata is coming! He has got the kingdom; he has driven us to the forest, and now he's coming to kill us." Rama replied, "My brother, you are very upset. Bharata is an extraordinary person; he is not coming to kill us. I don't think he is seeking anything from me. Why are you angry with Bharata? Are you angry because he is the king now? Lakshmana, if you are really interested in the kingdom, he will give it to you." That is the confidence Rama had in Bharata.

When Bharata came, he broke down and said, "My Lord, you come back to Ayodhya." Rama replied, "That is not possible. You know that I have to honour my father's wishes. I cannot come back now." Bharata then said, "Father's wishes have been fulfilled. For some time, you were in the forest, and I was also the king for some time. So please come back." Sri Rama said, "What you say is partly true. Father asked me to go to the forest, and be there for fourteen years. And therefore, although yours is a very clever argument, I am sorry, I cannot come." At that time, one of the *rishis*, Jabali, who was listening to all this said, "You talk about *dharma* all the time. You have come to the forest in order to protect this *dharma*. What is this *dharma*? Is it to make sure that you keep your word? We don't want you to betray your father; you want others to feel that your father was a man who kept his word. Now I am asking you, what has *dharma* done for you that you have to follow *dharma*? Kaikeyi is not following *dharma*; Bharata has been made king, and you have been sent into the forest. People who follow *adharma* are leading a comfortable life." This is a statement made not only by Jabali, but by several people in the *Ramayana*.

Jabali Maharshi continued, “You are talking about your father. It is an accident that Dasharatha is your father. Why do you talk about this accident? Anybody could have been your father. My son, look at nature - does the calf worry about the cow after sometime? These are attachments, and there should be no attachments, whatsoever. Do things that make you happy; don’t do things that make you unhappy. I suggest that you go to Ayodhya, and live a comfortable life. See what *dharma* has done for you.”

Jabali tried to convince Rama that all the things that are said about *dharma* are rubbish. Rama listened and said, “Because you are a *rishi*, I am not punishing you. You are giving wrong advice. A person should follow *dharma*, not because it will give him prosperity, not because it will make him look better from the worldly point of view, but because that is the only thing to do. You have to do your *dharma* because it is right. All these things that you are talking about are nonsense, because eventually, *dharma* will win. There are initial setbacks in order to strengthen you. So, I don’t want you to talk to me like this. I don’t know how my father has allowed you to be in his court.” Hearing Rama’s reply, Vasishta said, “Don’t be harsh with Jabali. He is not an atheist; he is a believer. He wanted to put before you the other point of view, and you have won, Rama. Even though you knew the other side also, you have not yielded to his suggestion.” And so, Valmiki has introduced this for our sake. Rama was a person who knew the other side also; Jabali put forth the other side most effectively. This tells us the extraordinary greatness of Rama who upheld *dharma* at all times.

Sri Rama knew a great deal about human beings, and he was a person who was kind to all beings. He was a scholar who was always pleasant to everyone.

poorva bhashi mrudu bhashi

Sri Rama used to make other people feel at home; he approached people, talked to them, and enquired about their families. He had an extraordinary insight into people's psychology. He told Sita, "You don't worry about what will happen to you. Bharata is a great brother; I can't think of anyone greater than Bharata. However, when I am gone, do not talk to Bharata about my good qualities; do not praise me, because people in position do not want to hear anything good about people who are not in power." This is in the Valmiki *Ramayana*. There is a distinction between Bharata the brother, and Bharata the king. That is why we must realise that Rama was not just a good person; he knew who was what, and yet, he had tremendous compassion for other people. This can be seen in the way he accepted Vibhishana, in the way he treated Hanuman, and in the way he treated Bharata as a brother.

After he returned from Lanka, Rama told Hanuman, "We are on our way to Nandigrama. Please go ahead and quietly find out whether Bharata is really expecting me. Bharata has been enjoying power for fourteen years, so find out discreetly if he is waiting and willing to hand over the power to me. If he is not, I would like him to retain it." This is extraordinary because it comes from a person who has been in the forest for fourteen years! Sri Rama was extraordinary. If our behaviour equalled even one tenth of Rama's, we would have a peace that surpasses all understanding. The whole of the *Ramayana* tells us about the sorrow and suffering of Sri Rama, but what we learn from his life is his extraordinary detachment and determination in every act. Dedication, combined with detachment, is possible only through the grace of Sri Rama.

There is a story that when Sri Rama was wandering through the forest crying, "O Sita! O Sita!", Parvati told Parmeshwara, "You said that Sri Rama is a great *avatar*, but look at what he is doing! He is weeping like any other human being. I don't think he is

great.” Ishwara said, “You have not understood him; you cannot understand him. He is not what he appears to be. As far as he is concerned, he has come down on earth in order to do something, and he is acting the role.”

loke vihara Raaghava

In this world, each one must play a role, and we should do it effectively. When we want to get work done, we play a role without any anger in our heart. Everything that Rama did, he did like an actor on stage. An actor plays a role, but he knows that he is not the role. That is, he is able to detach himself from the role and play the role beautifully. Then, Shiva told Parvati, “Go and stand before Rama and see what happens.” Parvati took the form of Sita, and then stood in the way of Sri Rama. Rama, who was crying, suddenly saw Parvati in the form of Sita. When he saw her, he asked, “O Mother Parvati! What are you doing here?” The moment she heard that, she realised the truth of the statement made by Parmeshwara.

If we read the *Ramayana*, and if we think of Sri Rama as often as we can, he will give us the state of mind that will help us understand that everything is his will, and what is more, he will give us the strength to face problems. We will always have problems as long as we are human beings. Sri Rama himself had problems and Krishna had problems. But what we understand from their lives is that they will give us the strength to face these problems. What is more, when we face these problems, we will have inner peace. Peace is not something we get of our own accord; it can come only through the grace of Sri Rama. I pray that he gives us all the peace that we all so badly need - it is something that only Sri Rama can give.

*mangalam kosalendraaya mahaneeya gunathmane
chakravarthi thanujaaya saarva bhaumaya mangalam*

(Talk 68)

15. Tension and Suffering

Sometimes you go to meet someone without expecting anything in return from the visit. You spend time with the person because you like him. When the other person also knows that you are visiting him without expecting anything in return, the atmosphere is very pleasant. You are happy, he is also happy, and there is no kind of tension, whatsoever. When you leave him, you come away with the satisfaction of having met him. In other words, where there is no expectation of any kind, there is no tension, and the meeting is fruitful. The moment you go to someone expecting something, then even before you meet him, there is tension. Suppose you decide to go and meet X in order to get something from him. First of all, you debate if you should meet him; then, after some time, you decide you need to. Between the time of deciding to meet him and the actual meeting, you are under tremendous tension. You begin to wonder about many things - how he is going to react, whether he'll really make an attempt to help you, if meeting the individual is going to be useful or harmful, etc. You begin to think about all these things, long before meeting him. The tension that you feel does not develop after meeting the person or during your conversation with him. It starts developing long before. This tension that builds up in you over a period of time is the cause of your unhappiness.

When you seek something from somebody, and we are all seeking something from others, there is a lot of tension. This tension doesn't exist only when you are seeking from your fellow human beings, but also when you seek something from God. Before you decide to pray for something, you experience the same kind of tension. Sometimes, you feel that your prayers will be answered; sometimes, you feel that they may not. When the situation you're in is bad, you feel that you should pray. At the same time, you remember the occasions when your prayer was not answered. You,

therefore, tell yourself that it is pointless to pray. You even begin to question the very existence of God; you may conclude that there isn't a God. This happens because you ask yourself, "Why should such a terrible thing happen to me? Why should I be singled out for this suffering and sorrow?" After a few minutes of struggle, you tell yourself, "To think there is no higher power is absurd; I must pray to Him." Then, this thought is replaced by another, "Why should I pray? I'll leave it to Him." All these thoughts flit through your mind when you are in deep sorrow, when you are experiencing suffering.

Now, what happens in all these cases is that you expect or want something that you may not get, and therefore, you mentally prepare yourself for disappointment. Much of the time, you find it very difficult to think of God without wanting something from him. The moment you want something from anyone, there is this tension. There are many books which discuss sufferings, sorrows and expectations, and reading them is useful up to a point. The most important thing is that you know you're suffering because you experience the sorrow. You don't have to consult or read any books to know that you're suffering; what you would like, is to be relieved of this terrible suffering. And each one of us tries to find his own method of overcoming it - both physical and mental.

Much of the time, there is suffering; but the suffering and sorrow increase because of the tension that is involved. When you suffer, you don't look at things very objectively. You worry what might happen because of your suffering. You think that it might increase to such an extent that you will die. Then you begin to worry about what might happen to your family in the event of your death. When this happens, sometimes you tell yourself, "I should think of God. After all, I am not going to live forever." We realise that it is not the suffering that causes the pain; what causes it is our mind thinking of what might happen. As a result, there is more tension,

and more fear than there should be. If there is no expectation of any kind, there is only joy. The moment you expect something, there is sorrow.

You expect your body to be perfect, and when this expectation is not fulfilled, you are unhappy. You are terribly upset when your expectations are not met. You think of what others in a similar situation would do, and therefore, the tension mounts. You realise that your suffering is not just due to what is happening to you, but also because of your mind thinking about the possible consequences of what is likely to happen. As a result, the suffering increases. All our saints and sages have said that the reason we are unhappy is that we're constantly seeking. Everyone wants to be happy; some seek it in books, some in wealth, etc. - each one of us tries to seek happiness in his own way. The path to happiness may be different, but the goal is the same for all of us - we all desire to be happy. There are different routes or paths to the same goal, but some of us are sometimes unhappy with the path we've chosen - we compare our route with the paths that others have chosen, and soon, we change our own path to some other. What our saints and sages have said is that instead of changing the route, why don't you start from the other end? Instead of seeking a new path, why don't you seek the seeker?

All our lives, we're seeking something or the other, and because we're all seeking happiness, we would like to find a path that leads to complete or permanent happiness. When the new path we've chosen only leads to partial happiness, we try some other route. That's why our saints talk about *karma*, *jnana*, *bhakti*, and so on. We move from one object of desire to another, and for some reason, we are content doing this - for a while, at least. We feel this is the way to achieve permanent happiness.

Bhagavan, on the other hand, says, instead of going from one object to another, and from one path to another, the most important

thing is to find out who it is that is seeking the goal. Who is the seeker who is trying to find a way? He says, “Try to find out who the person is who is unhappy. Seek out the individual who has this tension.” One of the paths he has suggested is *Who am I?* This is the simplest and the most direct path to find permanent happiness. For example, breathing is something we do from the time we’re born till the time we die. It is vital; if we don’t breathe, we die. This very important thing we do, we do unconsciously; we only become conscious of it and recognise its importance, when we are unable to breathe. The moment somebody asks us to be conscious of our breathing, we realise how extraordinarily difficult the task is, because what is unconscious has to be made conscious.

Bhagavan maintains that the moment we seek the seeker, the moment we try to find out who it is that seeks or is doing the breathing, then we’ll find a change in our attitude. The moment the seeker is sought, there will be less tension, less fear, and less unhappiness. We will begin to do what we have to without any real expectations. We realise that this is the role we’ve been chosen to play; and we play it to the best of our ability, knowing fully well, that we are not the role, and that we are merely acting. An actor who plays the role of Ravana on stage knows he is merely acting. He may be very impressive as Ravana because he is a good actor. But the person who is playing the role knows he is not the real Ravana. Bhagavan says through enquiry or through total surrender, we will be able to relieve all our tensions, and discard all our fears.

When we enter a situation with no real expectation, there will be an absence of tension and fear. For example, when we attend an interview without expectations, we don’t worry whether we will succeed or fail. We will constantly be aware that this is a role we have to play. We will attain this kind of state as we go deeper and deeper into ourselves. The more we try to find out who we are, the

less will be the fear. When there is less fear, there is less tension. The moment we decide to leave everything to him, there will be no tension at all. We will begin to understand that whatever happens, is the result of his will. This, however, does not mean we will remain quiet or that we will remain idle. We will do what needs to be done to the best of our ability, and accept the consequences of our actions as his will. When we don't succeed at something the first time, we won't worry - we may think that perhaps it was his will that we should fail in our first attempt. What is important is that every attempt has its result. Sri Rama says when we take a stone and strike it several times, and at the tenth stroke, it breaks, all the credit goes to the tenth hit - nobody thinks of the nine strokes that preceded, and were responsible for weakening the stone.

Similarly, when we're not able to unscrew a bottle, we pass it around to many people. If the sixth person succeeds in opening it, we give all the credit to him; we forget that five people had loosened the cap to some extent. It is, however, the will of God that the credit should go to the sixth or seventh individual. What is important is the attempts that we make - they have significance. We may not understand the significance of our failure because we don't have an idea of the overall situation. The path to finding the seeker appears difficult, but we have assurance from Bhagavan, and so many saints and sages, that we are undertaking the quest because of his grace - once we have his grace, he will take us in a way that he feels we should be taken. In other words, there will be no expectation - things will happen the way they're meant to happen.

All our tensions and fears due to expectations will vanish. What is the state when we have no expectation? It is the highest state. Bhagavan, for example, did a variety of things without any expectation, and the result was perfection. When there is no

expectation, there is no fear of failure. The moment we turn our attention inward, we get peace and clarity to tackle a problem to the best of our ability, without being distracted by the thought of success or failure.

(Talk 69)

16. Satyam Vada

We all do many things in order to be happy. We go from one *satsang* to the other, we listen to discourses by various people, and we say this discourse was good, he spoke wonderfully, and so on. We also know that though we've been doing these things for many years, we are not always happy. Therefore, we read more books, recite some *stotra* or the other, do *puja*, *japa*, *dhyana*, and many other things. Despite doing all this, we're not happy. We think being happy is an incredibly complicated thing - and in order to achieve happiness, one has to do a lot of things. We accept one *guru* today, another *guru* tomorrow, and yet another, the day after. We keep changing because we are dissatisfied; sometimes, we find that some of the *gurus* are even worse than we are. When we come to know about them, we say, "He's no *guru*," and then go looking for someone else. Our quest never stops. Our whole life is spent in going to different *gurus*, listening to lectures on how to be happy, and so on. When we read the *Bhagavatam*, the *Gita* and the *Ramayana*, we tell ourselves, "This is how I must be. I must be detached. If I'm like so and so, I'll be happy."

There are people, however, who don't do any of these things, and they are happy. They don't go to *satsangs*, don't read books or attend discourses, don't do *japa* or *puja* - yet, they are happy. What is the reason for this? A man can be very religious; he may be able to recite the *Gita*, talk a great deal about philosophy, and

yet, he may not be spiritual. Being spiritual is very different from being religious. A person can be spiritual without being religious. We don't really need to know about many things to be truly happy. That is why we talk about *sat-chit-ananda*. *Sat* means 'that which is'. We talk about *sat* and *asat*. From 'that which is', we get *asatya* – 'that which is not'. When I ask you what happened and you lie, you are saying something that did not happen; you are being *asatya* - saying things that did not happen. If everybody decides that they will speak only the truth, then things will change. We will all find happiness.

We don't speak the truth all the time because we feel the other person may get angry or upset if we do. Sometimes, we don't speak the truth because we don't want to hurt the other person's feelings. At other times, we don't speak the truth because we hope to gain something by lying. We lie for the sake of our company, our family, our friends and ourselves. There are times in our lives, when we pay a heavy price for our lying - sometimes, our own family members stop trusting us. We may have been caught lying about something years ago, but that memory stays with the wife and children. Or it could be that your children, seeing you lie all the time, think it's okay to lie. "If my dad can lie, why can't I?"

That's why the first thing our scriptures say, is *satyam vada*. When you speak the truth, all other things will follow. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that if a person spoke the truth and only the truth for fourteen years, then, whatever he said, would happen. A man who decides to speak the truth at all costs, doesn't have to read sacred books, doesn't have to go to the temple, doesn't have to do *puja*, *japa*, etc. These are things that some people do because they're afraid that if they don't, the Lord will punish them. When we lie, for example, we are afraid the Lord will punish us. So, to avoid punishment, we go to the temple and pray to the Lord to forgive us.

Only a man who is not afraid will decide to speak the truth. That is why Gandhiji used to say, "God is Truth and Truth is God." We don't know anything about God. Our knowledge about him is based on what other people say. As far as truth is concerned, we don't have to ask another person what it is. We all know what it is. I can lie and say, I don't know what it is. I can cheat you, but the thing is, I can't cheat myself. I know when I'm lying. The basis of all spirituality is truth. If a person wants complete happiness, he has to be honest; this is the simplest, the easiest, and the best way to stay happy.

All religious leaders were aware of the limitations of human nature. They knew that it would be very difficult for an individual to be happy all the time; they talked about this, and other things also. We are afraid much of the time for the simple reason that we are not honest with ourselves and with others. We're afraid of being caught lying. If a man is totally honest, then there is no fear of any kind, whatsoever. When there is no fear of any kind, there is only joy. People can dispute the existence of God, but nobody can dispute truth. In fact, a habitual liar will say he respects truth and that he speaks only the truth. This is precisely the reason why Gandhiji said truth is God. A spiritual person is someone who is truthful - he does not lie. The tragedy is, we consider ourselves religious. We worship God in our homes and temples, but we are not truthful. If we are merely religious without being honest, then we're being merely ritualistic, not spiritual.

In the invocation to the *Taittiriya Upanishads*, the first thing that the *guru* says to the *sisya* is, "*Satyam vada.*" If we can speak the truth all the time, then we don't have to seek anything, there won't be any fear of any kind. Where there is no fear, there is no unhappiness. When a man is totally honest, and does what is correct, he has no expectation of any kind, whatsoever.

manas ekam vachas ekam karmanyekam mahatmanam

When a man is totally honest, he is not seeking anything, he has no fear of any kind, whatsoever. Such a person who does not seek, we call a *jnani*. We can acquire a *jnani's* state of mind only through the grace of God. Total honesty is possible only through the Lord's grace. We can have this only when there is a total absence of fear; total absence of fear is possible only when there is total absence of desire.

It is easy to say *satyam vada*, but it is extraordinarily difficult to be completely honest all the time. It was a big struggle for Gandhiji to be completely honest. His life is of great significance to us because it tells us that an ordinary man can also succeed through perseverance. In addition to his perseverance, Gandhiji also had tremendous faith in God. And unlike most of us, he wasn't seeking anything for himself - this is important because honesty and desire are closely related. When we are seeking something, there is the fear that we might not get it - and this feeling, sometimes, overwhelms us. Therefore, we resort to falsehood to get the thing we desire. If we don't ask anything for ourselves, the chances of our being honest are brighter. When we remain honest, we don't have to do anything else; we don't even have to think of God or meditate, because truth is God.

Gandhiji said that if he succeeded in staying honest most of his life, it was because of the grace of God. "If I overcame many of these things, it is not through my will power, it is through His grace." An individual cannot choose to be good or honest; only he can make one so. One can be totally honest only through his grace.

(Talk 71)

17. Seeing Yourself in Others

I have talked about Bhagavan week after week for fourteen years. You all know that I haven't been saying anything new; it's the same old thing over and over again. We often listen to the same subject from a variety of people because the subject is inexhaustible. We never get tired of listening to the discourses on the *Ramayana*; in fact, some of you may have been listening to such discourses for years and years. You listen, not because of the greatness of the person who gives the discourses, but because of the greatness of the subject. If we were to talk about ourselves for a few minutes, people would get bored; they wouldn't want to listen. We, however, don't mind listening to the sayings of the saints and *mahatmas*. We listen to the discourses because we want to find out whether we can get any clue to being happy, forever. We go to a number of people to find out whether they can give us this kind of happiness. We realise happiness is temporary. Therefore, we take up another book or we go to some other *guru* because we think that this *guru* will be better than the previous *guru*. In order to find the secret of eternal happiness, our whole life is spent in either studying books or meeting people.

Our happiness is short-lived because our concept of happiness is very different from that of the sages and saints. We are human beings with a limited mind, and we think of happiness with a limited experience. All seven days of the week, there is a fluctuation in us as far as happiness is concerned. When we are happy, we would like to cling to it; it is a universal human desire. We also think that when we reach a certain stage, we won't have the problems that we do now. It is here that we've got to learn a lot from the lives of saints and sages.

Many of our activities are aimed at becoming something. We come here to participate in *satsang* in order to become better. We

read something in order to get some knowledge. We are at a particular stage, and we wish to move up to the next level. The moment we want to become something, then we are interested, not just in being, but in becoming something. Whereas, in the case of a *jnani*, he's not interested in becoming anything; he only IS. Those who have a mind would like to develop it in order to become something. Those who don't have the kind of mind that we do, have no desire to become anything - they already are. They're at a stage beyond desire, and therefore, there's no question of becoming.

Whenever I went to the *Ashram* when I was young, and saw Bhagavan in the dining hall or heard that he had gone out to answer the call of nature, I used to ask myself why it was necessary for him to eat, answer the call of nature, and talk to people. Bhagavan used to talk to the people around him, he used to talk to birds and animals, and so on. Wasn't it possible for him to convey what he wanted to, without the medium of words? When people had a doubt, he used to say, "There is a book there. Why don't you take it?" I used to think at that time, if Bhagavan wills, wouldn't the book of its own accord fly to him? Why is he behaving like a normal person? He could have skipped eating, altogether. When somebody tells us there is a *sadhu* in such and such place who hasn't eaten for five years, we are tremendously impressed. We think it is a remarkable thing. But it isn't.

Someone once informed Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa that after ten years of hard work, he'd mastered the art of walking on water. People like us would be impressed, but Sri Ramakrishna said, "It is a pity that it took you ten precious years. To cross the river, you have to pay only ten paisa." We often do things for recognition. If in a competition, I eat thirty *idlis* in one minute, my name gets published in the paper. When I get this recognition, I am happy; next year, when somebody breaks my record, I am unhappy. I

want to break the new record. Is breaking the record such a big achievement? Is this what we want to do? Bhagavan's answer to this question often depended on the individual. He says that as far as the day-to-day activities are concerned, a *jnani* is no different from us. Had they been very different, we would have been frightened of them, and as a result, would not have tried to be like them - we would not have imitated them. If a *jnani* behaves like us, outwardly, it is because of their great compassion and love for us.

You may be the Collector of the district, but you don't use your authority with your son or grandson. People outside the family may fear you because of the power you have, but your son and grandson are not frightened of you. You don't exercise your power over them. Not only that, you are prepared to do ridiculous things to make them happy. When your four or five-year-old son asks you to lie down and be his donkey, you lie down. He might even beat you to make you go faster; instead of getting angry, you are happy. You don't ask yourself, "Why am I doing this? This is not real; this is a ridiculous thing to do." You are happy in the happiness of your son - your heart is involved in this. Similarly, out of great compassion for us, *jnanis* do some of the things we ask them to.

Bhagavan was truly extraordinary. If we're sleeping in our bedroom and two strangers walked in and said, "We'd like to sleep here as well," would we allow it? Probably not, because we don't know what will happen to us. In the case of the Maharshi, complete strangers slept around him for many years - both at Skandashram and in the hall of the *Ashram*. Before the sofa became a permanent fixture, Bhagavan used to sleep on the floor, and a number of people used to sleep around him because there was no place for them to go. This type of attitude is possible only if we don't have body consciousness. When we look at the whole

life of Bhagavan, we realise how difficult it is for any one of us to lead that kind of a life even for a single day. Bhagavan stayed in Virupaksha cave, in Skandashram, in and around the temple, etc. Now imagine what it must have been like to live on the hill in Tiruvannamalai during summer - one of the hottest places in South India. Bhagavan didn't even have a fan, but he never complained. Would we be able to live like him?

Probably not! The moment the power fails in Hyderabad, we hope and pray it will be restored soon. Would it be possible for us to accept that there will be no power supply for the next week or so? Would we be able to accept the absence of power without complaint? It is then we realise that though Bhagavan had a body like ours, and performed the functions that we perform every day, he was very different from us. Unlike us, he did not identify himself with the body; he was not body conscious. He was, however, considerate to other people's ailments. This is what we have to learn from the life of *jnanis*. When people went to Bhagavan, and cried and talked about their illness and medicines, Bhagavan never said even once that the body is not permanent, and one must lose body consciousness. Only a pseudo-*vedantist* would say something like this. Bhagavan, on the other hand, used to listen to the person with great compassion, and recommend some *ayurvedic* medicine as a cure.

Bhagavan never worried about himself. He was totally indifferent to his body. That is why Kavyakantha said, "When it comes to other people, you are so diligent and industrious; when it comes to yourself, O Bhagavan, you are so lazy; you never worry about your welfare." This is the difference between a great *jnani* and people who have studied *Vedanta*, and tell others that they need not worry about anything because everything is *maya*. The mother may not eat anything, but when a child wants something, she

prepares it. That is the kind of compassion Bhagavan had for his devotees; and the kind all *jnanis* have, as well.

If I see myself in others, and others in myself, how can I talk of another person? There is no satisfactory answer to the question because it is an intellectual one. As we grow older, we realise we cannot understand anybody completely, unless we become that person. If I want to understand you, I must become you; when I become you, there is only compassion. There is no condemnation of any kind, whatsoever. I cannot hope to understand Bhagavan till I become Bhagavan. When there is a lack of understanding, there is criticism, condemnation, etc. The moment I become you, there is only compassion because I understand you totally. Theoretically speaking, if we look at it from the highest angle, then we see what happens. A *jnani* sees himself in others, and others in himself. The moment we understand that totally, we also understand that in that state there cannot be criticism of any kind, whatsoever - there is only compassion.

(Talk 75)

18. Follow the Deshika's Disha

sraddhaavaan labhate jnaanam

If you want *jnana*, you must have faith. However, when it comes to spiritual matters, much of the time, we have doubts; we wonder if we are following the right path. We want assurances that the *guru* will take us to the right destination. In everyday life, we realise that we have faith. We cannot live even for a single day in the normal way we do, unless we have faith in others. We have faith that our children are attending school regularly - we don't follow them to school every day. We have faith that those who work under us will come on time, and that the people we talk to,

speak the truth. After buying a ticket to Vijayawada, we don't go to the Station Master to find out the name of the driver, and if he's qualified to drive the train. We hope that he will not be drunk, and that everything will work out well.

It is on the basis of faith that we do everything in this world; if we start doubting every little thing, we can't exist, even for a single day. From morning to evening, we have this faith that everything will work out well. At the end of the day, when we go to bed, we hope that we will get up the next morning. Even though from time to time, we read that so and so passed away in his sleep, we continue to think that these things are exceptions, and won't happen to us. We have no doubt that we will get up the next morning.

When it comes to instructions from the *guru*, however, we have all kinds of doubts. We wonder whether what he says is correct, and whether he will take us to the right goal, and so on. This is where we have to be careful. When we have chosen a *guru*, the important thing is to follow what he says. If we don't, it'll be you, and not the *guru*, who will be affected. There are so many things in life that we fail to understand, because of our limited intellect. For example, every day we seek something or the other. What do we do? We work hard to get it. There is a lot of *mano vyakula* – tension – and we wonder whether we will get what we want. We try various ways of getting it. Sometimes, we go to someone, get some recommendation, and get what we want. When we get it, we are happy.

So, whenever we have a desire of any kind, we spend a lot of energy and time trying to fulfill it. However, a few days after getting what we want, we want something else. Our whole life is spent in getting things, enjoying them for a short period, and then, tiring of them. Hence, we look to other things to keep us happy. We not only want to possess things, but people as well. We know

from experience, however, that we have no control over people or things. Yet, when a person gives himself to us, without expecting anything in return, something happens to us. We begin to doubt the person.

What is love? It is when we give ourselves completely to somebody. When we give ourselves to somebody, we don't expect anything in return. Where there is real love for another person, we are prepared to do anything for him because he doesn't ask for anything. On the other hand, when we seek to control, the other person seeks to control as well, and it results in a fight. Where there is assertion of authority, where we would like to have control over people or things, there is resistance. However, when we give ourselves to the other person, without expecting anything in return, the other person is prepared to do anything for us - the paradox is, we are not interested in getting anything from him. The moment we are not interested in getting something from other people, then the whole world is prepared to do anything for us. Yet we feel this is not practical; even though the most practical thing to do is help the other person without seeking anything from him - not even a thanks. The reason we don't expect anything is because we don't think we have done anything for him.

A real *sadhu* doesn't own anything - in fact, he doesn't even own himself. He doesn't think that he possesses his body; he believes that it is something he should use to serve other people. We, on the other hand, preserve the body to enjoy ourselves. What happens when we come across a person who is prepared to give everything that he has to other people - someone who doesn't worry about his bodily comforts, and willingly gives his time and energy to other people? The people who go to the *sadhu* think he belongs to them; they love him very much. Since he has no sense of identification with himself, everybody thinks he is wonderful; they feel the need to meet him often. There may be thousands of people when we go

to meet him, but even if we have a glimpse of him, we are happy. Why? This is because we are so impressed when a person gives himself totally to other people.

The same thing happens when we are in love. When we are in love, there is no sense of possession. We give ourselves to other people. Is it possible for us to have this attitude in our day-to-day life? It is possible, but only through the grace of God. Our normal tendency is to possess and control; the inclination to lose oneself in other people is foreign to our nature. If we have the grace of the Lord, we would think less and less of ourselves; we would do our duty to the best of our ability. This, however, doesn't mean that we will be like a piece of stone - unemotional. We will fulfill our particular purpose in life without worrying about the results; we will put our faith in a higher power.

The word *disha*, in Sanskrit, as you know, means 'direction' - east, west, north, south, and so on. We also have the word *desha*. If we look at the map of a country, we find that it gives us information on how far the country extends to the east, to the west, to the north and to the south. So, a *desha* is a country whose *dishas* are defined. If I ask you how to get to Panjagutta, you'll give me the directions. I follow them, and then reach the place. *Disha* also means 'way'. When we talk about *upadesha*, we are talking about the most important directions given to us in order to lead a spiritual life. We also talk about *adesha* and *sandesha*, which are all derived from the word *disha*.

What does the *guru* do? He gives us *upadesha*. *Upa* has several meanings, and *desha* means 'direction'. What is *Upanishads*? Here, *upa* means 'close' and *nishad* means 'sitting'. In fact, the literal meaning of *Upanishad* is 'sitting very close'. *Upadesha* was given not over All India Radio or Doodarshan, it was something that was given when the *sisya* and the *guru* sat very close to each other - not only physically, but also mentally. *Nishad* means

‘sitting’. The most important thing for the *sishya* is to follow what the *guru* says. And what does he say?

satyam vada, dharmam chara
matruvedo bhava, pitru devo bhava
aachaaryadevo bhava, atithidevo bhava

A living *guru* is considered very important because he is someone who directs us, and knows what our *vasanas* are. We get the *guru* we deserve. The moment we get a *guru*, whoever it is, we must have *shraddhaa*, for he will take us in the right direction. Do not worry about the externals; we can't expect all *gurus* to be the same. There are different kinds of taps - brass, stainless steel, and even gold. The externals don't make any difference because the main function of the tap is to allow water to flow through it. The tap by itself doesn't produce water when it is opened. Similarly, a real *guru* is one through whom we get the grace of the Lord; he knows how much water we require at a particular moment. So, *upadesha* is very important. And what is more,

shraddhaavaan labhate jnaanam

We must have *shraddhaa* in our *guru*. A *deshika* is a spiritual teacher who shows us the *disha*, the same word that we have in *upadesha*. Because of various problems that we have in this world, we find it difficult to identify the right path. There are so many of them; we don't know which the correct path is. We also don't know which path will mislead us. Therefore, we say that the *deshika* will show us the right path. A real *guru* will help us accept whatever is offered to us; he will give us the state of mind that will make us accept everything as his will, and yet, give us the extraordinary strength to do what we have to do.

At the highest level, what is it that we are all seeking without our being aware of it? What we seek is stillness of mind; we want to

have a quiet mind. Our happiness is temporary; the mind is constantly agitated. What we seek is *shanti*. The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* say that *shanti* is a state where the mind remains calm when both good and bad things happen. We learn to accept both, and this is the most extraordinary thing. A true *guru* will give that state of mind which will be indifferent to both happiness and unhappiness - which are two sides of the same coin. In deep sleep, we are neither excited nor unhappy; there is only deep peace.

A *jnani* will have the same peace that we have in deep sleep. He will be able to act extraordinarily effectively because there is no sense of doership on his part. He wouldn't think that he was doing anything. His actions are spontaneous because there is no thinking on his part, and he's not doing anything for himself. And since he is not doing anything for himself, he gives himself to other people. The moment we give ourselves to another person, there is only peace, and there's no conflict of any kind, whatsoever. The *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* also say that the *guru* will give us this *shanti* which cannot be understood by the ordinary mind, because the ordinary mind can only think in terms of opposites – *sukha* and *dukha*, and so on. When we give ourselves to other people, or when we love everybody - through the grace of the *guru* - we don't have a sense of individuality, and therefore, we become everybody. When we become everybody, then, there is no conflict. There is conflict only where we have a sense of individuality. When I see others in myself, and myself in others, there is no conflict - there is only oneness. This is what we call *advaita*. There is conflict when there are two; there is no conflict when there is only one. When a person dissolves in others in love, then there is no conflict of any kind, whatsoever.

This we experience in our own lives when we are deeply in love with another. We give ourselves to the other person, and we don't expect anything from them. We don't have to think of love

between a man and a woman - think of the love we have for our children. We give ourselves totally to our small child or grandchild; with them, there is no sense of me and mine. There is no sense of individuality; there is no ego involved. This is what a *guru* does as well; he gives himself totally to us. Even if we forget him, he won't forget us; he does things even without our being aware of it. In fact, a time may come, again through his grace, when the *guru* is closer to us, than we are to ourselves. Since the *guru* knows what is good for us, he does what is unimaginable; he does things without telling us that he is doing them. His compassion is so extraordinary that he continues helping us in his quiet and effective way. The *guru* will give us freedom, and he will not react if we are occasionally indifferent to him. He is like a mother - perhaps more than a mother - for he will never desert you.

This is why Bhagavan talked about the importance of *guru kripa*. We must, from time to time, become conscious of the *kripa* of the *guru*. The more we are conscious, the more we are blessed. He will give us the most precious thing - stillness of the mind. Whatever might happen, the mind will remain calm, and yet we will do our duty. We will reach this state, not because of our intelligence, but because of the grace of the *guru*. The greatest thing that the *guru* can give us is the equanimity of accepting everything that happens as his will, and that we are mere instruments. As we think about him more and more, he becomes internalized, and when this happens, we will realise gradually, that he is none other than God himself. *Guru*, God, the Self and Grace are the same, eventually.

(Talk 76)

19. Lessons from Bhagavan

When we become experts in a field, we are recognised, get fame, name, position, and money. Consciously or unconsciously, we become proud of our achievement, and we begin to think that we know a great deal. In spiritual life, when we do *sadhana*, whatever be the nature of the *sadhana*, we realise that we know nothing, and we are surprised that we live this life with so little knowledge of everything. What we know is very little; what we do not know is the only thing we know. We also realise that there is no way we can have a complete understanding of anything in this world. How does this happen? As we progress in our *sadhana*, we realise that we cannot understand anything fully, for the simple reason that we have not understood ourselves fully. When we have not understood ourselves, a complete understanding of something that is outside of us is impossible. At best, this understanding will be very limited. We realise the limitation of our knowledge. We also realise that things happen the way they do, not because of us, but because of a higher power.

We are mere instruments in the hands of the Lord. We function like taps - we can either stop or let the water flow through it. The function of the pipe is to let the water flow; the function of the tap is to stop or release the water. It doesn't matter what kind of tap it is - it can be brass, silver or gold - its function is to allow the water to flow. Because of our limited knowledge and because of the importance we give to external features, we conclude that the gold tap is the best for the job. We fail to understand that there is no difference between the three taps in terms of their function. Bhagavan repeatedly said, "Why do you focus on appearance? Why do you limit yourself to the body? You are not the body." He maintained that with our limited mind, we say something is good, and something is bad. We don't realise that there's a place for everything in this world. If you think you can get satisfaction by

following a particular method, follow it. Don't criticize or look down on other methods - methods which other people are following. The world is a very big place. As to whether we should perform idol worship, Bhagavan humorously replied, "We all do *vigraha aradhana*, don't we? We all worship *vigrahas*, for everyone in this world worships his body knowing full well that it is not a permanent thing." When we start our worship, it is a *vigraha*, but after sometime, we realise the idol is a just means to an end. Through our *sadhana*, we realise that Krishna and Rama are within us, not outside of us. Our ancestors thought that it would be difficult for some of us to focus on a formless God; so, out of compassion for us, they introduced idol worship.

In *Lalitha Sahasranama*, after we recite the one thousand names of the *Devi*, we conclude by saying, *nama roopa vivarjitha* - she is someone without form or name. When we recite the various *stotras* with great feeling, what happens to us? After about ten to fifteen minutes, we don't think of anything; we are overcome with a great feeling and we see our *guru* or *ishta devata* within ourselves. When we do *puja*, and we are involved in it, after about ten minutes, the tongue repeats whatever has to be repeated, but the mind is so totally focused for such a long time that we are surprised that the *puja* is over. However, at times, the mind is not focused on the *puja*, but on other things. Both are possible. Bhagavan says that if there is a distraction during meditation, do not worry about it; we should find out for whom is this a distraction.

Sometimes, we are unable to concentrate when we sit for meditation because for some reason or the other, we have many thoughts. Bhagavan says not to worry about this, for what is inside is trying to come out. He warns us not to suppress the thoughts, but to just watch and observe. We must understand that all the thoughts are coming to the surface because of the grace of the

guru. The *vasanas* of so many *janmas* are coming to the surface - there is nothing to worry about. All our saints and sages have said that if we have the *guru's* grace, the thoughts within us come out faster. After sometime, as we continue our meditation, we will enjoy a longer period of peace. In this, again, we have to learn a lot from the life of Bhagavan.

If anyone went to Bhagavan and told him, "I am a devotee of Krishna," Bhagavan would ask the person to tell him something about Krishna. He would never say, "Why are you worshipping Krishna? Worship Shiva. I recite *Arunachala Shiva*, so you also recite it." We would have said that, but not Bhagavan. He never discouraged anyone from doing what they considered to be right. He would say, "We don't know anything about ourselves; how can we compare two people or two methods? How can we say if somebody is more important or less important than someone else?" To one person, he said that it's because of our ego that we make such comparisons. It is the ego that is talking when we say, "My *guru* is greater than yours." He said that *gurus* don't lose anything when we make such comparisons; we, however, lose a lot - we should not compare highly evolved souls.

Once, after taking the permission of Bhagavan, Kunju Swami went to see another *swamiji*. When he returned, he informed Bhagavan that a lot of people gave the *Swamiji* fruit and prostrated before him. Bhagavan listened to the whole thing and asked, "What did you do?" Kunju Swami said, "I did not do anything. I did not prostrate." Bhagavan said, "It's because of your ego. You did not prostrate because you would like to be told that you are associated with a greater *guru*. If you go to another *guru*, and you find people prostrating before him, what is the difficulty in your prostrating? The moment you accept that everyone is divine, where is the need for any comparison of this kind? When you prostrate before the other person, think of your own *guru*, and think that you are

prostrating before him." This is something we should all learn. When we say other *gurus* are no *gurus*, it is not a reflection on them, it is a reflection on us. When we hardly know ourselves, what can we say about other *gurus*? Who are we to talk about them?

When somebody asked if he could go to Aurobindo Ashram, Bhagavan said "Go!" If somebody said, "I am going to the Himalayas," he would say, "Go!" If somebody said, "I am going to Kashi," he would say the same thing. You and I, on the other hand, would have become angry and said, "When I am here, why do you go to other *gurus*?" Because our exposure is so limited, we think our *guru* is the best. Bhagavan never forced anyone to do anything; he allowed them to do what they wanted to. For example, Bhagavan never wore chappals; but he never said to the others, "Don't wear chappals because I am not wearing them." Bhagavan used to walk short distances at least four or five times during a day. He used to request the attendants and Kunju Swami to go first because they found it hot. Bhagavan, on the other hand, because of his total absence of body consciousness, would walk as if it were a moonlit night. You and I talk about what we should do and what we should not do. Bhagavan never asked anybody to do anything for him. This is a lesson which we should learn from his life.

If somebody came to the *Ashram* after a long time, Bhagavan would just smile; he never embarrassed the person by asking why he hadn't come for a long time. Whenever he heard anyone criticizing others, he used to put a stop to it. He would say, "Let us mind our business; the criticism is irrelevant." Some people would go to Bhagavan and complain, "This *Ashram* is not maintained properly; there are some things that could be better." Bhagavan would listen a couple of times, and say, "Why have you come here? You have come for *sadhana*, so you do your *sadhana*. If you

have come to improve the *Ashram*, do that, but is this the purpose for which you have come? Your purpose is not to improve the *Ashram*. There are some people here who are doing it; leave it to them." Somebody went to the Maharshi and said, "Bhagavan, so and so is not a good person. He should be made to leave the *Ashram*." The Maharshi said, "Who are you to say what he is? Each person has his own weakness. Leave it to him." The person said that Bhagavan should reprimand this particular man for bringing discredit to the *Ashram*. But Bhagavan never did what he had been asked to because unlike us, a *jnani* doesn't have an ego, and hence, is not worried about his reputation. He does not have the kind of mind that we have. A *jnani* or an *avatar* does not react the way that we do - he reacts spontaneously to a situation.

Bhagavan's lesson to us was to meditate, and when we meditate, we should try to observe the thoughts that surface. The moment we try to detach ourselves from the thoughts, and merely observe them, then half the battle is won. This, of course, we cannot do on our own; we can only do it through his grace. The other thing is that we should not look down on other *gurus*. Each one gets a *guru*, and this *guru* is suited for the spiritual growth of a particular person. When we compare *gurus*, these comparisons don't affect the *gurus*, they affect us. At the highest level, when we understand ourselves, we realise there is no *guru*, there is no *sishya* - there is only one person who sees himself in others, and others in himself. In that stage, there is no seeking of any kind, whatsoever, because the seeker and the sought would have become one.

(Talk 77)

20. Discard all Veshas

It is strange that people want complicated things; they are not satisfied with anything simple. As we grow old, we realise that it is not difficult to lead a sophisticated and complicated life, but the most difficult thing is what appears to be the easiest - simplicity. Bhagavan led a very simple life. What is this simple life? What is it that we are seeking all the time? We want money, we want fame, we want so many other things. Why do we want so many things? This is because we have a sense of insecurity, there is emptiness within; we want to fill that emptiness with fame, wealth, and so on. We would like to put on a *vesha*. I want to impress on you that I can do more than you, that I have more money than you do, etc. Why do we want more money, fame, and other things? We all need money, but we are not satisfied, however much we have. We would like to have more and more money. We want to have more and more money in order to have control over other people - the more control we have over other people, the less dependent we are on other people. We can do what we want to do because we have influence. If we don't have money, then we have to depend upon a number of people. In other words, if we cannot do something we want to, we have to go to people who can help us. As such, we become dependent on other people. This applies to money, fame, name, and everything else. The moment somebody comes to know you are famous, then they know that you can get things done in a way that most others cannot.

We are constantly seeking money, fame or power because with the help of these, we can be independent of a large number of people. This is what is happening all over the world. We would like to have freedom to do what we want to do, but the problem is, there cannot be absolute or complete freedom. Therefore, we ask ourselves, "How is it possible to have a great amount of freedom?"

We conclude that if we become very rich, or become powerful or famous, we will be independent of a large number of people, and we will be able to get a number of things done.

We soon realise, however, that no matter how much wealth or power we have, we don't have complete or total freedom. We also realise that however much we have - whether it be money, power or fame - we want more and more of it. So, what we are actually seeking is freedom to do what we want to do without obstruction of any kind. We don't want to be bothered by other people. We would like to pursue what we want to pursue. And from time to time, we realise that we don't have complete freedom to do this. It also dawns on us that even though power, position and wealth give us greater freedom to exert our influence on other people, the freedom they provide is not perfect. It does not free us from our own mind.

The mind is often referred to as the devil's workshop. It is constantly thinking of new ways of making us enjoy ourselves. It is thinking about the things we could buy or do. And as we follow the trail of thought, we realise that it is unending - the mind wants more and more. When we are unable to get what we want, we curse ourselves and wonder, "Why is it that I am not able to get what I want?" We find it difficult to control the mind and restrict our desires. As our wants increase, we find that we have to do more and more in order to have the power and position we need.

When we think deeply about this, we become aware that we cannot have the kind of freedom we want, so long as we have a mind that is seeking something or the other. The mind is a bundle of thoughts, a bundle of desires, and its inherent nature is to seek something or the other. There is no end to these desires. All our lives, we spend trying to find different ways of satisfying our desires; our experience tells us that desires can never be satisfied

by fulfilling them. If we fulfil one desire today, tomorrow we will have two, and the day after, we may have four. When Yayati went to his youngest son to return his youth to him, the son said, "Father, enjoy your youth for some more time. I am not in a hurry to get my youth back." In reply, Yayati said,

*na jaatu kaamah kaamanam upabhogena shamyati
havishaa krishnavartmeva bhuya eva abhivardhate*

"O my son, I took your youth years ago, hoping that I would tire of the whole thing, hoping that I will one day say that I no longer have any desire. I thought after I'd enjoyed all the desires in this world, I will say, I have no more desires, and that I have satisfied all my desires. I realise now that this will never happen. I am no longer interested in keeping your youth, because I now understand that desires cannot be killed by fulfilling them. Trying to kill your desires by fulfilling them is like trying to put out a fire by pouring *ghee* on it. It is like this - when you pour *ghee* into the sacred flame in a *yajna*, the flame leaps up. If you pour a little more *ghee*, the flame leaps up higher. In other words, if you think that you can satisfy the fire with *ghee*, you are mistaken. The *agni* wants more and more, and it leaps higher and higher. It is the same with human beings. When you fulfil one desire, several other desires crop up; so, there is no way you can quench all the desires that you have."

On the one hand, we are trying to get rid of our desires; and on the other, the mind is finding ways to fulfill desires. These are two contradictory things. This is why our ancestors said that what we are actually seeking is freedom - one that we will not get from wealth, children, fame, etc. What will give us freedom is *moksha*. *Moksha* literally means 'freedom', although we often associate the word with heaven. *Mumukshu* is a person who is actually interested in liberation. What is this liberation? It is the liberation

of oneself from one's own mind. There can be complete *moksha* or freedom only when the mind subsides in the self. When the mind completely subsides in the self, there is no ego of any kind. There is no sense of 'I', and when there is no individual, then there is no seeking of any kind. When there is no seeking of any kind, whatsoever, there is no unhappiness of any kind.

All our problems are of our own making - they are due to our seeking. And that is why Bhagavan says, "Why don't you go to the root of seeking? Try to find out who you are. Who is it that is seeking?" Bhagavan says it is all right to seek, but constant seeking makes us unhappy. So from time to time, we need to ask ourselves the all-important question, "Who am I?" Ultimately, when we find the answer to the question, we will have *moksha*. We will have total freedom from the mind, and will no longer be controlled by it. This is the highest form of freedom, and it is this that both Bhagavan and the *Upanishads* talk about - the freedom of the mind, freedom from all seeking. We can achieve this freedom either through enquiry or through total surrender. The moment we have *moksha*, all problems disappear.

Doing the most simple things in life are very often the most difficult to do. To speak the truth is the simplest thing to do. In order to lie, a person has to think of so many things - what to say, how to say it, etc. It is a very tedious process. When a man speaks the truth, there is no problem; he says what he feels, what he considers to be true. But that seems to be the most difficult thing to do in our everyday life. And that is why, when we talk about who a great *jnani* or *mahatma* is, we don't write a list of things. The mark of greatness is the following,

manas ekam, vachas ekam, karman ekam, mahatmanam

A *mahatma* is one who says what is on his mind, and does what he says. This is very simple, but it is only possible to achieve when there is no sense of doership - when there is no ego. All our

problems are due to various reasons. For the sake of power, money and fame, we think of one thing, say one thing, and do another thing. In other words, there is no consistency of the kind you find in a *mahatma*. Truth is a simple thing – we say what we feel. What is falsehood? We feel one thing, and we say another; we see something, and then say it did not take place.

We all suffer from a sense of insecurity. We want to achieve many things in life, and in the process of fulfilling our desires, we do so many things which result in a dichotomy between *manas* and *vachak*, and *vachak* and *manas*, and so on. As a result, we suffer the consequences of this. If we are free from the disturbance of the mind, if we surrender our mind to the Lord, or if we understand ourselves totally through self-enquiry, there will be no desires or expectations. What is to be done, will be done spontaneously - without too much thinking, without any expectations from other people. The emptiness that we now feel inside us will disappear. So, Bhagavan asks, "Why are we obsessed with our *vesha*?" When you wear the uniform of a police official and travel in a jeep, people everywhere respect you. Is the respect that you get something intrinsic to you? It is not intrinsic to you. It is the dress that is responsible for all the respect that you get - it is a *vesha*. When you are off duty and wearing everyday clothes, you won't get the same respect that you'd get when you put on the *vesha*. This is *veshah hanata*. Once the *vesha* is gone, then your *nija swaroopa* is revealed. We all put on so many *veshas*, but underneath it all, we are the same. Bhagavan says that if we understand this truth, we will realise there is nothing else to understand. When we realise there is nothing else to understand, we see ourselves.

We see ourselves in others, and others in ourselves. This, Bhagavan has said, is the real state.

*balakepi jada gopakepi vaa vaanarepi suni vaa khalepi vaa
panditepi pada samshritepi vaa pakshapatha rahitam
sameekshanam*

In that state there will be no difference between a *baala* (child), a *jada* (unintelligent person), a *gopa* (cowherd), a *vaanara* (monkey), a *pandita*, a *pamara* (ordinary person), etc. We will be unable to see any difference whatsoever, because in that state, we see ourselves in others, and others in ourselves. This becomes possible when we have freed ourselves of the mind. There cannot be perfect freedom until we can get over the influence of the mind. One can be free of other things, but we cannot be free of the control of our own mind. The mind has extraordinary control over us, and when we talk about freedom, what we mean is, we don't want to be a slave to anybody. Bhagavan says real *moksha* is freedom from one's own mind, and all our *sadhanas* should be aimed at achieving it.

(Talk 79)

21. Inside the Jaws of the Tiger

When your child or grandchild has learned a poem, and wants to show off her knowledge, she may ask you, "Do you know this poem?" In order to encourage the child, you say, "No, I don't know the poem. Please recite it for me." The child is very happy that she knows something you don't, and with great pride, she recites the poem. After the recitation, she may once again ask, "You don't know this poem?" When you again say that you don't, the child is very happy that she knows something that you don't. She may excitedly tell other people about this, and you are very

happy. You do this for the simple reason that you want to make the child happy. In other words, you pretend that you do not know, and the child is very happy that she knows what you don't. She also has the feeling, that now she has recited it, you know all about the poem.

We do so many things for the people we love - something that we don't do for others. Very often, when we are in despair or in depression, we appeal to our *guru* or God: "Can't you see how much I am suffering? Can't you do something about it? You must open your eyes and see what is happening." If he is a living *guru*, he wouldn't say, "I know what is happening." Instead, he would say, "Is that so?" and ask you a number of questions. We have the feeling that he does not know, and so, we pour our heart out to him. He doesn't say anything; he merely listens. When the *guru* does not say anything, we are hurt. We think, "What is this? I said so much about my problems. But he didn't say he will do something about it." We then begin to doubt whether the *guru* can do anything at all. Sometimes, we feel the *guru* is a myth because we wonder how it is possible for another person to do something for us when we are deeply distressed. After sometime, we tell other people how we went to our *guru* with a problem, but he did not say or do anything. We tell people that it is pointless to go to a *guru*, and we have to do something ourselves.

This is human nature - we think the *guru* does not know what is going on. We are like the child who feels that the father or the grandfather does not know the poem. Suddenly, when we least expect it, we get some peace in the midst of our problems. Because of our limitations, we do not realise that the peace we get for some time is the result of the grace of our *guru*. Even though we are in the company of the *guru*, the problems may or may not get solved. But we constantly think about what the *guru* can do or cannot do. In all this, without our knowledge, we think of our

guru. And very rarely, we realise that it is the *guru* who makes us think of him.

A mother will not talk to the child about the concern she has for him. When we have great affection or love for another, we don't have to talk about it or write about it at great length. The other person would know it. A real *guru* will not tell us about the great concern he has for us - just as the sun does not tell us every day what it is doing for us. The way the *guru* operates is something we can't describe in words. The moment we have unshakeable faith in him, through his grace, we would never worry about our problems, the way we do now.

Why do we worry about the improvement of our soul when we have a *guru*? We have accepted someone as our *guru*; so it is his responsibility, not ours. Any change in us, is a change brought about through his grace. The moment we take on the responsibility, we tell ourselves that we are doing it, and the sense of 'I' in us frustrates all our efforts. So, leave everything to him; do not worry, and accept everything as his will. The *guru* worries - he is more concerned about our development than we ourselves are.

This relation between *guru* and *sishtya* is not something we can explain to anyone. If one has a *guru*, and has followed him over a period of time, one can't tell people what happened during that period because it is something very personal. There is no way in which we can try to describe the *guru-sishtya* relationship in ordinary language. There is nothing the *guru* cannot do; the *guru* is God himself; he is the Self, he is grace. He is not something outside of us. He is here, there, and everywhere, and is not restricted to one particular form. Sometimes, extraordinary things happen because of the *guru*. According to the *Vaishnava sampradaya*, we may read books, we may read the *Vedas* and so

on, but we can get knowledge only from a *guru*. An *acharya* is very important; mere book knowledge will not give us experience.

Sri Ramanuja had a *guru*. Although he had studied a lot of works, he felt he should get *upadesa* from a *guru*. There is a *niyama* or discipline one had to follow in order to get *upadesa*. *Upadesa* means following certain restrictions; we can't go to a *guru* and ask for *upadesa*. In the past, one had to start on a *pournami* day. On that day, one could have the normal quantity of food, but after that, one had to keep reducing it so that on *amavasya* day, one took practically nothing. Once again, one started eating a little food so that by the next *pournami*, one could go back to the normal intake. It all depended on the *guru*. Before the *guru* gave *upadesa*, one had to undergo this. The *guru* would then give the *mantra* most suitable for the person on *pournami* or *amavasya* day.

Ramanuja wanted to have *upadesa* from his *guru*. He had to walk from Srirangam to a place twenty miles from Madurai. When he arrived there, the *guru* said, "You are not ready, come later!" The *guru* tested him in this manner eighteen times. Every time, Ramanuja fasted for fifteen days before meeting the *guru*, and the *guru* told him to come back later. But Ramanuja's *shraddha* was such that he did not give up. He said, "He is my *guru*. I can't go to someone else. I have to get *upadesa* from him." Ramanuja's friends thought that the *upadesa* must be something extraordinary, since Ramanuja, who was very knowledgeable, was made to undergo such hardship. They felt that there was no hope for them. They told Ramanuja, "Your *guru* must be very cruel. He has been sending you back so many times." But Ramanuja said, "I don't know; my *guru* knows best."

The eighteenth time that he went, the *guru* was pleased with his *shraddha* and gave him the *mantra*, which is the most important thing. We may know the *mantra*, *Om namo Narayana*, but

according to *sampradaya*, we must get it from the *guru*. The *guru*'s words have greater potency, so we must be initiated by a *guru*. Ramanuja was very happy. The *guru* said, "This *mantra* is going to make you happy in this world, and also in the next world. It is a unique *mantra*. You must keep repeating it. But you should not reveal it to anyone. If you mention it to other people, or give it to other people, then you will suffer greatly. Not only that, you will go to hell. This *upadesa* is not for all." What the *guru* meant, of course, was that he could give it to a competent *sishya* at the appropriate time.

What happened in the life of Ramanuja is very interesting. He had great respect for his *guru*, and that is why he went eighteen times. The thought of going to another *guru* never occurred to him. Whenever Ramanuja's friends and admirers met him, they told him that once he got the *mantra*, he should share it with them so that they too could benefit from it. Ramanuja would say, "Certainly, I will tell you."

The day he got the *mantra*, Ramanuja said to himself, "The *guru* said it is a powerful *mantra*, and that it will give me *shreyas* in this world, and in the next. But he also said I must not reveal it to other people or I will go to hell." Imagine the extraordinary tension Ramanuja must have had! He did not want to reveal the *mantra* to everyone, and be charged with *guru droha*. But Ramanuja also felt that if it was such a great *mantra*, and that if everyone knew it, then they too could be happy in this world, and in the next world. He said to himself, "I will reveal this *mantra* to all these people." Again, he felt that he should not betray his *guru*, since *guru apachara* is the gravest *apachara*. He must have gone through all these thoughts, and it must have been a torture for him before he reached a decision. His friends and admirers were waiting for the *mantra* that he had told them he would reveal once he got it. After a lot of mental torture, he climbed up the roof of the temple, and

said, “Everyone come here! I am going to give you a message that is going to make you happy - not only in this world, but in the next world as well. This is what my *guru* told me.” And then, he revealed the *mantra* to all the people gathered there.

Some people got the *mantra*. Human nature being what it is, some went to the *guru* and said, “Do you know what your *sisya* has done? He has revealed to all of us the *mantra* that you gave him. We know that according to the *shastras* it should not be revealed to everyone.” The *guru* became very angry and rushed to the temple where Ramanuja was. He said, “I never thought you would betray me like this. I gave you the *mantra* because of your *shraddha*. I also told you that if you revealed it to anyone, you would undergo a lot of hardship, and you might even go to hell if you uttered the *mantra* in the presence of others.” Ramanuja said, “I bow to you - you are my *guru*. I have disobeyed you. I know I will go to hell. You may ask why I did what I did. In all humility, I want to tell you that when I learnt the *mantra*, I was very happy. You told me that I would be happy in this world and in the next world. I then thought that if it is such a powerful *mantra*, I should share it with other people, and I should not keep it to myself.”

The *guru* said, “For what you have done, you will go to hell.” Ramanuja said, “My Lord, it occurred to me that if I reveal the *mantra* to the whole world, I would go to hell. Then I thought that if so many people in this world can become happy - happy not only in this world, but also in the next - and if I alone go to hell, it doesn't matter. Only I would go to hell, but the rest of the people would go to heaven. This thought gives me more satisfaction. I know what I have done, but you must forgive me. This is the thought that came to me.”

The story goes that the moment the *guru* heard Ramanuja, he said, “I was angry with you, but now I realise what an extraordinary *sisya* you are. You don't mind going to hell, but you mind if

other people go to hell!” It is important to remember this, because we only remember that Ramanuja disobeyed the *guru*. When we look at the whole thing, we understand that there are so many ways in which the *guru* guides us.

If Ramanuja is considered an extraordinary person, it is because of the way he disobeyed his *guru*. We normally don't think highly of a person who disobeys his *guru*; but here is an instance of someone disobeying his *guru* because he was more interested in the happiness of other people. In such a context, we must realise that the individual is greater than the *guru*. It is only a *guru* who can do such a thing. A *guru* doesn't consider anything inferior or superior when it comes to his relation with the *sisya*. He doesn't mind humiliating himself in the interest of the *sisya*.

In the *Mahabharata*, when Arjuna and Duryodhana went to see Sri Krishna, Krishna said, “There are two things I can offer - I can give my army or I can just give myself. However, I won't take up arms.” Duryodhana asked for the army, but Arjuna said, “It is enough if you are with me.” That is how Krishna became Arjuna's *sarathy*. Even when we think of the word *Parthasarathy*, we are deeply moved. The Lord of the Universe had no hesitation in being referred to as *Parthasarathy* or the driver of Arjuna's chariot. Would we do that? We want to sit in the back seat of a car because we want to be considered superior to the driver. But Krishna agreed to be the *sarathy*.

When Bheeshma heard this, he said, “I take the *pratigna* to make Krishna take up arms.” We all know how ferociously Bheeshma fought. Arjuna and Yudhishtira understood that there was no way they could win the war as long as Bheeshma was alive. On the day the war became very fierce, as Bheeshma marched towards the Pandavas with great ferocity, Arjuna and Yudhishtira became nervous. At that time, Krishna got down from his chariot and walked towards Bheeshma with his *shankha* and *chakra*.

Yudhishtira ran after Krishna. Bheeshma thought to himself, “O Lord! I would like to be killed by you. There can’t be anything greater than that. I would consider myself very fortunate if I am killed by you.” Bheeshma bared his chest, ready to receive the arrows of the Lord. But Yudhishtira reminded Krishna of his *pratigna* that he would not take up arms, and so Krishna smilingly returned to the chariot.

When Bheeshma fell, he waited for *uttarayana* on a bed of arrows. After the war, Dharmaputra said, “I don’t want to rule the kingdom. I have lost everybody.” Krishna said, “It is your duty; you must rule the kingdom.” Dharmaputra said, “I don’t know anything about statecraft. I don’t know how a king should rule his people.” Krishna said, “I can’t tell you. But there is a person who will tell you, and he is Bheeshma.” So, they all went to see Bheeshma, and Yudhishtira asked Bheeshma for advice. Bheeshma said, “Why are you asking me for advice? The *Purushottama*, the Lord of the Universe is here - you ask him.” Then Krishna with great *karuna* said, “I know I will be remembered by people, anyway; but I want people to remember you, because you are one of the greatest men. There is nobody equal to you in *vairagya*.” The moment he heard this, Bheeshma said to Yudhishtira, “Because he is with you - talking to you and joking with you - you all think that the Lord is like anyone of us. The person who is standing before you, who has been talking to us and guiding us in so many ways, is no other than the *Purushottama*, the Lord himself. Please understand he is not an ordinary person.” With tears in his eyes, Bheeshma started talking about the great qualities of the *Purushottama* as they all listened. That is the *Vishnu Sahasranama*. That was the occasion when Bheeshma poured out his heart.

The *Vishnu Sahasranama* is considered very important because Lord Krishna listened to it at the time of its composition.

Afterwards, Bheeshma said, “You can never understand the Lord of the Universe. His compassion for his devotees is something I can never describe.” Bheeshma was then asked what type of compassion he meant. He answered, “The Lord is the servant of the devotee; he will do anything for his devotees. He doesn’t worry about anything. His one concern is that the devotee should be satisfied with him.” Bheeshma then said, “When I heard from Duryodhana that the Lord would not take up arms, I told myself that somehow I would make him take up arms. Krishna, of course, came to know all that. On the day of the fierce battle, the Lord took up arms and walked towards me. He did it because I had told him that I would make him do it. So out of *karuna* for me, he did it.” Krishna did not mind being called a liar by other people; he did not mind the insults that would be heaped on him. He did what he did because his devotee wanted him to do it. The point is, the *guru* will humiliate himself for the sake of the *sishtya*; he is not concerned about what others will think of him. Talking about Krishna, Bheeshma continued, “There has been no one like him; there will be no one like him. Please do not think of him as an ordinary human being because he moves with you so effortlessly. He doesn’t frighten you in any way, but he is the *Purushottama*.”

The story of Chandala, it is said, was a great lesson for Shankara. Who was Shankara? *Loka Shankara*! Shankara, from our point of view, demeaned himself in order to teach us that however exalted we may be in our spiritual *sadhana*, we must be careful. *Maya* will blind us. Just as we tell our children, “I don’t know,” in order to give them a sense of happiness, Shankara too, may have done that. *Gurus* will do anything to let us know what is right and what is wrong. They know, but they would not like to frighten us with their knowledge. And so, the *guru* of Ramanuja too behaved in that manner on account of his great compassion for others. We might say that Ramanuja is certainly greater than his *guru*, but that

is not the case, because it is like saying that our grandchildren and our children know much more than we do.

Guru kripa is something that one can't understand. On such occasions, we have to think of our own attitude to people we love - how we don't mind demeaning ourselves or even humiliating ourselves in the interest of their happiness. If this is so at our level, how much more it would be at the divine level!

*gurur Brahmaa gurur Vishnu gurur devo Maheshwara
guru saakshaat para Brahma tasmai sri gurave namaha*

There are so many stories about what the *guru* can do if we surrender to him. There is nothing impossible once we come under the influence of a *guru*. Whatever happens, we feel it is happening because of the grace of the *guru*. We will never say that the *guru* has no compassion or no consideration for us. He will give us the attitude which will make us accept everything as his will. As Bhagavan says, "It is like getting in the jaws of the tiger." Once we are under the guidance of a *guru*, we cannot escape from him. He is more concerned about us than a mother. Therefore, he will constantly tell us that he is there, and that there is nothing to worry about. Even though other people may think there are a lot of problems, we will not think so, because of his unbounded grace.

(Talk 80)

22. Let Him Carry Your Burden

No human being is perfect; we all make mistakes, some minor and some major. We try to correct them. If we remain good for a short time, it is because of the grace of God. If somebody says, "He is a good man," what he means is he has been good till now. This

goodness is not a result of the person's intelligence, but because of the grace of God. In one second, we can do something bad, something that we never expected to do. Then, people will say, "How did this happen?" There is no answer to this. A man who is considered totally honest does something not expected of him - he steals. A man who is generally soft spoken, suddenly becomes very angry. You realise, in all these cases, that people are not predictable. If we have been good so far, it is due to the grace of the Lord.

If you know a particular Minister fairly well, there is no difficulty in getting things done in the department he is in charge of. In fact, you don't even have to ask for anything. When people come to know you are close to the Minister, they themselves will come and ask whether they can be of some service to you. Everyone respects you, not because of your intrinsic worth, but because of your closeness to the Minister; they know that if they please you, the Minister will be pleased. They are pleasing the Minister through you. If you know the Chief Minister, then you can get things done without any difficulty in any department. Not only that, the Ministers themselves will be very keen to do something for you, even if you have not asked for anything. Again, it is not because of any great intelligence on your part, but because you know a person who has some power. If you know the PM, then even the Chief Ministers will be prepared to do anything for you. Is it because of any great virtue in you? No, it is because of your closeness to a person in power. In other words, people are prepared to do a lot for you because of your association with the Minister, the Chief Minister or the Prime Minister.

This is *loukika*; this is what happens in everyday life. If we are constantly in the company of devotees, then we are in the constant company of God. And therefore, the power we derive is from the power of God. This is the advantage of *satsang*. If we are in the

company of good and devoted people, we get the strength to resist temptation. Thinking of the Lord when we are in *satsang*, gives us an extraordinary power; we will not be afraid of anything. We will get a frame of mind that will accept everything as his will; what's more, we will not seek anything. We can't get that kind of attitude by reading books. It is only possible when we submit ourselves totally to the will of God. In other words, it is given to us when we are humble; and humility, once again, is possible only through his grace.

We must realise we don't deserve anything, and yet, so many things are given to us; so much happiness is given to us. We think that we are devotees; we think that we think of God. But we don't! We think of God only when we have problems. And yet, God doesn't worry about that. On those days, when we think about him, he gives us more happiness than we deserve. He is like the mother who doesn't throw her child out because he's been bad. When we pray, when we think of God, we must consciously remember that it is God who makes us think of him. Bhagavan, in one of his extraordinary verses says, "Arunachala! Among those in this world who don't think of you, among those people who have not surrendered to you totally, I am the worst of the lot. I have not surrendered myself totally to you. I am supreme in that I have not totally surrendered to you, to your lotus feet." Then he says, "Arunachala! What is it that is difficult for you? Nothing! Nothing is difficult for you. You are bearing the burden of this world; you are shouldering the responsibility of this world. Arunachala, you take upon yourself my responsibility. I have lots of worries and problems, but nothing is difficult for you; you are bearing the responsibility of the entire universe. Nothing will be difficult for you, Arunachala; so, bear my burden also. I have tried to carry my burden for a long time. How long do I have to carry the burden?"

Bhagavan says, "Arunachala! I have tried to carry the burden myself; it is enough! I no longer want to carry the burden of this world, Arunachala!" And then, he says, "Enough of this; there is burden only when there is no assistance." When we suddenly have a problem, some people might say, "Nothing can be done, you will have to suffer." We get the feeling that it is the end of the world; then suddenly, something happens, and the problem gets solved. People tell us, "You are very lucky. We never thought that this problem could be solved." On such occasions, we say, "It is luck." When we cannot provide any explanation for something, we say it is luck. But what is this luck? It is really divine favour. When we least expect it, we confront a problem, and we say that it is our misfortune. At that moment, we become humble, for we realise that nothing is in our hands. Bhagavan says, "Take away this burden of the world from my head. This is my prayer - please see that you don't remove me from your lotus feet." Bhagavan did not say, "Please see that I am not removed from your lotus feet." It is only God who can give us the devotion to be at his lotus feet. We can't be devoted to God; he needs to give us this devotion. The moment we are devoted to him, there is no one to say we are devoted or not devoted. The moment I really love you, I won't have to say it; you will know from the way I behave with you.

Love is something that can be expressed through gestures and through the eyes; there is no need for words. Can I tell anyone how much I love a particular person? I can speak for an hour, but if I have great love for that person, then the intensity of that love cannot be communicated through the medium of words. So, if I am angry with you, I don't have to tell you; you would know from my face. Similarly, if you are distressed about something, and I am deeply worried over your distress, I don't have to speak. When a person you know really well is in great distress, if you take the hand of the person, that is more than enough. Or if you look into the eyes of the person, that would give greater consolation than all

the words in the dictionary. Similarly, when you are devoted to God, you don't have to tell him - he knows.

The language of the heart is the language of silence, for the feelings we have in our heart cannot be communicated through ordinary words. Bhagavan says, "Arunachala! I am a useless fellow. I think I am doing so many things. I would like to be rid of all the burdens. Arunachala! Keep me at your lotus feet all the time." We can't be at the lotus feet of Arunachala all the time; only he can keep us there. In other words, it is not because of our effort that we are at his lotus feet. It is the Lord himself who keeps us there.

When we are at the feet of someone else, we are under his control or protection. In other words, we have surrendered to him, and therefore, it is his responsibility to look after us. When people see this, and realise that the person whose control we're under is someone they respect, then they will not do anything to harm us. When we do *shastang namaskar*, we prostrate before our *guru*. It is a symbolic act; it is not just the body, but the mind as well that surrenders itself to the *guru*. At that particular moment, we express our utter helplessness; lying face down, we are in a vulnerable position. We don't see anything; other people can attack us.

When we surrender ourselves totally to our *guru*, then it is his responsibility to give us what we need. What is it that we need? We need peace of mind. When we sincerely prostrate before our *guru*, the *guru*, out of his unbounded compassion, gives us the peace that we are desperately looking for. It is wrong to think that the *guru* will bless us to be permanently happy. No good *guru* will do this. What he will do, out of his unbounded compassion, is to give us that state of mind which will accept everything that happens. And whatever happens, we will not be worried or afraid; we will, thanks to the *guru's* grace, have peace of mind. Not only that, sometimes, when we least expect it, when we get up in the

middle of the night and we actually want to go back to sleep, we are not able to think of anything except our *guru*. The feeling of peace that we experience stays with us for a long time. What is that peace? It is the peace that is given to us by our *guru* when we surrender to him.

When we have his grace, then, whether we have problems or not, we will experience unusual peace. Problems may come up, when we least expect them to, and they somehow get solved - sometimes, without any effort on our part. When we don't expect them to be solved, and they are solved, we are happy. When we have surrendered ourselves to the *guru*, and have expressed our helplessness, he will give us the state of mind to handle all situations, extraordinarily efficiently. We will act extraordinarily efficiently because we realise that we are a mere instrument in his hands; it is he who is doing everything, and therefore, there is no need for us to worry, whatsoever. When we make use of a spoon to take something, the spoon does not worry at all whether we are dipping it in honey or castor oil. As far as the spoon is concerned, it is neutral; it is merely an instrument being used by us. It is only a *sakshi*. Similarly, God will give us the same state of mind - we will be used by him for various purposes, but there will be no *kartrutva*. Like the spoon, we will not feel we are doing something; we are merely the instrument of the Lord.

The moment there is the feeling that we are not doing something, all worries stop. The moment there is no worry, we will function extraordinarily well. In fact, we will function better than most people who have ambition. Such people may be considered dynamic, but they are really not so. A dynamic person is one, who through the grace of God, has this extraordinary capacity to accept everything that happens as the Lord's will. Considering himself to be a mere instrument of the Lord, he doesn't worry about success or failure. He has the ability to put all the burdens on him, and by

doing so, he sets himself free. Bhagavan says that we should put all the burdens on him, and he will carry the burden.

When we travel by train, we sometimes carry a lot of luggage. After the porter has put the luggage in the compartment, we don't carry the luggage on our head. The train carries both, the luggage and us. The burden is there, yet the burden is not there. When we get a lakh of rupees, what do we do? We put it in our bank account. We don't keep it at home because we are afraid that it will get stolen. When we have a large amount of money at home, even for a single day, we are worried about theft. So we put the money in the bank, and stop worrying. The moment we put money in the bank, it ceases to be our problem - it is the bank's problem to keep it safe. When we think we have problems, we become worried. If through the grace of God, we think they are not ours, but God's problems, then the Lord will carry the burden for us.

The moment we think - through his grace - that the burden is his, and we are going to be used by him to solve whatever problems there are, we will become the spoon. Nobody is always happy; nobody is going to be always unhappy. But if we surrender to the Lord, whatever happens, we will have peace of mind. Problems will not affect us. We will also have the extraordinary ability to tackle the problems, and we will get this ability through his grace. When we surrender to him, it is again, through his grace.

(Talk 83)

23. The Lord is Within

We all know from experience that everybody has some problem or the other. There is nobody in this world who doesn't have a problem. If you are poor, you worry about food. If you are rich, you worry about your digestion; if you are a successful businessman, you look around, and you want to be more successful. Then, there is a scholar or a *pundit* who knows a lot; he looks around and finds people who have greater knowledge, so he spends time in learning in order to get more knowledge than them. Whatever be the walk of life we may belong to, we have problems - at least one problem. It is an extraordinary thing that in this world, there is practically nobody who doesn't have a problem. Everyone is unhappy about something or the other; however, not all the time. It alternates - we are happy for one hour, unhappy for another hour, or we are happy for the whole day, and the next day, we are depressed.

But whatever be our problems, we are happy for a few hours almost every day, irrespective of who we are. And during those few hours, we want to do things to remain happy - by studying, making more money, getting more power, etc. We work towards this objective. During our waking hours, we are constantly seeking happiness.

However, for a few hours every day, we are happy without doing anything, and that is in deep sleep. When it is a fairly dreamless sleep, we feel we have slept well. In other words, without doing anything, we get happiness. When we do something in our waking state, sometimes we are happy, and sometimes we are not. And so, what is the relationship? The mind is extraordinarily active in the waking hours; we constantly want something or the other for ourselves. Our whole life is spent in seeking something or the other. The moment we get it, we are happy because the desire has

been fulfilled; but we soon get tired of it, and we would like to have something else. This attitude is not only with reference to objects, but also with reference to people.

When you are a bachelor, you would like to marry because you think it is the ideal life. You think that once you are married, you will not have to worry since somebody will look after you, and you will also look after someone, and so on. Then, you have children. In all these stages, you realise that it is not unalloyed happiness, and there are many adjustments to be made. You realise, only from experience, that there cannot be happiness without unhappiness. As the children grow older, you have other problems, and then there are differences of opinion on how the children should be brought up. You and your wife quarrel, and you wonder why you got married in the first place. Sometimes, you think of the time when you were a bachelor, and you tell yourself, “When I was a bachelor, I was so carefree.” At that moment, the advantages of being a married person don’t cross your mind because you are thinking only of your happiness, and your wife is thinking of her happiness. There are occasions when your objective and her objective is the same, and therefore you are happy; when there is a clash, there is unhappiness. Our whole life is spent in seeking happiness, and we find that the more we seek happiness, the more it eludes us, because happiness lasts only for a short period of time.

When we find that there is no real happiness in this world, we become religious, and try to seek it in God. We go to various *gurus* or do *puja*. For the first few days, we are very happy because of the novelty; and so, there is tremendous concentration. Soon, it becomes a routine, and we stop paying attention. We read books and then give up that too. After doing *puja* for about a year or two, we feel that we are not getting the happiness we thought we would get. Therefore, we would like to give up *puja*. However,

when this thought arises, we are also struck by fear because we feel God may become angry with us. That is, in our heart of hearts, we would like to give it up, but we are afraid of two things. We wonder whether people may think we are fickle-minded, and we also feel that something bad may happen to us if we give up the *puja* that we have been doing. This is true of everything that we do. We then decide to go to various temples, and pray for what we want. First, there is tremendous peace of mind; and then, that too becomes a routine.

Sometimes, we wonder whether there can be any God. You may be a graduate. You think of one of your classmates with a successful career – a person who failed SSC. You may be earning Rs 7000, and he may be earning Rs 20,000 a month. You wonder what kind of justice this is. You compare situations and tell yourself that even though you are better, you are not getting what you deserve. So you seek happiness, either through objects or people. Again, you may think that you should give up everything and concentrate on God. You go on a pilgrimage to a number of places. For the first few days, there is a lot of happiness, but afterwards, there is, again, no peace of mind. You again wonder why you are not happy, even though you have been to all these places.

We recite the following verse every Friday, Sunday, and whenever we meet.

*na karmanaa na prajayaa dhanena
tyaagenaike amrtatvamaanasuh
parena naakam nihitam guhaayaam
vibhraajatetad yatayo visanti
vedaanta vijnaana suniscitarthah
samnyasa yogadyataya suddha sattvah
te brahma lokethu paraanta kaale
paramratah parimucyanthi sarve*

*dharam vipaapam paramesma bhutam
yath pundarikam puramadhya sagastham
tatrapī dahram gaganam visokas
tasmin yadantastadupositavyam
yo vedaadau svāra proktaḥ vedante ca prathistitaha
tasya prakṛiti linasya yah parassa Mahesvaraha*

This particular verse is recited in all religious functions. This is the sloka that was recited after the morning and evening *parayana* during the lifetime of Bhagavan. Everyone used to get up while reciting it, and Bhagavan used to sit absolutely still; sometimes, he would open his eyes only after about forty minutes.

We come together every Friday by Bhagavan's grace, and today, I would like to give you the gist of the sloka. When we recite this, it should not be mechanical. If we recite this wonderful sloka consciously, and think about it constantly, there will be a transformation in our lives - not just ordinary transformation, but extraordinary transformation. Our nature is to be happy. Bhagavan says that the moment we realise this, the moment our ego is completely gone, as it is in deep sleep, we will be supremely happy in the waking state too. In that state, we will be conscious, and we will be able to do many things without feeling that we are doing them. To begin with, we can make sure that our ego is not strengthened. We must see to it that we have less and less ego. We will then get the feeling that we are being used by the Lord as an instrument for many things.

yah parassa Mahesvaraha: The person we are seeking - Maheshwara - is here, there and everywhere. He is both outside of us, and is also within us,

*parena naakam nihitam guhaayaam
vibhraajetatad yatayo visanti*

He is not outside of us, but he is shining in our own heart, whether we are awake or asleep. He is the *sakshi*; he is there all the time in our heart. In deep sleep, we are not conscious of our body or of anything else, and yet when we get up the next morning, we say that we slept very well. Who was it that was a witness to our sleep? The mind was not there, and therefore the mind cannot say, "I enjoyed my sleep." There was obviously something within us that was a witness to the whole thing, and this something did not sleep. If that thing had also slept, there wouldn't be anyone to say, "I slept well." The mind was not there; it was completely merged in the Self. There is something within us that is awake all the time - whether we are dreaming or sleeping, or awake. It is in all of us. That something is the one that distinguishes between what is good and what is bad. We sometimes refer to it as our conscience. We may try to suppress our conscience, but this small voice is so powerful that it will keep nagging us if we go against it. The *Upanishads* say that the Lord is within us, and if we seek him, we will find him everywhere. We seek him in a few places outside of us, because we don't find him within us. When we succeed in finding him within us, we will see him everywhere. Some of you may ask, how this is possible.

Our nature is to be happy. We feel we are used by the Lord as his instrument for so many things. He is not outside of us,

parena naakam nihitam guhaayam vibhraajatetad yatayovishanti

When we are unhappy, we don't have to tell others. We don't have to talk about our happiness, either. Happiness and unhappiness are contagious. When we go to a man who is happy, we come away very happy; when we go to a man who is unhappy, we come away unhappy. That is one of the reasons we think of *satsang*. When we are in the company of people who think about God, then at least, for some time, there is concentration. Such is the power of *satsang*!

satsangatve nissangatvam
nihsangatve nirmohatvam
nirmohatve nischalatattvam
nischalatattve jivanmuktih

satsangatve nissangatvam: If we are in *satsang*, as often as possible, what happens?

nihsangatve nirmohatvam: Because of the power of *satsang*, we would not like to associate ourselves with people who are not like-minded or who are totally different. We separate ourselves from the company of people who are not in *satsang*. When we detach or disassociate ourselves from the company of people with whom we don't have rapport, it is the result of our discrimination or *viveka*. We always want to be in the company of people who think of God or the *guru*.

nirmohatve nischalatattvam: We are free from all *moha*. The moment we are free from all *moha* or illusion, we are calm, and understand reality - *nischalatattve jivanmuktih*.

What is reality? Reality is the stillness of the mind; it is peace of mind. It is not something we get from other people. The basis of peace of mind is *satsang*. Therefore, Shankara says, *nischalatattve jivanmuktih*. Even when we have the body, we enjoy a peace that we cannot get from outside; our mind becomes totally silent because it is merged in the self.

And therefore, to realise that the Lord is within us, the most important thing is *satsang*. In *satsang*, so many things happen - we can't explain them. We must have all experienced waking up suddenly in the middle of the night, deeply disturbed, and then, what happened in the *satsang* comes to the mind. It gives us tremendous peace at that time, and we cease to worry. This may have happened many years ago, but it gives us peace at a time

when we need it most. Reading a book is good, but it is an intellectual activity. In *satsang*, something happens to our heart, and so we enjoy a peace, even if it is for a short time. It is not the duration that is important, it is the intensity that is important. For example, sometimes when we are very tired, we may fall asleep sitting on the chair for about ten or fifteen minutes. When we get up, we are so refreshed that we are able to concentrate on our work for another four or five hours. The mind required sleep, and then it disappeared in the Self, which is the Supreme Being. We visit a lot of places in search of God, knowing fully well he is within us. A time will come, through the grace of our *guru*, when we will realise that he is within. The moment there is the realisation that he is within, then there won't be any seeking of anything. We will seek *atmanyeva atmana tushtah* - we will seek the supreme happiness. We will see it within ourselves, and there won't be any seeking of any kind, whatsoever. The moment we constantly tell ourselves that he is within, and he is constantly guiding us, it is for us to follow what he says, irrespective of what other people say. At the appropriate time, he will give us complete peace.

When we are unhappy, we must tell ourselves - and I would like you to practise this - I refuse to be unhappy. What does it mean? The Supreme Being - the *Parmeshwara* - we are seeking outside, is within us. The moment we are unhappy, we must bring ourselves to say, "When he is here, I refuse to be unhappy." In other words, the moment we are unhappy, we must realise it is because of our desire for something. He, who is within, gives me this feeling that we must refuse to be unhappy. What will he give? Will he give us a state where there won't be any problems? No! The more and more we think he is within us, the more we experience him within us. He will give us a state to be indifferent, no matter what happens, to both pleasure and pain. What he will give us in the midst of pleasure and pain is peace. When he is within us, what is there to worry about? The moment we think that

he is there, and he is guiding us, we will be able to tackle our personal problems guided by the power within. Whether we succeed or not, is up to him.

When we recite *na karmana na prajayaa dhanena*, we should be conscious of the fact that because of the grace of the *guru*, we realise that he is within us, and then, we become a powerhouse - the power we get to face problems and tackle them will be extraordinary! And what is more, he will constantly tell us that our real nature is happiness, and therefore we should refuse to be unhappy. The problems may be enormous, but we will not worry about the magnitude of the problems. Bhagavan had cancer, Sri Ramakrishna had cancer, and Vivekananda was severely criticised, but these things did not affect them at all. Bhagavan was attacked in his own lifetime. So many people went up to him and said, "You are a lazy person; you are sitting on the sofa, not doing anything. You don't deserve any of these things." Bhagavan used to smile and keep quiet. You and I would have said, "You are the only person who is saying this, so please get out."

At Tiruvannamalai, he used to go for *bhiksha*. He would stand in front of a house and clap three times. Very often, people used to give him food; he would accept only three handfuls. Bhagavan used to say, "I was so indifferent. I never used to wash my hands." It is important for us to understand how he lived. For many months, Bhagavan never had a bath. He was totally indifferent to his bodily comforts. His hair had grown so long that birds would sit on it. Once, years later, he said, "Once I put my hand on my head and felt a lot of small stones." He said that his head used to feel heavy because of his hair. Someone washed him, and shaved his head. Bhagavan said, "When my head was shaved, my head felt so light! I would touch it to see if the head was still there. The heaviness had all gone." Total indifference to the body!

When we are young, we worry about our dress. When somebody says that the dress or suit we are wearing is nice, we are pleased. What is there to be pleased about? It is a compliment to the suit or the dress. These are all small things, but they seem very important at the time. When we go to the temple, we say that the *chandana alankara* was so beautiful. On another day, we say that the *pushpa alankara* was so good. What strikes us is the *alankara*. The idol doesn't change because of the *alankara*. But because of our limitations, we are distracted by these things. Bhagavan says all these are very good, but it is important to pay attention to the real person. We may wear many dresses, but we don't change. We must pay attention to the individual concerned.

*vesha haanatah svaatma darsanam
isa darsanam svaatma rupatah*

We are the same; what is within us, doesn't change. It is the mind that is responsible for the various attitudes. We must stick to that which is within, and constantly find out who we are. If that is difficult, surrender to him, and he will look after our needs. He knows what is best for us.

The essence of *na karmana* is that *Parmeshwara* is within us. If we meditate on him, realise him within, then we will find him everywhere, in every individual. We will see ourselves in others, and others in ourselves. Bhagavan says that we must aim for the highest. If we are not able to achieve it, it is not our problem. He will give us the experience, not because we deserve it, but because of his grace. He will give this experience at a time chosen by him, and not at a time chosen by us, because we are not a good judge of spiritual progress. Bhagavan says that looking for him outside is like taking a torch and looking for darkness. The moment we switch on the light, the darkness around disappears. If we look for darkness with light, would we see darkness?

We must realise everybody has problems. If we tell ourselves consciously, through his grace, that he is within, then we will not have any fear. And he will tell us, from time to time, that we must refuse to be unhappy. The moment he makes us say to ourselves that we refuse to be unhappy, that itself will give us some measure of happiness.

(Talk 84)

24. Humility and Gratitude

When we read about the suffering of some of the characters in the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavatam*, etc., it is not just the mind that is affected, but the heart is also deeply moved. In all our great epics and *puranas*, it is the good people who suffered. Yudhishtira was a *dharmaputra*, but what extraordinary suffering he underwent. Rama was an *avatara*, but he wasn't spared either. Sita was Mahalakshmi herself, yet she was kidnapped and imprisoned. The attitude of all these individuals to their suffering, however, was very different from that of the common man's. They never complained, and they faced them in a way that we have grown to admire. This is the reason why we are asked to read the *Ramanaya*, the *Bhagavatam*, the *Gita*, and so on - we have examples of how we should be when things turn bad for us.

In the whole of the *Ramanaya*, there is not a single incident that tells us that Hanuman wanted something for himself. Was there anything impossible for Hanuman? He could have got whatever he wanted, but he was completely devoted to Sri Rama. Hanuman was a *Ramadasa*.

*asaadhya saadhaka swaamin asaadhyaam tava kimvada
raama doota kripana sindho mad kaaryam saadhaya prabho*

Although his devotion to Sri Rama was total, Sri Rama did not ordain that Hanuman would be able to complete all his tasks easily. He faced enormous problems. He had problems at several places while crossing the ocean, and faced many more, after reaching Lanka. He was captured and his tail was set on fire. He, however, never complained; he never said, "O Lord, I am doing all these things for you! So why are you creating so many problems for me?" Hanuman's attitude was simple - "I have a job to do, and I am doing it. Whatever happens in the course of my actions, I will accept it." Although he was successful in whatever he did, he never claimed any credit for his achievements.

When Hanuman returned from Lanka and informed Sri Rama that he saw and talked to Sita, Sri Rama was overwhelmed. The Lord said, "I cannot express my joy to you! I don't know how to express my gratitude. I don't know what to gift you." This is the difference between an ordinary person like us, and a person of Sri Rama's stature. If somebody had said that to us, we would have accepted it, and said, "Thank you." The greatness of Sri Rama was his gratitude for everything that others did for him. He said, "Hanuman, you have brought such good news that if I had been in Ayodhya, I would have given you gems or whatever you wanted. But I am in this forest. I am poor, and I feel so bad that I am not able to reward you in any manner that would be satisfactory to me." Then, he said, "Hanuman, here in this forest, I don't have anything, so this is the least I can do for you." He then walked to Hanuman, and hugged him. Hanuman was overwhelmed, and shed tears. This is the greatness of Sri Rama. He did not think that Hanuman was his servant or *dasa*, because when you hug another person, you are giving yourself up to him without any reservation. For example, when you have great affection for another person,

you say, "I love you." The hug was Lord Rama's way of saying, "I love you very much, Hanuman. I surrender myself to you." This kind of thing is possible only if we have humility.

Gratitude is a rare virtue in this world. If you look back on your own life, you will find that people who are truly grateful for what you have done for them are very few - you can count them on your fingers. When somebody does something for us, we often take it for granted - we feel that it was their duty to have done it for us. Lord Rama, on the other hand, was willing to hug his *dasa*; this was his greatness.

Valmiki talks about the *kritagnyata* of Lord Rama. What is *kritagnyata*? It is humility, and humility is due to the lack of ego. When we say *namaste*, we normally bend our head towards the other person: *namo* in Sanskrit means 'bend'. By doing this, we are telling the other person, "I bend to you. I do not consider myself superior to you." We are, in fact, bending to the divine that is inside the other person.

When there is a cyclone, big trees, which are believed to be tough and strong, are usually uprooted. On the other hand, what happens to the tiny blade of grass? Absolutely nothing. When there is a strong wind, the grass bends, and it survives. That is what happens with people who are humble; they bend, and as a result, there is no resistance of the kind that you have with other people. This is true in the case of Sri Rama, Yudhishtira, Bheeshma, and so many others. They were exceptional people, but they never said they were the most important persons in this room, in the kingdom or in the world. According to Shankara, if you wish to make progress in spiritual life, the first quality you need is humility. He says,

*avinayam apanya vishno damaya manah
samaya visaya mrgathrsnaam
bhutadayaamm vistaaraya taaraya
samsaara saagaratah*

avinayam apanya: The first thing is to become humble; remove my pride for it can take on so many different forms.

Humility is reflected in everything we say and do. A man who is truly humble will never say he is humble; the moment we repeatedly say we are humble, it means that we are cultivating humility in order to impress others with our humility - it is a form of humble pride. Humility is not something that we can proclaim to other people. In the case of Sri Rama, he did not say he was a humble person; he never behaved in a way that gave the impression that he was superior to others. We see his humility in his attitude to Hanuman, and to everyone else. What extraordinary compassion he had for Sabari! He treated everyone the same - what made him truly humble was that he saw no difference between where he was and where the others were. He treated everyone as being his equal. So, when he was compassionate with Sabari, Rama wasn't really coming down to her level. He was merely being himself. The same is true of Bhagavan as well; there was no question of him coming down to the level of poor people. His attitude towards everyone was the same. The affection and the respect that he gave to other people was the same; it did not depend upon the position they occupied in society. He made no distinction between himself, the poor, and the rich. It was possible for these great individuals to do this because they saw themselves in others, and others in themselves.

*aatmanyeva aatmanaatushtah
sthita prajnas tadocyate*

In the case of Sri Rama and Bhagavan, they did not seek pleasure from anything outside of themselves. The existing bliss came from within. Their behaviour with everyone was the same because they didn't have an ego. When the ego is gone, the attitude we have towards other people, and the way we treat them, remain the same. Such individuals see us in the same manner we see small babies. The moment we see a baby, we are filled with indescribable happiness; we forget our problems, and are at peace with ourselves - this is a universal thing. We have a sense of peace because, a baby, like a *jnani*, does not have an ego like the kind we do. When we see a *jnani* or a baby, we are filled with an indescribable happiness.

So, what happens when we are happy? The mind or the ego temporarily merges into the Self, and we forget about ourselves. When we are in the company of a person we like very much, or when we talk about somebody we both like very much, we are extremely happy. In both cases, we don't feel the passage of time. During this period, there is no sense of restlessness either. If the mind is at peace with itself, there is no restlessness of any kind, whatsoever. On the other hand, when we are in the company of a person we don't like, we are acutely conscious of the passage of time. In this case, the mind is very active, and resisting all the time. Where there is restlessness, there is consciousness of time. That is why we say *ananda* is a state where there is no time and space. We experience this *ananda* or bliss in a limited way when we meet a great *sadhu*, or when we are in the company of someone we genuinely like.

Shankara says in order to be truly humble, we need the Lord's grace. We don't need to read the *Vedas* or the *Upanishads*; all we need to do is to pray to the Lord, and request him to remove our pride. We can't remove our pride on our own; it is something that can be done only by him. The moment pride is gone, gratitude will

come into being of its own accord. This is not the type of gratitude we express to people in our office, to our boss, and so on. Gratitude is something we express when it is least expected. For example, sincerely thanking your wife for a well-cooked meal or your children for helping you clean the car. What we don't realise is that the moment we express our gratitude most sincerely, it has a tremendous effect.

And this is where I feel that we have a lot to learn from our saints and sages. Bhagavan always used to express his gratitude even for small things. When people came to know that Bhagavan never accepted expensive things, not even pens, they gave him small notebooks and pencils. He would continue to write with a pencil till it became too small to grip properly. Once, Bhagavan was writing with almost a stub; so, a devotee said to him, "I will get you another pencil. The one you have is very difficult to hold." Bhagavan said, "Yes, it has become very short now. But you know, so and so brought this pencil to me two or three months ago, and I am still using it. I think I can use it for some more time." He talked about the pencil at length, as if he had been given a million dollars! That kind of attitude is possible only when we are at the level of Bhagavan. To him, nothing was small or insignificant. If you took some fruit and put it on the stool, the next time Bhagavan saw you, he would tell you that the fruit that you had brought was very tasty. He was beyond all taste, but he would remember you and connect you to the fruit. He would then ask you questions about whether it was from your garden, and so on. When Bhagavan asked these questions, or when he said the fruit was tasty, the person who had presented them to him felt he was in heaven.

Ramaswami from Bangalore is a great devotee of Bhagavan. He met him once in the company of Maurice Frydman. Bhagavan had come out of the dining hall, and Maurice Frydman informed him

that he was taking Ramaswami to Skandasram. Bhagavan asked them to wait; he went to the kitchen, took about six idlis, asked for a leaf and some paper, and packed them. Coming out, he said, "You are going to Skandasram; you go there and eat this." Even today, when Ramaswami narrates this incident, he sheds tears. "When we received the idlis, we were in tears. What is his stature and where are we? Bhagavan could have asked somebody to go to the kitchen and get the idlis for us, but he didn't. What he did was truly extraordinary."

This was the way that Bhagavan treated everyone; there was no mind there. And therefore, when there is no mind, there is no question of assumed humility - there is only love. Whether it was an ordinary coolie or a great scholar, it made no difference to Bhagavan. He did not believe that he was coming down to the level of these people. Like all *jnanis*, whatever he did was spontaneous.

*balakepi jada gopakepi vaa vaanarepi suni vaa khalepi vaa
panditepi padasamshrithepi vaa pakshapaata rahitam
sameekshanam*

As far as Bhagavan was concerned, there was no difference between a *bala* and a *pandit*, between a cowherd and a monkey. It is possible to achieve this only if we don't have a trace of ego. What we should learn from the life of Bhagavan, is that when we feel we have benefitted from another person, we should express our gratitude to him sincerely. We should not take people for granted. This is a characteristic of all great people, of all *jnanis*, saints and sages. Shankara says we should all have humility. And this humility can be granted only by the grace of the Lord.

(Talk 63)

25. The Importance of the Adi Guru

Tomorrow is *guru purnima*, a very important day. It is also called *Vyasa purnima*, and it's the day on which every person expresses gratitude to the *guru* in his own way. Vyasa, also called Veda Vyasa, is our *adi guru*. In some of our languages, Vyasa means 'an essay'. In a good essay, there is a clear division; there is a beginning, a middle, and an end. Vyasa literally means 'to divide'. Originally, there was only one *Veda*; Vysa, however, felt that it would be very difficult for people to read a single large volume. He therefore, divided it into four - *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. Vyasa also wrote the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*. We have a wealth of religious literature because of our *adi guru*.

Vyasa's father was Parashara, and Bhagavan's *gotra* was Parashara *gotra* - *para Parashara gotra samudbhavam* is what Kavyakantha says. In a way, our *guru*, Bhagavan, is related to the *adi guru*, Vyasa. The long lineage of *guru parampara* includes Vyasa, his son Shuka (who gave us the *Bhagavatam*), Gauda Paada, and Govinda Paada. The next great *guru*, according to Kavyakantha, was Adi Shankara,

pashchad bhodhakalavidhuta timirah shankaapaha Shankarah

who came to this earth to remove our doubts (*shankas*) and difficulties, and give us happiness.

Shankara literally means 'one who does good'. Adi Shankara was born for the good of humanity, not just for the sake of India, but all humanity. He was *loka Shankara*.

*shruti smriti puraanaanaam aalayam karunaalayam namami
Bhagavadpadam Shankaram loka Shankaram*

Shruti - Vedas, *aalayam* - treasure house. Shankara was the treasure house of *shruti smriti puraana*; he knew everything there was to know. He was not only a great intellectual with a sharp mind, but also the embodiment of *karunaa - karunaa purna sudhaabdhe*. The *karuna* of Shankara was truly extraordinary, *karunaalayam namaami Bhagavadpaadaam Shankaram loka Shankaram*.

So, Kavyakantha says, “Of the stature of Vyasa, after a very long time, we had Shankara.” Shiva himself came down to earth as Adi Shankara.

In his thirty-two years, Adi Shankara did a lot for all of us. He walked up and down the country, established the supremacy of the *Vedas*, and established the four Shankara *Mutts* in the four corners of the country. When you go to Badri and Kedarnath, there is a feeling of oneness with everyone there; you don’t feel that you are from Andhra Pradesh, and that someone else is from Gujarat. When you go to Kashi, the convention is that you must take the waters of the Ganga to Rameswaram and pour the waters into the ocean. If, on the other hand, you go to Rameswaram first, then you take the waters of the ocean there and pour it into the Ganga in Kashi. Earlier, our people did not talk in terms of national integration, as we do now. What was important was religion.

Who is the person who does *puja* at Badrinath? The priest in Badrinath is not someone from that area or any place in North India; he is, in fact, a *nambudri* from Kerala. A *nambudri* family was taken from Kerala to Badrinath, and the person who does the *puja* even today is a descendent of the *nambudri* family. This has been a tradition for centuries. Shankara said, “Do not think in terms of your place, your religion or your culture.” This is the way he tried to bring about national integration, without talking about it. The concept was not based on any sense of individuality, but on *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*. That is why we say *Shankaram loka*

shankaram, meaning Shankara was interested in the improvement of India. It is said that Shankara himself was a *nambudri*.

Every day, we hear people saying there is no hope for this country, that it is full of vandals, rapists and so on. It is not so. The people in the country are good; the farmer is still tilling the field and raising a harvest for you and me. By and large, there is nothing wrong with the country because so many good things are happening here. You must all have had this experience whenever we announce there is poor feeding the following week or month. Somebody comes, gives some money to you, and says, "For poor feeding." Not rich people, but people who can't afford to give even ten rupees - they give you twenty rupees because they think it is good to feed the poor. The average individual in our country has a heart of gold, and our country is not going to pieces.

When you listen to the national anthem of other countries, it says, "Let my country grow, let my country prosper." The British national anthem says, "Let our enemy be defeated, let them be killed." But in our country, it is *loka samastha sukhino bhavantu* - the *loka* does not refer to India alone, but to the entire world.

Kavyakantha says our *adi guru* was Vyasa. After Vyasa, Kavyakantha recognises only Shankara as an *adi guru*.

*yat poorvam shruti paradarsi dhiishanou dwaipayano adhayruhat
pashchad bhodhakalavidhuta timirah shankapaha Shankarah*

He then tells his *guru*, Bhagavan, that after Shankara, the *guru peetham*, which has been vacant for a very long time, is now ready to be occupied.

*tat samprat yakilavani talajushaam aacharyasimhasanam
deva tvaam prativikshate naratano girvanasenapate*

The poet says to Bhagavan, “The *acharya peetham*, which has been vacant for a long time, is now happy that it has been occupied by you, O Lord, who is the *avatar* of Subramanian.”

Tomorrow is *guru purnima* or *Vyasa purnima*, the day on which we all express our gratitude to our *guru*. There is no way in which we can explain in words the compassion of a *guru*. That is why we say the *guru* is Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara, for we cannot imagine the things the *guru* can do. Bhagavan once said, “The grace of the *guru* steals into you in silence.” The *guru* doesn't say he's going to do something; what happens to you, happens in silence. It takes place without our knowledge.

Sometimes, we feel an extraordinary peace. We think it is the result of the extra *sadhana* we did. But this, however, is not the case. The peace is the result of our *sadhana* and the *guru's* grace. It is a combination of both. Without the *guru's* grace, however much *sadhana* we do, we may not experience any peace. When there is the grace of the Lord, we are overtaken by peace. We all make use of soap every day in order to clean our body; and we pay a lot of attention to the quality of soap we buy. But this bar of soap is of no use unless there is water. It has to be made wet. If there is no water, then soap by itself cannot clean our body. We can, however, clean our body with just water. Similarly, effort is fine, but unless there is water, that is the grace of the *guru*, the effort will not bear any fruit – it will not result in peace. In fact, when there is this tremendous flow of grace, there is no need for effort. For example, if we stand under a waterfall, we find that our entire body becomes clean in a few minutes. We don't need soap or anything else for that matter. In order to have this conviction, what is most important is grace.

There are many things the *guru* does that we cannot see. *Adrusta* is that which we cannot see. We may say, “He is a lucky fellow,” meaning there is no correlation between what he does and what he

gets. When we see somebody who gets something without any effort, we say it is his *adrusta*. Luck is something which we cannot explain. There are so many things that happen to us every day, and we attribute it to a number of things. Bhagavan says that everything happens due to his grace. We consider some things to be good and some things to be bad, but that is because of our limited understanding. For example, what we consider to be good at present, may not remain good forever. When you apply for a job and don't get it, you say God has not been gracious to you. After ten years, when somebody says that the company that you'd applied to, wound up, you say, "Oh! It's a good thing that I didn't get the job then. If I had got it, I would have been out of a job now."

So, a *guru's* grace cannot be comprehended with a limited mind. Grace does not necessarily mean that we will have all the good things in life. There will be ups and downs. But what will happen when we willingly surrender to our *guru*, again through his grace, is that we will accept everything that happens as his will. The moment we are totally convinced - not just intellectually, but also emotionally - that everything happens because of his grace, then we begin to feel the burden lift off our shoulders. We are at peace.

Tomorrow is the day dedicated to the *guru*; we must, therefore, think of him for a longer period of time than we do on other occasions. Wherever there are *sanyasis*, there will be grand *poojas* tomorrow. They will observe the *chaturmasya* for four months beginning from tomorrow.

(Talk 81)
