

CONCENTRATION OF MIND ON THE DIVINE IS REAL SADHANA

Nachiketha, son of Vajasravas, prayed to Lord Yama to teach him Atma Vidya. Then, Lord Yama said, “Oh the son of immortality! Listen. First establish your link with the source from which you have come into the world.” He also advised Nachiketha that since the body was perishable like a water bubble and the mind was fleeting, both of them must be discarded, meaning, no importance should be attached to them and efforts be made to realize the fundamental Truth.

The Lord of Kailasa has manifested his Divine form with the crescent moon adorning his head, the cool water of the Ganga flowing between the matted locks, with his radiant eye in the middle of the forehead and the purple neck gleaming like the sheen of a blackberry. He wears serpent bracelets and a snake belt, his entire body is smeared with Vibhuti, his forehead is adorned with a kumkum dot, his ruddy lips glow with the juice of the betel, diamond-studded gold earrings dangle from his ears and his whole swarthy body glows with divine effulgence. (Telugu Poem)

“Nachiketa! You need not search for Lord Easwara for He is very much present in you”, said Lord Yama.

Dear Students and Devotees!

You have to understand the true significance and philosophy underlying the festival of Sivarathri. First realise that you are not the physical body which is perishable and impermanent. You have to look at this objective world with *Jnana Chakshu* (the eye of wisdom), not with the *Charma Chakshu* (physical eye). The animals, insects, birds and beasts are looking at this world with their physical eyes. If you also look at this objective world with mere physical eyes, what difference is there between you and those beings? You will then simply remain an animal, bird, beast or insect. You will not be able to realize your true nature, which is beyond the physical world. You have to comprehend the transcendental reality which is beyond the body and the mind. This is possible only with the help of *Jnana Chakshu* (the eye of wisdom). The body is like a water bubble. It will disappear one day or the other. You are not the body that has birth, growth, decay and death ultimately. Therefore, Lord Yama exhorted Nachiketha to realize the *Atma Thathwa* that has no birth and death. Then, the question arises as to what is *Atma*? *Atma* has no form. It is infinite, indescribable and immeasurable.

Nirgunam, Niranjanam, Sanathana Niketanam, Nitya, Shuddha, Buddha, Mukta, Nirmala Swarupinam (*Atma* is attributeless, pure, final abode, eternal, unsullied, enlightened, free and embodiment of sacredness).

Such an *Atma Thathwa* is immanent in every individual, nay every being, in the form of consciousness. Your life as a human being will acquire a meaning and purpose, only when you realise the consciousness. Enquiries relating to worldly matters are meaningless and an exercise in futility. Lord Yama exhorted Nachiketha to realise that principle, having realized which he would have known everything else. The body has birth, growth, decay and death. But, *Atma* has no such qualities. It is the eternal witness to everything in this Universe. You have therefore to realize that *Atma Thathwa*. Thus taught Lord Yama to Nachiketha.

The Atma is eternal without birth or death. It has no beginning, middle or end. It is omnipresent and eternal witness.

(Telugu Poem)

Look! There are several electric bulbs glowing here. Though the bulbs are of different sizes, colours and capacity, the electrical energy manifesting as light through them is one and the same. Similarly, the same divine power is present in every living being and makes it function. That is *Atma Thathwa*. I often refer to the terms *Sathya* (Truth), *Dharma* (Right Conduct), *Santhi* (Peace) and *Prema* (Love). *Sathya* is the electricity, *Dharma* is the wire through which the electric current passes. *Santhi* is the bulb and *Prema* is the effulgence. If you want to attain *Atmaananda* (Atmic bliss), you have to follow *Sathya* and *Dharma*. That is why, the ancient culture of Bharath exhorted humanity *Sathyam Vada* (speak Truth) and *Dharmam Chara* (practise righteous conduct) In contrast to this noble principle, what is happening today? *Sathyam Vadha* (Truth is being killed) and *Dharmam Chera* (Righteous Conduct is being imprisoned). No, No. This is not humanness. Speak truth and observe righteous conduct.

Lord Yama told Nachiketa, “This human body which is like a water bubble is bound to burst one day or other. Therefore,

realize that *Atma Thathwa* which is real and eternal”. You have to recognize that *Atma Tathwa*, not by your *Charma Chakshu* (physical eyes), but by the *Jnana Chakshu* (eye of wisdom) Then, the question arises as to what is *Jnana* (wisdom)? Is it physical knowledge or secular knowledge or knowledge relating to the objects of nature? No, none of these. Experiencing the principle of non-dualism is true wisdom (Advaita darsanam jnanam). *Atma* transcends the name and form. Lord Yama, therefore, exhorted Nachiketha to attain *Atma Jnana*.

Today, people are going mad in search of spiritual knowledge. They adopt umpteen number of practices and bodily postures and call it spiritual sadhana. But, none of these can help to attain *Atma Jnana*. What is important is *Prema* (Love) which is the undercurrent of all forms of spiritual sadhana. Realising the perishable nature of this *Deha* (body), one has to realise the indweller (*Dehi*), who is none other than the eternal *Atma*.

The body is made up of five elements and is bound to perish sooner or later but the indweller has neither birth nor death. The indweller has no attachment whatsoever and is the eternal witness. Truly speaking, the indweller who is in the form of the Atma is verily God Himself.

(Telugu Poem)

The true and eternal *Atma Thathwa* is immanent in one’s own body. It can be realized only by the *Jnana netras* (eyes of wisdom). You have to gradually give up *Dehabhimana* (attachment to the body) and cultivate *Atmabhimana* (love towards the *Atma*). You think you are the body and develop attachment to it. So long as the process of inhalation and exhalation continues in the body, you consider it as yours. Once the process comes to a halt, you do not know what is happening around.

The human body, though of perishable nature, teaches one great lesson, namely, “*SOHAM*” (you are nothing but the eternal *Atma Thathwa*). When you inhale your breath, you make the sound “*So*” and while exhaling you make the sound “*Ham*”. The inhaling process represents life and exhaling represents death. If you wish to overcome life and death, one moment is enough. You have to give up body attachment, which I am demonstrating right before you day in and day out. This body which I have taken upon Myself is undergoing several types of suffering . Just as you suffer from physical ailments, this body also suffers. But, I do not attach importance to this suffering. Several students and devotees have expressed anxiety and concern that I might undergo a lot of suffering while the *Linga* emerges from My body. No doubt your apprehensions are true, but, I do not feel any suffering. In fact, it is only when I identify Myself with the body, I undergo pain. Since I am not the body, I do not suffer any pain.

For example, this is a handkerchief (holding a kerchief in His hands) As long as you consider this kerchief as yours, you pick it up, wipe your face and carefully put it back in its original place. Just because the kerchief is yours, do you accept if there is dirt on it? No, never. You at once discard it. In the same manner, you should realize that you are different from the body. You should not attach any importance to the suffering of the body. All those objects which you consider as yours have to be discarded one day or the other. When you do not consider something as yours, you do not feel any pain in discarding it. This body underwent several types of suffering, the recent one being a fracture in the hip bone.

The body is afterall a conglomeration of *Indriyas* (senses). Whatever has happened is only to the body and not to Me. When you adopt such type of attitude you will get peace. For example, when you find an ant crawling on your hand, if you try to scratch it, you will have more pain. After all why should you have to suffer so much on account of a small insect like an ant crawling over your body? It is only because you are under the illusion that you are the body. The eye sees something. But what it sees may not be real since it is bound to undergo change after some time. What the ears have heard may undergo change after some time. In the same way, the food we eat will also undergo change after a few hours. There is nothing that is permanent in this world. You have to realise this truth. You have to enquire as to what is it that remains unchanged in the past, present and future. If I teach you this truth by quoting big Sanskrit Slokas and Mantras, you may not be able to understand this simple truth. If this is related to your day-to-day experience, you will understand it better.

Some time back, when My hip bone got fractured, I was taken to the hospital. The doctors were planning for performing a major orthopaedic surgery. I told them, “You can do whatever you wish to. This body is yours. I am not the body. I am not under the control of the body I am I.” The doctors performed a major operation on this body. But, I did not suffer any pain. Whatever pain was there, only the body suffered, not Me. If you also adopt similar attitude, you will not feel any pain.

Therefore, reduce your *dehabhimana* (attachment to the body) gradually.

All of you are undertaking some sort of *sadhana*. What exactly is the real meaning of *sadhana*? *Sadhana* is not merely acquiring knowledge about the nature of body. In fact, you have to forget about the body and concentrate on the Atmic Bliss. How do you attain that bliss? It can be attained only through Prema (love). If only there is pure love, all your suffering will be removed. Therefore, cultivate pure and selfless love. Supposing, you came across a person on the road who is inimical to you. If you hate him and move away from him considering him as your enemy, the distance between you and him increases further. On the other hand, if you greet him lovingly saying “Hello! how are you?”, naturally he would respond with love. Thus, when you both greet each other lovingly, there is no scope for hate persisting anymore. As is your feeling towards others, so is their feeling. The same idea is contained in the Vedic declaration: “*Yadbhavam thadbhavathi*” (As is your feeling, so shall you become). Today, we are directing all our negative feelings on others. We should not however bear any ill-will against anybody. Whatever negative feelings are there, they are just passing clouds. They come and go. The sun may not be visible while it is under thick clouds. The moment the clouds move away, the sun is visible. Similarly, when your negative feelings scatter away, what remains is pure love. You can achieve anything in this world with love. In fact, you can get the entire world under your control through love. People say they are sitting in meditation, both morning and evening. But, what kind of meditation is going on? What benefit are they deriving out of it? How long is its effect lasting? Not even a moment. Remember, all worldly matters are like passing clouds. Therefore, do not engage yourself much in them.

Once Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was walking through the market place, chanting the divine name. In fact, he was dancing in ecstasy. Some people on seeing him thought he was a madcap. They snatched away his mridanga. But, he did not resent for this. He started chanting the divine name while beating the cymbals. The irate onlookers took away the cymbals also. Even then he was not bothered. He thought perhaps God did not like his beating the cymbals. He resolved not to touch the cymbals which he thought were not to the liking of God. He consoled himself saying whatever musical instruments were taken away from him, were not to God’s liking. God’s will prevails ultimately. Such was his faith. From then onwards he gave up all worldly attachments and concentrated on *Premathatha* (Principle of Love), which none could take away from him. One has to aspire for that which cannot be taken away by others. That is Pure Love. A printed matter on a piece of paper cannot be separated from it. Likewise, your heart should be like a pure white paper and love the printed matter. These two are inseparable. Cultivate such love.

Love is your sole refuge wherever you may be, in a forest, in the sky, in a city or a village, on the top of a mountain or in the middle of deep sea.

(Telugu Poem)

Wherever you may be, divine love will protect you always. Cultivate such type of love. That is the real *Sadhana*. *Sadhana* is not something that is associated with dhana (money). *Sadhana* stands for *Salokya*, *Sameepya*, *Sarupya* and *Sayujya*. Unfortunately today people do not understand the real meaning of *Sadhana*.

Students! You are reading big books written by elders. However, mere reading will not help. When you read a *pustaka* (book), whatever is contained in it will enter your *mastaka* (head). That means both the *pustaka* and *mastaka* become one. You should not stop at that. Whatever has been stored in the *mastaka* must get into the heart, where it will remain for ever.

Embodiments of Divine Atma!

Atma is Divine. Never forget this aspect. Some people find happiness in physical *sadhana*. But, the pleasure they derive out of it is only physical and temporary in nature. All that is associated with time is bound to disappear one day or the other. You have to attach yourself to that which is permanent, eternal and real. God’s love is beyond all description. It is supreme. On the other hand, the physical love is momentary and is associated with physical relationship. Whatever is associated with the body comes and goes. But, pure and selfless love which emerges from the heart comes and grows. You have to cultivate such love. It will never diminish. You need not have to beg for this from somebody. You cannot purchase this from the market either, since it is not a saleable commodity. God is the only source from which love flows. It

is available only in His shop. Therefore find out a way to reach Him. Unfortunately, today people do not aspire to acquire such pure love in spite of being very near to the source of such love. They do not even realise that this invaluable gift is available right in front of them. People crave for worldly favours and objects, thinking there is great happiness in possessing them. No. They can never give real happiness. The happiness arising out of worldly things is only momentary. Only God's love is the eternal principle. Therefore love such Divine Love. You do not get it anywhere else except from God.

God has neither birth nor death. He has neither beginning nor end. He is present in all beings as the eternal witness.
(Telugu Poem)

God's love is the only Truth. It will never change. Worship such changeless Truth. Seek refuge in that Truth. That is the only real *sadhana* for attaining liberation. What is meant by 'Moksha' (Liberation)? Is it living in some palatial building with air-conditioned rooms, located in the heaven above? No, not at all. To get rid of *Moha* (attachment) is true *Moksha* (liberation) You have to give up the body attachment in the first instance. Once you get rid of body attachment, you will naturally develop *Vairagya* (renunciation), which will ultimately lead you to liberation. Love is the only path that can lead you to liberation.

You might have heard the story of Mandana Misra, a scholar of great repute. His wife, *Ubhayabharathi*, too was a great scholar. When Adi Sankara was proceeding on his victory march, he met Mandana Misra and entered into a scholarly debate with him. It was decided that Mandana Misra would take to Sannyasa if he was defeated in the debate. *Ubhayabharathi* was chosen to be the adjudicator of the contest. Will anyone accept such a proposal wherein the rival's wife acts as the adjudicator? But, Adi Sankara had no hesitation to accept her as the adjudicator, for he knew that *Ubhayabharati* strictly adhered to the principle of truth in letter and spirit. She was impartial in her judgement and declared Sankara to be the winner. Mandana Misra took to Sannyasa in accordance with the terms and conditions of the debate. *Ubhayabharati*, being his *Ardhangi* (better half), followed suit.

Ubhayabharathi lived in a hermitage near the bank of river Ganga. Many women became her disciples. Every day in the morning, they used to go to the bank of the Ganga to have a bath. On the way, there lived a Sannyasi, whom people considered as *Brahma Jnani* (the knower of Brahma). He had renounced the world to attain true wisdom. However, he was very much attached to a dried bottle-gourd in which he used to preserve water. One day he was lying down, using it as a pillow, lest someone should steal it. *Ubhayabharathi* observed this and asked her disciples as to who he was. One of the disciples said that he was known as *Brahma Jnani*. Then *Ubhayabharathi* remarked, "Though he is one of wisdom, he is attached to his bottle-gourd which he is using as his pillow." The so-called Brahma Jnani heard their conversation and became angry. When *Ubhayabharathi* and her disciples were returning from the Ganga, he threw away the bottle-gourd on the road, just to show that he was not attached to it. Seeing this, *Ubhayabharathi* at once remarked, "I thought there was only one defect in him - *Abhimana* (attachment). Now I realise that he has another defect also - *Ahamkara* (ego). How can one with *Ahamkara* and *Abhimana* be a *Jnani* (one of wisdom)? Her comment was an eye opener for the Sannyasi. Immediately he fell at the feet of *Ubhayabharathi* and prayed to her to teach him true knowledge.

To visualise multiplicity is *Ajnana* (ignorance) and to visualise unity in multiplicity is *Jnana* (wisdom). *Ubhayabharathi* imparted such sacred teachings and transformed the individuals. As she understood the principle of unity, she ultimately attained liberation. On the other hand Mandana Misra could not attain liberation as he was immersed in worldly feelings. *Ubhayabharathi* started preaching and propagating the path of wisdom. She became the guru of one and all. A true guru is one who dispels the darkness of ignorance and lights the lamp of wisdom. That which remains changeless in all the three periods of time is true wisdom. People accepted *Ubhayabharathi* as their guru because her thought, word and deed were in complete harmony. *Manasyekam vachasyekam karmanyekam mahatma naam* (Those whose thoughts, words and deeds are in perfect harmony are noble ones)

Manonaashanam (annihilation of the mind) is what you should strive for. You should have desire for God and nothing else. You should not get entangled in the worldly relationships. That is true wisdom.

The teachings of *Ubhayabharathi* spread far and wide and she became highly reputed for her wisdom. Even today there

are many such people of wisdom. Without men of merit and wisdom, how can there be light in the world? However, wisdom cannot be acquired from individuals. It can be acquired only by developing love for God. A beggar who comes to our doorstep begs for alms saying “*Bhavati Bhikshan Dehi.*” He addresses *Dehi* (indweller) and not *Deha* (physical body). In this manner, you can learn a profound spiritual truth even from a beggar.

One may acquire a high academic qualification such as M.A. and B.A. and attain exalted position

One may amass wealth, perform acts of charity and attain name and fame

One may have physical strength and enjoy a long and healthy life

One may be a great scholar studying and preaching the Vedas,

None of them can equal a true devotee of the Lord.

(Telugu Poem)

No doubt, worldly education is also essential to eke out a livelihood, but it cannot impart true wisdom. Only *Atma Vidya* (knowledge of the Self) can grant you everlasting happiness. However, secular education is also essential to take care of your physical needs. You should not give it up altogether. Worldly education is Negative and spiritual education is Positive. Both are essential for happiness here and hereafter.

Students! You should become masters in both forms of knowledge, secular and spiritual, like *Ubhayabharathi*. But always remember that only Atmic knowledge is the true knowledge. Once you acquire it, you would have acquired everything else.

Last night I came to the Sai Kulwant Hall at 1 o’ clock. It is during this auspicious time that the divine lingas emerge from Kailasa. The lingas emerge of their own accord at the divine will. I saw several students and devotees singing Bhajans with great devotion. But who are the real devotees? I observed that only a few people were singing with real devotion and a pure heart constantly contemplating on the divine name. There were thousands of people participating in the Bhajans. But not all of them are real devotees. Their body was present in the hall but their mind was not fixed on God. They were mechanically participating in Bhajans. This is not real devotion. Wherever you sit, whether in the prayer hall, or elsewhere, if your thoughts are fixed on God, then you are a true devotee and you will attain His grace. If you feel sleepy, you can sleep. There is no objection. However even in sleep, may your thoughts be fixed on divinity.

Is it not because of your love and devotion towards God that you came all the way to Prasanthi Nilayam to participate in Sivarathri Bhajans? I can understand your devotion. A true devotee does not need any conveniences. He does not wish any type of comforts. Wherever you go, keep the mind under your control and direct all your thoughts towards God. That is real devotion. That is what Ubhayabharathi taught to her disciples. If you also cultivate such devotion, your lives will be sanctified. Do not divert your attention on physical comforts. Always chant the *Panchakshari* Mantra, “*Om Namah Sivaya.*” If you merely chant with lips it will merge into worldly sounds. On the other hand, if you chant the divine name sincerely with full concentration of your mind, it will spread all over the world. Chanting of the divine name with full concentration by the mind is real *sadhana*.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, “*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi...*”)