

OM SAI RAM

Welcome to this Question and Answer Session

Q. 325, "OPENING THE INNER DOOR"

June 22, 2024

This text excerpt is taken from Prof. Anil Kumar's book "Satyopanishad, Vol. 2," pages 203-209.

Swami! *Now we understand that we are mistaken with regard to our knowledge. You have explained clearly what awareness is, by saying that it is complete knowledge and not the knowledge of a bit or a piece of anything. How are we to cultivate this awareness?*

Bhagawan: Spirituality is very essential for awareness. It is impossible to develop awareness by any other means. With a spiritual background, things will be very clear to you. You will then have total understanding which is awareness. Otherwise, what you acquire is bookish knowledge, superficial knowledge, general knowledge but not practical knowledge, which is awareness. This is possible only in the spiritual path.

A small example: You sow a seed in the ground. It germinates into a plant. But do you expect the seed to germinate if it is kept in a tin? Impossible! Similarly, the plant of awareness grows in the field of spirituality and not in a tin of worldly pleasures. Then the awareness that is developed is, in fact, true awareness.

Swami! *Now it is clear that this sort of "awareness" is not available in our educational institutions. That awareness is so very important for all of us. You are the incarnation of God in the present day world. Why don't You, by Your grace, grant us this boon of awareness?*

Bhagawan: If everything is done by God Himself, what will be there for you to do? How will you make use of the God-given mind and intellect? Don't you realise that these divine instruments, like the mind and the intellect which you are equipped with, will be a waste if God does everything for you? The mother cooks and serves food. She cannot eat it on behalf of the child! When the child sustains any injury, the mother feels sad. But she cannot bandage herself on behalf of the child!

Though you sit in front of the plate filled with potato curry and chapati, you must also pick them up with your own hands and eat. By simply repeating, "potato, chapatti" will your hunger be appeased? The hand and the mouth should be put to work, isn't it? Similarly, you should make use of your mind and intellect.

Everything will be known to you. By your effort, you will win God's grace. With *krishi*, effort, one can even become a *rishi*, a sage. Do your duty, thinking at the same time of the Lord. Krishna too said the same thing to Arjuna, *mam anusmara yudhya cha*, "O

Arjuna! Remember me and fight!” Chanting Rama’s name, Hanuman could cross the mighty ocean. So do your duty and you can achieve whatever you want.

Swami! Spiritual aspirants observe austerities like upavasa, fasting and jagarana, vigil and consider them as spiritual activities. We request you to let us know their importance and inner significance.

Bhagawan: The traditions, rituals and the age-old practices of Bharat have a meaning and significance. Aspirants undoubtedly get divine experiences. But today, people are after external and pompous rituals, without any understanding of their inner significance. So, they have forgotten the very goals and purposes for which these rituals were originally intended. Almost all the rituals have become mechanical, monotonous and routine. There is none to explain them lucidly. Most people are not aware of the subtleties. So, you don’t find anybody practicing austerities or rituals sincerely. Man need not change. It is the mind that should change.

Suppose you are travelling to a distant place, and you don’t have food to eat on the way. Can you consider this *upavasa*, fasting? Will this be of any spiritual use? A patient doesn’t take normal food. Is that fasting? What do you get out of it? To feel God in you is *upavasa* and not mere fasting as the literal meaning goes; *Upa* means near, *vasa* means living. In other words, *upavasa* means living close to or near God. It means one should turn inward, feel God and constantly think of Him. This is *upavasa* in its true sense. Today, we notice people who fast on the *ekadasi* day. But, they eat double the normal quantity of food the next day. The *madhvas* (followers of Madhvacharya) observe *Bhisma ekadasi* on which day they fast. They don’t swallow even their saliva.

In the state of Karnataka, they say in Kannada, “*Bida bedi bittu keda bedi*”, which means ‘do not give up and spoil yourself’. When you give up anything, don’t pick it up again. It is a bad habit. Instead, what is happening? They get the flour ready, well grinded and preserve the dough for three days. With this, they make nice tasteful *dosas*, South Indian tiffin. So, in Kannada it is said, “*Indu adide ekadasi ondu tindu nalavattu dosa.*” It means, “in the name of *ekadasi* on one fasting day in a month, preparations are made for as many as forty *dosas.*” Is this *upavasa*? No! Definitely not!

Why should you observe vigil, *jagarana*? Why is *jagarana*, meaning ‘keeping awake throughout the night’ observed? It means that you should keep away from your worldly happiness, sensual pleasures and material comforts. You should be unmindful of all these mundane matters, but be awake or vigilant to the inner core, the *atma*.

You should be awake in respect to the inner Divinity, while neglecting worldly botherations. But what is done in the name of *jagarana*? They play cards throughout the night or watch three movies, one after the other throughout the night, in the name of *jagarana*. Watchmen, nurses in hospitals who are on duty and railway station masters on duty don’t sleep in the night. Does it amount to *jagarana*? Certainly not! Merely skipping sleep is an external ritual. One should know the inner reality while observing these rituals. Since they are all done mechanically, they are made fun of and they look ridiculous to the eyes of others.

Swami! Some want us to do *puja*, some suggest *dhyana*, meditation, a few prescribe *parayana*, reading of the scriptures and some others assure us of good results from *japa*, the repetition of God's name. I am confused about what to do and which one to follow. Kindly tell me the best among these ways to be followed in my *sadhana*?

Bhagawan: You can follow any of them with total *prema*, love, *nisvartha*, selflessness, *chittasuddhi*, purity of your heart, *ekagrata*, one pointedness and *saranagati*, surrender, to realise and experience God.

You follow the path that suits your convenience. Any procedure that appeals to you and gives you *santhi* and *ananda* can be followed. But never imitate. Never go by other people's words and paths. You follow your chosen path. Otherwise you lose your own way also. Imitation is human but creation is divine.

A small example to illustrate that one becomes a loser by following others. There was a fruit market and it was the season when mangoes were available in plenty. A shopkeeper got a board specially painted with the words "Good mango fruits are sold here" and displayed it in front of his shop to promote sales. One stranger came and said, "Sir! What is it that is written there on the board? This is a fruit market. Why should you have the word '**here**' on the board? It looks silly and superfluous. I suggest you erase this word, 'here'. Then the shopkeeper sent word to the painter and erased the word 'here' from the board.

Now on the board, the words "Good mango fruits are sold" were left. Another man came to the shop and said, "What, Sir? You don't look smart and intelligent. Have you yourself cared to read what is written on the board? This is the mango season. All the shops are selling mangoes only. Why should you write 'mangoes especially, as if they are here only? Better you remove the word 'mango' from the board!.

The shopkeeper got it erased with the help of the painter. Now on the board the words "Good Fruits are sold" were left. Another customer came and said, "What nonsense is this? Do you find any one selling bad fruits? How funny it looks when you say "good fruits", very silly! Remove those words "good fruits" from the board.

The shopkeeper was convinced and got them erased with the result that only the word "Are sold" were left on the board. A well-wisher of the owner who happened to pass by looked at the board and was shocked. He said, "What? Are you mad? Did you read the board? What do you mean by "Are sold"? Are you going to sell the board or what? The shopkeeper called for the painter and got the words 'Are sold' removed. Now he was left with a blank board. Finally, the painter gave the bill with two entries: one for initially painting the letters and the other for erasing each word at intervals. What happened to the owner of the shop who paid heed to the words of everyone? He lost both the board and that money. This will happen to you too if you adopt other people's ways.

Your Guru also prescribes a method that suits you. He never wants all and sundry to follow the same pattern. The methods of *sadhana* are suggested depending on your capacity, skill, understanding and the level of your spiritual awareness.

We will hear more of Swami's divine advice through Prof. Anil Kumar's writings in the next sessions!

Thank you for your time,

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