

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION:

Q&A 308, 'DEAR' NOT 'NEAR' IS IMPORTANT

Feb. 24, 2024

Om Sai Ram

Welcome to the Question and Answer session Q. 308, 'Dear' Not 'Near' Is Important

The following Question and Answer contains excerpts from Professor Anil Kumar's book "Sathyopanishad, Volume 1", taken from pages 107 to 114.

Swami, today Sai glory brought almost everybody from all parts of the world to your Feet. People from many countries, whose names we had never heard before, are coming to You. People of almost all linguistic groups of the world are here. We have representation from all walks of life. It is unfortunate that we, who have been here with You, find ourselves less devoted to You than Your overseas devotees. We see them practice Your teachings with much more sincerity of heart than us! Why is this happening?

Bhagavan: The experiences of the devotees depend on their sincerity, steadfastness, devotion and faith. Nearness in one way is responsible for not realising the actual value of Divinity. Don't you find a shadow under a lamp? Similar is the case here. As the light of the Avatar spreads everywhere, there is a shadow underneath the light.

You also know that honey bees come from a distance to suck the honey out of the lotus flower, while frogs, snails and fishes so near the lotus flower, do not know the taste of honey. The same thing happens when God incarnates in human form. People who are very near Him will not be able to realise His divine splendour.

When you hear of a mango fruit, you feel like eating it. But when you go to a market and see the fruits there, you take a fruit close to your nose and start smelling it. Why? You doubt if it is a ripe fruit or not. The very mention of the name of the fruit made you long for it. But when you are near it, you doubt. Isn't it so?

Why go for such a far-fetched simile? Well, you speak ecstatically to everyone, saying that Baba appeared in your dreams and that you experienced His presence at your place. But, when you are in the immediate Presence of Baba, you are not even thrilled and excited. You people who are so near Me don't know the tremendous and magnificent experiences of devotees all over the world and their magnitude. A frog in a well cannot know the outer world, you see!

It is not the length of time or the number of years you are with Swami that matters! Bus drivers come here and go from here daily. What experience do they have? You may keep an iron ball in a water tank for any length of time. What happens? Absolutely it undergoes no change in any way! Just as darkness is dispelled by a flash of light, the darkness of ignorance should be dispelled by the light of wisdom.

If you have full faith in and love for Swami, you will follow His teachings. You find a spectacular transformation in the life of umpteen number of people everywhere. Why? This is the love of Divinity that attracts and draws people to this Prasanthi Nilayam.

It is only God whom you respect, love and worship. You respect your boss, administrators; elders, etc. You love your parents, family, and friends. All the same, you don't worship your officers nor do you worship the members of your family. Isn't it so? But you respect, love and worship God only.

Swami, devotees come from far off places like Argentina, the Philippines, Guatemala, Russia and many other countries from all over the world. Name a country and its representation is there at Prasanthi Nilayam. They go out of this place with heavy hearts, not able to leave you. How should they take it and what exactly do you want them to do in these circumstances?

Bhagavan: You should experience the omniscience of God .God is always with you, around you, below you, above you and in you. In fact, you are God. Devotees come to Swami to charge their batteries. Always remember this. 'Near' is not important to Swami, 'Dear' is important. The flame burns brilliantly when the breeze blows. Two wooden pieces should be kept close together. This is nearness. As you light and burn them, you should also fan them so that the flame will rise upwards. This fanning is 'dearness'. Mere nearness is not enough.

There is a lotus flower in the lake. There are a number of fishes and frogs in the same lake that do not know the value of the flower. But honeybees come from long distances and suck nectar from the flower. Bees represent 'dearness' while frogs and fishes stand for 'nearness'.

Similarly, you know the lighthouse from which the light spreads all around, guiding the ship's voyage. But, under the lighthouse, it is dark because of the shadow. So the light around is 'dearness' while the shadow underneath is 'nearness'. So devotees who go from here should understand this. They should strive to be dear to Swami and not merely near to Him.

Swami, it is our common experience that some of us are quite good for some time, devoted, disciplined and dutiful, especially when we are here in Your proximity. Then why do we change when we are somewhere else? What happens to all that we learn here? Why do we lose sacred qualities like sincerity, devotion and steadfastness when we are away? Kindly pardon our mistakes and let us know the causes of our downfall?

Bhagawan: This is a wrong statement. Sincerity, devotion, discipline, steadfastness and all the noble qualities that you claim to have possessed while you were here are not true and natural. They are artificial. They are like plastic flowers that are not fragrant and cannot attract bees. It is all your show or trick. God is never carried away by these artificial, temporary and external features. God looks into your heart and internal nature.

You say that circumstances change you. If noble qualities were really present in you, you wouldn't change due to the change of circumstances. No change in the environment will ever affect you. Truly, the mistake lies in you only. You don't have strong faith and conviction. In fact, the seeds are there, lying underground and are waiting to sprout at an appropriate time. Environment has no legs and hands and life to move about like you!

You are now here in Kodaikanal. You are fully clothed with sweaters and shawls, rugs and blankets and all the woolen stuff to keep you warm in this cold place. If you don't have warm clothes, whose fault is it? Who would you blame then? Similarly, you know how challenging and testing life is in the world today. It is your own responsibility to carry with you the blanket of duty, the rug of devotion and wear the sweater of discipline whenever you are exposed to the severe cold winds of neglect of duty, disobedience of God's commands, and vagaries of ego and disbelief. Wearing this warm woolen clothing, you will not be affected by the cold climate. You have to protect yourself, so blaming the environment is of no use. If good thoughts and good behavior are in you, you will remain unaffected, whatever be your surroundings!

Swami, we are here by Your sheer grace and mercy. You say that You spend three-fourths of your time on Your boys. What do You want us to do?

Bhagawan: There is nothing you can do for Me. I don't need anything from you. I only give and never receive. I do not accept or receive anything from anyone. I never stretch my hand before anybody in order to receive something. I have never asked anybody for anything till now. In fact, all things happen according to the will of Swami. But I ask you to give Me only one thing, and that is enough. What is it? It is your love.

Your parents sometimes stay away from you. But I am always with you, in you, below you, above you and around you. I am indeed yourself. You remember this always, and that is enough. You follow Swami, and you will shine like a precious gem in the future. You will be highly respected and you will get a good name in society. Whatever you have learnt here in the hostel and the college, and on top of all this, the love of Swami you have received should never be forgotten. Get yourselves a good name. Follow Swami's teachings.

Thank you for your time. There will be more spiritual gems from Professor Anil Kumar's book "*Satyopanisad*" in the next session.

Om Sai Ram!