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PREACHING

Dada Vaswani in Africa

Saintly teacher speaks on duty, service and silence

In December, Dada Vaswani, head of the worldwide Sadhu Vaswani Mission, visited several countries in Africa, including Ghana. There he delivered lectures in Sindhi and in English to the Indian community and local Ghanaians. He also met with religious and political leaders, including Swami Ghanananda, a disciple of the late Swami Krishnanand of India and the founder and head of the Hindu Monastery of Africa. Dadaji addressed over 150 of Swami's followers at their temple near Ghana's capital, Accra. Sandhya Nankani recorded the following interview with Dadaji for Hinduism Today after his visit with the Swami.

Today, the emphasis in society has shifted from duties to rights. Women say, "We must have our rights." Yes, my sisters, but what about your duties? Men say, "We must have our rights." Yes, my brothers, but what about your duties? Whatever be our rights, they will easily fall into our life if we do our duties properly. If the employers do their duties, the employees won't need to claim their rights. As I fulfill my duties in the right spirit, I will grow in the powers of concentration. As I grow in the spirit of concentration, I will grow in the spirit of detachment. As I grow in the spirit of

detachment, I will grow in inner purification. These changes lead to illumination and finally to unification, which is the ultimate goal of the spiritual life.

Service

As you grow in inner purification, you will grow in the realization that you belong to the family of your community, to the family of society, to the family of your country and to the family of humanity. In this family of humanity, every man and woman is a brother and sister, and it is your duty to attend to their needs also. Service should be selfless, without thought of reward or thanks. It has been rightly said, "Selfless service is the rent we have to pay for inhabiting the human body."

Importance of daily silence

We live in a noisy world from which we need to detach ourselves time and again. I often say, even as there are particles of dirt and dust that cling to our clothes that need to be washed, so too particles of noise cling to our hearts and souls. We need to cleanse these particles in the waters of silence. After you have done your duty each day or helped someone in need, come and sit in a corner each day. Sitting in silence, we can repeat the name divine, we can engage in a loving and intimate conversation with God, we can do our spiritual thinking. As we practice silence, we will keep on sinking deeper and deeper within ourselves until one blessed day, by the grace of God, we shall behold a patch of bright light in the forehead. This patch will in due course grow into a

full orbit of light that will appear in a plexus of 1,000 petals in our head. This plexus is called the sahasrara chakra. Then our entire inner self will be illuminated. This is the purpose of spiritual life.

Religion versus spirituality

Religion concerns itself with many things. For example, there is the ritual aspect, there are many creeds, and there are many dogmas. But, spirituality is the essence of every religion. Spirituality is that which reveals to you your own true self, that which is universal. Spirituality is the realization that the same self that is in you is in me.

Slowing down in a technological age

The day comes in the lives of each and every person when the soul wakes up and finds that it is hungry for more. The food of the soul is silence. If we don't practice silence, we are starving ourselves. As soon as we become aware of this, we will begin to say no to the sounds around us. As things are at the moment, we are happy with what the world has given us and we are content to be part of the rat race. But when you need to slow down, you will automatically say no. I don't have to strain to say no because I realize the need. All you have to do is realize the need.

Making the right choice

Right decisions are made by buddhi, intellect, which is separate and different from intelligence. Intelligence, which belongs to the mind, creates doubts in us, while buddhi gives us a sense of certainty. To make the right decisions in life, we need to contact the buddhi. This is possible through silence, if our buddhi chakra is open. If not, we can always consult a guru or spiritual teacher for guidance and advice.

Dealing with people conflicts

The best way to deal with personal conflicts, as I have seen, is that I must not argue or enter into discussions with this particular individual, because arguments make things worse. Instead, go sit in silence and think of that person sitting by your side in the presence of the one who is symbolic of God or Truth in your life. Go sit together and feel the healing rays that are emanating from that form envelope both of you together. You will find wonderful things happening.

Millennium Message

Today the nations of the world are wandering aimlessly. They are cut off from God. The time has come for us to turn back to God. At the dawn of the new millennium, let us take a U-turn to God!