

Football by Vidagdha

“Who am I? I am a football played by the Supreme constantly. This football has no individuality of its own. You have more individuality than I have. My individuality and personality I sold to the Supreme many centuries ago. He was kind enough to buy it from me with His infinite Compassion.” Sri Chinmoy

Like every boy, and especially Indian boys, Sri Chinmoy adored football. He played it during his early youth in Chittagong and it figured prominently in his sports experiences at the Ashram. Among all the games that he played during his formative years, it was his favourite.

It happened that during one particular game of football, he collided with another player and that boy was hurt as a result. The young Chinmoy, who was mildness incarnate, was mortified. For

two weeks he went every day to the injured boy's house, bringing him extra fruits. He vowed never to allow it to happen again. As the years passed by, Sri Chinmoy went on to play football in the Ashram's best team and even become its captain. One contemporary has written of him:

Chinmoy was fast, relied on his speed more than anything else. The idea was to push the ball ahead and then run after it. More often than not, he reached it before the opponent. Then passed it to a teammate.

Then injury struck, putting an end to Sri Chinmoy's football career:

Once anything gets fractured, finished. My right foot is fractured — here, in between the big toe and the second toe. That is why I had to give up football. So many times, for three or

four years, I had pain. I had to take injections, even. I have taken at least 12 injections. So when I kick hard, immediately it presses down. But when I run, it does not bother me. Even now, when I use proper football boots, it does not help. I developed an outside kick, but when I fractured my foot, my left leg was not enough. If I played for one day, then I could not walk the following day. After I gave up playing seriously, I only played for fun.

In India, I did not play football again. I was the coach. In the West I have played a few times for fun. But I won't go near any other player. I am so careful. Such pain I had!

Sri Chinmoy told this story many times over the years. In the following account, he describes the Mother's reaction to his injury and

the lengths she went to in order to cure it:

I was a super-excellent football player. I used to play football so hard, so hard. Then, when I was 17 or 18 years old, I got hurt. The big toe on my right foot suffered a compound fracture. I suffered for months and months. X-rays showed that the bone got twisted. Even now, from time to time, I get such severe pain in that toe.

Throughout Sri Chinmoy's life, the game of football continued to supply a very fruitful analogy for many spiritual lessons. In the following extract, for example, he encourages each aspirant to feel that he is nothing other than God's football:

From the spiritual point of view, football is extremely meaningful, soulful and fruitful. Each sincere seeker should pray to the Supreme to make him His football. When we kick

a football, the football is at our mercy. The football is the instrument. We kick right, left, forward, backward and play with it according to our sweet will. Now, look at this football! It is far better than we are. The football does not quarrel with us, it does not fight us. At times the football, as an instrument, can fail us; the air can leak out, the bladder can burst, all kinds of problems can come up. But the main wish of the football is to please the football player. We should consider ourselves to be footballs of the Supreme. The earthly football, the leather football is under compulsion to please its master. The football that we kick is under our control, at our mercy. It has become our instrument and it is pleasing us, although it may not be pleasing us cheerfully. But we should be conscious footballs always trying to please the Supreme

cheerfully so that the Supreme can at any moment kick us, shape us, mold us, form us in His own way. We should be real divine footballs so that He can use us all the time in His own way, according to His sweet Will.

In another discussion, Sri Chinmoy likens seekers to the various players on a football team, each one with his own appointed task to complete:

Each soul has a task and you can know it only through your sincere aspiration. Let us take each soul as a limb of God's own Existence. With His Hand He does one thing, with His Nose He does something else, with His Eye and Ear something else. It is like a football game. Somebody has to play at the goalpost, somebody has to play on the left and somebody has to be on the right. If all the players stay at the goal, there will be no game. No, the players have to be

well distributed. So like that, each soul has its respective job to do. And you will know which position you are going to play only when you deal with the captain. God will tell you where your post is.