

## 9. The Name Of Narayana

You are all lucky indeed to be the residents, at least for some months every year, in this Holy Place, which is known from very ancient times as Badharikashram. Many great sages have performed concentrated spiritual exercises (*tapas*) here and realised the Goal of human life. These snowy peaks teach man to be as pure and unblemished as their whiteness. The silence of these valleys is very inspiring; when the heart is free from agitation, the tongue is dumb, and the ear has rest. That is why in olden times, and even today, spiritual aspirants came to these solitary places and did penance. But it is no use searching for silence with a noisy storm raging inside you. You are where your mind is, not where your body rests.

This morning, I took out from its resting place the *Nethralinga* (egg-shaped stone, representation of Siva, with the eye of wisdom in it) which Sankaracharya had installed as the chief source of spiritual sustenance in this shrine, and after *abhisheka* (consecrating by sprinkling holy water and ritual worship), it was sent back to the original place from where it will continue to scatter even more grace on the pilgrims who come here. Sankaracharya, when he first came here—he must have known this place and journeyed up by means of *yogic* powers—had with him five *lingas*, which he brought from Kailas; the other four he installed, in strict conformity with the *Sastras* (scriptures), at Sringeri, Dwaraka, Puri, and Chidambaram. Just as the mountains Nara Parvatha and Narayana Parvatha, which form the background of this temple, have the mountain Neelakanteshwara Parvatha shining on the horizon between them both, this Narayana Shrine has a *Linga* from Kailas as the core of its spiritual halo. The river Ganga is born from the Foot of Vishnu, and it is sanctified by contact with the head of Siva. Such stories are formed to teach that there is no difference between one aspect of God and another.

### The four limbs of the Cosmic Purusha

There is no room for higher and lower among the aspects of Godhead; there is no room for inferior or superior in status among the various sections of mankind. The *Purusha Sukta* speaks of the priestly caste (*brahmin*) being the face, the protector caste (*kshatriya*) the hands, the business caste (*vaisya*) the thighs, and the labourer caste (*sudra*), the feet of the Cosmic *Purusha* (Primeval Supreme Person, God). Apart from the figurative meaning that the passage obviously carries, when God is one uniform sweetness and wisdom and grace, any part is as sweet, as effulgent, as graceful as every other. A sugar doll is sweet all through; the limbs are as much sugar as the head. The trouble comes and the quarrel starts only as a result of the want of love (*prema*) toward sugar.

Once you are established in love, you will not notice these differences any more; they will appear silly, stupid, and meaningless. When there is no love, egoism has the upper hand; quarrels about your being superior and others being inferior raise up their heads. You are in the holy presence of Divine Love Personified (*Premaswarupa*) Himself, Badri Narayana; so you too must be full of love. Do not entertain any hatred or anger in your hearts.

Most of you have come here on pilgrimage, fulfilling the dream of a life-time. I know how much sacrifice you have made to put together the money needed for this arduous pilgrimage. I know the long time you spent in planning for this; I know the joy with which you started on this pilgrimage and the courage that has brought you here. You have braved illness, accident, poverty, and hunger during the long trek from your villages, wherever they may be, in Assam or Kerala or Rajasthan or Kashmir.

### **Proceed toward the goal gladly over rock and boulder**

Carry back with you the silence of these hills, the cool comfort of the Alakananda river, the warm affection of the hot springs that gurgle from the earth here, the spirit of sacrifice that brought sages and saints to this spot. Become better spiritual aspirants on your return, carry on that other pilgrimage toward the goal more resolutely hereafter. Like the river Ganga rushing toward the sea from where its waters are derived, the individual soul (*jivi*) must hurry toward Brahman (Supreme Spirit), from which it has separated. The Ganga does not allow any obstacle to stop its course. You too should proceed as this Alakananda proceeds — laughing, roiling, tripping gladly over rock and boulder toward the goal.

I would ask the residents of this place, who are mostly merchants, shopkeepers, and priests, to take from the stream of pilgrims that comes here every day a part of their faith in Badri Narayana. Just try for a moment to understand what brings these people, poor, old, decrepit, from far-off places through this tortuous mountain road, to this Temple. There is a faith that heartens them to the last step across the threshold of this temple. Plant that faith in your heart too; you will then find that your whole life changes for the better. Take the Name of Narayana (God) on your tongue and become aware of its sweetness; you will find a new meaning in every act of yours. This temple will then become for you the House of God and not a source of livelihood. Anyone can eke out a livelihood anywhere, by any one of a thousand means. But to be in this place, a place considered holy by millions for thousands of years, a place at the very mention of whose name millions stand up and bow their heads in reverence, is indeed a great privilege, a great opportunity. Use that opportunity. Use that opportunity well.

### **Do not exploit the ignorance of pilgrims**

I must tell you one thing more. I would ask you to appreciate the ordeals, trials, and tribulations of the pilgrims who come here. Treat them kindly. Do not speak harsh words and add to their troubles. When after weeks of blistering walk and hungry vigil they reach this heaven, treat them gently. Do not exploit their ignorance and try to get maximum advantage out of it for yourself. There is a code of morality (*dharma*) even for business; do not overstep that limit. Then Badri Narayana will bless you — not that He will give you up if you act otherwise, it will just take longer! For, every living being has some day or other to tread the right path and get merged in the Grace of God.

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