

42. The Garden of no-grief

BHAKTHI is the state of mind in which one has no separate existence apart from God. The *Bhaktha's* very breath is God; his every act is by God, for God; his thoughts are of God; his words are uttered by God, about God. For, like the fish which can live only in water, man can live only in God--in peace and happiness. In other media, he has only fear, frantic struggle, failure. The *Nandhi* (Bull) is the lower nature of man; when it is used as the vehicle of God it secures a place in front of the central shrine of God and it shares some of the adoration offered to God. It is only association with the Divine that can confer value and significance. The mind too gets illumined, and feels joy, peace or calm, only because the peace, joy and calm, which are the native characteristics of the Aathma (God) within are reflected on it.

There is no attempt on the part of man in recent times to grasp this truth and to gain the constant Awareness. A beast, when it falls into a slough, struggles to get out of it and save itself; but man, who has fallen into this slough of down-dragging desire, does not make any effort to lift himself up from it! Shiva is depicted in the *Shaasthras* and *Puraanas* as carrying a begging bowl! In fact, He is said to use a cranium as the bowl! What is He asking from man? He is the giver, He is the person who demands. He demands only what He has given---namely, a pure heart. He gave it pure; He wants it back as pure as when He gave it. He filled man with Love; He asks for that Love.

Surrendering all facilities to the Lord is Prapatthi

The Raamaayana and the Mahaabhaaratha teach the vast possibilities of Love and the bounds between which the Love has to flow, to irrigate the thought, word and deed. *Dharma* sets the bounds; it lays down the goal. Seetha stuck to *Dharma*, as fast as Raama did; Dhroupadhi stuck to *Dharma* as fast as Dharmaraaja did. Mothers such as these suckled the heroes of Bhaarath, and so, this land became the nursery of sages. Seetha had supreme *Bhakthi* towards the Lord however far He was; Dhroupadhi lived every moment with and by Lord Krishna, the guardian of the Paandavas, however distant he was. The lotus on the lake is far, far away from the Sun; but distance is no bar for the dawn of love; the lotus blooms as soon as the Sun peeps over the horizon. The moon is so far away, but, when the moon shines in the sky, children clap their hand and run about in glee, happy that 'Uncle' Moon is smiling on them.

The aborigine in the forest shoots the birds; that is legitimate so far as his stage of life and his means of livelihood are concerned. But, the ascetic in the forest who is engaged in discovering the spring of Divine Love in himself will be committing a grievous wrong which will undermine his progress, if he denies love to the bird on the tree. So too, every profession, every state of life, each sex, each period of life as fixed by age---childhood, boyhood, adolescence, youth, middle age, old age---has duties and obligations, which set the norm and guide the individual to benefit himself and society. When Seetha was fixed in the *Dharma* of the wife, she saw Raama in all beings. Though she was surrounded by frightful female monsters, she did not notice them; though she was interned in a charming garden, named Garden of No-grief (*A-shoka*), she did not see any flower around her. Her eyes, her mind, her thoughts were filled with Raama only. This is the condition of *Prapatthi*---surrender of all faculties to the Lord.

The ego has to sacrifice itself so that man's divine nature can manifest itself. "Mine" is death; 'not mine' is immortality. Renunciation results in peace. The golden key of non-attachment opens the lock which keeps the door to heaven shut. "Give up; I shall fill the gap" says Jesus.

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