

40. Bhakthi, stage by stage

Lord Shridhara is the embodiment of Love.

He lives in Love. Love is His Divine form.

His Love is pervading everywhere in the Universe.

Love is the "Thaaraka Manthra" (holy formula for liberation).

God cannot be understood without this Supreme Love.

How can you get good thoughts, without comprehending this Love, which is God?

If something gets rated, you can clean it.

If there is husk over a seed, you can remove it.

You can even remove ignorance from a normal individual.

But it is not possible to correct a fool!

You are all brought here today by bonds of Love. It is only Love that binds one person to another and one thing to another. The entire world is filled with Love. Life devoid of Love can be described as lifeless.

In Love, there are three levels. The first is the best and the highest level (*utthama*). Men at this level have full faith and belief that God, who is the embodiment of eternal bliss, is present in all beings without exception. They will have the feeling that *Ishwara* is present everywhere and in everything in the form of Love. For such people, "*Adveshtaa Sarvabuuthaanaam*" will be the feeling. They see nothing but love in every being. They see no difference between their "own" people and others. Persons filled with such supreme love will experience bliss.

Those at the second level care only for their own good and the welfare of their own kith and kin, their comfort and happiness. They do not care about others, about their merits or their faults. These people can be termed as *madhyama*, or middle level persons.

Lowest level of love to be avoided

There are others who don't feel happy if they see others happy; in fact they grow jealous of others' happiness. They will always be looking for faults in others and criticising them. They cannot tolerate other people being happy. Thereby they ruin all aspects of love in themselves. Just as a crow feels jealous when a cuckoo sings well, these people feel jealous at others' attainments. Just as the crow ridicules the swan, these people ridicule good people. They are in the lowest level of love (*adhama*).

Although love is present in all these three, they enjoy, experience and use this love in different ways. In every tree of life, love is present in the form of sweet juice in its fruit. But this is covered by a skin called desire. Hence we are not aware of the sweet juice in the fruit. Only those persons who remove the skin of desire and throw away the hard seeds of anger and jealousy, can enjoy the sweet juice of the fruit of Love. When one throws away seeds of likes and dislikes and removes the skin of desire, he can enjoy *Parama Prema*---Divine Love, which is *Rasa Swaruupa* (sweetness personified).

The *Upanishads* say that this *Rasa* (tasty juice) is *Brahmam*. With a view to experiencing this Bliss, they prescribe nine types of Devotion. *Bhakthi* is described in common parlance in many ways, but the *Vedhas* say that there are three types of *Bhakthi*: *Bhouthika*, *Ekaantha* and *Ananya Bhakthi*. These have been described in different ways and various commentaries also have been written about them.

Shravana (listening), *manana* (digesting what was learnt) and *nidhidhyaasana* (practising what was preached and learnt), the rituals connected with *yajna*, the visiting of various *kshetras* (places) of pilgrimage, and various types of service such as charity (*dhaana* and *dharma*) are all classified as *Bhouthika Bhakthi* (devotion related to created or living beings). *Japa*, *thapas* and *sandhya* rites are all connected with this first type of *Bhakthi*. Constructing temples, consecrating idols, worshipping in temples and rituals connected with these are also *Bhouthika Bhakthi*. These are all connected with the '*jada*' (the physical).

The second step in the path of devotion

Even though one may be immersed in meditation and experiencing visions of such idols, these have to be classified under this first type since all these experiences arise out of the body, mind and intellect, which are transient and not of a permanent nature. This body has to perish and hence experiences arising out of this body will also disappear with the body. Nevertheless, this type of *Bhakthi* is necessary as the first step.

Travelling on this path, we should slowly march to the second step of *Ekaantha Bhakthi*. Many people think that *Ekaantha Bhakthi* means dedication to one idol or form and experiencing mental vision of that one Form, exclusively in privacy. This is not correct. *Ekaantha Bhakthi* is a subtle state achieved by effective control of the mind and experiencing one's inner self (*Antharaathma*). It is not correct to think that control of the mind means holding it steady without wandering around. To be able to cleanse the mind of impure thoughts is the correct meaning of '*Ekaantha*.' This is a *saadhana* (spiritual discipline) to be practised in a lonely atmosphere, in a quiet place free from noise or disturbance of any kind.

The best time for this practice is from 3.00 A.M. to 5.00 A.M. which is called *Brahmamuhurtha*. Selecting a particular time in this period, closing the door, contacting no one else, one should sit quietly and adjust the rate of inhaling and exhaling of breath. It is important that the pace of inhaling and exhaling must be the same. By gradual practice, the number of breaths per minute must be reduced from eight or ten a minute to two or one. You can take your own time; proceed gradually in the process of reduction of the number of times of inhaling and exhaling. Because of the flow of thoughts in the mind (*Sankalpa* and *Vikalpa*---mental resolves and doubts), the breathing also gets affected and disturbed.

Importance of purity and steadiness of mind

To control the breath in this manner and direct it in the proper path, there is a very effective method that can be followed. The tip of the tongue must gently touch the rear of the teeth. When it is kept in this position, the thoughts in the mind become less and one can concentrate on the control of the breath. When you control the *sankalpa* and *vikalpa* of the mind and detach yourself from thoughts of the body and things around you, you come to the stage when the mind is without thoughts and desires, when it can concentrate on God.

In the state of *Ekaantha Bhakthi*, the mind is dissolved and is in a still stage. God is everywhere in everyone; when the mind is rid of all impurities, God's presence alone is experienced by people with *Ekaantha Bhakthi*. If you take a small tumbler with very little water and place it before the sun, you can see the reflection of the sun in the water. Though the quantity of water is very little, because it is steady and clear, you can see the reflection. On the other hand, if you try to look into the vast expanse of water in the sea nearby, you don't see the reflection because the water is always moving as tides and waves. Nor can you see the reflection of the sun in a well where the water is muddy.

Even in the sacred river Ganges, you can't see the reflection of the sun because it is ever flowing, though the water may be pure and the bed sandy. Similarly, God will not be reflected in a mind full of likes and dislikes and desires or a mind that is disturbed with impure thoughts. If you want to realise the presence of God in the beings, you must recognise the importance of purity and steadiness of mind. When the mind is pure and steady Divinity will be resplendent everywhere.

The march to the final stage of devotion

To experience Divinity in this way *Ekaantha Bhakthi* alone will help you. On any other path you may experience visions of different types. These are nothing but hallucinations and products of imagination. Without virtuous qualities, you cannot control your mind. How can you build a house without brick and mortar? To achieve purity and steadiness of mind, earnest practice is essential. *Ekaantha Bhakthi* is not obtained by locking yourself in a room and worshipping an idol with devotion. This can only be called *Ekaaki Bhakthi*; after all, the idol is only a created object. You should experience your *Aathma Swaruupa* and not a created object. You should have a vision of the Primordial Divinity, whose reflection is your *Aathma*. Worshipping an idol is necessary as a first step. But do not devote all your lifetime on the first step!

By continuous training and practise of *Ekaantha Bhakthi*, you will be able to know the '*Aathma*' within yourself. The *Aathma* is in you. You can't see it because of impurity and waves of likes and dislikes hovering round. When you remove these impurities, the mind rests in a pure state. At that stage, if you turn your eye inward you will have the vision of Divinity, the '*Saakshaathkaara*'. This is the *Ekaantha Bhakthi* we read about in books. *Ekaantha Bhakthi* is realised only when you turn the vision inward, away from sensory objects and experience the pure *Aathma*. *Ekaantha Bhakthi* is *anthar dhrishti* or inner vision, while *Bhouthika Bhakthi* is *bahir dhrishti* or outer vision.

After earning *Bhouthika Bhakthi* and *Ekaantha Bhakthi*, *Ananya Bhakthi* will be easy to attain. We have a feeling that *Ananya Bhakthi* consists in surrendering to God, saying: "I have no saviour other than you." We think that simply by declaring "You are mother, You are father, You are friend and You are my saviour, Oh God of Gods," we have surrendered and are practising *Ananya Bhakthi*. This is only *oral Ananya Bhakthi*. *Real Ananya Bhakthi* comes from deep inquiry into the reality of the inner Self.

If lost in doubt one cannot achieve success

The experience you have in the waking state and the things you see in the dream and deep sleep states are found to be illusory and transitory when you inquire into them deeply. After such inquiry, the *Ananya Bhakthi* will come to the conclusion that in all the three states whatever one sees is illusory. He will find that the 'I' which is present in all the three states, is only *the Aathma* and that there is no difference between *this Aathma* and the *Paramaathma*. If the thought of the

body is not there, duality too will not be there. Where there is no thought of a second one, it is *Ananya*. To reach this state of *Ananya*, you have to go through the stage of *Ekaantha Bhakthi*.

You saw in the drama presented by the Baala Vikaas children yesterday how a *Pandith* was describing Krishna, and the jewels that he was wearing and the flute he was playing on. A thief who listened to this was intent on reaping a rich harvest by robbing the boy of the jewels and asked for his address. The *Pandith* gave him the details of the place on the bank of the Jamuna, with all its scenic beauty. He gave this information only from his book-knowledge. The thief, believed him and went to the address and saw Krishna. He accosted him and got the jewels from him.

Do everything with the awareness of God

The Pandith could not see Krishna, while the thief could see Krishna, because the *Pandith* had only book-knowledge and no real belief. '*Panda*' means *viveka* or discrimination. One who has *viveka* is *Panditha*. This *viveka* is of two types' One is worldly or *Bhouthika*, and the other is spiritual or *Adhyaathmika*. The former can be understood by experiments and instruments, but in the *Adhyaathmic* sphere such *viveka* will not work. One should have faith and love. Without faith or pure love, whatever arguments you may enter into, whatever inquiry you make, will yield no results. If lost in doubt one can never achieve success even in many lives. *Ananya Bhakthi* can be described as 'un-questioning faith.'

King Pareekshith had to lay down his life within seven days. At this stage, Shuka, the great *rishi*, came to teach him about God. Shuka had no attachment to the world. When such a great sage described the devotion of the *gopees* as the highest state of *bhakthi*, you can realise how great 'was their devotion. It was *Ananya Bhakthi* in the highest sense. Pareekshith questioned Shuka *Maharishi*, how the *gopees* got *Ananya Bhakthi* and experienced divinity. Shuka put a counter question to Pareekshith, whether he thought Krishna was a cowherd; if so, there was no use teaching him. He said that he was teaching *Vedhaantha* and *Bhaagavatha* only to one who had full faith in God. Only those who are eager to learn, who have the faith that the teaching should be learnt and are having the *shraddha* to experience divinity, can be taught.

Members of the Sathya Sai Organisations should attempt to follow the right path and raise their own spiritual effort to the level of *Ananya Bhakthi*. The world today is in a very bad state. The situation can improve, only through *Aasthikas* who are believers in divinity. They should become *Premaswaruupas* or embodiments of Love, and by their *saadhana*, backed by patience, forbearance and compassion, play their role in serving society and contributing to the betterment of the world. God is present in you and is viewing with thousands of eyes what you do. Even if no one is seeing, God is always watching your actions. Do everything with this awareness.

Madras, 23-1-1982.

*In what is created,
there is always the principle of Dualism.
There is difference and disparity
between one and another.
If these differences and disparities*

*are harmonised wisely, the world will have
happiness and peace.*

*If, on the other hand, living beings behave wrongly,
the world will be sunk in anxiety, misery and confusion.*

Sathya Sai Baaba