

32. Devotion and Divine Grace

EVERY second is a new moment in your life. Do not wait for a whole year to celebrate the new year and make new year resolutions. Utilise every second to purify your heart and fill it with love. You will then realise that God is yours and you are with love.

True devotion is the means to realise the Divine. Devotion means love of God without any desire for reward. Such devotion can be developed only through good conduct. There can be no devotion without righteousness. Purity of mind is an essential for enjoying Divine Bliss as purity of body is essential for bodily health.

Higher than all the knowledge that can be acquired in the world is the *Aathmajnaana* (knowledge of the Self). There is nothing equal to the bliss that comes from Self-realisation. It is attained only when the ego-sense is destroyed and there is prayerful submission to the Divine. Prayers must issue not from the lips but from the heart. Prayers from the lips are like a telephone number call. They will not reach the person you want. Prayers from the heart are like a "particular person call." They will go straight to God.

Prayers, again, are used for seeking fulfilment of material desires. Out of the millions who offer prayers, very few seek God Himself with pure hearts. The happiness derived from material benefits is lost when these are lost. Life is a constant succession of happiness and sorrow. To be free from these opposites one has to cultivate detachment. This detachment is *Vairaagya*.

Relationship between nature, man and God

In a life filled with desires, the pleasures one seeks are inevitably followed by grief and disappointments. All unrighteous actions lead to sorrow. It was for this reason that Buddha emphasised the need for discrimination. The, first prayer, "*Buddham Sharanam Gachchaami*" is a call for cultivating wisdom and discrimination, the *Buddhi* (intellect). But unless the power of discrimination is Used for doing fight action for the good of society it is of no use. Hence the second prayer, "*Sangham Sharanam Gachchaami*" (I surrender myself to society). What is this right action that must be done? That is indicated by the third prayer: "*Dharmam Sharanam Gachchaami*" (I take refuge in Dharma). To reach your goal, **the royal road** is Dharma (righteousness). It is only when these three are combined--Wisdom, social service and righteousness that there is fulfilment in life.

Everyone should realise the integral relationship between Nature, Man and God. They are inextricably interrelated. Take a simple example. Here is a tumbler. It contains water. It is on the table. The tumbler has been placed for the sake of the water. If one does not need water, there will be no need for the tumbler. If there is no table, the tumbler cannot be placed on it. You may ask the questions: Is the table important, or the tumbler, or the water in it? Water is important. The water needs the tumbler as a container. Nature is like the table. The *Jeevi* (individual) is the tumbler. The Divine exists in the form of *Naara* (water). There is no use for the tumbler unless there is water.

"*Naara*" is the water that cools the heat generated by the agitations arising from the body, the mind and the life-spirit (the *Adhibhouthika*, *Adhyaathmika* *Adhidhai-vatha* factors). This *Nara* (human) is Naaraayana---the Supreme Universal Consciousness. Naaraayana is' present in every, one. If man did not have the cooling power of the Divine, he would not be able to bear the heat generated by the body, the mind and the vital air.

How far is the Divine?

Where is Divine? The *shaasthras* (revealed ancient scriptures) say the Divine is twenty feet away from the *Brahmachari* (the bachelor). The reason is a youth suffering from the fever of adolescence cannot perceive the Divine. He relies on his mental abilities and the ; power of his muscles and heart. He has no faith in the power of *Dharma* or God. Hence, one who is remote from *Dharma* is also distant from God.

For a *Sanyaasi* (the ascetic), God is said to be three feet away. Wearing the yellow robe and having a shaven head cannot make a man a genuine ascetic. He must have renounced all bodily attachments and all material desires. Although he may have renounced many things, because the *sanyaasi* (renunciant) has still some delusions regarding the body, God is said to be three feet away from him.

Only in the case of the *Grihastha* (householder) is God said to be residing in his heart. But even if God dwells in his heart, till the *Grihastha* sheds vices like greed, hatred and envy, the Divine will not be visible to him. Attachment and ego will make him blindfolded.

To secure the grace of the Divine, it is not necessary to seek knowledge, wealth, power or position. Purity of mind alone is enough. Every cell of one's body will be filled with the Divine when God is worshipped with pure and .single-minded devotion. To the self-sacrificing devotee, the Divine will be Omnipresent.

Devotion has been reduced to a pompous show

The Lord is ever ready to answer the prayers of the devotees. But what passes for "devotion" nowadays is only "deep ocean" (submergence in the ocean of worldly life). People talk about the "*Divine*," but are interested only in "deep wine." They talk of "compassion," but are concerned only with "fashion." They mouth the word "Co-operation," but indulge only in "operation." Devotion has been reduced to a pompous show.

True knowledge can come only when one is confronted with an extreme moral crisis. This was the situation Arjuna faced when he was placed between the two opposing armies. Pareekshith faced a similar crisis when he learnt he had only one week to live. It is at times of such crisis that one thinks of God and seeks Divine help.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 31 December 1983