

10. Who is the greatest?

DURING a visit to Ooty in April 1984, Bhagavaan related the following story about Sage Naaradha's encounter with Lord Naaraayana, to the small group of devotees accompanying him:

On one occasion Naaradha went to the Lord. In the course of their conversation, Naaraayana asked Naaradha: "You are moving around three worlds, what news have you brought for Me from your wanderings? Have you seen anything great in my creation?" "What is greater than Yourself in the world", said Naaradha. "I am asking you about my creation and not about myself", said Naaraayana.

Naaradha said: "I do not understand the question." "There *are the Panchabhoothas* (five basic elements). Which is the greatest among them?" Naaraayana asked. Naaradha said: "The earth is the biggest." Naaraayana said: "In the earth three-fourths are occupied by water."

Naaradha agreed that water is greater than the earth. But Naaraayana observed: "All the oceans were drunk by the sage Agasthya in one gulp. Therefore, who is greater, water or Agasthya?" Naaradha agreed that Agasthya was greater. But Naaraayana observed that "Agasthya is remaining as a star in the sky. In the vast firmament, Agasthya is merely twinkling as a small star; is not the firmament greater than the star?" Naaradha said that the firmament is greater than Agasthya. Then Naaraayana said, In my *Avathaar* as Vaamana I covered the entire earth and sky with one foot of mine. So is the firmament greater or my foot? Then Naaradha said: 'Your Foot'.

Lord's Devotees are greater than the Lord

"If my foot itself is so great, am I not greater than my foot?" Naaraayana asked. Naaradha agreed. Then Naaraayana said: "Although I am great, I am confined in the hearts of my devotees. So the devotees are greater than myself. And therefore, wherever my devotees sing my name I am there".

Hence, everyone must cultivate a broad mind, a large-hearted outlook. Broad mindedness is expansion, narrow-mindedness is contraction. Devotees should also cultivate broad mindedness. It is to broaden the heart that name of the Lord should be chanted. Instead of singing by oneself, when devotees sing in groups, a sense of unity develops. By all people singing in unison and all hands clapping together, all hearts become one. This unity is proclaimed by the *Vedhas* by describing the different organs of the Lord as the source of the power in the different sense organs of a human being.

(On another evening at Ooty, Bhagavaan expatiated on how devotional songs should be sung).

Naaradha once asked Sriman Naaraayana what was His permanent address. Naaraayana replied: "Wherever my Bhaktha (devotee) sings my name, I am present there". Then Naaradha asked: "There are innumerable places in which the devotees sing your name, how can you be present in all those places at the same time?" (*Bhagavan explained that it was not any kind of singing that appealed to the Lord*). In singing there are some who indulge in gymnastics and do not reveal genuine devotional feeling. When songs are sung in that manner, how can the Lord be present there.?" (*Bhagavan illustrated it by reciting merely the musical notation Sa, Ri, Ga*).

Devotional singing which attracts the Lord

When the singers merely emphasise the *Raaga* and the *Thaala* (tune and rhythm), He will not be present. It is only when the song is melodious combining *Raaga*, *Thaala* and *Bhaava* (the tune, the rhythm and the feeling) only there will He be present. The singing must be full of feeling. The Lord is moved only by the feeling that is expressed, not by musical talent as such. It does not matter if the *raaga* is not perfect and the *thaala* is not perfect. Those appeal only at the worldly level. The Lord loves only the sincerity of feeling.

There was a great musician in Akbar's Court known as Thansen. He used to sing night and day and the music was mellifluous. It was perfect music but there was no deep feeling in his singing.

One day Akbar and Thansen were going round the city. Akbar found an old man singing to himself songs in praise of God. Akbar stopped his chariot and went on listening to the song of the devotee and even without his knowing it, tears started flowing from his eyes. His

heart was deeply moved. He went some distance and told Thansen: "You have been singing for a long time before me and I have always found your music very sweet to the ears but it has never moved my heart, but the music of this devotee has melted my heart. I wish to know the difference between your singing and the singing of this devotee!" Thansen replied: "Mahaaraaja! I have been singing to please you, but this devotee is singing to please God, that is the difference."

So something which is sung to please a man cannot move the heart. Only that which is addressed to God can have that effect. What pleases the Lord alone can change the mind of man. Both the devotee and the great musician Thansen were singing well, but only the song filled with devotional feeling could appeal to God.

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The age span, 16-30 years, is crucial, for that is the period when life adds sweetness to itself, when talents, skills, and attitudes are accumulated, sublimated and sanctified. If the tonic of unselfish Seva (selfless service) is administered to the mind during this period, life's mission is fulfilled--for the process of sublimation and sanctification will be hastened by this tonic.

Sri Sathya Sai