

16. Near and Dear

THE Lord has revealed to Arjuna, and thereby to all mankind, that He is pleased by the devotion offered by aspirants for Grace. "*Bhakthimaan me priyo narah*" (The man so devoted is dear to me Gita XII 19), He declares. The devotee offers prayer, worship and his thought, words and acts to God whom he clothes with a Form and Name and attributes like Love, Compassion, Wisdom and Power. Most devotees seek health, wealth, power and fame from God, which are all trivial assets yielding momentary pleasure. Divine Grace can confer the most precious gift of His Love. Man may assert with the pride of achievement that he loves God. That takes him only half-way through. He does not gain much there-form. Does God respond *with me priyo narah*, (he is dear to me)? Only then can man claim to have achieved Grace.

How can man become 'dear' to God? The Gita emphasises two qualifications: *Samthushtah Sathatham* (ever contented) and *Dhruda nischayah* (with firm resolve). He has to be contented and cheerful always, without regard for the changing tides of fortune. It should not be a pose, a passing phase, an artificial, superficial show. The prefix *sam* indicates that the *thushti* (contentment) has to be deeply rooted in the heart manifested in and through every thought and act. The other word for contentment is *thrupthi*; the all-pervading never changing form of *thrupthi* is also denoted by the prefix *sam*, which changes it into *samthrupthi*.

Equanimity is the sign of contentment

Samthushti fills the heart with divine delight. It marks a stage of detachment from the world, for the world makes one swing from pain to pleasure and back again. The devotee therefore must desist from attempts to earn joy or avoid grief. He has to be unconcerned with ups and downs. Success should not boost his ego, nor should defeat land him in dejection. Honours should not turn his head, nor dishonour make it droop. Equanimity, serenity, these are the signs of *Samthushti*. The devotee welcomes gratefully whatever happens to him or is given to him by the Divine Will, to which he has surrendered his own will.

Dhruda Nischayam (firm resolve) is the other requisite. Of course, all men possess this qualification; it is an asset that assures survival, and secures popularity and pre-eminence. Those who climb Himalayan peaks derive the tenacious courage, that sustains them, from the firmness of their resolve not to turn back. Others exhibit their heroism in crossing tumultuous oceans alone. Some others resolve on exploring fearful forests. Firmness of resolution, bravery and skill are utilised even for merciless torture of others to rob them of their riches. Ignoring their inner divinity and setting aside their human-ness, some people descend to demonic levels and become fanatically cruel. We have to conclude that *dhruda nischala* can serve good purposes as well as evil.

Valmiki, when he was Ratnakara, used his courage and adventurousness in vicious and wicked ways. Contact with the Seven Sages and their teachings made him direct the same qualities towards Rama. He was transformed so completely that he became the author of the Ramayana.

The Form and the Formless

Texts on devotion dwell at great length on the worship of the Personal and the Impersonal God, or of the Form-full and the Formless God. This problem too is considered and solved in the Bhagavad Gita. So long as man is afflicted with the delusion that he is the body which contains

him and so long as he is attached to it and attracted by it, he cannot conceive the abstract, impersonal and formless entity.

Nor can man stay without interruption on the Personal as the ultimate basis. He has need for both the Form and the Formless. They are as the two wings for a bird, the two wheels for the cart and the two legs of the human being. Both are valuable and valid for the devoted seeker, though Personal is not as lasting as the Impersonal.

We have now about a thousand in this *Mandir*, with me. When you are back in your own homes and recollect this experience, you reconstruct this situation, this Prasanthi Nilayam, Swami and the thousand. Since this experience was gained in the wakeful stage, you could recall it into the subtle region of your consciousness, the *Chitta Akasa*, whenever and wherever you wish.

Identify the *Kshara* with *Akshara*

In order to make a child understand that the word 'chair' represents that piece of furniture, you have to draw the picture of a chair and write the letters underneath. When once he has learnt to identify the *kshara* (the temporary form, the chair) with the *Akshara* (the formless eternal--the Word), the picture is eliminated; the Word remains. The Word, hence forward, represents the thing, the concrete material visible thing. If no chair existed, the word chair could not have emerged. The word God emerged to indicate an entity that was experienced. A 'nothing', 'non-existing being' needs no name. The name is evidence of the thing. The word God is evidence of the Divine Phenomenon.

The objection may be raised that words like sky-flowers or castles-in-the-air do not denote any concrete tangible reality. But these are not words, they are compounds, artificial strings of words. Consider another example of Form and No-form. Take this pillow. You described it as cotton enclosed in a cloth bag. I disclose that the cloth too is cotton. The shapeless, formless cotton has become yarn and by dealing with the yarn as warp and wool the cloth has put in form for the bag and the pillow.

From the Form .to the Formless, from the Formless to the Form both processes are possible and progressive. The Personal God is an expression, a symbol, a representation of the Impersonal God. The Impersonal does personate and assumes Form and Attributes. This is the very Nature of the Divine.

The devotee must not be agitated by such controversies promoted by people who have no intuitive experience. He must be free from anxiety and fear, pride and envy. He has four enemies intent on ruining him---anger, envy, hatred and the horde of desires. He regards both high and low as roles in the Divine play. When he insults or injures or rejects any one, he is, in fact, inflicting them on the God he adores. He cannot reap the harvest of Grace or the Bliss from the Atma, if he sows spiritual ardour on a heart full of the weeds of greed and hate. The basic moral prescription for the devotee who aspires to be near and dear to the *Avatar* is "Worship God and offer Love to Him in every living being."

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Attitudes of tolerance and reverance can be cultivated only along the spiritual path. That is the one path for attaining peace and

*harmony in this world of ceaseless striving and never-ending
despair.*

BABA