

9. The Lord and the Devotee

MAN always craves for bliss. The first requisite for achieving *Brahmananda* (Supreme Bliss) is a pure heart. Man's heart, which should be white like milk in its purity, is today filled with bad thoughts and feelings. Spiritual *sadhana* begins with the purification of the heart and transforming it into an ocean of milk. When the heart is filled with *satwic* qualities, it becomes like a milky ocean. Only then does it become a worthy dwelling for the Lord (Vishnu) whose abode is described as *Ksheerasagara* (the Ocean of Milk).

By yielding to *Tamasic* and *Rajasic* impulses, man today has turned his heart into *Kshaarasagara* (an ocean of salt). In the saltish ocean, we have sharks

and whales. Likewise, in the heart of the evil-minded, bad qualities like lust, anger, greed and envy flourish. It is folly to give room to such evil forces. They must be removed totally so that the Lord may find His rightful place in a heart that is pure and holy, filled with *Satwic* qualities. Each one should perpetually examine whether good thoughts and impulses are growing in his heart or whether bad thoughts are getting rooted. While doing daily worship, one should invoke the presence of various deities through appropriate *mantras* (holy sound formulae). Simultaneously, one should call upon the demoniac forces to quit the place.

People tend to ignore Internal Purity

Both inner and outer purity are essential for man's physical and mental health. Most people are concerned about external physical cleanliness. People tend to ignore inner cleanliness in the belief that the heart and mind are not visible to others. But they should realise that the physical body is made up of five elements and will return to the dust sometime or other. It is the state of the spirit that is important. Even the body should be regarded as the abode of the Spirit and cared for as such.

To ensure perfect health, it is essential to get rid of internal impurities and take in only wholesome food. Equally for preserving mental health, similar two-fold action is necessary. The ills that afflict the mind have to be got rid of by eliminating bad thoughts and purifying the mind.

Man's destiny is determined by his actions. Through righteous actions, the mind is purified and a pure mind results in an awakening of *jnana* (spiritual wisdom). When you offer worship to God in the morning, you must offer your obeisance to whatever work you propose to do. You must pray to the presiding deity of *Karma*: "Let me do today only pure, purposeful and helpful actions."

The circumstances of one's birth are a result of past actions. *Karma* (action), *Janma* (birth), *Dharma* (righteousness) and the *Marma* (secret of life) are all connected with *Brahman*. They are like the four walls of a building. The first wall is *Karma* (action). One should not act as his fancies dictate. Before doing anything, one should consider whether it is proper or improper. Nothing should be done in haste on the impulse of the moment. Only then will one's actions be *Sathwic* and free from *Rajasic* and *Tamasic* stains.

Do your duty, leave the results to God

Very often people who experience troubles in life complain: "Why is the Lord subjecting me to trials like these?" The truth is, the Lord neither punishes nor rewards anyone. The devotee has only to do his duty and leave the results to God. If the actions are good, the fruits will also be good. If the actions are bad, the results will be equally bad. Hence without

examining the nature of one's actions, there is no meaning in blaming God for what one experiences.

One devotee has said to have exclaimed: "Oh Lord! Among the millions of beings on earth, how will your eyes fall on me? You are not looking at me at all. Won't you see me?" The devotee heard a voice saying: "Oh devotee! You are immersed in so many activities that you have hardly set your eyes upon Me. You have hardly devoted any thought to Me. Who, then, has forgotten whom? Is it you or me?" People are involved in mundane concerns and are deeply immersed in worldly activities. All their thoughts relate to these actions. They worry about some relation or friend in some distant corner of the world, but cannot think of God who is so near to them. And when they are in trouble, they wail: "Oh Lord, hast thou forgotten me?"

God is the dispenser of fruits of actions

It is only when you recognise your own faults that you begin to understand the ways of the Divine. What we witness today is the tendency to forget one's faults and go about blaming God for one's sufferings. Every action, however small or trivial, has its reaction. Nothing happens without a cause. Every object has its reflection. The Lord awards fruits according to one's actions. Good actions earn good returns. Bad actions result in bad consequences. That is why the Lord is described as *Karmaphala pradhaata* (the dispenser of the fruits of action).

When Duryodhana sought to disrobe Draupadi, the consort of Pandavas, she prayed to Krishna in various ways. Although Krishna heard her prayers, he could not respond immediately to her calls for help. The reason is the stem law of Nature. This universal law operates always at all places and at all times. For instance, if a man slips, he falls to the ground. If a stone is thrown up, it comes down. These are the results of the law of gravitation. Whether he is a millionaire or a pauper, if his foot slips, he falls down. That is how the laws of Nature operate, regardless of the persons.

Hearing Draupadi's prayers, Krishna thought for a moment whether she had done any action in the past which entitled her to secure protection in Duryodhana's assembly hall. To merit Divine help one must have offered something or the other to God--a leaf, a flower, or a little sacred water. At the mundane level there is a simple role of give-and-take in daily life.

The Lord responds to spontaneous actions

Krishna remembered something that Draupadi had done years ago. It was on a Sankranti day. Krishna suffered a cut in His little finger while handling sugarcane. Immediately Rukmini sent a maid to fetch bandage cloth. Sathyabhama rushed to bring some cloth to bind the wounded finger. Draupadi who was standing by, without hesitation, tore a piece of cloth of her sari and immediately bandaged Krishna's finger. Although what she gave was only a small bit of her sari, it was a spontaneous act of love and devotion. Krishna decided to make that little piece of cloth an endless sari. He uttered the word "*Akshayam*" (May it be unending). And Draupadi's sari became endless!

You feel happy when someone gives you something. But you don't feel equally happy in giving to others. Men desire the fruits of good actions, but will not do good actions. They wish to be saved from the consequences of evil deeds, but will not refrain from bad actions. As you sow, so shall you reap, is a relentless law. You cannot escape from the consequences of your actions, whether good or bad.

If you wish to enjoy enduring happiness, you have to fill your mind with pure thoughts and entertain fine feelings in your heart. Through good thoughts and good kindly actions, the heart gets pure and holy. In the journey of life, the body is like a cart and the heart is like a horse. Unless you feed the heart well, the journey cannot proceed properly. The heart has to be fed with good fodder in the form of *Satsangam* (good company), *Satpravartana* (good conduct) and good thoughts. And whatever is done should be an offering to God. There is a story to illustrate how God is pleased when actions are done in this spirit.

God accepts anything offered with a pure heart

There was a woman devotee, who was a worshipper of Krishna. Every morning she used to clean the Krishna shrine in her house with cowdung and throw the remnants of the cowdung outside saying "*Krishnarpanam Asthu*" ("Let this be an offering to Krishna"). The priest of the local Krishna temple noticed that every morning, after he had washed and decorated the idol of Krishna with garlands, when he was offering *harathi* (waving of lights) to the deity, a small lump of cowdung used to fall on the face of the idol. He was deeply distressed over this strange phenomenon and told the village elders about it. They also witnessed the phenomenon in the temple and sent a vigilance squad to find out who was throwing cowdung at that time.

In one street a scout found a woman throwing cowdung outside her house, uttering the words, "*Krishnarpanam*." It was found that at the same time she was throwing cowdung, the apparent desecration of the idol by cowdung was taking place in the temple. The Lord is not concerned as to what is offered to Him. He accepts whatever is offered to Him with a pure heart. In His eyes there is nothing good or bad in itself. When the woman devotee offered the cowdung as *Krishnaarpanam* (offering to Krishna), it reached the Krishna idol. The village elders went to the lady and reproached her for her unbecoming conduct in offering cowdung to Krishna. They did not consider how the cowdung thrown outside her house reached the temple. They thought only of the cowdung as such and did not reckon with the power and intensity of the devotion behind the devotees's action.

Ways of devotees cannot be understood by all

The elders summoned the husband and other relations of the old woman to hold an enquiry. The woman pleaded before them: "I am incapable of hurling cowdung on the face of my Krishna. I am ready to lay down my life for Krishna." The elders told her to throw the cowdung and not to utter the words "*Krishnaarpanam Asthu*." At the instance of her husband and other relations, she agreed to this course.

But from that day onwards, the doors in the Krishna temple would not open however much the priest and others tried to open them. The village elders realised that they had done a grievous wrong to a great devotee and pleaded for pardon from her. That moment the temple doors opened.

The ways of devotees can be understood only by devotees. Others cannot understand them. Phenomena such as these are happening all over *Bharat*. It is because of such devotion that *Bharat* has remained a holy land through the ages.

Meera's devotion to Krishna

Meera was a devotee who had completely merged herself in Krishna consciousness. After her marriage, she requested her husband to build a temple for Krishna. The Rana built for her a temple in marble. Meera spent all the time in the temple singing *bhajans* (devotional songs)

oblivious of the outside world. The Rana, who allowed Meera to carry on her worship of Krishna as agreed to by him before the marriage, got vexed with her complete absorption in Krishna and prohibited her from going to the temple and closed its doors to prevent her from going there. Meera felt: "The Rana may bar me from the temple which he has built. But who can bar me from seeking the Krishna who resides in the temple of my heart?"

Meera's thoughts were centred on Krishna installed in Dwaraka. She ran towards Dwaraka through forests and hills, defying storm and rain, singing all the way and calling on "Krishna ! Krishna !" Reaching Dwaraka, she entered the temple but found the doors of the sanctum closed. Despite all her efforts, the doors would not open. She cried out "Oh Krishna ! Do you think with the cymbals in one hand and *tambura* in the other how can I hold your lotus feet ? See, I am throwing them away. I shall not give you up and you cannot get away from me. Abandoning everything, I will cling to your feet." Crying in anguish, Meera knocked her head against the door of the sanctum. That very moment she fell into a swoon. An effluent flame emerged from her body and merged into the Krishna idol.

Few can understand the ways in which devotion manifests itself among the lovers of God. Human relations come and go. But the association with God is eternal.

Offer worship to God wholeheartedly

When one offers everything to God, the Lord submits Himself to the devotee. The old woman who did everything as an offering to Krishna was such a devotee.

The words "*Krishnarpanam*" were on her lips all the time. But they were said with deep and genuine devotion. Merely mechanical repetition of "*Krishnarpanam*" will have no significance. Engaging priests in temples to perform worship by offering money is totally wrong. Such worship is a mercenary exercise and does no good to the persons who get it done. The proper thing is for devotees to offer worship wholeheartedly in their own homes. That will do them real good.

Discourse at Trayee Brindavan on 3-5-1987.

You might have heard people talk of the 'miracles'; of My 'making' this and 'giving' that, of My fulfilling your wants, of My curing your illnesses. Of course I confer on you these boons of health and prosperity; but, only so that you might, with greater enthusiasm and with less interruption, proceed with Spiritual Sadhana.

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