

2. Devotion in action

EVEN though it is said that in *Kali* Age even mere reciting the name of the Lord is enough for realising God, without active service, the Divine *Namasmarana* alone is not enough. Everyone should combine *Namasmarana* with dedicated service to the Divine in one form or another. Hanuman is the Supreme exemplar of devotion based on service.

The Supreme, who is the embodiment of *Ashtaiswarya* (the eight forms of Divine wealth), permeates the cosmos through eight potencies. This vast universe of animate and inanimate objects is called *Viswam*. *Viswam* is the epithet applied to the Divine who enters into every part of the cosmos. "*Viswam Vishnu Swaroopam*" (The cosmos is the manifestation of Vishnu). Vishnu means the One who pervades everything. Vishnu is the Cause, *Viswam* (the cosmos) is the effect. The universe is manifestation of the creator and the creation. It is because the Lord is manifest in the Creator-Creation relationship that we are able to recognise the Divine.

Different forms of manifestations of Divine

In the cosmos, the first manifestation of the Divine is as water. Man cannot live without water. Water is present everywhere, though in some places it will be visible on the surface and below the ground in others. The Divine is protecting all living beings in the form of water. Water is known by another name as *Jivanam* (Life). God is making His presence manifest in the world in the form of water.

The second manifestation is *Agni* (fire). It is on account of fire that everything is illumined and can be perceived. The same fire is present in man as the *jataragni* (digestive fire). It is this fire that enables the conversion of the food one consumes into blood, flesh, bone and other things (seven basic constituents) and sustains the body. Without these seven primary constituents life cannot exist for a moment. For all of them, God in the form of fire is the basis.

The third manifestation is the earth. All living beings flourish on the earth. Birth and death go on the earth. The phenomena of birth, growth and death testify to the manifestation of God in the form of the earth. Man secures all the things needed for living from the earth. Hence the earth must be regarded as a manifestation of God. As God cannot be experienced in any specific form, He must be recognised in manifestations like the earth.

The fourth manifestation is air. Every moment we are engaged in breathing air. We are sustained by the oxygen in the air. Man inhales and exhales air 21,600 times a day in 24 hours. While inhaling, the sound "*So*" is produced. In exhaling, the sound "*Ham*" is produced. Together, they make up the term "*So-ham*", meaning "He is I", proclaiming the inherent divinity of man. God is to be recognised in the process of inhaling and exhaling. That being so, what is the need to go in quest of God elsewhere? When the Divine is within us and present in the form of the *pancha bhutas* (five basic elements), men strive to search for God everywhere else.

The cosmos is rifled with sound vibrations

When the Lord is present everywhere, within and outside you, why go in search of Him anywhere? In this context, the question arises' Is it true that devotees are going in search of God or is God searching for devotees? In my view, it is God who is searching for devotees.

Akasa (space) is the fifth manifestation. The distinctive quality of *Akasa* is *sabda* (sound). The cosmos is filled with sound vibrations. Sound is the means of cognising most things in the world.

The entire cosmos is permeated by sound waves. Creation itself has originated from sound. When man inhales air, it is this sound that emanates from him in the form of *So-Ham--Ham-So*.

Where is this *Akasa*? People imagine it is somewhere high up. Only the clouds are above. Wherever you have sound vibrations, you have *Akasa* (space). When I speak, it is *Akasa*. When you strike this table, you can experience *Akasa*. *Akasa* is present in the clapping of hands during the *bhajan*. *Akasa* is present in the process of breathing. It is because of *Akasa* that living is possible.

The Sun, the Earth and the Moon

The sixth is the Sun. All living beings are able to survive because of the Sun. Birds, beasts, trees and crops, all thrive on the energy got from the Sun. The world will cease to exist without the Sun. Human intelligence is a reflection of the effulgence of the Sun. The enquiring nature of the intellect is derived from the Sun. Without the power of discrimination man will be a moron

The Moon comes seventh. The moon principle confers tranquillity on man. The mind is reflection of the moon. Man's primary goal is to secure peace of mind. The earth came from the Sun and moon from the earth. The Sun, the earth and the moon are forms of the same substance. These three find their expressions in man in the form of mind, intellect and *Vijnana* (*consciousness*).

The eighth element is the authority of the *Veda* (*Veda-pramanam*). The *Vedas* proclaim the eternal Truth. There is the saying: There is no greater *Dharma* than Truth.

God, who is embodiment of Truth, though eternal and formless, manifests Himself in the eight forms in the cosmos. When the Divine is recognised in these forms, man will realise his true nature.

It is naive to try to search for God in any particular place. Man is himself the cause of all his sorrows and difficulties because, forgetting his inherent divinity, he regards the body as real and pursues mundane and physical pleasures. Man forgets that it is the Spirit that activates all his senses. When a fan turns or a bulb burns, it is the current that makes them work. When a car is driven, the engine revolves and the horn works because of the current from the battery. Likewise, for the car of the human body, the eyes are the lights, speech is the horn and all sense organs function because of the current from the *Atma* (the Spirit).

The Atma is the unified form of three constituents: Mind, Intellect and *Samskara* (sacred actions). If anyone is asked, "What is the mind?" the answer comes: "It doesn't matter." When one is asked, "*What* is matter?" the reply is "Don't mind." If people are not concerned to know what is mind and what is matter, what is it that concerns them in this world? Without understanding mind and matter, how can one enquire into anything?

Mind is the cause of bondage

In the life of man, the mind, which is continually engaged in thought, is most important. All sorrows arise because of the failure to understand the workings of the mind. The mind is constantly engaged in thinking. This important function of the mind must be properly understood. The mind is not a mere physical entity. It is not the body but an expression of the enquiring quality of the *Atma* (Spirit). Hence it is that the mind is regarded as the cause of bondage or liberation for man. If the mind is turned towards God, it becomes the means of liberation. When it is turned towards the things of the world, it becomes the means of bondage.

The Godward mind results in detachment. The world-directed mind leads to attachment. Hence, turning the mind towards God must be man's primary aim.

The powers of the mind are indescribable. The speed of thought is greater than that of anything in the world, faster than light or wind. Though endowed with this immense power, it is a pity man considers himself a weakling. There is no connection between the mind and the heart. The heart is doubtless a vital physical organ in the body. It is the supplier of blood to every part of the body. But the mind manifests the *Atmasakti* (power of the Spirit).

Difference between *Medha Sakti* and *Buddhi*

The second constituent is *Buddhi* (intellect). *Buddhi* is generally regarded as the *Medha-sakti* (power of intelligence). This is not correct. It is really the discriminating power of the *Atma*. There is a vital difference between *Medha sakti* (intelligence) and *Buddhi* (the discriminating power). Intelligence exists as a physical entity in man. It is the centre of the nervous system, a kind of control-room for man. But *Buddhi* represents a superior power derived from the Spirit. It is not related to the physical body or to the physical phenomenal world. By its relationship to the *Atma*, it has divine attributes.

The third constituent is *Samskara*. This term is usually defined as "way of life." But it is much more than that. It represents righteous conduct, based on reason and tradition, embodying the mores of the society. Without righteous conduct, man's life is utterly worthless. Righteous conduct must be based on an enquiry into what is transient and what is of enduring value in human existence. The mind and the *Buddhi* have to be utilised for determining what is spiritual and what is non-spiritual. It is only when knowledge of the eternal verities is obtained by such enquiry that one's conduct can be reflected in *Samskara* (righteous behaviour), which is the divinisation of life.

We witness today many attempts at reform of society--political, economic, social, etc. But all these are of no avail, because they are ignoring the essential factor of transforming the mind of man.

Many people complain that their troubles have not ended and God has shown no compassion towards them. They would do well to learn a lesson from an episode in the Ramayana.

After Vibhishana had become friendly with Hanuman, he once asked the latter, "Hanuman! Although you are a monkey, you have been the recipient of the Lord's grace. Although I have been ceaselessly engaged in the contemplation of Rama, how is it I have not secured His grace?" Hanuman replied: "Vibhishana! It is true that you are ceaselessly chanting the name of Rama. But to what extent are you engaged in the service of Rama? By merely contemplating on the name of Rama you cannot get Rama's grace. When your brother Ravana brought away Sitadevi, what is the help you rendered to her? Did you do anything to relieve even partially Rama's distress?"

Practice should follow the precepts

Devotees should realise that by merely uttering "Rama! Rama!" you cannot ensure the Lord's grace. To what extent are you carrying out the injunctions of Rama, Krishna or Baba? How far are you practising the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* ? Without practising the precepts, no amount of repetition of the name of the Lord is of any use. It is merely like playing a gramophone record. The Lord's name must get implanted in your heart.

Today, on *account* of the special prerogative of the *Kali* Age, people think that it is enough to recite the Lord's name alone for achieving the goal of life. But this is mistake. Can you have the current merely by having the negative wire? Only when the negative and positive lines are combined will the current flow. Devotion must find expression in dedicated service to the Lord.

Chant God's name and perform sacred acts

Embodiments of love! When you recite the name of the Lord with love, when you carry out with your limbs the injunctions of the Lord, and look upon the world as a manifestation of the Divine, you are bound to receive the grace of the Lord. Have this firm conviction. Do not labour under the misconception that mere chant of God's name alone is necessary and adequate. Along with it you have to take part in sacred activities. You must not mind whatever obstacles you may encounter. This is the lesson which Hanuman conveyed when he overcame everyone of the obstacles he met with when he set out on the search for Sita. Hanuman stands out as a supreme example of dedicated and determined service to the Divine.

Devote everyday at least five minutes for reciting the Lord's name and a few minutes for rendering some kind of service to the needy and the forlorn. Include in your daily prayers a prayer for the welfare of all people in the world. Do not be engrossed in your own well-being and salvation. Try to lead a life free from ill-will and harm to others. Regard this as a type of spiritual discipline and redeem your lives.

Discourse on 8-2-1990, at Abbotsbury, Madras.