

31. The Devotee dear to the Lord

Proclaim with raised hands that caste and credal

divisions should go;

Speak out repeatedly that service to the weak is

Divine;

Meditation on the Lord's name will lead man to

the Lord's abode

And confer immortality on him.

Declare that all men of devotion and faith are

your kith and kin.

Those who teach this wisdom to the people are

dearest to the Lord.

Getting rid of feelings of differences, if you live

in love and harmony,

That alone will delight Sai.

What more can I tell you, Oh good people, assembled here?

Anapeksha Suchir-daksha Udaasino gathavyathah

Sarvaarambha Parithyaagi Yo madbhaktah sa me priyah

"THAT devotee of mine, who expecting nothing, is pure, dexterous, unconcerned, free from distress and renounces all undertakings, is dear to Me." (Bhagavan began His discourse with this sloka from the twelfth canto of the *Bhagavad Gita*).

The first quality figuring in this sloka is *Anapeksha*. This term means, "to be free from any kind of *Apeksha* (expectation or desire)." Can a man having a body, mind and intellect be free from desires at all? It is impossible. But such a state can be realised by an effort of will.

Preya and sreya margas

There are many in the world who seek sensuous pleasures from moment to moment. Most people crave for such pleasures. This method is described in the Gita as *Preyo-Marga* (the pleasure seeking path). As against this, there is another path, which confers the experience of Self-realisation and which transcends the senses. This is called *Sreyo-Marga* (the superior righteous path). This path is not easily intelligible to all. It is not also accessible to all. Consequently the general mass do not favour this path.

In the world, there is on the one side the attraction of the *Preyo-Marga* and on the other, the *Sreyo-Marga*. However, those who seek the pleasures of the senses take to the *Preyo-Marga*. Only *the Jnanis* (the spiritually wise persons), who are indifferent to the fleeting mundane

pleasures derived from the senses, and who are austere and pure-hearted, pursue the *Sreyo-Marga*.

There is another path, which transcends the path of *preyas* (pleasure) and *sreyas* (virtue). These two paths encompass all the possible desires of human beings. *Anapeksha* goes beyond both of them. *Anapeksha* is described as being free from desires. But this is not wholly correct. It is when a man gives up the feeling, in the performance of all actions, that "I am the doer" (the sense of ego), "I am the experiencer," (the sense of fulfilment of desire) that true *Anapeksha* emerges. This means that conceit of doership and the sense of enjoyment of desired things should be wholly renounced. This is the true state of *Anapeksha* (desirelessness).

It is only when all actions are done as an offering to God that *Anapeksha* prevails. When such a feeling fills the heart of the devotee, the Divine confers beatitude on him. Such a devotee is dear to the Lord. If you want to earn the love of the Lord, you have to render service to anyone, anywhere, as an offering to the Lord.

Purity of heart is required for a good devotee

The second quality is *Suchi* (Purity). There should be both inner and outer purity. Bodily purity relates to the physical. It covers such cleansing acts as bathing, wearing clean clothes, eating pure food and the like. Even in studies, the books should be wholesome and elevating. But mere external cleanliness without internal purity is of no value. Everyone, from the scholar to the common man, is concerned only about external cleanliness and not about the purity of the heart within. However pure the ingredients may be, if the vessel in which they are cooked is not clean, the food will be spoiled. For a man, his heart is the vessel, and he must see that it is kept pure and untainted. For the purification of the heart, everyone must undertake selfless service. Attachments and aversions, which pollute the mind, should be eschewed by concentrating on *Seva*. It is only when the heart is pure that selfless service can be performed. Hence both bodily and mental purity are essential for a good devotee.

The third quality is *Daksha*. This means that everyone should regard his life as a form of penance. Everyone must have a *Daksha* (firm resolution) that as long as life lasts he will dedicate himself to the service of his fellowmen. Thereby he will realise his oneness with all mankind. Such a feeling of unity will lead to God-realisation. Service is the only way to get rid of selfishness and self-centredness. A devotee who has resolved upon such service is dear to the Lord.

Do not be swayed by fears or threats

The fourth quality is *Udaaseenah*. This means indifference towards sorrow and joy, loss or gain, honour or dishonour. You must be concerned only to see whether your actions are pure and selfless according to your conscience. Nothing else matters, neither the praise nor the blame of other people. When your conscience tells you that what you are doing is good, you may go ahead regardless of the opinion of others, whether they are your kinsmen, friends or others. This is the true meaning of *Udaaseena* (indifference).

You should not be swayed by fears or threats. In this context, it is advisable for *sevaks* to keep away from politics. Sometimes, out of a desire for recognition or publicity, one may be tempted to cultivate men in power. This temptation corrupts your mind. By developing the *Udaaseenatha* (spirit of indifference) in its best sense, you must seek to serve all with a feeling of love.

"Indifference" should not assume the form of arrogance or ostentatious condescension. Adhere to what is right and turn away from what is bad. That is the highest *Udaaseenatha*.

The past and the future are in the present

The next quality is *Gathavyathah* (free from worry). This means that there should be no worry regarding what is past. A man with worries can never accomplish anything. One should not worry about what is past or what is in the womb of the future. It is such worry that is the cause of all of man's troubles. There is no meaning in worrying about the unknown future. Keeping the present in view, men should engage themselves in right actions. The past and the future are in the present. Devotees who do their duty in the present are dear to the Lord.

The sixth quality is *Sarvaarambha Parithyaagi* (renunciation of all undertakings). This means that there should be no ostentation or showing off in any undertaking by a devotee. Unless ostentation is given up, egoism will not go. The ego must be eliminated for purifying the heart. No good deed can be done without purity in the heart. It is through sacred deeds that the heart is purified.

Ostentation is a demonic quality. It encourages egoism and megalomania. One should seek to acquire a good name through selfless service alone. It should be done with humility and sincerity. One who aspires to become a national leader must first know how to render service. He should not seek office or position. The Sai organizations have been set up for rendering service and not to establish official positions. *Seva* should be done out of a sense of duty.

Men are born to serve, not to dominate

Seva brings out all that is great in man. It broadens the heart and widens one's vision. It fills one with joy. It promotes unity. It proclaims the truth of the Spirit. It drives out all the evil qualities in a man. It must be regarded as a great spiritual discipline. You are born to serve, not to dominate. Everyone in the world is a servant and not a master. All relationships--husband and wife, mother and child, the employer and employee are based on mutual service. The world is progressing because of such mutual service. If the principle of service did not operate, the world would come to a halt.

Do you regard an "officer" as a superior? It is not so. Even he is a servant. It is only when man is filled with the spirit of service that his divine nature is revealed. He then experiences the peace that passeth understanding.

What is the reason for the lack of peace in the world today? It is because there is no harmony in thought, word and deed in the lives of the people. Peace must begin in the family, in the home. When there is understanding and harmony in the family, peace will spread to the community and from there to the nation and the world. Hence unity is the primary need today. Unity confers joy and peace.

Transformation must begin with the individual. When the individual changes, the world will change. This transformation has to take place in the minds of men. Right thoughts will lead to right actions. That is why the scriptures have declared that the mind is the cause of man's bondage or liberation.

Discourse to the Fifth World Conference of Sathya Sai Seva Organizations on 20-11-1990 at the Hill View Stadium.

Temples are intended to instruct men in the art of removing the veil of attachment that lies over their heart. That is the reason why Thyagaraja cried in the temple at Tirupathi, "Remove the veil within me, the veil of pride and hate." The fog of Maya melted away before the rays of Grace and so, he could discern and describe the image of Divine Charm in the song: "Sivudano Madhavudano" and drink deep the sweetness of that Form. The churning of his heart by the Divine Formula produced the spark of Jnana, and it grew into the Flame of Realisation.

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