

23. Krishna : incarnation of love

*Love is God; the Cosmos is permeated with Love.
Assuming the Love form, to save His beloved ones,
Showering the nectarine stream of Love,
Krishna came as the embodiment of Love for those yearning for
Him.
Everything is born out of pure Love;
All joy is derived from unalloyed Love;
So are Truth, Sacrifice, Peace and Forbearance
If Love is lacking, there can be no contentment.
This is the path of Sai and the word of Truth.*

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! Anuraaga (affection) and Prema (Love) are mutually dependent and inseparable. When the mind is turned towards things of the world, it is called Anuraaga (affection or attachment) and if it is turned towards God, it is called Prema (Love or devotion). Love is the fruit of love. Love is comparable only with love. Love can offer only love itself. Love cannot be described by poetry. It cannot be proved by the mind or the spoken word. Hence, the Vedas declared that it transcends the mind and speech. Love is priceless and indescribably precious. Its sweetness is unexcelled. The scriptures have described Amrit (nectar) as indescribably sweet. But Love is far sweeter than nectar.

Love can be got only through love

Love is a precious diamond which can be got only in the realm of love and nowhere else. The kingdom of Love is located in the heart, in a heart filled with love. Love can be experienced only in a mind flowing with love and a heart filled with love. The precious diamond of Love cannot be got through *japa* or meditation, through prescribed rituals or various sacred acts. These can only give mental satisfaction.

Love can be got only through love. The different paths of *devotion--santhi* (peace), *sakhya* (friendship), *vaatsalya* (material love), *Anuraaga* (affection) and *Madhura marga* (sweetness)--are all based on love. The essence of all spiritual disciplines is contained in love.

The greater a man's love for God, the greater the bliss which he experiences. When love declines in man, his joy also declines equally. The lover of God sees God everywhere. Hence man's heart must be filled with the love of God.

Love will not enter the heart of one who is filled with selfishness and self-conceit. Therefore, man should forget his petty self and concentrate his thoughts on God. Love of God makes a man oblivious to his own existence. Love becomes a form of intoxication. Love makes the devotee and God dance in ecstasy and becomes one with them. It induces self-forgetfulness. It generates an ecstasy in which everything is forgotten.

Love cannot bear separation from the beloved. Today is the day when we celebrate the advent in human form of the Lord who came down to the earth from *Gokula* to instil love in human beings.

The nature of divine love can be understood only when the Divine in human form teaches as man to man the nature of this love.

Love transforms man's animal nature

In ancient times, the sages performed rigorous penance in the forests, living among wild animals. With no weapons in their hands, they relied on their spirit of love to protect them. They performed their penance with love for all beings. Their love transformed even the wild animals which lived at peace with the sages. Love transformed even tigers into friendly beasts.

Today because men have lost the feeling of love and are filled with selfishness and greed, they have become "tigers" (man-eaters). You read in the papers about the death of "Tigers" in Sri Lanka. Who are these "Tigers"? They are men who have turned into "Tigers."

Today men are becoming man-eaters. In ancient times, tigers turned into creatures with love.

It is to transform man's nature from the animal to the human that love has been serving as a powerful force. The hearts of men in the olden days were soft and loving. Although love inherently is soft and compassionate, in certain situations it assumes a stern form. This is because, even out of love one has sometimes to use punishment. The harsh words and the punishment are associated with love. When it rains, it is a downpour of drops of water. But sometimes the rain is accompanied by hailstones. The hailstones are hard, but they are only water in a condensed form. Likewise, softness or punishment are different expressions of love.

Sometimes, even devotees use harsh words about the Divine. Kamsa, who regarded Balarama and Krishna as his mortal enemies, wanted by some means or other to get rid of them. Despite all his stratagems, Kamsa could not get hold of them. On the pretext of performing a sacrifice, he sent Akrura to bring Balarama and Krishna to Mathura. Akrura was a kind hearted man, full of devotion to the Lord. Although he did not relish the prospect of going to Balarama and Krishna to bring them to Mathura, he could not disobey his master's orders. He reached Repalle and conveyed to Devaki and Vasudeva and Yasoda and Nanda, Kamsa's invitation to Balarama and Krishna and asked them to arrange for sending the two lads with him.

Gopikas' appeal to Krishna not to leave them

The gopikas got wind of this and immediately rushed to Yasoda's house and asked: "Who is this *Krura* (cruel fellow) who has come here? He has been named Akrura (a man without cruelty) by mistake, Are Balarama and Krishna to be entrusted to such a cruel person?" They decided to ignore Akrura and appeal directly to Balarama and Krishna not to go with Akrura.

However, the main purpose of Balarama's and Krishna's advent was to destroy Kamsa. This task had to be accomplished. Therefore, they could not agree to the *gopikas'* appeal. They got into Akrura's chariot. All the *gopikas* surrounded the chariot. "Krishna will not give ear to our prayers not to go," they felt. So, they decided to appeal to him with all humility and intense love.

Sobbing and praying from the depths of their hearts, they said: "We cannot bear separation from you even for a moment. Is it right for you to leave us like this? Is it a game of yours? Take pity on us, oh Lord! What is this farce of a *yaga*! It is Kamsa's *roga* (disease). Our sole prayer is this. Take us also with you, who have placed all our faith in you." (Swami sang the song of the *gopikas*). They prayed to Krishna, "Take pity on us, Lord!" Even as they were praying in this fashion, the chariot disappeared from the place by the *Maya* of the Lord.

Devotional love of *gopikas* is boundless

The hearts of the, *gopikas* were filled with love. Hence they saw only love everywhere. They felt that everything was throbbing with life and love. They ran to Brindavan, went to every plant and bush and flower and entreated them to tell whether Krishna was anywhere hiding amongst them, describing the beautiful features of Krishna. (Swami sang the song in which the *gopikas* described Krishna).

For those immersed in love, everything appears *vibrant*, with life. The power of love. is boundless. The love-impulse is manifested in different, persons in different ways. Supreme devotees like the *gopikas* considered Sri Krishna as the very breath of their life and worshipped him. "You are everything for us," they declared.

Maternal love differs from devotional love

On the other hand, Yasoda's love for Krishna was that of the mother towards her child. After Krishna's departure, she waited for two days for news from Mathura. Note the difference between the devotional love of the *gopikas* and the maternal love of Yasoda. Yasoda looked upon Krishna as an ordinary child, the darling of her heart, who was innocent of the ways of the world. She was in anguish with the thought: "I cannot imagine what tortures the inhuman demons in Mathura have inflicted on Balarama and Krishna in the streets of Mathura. Oh Krishna! I cannot wait any longer for your return." (Swami sang a song full of feeling).

There is a great difference between the love of devotees and the love of a mother. The intensity of the mother's feeling arises from the sense of maternal attachment. The devotees feelings are different. The *gopikas'* lament was: "Oh Krishna! Why don't you show your beautiful face and let us listen to the divine music of your flute?"

The love of Radha, who was totally absorbed in the love of Krishna, was different. "Oh Krishna! Wherever you may be and whatever the form you may assume, bless me so that I may be one with you in that form." Radha yearned for this kind of union.

But the love-principle in all these cases was one and the same. Love may be called by different names, but its expression is the same.

The Brahman is the form of Love.

It is suffused with love.

One can have the experience of Unity with the Divine

The Advaitic experience, only through love.

Prema is a two-letter word in Telugu. But in this short and small word, *Akshaya Jagat* (the entire universe) is contained. But, alas, today there is so little awareness of the power of this love. Wrapped up in their trivial attachments, people are ignoring the power of this infinite, sacred and all-encompassing Divine Love. Love is associated with immortality. It is nectar itself. There is nothing in the world comparable to it.

Love incarnates as *Avatar* to teach love

It is to teach mankind the truth about this Divine Love that Love itself incarnates on earth in human form. The scriptures declare that the Divine descends on earth to teach mankind the ways of *Dharma*, Justice and Truth. "*Dharma samsthaapa naarthaaya sambhavaami yuge yuge*". (I

incarnate on earth from age to age to establish *Dharma*). This is Krishna's declaration in the *Gita*. Once people are filled with love, all *Dharma*, all justice and all truth will be installed in them. Without love, righteousness will be a mechanical ritual. What kind of righteousness can there be without love? What sort of justice can there be? It will be a lifeless corpse. Love is life. Without love, no man can exist for a moment.

Hence, Love is the form of the Supreme Lord. It is to preach the doctrine of love that the Krishna *Avatar* and other divine incarnations made their advent on earth. According to the place, time and circumstances prevailing then, different names were given to the Lord. These differences are like the different figures made from sugar to appeal to the different preferences of children. These figures may be those of a peacock, or a dog or a fox and so on. But what is common to all of them is sugar.

Love is the basis for all *Avatars*

Likewise, the *avatars* in the four *yugas* incarnated to teach what were appropriate for that age' *Dhyana* (meditation) for the *Krita yuga*, *Tapas* (penance) for the *Treta yuga*, *Upasana* (worship) for the *Dwapara yuga* and *Naamasmarana* (chanting the name of the Lord) for the *Kali yuga*. Common to all these is love of the Lord. In the same way what is common to the nine forms of worship (*Sravanam*, *Keerthanam*, etc.) is love. In all of them the chanting of the Lord's name with devotion is common.

Although there are many types of spiritual practices, they are of no avail without love. This love must be unchanging in all circumstances. The faith of the eldest of the Pandava brothers, Dharmaja, was of this steadfast type. Whether as an exile in the forest or as an emperor, whether during the disrobing of Draupadi in Duryodhana's court or when Abhimanyu was killed in battle, or when the slaughter of the *Upapandavas* (by Aswathama) occurred, in all situations, his faith in Krishna never wavered. He firmly believed that Krishna was his sole saviour. At all times he was contemplating only the name of Krishna. Whether as an emperor ruling over a vast realm or when he lost everything in the game of dice, he was neither elated with success nor depressed by defeat. The primary trait of the Pandavas was to cherish such unflinching faith in the Divine.

Unfortunately, in this age of *Kali*, it is characteristic of the small-minded people to praise God in times of prosperity and traduce God in periods of adversity. People must cultivate the feeling of love which will enable them to look upon prosperity and adversity with equal serenity. People must develop the conviction that it is the same Lord who is the indweller in all beings. Just as the body is an organic whole and any ailment affecting any part of the body is felt as a pain by the whole organism, people should feel that anyone's suffering is their own suffering and any relief done to the other is a help done to themselves. Differences between persons will cease when there is a recognition of the common Divinity present in everyone. The foremost purpose of the Divine as *Avatar* is to teach this truth to humanity.

Difficulties bring out human values in man

However, despite all the teachings, mankind is prone to go astray from time to time. Men should shed their pettiness and develop broad-mindedness by the cultivation of love.

Human life is beset with ups and downs, joys and sorrows. These experiences are intended to serve as guideposts for man. Life would be stale if there were no trials and difficulties. It is these difficulties which bring out the human values in man. Because of the manner in which

Harischandra faced all the trials in his life, his story has become a glorious chapter in human annals. Prahlada stands out equally as a great devotee who stood up to all the persecutions of his father. Today, however, people want instant salvation, without the slightest effort or sacrifice on their part. But if such instant salvation is achieved, it will vanish also in a trice. Only that which is got by hard effort will yield lasting benefit.

People pray to Swami to rid them of all difficulties and losses. This is a totally wrong kind of prayer. Difficulties must be welcomed and must be overcome. By overcoming trouble the Divine must be experienced. You cannot get the juice of the sugarcane without crushing it. You cannot enhance the brilliance of a diamond without cutting it and making many facets. The body is like a sugarcane stalk. It is only when it goes through various difficulties that you can experience the sweet bliss of Self-realisation. That sweetness is Divinity itself. Where does that sweetness reside in man? It is in every limb and organ.

How can we develop love for the Lord?

All have faith in the power of love. But how is this love to be fostered and developed? This question may arise in the minds of many. When people ask, "How can we develop our love for the Lord?" the answer is: "There is only one way. When you put into practice the love in which you have faith, that love will grow." Because you do not practise what you profess, your faith gets weakened. A plant will grow only when it is watered regularly. When you have planted the seed of love, you can make it grow only by watering it with love every day. The tree of love will grow and yield the fruits of love. Men today do not perform those acts which will promote love. When you wish to develop love for the Lord, you must continually practise loving devotion to the Lord.

Sahasa and Sadhana

The mind is allowed to wander and engage itself in external exercises like *japa and puja*. Here is a story to illustrate this:

King Vikramaditya was once going round his country incognito to find out what the people were doing. He noticed an old Brahmin performing a *yajna* (tire-sacrifice). Apparently as the *yajna* had been performed over many years a huge mound of ash had come up near the sacrificial fire-place. Vikramaditya asked the old Brahmin what he was doing. He replied: "I have been performing a *yajna* for the past 60 years. This mound you see is the accumulated ash from the *yajna*. Though I have been ceaselessly performing this *yajna*, I have not yet had a vision of the *Yajna-Purusha* (the Lord of the Sacrifice)."

Vikramaditya was deeply moved by the anguished utterance of the old man. He sat in meditation himself. He performed a severe penance. Despite his long penance, he could not have a vision of the *Yajna-Purusha*. He felt: "Of what use is all the penance I have performed? If I cannot get the grace of the Lord, what use is there in living?" Thinking in this way, he took out the sword from inside his cloak and decided to end his purposeless existence if he could not have a vision of the Lord. Addressing mentally the *Yajna-Purusha*, he said: "If you will not appear before me, I am offering my life to you." As he drew his sword to offer his head, the *Yajna-Purusha* appeared before him and seized the sword from the king's hand.

He said to the king: "Oh Vikramaditya! This is a *sahasa* (an act of recklessness) and not a spiritual offering. Where am I? As Vaiswaanara, I am dwelling in all beings as the digestive

power. Is it a sign of spirituality for you to seek, on the one hand, externally a vision of the Divine who is within you, and on the other, to put an end to your life, because you do not have a vision of the Divine that is in you? This kind of act savours of the *Rajasic* tendency. A real devotee should not resort to such desperate actions. To realise me, what you need to practise is love and not reckless courage. Whatever you see, whatever you do, be conscious of the all-pervading Divine. Only then work will be transformed into worship. What this old Brahmin has been doing for sixty years is to mumble the words of the *mantra* without understanding their meaning. He did not invite my presence with all his heart and soul. I present myself to one who prays for me with all his heart and with harmony in thought, word and deed. If one cannot offer such dedicated worship, he should adhere to my injunctions without hesitation."

Implicit obedience merits its own reward

Once there was a debate between Prahlada's son Virochana and Angirasa's son Sudhira in which Prahlada himself acted as judge and gave the verdict in favour of Sudhira. When Virochana had to forfeit his life as the loser in the debate, Sudhira gave him back his life, in his admiration for the supreme sense of justice of Prahlada and the readiness of Virochana to give up his life according to the conditions of the debate.

A similar incident occurred in the life of Parasurama, son of the sage Jamadagni. One day when Jamadagni's wife went to the river to fetch water, the king Vichitravirya was going in his chariot. She was a pure-hearted lady. She just looked up to see who was going in the chariot. She was struck for a moment by the beauty of Vichitravirya. When she returned to the hermitage, Jamadagni ordered Parasurama to cut off the head of his mother. Parasurama did not flinch for a moment. Carrying out his father's command implicitly, he cut off the head of his mother. Jamadagni then asked his son: "What boon do you want? You have implicitly carried out my command." Parasurama said: "Dear father! Restore the life of my mother." The sage gave back her life. Implicit obedience merits its own reward. This is the inner secret of how the Divine works.

Esoteric meaning of incidents in Krishna's life

In the life of Krishna, there are many incidents which have an esoteric meaning, but which have been misunderstood and misinterpreted by scholars and commentators. Such misunderstandings have been caused by stories that Krishna had eight wives and that he dallied with 16,000 *gopikas*.

In the spinal column, there are six *chakras*, of which two are important--the *Sahasraarachakra* in the brain and the *Hridayachakra* in the middle of the spinal column. The *Hridayachakra* is a flower-like *chakra* with eight petals. The eight petals are symbols of the eight parts of the earth, whose master is the Lord Himself. The esoteric meaning of this is that God is the Lord of the eight-petalled lotus of the heart in man. The Lord of the heart is described as *Madhava*. "*Maa*" means Lakshmi or *Maya* or *Prakriti*. "*Dhava*" means husband. God is the Lord of Lakshmi, or *Maya* or *Prakriti*. Krishna is thus the Lord of the eight-petalled lotus of the heart.

Sahasraara is the topmost *chakra* of the spinal column. It is pictured as a thousand-petalled flower. In each petal, God dwells with all his sixteen *kalas* (potencies). Altogether, there are 16,000 potencies, which represent the *gopikas*. "Go" means sound, speech, and life breath. God is the Lord of this thousand-petalled *Sahasraara*.

Spiritual significance of *Bhagavatha* episodes

The inner significance of the reference to 16,000 *gopikas* should be understood in this manner.. Few attempt to understand the spiritual significance of many episodes in the *Bhagavatham*. Young men may easily be misled by references to Krishna's eight wives or his association with 16,000 *gopikas*. The real meaning is that each one should awaken the sixteen thousand potencies within him. This can be done only by implicit obedience to the commands of God. The *Kundalini-sakti*, which starts at the *Moolaadhara* (the root of the spinal column), ascends to the *Sahasraara* to attain its fullness. The life-breath for this power is *Prema* (Divine Love). This love has to be generated at the *Moolaadhara* and taken upto the *Sahasraara*.

In this age of science and technology, students should try to understand the inner meaning of the concept of *Ardhanaareeswara* (the combination of the male and female principles in *Easwara*). No scientist has attempted to explain this concept. Consider the similarity between the ancient sages concept of *Ardhanaareeswara* and the ideas of modern science regarding the atom. There are many such ancient concepts which have contemporary validity

Every object is composed of atoms and in every atom (*Anu* in Sanskrit) there is a proton and an electron. The electron is described in Sanskrit as the *Vebhaaga* (the left half) of the atom and the proton is described as the *Dhanabhaaga* (the right half) of the atom. The *Vebhaaga* represents the female principle and the *Dhanabhaaga* the male principle. The coming together of these two constitutes the material base of each object. This process of coming together is represented in the concept of *Ardhanaareeswara--the* coming together of the female and male aspects. *Ardhanaareeswara* means half-feminine and half-masculine. The electron represents the feminine aspect. The proton represents the male aspect. The atom is formed when they come together. Every object in the universe is made up of atoms. Hence, the ancients regarded the entire cosmos as an embodiment of the *Ardhanaareeswara* principle.

Customs are based on scientific truths

Similarly, many of the ancient *Bharatiya* customs and practices are based on profound scientific truths. For instance, during festive occasions, green leaves and plants are displayed at the entrance of houses. The scientific principle behind this custom is noteworthy. During festive occasions, large groups of people used to gather in houses and they exhale carbon dioxide which fouls the air. The green leaves and plants serve to absorb the carbon dioxide and give out oxygen, which is essential for the health of the people. As the houses in old days had only small windows, this practice helped to ensure fuller supply of oxygen. Could the display of green leaves be called a superstition?

Similarly, the use of cow-dung for cleaning floors in houses has a scientific basis. The cow-dung has antiseptic properties and its use in cleaning floors served to eliminate germs. When cow-dung water was sprinkled in front of houses, all disease-causing germs were destroyed.

Such practices helped to promote the health and longevity of people. Let any scientist today experiment with the use of cow-dung. Unfortunately, the scientists seem to be more concerned to conduct experiments on remote objects than with those lying at their doorstep.

The properties of turmeric and *kumkum*

The ancient seers established practices which were designed to make life more healthy and joyous. For instance, in the past women were accustomed to making use of turmeric for

cleansing the body. Turmeric was also used for adorning the threshold. This turmeric also has antiseptic properties. The use of turmeric served to destroy germs entering the houses. People today wish to substitute yellow paint for turmeric! The paint may look attractive, but has no antiseptic properties.

Thus, the ancients always had in view the inner purpose of each small practice which they prescribed. The use of *kumkum* and turmeric by women was based on hygienic principles. (Swami recited a song composed by Him in His early years in which He had lamented the replacement of *kumkum* and turmeric by face powder). The application of turmeric helped to prevent the growth of hair on the face. By the giving up of these practices, diseases like Oesonophilia and asthma have spread among women. In the olden days, people valued health as the key to happiness.

If we study the Indian cultural tradition in this manner, we will find that its emphasis was always on what was beneficial and good for the individual and society.

The Vice-Chancellor (in his address earlier) made a reference to the doctrine of surrender. Surrender does not mean that the devotee and God are different. True surrender implies the sense of oneness with God. "Without you I cannot exist," should be the attitude of the devotee. This was the feeling which the *gopikas* expressed about Krishna. (Swami sang a song in which *the gopikas* express their love for Krishna and how they cannot bear separation from him). The love of the *gopikas* was pure and sacred. This is exemplified by the story of Suguna, who was so completely lost in thinking about Krishna that she was not conscious of her fingers being burnt while she was getting her lamp lighted in Yasoda's house. When Yasoda asked her what had happened to her, she said that she was seeing the charming face of Krishna in the flame of the lamp.

Devotion should flow from the heart, as was the case with the *gopikas*. Much of what passes for devotion nowadays is artificial. Develop pure and sincere devotion and sanctify your lives.

Discourse at the Prashaanthi Mandir on 2-9-1991, Gokulashtami Day.