

22. Devotion is pure love for God

*What harm can Kali do to one
Whose heart is compassionate,
Whose speech is adorned by Truth,
And whose limbs are used to serve others?*

EMBODIMENTS of love! Any human being who has compassion for others, who adheres to Truth and who dedicates his body to the good of others will experience no serious trouble. The primary reason is one's devotion to God.

Bhakthi (Devotion) is not something which man can acquire by himself. It is indeed the inherent principle animating man. Devotion manifests itself as love. This love is the supreme treasure of man. It is this treasure which enables man to live in this world. But few persons recognise this truth.

Time moves like a whirlwind. The allotted span of life for the body is melting away every moment like a block of ice. However, even before recognizing what is his duty, man departs from this world. What is the aim of human life? What is a man's duty? It is to discover this truth that God has endowed man with a body. "*Paropakaara artham idham shareeram*" (This body is given for rendering help to others)

We live in society, depending on it for our needs. But, forgetting what they owe to society, people lead selfish, self-centred lives. Service to society is the primary, *Karma* (duty). Concern for the welfare of all is *Bhakthi* (devotion). "Let all people be happy." Awareness of this feeling is *Jnaana* (true knowledge).

Devotion is a fragment of the Divine

Without recognizing the duty to serve society, without concern for the welfare of society, how can the all-encompassing desire for the happiness of all, which is devotion, arise in anyone? These three are intimately related like flower, render fruit and ripe fruit. The ripe fruit of devotion confers the wisdom which eliminates differences. Devotion is a fragment of the Divine. Without devotion, awareness of the Divine cannot be experienced. Equally, devotion without consciousness of the Divine can only breed *Ahamkaara* (egoism).

Different people experience the bliss derived from devotion in different ways. One devotee begins with repeatedly reciting the word, *Dhaasoham, dhaasoham* (I am His servant), expresses his devotion as a servant of the lord. In course of time, by frequent repetition of this word and reminding himself of the Lord, he reaches the stage where the '*daa*' drops away and only '*soham*' remains. He begins to realise that he and the Lord are one. Starting as the servant of the Lord, he realises his identity with the Lord.

Another devotee, starting with a consciousness of the material body, contemplating on the Self, merges in the higher Consciousness. How is he able to experience this subtle consciousness to the physical body? Without this earthly body, the *Chinmaya* (subtle Self) cannot be experienced.

How did the transformation take place? How did the realisation come that the Divine and the individuals self are not different, but are inextricably linked to each other? This is because the

Divine and the jeeva (the individual self) are united like substance and shadow. That is why Vedhaantha declares "*Eeshvaras sarva bhuuthaanaam*" (Lord dwells in all living beings).

Krishna described Arjuna as friend and devotee

Recognition of this truth is the essential mark of devotion. *Bhakthi* is derived from the combination of the verb "*Bhaj*" with the indeclinable "*thi*": *Bhakthi* means *seva* (service). It also means friendship coupled with fear. Without fear friendship cannot be firm. In the Geetha, Krishna refers to Arjuna as friend and kinsman. "Besides being a friend, you are also my servant," said. Krishna. Thereby, Krishna regarded Arjuna as a devotee. When one is a devotee he is reverential and submissive. If one is treated solely as a friend and not a devotee, he is likely to behave as he pleases. To maintain the balance between the two, Krishna described Arjuna as friend and devotee.

In this relationship, there is equality and oneness. For this to be achieved, one has to get rid of *Dhehabhraanthi* (the identification with the body). The ancient sages observed rigorous penances to get rid of *Dhehabhraanthi* and in due course experienced *Aathmabhraanthi* (identity with the Self).

Dheha-prema* and *dhaiva-prema

In this context, the twofold nature of *Prema* (love) has to be understood. One is *Dheha-Prema* (love associated with the body). The other is *Dhaiva-Prema* (Divine love). *Dheha-prema* relates to experiences associated with the physical, the sensory and the natural. It is the identification with the body that accounts for all sufferings and miseries. It is portentous and produces inauspicious results.

Divine love on the contrary, is sacred and leads to auspicious and enduring well-being. Grief and trouble are alien to divine love. Divine love sustains itself and is lasting. Bodily love depends on others and is evanescent.

Every man should seek to acquire this divine love. The body, however, is an impediment in the way. The entire world is caught up in the vast net of *Anuraaga* (attachment). This attachment is an amazing *Maaya* (delusory) phenomenon. There is no connection between the body composed of the *Panchabhuthas* (five basic elements) and the transcendental *Aathma* (Self). But the delusory power of *Maaya* in the form of attachment brings about a link between the two. If this were not the case, what is the relationship between one person and another? Who is a wife and who is a husband? Who is a mother and who is a son? All these relationships have been brought about by *Anuraaga* (attachment born of desire) and not by love. There is no attachment between mother and son before the child is born. But after birth, *Vaathsalyam* (maternal affection) arises. This affection is based on bodily relationship and is by its nature temporary.

Attachment to the body is a kind of disease

Divine Love exists before birth, after birth and continues forever. No effort is made by men to understand this true and enduring love. Attachment to the body is a kind of disease which has to be treated by three kinds of remedies. One is observing dietary restrictions while taking the medicine. If diet regulations are not observed, the medicine alone will not cure the disease. Diet control without the medicine will be equally ineffective. Both diet control and medicine are equally necessary for curing the disease. With regard to the disease of attachment to the body, one has to abide by divine injunctions and practise love for the Divine to get rid of the ailment.

Observing the Divine injunctions without love for God will not be efficacious. Equally, devotion without observance of the Lord's commands will be useless. Love is the medicine and God's injunctions are the diet restrictions. It is by the presence of both, that Divinity in man can be made to manifest itself.

For all the troubles, chaos and discord present in the world today, the root cause is attachment to the body which breeds selfishness and self-centredness. Concern for the body is necessary upto a point. But excessive attachment to the demands of the body is harmful, because the body is essentially fragile and liable to break up any moment at any place. The body, of course, needs to be protected and allowed rest and recreation. But all these should be only for the purpose of enabling it to discharge one's duty.

"Discharge of duty is Yoga," says the Geetha. What is this duty? It is assumed that duty relates to one's professional or occupational responsibilities, as lawyer, doctor, etc. This is not duty at all because these actions are performed for selfish reasons, to earn money. The *Sanskrit* word *Karthavyam* means that you are not free to act as you please and you have to respect the rights of others on the same basis as you expect others to respect your rights. The terms duty or right should not be misused.

True devotion knows no differences

Equally, in respect of the term *Bhakthi*, devotion is equated with performing puujas, observing rituals, going on pilgrimages, etc. But these are not the true insignia of devotion. The true mark of devotion is pure love of God. Without this pure love, *bhajans*, worship and the like are artificial exercises and are valueless. They may appear to be devotional acts, but they do not contain the essential sweetness of devotion. They resemble plastic flowers and fruits. A life without love is like a barren wasteland. True devotion knows no differences. It sees unity in diversity. Today, devotion is marked by various *differences*. Though God is one, He is worshipped in many forms. Can this be called devotion? No. The one God is broken into fragments. On the other hand, man has to unite the fragments and see the One. The Upanishaths proclaimed the unity suffusing the multiplicity as the *Aathmik* Principle.

Today you have a myriad individuals, but the Spirit that dwells in all of them is one and the same.

"Ekovasee Sarvabhootha antharaathma" (The Indwelling Spirit is one in all beings). God is one but is called by different names. It is out of self-interest that God is worshipped under different names and forms by different people.

What has to be recognized today when people talk about devotion is the oneness of the Divine. The love of God should be developed. Love for all other worldly things is bound to change. Only love for the Divine can be unchanging.

The Bhaagavatham proclaims the glory of Divine love. Bhaagavatham is described as a sacred book on Bhagavaan (Divine). Another interpretation is that the Bhaagavatham deals with the greatness of devotees of the Lord. Yet another explanation is that the Bhaagavatham describes the intimate relationship between God and devotees.

It is this relationship that should be developed by all devotees. People feel distressed when some one among their kinsfolk is ill. If such is the affection they bear towards relations who are

associated with them for brief periods, how much more love should one have towards the eternal Lord?

Best way to serve God is to love all, serve all

One should regard love for God as the greatest treasure one can have. When you love God, you will have love towards all because the Divine is in everyone. Therefore bear in mind: Love all; serve all. The best way to serve God is to love all and serve all. Your devotion will get diluted if you entertain differences between people. Devotion to Raama or Krishna becomes meaningless if you do not practise their teachings. The worship of the Lord should be accompanied by leading a Godly life. Only the bliss can be experienced.

Today people carry on routine reading of scriptural texts like the Geetha or the Bible. This serves no purpose unless they lead pure and sacred lives. They should fill their hearts with love of God and share that love with others. There can be no greater demonic quality than hatred towards God.

The Divine is both protector and destroyer. For Prahlada, who was a staunch devotee, the Lord was a protector. To Hiranyakashipu (Prahlada's father), who hated God, the Divine became the destroyer.

God showers His grace according to one's deserts. He is the embodiment of Love. One's bad qualities prevent one from realising the grace of God. The fault lies with the individuals and not with God.

Hrishikesha sevanam Bhakthiruchyathe (Service to the Lord is called devotion). If you fill your heart with love of God, you will secure all powers. Therefore, live in love. Redeem your lives through love. Let love become your life-breath and the sole goal of your life.

Discourse in the Sai Ramesh Hall on 21-8-1994.

Develop Prema (Love) towards the Lord, the Parama-Prema (Highest Love) of which He is the embodiment. Never give room for doubts and hesitations, for questions, to test the Lord's Prema.

BABA