

## 32. The devotion that God loves

*Clay is one, but pots are multifarious;*

*Gold is one, but jewels are varied;*

*Milk is one, though cows are of many colours.*

*The Supreme is One, but wears many vestures.*

*EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love!* Although clay is one, the products made out of it are varied in form and name. Gold is one, but many different ornaments are made out of it. Milk is same, though it may be derived from cows of different colours. Though the Divine is one, He manifests Himself in various forms with different names.

From the fathomless ocean, countless waves arise. Though the waves appear as different from each other, the ocean is one. Likewise, though living beings appear in the Universe in a myriad forms, all of them are waves that have emerged from the ocean of *Sath-Chith-Aanandha* (Being-Awareness-Bliss ).

The joys and sorrows man experiences in daily life, his attachments and aversions, his pursuit of sensory pleasures, are all due to the vagaries of the mind. As long as man is subject to the feeling of duality, he cannot be free from attachments and hatred. There can be no escape from dualism as long as man does not recognise his inherent divinity.

### **Freedom from dualism**

There are today few who recognise unity in diversity, though there are any number of intellectuals who are engaged in promoting divisions and differences. The world today needs righteous men who will promote unity.

The mind is the cause of differences and only by control of the mind can differences be eliminated. How can man discover his oneness with the Divine without seeking to know his true nature? Nine forms of devotion have been indicated for man to realise his divinity, starting *with Shravanam* (listening to the glories of God) and culminating in *Aathma nivedhanam* (total surrender to the Divine).

Of these nine forms of devotion, the greatest is total surrender. But who is to surrender, what and to whom? When this question is pursued, man discovers that the entire tuff verse is made up of the *Pancha bhoothas* (five basic elements), which are manifestations of God. Man is also a manifestation of God. God is not separate from man. But man is unable to recognise this because of his identifying himself with the body, which is only an instrument. When he gives up this feelings, he will experience the Self.

### **Elevate every object to the level of the Divine**

Men are of three types. First, *Bhakthi rasa-aathmakam* (emotional type), The second, *Kriya-aathmakam* (active type). The third, the rational type. The emotional type of persons are engaged in activities like worship of idols, *bhajans* etc. They offer worship to an idol or picture in the faith that God in a certain form has shown to mankind the means to liberation. However, you may worship a picture as God, but not God as a picture. You may see God in a picture, but the picture is not God. No object exists with a form without the immanence of the Divine in it. Hence every object has to be elevated to the level of the Divine. Treat every object as a

manifestation of the Divine. But do not reduce the Divine to the level of material objects. The process of devotion, beginning with adoration of physical objects, ultimately leads to the realisation of the Divine. Without this emotional yearning for God active pursuit of the Divine is not possible.

When devotion develops, one resorts to the path of action. And then, one starts enquiring into what is transient and what is permanent, what is real and what is unreal. While this discriminating faculty is essential for the spiritual aspirant, it is being abused in the name of rationalism. The process of enquiring has assumed bizarre forms. Today many young persons are misled by so-called rationalism to deride spirituality. Few persons attempt to get at the correct meanings of things. By misinterpreting things and creating confusion, many are taking to wrong courses.

Human life is precious, sublime and meaningful. But by involvement in purely worldly pursuits, the greatness of human birth is forgotten. Without values, life is meaningless. When there is purity in thought, word and deed, human values are practised. The unity of the three H's is essential--Heart, Head and Hand. But today this unity is absent among people, with the result that men are becoming inhuman.

### **Man has to understand the inherent divinity**

Because man has not been able to shed the animal qualities inherited from his past, he does not behave like a true human being. Hence, man has to endeavour to understand his true nature, his immense potentialities and his divine qualities.

He must realise that whatever he perceives is essentially Divine. All his actions should be dedicated to the Divine. Thereby work will be transformed into worship. In essence, there is no difference between work and worship. But, unfortunately; in these degenerate days even worship is turned into some form of undesirable activity. Today devotion is used for deriving sensory enjoyment. It is used more as a source of fleeting pleasure than a fountain of enduring bliss. God will not approve of such part-time devotion. The Divine is omnipresent and is watching everyone of your actions, wherever you may be. 'People in their ignorance imagine that God takes no notice of them. Divinity cannot be understood as long as this ignorance prevails.

Many people imagine that they are caught up in the coils of *Samsaara* (worldly life) and are the victims of worldly existence. This is a ridiculous idea. It is not family life that binds you. It has no arms to clasp you. It is you who are endowed with hands, eyes and ears. It is you who are holding on to worldly life and suffering the consequences. This is the truth in the false and the unreality in the Real. This accounts for the fact that in the world today the false is deemed true and the truth is considered as untrue.

### **All that exists in cosmos belongs to God**

How can man realise the Truth? Only when he experiences the *Adhvaithabhaava* (non-dualism). As long as he is steeped in dualism (that he and the Divine are different), he is bound to be racked by the opposites: joy and sorrow, the real and the unreal.

All that exists in the cosmos belongs to God. But man imagines that he is the owner of various things and is a prisoner of the conception of "mine" and "thine." In reality all are only trustees of the property belonging to the Divine. This means that everyone has to consider himself as a trustee for the world's goods. A bank cashier handles an enormous amount of money. None of it belongs to him. He cannot use it for himself, but has to ensure its safety and right use. Likewise,

all are trustees responsible for the proper use of the goods entrusted to them. No one can claim ownership.

Hence one's life should reflect the unity of thought, speech and action. Devotion should also be the unified expression of love for God, action in the service of God and total surrender to the will of God. These are intertwined like the braid of a woman's tresses. *Bhakti* (devotion), *Upaasana* (worship) and *Jnaana* (awareness of the Self) together demonstrate the oneness of the Divine.

This truth is common to all religions like Christianity, Zoroastrianism and other faiths. True spirituality emphasizes the truth that is common to all religions. One should not hate any religion or ridicule any form of worship. One must recognise the unifying truth in all religions. God is not separate from you. However, by regarding God as separate from him, man resorts to various kinds of worship. In the present day world this type of *Karmopaasana* (worship through action) is necessary. But one should not be engaged all his life in this form of worship. Gradually one should reach a higher level. Only then humanness gets divinised.

### **Every human has latent tendencies of a sage**

What is important today is not what particular faith one professes, whether he is a Christian, a Buddhist, a Muslim or a Hindu. The real question is how far he is a true human, being. Develop therefore, your human qualities. What constitutes humanness? It is good conduct alone. The Indian epics hail man as *Manuja*. One who belongs to the lineage of the sage Manu. As such every human being has the latent tendencies of a sage. Unfortunately, instead of these traits, only vicious tendencies are to the fore. Man must recover his spiritual heritage. He must cultivate sublime and divine feelings. However, owing to misdirected education men are taking to evil ways. Compared to the behaviour of the educated urban population, there seems to be more goodness and virtue among unlettered hill tribes. Injustice and wickedness seem to flourish in the places where you have educational institutions and courts of law.

Men should concentrate on their natural spiritual tendencies rather than succumbing to the allurements of worldly objects. For this purpose, association with good people is essential. Eschew totally the company of bad people. Good company does not mean participating in *bhajans* and religious gatherings. *Sathsang* truly means cultivating the company of one's *Sath* (conscience). It means being immersed in the contemplation of God. Carry on your daily, duties with your thoughts centred on God. Deem every action as an offering to God. That is the way to perfect one's human nature and sanctify one's life.

### ***Likhitha japam* purifies the mind**

As this may not be an easy process, the method of *Likhitha japam* has been recommended for purifying one's *mind*. *Likhitha japam* is a form of spiritual exercise in which one is engaged in writing the name of the Lord). *Likhitha japam* should be performed in a spirit of devotion. A wealthy man, who had no peace of mind & spire his riches, went to a sage for advice. The sage suggested to him that as a way of reducing his insatiable desires, which were the cause of his worries, he should write the name of the Lord some crores of times. Unused to such an arduous exercise, the rich man found a shortcut to achieving what the sage had suggested, by resorting to mechanical devices for multiplying the number of times he wrote the name of the Lord. This is a total travesty of the spiritual exercise suggested by the sage. It is tantamount to cheating God. This sort of deception and hypocrisy is rampant today. It is not quantity that counts. Even the writing of a few names with sincere devotion is better than filling pages mechanically.

In Tamil Naadu, numerous devotees have written with true devotion the name of Sai Raam many crores of times, thinking of the name in their minds, spelling it by mouth and writing it by the hand. The unity of mind, speech and action has produced purity in thought, word and deed. Any spiritual exercise like *Likhitha Japam* should be done wholeheartedly. Only then it becomes sanctified and godly. All actions should be performed in this spirit of dedication and in accordance with the dictates of one's conscience.

The name of the Lord is like a precious jewel which must be considered valuable and cherished as a gem. Thulsidhas sang in praise of the Lord's name (Raama's name) as the most invaluable gift given to him' by his *guru*. The Lord's name should be recited with deep feeling so that it gets firmly entrenched in the heart.

### **The example of Hanumaan**

Hanumaan is the supreme exemplar of true devotion. At the time of Raama's coronation in Ayodhya after his return from Lanka, Raama gave presents to all those who had helped him in the battle against Raavana. When it came to Hanumaan, Raama could not find anything that was worthy of the unparalleled devotion of Hanumaan. Praising Hanuman's unexcelled services, Raama said that the only fitting reward for such a devotee was to give himself to Hanumaan. He embraced Hanumaan most lovingly. Seetha saw this and felt Hanumaan should not be left unrewarded for his great services. She took out from her neck the pearl necklace she had received from her father Janaka at the time of her wedding and gave it to Hanumaan. Immediately after receiving the necklace, Hanumaan removed one pearl after another from the necklace, crushed it between his teeth, placed it close to his ear and then threw it away. Surprised at his strange behaviour, Seetha asked him why he was treating the pearls in that manner. Hanumaan explained that he had no use for any object that did not chant Raama's name. Seetha asked him how he could expect to hear Raama's name from an inert object like a pearl. Hanumaan immediately pulled out a hair from his arm and kept it close to Seetha's ear. The hair was chanting Raama's name!

True devotion means that even the blood stream should proclaim the Lord's name. Because Hanumaan was such a devotee he could be the foremost servant of Raama. He was totally free from egoism, pride and envy. In Lanka, he did not boast of his prowess, but was content to declare himself a humble servant of Raama. This humility is the true mark of a devotee.

When a person is asked "Where do you live?" the correct answer is: "I am dwelling in the (Indwelling Spirit)." This is the truth to be learnt from all the scriptures and epics. Everyone should realise the oneness in spirit of all mankind, which is proclaimed equally by all religions.

Sometime ago a devotional exercise called *Likhitha japam* (writing the names of the Lord as a form of worship) was started in Tamil Nadu. It was a collective (*Samashti*) exercise. Large numbers of devotees assembled at one place and wrote the name of the Lord as a (spiritual exercise). The joy to be derived from such a collective effort is indescribable. The community bhajan in which all join to sing in unison is an equally blissful experience. This community singing was started by Gum Naanak. During community singing divine vibrations emerge sanctifying the whole atmosphere. The same result cannot be expected when one sings alone. Community singing promotes unity which leads to purity and divinity. Today there is no unity, purity or divinity. What mankind needs today is unity based on the spiritual oneness of humanity.

### **Worship of the Lord's feet**

Today we are celebrating the *Paadhuka* Festival (a festival for worshipping sandals blessed by the Lord). What is the significance of worshipping the Lord's feet? There is the devotee's yearning for touching the Lord. How is this to be done? The easiest way is to touch

the feet of the Lord. A spiritual significance is attached to the touching of the Lord's feet which sanctify the earth by walking on it. Scientifically also there is meaning in *Paadhasparsha* (touching the feet). The blood circulates from the feet to the head. When one touches the toe of the Lord's Feet, he can experience a current present in the toe. That is a divine energy.

From a mundane point of view the body appears as a physical form. But from the spiritual point of view, there is an aura around every body. It has *Thejas* (effulgence) from which arises *Ojas* (spiritual energy). This energy produces vibrations. That is why it is declared: "*Dharshanam Paapa naashanam*" (Sight of the Lord destroys all sins). "*Sambhaashanam Sankata naashanam*" (Dialogue with the Lord destroys all sorrows). "*Sparshanam Karma vimochanam*" (The touch of the Lord frees one from the consequences of one's actions). When the devotee touches the Lord, it is like the linking of the negative and positive wires, which generates divine energy. This connection should be from heart to heart. Only then the Divine energy will flow (from the Lord to the devotee). Then the Lord and the devotee become one. Because the spiritual significance of these practices is not properly understood people fall a prey to confusion.

### **Men should go away from the worldly path**

Men should go away from the worldly path like the fish which swim against the current in a river. That is the way to realise the Divine. If you allow yourself to be carried away by the worldly current, you can only meet with a sad end. Whatever the world may think, keep your eye on the spiritual goal. When people ask for liberation, they should understand that liberation means oneness with the Divine. Become aware of your divinity. Then worldly thoughts will not enter your mind. To realise this oneness with God, one has to chant the Lord's name incessantly. You must pray for the vision of the Lord's feet in your heart. There should be no room for evil thoughts and feelings.

### **Lakshmana's unalloyed devotion to Raama**

It was because of the unalloyed devotion of Lakshmana that Raama considered him greater than Seetha or anyone else. He declared: "It is impossible for me to find a brother like Lakshmana." This was a tribute to the way Lakshmana served Raama and Seetha for thirteen years in the forest. During all these years Lakshmana had never looked at the face of Seetha but revered her feet everyday. When the jewels dropped by Seetha were shown to Lakshmana he could identify only the anklets and not any of the other jewels worn by her. (Bhagavaan recited the *shloka* from the Raamaayana in which Lakshmana explained how he could only see Seetha's anklets because he saw them every morning when he prostrated at her feet). Can such reverence be found among the youth today? One feels ashamed when one listens to their talk. Young people should follow the ideal exemplified by Lakshmana.

Devotees should not feel satisfied with what they deem as their devotion. They should find out whether the Lord has appreciated their devotion. God should acknowledge your devotion. Krishna acknowledged Arjuna's devotion to Him only when the latter declared: "*Karishye Vachanam Thava*" (I shall abide by your words). If one does not pay heed to the Lord's words

and does not act up to His injunctions, to claim that one is devotee is only a pompous boast. Activise your devotion. Let your actions be pure and sacred.

### **Old devotee's example for dedicated service**

For one to come to this godly path, one has to contemplate on God incessantly. Today in Tamil Naadu the *Likhitha japam* movement and the worship of *Paadhukas* (sandals sanctified by the Divine Feet of Bhagavaan) have grown by leaps and bounds. An 85-year-old devotee is striving to achieve even greater progress in these movements. In devotion it is not age that counts. What matters is the determination and the dedication. At this age, he comes almost every week to Prashaanthi Nilayam without regard to the strain involved. His sole concern is service to Bhagavaan. All devotees should become exemplars like him, of dedicated service. When that happens the world will be an earthly paradise.

This old devotee has been able to bring together large numbers of people to get involved in this form of collective worship by his example and enthusiasm. The saint Thyaagaraaja had great difficulty in chanting the name of Raama 96 crores of times. But in Tamil Naadu today the Lord's name has been written 108 crores of times (one crore is ten million). Countless devotees have been engaged in writing the name of the lord, without wasting their time in useless gossip or meaningless activities. What a sacred pre-occupation is this! Do not waste your time in useless pursuits. Instead devote all the time available to remembering and writing the Lord's name.

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