

48. Who is dear to the Lord?

EMBODIMENTS of Love! Human life is precious, noble and virtuous. It is a pity human beings do not realise this. The whole purpose and goal of human life is to know one's true nature. Forgetting one's true nature, man is caught up in worldly concerns and plunged in misery. The ancient sages indicated the path to be pursued for the redemption of mankind.

They commended nine forms of worship any one of which could confer bliss and redeem a man's life.

To experience the proximity of the Divine the easiest path is *Naama-smarana*, remembering constantly the name of the Lord. Sage Vedha Vyaasa declared that in this *Kali Yuga* there is nothing greater than chanting the name of Hari for realising God. It is the easiest path for one and all, the scholar and illiterate, the rich and the poor.

In the Geetha, the Lord has indicated the qualities which a devotee should possess to enable him to earn the love of the Lord. Among these qualities, Krishna declared *Anapeksha* (desirelessness) as important. Today there are few without desires of one kind or other. All sensual pleasures are ephemeral. But most people are content with them. Greater than the sensual is the transcendental path, *Shreyo maarga*, which confers lasting bliss.

When one does any action as an offering to God, it gets sanctified. Such an act becomes *anapeksha* (desireless act). Every selfless act of devotion becomes an action free from the taint of desire.

The second quality is *Suchi* (purity). What is required is both internal and external purity. God cares only for *Chittha-shuddhi* (internal purity of the mind).

Faith and service

The third quality is *dhaksha*. This means that the devotee should be steadfast and unwavering in any situation. With his mind firmly rooted in God, he should engage himself in service to others and perform actions in a spirit of detachment. Only such a devotee is eligible for God's love. He is unaffected by pleasure or pain, gain or loss or what happens in the mundane world. The fourth quality is *Udhaaseenah* indifference to external happenings. The fifth quality is freedom from egoism and possessiveness. One should get rid of the idea of doership and ownership and surrender everything to God.

Today all spiritual exercises are ostensibly undertaken for realising God. But there is no need for undertaking them. Human birth itself is a mark of Divinity. What is essential is to recognise the indwelling Divinity and live on that basis.

Where is God? Not in temples or pilgrim centres or other places. He dwells in the heart of everyone. To experience the Divinity within, one has to see the Divine in all others and render them service in that spirit.

Worship of *paadhukas*

Today we are celebrating the worship of *paadhukas* (sandals sanctified by the touch of the Lord's feet). Worship of *paadhukas* is not of recent origin.

Even during the Kritha Yuga, the sages used to worship paadhukas, experience divine bliss and share it with others. By worshipping the Feet of the Lord, they achieved the goal of their penance.

In the worship of Dakshinaamurthy, adoration of the sandals of the Lord as *guru* (preceptor) is considered important. Even Shankaraachaarya resorted to the worship of the Lord's Feet as essential. In a famous hymn, he extolled the Lord in many ways and declared that he was taking refuge in the Lord's feet (Shambhu). He declared that Shiva's feet were enshrined in his heart and not elsewhere.

The glory of the Lord's feet is demonstrated by a significant episode in the Raamaayana. After Raama left for the forest, Bharatha came to him and pleaded earnestly with him to return to Ayodhya. Raama was equally determined not to return. Vasishta noticed the equal determination of the two brothers. The sage told Bharatha: "Raama has come to the forest to carry out the command of his father. It is not right on your part to ask him to change his mind. Let us take his *paadhukas* to Ayodhya. Those *paadhukas* will reign over the kingdom." Vasishta gave this timely advice and persuaded Bharatha to take Raama's sandals and install them on the throne in Ayodhya.

These incidents show that the worship of the Lord's feet and of the Lord's sandals has a long antiquity. The sacredness of this worship was propagated to the world by Bhaarath from ancient times as part of its spiritual message to mankind. Indians today have largely forgotten this ancient practice. In those days it was the practice of the disciples, after the completion of their education at the *guru's aashram*, to take with them *paadhukas* of the *guru* to worship them on their return to their homes. But even the worship of *paadhukas* is an external activity. True devotion calls for the installation of the *paadhukas* in the heart.

This means that starting with the external form of worship, we should in due course make it an internal exercise.

Karma, Bhakthi and Jnaana

All these are related to the *Karma Maarga* (path of Action). Beginning with the path of action, progressing towards the *Bhakthi Maarga* (path of devotion), one should ultimately *achieve-Kaivalya* (Self-realisation) by the *Jnaana Maarga* (the Path of Wisdom). "*Jnaanaath eva thu Kaivalyam*" (Realisation is only through Wisdom), declares the scripture.

The entire life should not be spent on only worldly duties. One must progress spiritually from stage to stage. *Karma-Upaasana-Jnaanam* (Action-Devotion-Wisdom)--these are the three steps in Self-Realisation.

Subramania Chettiar has been engaged in these devotional activities for a long time. Looking at his age, you can realise that physically he is not fit to undertake long journeys. But because of his intense devotion and strong faith in Bhagavaan he has been able to carry on this work. The Divine grace has been giving him all this abundant energy.

So far as the worship of the paadhukas is concerned you need not bother about what others think. Every man should take up such sacred activity to get nearer to God.

To get close to the Divine, you have to engage yourselves in activities which please the Divine. The supreme maxims of the Bhaaratheeya culture are: "Speak the Truth. Follow Righteousness." When you adhere to these two maxims, all your actions will be sacred.

The *Purusharthas*

Of the four goals of human life prescribed by the scriptures, the first is *Dharma* (Righteousness). It is the feet in the human body. The entire body rests on the feet. *Artha*, the second goal, rests on the feet. Hence, the acquisition of wealth should be based on righteous means. The third goal is *Kaama* (desires). For the fulfillment of desires you need the *Bhujabalam* (strength of the arms). Both *Kaama* and *Artha* are based on *Dharma*. *Moksha* is the culmination of a life based on *Dharma*.

Today people have forgotten *Dharma* and *Moksha* and are immersed only in *Artha* (acquisition of wealth) and *Kaama* (the pursuit of sensual desires). For the realisation of the goal of human existence, you have to rely on the feet, namely, *Dharma*, and the head, namely *Moksha* (Liberation). This is the meaning of the symbolic description of the Cosmic Person in the *Vedhas*. The face of the Cosmic Person symbolises the *Brahmik* Principle. The feet symbolise *Dharma*. Thus basing oneself on *Dharma*, one should pursue *Artha* and *Kaama* to attain *Moksha*.

People should seek the Divine in all possible ways. In the worship of the *paahukas*, devotees should offer worship with all their heart and not as a mechanical ritual.

How to recite *manthras*

For instance, when the chief priest was reciting the *manthras*, anyone would have been deeply moved by listening to them. *Our pandith* pronounced the words with extreme clarity. Let me not be misunderstood when I say that, whether in *Thamil Naadu*, *Kerala* or even in *Northern India*, *Sanskrit* words are not pronounced correctly. But *the pandith* pronounced all the words very clearly this morning. Every syllable was pronounced in such a way that it appealed to the heart. His assistants were also closely following him.

Governor *Burugula Raamakrishna Rao* took one group to *Badhrinaath*. The priest in the temple there was a *Nambuudhiri* and a *Sanskrit pandith*. Yet, when the *pandith* was reciting the *manthras*, *Raamakrishna Rao* closed his ears. *Raamakrishna Rao* exclaimed: "Oh *pandith!* Do not massacre our *Sanskrit!*" The *pandith* was saying: "*Janthaagaaram Bhujaga Jayanam Badmanaabham---*(laughter) instead of saying "*Shanthaakaaram bhujagashayanam Padmanaabham* " What humiliation is inflicted on the *Sanskrit* language! It is praiseworthy that a *pandith* living in *Tamil Naadu* should pronounce *Sanskrit manthras* more clearly and correctly than even *Aandhras*.

It is because of the help of such *pandiths* that *Subrahmanya Chetty's* burdens are lightened.

A blissful experience

The spectacle you witnessed this morning was indeed a blissful experience for one and all. It looked as if all were in *Vaikunttha* (the Abode of the Supreme Lord) or *Svarga* (the abode of *Indhra*). It was not at all a command performance. Everyone silently performed the *puuja* (worship of the *paadhukas*) with his/her full heart in it. The *pandith* explained the meaning of every word in the *manthra*. It is rare to find *pandiths* who recite the *manthras* so clearly and explain their meaning intelligently. This has been the problem in *Bhaarath* for quite a long time. Very few are concerned about the well-being of society. People carry on their work, professing that duty is God. That was not the case with the *pandith* who officiated at the function today. It is thanks to such *pandiths* that we have devotees who practise the rituals sincerely.

Now, let me say a word about Dr. Gadhia (who has addressed the meeting earlier).. You know about him. His grandfather, Kaaka Dheexith, was in Shirdi. He has not seen the old man. But I have seen him. Kaaka Dheexith's son came to Bhagavaan and stayed with Svaami for 30 years in Brindhaavan. He showed to Svaami the diary written by Kaaka Dheexith. The Dheexith family had relations with Svaami which have continued to this day. Dheexith stayed with his wife in Svaami's *aashram*. He showed to Svaami Kaaka Dheexith's diary. In it he had written what Shirdi Baba told him: "Child! you will again be close to Baba. Whatever troubles may come, do not give up your faith." Then Gadhia came to Baba. I sent him to Manipal to study a course in Medicine. After completing his medical studies in Manipal he came to Bangalore. I told him that there was no point in his remaining in Bangalore and directed him to go to London.

In this manner, Gadhia and his ancestors have been associated with Sai! Like this, many devotees have been associated with Svaami over many lives. Without such association in the past it would not be possible for all of you to come here. You are not aware of this but I know it all. These sacred associations have been maintained over many life-times.

Association with Sai

Thus, many of you have from immemorial times had links with the *Aathmik* Self. This link is unbroken. It is eternal, infinite. Such sacred relationships should never be given up. All should return to the place wherefrom they came. That is the strident declaration in the Bhaagavatham: "It is natural for every living creature to go back to the source from which it came." You have come from the *Aathma* and you must merge in the *Aathma*. Till the goal is reached you must not treat lightly the sacred journey of life.

People forget the route by which they came and are searching for new paths. Many approach me and ask: "Svaami! show a way." I tell them: "There is need for me to show you a path. You go back by the route you came.

Wherefrom did you come? Not from your mother. Nor from any particular place. The body came from the mother, but the *Aathma* came from the *Aathma*. You are not the body or the senses or the mind. You are the *Aathma* alone. You are the son of immortality. Being an *Amritha-puthra* (son of immortality), why are you seeking this *anrutha* (untruth). What is the way to immortality? Removal of immortality is the only way to immortality. If you get rid of evil qualities like attachment, hatred and envy, you will realise immortality. These bad traits make you remote from God. When you get rid of them, God becomes close to you.

The Lord is with you

Hence, gradually: you have to give up the animal qualities and develop godly qualities such as truth, righteousness, justice and morality. By a process of self-enquiry you can get rid of your animal qualities like anger. How long are you going to remain in the same round of birth and death without realising the goal of human existence? All *puujas*, rituals and penances are performed for this realisation. You have secured an extremely precious gift by your present birth. Do not waste it. Utilize every available moment for a worthwhile purpose. Devotees are yearning to realise the Divine by worshipping the Lotus feet and offering their worship to the *paadhukas*. Have the conviction that when you have the sanctified *paadhukas* with you, the Lord is also with you. When you enter the *Mandhir* you leave your shoes out side. But the Lord's feet are present wherever His sandals are kept. Bear in mind this sacred idea. Live upto the conviction that the

eternal Divine is omnipresent. Maintain purity and harmony in thought, word and deed. That is the way to secure *Jnaana-shuddhi* (Divine Wisdom).

Thanks to many meritorious lives in the past, you have got this sacred opportunity. Of the hundreds of millions in Bhaarath, how many have got this opportunity? Many who wished to come here have been unable to do so for one reason or another. Make the best use of the rare and sacred opportunity that has come your way.

Spread the message of worship of *Paadhukas*

Dr. Gadhia observed that many significant events are likely to take place before 1998. Dr. Gadhia invited Svaami for a big *paadhuka* celebration to be held in Birmingham in 1998. In accordance with this desire, Subramania Chettiar should be blessed with the necessary health and strength. He is willing to take on any burden, but is physically weak. But his faith and determination will give him the strength he needs. Our *Shaasthri* (who officiated at the function in the Nilayam) should also take a resolve.

He should spread the message of the worship of the *paadhukas* among wider sections of the people and dispel the darkness of ignorance. Whoever carries on the divine mission, unaffected by success or failure, joy or sorrow, will be the recipient of God's grace. Krishna has declared that such a devotee is dear to Him. Such a devotee develops detachment towards all worldly concerns and is indifferent to the happenings in the phenomenal world. He is indifferent to praise or censure, pleasure or pain.

The next quality a devotee should have is giving up attachment to the fruits of one's actions. Even the egoistic sense of doership should be given up. Everything belongs to the Divine. Engage yourself in good acts and experience the Divine. (Bhagavaan then honoured the *Pandith* with a gold kankanam and fastened a gold wristlet on Subrahmanya Chettiar. The entire gathering broke into applause. Bhagavaan also presented shawls to the other *pandithhs* who had participated in the function).

Discourse in Sai Kulwant Mandap on 3-1 O- 1996.

It is here in India that there is a mine of spiritual wisdom and spiritual treasure: the Dharshanas, Upanishaths and the Geetha and the Vedhas. This has to be distributed, pure and unsullied, guaranteed in value and quality, to eager aspirants everywhere and so, we have here a succession of sages and saints. On account of the teachings and the lives of these people, there is a vast field of spiritual virtue in this land, which needs only a little care to yield a rich harvest.

Baba