

8. CHANTING GOD'S NAME --THE ROYAL PATH TO LIBERATION

Date: 14 April 2003 Occasion: Tamil New Year Place: Brindavan

Forbearance is the real beauty in this sacred land of Bharat.
Of all the vows, adherence to truth is the greatest vow.
The nectarine feeling in this country is the feeling of
motherhood.
Self-respect is valued far more than the very life itself.
People have forgotten the basic principles of this great culture
and,
in the name of freedom, are imitating Western culture today.
Alas! What can I speak of the governance of this country?
The Bharatiyas (Indians) are not aware of the greatness of
their cultural heritage
just as a mighty elephant is not aware of its own strength.
(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Today everyone is rejoicing celebrating Tamil New Year's day. Swabhanu is the name of this year. 'Swa' means Atma. In the spiritual parlance, we have four stages towards liberation: Salokya, Sameepya, Sarupya, and Sayujya (mental proximity to the Divine, physical proximity to the Divine, identifying oneself with the Divine, becoming one with the Divine). The letter 'Sa' is associated with the Atmic feeling. With the onset of the New Year, 'Swabhanu', one should also develop new and divine feelings.

Many New Years have gone by. But to what extent man has transformed himself? Man should tread a new and noble path and set an ideal to others. Only then would he have celebrated the arrival of New Year in the true sense. He should practise and propagate newer ideals in his daily life. Vedanta declares, Aham etat na (I am not this). Aham means 'I', the Atmic principle and 'this' refers to body. Man should not give scope to ahamkara (ego) by identifying himself with the body. 'I' does not correspond to the body. 'I' corresponds to the eternal and immortal Atma, which is not tainted by ego, pomposity, and immorality. Only when man develops such Atma viswasa (Self-confidence) can he set an ideal to others. Man today does not understand the meaning of Self-confidence. First of all, man should have faith in himself.

Where there is confidence, there is love;
Where there is love, there is truth;
Where there is truth, there is peace;
Where there is peace, there is bliss;
Where there is bliss, there is God.

Truth is the direct manifestation of God. People attribute various names to God. Sahasra seersha purusha sahasraksha sahasra pad (God has thousands of heads, eyes and feet). Names are many, but God is one. Be it any State or country, God is one. Ekam sath viprah bahudha vadanti (truth is one, but the wise refer to it by various names). What is truth? It is not merely reporting what is seen, heard or experienced. It is the transcendental truth which is not bound by time, space and circumstances. Be it any nation, any time, any circumstances, Truth is Truth.

The creation emerges from truth and merges into truth,
Is there a place where truth does not exist?
Visualise such pure and unsullied truth.
(Telugu Poem)

Truth cannot be different from nation to nation like American Truth, Russian Truth, Pakistani Truth, Indian Truth, etc. Truth is one and the same for all nations. Hence, we should recognise that Truth is God and worship Truth by strictly adhering to it.

We find unrest and agitation in the world today because people have forgotten truth. Sathyam bruyath, priyam bruyath, na bruyath sathyamapriyam (speak truth, speak pleasantly, and do not speak unpalatable truth). Only truth and righteousness can confer peace and prosperity on the world today. Sathyam vada; dharmam chara (speak truth; practise righteousness). This is the most important principle of Indian culture.

Once you develop truth and righteousness, peace and love will automatically follow. Righteousness is the head of Indian culture and, Truth its feet. But today people have severed the head and feet of Indian culture. They are clinging on to the trunk of artha and kama (wealth and desire). What is the use of a mere trunk without the head and the feet? People are striving to protect the country. If you protect and practise truth and righteousness, they will in turn protect the country. You don't need to make any special efforts to protect the country. It is enough if you protect truth and righteousness. The entire world is based on these two principles.

Embodiments of Love!

New Year does not bring new principles of truth and righteousness. They are changeless and eternal. When they are practised, the whole world will be taken care of. Hence, we have to always keep in mind these two principles. For man, truth and righteousness are his two eyes. In fact, they are his very life principles. He may undertake any activity, he may do any job or business, but he should make truth and righteousness the undercurrent of all his endeavours.

Man has to take to a newer path. Years have rolled by, but man has not given up his old and mean feelings. He has to purify his heart. Humanness will blossom only when there is transformation of the heart. Merely putting on new clothes is not enough, man has to change his character and behaviour. His conduct should be based on truth and righteousness. He has to understand the principle of Transcendental Truth. It is present in everyone. In fact, man is not a mere mortal, he is God. The Vedas say, Raso Vai Sah (God pervades everything in the form of essence). God moves about in the form of rasa (essence) in every limb and every cell and protects the body. Hence, He is known as Angirasa. If God does not protect the body, who else can? Body is not permanent.

This body is a den of dirt, and prone to diseases;
it is subject to change from time to time;
it cannot cross the ocean of samsara.
It is nothing but a quiver of bones.
Oh mind!
Do not be under the delusion that body is permanent.
Instead take refuge at the Divine Lotus Feet. (Telugu Poem)

Body is like a water bubble. Mind is like a mad monkey. Do not follow the body; do not follow the mind. Follow the conscience. Conscience is your God. You are forgetting God, who is present in you in the form of conscience and who is protecting your body in the form of Angirasa.

God is changeless, pure, and eternal. He has absolutely no trace of selfishness in Him. He is always concerned about the welfare of the devotees. Do not superimpose your selfishness on God and get deluded. When everything is in His hand, how can there be selfishness in Him? Whatever He does is for the welfare of all. Loka samasta sukhino bhavantu (May all the people of the world be happy)! This is what God aspires for. He is known as Aprameya, since He is beyond all measure. He is present in man's hridaya (heart) in the form of bliss. He shines as prema swarupa (embodiment of love). He practises dharma, being the embodiment of dharma. He leads from the front, setting an ideal for humanity and helping everyone. He says, "Oh man! Why fear when I am here. Follow Me." Why should one fear when God has given such an

assurance? If you follow Him, He will certainly bestow on you pure and unsullied bliss.

Saints and sages of yore performed intense penance in order to have the vision of God. Some of them died during their penance, but the others did not give up their resolve. They continued their penance with unflinching faith and determination. Ultimately, they had the divine vision. Then they declared to the world that they had seen God. Vedahametham purusham mahantham adityavarnam thamasa parasthath (I have visualised the Supreme Being, who shines with the effulgence of a billion suns and who is beyond thamas (the darkness of ignorance)). They exhorted people to make efforts to see God and experience bliss.

If you contemplate on God with pure and selfless love, you can also see Him. Today, many are in the quest of God. God is everywhere, but you should have the eyes to see Him. Today people are trying to see God with their charma chakshu (physical eye). That is why they are unable to see Him. One can see God only with jnana chakshu (the eye of wisdom).

Sarvatah panipadam tat sarvathokshi siromukham, sarvatah sruthimalloke sarvamavruthya tishthati (with hands, feet, eyes, heads, mouth and ears pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe). Where is the need to search for God, who is everywhere? What we have to search for is not God but a true human being! But he is not to be seen anywhere. Nowadays, we find only akara manavas (human beings in form), not achara manavas (human beings in practice).

Practice is very essential. Without acharana (practice), what is the use of merely having akara (form)? Do not repose your faith in the body and consider it to be permanent. It is merely an instrument given by God. Make proper use of this instrument by discharging your duties and serving society. Help the needy and the forlorn. Take good care of the destitute and the poor with love. Dedicate your life for the cause of sathya (truth) and dharma. That is how you have to celebrate the arrival of New Year. You should give up your old and mean thoughts, fill your heart with novel, fresh and noble feelings and lead a new life.

But where is such a new life in the present-day world? Days have changed but feelings have not. Guddalu (clothes) are changed every day but gunamu (character) has not changed. Merely donning ochre robes will not make a sannyasi (renunciant). You should develop good qualities and become a sarvasanga parithyagi (totally devoid of attachment). Only then can you be called a true sannyasi.

Na karmana na prajaya dhanena thyagenaike amrutatthwamanasuh (immortality is not attained through action, progeny or wealth; it is attained only by sacrifice). Who has this quality of sacrifice in the present-

day world? One in a hundred or in a million is endowed with such a noble quality. Though God is present in everyone, He manifests Himself in a man of sacrifice. Sacrifice is of paramount importance to man. He should become a thyaga jeevi (one of sacrifice), not a bhoga jeevi (one who leads a life of pleasures). Thyaga leads to yoga, whereas bhoga gives rise to roga (disease). So, give up bhoga and take to the path of yoga.

There are people who do Rama Chintana (contemplation of Rama) day in and day out. Every moment of their life and every cell of their body is filled with the name of Rama. Such a life is a life of fulfilment. Indeed their lives are sanctified. Man should contemplate on God, his only saviour incessantly. The world will never come to your rescue. The world has witnessed many changes in the fields of politics and philosophy. Old Siddhantas (Schools of Thought) have given way to new ones. Many political parties have come and gone. But in what way has the world benefited from all these changes? There is no progress whatsoever. The world is where it has been. Everyone is interested in only filling their belly. No one is making any effort to understand the principle of Divinity.

You have to think of God every moment. If you win the grace of God, you can overcome any obstacle and acquire any type of wealth. Once Ramdas prayed, "Oh Lord! What did I do to deserve Your bounteous grace? I have not offered anything to You, yet You shower Your grace on me." Then the Lord replied, "My dear, the spirit of thyaga (sacrifice) that you have developed is the true yoga. I know the sense of sacrifice that is there in your mind, you may not be aware of it. Only God can understand the sacrifice you have made mentally. Others need not understand; they cannot understand any way. Only God can understand your thyaga, yoga, and prema (love)."

Saint Thyagaraja composed a song in praise of Rama, the meaning of which is as follows:

But for the power of Rama, could a mere monkey cross the
mighty ocean?
Would Lakshmi Devi, the goddess of wealth, become His
consort?
Would Lakshmana worship Him?
Would the intelligent Bharata offer his salutations to Him?
But for the mighty power of Rama, would all this happen?
Indeed, Rama's power is beyond all description.
(Telugu Poem)

Nobody can estimate the infinite power of Rama. It can only be experienced in the heart. Love is the only yardstick to measure the power of Divinity. Hence, we have to develop love to experience Divinity. Hanuman could jump across the vast ocean because he chanted the

Name of Rama always. With the power of Rama's Name, he could lift mighty mountains.

How could the monkeys build a bridge across the ocean? In the beginning, the boulders were getting drowned in the ocean and the monkeys were frustrated. Then Hanuman thought of a plan. He inscribed the letter 'Ra' on one boulder and 'ma' on another and threw them in the ocean one after the other. They stuck together to make the Name 'Rama'. With the help of many such boulders bearing the letters 'Ra' and 'ma', a bridge was constructed. The boulders became light and floated on water only due to the power of Rama's Name

There is an intimate and inseparable relationship between the love of a devotee and the grace of God. Only love can win divine grace. You have to practise righteousness and tread the path of sacrifice to experience everlasting happiness. The name and principle of Rama will give you tremendous strength and power. The divine principle underlying the Avatars of Rama and Krishna can neither be explained in words nor understood with the help of worldly education. Only through love can one understand them. Fill your heart with love and chant the name of Rama forgetting yourself in bliss. Then Rama will certainly give you His divine darshan.

Once there lived an ardent devotee of Rama in Chengalpat near Madras. He wanted to attend the marriage of Thyagaraja's daughter in Thiruvayyar. He wanted to present a picture of Rama to the bride. In those days, there were no buses, cars, or planes. Therefore, he walked all the way from Chengalpat to Thiruvayyar, carrying the picture of Rama.

On seeing the picture, Thyagaraja was ecstatic and burst into a song, "Oh Rama! You walked all the way in order to protect me. You have taken so much trouble Oh Lord." In this manner, he went on extolling Rama's love and compassion. He experienced unity with Rama's Divinity. He considered Rama his dear old friend. You don't need to observe any formalities or use respectful words when you address your old friend. Thyagaraja addressed Rama with the same intimacy in the song, "Ra Ra ma inti daaka ..." (Oh Rama! Come to my house).

There is another song that reflects the feeling of friendship: "Enta vedukondu Raghava E panthamelara Oh Raghava ?" (How long should I plead with You, Oh Raghava! Why are You so obstinate and not responding?) Thyagaraja felt, "It is my duty to pray till Your heart melts. But the warmth of my prayer does not seem to have touched Your heart. One day or the other, Your heart will surely melt. I will wait till such time. I am in no hurry." In this manner, he consoled himself. It was only then that Rama granted him His divine vision. No one can comprehend how and when God is going to shower His grace on a sadhaka (spiritual

aspirant) and what type of boons He is going to grant him. He gives so many gifts and ultimately gives Himself and makes you ecstatic. Why then are you distancing yourself from such all-merciful Lord?

You are aware that everyday you chant the following prayer before partaking your food:

Brahmarpanam Brahma Havir
Brahmagnou Brahmanahutam
Brahmaiva Thena Ganthavyam
Brahma Karma Samadhina.

You say that the food is an offering to Brahman. Then where is Brahman? He is within. So, immediately God replies from within:

Aham Vaishvanaro Bhutva
Praninam Dehamasrita
Pranapana Samayukta
Pachamyannam Chaturvidham

God says "My dear one, I am in you in the form of Vaishvanara. I receive and digest the four types of food that you partake of. You don't need to send any special invitation to Me nor extol Me. I am yours and you are Mine. I am with you, in you, above you, below you, around you." God has given you such a great assurance. He has promised that He will be always with you. But you are not able to understand this.

Embodiments of Love!

God is the ocean of love and compassion. He is sweetest and most enchanting. That is why Rama is described as Pumsam mohana rupaya (One who enchants even the males). He captivates and attracts everyone. There is divinity in every object in this world. But man is unable to understand this divine principle. In spite of all his education and listening to the discourses of saints and holy men, he is unable to comprehend the nature of the divine. There is only one way by which you can understand God. Love Him wholeheartedly. Do not hate anyone. If you come across a person who hates you, do not reciprocate the same feeling. Greet him saying, "Hello friend, how are you?" Then all the hatred in him will vanish. He too will develop love toward you. God is your true friend and is most intimately related to you. Love is the only path that can take you to God. When you develop love, God will give Himself up to you and will protect you always.

Embodiments of Love!

It is a grave mistake on your part to consider yourself a mere human being. Contemplate on the fundamental principle of wisdom, Aham etat na (I am not this (body)). I and you are one. When you understand and experience such intimate relationship with God, there will be no differences whatsoever.

In this New Year, develop new and noble feelings; contemplate on God with full faith that He will grant you all comforts and happiness. Lead your life with love and enjoy peace and happiness. You should strive for the happiness of not merely yourself, your friends, and relatives, but for the welfare of all. Strive to make everyone happy with the constant prayer, Loka samasta sukhino bhavantu (May all the people of the world be happy)! Then you will certainly experience true peace and bliss. Those who help others will always be helped in turn; they will never be put to harm.

Bhagavan sang the bhajan, "Rama Rama Rama Sita ..." and then continued the discourse.

Embodiments of Love!

When you chant the divine Name with love at least once, you will experience inexplicable and overwhelming bliss in your heart. The divine Name melts even a stone-hearted person. Even ice takes some time to melt, but God's heart melts instantaneously when you chant His Name with love. So, chant the Name of God. Even while you are traveling, you can chant His Name silently without attracting others' attention. Sarvada sarva kaleshu sarvatra Rama chintanam (everywhere, at all times and under all circumstances, contemplate on the divine name of Rama). There is no greater sadhana (spiritual exercise) than this. The essence of all sadhanas is contained in this. In the Kali yuga, chanting of God's Name is the royal path to liberation.

Harer Nama Harer Nama Harer Namaiva Kevalam,
Kalau Nastyeva Nastyeva Nastyeva Gathiranyatha.

Chanting of the divine Name is
the only path to liberation in this age of Kali.

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