

39. Have firm faith in the unity of Self and Cosmic Lord

The attitude of the worshiper and the worshiped is the seed of devotion (*bhakti*). First, the worshiper's mind is attracted by the special qualities of the object of worship. The worshiper tries to acquire these special qualities. This is spiritual discipline (*sadhana*). In the early stages of spiritual discipline, the distinction between worshiper and worshiped is full, but as the spiritual discipline progresses, this feeling diminishes and, when attainment is reached, there is no distinction whatsoever.

Whatever the object of worship one has grasped and loved and sought by spiritual discipline, one should have firm faith that the individual self (*jivatma*) is the supreme Lord (*Paramatma*). There is only one wish fit to be entertained by the aspirant: the realisation of the Lord (*Iswara Sakshatkar*). There is no room in the mind for any other wish. That is why Kunthi prayed thus to Lord Krishna, "Let us have always, O Lord of the world, distress, and misery, if only You grant us Your sight (*darshan*), the sight that destroys rebirth."

Devotees (*bhaktha*) who desire and seek to attain the Supreme should have this mental attitude. Then, regardless of joy and sorrow, without any worry about their own satisfaction, they will engage in spiritual discipline (*sadhana*) firmly, uninterruptedly, and with conviction; after understanding the Reality, they will have full contentment.

From this point of view, there is no difference between a liberated soul (*jivan-mukthas*) and a devotee; both are beyond ego (*ahamkara*), nature (*prakriti*) with its three attributes, and the *dharma* of the caste-stage of life (*varna-ashrama*). The hearts of such will be full of compassion and the urge to do good to the world. Their *Brahmic* bliss impels them to act in this way. They will have no desires, for desires are the products of feelings of "I" and "mine". Only after these desires are uprooted do people become devotees, right? So there can be no room in them for desires. They are devotees of immortal nature (*amritha-swarupa*). For those with that immortal nature, there can be no appetite except for the sweetness of spiritual bliss (*ananda*).

40. Start spiritual practise at the earliest moment

Yama (Lord of Death) is as omnipresent as Siva! Yama is associated with the body (*deha*); He cannot affect the individual soul (*jiva*). Siva is associated with the individual soul, but He won't allow the body to subsist for any length of time. The body is the essential vehicle for the individual soul to understand its real nature. Still, who knows when it may become the target for the attention of Yama, the master of the body? Who knows when this body will get entrapped in the coils of Yama's ropes?

The individual soul, burdened with this easily destructible body, must grasp the above-mentioned caution and be all-eager to merge in Siva, whatever the moment, that very moment! No single moment that is passed by can be turned back. People usually delay doing some things; yesterday's till today and today's till tomorrow. But the tasks of spiritual discipline are not of such a nature. For them, there is no yesterday and no tomorrow. This very moment is the moment! The minute that just elapsed is beyond your grasp; so too, the approaching minute is not yours! Only the individual soul that has this understanding engraved on its heart can merge in Siva.