

## 25. Service To Man Must Be Regarded As Service To God

*To set right those who have taken the wrong path and to protect the good people, Sai will be born again and again. He will be born without any pangs of birth. What other truth can I convey to you, the good people who have assembled here.*

### **Pavitratma Swarupas:**

The sacred story of Prahlada is very illuminating. The *gopalas* have a pure, *sathwik* and clean mind. The *gopikas* have been used to worship a form, that is Krishna. On the other hand, Prahlada was an equally sacred person, but he was worshipping the formless aspect of God. *Bhagavatha* is a confluence of both these features—an aspect of God that has no form and no qualities, and another aspect of God which has a form and some qualities. The worship of the formless aspect of God and of God with a form constitute the essence of *Bhagavatha* and may be compared with the two eyes of a person. It is necessary for us to recognise these two aspects of God. If we ask which of the two feet is more important for us to walk, we will see that both feet are equally important. It is only when we have both feet that we can walk comfortably. Walking is meant for reaching the destination.

This is a pillow. The outer cover of this pillow is cloth and what is inside is cotton. One who worships the visible form will argue that the cotton is more important. The basis for this is that without cotton, we cannot have cloth. When we examine the inseparable connection between those two aspects, we will come to the conclusion that the cloth has a certain usage and the cotton has another type of usage. Cotton is some-

thing that is used to produce the cloth but cannot replace the cloth. So, for everyone who is in a human form, it is essential to have a form as an aspect of God, at least as a first step. It is not right for us to begin the search for God by thinking of the contents of the container, forgetting the container. This is a silver tumbler. We do not see, in this, the silver being different from the tumbler. Someone has given me the silver, and I have got a tumbler made out of the silver. If the individual asks for his silver back, it is not possible for me to say that he could take the silver and let me retain the tumbler. It is not possible, at all, to separate the silver from the tumbler. In this manner, as the silver and the tumbler are inextricably connected with each other, God with a form and God without a form are connected with each other. If we just bring a piece of silver and want to pour water into it, we cannot do so. If we take the silver and give it the shape of a tumbler, then only can we use it to contain water. Here, the form of the container can be compared to the form of God. Taking this form as the basis, we can gradually proceed to realise the nature of the contents of that container. But remember that if we want to sell the tumbler, we will not get any value for the tumbler. The value is really that of the silver that is used in making the tumbler. Therefore, when the experience of the *Atma* flows in a mortal form, only when the aspect of *Para Brahman* is mixed with this, will it get a value. The purpose of *sadhana* is to enable us to worship the divinity that is omnipresent and help us to see the divinity that is in us. What we should learn today is the path that will enable us to see the divinity that is present in every one. Prahlada was one who loves Hari and Hiranya Kashyapa was one who hated Hari. At all times, there was a difference of opinion between the father and the son. As Prahlada grew older, the father tried his best to teach his son what he considered as the correct type of education. For an individual filled with ego, jealousy and arrogance, the world around him is the most im-

portant thing. Since Hiranya Kashyapa was of this type, he used to preach that there was no God, and that he himself was God and that there was nothing worthwhile beyond his kingdom. Prahlada was very much against such teachings. He was feeling sorry that the people in the world were worshipping *Siri* (wealth) instead of Hari. He felt that without the presence of Hari, all the wealth was indeed useless. He began to preach that Hari was the base and the wealth that one gets is only incidental. Prahlada used to think that if only man can learn how to reconcile Hari with *Siri*, he can then become very blessed indeed. As he was immersed in such thought and actions, his father did not like the spiritual path on which his son was going. Therefore, he got hold of two spiritually strong teachers by name Chanda and Amarka and instructed them to see that Prahlada was put on a different path. Hiranya Kashyapa was always worshipping wealth; and Prahlada was always worshipping Hari; and between these two extremes, the mother Lilavati was suffering very much. Here, we should carefully understand the difference between human beings, demons and divine persons. When we talk of God, we should not think of him as residing at some distant place; in fact he resides in each one of you. When you think of sin, you should realise that it is not external to you and it depends on the actions that you undertake. Therefore, when we talk of demons, human beings or *Devas*, it is not as if they are resident at some far off place. As has been told in the *Gita*, this division is really based on the *Gunas* or actions and the classification of the person is determined by his qualities. In keeping with this, Hiranya Kashyapa represents the demons, Lilavati represents the humans and Prahlada represents the divine ones. Thus, in one family, the father, mother and son represent demonic, human and divine qualities. In this manner, Prahlada's actions, which originate from divinity, were being promoted day after day. Since Prahlada had the fortune of being close to Narada, the coming to-

gether of these two divine personalities brought a great deal of *ananda* to Prahlada. The two teachers, Chanda and Amarka tried to teach Prahlada that Hiranya Kashyapa was God and that his kingdom was heaven. They were also telling him that there was no one greater than his father. However, Prahlada never agreed with this kind of preaching. On the other hand, he would defy the teachers and tell them that this was not the kind of teaching that they should be imparting to young and pure minds such as his. After some time, Hiranya Kashyapa brought Prahlada and made him sit on his lap and asked him what he learnt from his *Gurus*. To this, Prahlada replied that the *Gurus* had taught him all that there was to learn about the important aspects of life. He went on to say that “*Om Namō Narayana*” represents the essence of all learning. As soon as he heard this, Hiranya Kashyapa felt that he was being stung by millions of scorpions. He could not bear this situation at all and called the *gurus* and instructed them to use whatever methods of punishment they would like, but to see that Prahlada’s attention was diverted from the path chosen by him to a different one. He tried many methods to change Prahlada. He tried to beg him, punish him, cajole him and threaten him, but all these were of no avail at all. Prahlada would not lend himself to any of these methods. He had only one ambition and all these methods did not deter him from his chosen sacred path. To a person who is in divine *samadhi*, the worldly punishments will not mean anything. On Prahlada who was immersed in the aspects of Narayana, the punishments had no effect at all. The teachers, Chanda and Amarka came to Hiranya Kashyapa and told him that all the demons were punishing Prahlada, but this had no effect on him at all and that he was always in bliss uttering the name of Narayana. He would not suffer or cry in spite of all the punishments. They got snakes to bite him, elephants to trample on him and beat him mercilessly; but all these were of no avail. Prahlada was not moved at all. These were not things

which a father should mete out to a son. Hiranya Kashyapa put the son to indescribable pain and torture, just because the boy was always thinking of the Lord. In return for all this, Prahlada was teaching the father various aspects of truth and God. He said, "A human being who is attracted by transient pleasures will be mistaking charcoal for a precious stone."

In the same manner in the *Upanishads*, in order to test Nachiketa, King Yama asks him a number of questions. He asks, "Dear Son! You are in the prime of youth and without experiencing the pleasures of youth, why do you want to enter the spiritual world?" To this, Nachiketa replies, "These pleasures are very transient. They are like passing clouds and are like visions which one gets in a dream." He was saying that he was interested only in the permanent aspects of life. Prahlada, Nachiketa and several other young devotees have demonstrated that youth is no obstruction to experiencing the sacred aspects of divinity. Prahlada has taught the world about the kind of persons that should be regarded as good teachers. He said, "The prayers that are offered to Kamalaksha are the only true prayers. The eyes are valuable only if they are used to see divinity. The head that bows to Seshasayee is the only head that counts. All other heads are as good as not being present. That education which teaches us about the Lord is the only true education. The teacher who teaches us about the secrets of divinity is the only true teacher. A father who encourages the son to go and reach Hari is the only real father." Nowadays, there are many fathers like Hiranya Kashyapa. If the children want to attend divine discourses or sacred bhajans, the father discourages them and says that they should take to such a path only when they grow old and retire from active service. Some fathers even advise their children that they should do such things only as a last resort. Because such fathers have become very large in number, the children are taking to a wrong path.

In this context, Prahlada has also said, “How can you think of God when the messengers of the God of death are dragging you, and your own relatives are pushing your body nearly dead, out of the house and crying over the impending death? Is it possible to utter the name of Hari, at that time, if you do not do so when you are in good health?” He continues, “Oh! Foolish person, when the phlegm chokes your throat and when your relatives are surrounding you and crying over your impending death, is it possible to think of God?” It is in this context that it is said that such prayers and thoughts should start at an early stage of your life. You should start early, drive slowly and reach safely. If you start early on such a path, there is a possibility of your blossoming into a good person. If a plant is good when it is tiny, it will develop into a good and straight tree; but if the plant becomes crooked even when it is tiny, the entire tree will be crooked. In the early age, you must see that your life takes a straight path. This age of yours is, therefore, the most important one. So saying, you should not give up your family, job and life and go and live in a forest. This is not the right kind of sacrifice. You should have “hands in the society and heads in the forest.” But today it is exactly the opposite. Many people have their hands in the forest and their heads in the society. By following such a path, we are losing even the little divinity that is present in us. Whatever service we do, we should regard it as being done in the thought of God. A few minutes ago, one of the speakers told you that service to man must be regarded as service to God. Abu Ben Adam earned the love of God. He was dedicated to the service of man. We may say that we have a great deal of love towards God, but who is the one who can measure your love towards God. In fact, God must be pleased with your love and say that you have a great deal of love for Him. In such a case, God will have love towards you.

What is the point of your talking about your love like a frog in the well? Your love must be such that God will be pleased with it and say that in return, you deserve his grace. You should get back an acknowledgement from God that he has received your love, sent in the form of a registered letter. Whether your love is of a superior type or not, the answer must come from the Lord. Prahlada was one who had received the reply from the Lord in many ways. He used to feel that God was present everywhere. He felt that his *sadhana* was always directed towards the Lord. For him, work was transformed into worship. On one occasion, after becoming very angry that Prahlada was not changing his ways, Hiranya Kashyapa sent for his son and asked where the God to whom he was praying was residing. To this Prahlada replied that God was present everywhere, wherever he is looked for. Then Hiranya Kashyapa asked if God was indeed residing in the pillar in front of them. Prahlada said that God was resident at all places including the pillar. He also said that the aspect of God was so widespread that there was no place even to put a needle. The father then asked if he would see God if the pillar was broken, and he went and broke the pillar. We should here understand why the Lord had given his vision to Hiranya Kashyapa who was always arguing that God does not exist. We should also understand the difference between Prahlada and Hiranya Kashyapa. If one has to be born as man, there must be some *karma* behind it. Even if a tree has to be born, there must be a seed planted. Similarly for the birth of a human being, there must be some cause, *karma* in the form of a seed.

In a similar manner, we may ask if God is to come in human form, should there be some *karma* behind it. In the case of man, he is born as a result of his *karma*. Man is not born as a result of others' *karma*. He is born as a result of his own *karma*. The tree that comes is dependent on the seed. You can-

not get a mango tree, if you plant a lemon seed. However, for the birth of God in human form, there are two causes. The bad deeds of bad people and the good deeds of good people are jointly responsible for the birth of the Lord. Here, as a result of the bad that Hiranya Kashyapa had done and the good that Prahlada had done, the Nara Simha *Avathar* had come. Prahlada proclaimed the truth that God is present everywhere; and in order to establish that truth, God came in human form. In the earlier times, Hiranya Kashyapa believed that God does not exist. and with this belief, he searched for God and he did not find God. On the other hand, Prahlada found him even in a pillar. If you say that God exists, he exists. For one who says that God does not exist, He does not exist. For one who says that God exists and does not exist, He exists and does not exist. These are only your feelings. No and Yes are not for Sai for whom it is always Yes, Yes, Yes. To reconcile these two, a certain amount of *sadhana* is necessary.

We now take the incident of a group of people who said that God does not exist. One *sanyasi* comes and says that God exists. The moment they saw the yellow robe, the others became angry and surrounded him and asked him if God really exists. He asked, "What is it that exists, if God does not exist? If you can show proof that God does not exist, I will show proof that God exists." The *sanyasi*, thinking that he must teach them a good lesson, said that he would show them God if they can bring him a glass of milk. Thinking that he can, indeed, show them God, they rushed and brought him a glass of milk. As soon as they heard of this news, the entire village gathered together. In the centre of the group, the *sanyasi* was stirring the milk and carefully looking inside. He explained that he was looking for butter. They asked how he could see butter in a glass of milk. The *sanyasi* then said that just as one cannot see butter in milk, directly, one cannot see God directly.



To see butter in milk, you have to heat the milk, make it into curd and then churn the curd. You will then get butter. The people gathered there agreed that, although butter cannot be seen, it was present in the milk and will come out after some effort. The *sanyasi* then said that in a similar manner, God was present in all creation but would become visible only after some effort. Like butter is present in milk, God is present everywhere. As we have to adopt a particular path to get butter out of milk, we shall have to adopt a path called *Sadhana* to get to experience divinity and have a vision of the Lord. Prahlada followed such a path and made the people around him follow such a path to secure the vision of the Lord.

Here we may get a doubt why the Lord had to take this special form to get rid of Hiranya Kashyapa. In fact, Hiranya Kashyapa was a great man who did a lot of *sadhana* to attain the grace of God; but in course of time, he had also developed a lot of ego and forgot the all-powerful God. When he was performing *thapas*, he asked a boon from God according to which he would not die of old age, or in the forest, or in a house; that he should not be killed by man or animal; that he would not die in a home or outside a home. As God was pleased with his *thapas*, he agreed to this boon; but in due course, he had to kill Hiranya Kashyapa because of the very bad qualities that he had developed. In order to keep up the promise that he gave and yet kill him, he had to take such an unusual form that was neither human nor animal. He took Hiranya Kashyapa on his thighs so that he was neither on the ground nor in the sky. He destroyed Hiranya Kashyapa by his nails, which neither had life nor were without life. God can give boons; but when sin exceeds all limits, he will undertake to punish. Thinking that we have the grace of God, we should not exceed limits of sin. The belief or non-belief regarding the existence of God is only a creation of your mind, and it has nothing to do with God.

Today, when people are forgetting the sacred aspect of divinity and when in its place they are promoting sin and the belief in the non-existence of God, it is necessary for students to strengthen their faith in God. In the text of *Bhagavatha*, the story of Prahlada and the description of the devotion of the *gopikas* are indeed inspiring and sacred. These stories are such that they will easily enter your mind. Prahlada has been showing what should be the food that you should eat for this sacred type of *sadhana*. One of the main reasons why demoniac qualities are being shown by human beings today is the type of food that people are eating. I have told you several times that the type of food that you take will determine the type of thoughts that you get in your head, and this will determine the type of *sadhana* that you do. Whether in the field of science or in the field of spirituality, you cannot but agree that the food that you eat determines the type of behaviour that you have. The gross type of food that we eat is excreted out. The subtle content of the food is converted into blood. Even more subtle content of food changes into our mind. To a large extent, our ideas are determined by the kind of food that we eat and this shapes our conduct. Food and conduct have become the main reasons for our good and bad actions. If we really want to come to this stage of divine comprehension, we should accustom ourselves to the appropriate *sadhana*.

Amongst all things that are born, to be born as a human being is the most sacred and most difficult thing and we must make an effort to achieve the divine objective. Prahlada was always immersed in the divine *Namasmarana* and, in this age, this is the only thing that will enable us to attain divine bliss.