

6. The ways of the Divine

THE ways of the Lord in granting relief to devotees in distress or trouble are infinitely varied and often baffling. On one occasion, the Pandavas during their exile from the kingdom, had strayed into the forest of Romarishi.

Romarishi was a sage whose body was covered with hair so long, that it spread as a carpet into the surrounding forest. There was a holy tree in that forest, yielding a very special fruit. The unique quality of that fruit was that once it was tasted one would not have hunger for years and years. But that fruit should not be plucked; it should be eaten after it dropped by itself. So, waiting for the fruit to fall, Romarishi was doing *Tapas* there.

One day, when Dharmaraja and Draupadi were on a stroll in the woods, Draupadi happened to look at this particular tree and saw the luscious big fruit hanging from it. "Can we not take this," she said to her husband, "so that all of us could share it today?" Then Dharmaraja shot an arrow and the fruit fell to the ground. Holding his bow in his right hand, he went to lift the fruit with his left hand. It was so heavy he could not move it. Draupadi also tried to help. Dharmaraja used both his hands, still the fruit would not move. In the meantime, Arjuna also came there and all three---

Arjuna, Dharmaraja and Draupadi---tried to lift that fruit, but it would not move. The two younger brothers also came and tried to help lift the fruit but however hard they tried it was no use; it would not move. Finally came the strong man, Bhima. He asked the others to move away and said, "I will lift this." But even Bhima could not succeed.

Meanwhile the hair of Romarishi, which had spread over all that area, began to stir. Because these six people were trampling about trying to lift the fruit, Romarishi felt the disturbance as strands of his hair were being trodden and pulled. He realised that there was someone trying to steal the fruit and he became very angry. Immediately his long hairs started to come together and coil round the Pandavas and tie them up.

Draupadi realized the danger, and immediately prayed to Lord Krishna. 'Draupadi called on Lord Krishna whenever she sensed any trouble. Krishna appeared before her. Draupadi fell at His Feet and prayed to Him for help to protect the Pandavas from the danger that was about to engulf them. Krishna told Draupadi that there was nothing He could do, since Romarishi was a great sage. As Lord, He resided in the hearts of all *rishis*, including Romarishi; so how could He do anything against the wishes of that Rishi? But Draupadi held on to His Feet and said, "You alone can save us. You can do anything you wish to do, in all the three worlds!" Then Krishna said, "All right, I will help you, but all of you should be totally silent, not say a word; you should do exactly as I tell you. Do not have any doubt or hesitation, but do exactly as I direct."

Draupadi promised that they would obey Krishna's orders. Krishna went to each of the Pandavas and whispered His plan, in their ears. He told them: "I will now go to Romarishi's *ashram*; a little later, you must follow me there."

In the meantime, Romarishi was furious with anger. He was about to curse the poachers. At that very moment, Krishna entered the *Ashram*. Romarishi fell prostrate at Krishna's Feet. He was overjoyed to see Him and asked Him, "What is it I can do for you, Lord?" Krishna kept Romarishi occupied, making a few casual inquiries, till the Pandavas arrived.

As soon as the six reached the *Ashram* and entered it, Krishna fell at the feet of the Pandavas. The Pandavas were feeling very embarrassed, but remembering Krishna's command, they said nothing. Romarishi, seeing Krishna fall at the feet of the visitors, also fell at their feet. Then Krishna introduced the Pandavas to the *Rishi*.

As Romarishi listened to the words of Krishna praising the greatness of the Pandavas, he totally forgot his anger. When Krishna explained that these were the people who were tempted by the fruit he awaited, Romarishi was so transformed that he said, "Let them take the fruit. I would like them to have it." By eating that fruit the Pandavas were able to live without hunger for a long time.

Soon after the Battle of Kurukshetra Krishna used the good offices of the Sage Durvasa to keep in hiding the Pandava brothers, whom Aswathama had vowed to exterminate, before the dawn of another day. Krishna approached the Sage, who was reputed for his quick temper as well as his adherence to truth, and told him about the peril confronting the Pandavas and requested him to keep them hidden in a cellar under his seat. The Sage told Krishna that he would not be able to utter a falsehood if Aswathama came to him enquiring about the whereabouts of the Pandavas. Krishna suggested that the Sage could tell the truth in a tone which would deter Aswathama from questioning the Sage further.

The strategy was eminently successful. When Aswathama, after a futile search for the Pandavas, came to Sage Durvasa and requested him to reveal to him their whereabouts, the Sage ejaculated gruffly: "The Pandavas? They are *beneath* me!" The roar rattled Aswathama so much that he did not dare to pursue the matter further, lest the Sage lose his temper and curse him. And the Pandavas 'beneath him' were saved!

An informal talk to Devotees at Trayee Brindavan on 4-4-1986.