

8. Love must win

CONSIDER, O man, whether you earn any lasting joy at all from your toil from the time of your waking in the morning to that of going to sleep at night, a toil incessant and limitless, a toil which often does not leave you even a moment's interval to call to mind the glow and grandeur of God? No wonder that even though God is everywhere, those who have seen Him are few and far between. Govindha, as the proverb goes, belongs to all, but there are hardly any who actually claim Him as their all. Thousands there are who extol the beauty and majesty of God in glamorous prose or poetry, but a counted few are the souls that share His Grace. For the sweetness of nectar is known only to those who place it on the tongue, and not to those who collect it in cups, caskets or even barrels!

There were three Andhra mystics who had nectar on their tongues, so to speak, and so were able to sing of the ecstasy they experienced, the God they realized. They were, as you may guess, Potharaaju, Goparaaju and Thyaagaraaju. They were ever aware of the Divine Principle, the warp and woof, the cause and effect, the beginning and end of the entire cosmos. They did not deviate even a little from the path of devotion to and absorption in God. They had, each one of them, known once for all that they could rely on none other than Him as Master or Protector.

Today people adore the strong, the wealthy and the exalted as their patrons and protectors. They run after such persons and humiliate themselves by flattering them. But for these three the only Protector, Master and Patron, was God.

Raama in the heart can give unalloyed joy

Thyaagraaju could have easily bided beside the thrones of rulers for the asking of it. He could have received invaluable gifts from royal patrons. But he refused the honours his contemporaries were prepared to heap on him. He said, "O mind, tell me if it is the treasures bequeathed by high dignities or the Divine Presence of Raama in the heart that can give unalloyed joy?" The emissaries from the palace had to return, carrying back with them the presents they had brought.

Potharaaju also had the same attitude towards worldly riches for he too was immersed in Divine delight. His brother-in-law, Shreenatha, once advised him to dedicate the great Thelugu epic poem, Bhaagavatham, to the ruler of the kingdom, for the king would shower diamonds on him and free him from poverty for ever. Potharaaju replied "Rather than wed this lovely, tender, angelic maid of poetry to wealthybarbarians to earn polluted food in return, I would gladly feed myself, my wife and children on what I can find of fruits and roots in the jungles. I will dedicate this epic only to God, who inspired me and bestowed song upon my lips. No one else deserves this offering. I am bound by loyalty to only the Supreme Deity, Raamachandhra."

Follow in the footsteps of saints

Then we have Goparaaju, who built the temple at Bhadhraachalam. Today it is difficult to find men who would refrain from unscrupulously misappropriating temple funds. But Goparaaju used his life and his means, even the lives and means of his kith and kin, for rebuilding and renovating the Raama temple at Bhadhraachalam. Later, while in jail for the alleged misuse of state revenue, he pleaded with Raama, "By spending 10,000 *varaahas* I got made a green gem necklace for Seetha, the Mother. I got made a crown of diamonds for you, my Raamachandhra. You accepted them coolly and put on airs! No, no, Raama, do not get angry at my disparaging speech. When

these people here deal blows of injustice, I blurt out harsh words. Pardon me!" See how near and dear Goparaaju took Raama to be, and how full of *prema* (love) he was for the deity.

Such great persons are found not only in Andhra Pradesh, but in other regions too. The culture of India has ever extolled such embodiments of devotion and held them up as examples before the common man. You must read about these saints, revere them and follow in their footsteps. To do this, you must also keep yourselves in good company. In most of the Shiva temples you will find the idol of the bull installed right opposite the *lingam*. Devotees taking *dharshan* of Shiva look straight over the head of the bull, for the bull itself is taking *dharshan* with concentrated devotion which they want to share. Just as the devotees of Shiva keep company with His vehicle, the Bull, to earn His Grace, you too must choose friends who by their company would help in raising your aptitudes. Moreover, as teachers, you have to be models for the children as well as for their parents, who often look up to you as the only educated persons in the vicinity.

Treat the school always as a House of God

A little while ago, Nathaniel, a teacher from Warangal, promised that he would transform his school into a House of God. But the school is always a House of God. To treat it as a caravanseral or as a prison or a house of correction, is sacrilege. Treat it as a holy place where Saraswathi, the deity presiding over knowledge and the arts, is present and is worshipped. Then, in that atmosphere of veneration, the pupils will mould themselves into worthy examples for the entire world. By taking this care the teacher will be evincing an intelligent love towards the child. He will be prompting the pupils to accord their conduct with the sacred atmosphere of the school.

After all, even the mother of the child may ignore some of its faults or even appreciate some of its peculiar mannerisms, but the teachers must be vigilant enough to take note of them and correct them by soft, sweet persuasion. The pupil will surely, listen and obey if he senses the sincerity behind the teacher's love. If, however, the teacher preaches love but behaves as if he or she has no love, the persuasion would not succeed.

Be warned of falling into the easy path of moving with the current. Heroism demands that you should promote your individuality and follow the ideals you deem best. Do not imitate others through sheer laziness of thought. Aim high and do not be disheartened if you miss your mark. Better it is to fail in shooting a tiger than to succeed in shooting a sparrow.

Love will be rewarded a thousand-fold

Once you have placed an ideal before you or set a goal, stick to it through gain and loss. It is not for nothing that the songs goes:

Whatever you hold, once you have held it

Hold on to it, till you win.

Whatever you've asked, once you have asked it

Ask aloud for it, till you win.

Whatever you wish, once you have wished it

Wish deeper for it, till you win.

Whatever you've planned, once you have planned it

Plan firmer for it, till you win.

He must grant the victory to stop the wail---

Wail, weep and pray, till you win.

Beware ! Don't lose heart and lag behind in effort.

Goparaaju, the Raamdhas of Bhadhraachalam, said, "I will not permit my feet to swerve from the path; I will not leave You without being, assured of fearlessness."

There are two ways of accosting God. One is in the manner of the beginner, of the devotee who is still in the elementary stage. He rhapsodizes, "Lord! You are the embodiment of mercy, you are *Anandha-swaruupa* (embodiment of divine bliss), you are All-powerful," and hopes thereby to win God's Grace. But the dearer the devotee holds God, the more this distance disappears. It is just as when an acquaintance visits you, you welcome him with a hand shake and smiles which are largely artificial. But when an old friend drops in, you receive him with an informal hello and show him a seat with a twinkle in your eye and warmth in your heart. In the flood of formal praise, love is mostly absent. As it happens, in dealing with the personal God, love is the preeminent requisite. Therefore have faith, have patience and do acts of love and service. Love will be rewarded with Love a thousand-fold.

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Saguna and Nirguna (with Form and Formless) aspects of God create the same doubt in the minds of saadhak, whether they can both be true. It is like hardened ghee and liquid ghee.

Ice and water are the same; water takes the form of the vessel which contains it. It is formless. But, there is no distinction between ice and water.

In saadhana, the saguna worship and the nirguna meditation are like the right and left feet for the journey.

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