

## 15. The bliss of Divine love

IN the field of the heart grows a *kalpatharu* (wish fulfilling tree). Around it all kinds of shrubs have grown. If the shrubs are cleared, the wish-fulfilling tree will be visible. Today the aspirations of man soar to the sky. We should realise that man has not only a mind which conceives thoughts, but also a heart which can put them into practice. From the heart emanate such good qualities as kindness, compassion, sympathy, non-violence and equal-mindedness. Evil qualities like anger, envy, hatred, cruelty, greed also flow from the heart. Man has the power of discrimination through his *Buddhi* (intellect) to decide what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil.

However, the possession of *Buddhi* alone is not enough. He has to cultivate the spirit of enquiry to be convinced what is right or wrong. Even that is not enough. After having found what is right or wrong, he must live up to his convictions. Thinking, discriminating and practice--all three constitute the basic human characteristics. By the unity of these three, the light of Inaam (spiritual wisdom) illumines the heart. The mere presence of the light is not enough. We should seek to go forward with the help of that illumination. If, having this light we do not follow the path revealed by it, we are as unseeing as the blind.

### The heart is the seat of the Divine

Once, Lord Krishna appeared before Suurdhas, the blind saint, and told him: "Suurdhas, if you are keen to see the world, I shall restore your sight to you this very moment." The great devotee that he was, Suurdhas replied: "Those who are endowed with eyes are really blind when they do not gaze upon your auspicious, beautiful form. Having ears, they are nevertheless deaf when they do not choose to listen to the music of your melodious song. Having in their hands the power to attain the Divine, they drown themselves in the ocean of *Samsaara* (worldly life). Although you dwell in their hearts, they are deluded by the false, meretricious and transient attractions of the world. Though they have large eyes, they are not able to see you. Hence, I have no need for such hearts, such eyes or such ears. Give me, O Lord, ears that will listen to your song, eyes that will see your beautiful form and a heart in which you are installed," pleaded Suurdhas.

All religions are unanimous in regarding the heart as the seat of the Divine. The Hindhu *Shaasthras* (ancient scriptures) have declared that the heart is the temple of God. The sacred *Upanishaths* (*Vedhic* metaphysical treatises) have referred to the heart as a cave in which the Divine dwells. It is stated in the Bible that the man with a pure heart can see God. The Muslims regard the heart as located between the two fingers of God. The *Guru* of the Sikhs, Naanak declared that only a man with a pure heart can be regarded as a true Sikh. In this way the various faiths have affirmed that the heart' is the abode of God.

### The great lesson lotus teaches man

But the *saadhus* (the saints and mystics) have defined the heart in another way. Treating the Omkaar *manthra* as a rocking cradle the *Mahaavakya*, "*Thath Thwam Asi*" ("That Thou art") as a bed and *Chaithanyam* (the Universal Consciousness) as a baby, the great souls of the seven worlds have sung lullabies to the Lord. For them the heart is the cradle of the Lord. The *saadhaks* (spiritual aspirants) should therefore regard the heart as the veritable dwelling of the Divine.

Many great souls have experienced the heart as a lotus. Although rooted in mire, and growing up in muddy water, the lotus shines in purity. When the lotus opens its petals and looks up it seems

to be saying: "O Lord, please come and dwell in *me*." Though born in mire it does not wallow in it. Though surrounded by polluted water it is not polluted by it. This is the great lesson the lotus has to teach man. "Though you are living in a corrupt world and are born in the mire of an unrighteous society you must turn your mind towards God and make your heart a shrine for God" this is the message of the lotus to man.

If you see a scholar you tend to show respect to him. But when you meet persons with the qualities of kindness you develop a love for them. You regard them as one of yourselves. What is the reason? The scholar has doubtless intellectual abilities but his conduct may not be exemplary. When we meet a person exhibiting qualities of forbearance, compassion and sympathy we tend to love him for his way of life. Mere intellect without practical action is valueless. Only thought that is combined with action deserves to be esteemed.

We must therefore put into practice the precepts we profess. It is not possible for any one to determine whether a man is good or bad by examining his heart. You have to judge him by his actions and behaviour.

### **What is studied must be put into practice**

Lord Acton was a profound thinker and a great scholar. He had achieved eminence as an acute thinker. But the great scholar was not equally good at living up to his ideas. In the absence of right living all his scholarship was of little worth. On the eve of his sixtieth birthday he held a big banquet to which many great scholars and leading journalists were invited. The next day the papers wrote about Lord Acton. They admitted that he was a great personality and an outstanding scholar, but they pointed out that in his actions he had not been exemplary or done anything for the good of mankind. Despite his deep scholarship he had not been of service to the nation.

Books are not intended merely to be read. Sacred scriptures like the Koran, the Bible, the Upanishads, the Zend Avesta, the Granth Saheb and others are worshipped in shrines today. But no attempt is made to live up to their teachings. People are forgetting the purposes for which these sacred books came into existence. By a mere study of books no change can take place in our lives. What is studied must be put into practice. Knowledge that is not put into practice is like food that is not digested. When you want to digest food you have to chew it well and take it in an easily digestible form.

### **Entire Cosmos is governed by action**

This means that it is not enough to browse through a book but one must study it deeply, reflect on its contents and absorb its meaning so that one can practise what one has learnt. That is why all religious books have emphasised the doctrine of action. The entire cosmos is governed by action. In such a context there is no purpose in indulging in intellectual speculation without putting knowledge into practice.

The Bhagavathgeetha also lays stress on the *Karma-Siddhanta* (doctrine of action). Krishna declared: "There is nothing I need in this world for which I must strive. Nevertheless I am continuously engaged in action because if I, who am to stand out as an example to the world, do not perform actions, the people of the world will renounce activities." Moreover, if thoughts are not translated into deeds they will develop into a kind of disease. A man who feels hungry and craves for food, if he does not get it, he will develop illness. Similarly, a man who feels thirsty and wants water, unless he makes efforts to secure water, he will become weak and collapse.

Desires continually crop up in man. He is always wanting something. He yearns for various things. But this yearning for material things cannot be regarded as love. This may be called *apeksha* (fascination for worldly objects). When the yearning is turned towards God and becomes an intense longing for spiritual attainments, it is called Prema. Prema (pure love) is not related to the mind. It springs from the heart. That is why divinity can be realised only through the heart.

### **Divine Love of *Gopees* and *Prahlada***

There are many examples to illustrate this truth. If you take the love of the *Gopees* (milkmaids of Brindhaavan) for example, you may ask for what purpose did they love Krishna. They had no concern for worldly things. They were concerned only with the spiritual quest. Anyone looking at the *Gopees* conduct from a worldly point of view might regard their actions as improper. Likewise *Prahlada's* love for the Divine was not understood by those who judged him :from the worldly point of view. Would *Prahlada* have been able to bear with indifference all the tortures to which he was subjected if he was a worldly person? He went through ordeals as a child which no man could have endured.

When the king's minions goaded him with spears he prayed to the Lord and praised His glories without shedding a tear or showing any signs of fear. If his devotion had been concerned with worldly desires should he not have shed tears? Should he not have displayed fear being a mere child? He did not do so because the Lord Naaraayana was installed in his heart. The Lord's name was ever on his tongue. The Naaraayana consciousness filled his entire being from head to foot. Because of this, none of the pains inflicted on him by physical instruments affected him at all. With his thoughts centred on God the pains of the world did not affect him.

Look at the love of the *gopees*. When their mothers-in-law beat them or their husbands abused them they did not breathe a word, they did not complain, because they carried the image of Krishna in their hearts. Would it have been possible for them to put up with all the troubles inflicted on them if their love for Krishna was mere sensuous love? They were unlettered simple village folk but their love for the Lord was so transcendent that even Naaradha praised them for their pure and unalloyed devotion.

### **Real meaning of the spiritual quest**

It is only when what is uttered from the mouth moves the heart to action that there will be proper conduct. A *saadhaka* decorates the idol of his chosen deity and makes offerings to it during worship. A farmer ploughs his land and irrigates it to grow the crop of his choice. The *bhaktha* (devotee) is the cultivator for the field of his heart. He must irrigate the field of his heart with the water of *Prema*, manure it with *Saadhana*, sow the seeds of the Divine name and fence it with spiritual discipline. Only then will he experience bliss---the bliss of Divine love and not worldly love. However, in this *Kali yuga* scriptures are read but there is no change in the heart which inspires spiritual endeavour. Because the heart is not transformed and sublimated people lead empty and futile lives.

Every good thought must spur one to action. For instance when a *saadhaka* sings a hymn he must feel immersed in its meaning and become one with it. It is the heart that brings about such a feeling of oneness. God resides in the heart. He is beyond the reach of external objects. Modern man sheds copious tears for achieving wealth, health, position and fame. He is carried away by

the stream of his tears, Does he shed a single tear for getting the grace of God or winning His love? Purandaradhaasa sang: "Of what use are eyes that cannot see God?" You use your eyes all your life to see the external world. What do you achieve thereby? No one attempts to see the Unseen. The daily chores are repeated endlessly---bathing and eating and sleeping. But there is no yearning to see the Unseen Divine. It is only when you develop that desire will your life become meaningful. It is that that will give you peace.

### **Do not regard the body as an end in itself**

It is because you do not seek that which should be sought, do not experience that which has to be experienced, you are plunged in grief and do not have peace of mind. That is why the *Upanishaths* declared: "Lead me from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality." The meaning of this prayer is that man should realise the permanent unchanging Reality that underlies the changing appearances of the phenomenal world, shed his ignorance of his own true nature and seek oneness with the Immortal *Aathma* (divine spirit) that resides in his body which is subject to decay and death. The spiritual quest does not mean merely engaging oneself in meditation, *japa* (repetition of Lord's Name or some sacred formula) and the like. It embraces all activities aimed at realising the *Aathma* which has assumed a human form.

The body must be regarded as the base for spiritual activity. With it as the basis, you must engage yourself in spiritual activity. You must not regard the body as an end in itself which has to be pampered and kept in comfort. All our mental and other abilities should not be used only for worldly achievements. Only by seeking the higher *Inaam* (spiritual knowledge) can man rise above the level of the animal. The animal is concerned only with the present. Man alone can realise that the present is the product of the past and that the future will be determined by what he does in the present. Only if you act tightly in the present can the future be good and ennobling. This requires steadfastness and determination to adhere to the path of righteousness whatever may be the difficulties.

### **Do not be a victim of doubts and vascillations**

You read many books and engage yourself in many devotional activities. You must ask yourselves how far these studies and actions have helped to transform your lives. You will find that there has been no significant change. But you need not wait to assess the fruits of your actions. It is enough if you realise what is your duty and decide to carry it out regardless of consequences.

You have today a golden opportunity to act in this spirit. Make the best use of the grace of Sai to change your lives. Do not let slip this glorious chance to make your devotion the means of your liberation. Do not listen to what others say. Try to correct your own conduct and redeem yourselves. Use your own intelligence and hold fast to the truth you arrive at. Do not become slaves of others. You must use your own capacity for enquiry and discrimination. You must arrive at the truth for yourself and put it into practice. You should not be a victim of doubts and vascillations.

### **No act of service should be considered trivial**

Your troubles are often self-created. If you develop firm faith in God and surrender to His Will, He Will not fail you. This is the concept of *Sharanaagathi* (submission to the Will of the Divine). The bliss that can be derived from this surrender to God cannot be got through any other means. Regard whatever happens to you as something intended for your good. Discover the bliss

that can be derived from trials and tribulations. It is during their exile in the forest for twelve years that the devotion of the Paandavas developed to the highest degree.

It is not a sign of true *bhakti* (devotion) to expect that life should be one unbroken chain of happiness and comfort. Is that true happiness at all? Thyagaraaja asked whether happiness lay in the possession of wealth or in the service of the Lord. He found no joy in acquisition of wealth. He experienced the greatest joy in recognising the omnipresence of the Lord. Similarly, all devotees should be conscious of the immanence of God in everything and carry on their daily duties as a consecration to the Divine. When such devotion is developed the Lord will illumine your hearts and fill it with bliss.

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