

28. The Mother Divine

Everyone should consider it his foremost duty today to revere the mother as divine and serve her, regardless of country or circumstance. If a man cannot respect and serve the mother, who has borne him for nine months, brought him forth into the world and reared him over the years, whom else is he likely to respect? Maternal love is akin to that of the Creator who projects and protects this infinite cosmos in countless ways. One individual may elect to worship the Divine in the form of his favourite goddess. Another may worship God in a different form and derive bliss from such worship. Each one should note that the forms in which the Divine is worshipped by others are as important to them as his own chosen deity is to him. If, on the contrary, he criticises or casts a slur on the deities worshipped by others, he is committing a grievous sin, however well he may be performing his own worship. Likewise, a man should show equal regard and reverence for mothers of others as he shows for his own mother.

There are several notable examples in daily life of the divine quality which motherhood represents. The cow converts its own blood into nourishing milk for man to sustain his body. The cow is the first example of the Divine as Mother. The Earth comes next. Like the Divine, the Earth bears man in its bosom and takes care of him in many ways. Hence the Earth also is the embodiment of the Mother.

Principles that constitute the role of motherhood

In the human body the Divine flows through all the limbs as *Rasa* (The Divine essence) and sustains them. This Divine principle is called *Rasaswaroopini* (Embodiment of Divine sweetness). Another name for the same is *Angirasa*. These Divine principles that permeate and sustain the physical body should also be worshipped as mother goddesses. Then there are the great sages, the Maharishis, who investigated matters relating to good and evil, fight and wrong, what elevates man or degrades him, and, as a result of their labours and penances, gave to mankind the great scriptures, indicating the spiritual and mundane paths and how humanity can redeem its existence. These sages have also to be revered as Divine Mothers.

The cow, the earth, the presiding deities for the body, the sages and the *guru* are all worthy of worship as the embodiments of the Divine Motherhood. Although these five appear in different forms and names, they have one thing in common with the mother. They play a protective and sustaining maternal role for mankind and hence should be revered and worshipped as Divine Mothers.

Conversely, the mother of every child displays in relation to the child the attributes of these five entities. The mother nourishes the child, provides the necessities for its growth, teaches the child what it should know and what it should avoid and leads it on the path of righteousness.

The powers of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi

The life of a man who cannot respect and love such a venerable mother, is utterly useless. Recognising one's mother as the very embodiment of all divine forces, one must show reverence to her and treat her with love. This is the true message that the Navaratri, the nine-night festival gives us. The supreme *Shakthi* manifests herself in the form of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi. Durga grants to us energy--physical, mental and spiritual. Lakshmi bestows on us wealth of many kinds--not just money but intellectual wealth, the wealth of character and others. Even health is a kind of wealth. She grants untold riches to us. And Saraswathi bestows on us intel-

ligence, the capacity for intellectual enquiry and the power of discrimination. The Navaratri festival is celebrated in order to proclaim to the world the power of the goddesses. One's own mother is the combination of all these Divine beings. She provides us energy, wealth and intelligence. She constantly desires our advancement in life. So she represents all the three goddesses that we worship during the Navaratri festival.

If the Pandavas were able to become so dear to Krishna and make their lives worthy by serving Him, it was not on account of their own merit or austerities. It was mother Kunti Devi's love for them that brought to them such a great fortune. Even when they had to live in a forest or in the House of Wax, she always stayed with them and prayed for their welfare. The Pandavas also reciprocated her love, and that accounts for their final victory.

Lakshmana, likewise, was able to dwell in the forest with his brother Rama, serving him ceaselessly, only because of his mother Sumitra's blessings. She told her son that Ayodhya without Rama was like a forest, and that the forest in which Rama lived would be a veritable Ayodhya to him. It was on account of the hearty blessings of his mother that Lakshmana was able to while away fourteen years in the forest even without food or sleep

Children require mother's loving grace

All our epics and sacred books emphasise the power of the mother's love, her blessings and grace. Consider the story of Gandhari and the Kauravas. When Krishna visited Gandhari to console her after the Kurukshetra war, she accused him of partiality towards the Pandavas. "Though You are God, how could You be so partial? Why did You support the Pandavas in full measure, and allow the destruction of all my sons?" she asked Him. Krishna replied to her that she herself was to blame for the death of her children. He reminded her that though she gave birth to a hundred sons, she didn't cast her loving glance on even one of them at any time. As she chose to remain blindfolded, she never looked at any of her sons with great care, attention and affection. "How could such sinners who couldn't even enjoy their own mother's loving glance thrive and flourish?" He asked her.

There is no need to propitiate Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi for energy, material prosperity and worldly knowledge. If we love and adore the mother, we shall be showing our love and devotion to all goddesses.

Mother comes first

One's mother is greater than heaven itself. Sri Rama Himself declared that one's mother and Motherland are greater than even heaven. The Navaratri festival teaches this profound truth. One must remember that reverence to one's own mother is one's paramount duty. If one's mother is unhappy, all the expenditure one incurs and all the worship one offers in the name of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi in the Navaratri festival will yield no fruit.

Even in the ancient teachings about the persons who are to be revered as Gods--mother, father, teacher and guest--the first place is given to the mother, when it says, "*Mathru Devo Bhava.*" Even in our casual talk we say mother, father, teacher and God. God is relegated to the last position but the mother is given the first place. This reveals the attitude of Bharathiya culture towards women in general and the mother in particular.

It is the mother that holds the child with her hand and teaches it how to walk. It is the mother that feeds the child and teaches it how to eat. It is again the mother that teaches the child how to utter meaningful sounds and speak. Thus the mother is one's foremost teacher. Vemana observed that

a son who does not care for his parents is no better than the worms that are born and die in an anthill.

We should deem our parents as Iswara and Parvati and serve them wholeheartedly. If we cannot please them, how can we hope to please God? Consider the story of Lava and Kusa. Sita gave birth to them in the hermitage of Sage Valmiki. They were taught various branches of knowledge by him. Sita also was teaching them many lessons and imparting to them many skills. What happened when Sri Rama Himself came to fight with them? Lava and Kusa remembered their mother with great reverence and aimed an arrow at Him. Rama fell into a swoon when the arrow struck Him. Such is the power of one's mother's blessing.

Discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, 14 Oct 1988

Ascetic practices, years of constant recitation of the Name, pilgrimages to holy places and shrines, study of the sacred books- these will not help the aspirant to spiritual victory as much as communion with the Godly and the good. Bharath is a rare treasure-house of spiritual jewels; it can confer all boons on the sincere.

Sathya Sai Baba