

Develop Your Faith With Love For God

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One may be a highly accomplished
scholar having mastered the *Vedas*,
the *Sastras*, and the *Puranas*,
One may be a great emperor ruling
over a vast kingdom,
But none can equal a devotee who has
sacrificed everything for the Lord.
What is more to be conveyed to this
assembly of noble people?
(Telugu Poem)

Students!

Since ancient times, many people have been making efforts to attain God by practising four types of *aradhana* (worship) as prescribed by the culture of Bharat (India): *satyavathi aradhana*, *angavathi aradhana*, *anyavathi aradhana*, and *nidaanavathi aradhana* (worships that are truth-based, manifestation-based, symbol-based, and slow and sure).

Various ways to worship God

The first is *satyavathi aradhana* (truth-based worship). In this type of worship, the devotee worships God with the faith that He is immanent in every particle of the universe, just as butter is present in every drop of milk. Like oil in *til* (sesame) seeds and fire in wood, God pervades the entire manifest creation. The devotee worships God with the awareness *Viswam Vishnumayam Jagat* (Lord Vishnu pervades the entire world) and believes that the world is the effect and God is the cause.

There is another subtle path by name *angavathi aradhana* (manifestation-based worship). Those who follow this path consider each of the five elements, namely, ether, air, fire, water, and earth, as the manifestation of God and worship them. These five elements are represented in the human body as *sabda*, *sparsha*, *rupa*, *rasa*, and *gandha* (hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell), respectively. Even today, people worship water as *Ganga Matha* (Mother Ganga), air as *Vayu Deva*, and rain as *Varuna Deva*. In this manner, the *Bharatiyas* (Indians) have been worshipping the five elements in accordance with their ancient culture. This is *angavathi aradhana*.

The third path is the *anyavathi aradhana* (symbol-based worship). People who follow this path ascribe to God various names and forms with specific attributes, just as *kodandapani* (one who wields the *kodanda* bow) symbolises Rama and *Gangadhari* (one who sports Ganga in his matted locks) denotes Eswara (God).

Similarly, Vishnu holds conch, disc, mace, and lotus in His four hands. Krishna sports a peacock feather on His head and plays on His divine flute. In the same way, Saraswati is considered *Veena Pani* (one who holds Veena in her hand).

In this manner, our ancients worshipped God by attributing various symbols to them. One is the form and the other is the name. They wor-

shipped God by attributing a specific name and form. Only when you realise the unity of the name and form can you experience divinity.

This is a matchbox (Swami materialised a matchbox). The same power is present in the matchbox and also in the matchstick. One symbolises the form and the other the name. Just as fire is produced when a matchstick is struck on a matchbox, likewise *jnanagni* (fire of wisdom) is manifested when name and form combine. The same power is present in the name as well as in the form. The name points to the form and the form reminds of the name. The same principle of unity and divinity is present in both. When the name and form combine, divine principle manifests there.

Since *Vedic* times, the *Bharatiyas* (Indians) have been following this principle and experiencing Divinity. They had total faith in the unity of name and form. They believed that there was no object or name that was not divine in this world. Is there any name that is not associated with a form?

Take, for example, the name God. Where did this name God come from? If there is no God, how can the name God come into existence?

However, some people may dispute this. They quote the name, Gagana Pushpam and ask, "Is there a flower in the sky? When Gagana Pushpam has no existence, how can there be a word like this?" But they are totally mistaken. Gagana Pushpam is not a single word, it is a combination of two words: Gagana and Pushpam (sky and flower). But God is single word. Without the existence of God, this word would not have originated. Therefore, since ancient times, people believed there was an inseparable relationship between name and form. None can deny this truth.

The fourth type of worship is *nidaanavathi*. People who perform this *sadhana* (spiritual exercise) follow nine paths of devotion: *sra-vanam* (listening), *kirtanam* (singing), *Vish-*

nusmaranam (contemplating on Vishnu), *Pa-dasevanam* (serving His Lotus Feet), *van-danam* (salutation), *archanam* (worship), *dasyam* (servitude), *sneham* (friendship), and *Atmanivedanam* (self-surrender).

By following these nine paths of devotion, people contemplated on God and attained the goal of life.

One can attain the goal of life by the power of *upasana* (worship). One should never forget the goal of life or deviate from the chosen path; one should attain it by one-pointed devotion.

The *sadhakas* (aspirants) in those days attained Divinity by following the path as prescribed by the *Vedas*. Due to the influence of time, space, and circumstances, modern youth are neglecting such sacred practices. They argue, "How can stones, trees, anthills, and animals be considered divine?" This reflects their narrow-mindedness.

What is the meaning of the *Vedic* declaration, *Easwara Sarva Bhutanam* (God is the indweller of all beings)? Just as the *Vedas* expound the truth that God is immanent in the entire creation, science declares that the entire creation is made up of atoms. There is nothing that is not made of atoms. The power of atom is present in anthills, stones, soil, trees, etc.

When the scientists argue that the power of atom is present in everything, it means that Divinity is present in the entire creation. That is why our ancients propagated the truth, *Anta Ramamayam, Ee Jagamanta Ramamayam* (everything is pervaded by Rama, the whole world is suffused with Rama).

Today, modern scientists boast of having made great progress in the fields of science and technology. They say that everything in this world is based on science. But one should not forget that along with *vijnana* (science), *ajnana* (ignorance) is also on the rise. One follows the other just as shadow follows the reality. What is this science? The ignorance

associated with science is not present in anything else. One cannot develop faith in God unless one understands this contradiction.

Have firm faith in God

The boy who spoke earlier prayed, “Swami, bless us with strong faith and develop it.” Such a prayer is born out of innocence. Faith is not something that can be developed in you by others. Faith is there in you right from the time of your birth. When you realise this truth, faith will automatically develop.

When you say, she is my mother, it is based on faith only. Without faith, you cannot call her your mother. Likewise, when you have firm conviction in the presence of God, your faith naturally develops.

Faith in yourself, faith in God —this is the secret of greatness. First of all, have faith in yourself. If you do not have faith in yourself, you cannot have faith in God. Therefore, one who denies God, denies themselves. One who has faith in themselves will have faith in God.

Man is essentially divine. That is why the *Vedas* declare:

Poornamada poornamidam, poornat
poornamudachyate,
Poornasya poornamadaya, poor-
namevavashishyate.

That is full, this is full.
When the full is taken out of the full,
what remains is again the full.

The same divine principle is present in God and human being. You may see various names and forms in this manifest world. *Ek Prabhu Ke Anek Naam* (one God has many names). *Ekoham Bahusyam* (the One willed to become many). God willed to assume many names and forms. That is why unity appears to be multiplicity.

Our ancients prescribed the paths of work, worship, and wisdom to teach this principle of unity in diversity. People followed these three

paths to realise unity in diversity.

Only One exists. *Ekam Sath Viprah Bahudha Vadanti* (truth is one, but the wise refer to it by various names). All other names and forms originate from this One.

Take, for example, the two numbers one and nine. Even if you ask a child, he will tell you, nine is greater than one. But this is not true. One is the greatest. $1+1+1+1+1+1+1+1+1 = 9$. How can you get the number nine without one? Hence, One is hero, this world is zero. Hero becomes zero if the hero forgets God.

Unity is Divinity. If you forget this One, nothing else matters in this world. This is what the culture of Bharat (India) has been propagating since ancient times. Therefore, you should develop faith in this principle of oneness.

In whatever form you see, only One exists, and that is God. You have to undertake certain practices to realise God. Anything can be accomplished by practice. One becomes a singer by continuous practice. Similarly, by continuous contemplation of God, you will surely experience Divinity. Have total focus on God with single-minded concentration.

In ancient days, everyone was engaged in the contemplation of God in Bharat (India). But due to the influence of modern age, many people do not have belief in God and consider idol worship as a foolish practice. The Indian belief that God is present even in birds and animals denotes social security. Such type of social security cannot be found anywhere else except Bharat. According to the *Bharatiyas* (Indians), a tree is God, a stone is God, and even an anthill is God.

A sculptor makes the idol of Rama out of an ordinary rock on the hill. Has the sculptor carved Rama out of the rock or was Rama already present in the rock? Rama was already present in that rock. The sculptor only cleaned and chiseled the rock to bring out Rama from it. In the same way, Divinity is present in everything.

You install an idol of Rama in the temple and worship it, considering it as Lord Rama Himself. There will be so many small stones lying scattered on the hill. But do you worship them? No. What is the reason? Because they have not taken the shape of the idol. Nevertheless, those pieces of stone lying on the hill proclaim, “*Thath twam asi* (That Thou Art). The idol in the temple and we are one and the same. But the sculptor has separated us.” The same truth is reflected in the great aphorism, *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman).

Due to your own worldly feelings and delusion, you think you are different from God. Mistake lies in the individual, not in the divine power. Wherever you look, God is present. You should have firm faith in the all-pervasiveness of Divinity.

Experiencing Oneness with God

Once the elder brother of Thyagaraja threw away the idol of Rama worshipped by Thyagaraja in the river Cauvery. The reason for his anger at Thyagaraja was that Thyagaraja refused to accept the jewels and other gifts sent by the king of Thanjavur, saying, *Nidhi chala sukham, Easwara sannidhi shala sukham, nijamuga telupumu manasa* (Oh mind! Tell me, whether happiness lies in wealth or in the proximity of God).

When he noticed that the idol of Rama was missing from his altar, Thyagaraja went in search of it. He sang, “Oh Rama, where am I to search for You? How can I limit You to a particular place?”

After searching for the idol of Rama for a long time, he was tired and went to the river Cauvery for a bath. As he took the river water in his cupped hands to offer oblations, saying, *Keshavaya Namah, Madhavaya Namah, Govindaya Namah*, the idol of Rama fell in his hands. When you have such firm faith in the Lord, you will always experience oneness with Him. You will never think that He is separate from you.

When an old friend visits our house, we address him in an informal way, “Hey, come.” But when a new friend comes to our house, we offer him a seat with all courtesy and respect, requesting him, “Please be seated.”

You address an old friend in intimate terms, saying, “Hey, what are you doing? What brings you here?” Similarly, when you have firm faith in the Lord and feel oneness with Him, you will not address Him in a formal way.

Thyagaraja considered Rama as his old friend and addressed Him in informal terms. *Ra Ra Ma Intidaka* (come to our house). He addressed Rama in such intimate terms because He considered Him very close to his heart. He sang, “Where am I to search for You, oh Rama. I have no refuge other than You, oh Rama.” He used the term, “*Ra Ra*” which in Telugu is used to address intimate friends. He enjoyed such freedom with Rama because he considered Him his old friend.

It is not possible to know God

You should realise that this is not your first birth; you had many previous births. The very term *manava* (human being) signifies that you are not new. ‘*Ma*’ means not. ‘*Nava*’ means new.

Similarly, God is not new to you, He is your old friend. Never treat God as your new friend. *Anadi, Ananta, and Aprameya* (Beginningless, Infinite, and Incomparable)—these are some of the names of God.

We acquire knowledge usually from four types of *pramanas* (experiences), namely, *pratyaksha pramana* (direct experience), *anumana pramana* (experience based on inference), *upamana pramana* (experience gained by analogy), and *sabda pramana* (experience gained from verbal testimony). God is beyond these four. Hence, He is called *Aprameya* (immeasurable and indefinable).

Howsoever you may try to know about God,

so much will still be left to know about Him. So far, no one can say that they have understood God completely.

A sage sat in meditation, closing his eyes, in order to realise God. God Himself came to him in the form of a small boy and asked him, “Grandfather, what are you doing?”

The sage replied, “My dear, I am trying to know God.”

“Have you come to know Him?”

The sage replied, “Not yet.”

The boy left the place. The sage did not realise that the boy was none other than God because he was contemplating on the formless aspect of God. Similarly, many people ignore the direct evidence of God’s presence and look for indirect evidences.

When the child came again after one month, the eyes of the sage were half open. The child asked him, “Oh grandfather, have you known God?” The sage replied, “Yes, I have known as much of Him as my eyes are open.”

The child said, “Okay, you have known half of what you are trying to know. Make efforts to know Him completely.” He left the place.

The child came back after another month. By then the eyes of the sage were fully open. The child asked again, “Have you succeeded in your endeavour to know God?” He said, “Yes, I have come to know the truth.”

“What is it that you have come to know?”

The sage replied, “I have come to know that it is not possible to know God.”

How can anyone know Him? When God Himself came in the form of the boy, the sage failed to recognise Him. Then, how can anybody attribute a particular form to God? That is what Saint Thyagaraja sang, “Oh Lord! How am I to know who You really are, whether You are Siva or Madhava?”

In fact, all forms are His. *Sarva Jiva Na-*

maskaram Kesavam Pratigachchhati (whoever you salute, it reaches God) and *Sarva Jiva Tiraskaram Kesavam Pratigachchhati* (whoever you criticise, it reaches God). God is the indweller of all beings. All forms are the forms of God. *Daivam Manusha Rupena* (God is in the form of a human being). First and foremost, you have to realise this truth.

God is described as *Viswa Virat Swarupa* (one with cosmic form).

Sahasra Seersha Purusha Sahasraksha Sahasra Pad (the Cosmic Being has thousands of heads, eyes, and feet). What does it signify? All heads, all eyes are His. What is there that does not belong to Him?

One must have such strong faith in God. This is not something one can give or take. Some people pray, “Swami, give me deep faith.” But this is not a give and take business. You yourself have to develop faith. If you are hungry, you have to eat food to satiate your hunger. It is you who has to take medicine to cure your illness. Similarly, you have to develop your faith with love for God. Love is not something that can be given to you as a gift.

When you step on the path of love, your love for God will automatically develop. When you sow a sapling and nourish it with water and manure regularly, it will grow into a tree. Similarly, when you regularly give water of love to the sapling of faith, it will grow into a giant tree.

On the other hand, if you keep on pulling the sapling every now and then to see how much it has grown, it will break. The growth of the sapling of your faith depends entirely on you, not anybody else. You have to develop it yourself.

Love and faith are present in you. What you have to do is to turn them toward God. Then work will be transformed into worship. Whatever you do, consider it as God’s work. Consider every form that you see as the form of God. God has infinite forms. This is also one

of those forms. But you should install only one form of God in your heart. Then you will realise that all forms belong to God.

In this way, ancient sages and seers followed the four paths *satyavathi aradhana*, *angavathi aradhana*, *anyavathi aradhana*, and *nidanavathi aradhana* to worship God and attained liberation. They were not foolish. In fact, they did a lot of research and deep study, experienced happiness, and shared it with others. Only the educated fools of today question the wisdom of our ancient sages.

Do bhajan with love

None can say, God is like this or that. If someone comes to you and says, “Why do you talk about God? God is nowhere,” you should say, “God is now here.” If you have strong faith in God, what should be your reply to him? “Oh madcap, you may say that your God does not exist. But who are you to deny the existence of my God? I have my God.”

When you have such strong faith, you can achieve anything in life. If your faith is shaken when any Tom, Dick, and Harry says something, you will not achieve anything. You should have firm resolve.

Earlier also I have told the importance of three Ps: Purity, Patience, and Perseverance. You can achieve success only when you have these three. First of all, have firm determination. Determination for what? Determination to do good, not bad. If your determination is for doing something bad, then it is only foolishness, not determination. Even at the cost of your life, be determined to do good.

Child Prahlada continued to chant the name Narayana in the face of all trials and tribulations. He had no fear at all. His own father subjected him to all sorts of ordeals. Ultimately, it was his firm faith that protected him and punished his father. Therefore, develop firm determination to attain the grace of God.

It is not proper to get carried away by what

any Ellaiah and Mallaiah tell you in the bazaar. You can yourself see that people today do not believe in God, but they believe in the weekly magazines and meaningless novels and are prepared to believe an ordinary astrologer.

Today there are some people who wear a robe like Me, have bushy hair on their head, and claim that Sai Baba has given them special powers. They are really foolish fellows. The powers of Sai Baba cannot be given or received. But some people believe in such impostors and get deceived. Never go near them.

Divine power is not something that can be given or taken. You can attain it with your faith. If your faith remains unwavering right from the beginning till the end, that is called true devotion and surrender. That is *sthira bhakthi* and *ananya bhakthi* (steady and single-minded devotion). When you have such firm devotion, you will attain unwavering mind and deep faith, which are very essential on the spiritual path.

Sometimes, you may think that God is subjecting you to hardships. In fact, God does not give you suffering or happiness; He is only a witness. Your own deeds are responsible for your suffering. When you face difficulties, you should remain unperturbed and move forward. Whatever happens, think it is good for you. You can achieve anything when you have such unflinching faith.

Do not waste your time, money, and energy running after fake Gurus. Attain God with unwavering mind and one-pointed faith. Sai always emphasises one thing: *bhajan*, *bhajan*, *bhajan*. When you do *bhajan* with love, you can attain God wherever you are.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajan*, “*Prema Mudita Manase Kaho ...*”)

– From Bhagavan’s Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam, on 20 July 1996.