

Turn Your Vision Toward God

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*One devoid of wisdom always thinks of the world,
whereas a wise man always thinks of the
Lord.*

*The wise man attains the Lord, whereas the world-
ly man gets mired in worldliness.*

Listen, oh valiant sons of Bharat!

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Even though people are the embodiment of existence-knowledge-bliss (*satchidananda*), he is unable to realise this truth and searches for *satchidananda* in the external and physical world. What is the reason? The reason is that they all the time think of the world, run after worldly pleasures, and thereby forget their own true Self. They believe this world to be the reality and forget the Lord. This ignorance is the root cause of all their misery.

Realise your true nature

Even though people are verily the embodiment of the Divine, they identify with the world out of their foolishness. Due to this ignorance and lack of discrimination, people are forgetting their very humanness. In fact, existence-knowledge-bliss (*satchidananda*) is one's very nature and very form. Just as rice grain is covered by husk, water is covered by moss, and the sun is covered by clouds, people's true nature of *satchidananda* is covered by the veil of ignorance.

Wherefrom has this ignorance originated? The moss that covers the water is born out of water, the clouds that cover the sun are born out of the sun. You see the rice grain when you remove the husk; you can see water when you brush aside the moss; when the clouds move away, you see the

sun in the sky. Similarly, when the veil of ignorance is removed, one can realise one's true nature, that is, existence-knowledge-bliss.

What is this ignorance? The absence of spiritual knowledge (*jnana*) is ignorance (*ajnana*). In fact, knowledge and ignorance are not separate from each other. Without knowledge, there can be no ignorance. Ignorance always follows knowledge like a shadow. People today follow only the shadow but not the reality.

Here is an example that students can easily understand. When you face the sun as it rises in the east, your shadow will fall behind you. On the other hand, if you turn away from the sun and start walking toward the west, you will follow your shadow. No matter how much you try to overtake your shadow, your shadow will continue to move ahead of you.

Similarly, when you turn your vision toward God, who is the very embodiment of existence-knowledge-bliss, the shadow of ignorance will fall behind you and will not be visible to you. But you forget God and turn your vision toward the world. You follow the shadow of ignorance, which moves ahead of you.

That is why the *Upanishads* exhort people: Oh man! Get up! Be aware and awake! Go to noble men and learn from them the secret of attaining Divinity (*Uthishta jagrata prapya varannibodhat*). Oh people, you are in the deep slumber of ignorance. You don't know in which direction you are traveling. You don't understand on which you are reposing your faith. In fact, you forget the truth and believe the untruth.

Experience oneness with God

In the dream state, people believe all that they see in the dream and consider it to be true. A president or a prime minister may have a dream in which they see certain things that he do not understand. While in the dream state, they have no awareness that they are the president or prime minister and that they resides in a big bungalow. They may dream that they are moving in a forest or doing shopping in the bazaar. As long as they are in the dream state, they consider all that to be true. Once awakened from the dream, they will remember that they are the president or prime minister.

Likewise, you are the embodiment of existence-knowledge-bliss. You are the president, you are the prime minister, you are the master of everything. Because you are overpowered by the sleep of ignorance, you see this world and consider yourself to be a member of society in this world.

But all this is a mere dream, which is born out of ignorance. In order to get rid of this ignorance, make efforts to attain wisdom (*jnana*). What is spiritual wisdom? Experience of non-dualism is wisdom (*Advaita darshanam jnanam*).

People want to attain God, contemplate on Him, and worship Him. But they do not realise that they cannot attain God by merely adopting these practices. As long as you contemplate on Him and desire for Him, it means God is different, you are different. You have to experience oneness with God to attain Him.

When is that possible? When you offer yourself to God completely, you become He and He becomes you. Then you realise “You and I are one.”

The same is stated by the profound aphorisms: That Thou Art (*Thattwamasi*) and I am Brahman (*Aham Brahmasmi*).

Only the one who offers himself to God completely can experience oneness with Him. Till such time, God is God and devotee remains a devotee. When you mix sugar in water, sugar dissolves in it and becomes one with it. Similarly, if you want to become God, offer yourself to God.

It is not possible to understand the principle of oneness so far as you have body consciousness.

The *Atma* is *beyond* the mind and the senses. The *Atma* is beyond the ken of senses and can be understood only by the intellect (*Buddhigrahya-matheendriyam*). Only when you transcend the mind and senses can you understand the principle of oneness.

This is a tumbler. Consider that there is fruit juice in this tumbler. In fact, there is only water in it. I don't have the habit of drinking fruit juice. I am saying this only to give you an example. Though the fruit juice is present in the tumbler, the tumbler does not know its taste. You put a straw in this and suck the juice into your mouth. Though the juice passes through the straw, the straw also does not enjoy its taste. Only when the juice reaches the tongue can you know its taste, whether it is sweet or sour.

Similarly, our body is a tumbler in which the sweet juice of Divinity is present, but the body is not aware of it. Senses are the straw through which we experience Divinity. But the senses also do not know the taste of Divinity.

Intellect is like the tongue, which experiences its taste. That is why Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, a great devotee of the Lord, extolled tongue in many ways.

Oh tongue, the knower of taste!

You are very sacred.

Speak the truth in the most pleasing manner.

Chant the divine names of Govinda, Madhava and Damodara incessantly.

This is your foremost duty.

(Sanskrit verse)

Oh tongue, you are very sacred because you can experience the taste of divinity. You are not satisfied by tasting ordinary sweet juice. But there is one juice that is most sublime and sweet. That is the Name of the Lord. Therefore, chant Govinda, Damodara, Madhava. Its sweetness never changes or diminishes. It enters your heart and saturates your entire life with sweetness.

People today consider God to be different from themselves and worship Him. It is impossible to become one with God in this way even after many births and aeons (*yugas*). Just as water becomes one with milk, the devotee should become one with God.

There is no need to perform any spiritual practice like chanting and meditation (*japa* and *dhyana*), nor is there a need to read spiritual texts or go to a *guru*. It is possible to become one with God only through love. That which preaches this principle of love is *Vedanta*.

You may sing devotional songs (*bhajans*) for any number of years, but you cannot become one with God as long as you have the feeling that you are different from Him. You can only derive temporary satisfaction while doing *bhajans*. That's all.

God is the embodiment of divine essence (*rasa*). The human heart is always filled with that divine essence. This is the teaching of the *Upanishads*.

If you forget God, you become devoid of essence (*neerasa*). In order to get rid of your *neerasa* state, you have to take refuge in the embodiment of divine essence (*rasa*).

Wherefrom does *neerasa* originate? It originates from the feeling that you are different from God. The Divinity present in you is called conscience, which is nothing but the principle of *Atma*. You have to make efforts to understand this principle. Ego (*ahamkara*) and attachment (*abhimana*) are the two hurdles that prevent you from experiencing the divine essence present in you.

When Adi Sankara was on his victory march, he had a debate with Mandana Misra on the principles of *Vedanta*. Before the commencement of the debate, they had to appoint a judge to decide the winner. Sankara, being one who knows the past, present, (being *trikala jnani*), knew the right person to perform the duty of a judge. He said, "Mandana Misra, your wife, Ubhaya Bharati, is the right person to perform the role of a judge."

See what great faith Sankara had in the nobility and ability of Ubhaya Bharati! Normally a wife always takes the side of her husband. But Ubhaya Bharati was not such a person. She was totally impartial. She did not observe any differences like mine and thine. That is why Sankara chose her as the judge.

The debate went on for a long time and ultimately Mandana Misra was defeated. Ubhaya Bharati gave the judgment without any doubt or hesitation.

The moment Mandana Misra heard the judgment, he took to renunciation (*sannyasa*) without any delay in fulfilment of the condition of the debate. Ubhaya Bharati also followed suit, since she was the better half (*ardhangini*) of Mandana Misra.

As you can see here, the worldly path is different from the spiritual path. One is outward (*pravritti*) and the other is inward (*nivritti*). Ubhaya Bharati proved that outward and inward are inseparable and interdependent.

Once they took to renunciation (*sannyasa*), they started living separately. One day, Ubhaya Bharati was going along with her disciples to the river Ganga to take bath in the river. On the way, she observed a renunciant relaxing, keeping a dried bottle gourd under his head. He was using this for storing drinking water, so he was preserving it carefully.

Ubhaya Bharati saw this renunciant's attachment to the bottle gourd and said to her disciples, "Look! This man calls himself a renunciant, but he is attached to a bottle gourd, which he keeps under his head as a pillow." The renunciant heard this comment but did not say anything then.

While Ubhaya Bharati and her disciples were returning from the river, he threw away the bottle gourd in front of them in order to demonstrate that he was not attached to it. Observing his action, Ubhaya Bharati aptly remarked, "I thought there was only one defect in him: attachment (*abhimana*). Now I realise that he has another defect also: ego (*ahamkara*).

How can one with attachment and ego become one with spiritual wisdom (*jnani*) and a renunciant (*sanyasi*)?" Her comment was an eye-opener for the renunciant. He expressed gratitude to Ubhaya Bharati for imparting true knowledge of renunciation to him.

There is no difference between man and woman with respect to the attainment of wisdom (*jnana*). Man and woman are different only in physical form, but there is no difference between them in the realm of knowledge. Similarly, there is no difference on the basis of caste, colour, and race.

That renunciant at once fell at the feet of Ubhaya Bharati and said, "Mother, since there is none to

teach such profound truths, today renunciants do not understand what true spirituality is. Hence, from today onward, you are my *guru*.”

Today we find renunciants performing various types of spiritual practices. What is the use of performing such external practices without deserving divine grace and compassion? Can you attain divine grace by merely performing spiritual practices like repetition of chanting and meditation (*japa* and *dhyana*)? Are you in search of a path following which you become deserving of God’s love? When you enquire on these lines, you will realise the truth at once.

One may don ochre robes, wear garlands, and chant with one’s beads, but ultimately one has to seek refuge in You, become a recipient of Your grace to redeem one’s life.

One cannot move Your heart and win Your love and grace merely by chanting, holding one’s breath, offering salutations to You repeatedly, or pleading with shedding tears.

(Telugu Poem)

People today perform various types of spiritual practices. However, in order to attain Divinity, first of all you have to develop friendship with God, who is changeless and immortal. I have told you many times about the nine forms of devotion: listening (*sravanam*), singing (*kirtanam*), contemplating on Vishnu (*Vishnusmaranam*), serving His Lotus Feet (*Padasevanam*), salutation (*vandanam*), worship (*archanam*), servitude (*dasyam*), friendship (*sneham*), and self-surrender (*atmanivedanam*). Friendship comes before total surrender. Therefore, first of all, develop friendship with God.

Worldly friendship is temporary

Worldly friendship is no friendship at all. It is limited to hello, hello, how are you, and goodbye. As long as there is water in the tank, you find many frogs in it. When the water dries up, you don’t find even a single frog there. When you have money in your pocket and your father has a high position as an M.L.A., M.P. or a minister, everyone will act like your friend. When there is no money in your pocket and your father is not in a high position any more, everyone will desert you without even saying goodbye.

Oliver Cromwell was a military commander in England. He was also an astute politician. He spent thousands of pounds on his friends. He also spent a lot of money to get the votes of people. But, ultimately, when his end came near, he started repenting, “Fie on me, I have misused my body, time, money, and energy. If only I had offered all these to God, how happy I would have been and what an exalted position I would have attained! This is my fate, after having spent so much money and effort.” He took a vow if there was another life for him, he would never enter politics.

Sanctify your body by undertaking sacred activities

Once a devotee prayed, “Oh Lord! What for are these hands, which do not serve You?” He declared, “Oh Lord! I am without limbs (*angaheena*).” His disciples who were by his side wondered, “What is this? Is he out of his mind that he calls himself an *angaheena* when all his limbs are intact?”

The devotee explained, “Yes, I have hands, but I am unable to serve Him. I have eyes, but I am unable to see His beautiful form. I have ears, but I am unable to listen to the divine music of His flute and sweet words. I have legs, but I am unable to do circumambulation (*pradakshina*) and offer my salutations to Him. Instead I am roaming in the streets. Therefore, what is the use of all my limbs? It is as good as I don’t have them.”

Oh ears, you are interested in listening to vain gossip and tales about others, but you pay least attention when the wonderful stories of the Lord are narrated.

Oh feet, you keep roaming here and there like dogs who have no work.

Is it that difficult to stand before the Lord even for a minute?

(Telugu song)

What is the use of all the limbs if they are not utilised to serve the Lord? The same truth was stated by Surdas when he said, “Though people have eyes, they have become blind since they are unable to visualise the most auspicious form of God.”

When Lord Krishna offered to restore his vision, he said, “Oh Lord! I don’t want my eyesight back. Many have eyes, but are they able to see You?”

People have ears, but they have become deaf since they are unable to listen to the sweet music of Your flute. Though they have the Lord right in front of their eyes, they crave for mundane pleasures.”

God is present in your heart, but you forget Him and run after worldly pleasures. For what are the eyes given to you? Are they meant to see anything and everything in this world? Saint Purandaradasa echoed the same feelings when he said, “Oh Rama! What for are the eyes that do not see You?”

It is God who sustains all

God has given you the physical body with various limbs not to misuse them or take to wrong path but to sanctify them by undertaking sacred activities. True humanness lies in understanding this truth and acting accordingly. When you offer your everything to God, He will take care of you in all respects.

Some people question, “Who will give me food if I spend all my time chanting Ram, Ram, Ram?” One who has planted the sapling, does He not water it too? If you sincerely and wholeheartedly think of Him, will He not look after you? Will one person become a burden to the One who provides sustenance to the entire creation? He will look after everything.

You find big trees growing on the top of hillocks. Who puts manure and water for their growth? Who provides food to a frog that lives inside a boulder? It is God who does all these.

Samartha Ramdas was a great devotee of Lord Rama. Once, when Shivaji visited him, Ramdas broke a rock into two pieces, from which a frog came out right in front of Shivaji’s eyes. Then he told Shivaji, “Oh Shivaji, don’t pride yourself that you are the ruler of the kingdom and you are looking after everyone. Are you the one who provided food to this frog all along? It is God who does everything and looks after everyone in His creation.” This incident was an eye-opener to Shivaji.

How wonderful are the colours of a peacock! Who painted it so beautifully? One may be a great painter, but no mortal can reproduce the original colours of a peacock on a canvas. However beautiful a painting you may do, the colours will look only artificial but not ‘heartificial’. Who is

the one who provided red beak to green parrot? What a perfect matching of colours is this! There is a bird in the egg, a giant tree is hidden in a tiny seed, human is born out of human. How great are the mysteries of God’s creation! Which engineer designed the entire Nature? This is all the Will of God.

Saint Purandaradasa expressed the same truth in his song:

Who gave the wonderful colours to the feathers of the peacock?

Who gave the red beak to the green parrot? Who planted the tree on the mountaintop and watered it?

Who provides food to sustain the tadpole in the crevices of a rock?

God is the fundamental basis of all creation.

(Kannada song)

People don’t understand such sacred divine power. On the other hand, they go on extolling the achievements of humanity, which are trivial when compared to the mighty power of God. Humanity’s power is like a small pebble compared to the power of God, which is like a mountain.

One God is called by many names

When Rama and Lakshmana came to Rameswaram, Rama wanted to install a Siva Linga there so that when people came to Rameswaram, they would remember the Lord and chant His Name. He wanted to demonstrate that Siva and Vishnu are one and the same.

Rama taught this truth to Hanuman in a very subtle way. Hanuman had great love only for *Rama Nama* (repeating the name *Rama*) and nothing else. Rama asked Hanuman to go to the Himalayas and bring a *Linga* for installation at Rameswaram. God derives pleasure in making people do things that they don’t like. Though Hanuman did not show any interest or enthusiasm to perform the task assigned to him, Rama commanded him, “Go at once and bring the *Linga*, since we have to perform the installation at a particular auspicious time for which not much time is left.” Since he had no other choice, Hanuman went and brought the *Linga*.

One with steadfast faith attains wisdom (*Sradhdhavan labhate jnanam*). When one has no faith, his wisdom will also desert him. Since Hanuman

lacked faith in performing this task, he came ten minutes after the stipulated time of installation. Meanwhile, Rama made a *Linga* out of sand on the seashore and performed the installation at the auspicious time.

Hanuman was sorry that he could not bring the *Linga* on the auspicious time. He was quite upset and even questioned Rama's divine power. He thought, "Do I lack devotion, or is there no power in Rama?" He pulled out a strand of hair from his body and put it near his ear. He could hear the Name of Rama. Then he gave a certificate to himself, saying, "I have devotion, but there is no power in Rama".

You can see, sometimes even great devotees are carried away by the sense of ego.

Then Hanuman thought for a while and realised his folly. "How mistaken I am! If really there is no divine power in Rama, would it be possible for me to cross the ocean? Could I have achieved such a stupendous task?"

Once Thyagaraja also had a doubt about the power of Rama. Then he sang the song:

But for the power of Rama, could a mere monkey
cross the mighty ocean?
Would Lakshmi Devi, the goddess of wealth, be-
come His consort?
Would Lakshmana worship Him?
Would the intelligent Bharata offer his salutations
to Him?
But for the mighty power of Rama, would all this
happen?
Indeed, Rama's power is beyond all description.
(Telugu poem)

"The entire world worships Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. Everyone prays for the grace of Lakshmi. If such most worshipped goddess of wealth in turn worships You, how great must be Your power! What an intelligent person Bharata is! Would he worship You for nothing? Therefore, oh Rama, Your power is unparalleled," said Thyagaraja.

Similarly, if there were no power in Sai, would people from various countries like Argentina, Australia, Germany, China, and Japan come to Him? We are not sending any invitation to anyone. This sacred Divinity attracts everyone.

Test is the taste of God

After the installation of the *Linga* at Rameswaram, one day Rama decided to test Hanuman. God always likes to test His devotees. Test is the taste of God.

As He was walking one day, Rama pretended to have tripped over a small stone. Lakshmana, who was walking behind, asked, "Brother, what happened?"

Rama said, "Nothing, it is a small stone."

Hanuman said, "I will uproot this stone and throw it away, lest someone should trip over it."

Rama said, "Hanuman, you have carried huge mountains. This small stone is nothing before you. Therefore, leave it. It was My mistake. Next time, I will be more careful while walking."

But Hanuman was adamant to remove the stone. Monkey is known for its fickleness. That is its natural quality. Therefore, without paying heed to Rama, Hanuman tried to remove the stone with his left hand. But he was not able to move it. Then he tried with both hands, using all his power, but all in vain. Hanuman was extremely surprised. He said, "Rama, this must be Your divine play (*leela*)."

Rama said, "Hanuman, you don't need to take that much trouble." Saying so, Rama pushed the stone with the little toe of His foot. The stone at once flew away to a great distance.

What was that stone? It was the *Linga* Hanuman had brought for installation. Instantly, a light emerged from the *Linga* and merged in Rama. Likewise, another light emerged from Rama and merged in the *Linga*, symbolising the oneness of Siva and Vishnu.

Siva rides on the bull, whereas Vishnu rides on the eagle. But both are one and the same. Rama exhorted Hanuman to realise the oneness and equality of both. Likewise, in the world today, some people have their chosen deity as Rama, Krishna, Easwara, and Sai Baba. But why observe such differences when God is one?

God is one (*Ekam sath*), the One willed to become many (*Ekoham bahusyam*). You may like any sweet like mysore pak, gulab jamoon, etc., but the sugar is same in all of them. Similarly, you attrib-

ute various names and forms to God to suit your taste.

But God is one. When you develop this principle of oneness, you become one with God.

Students! Embodiments of divine Atma!

Never consider God as someone separate from you. Give up the idea that you can visualise Him merely by worshipping Him. Understand that you are He and He is you. Offer yourself to God completely. That is the easiest way to attain Him. You don't need to make any special effort for this. Offer yourself to God. Then you will realise your true Self.

God is the only Master. There is no other master in the world. There are some who are called headmaster, stationmaster, postmaster, etc., but they are not real masters. There is only one Master, and He is God.

Therefore, contemplate on Him incessantly and attain Him. That is the truth. Truth is God. That is the real knowledge. Knowledge is infinite and God is infinite.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajan*, "*Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma...*".)

– Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 5 September 1996.