

Quest for Truth

*Neither by penance nor by bathing in sacred rivers
Nor by study of scriptures nor by japa
Can the ocean of Samsara be crossed
Without serving godly men.*

[Sanskrit sloka]

Embodiments of Love! Man adopts various means to achieve liberation (from the bondage of mundane existence). Penance is performed for whose sake? It is for one's own benefit and not for the good of others, nor even for the Supreme Self. In the performance of *japa* (recitation of the Lord's name), it must be noted that it is done for one's own satisfaction and not for the welfare of others. What should one do to secure redemption from the cycle of worldly existence? Chanting the Lord's name or performing sacrifices or doing other rituals will be of no avail. You have to render service to your fellow human beings.

Service is true worship

Seva (service) is the highest form of worship and the best penance. *Seva* is the most important form of reciting the Lord's name. Money that is lost can be earned again. Lost friends may be got back again. Even the loss of a wife can be made up by remarriage. But, if the present body is lost, it cannot be got back again. Hence, the body is highly sacred.

For what purpose should this sacred body be protected? The body has to be protected because verily it is the primary means of achieving *dharma*.

Human birth is a rare privilege. It is highly sacred and sublime. Having been born as human beings, if men do not realize the preciousness of human life, what is the use of being born as human? Man is endowed with the gift of memory. Reflection is natural to him. The search for the meaning of life is an admirable quality. It is as a result of this search that man's creative faculties have resulted in great achievements in the fields of science and in other fields of knowledge.

But, owing to their failure to use the intellect properly and on account of misdirected search, people are lost in different kinds of inquiry. One person sees a tree. He sees only the branches and not the roots. Another sees the roots and not the branches. This is not the right way to find out the real truth about anything.

Real inquiry into the truth calls for an inquiry both into the nature of the branches and the nature of the roots and of the tree as a whole. The scientist looks only at the branches. But the student of the roots is a *Vedantin*. Whether one is a scientist or a *Vedantin*, the pursuit of truth calls for a study of the branches, the roots, and the tree integrally.

There is an illustration for this from the scriptures. The *rakshasas* (demons) and the *devas* (gods) churned the Ocean of Milk (to get nectar from it.) The first product to come of the

churning was the dreadful poison, *halahala*. Not deterred by this outcome, they continued with the churning of the ocean. In the process, Lakshmi (the goddess of prosperity), marvelous beings like Airavatha, the divine elephant, and finally *amritam* (nectar) came out of the ocean. How could they secure all these? Because of their persistence in their efforts.

People today should turn their hearts toward the search for truth. The human heart is a symbol of the Ocean of Milk. If, in this ocean, the rope of wisdom is used for churning the heart, some disappointments and failures may occur. Without succumbing to these failures, if man continues his efforts, he will secure precious things like truth, righteousness, and justice. Qualities like forbearance and compassion will also emerge.

All arts originated from the search for truth

People should endeavor to cultivate qualities like tolerance, love, sympathy, righteousness, justice, and truth. People do not give any importance to this quest for truth. The search for truth is being directed toward worldly objects, which are ephemeral and worthless. Men should really dedicate themselves to the quest for the truth that is eternal. All arts have originated from the search for truth.

In this search for truth, though God may not be realised, there will be indications pointing to the Divine. How does this happen? For instance; one may point to the Pole Star (*Dhruva Nakshatra*) as the star that is seen above the branch of a tree. As a matter of fact, there is no connection between the branch of the tree and the Pole Star. The branch, however, indicates the direction in which the Pole Star is to be seen.

Likewise, all our directions, all the words we utter, all our behavior, all that we see are all related to the search for the truth. All of them testify to the existence of God.

For instance, we look at the vast ocean. We feel happy on seeing its vastness. We see a high mountain. It arouses a feeling of joy. Looking at a densely wooded forest, your heart is gladdened. These are all signs of the discovery of truth. Though you do not see God in them, they indicate the presence of the Divine in them.

A big tree grows from a small seed. A chick comes out of an egg. One being is born from another. A flower gives fragrance. You get butter from milk. All these are facts discovered in the search for truth.

God is immanent in all objects

The whole cosmos functions on the basis of three types of activity. These are what we experience in our daily life. One is the act of creation. The second is sustenance of creation. The third is the dissolution of what is created. Creation, sustenance and dissolution are all happenings of everyday experience. We witness them everyday. All of them testify to the existence of the Divine who is the embodiment of Truth.

Without realising basic truth, people are engaged in controversies about the whereabouts of God. It is easy to raise questions about God. But it is difficult to make the search for God. Why? God is the truth of all truths. He is present as truth even in untruth. He is bad in badness and good in goodness. He is the merit in the meritorious and the sin in the sinful.

It is in this context that the *Gita* declares that the Lord is present as the essence (*rasa*) in all things. God is the sweet essence in the syrup. There can be no syrup without sugar. Likewise God is immanent in all objects. He is like butter in milk, fragrance in a flower, the good element in every object. This is the significance of the scriptural dictum: "*Rasovai Sah*" (He is the essence of everything).

God is immanent in everything in the cosmos like sugar in syrup. This is not visible to the eye. It has to be experienced.

Creation, sustenance, and dissolution go on according to the predetermined laws. The *Vedas* have described the master of these three activities as God. It is reaffirmed by the *Upanishads*. The *Quaran*, the *Bible*, the *Granth Saheb* (of the Sikhs) —all these have described how the presence of God can be inferred from various indications.

There is nothing in the cosmos that is not subject to these three processes. None can deny this truth. A philosopher or a scientist, an engineer or a doctor, or anyone else has to accept this fact. The master of this process is called God.

What does GOD signify? G stands for generation (or creation). O stands for organization:(sustaining the creation). D stands for destruction (or dissolution). All these three aspects can be noticed when we examine any object. All three processes take place according to the will of the Divine. The entire cosmos is encompassed by these three processes.

Happiness is consummation of suffering

How is one to realise this truth? All impulses of man arise from the heart. When the heart is kept pure, all our thoughts, words, and actions become sweet. When the heart is dedicated to right purposes, all our actions become righteous and our life gets redeemed. All that is good or bad in us emanates from the heart. Good and bad are seldom separate from each other. They are inseparable. Happiness is not a separate state. It is the consummation of suffering.

The oneness of the Divine subsumes everything. Humanness is the means to realise this oneness. The scriptures have declared that the same Divine Spirit dwells in all beings.

The human body is encased in five sheaths: *annamaya kosa* (the sheath of food or physical sheath), *pranamaya kosa*

(the vital sheath), *manomaya kosa* (the mental sheath), *vijnanamaya kosa* (the sheath of wisdom), and *anandamaya kosa* (the sheath of bliss).

Among the five sheaths, *vijnanamaya kosa* (the sheath of wisdom) is present only in man and not in other beings. Man should realize the preciousness of this gift of wisdom sheath. It should not be misused. Man is endowed with so many noble and estimable qualities that he should not be treated as a being of no account.

Forgetting all his immense potentialities and treating the physical as most important, man is leading a meaningless life.

It is not the physical (*annamaya kosa*) that is really important. As long as life is based on the physical alone, man can have no peace.

Science and spirituality

The sage Narada, who was proficient in 64 branches of knowledge, suffered from lack of peace, so he went to Sanat Kumara. He appealed to him, “Swami! Dispel my ignorance and teach me the way to attain peace.”

Sanat Kumara said, “Narada! There is no field of knowledge in which you are not proficient. You know all the methods prescribed by the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and other *Sastras* (spiritual texts). But all this knowledge has not conferred any happiness on you. All this knowledge is concerned with the phenomenal world, which is transient in its character. You cannot secure peace till you gain knowledge of the Eternal.”

The same truth is declared by scientists when they say that where science ends spirituality begins.

Science is concerned with all the phenomena in nature. It furnishes what is required for the physical body. It is doubtless essential to take care of the body. But the body should not be deemed as the sole truth.

However, one should devote all efforts to its maintenance and comfort. All achievements are dependent on the body. Even the Divine can be realised through the body. But the body is not yourself. It is only an instrument for realising God. Moreover, the Supreme *Atmic* Principle (*Paramatma*) is immanent in it.

Love is man's most divine quality

There are many vital things to be achieved in the world. For all of them, the primary basis is love. What could be accomplished by love and goodwill was demonstrated by one of the Prime Ministers of the U.K., William Gladstone, during the reign of Queen Victoria. He was described by his biographer as a noble man, who discharged his duties with love and with a spirit of sacrifice.

Man has many sacred qualities, like love and sacrifice, but he does not put them into practice wholeheartedly. There is divinity in every man. Without recognising this divinity, man is wasting his life on mundane pleasures. Man is the most valuable creation in the world. All things, however precious, derive their value from man.

In man, the most divine quality is love. Love is God. Live in love. Cultivate love for all. This vast world calls for large-hearted love. Then humanness will become manifest. Troubles and difficulties are incidental to human existence. But they will pass in due course. What are permanent are the values we cherish.

In the world, every country has its own ideals and aspirations. Every country should adhere to its *dharma*, its traditional values. When a country disregards its ideals, it goes down as a nation.

Bharatiya culture is rooted in divinity

The culture of Bharat (India) is a glorious one. It has survived the vicissitudes of five thousand years in its history. A huge banyan tree is sustained by the fact that its roots go deep down into the earth to preserve it. In many countries, their ancient culture has vanished long ago. But only *Bharatiya* (Indian) culture has survived from the distant past to the present day. What is the reason? The divine roots of that culture have gone down to the core of the earth and established themselves firmly. It is that divinity which is sustaining this culture.

The culture of Bharat should not be considered merely as a catalogue of ideals. It is a perennial source of inspiration and example. In spite of other changes, it has remained the same. The perennial message of this culture is not properly recognised.

Despite the remarkable progress in science, peace is eluding the advanced countries. What happiness can there be when there is no peace? Churchill once observed that man had achieved many victories but had not conquered his senses. Prahlada conveyed the same lesson to his father. If a man has no control over his mind, what is the use of all other conquests?

Control of the mind is the first requisite. It can be achieved only by pursuing the spiritual path and not by any other means.

What is the significance of the *Guru Purnima*, which we are celebrating today? People consider a person who imparts knowledge as a preceptor. But most of them are mere teachers, not preceptors (*gurus*). There is only one *guru*, and He is God.

Many who describe themselves as *gurus* collect contributions from their disciples on this day. The letter *Gu* signifies one who transcends all attributes. *Ru* signifies one who has no form. Only God can be regarded as one who is beyond attributes and forms.

In another sense, the term *guru* means one who dispels ignorance. Most so-called *gurus* are engaged in worldly activities. In the *Kali* Age, even spirituality has become a kind of business!

People should understand the distinction between worldly love and spiritual love. Worldly love is based on the desire to receive. Divine love yearns to give. God's love goes on giving. This is the true mark of divinity. It is a sign of purity. Spirituality is opposed to the ways of the world. Worldly activities cannot always be avoided. But if whatever is done is made an offering to please God, it gets sanctified. Whatever you achieve, treat it as a gift from God. You will then realize your true humanness.

True humanness consists in the unity of good conduct, good thoughts and good speech. Never depart from truth. Let love flow freely from your heart.

Mind's role in health and disease

At a recent meeting in Bangalore, a devotee said, "I am constantly bathing in the river of life flowing in Bangalore." But where is this river of life to be found in Bangalore? He indicated that he considered the drainage water in the city as life-giving river. It flows on forever and is never dry. It is no wonder that people bathing in such "life-giving" rivers are full of diseases.

What are the causes of the maladies afflicting people today? Impure air, polluted water, adulterated foodstuffs, etc. Nor is that all. Even the minds are polluted. These mental ailments are the cause of man's degradation. Most of the diseases are caused by aberrations of the mind. Ninety per cent of the diseases are psychological. Constant thinking about one's health is also the cause of many diseases. A heart specialist, who was constantly examining heart patients, was worried

about this own heart. Ultimately he died of heart attack. Another doctor, who specialized in treating digestion disorders, ultimately died of gastric troubles by worrying about his own digestion!

The mind has thus a vital role in one's health or illness. That was why the sages declared, "The mind is the cause of men's bondage or liberation." When the mind is directed toward sacred things, everything in a one's life becomes sacred. In such a state, all that you think, see or hear becomes pure and sacred.

The heart is like a lock with the mind as the key. Turn the key toward God, you develop detachment. Turn the mind toward the world, you get attachment. Our minds should not be immersed in mundane concerns. Deem everything in the world as divine.

True yearning for God is essential to experience Him

Once Vivekananda went to Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa and asked him, "Have you seen God?"

"Yes," said Ramakrishna.

"In what form?" asked Vivekananda.

Ramakrishna replied, "I am seeing him just as I am seeing you."

"Why, then, am I unable to see Him?"

Ramakrishna explained that if he yearned for God with the same intensity with which he was yearning for many other things, he would be able to experience God. Ramakrishna said that people shed tears for relations, wealth, and many other things, but how many shed tears for God? Ramakrishna advised Vivekananda to yearn for God with all his heart and soul. God is then bound to manifest Himself to him.

If we are keen to experience the Divine, we must devote ourselves to the Divine. People go through various troubles for the sake of wealth, relations, position, and power. If they were

to devote a small fraction of that time to thoughts of God, they would experience freedom from the fear of death. If you think only of world, how can you get peace and bliss?

Love the Lord who resides in your heart

Concentrate on the love of God. Although one's mother, father, and preceptor are to be adored as divine beings, they are not God. God should be worshipped as mother, father, preceptor, kinsman, and friend. Father, mother, and preceptor dwell in their respective abodes. But God dwells in your heart. Love the Lord who resides in your heart. All other objects of love are impermanent. What is the use of education if you have not learnt to worship God?

What does the worship of God mean? Practices like meditation, *japa* and penance are all tainted by selfishness. True worship of God consists in seeking union with God by realising one's own divinity. With every breath, man proclaims that he and the Divine are one in the mantra *So-Ham*, expressed through inhalation and exhalation.

Men must recognize that the body becomes a sacred shrine (*kshetra*) because the indweller is God (*Kshetrajna*). To know that God is the indweller will free a person from all bad qualities. Egoism is the worst enemy of man. Possessiveness (*mamakara*) is another evil trait. Both these should be banished, since they are at the root of all vices. When the two evil traits go, man becomes divinised.

By developing love, one sees the Divine in all beings. It is like wearing coloured glasses. If you see the world through the glasses of love, you will see love everywhere. The glasses and the vision must be in harmony. Only with the eye of love can you use the glasses of love to see the loveliness of the world. There is no greater spiritual path than the path of love. It is through love that such noble qualities as kindness, compassion and sympathy are fostered.

Embodiments of Love! You are carrying on a variety of spiritual exercises (*sadhanas*). God does not seek your *sadhanas*. Nor does He seek your devotion. He seeks only your love.

Difference between a devotee and a servant of God

A short while ago, K.R. Prasad, a Member of the Sathya Sai Central Trust, came to Me. In the course of our talk he asked Me, “What is the difference between a *bhakta* (devotee) and a *dasa* (servant of the Lord)?”

I told him, “*Dasa* is one who seeks to serve the Lord using his body for the purpose. *Bhakta* is one who is always thinking about God wherever he may be. The devotee is one who ‘always and at all times contemplates on God’ “*Sarvada Sarvakaaleshu Sarvatra Hari Chintanam* (*Dasa* is always thinking of service to God).”

Sankaracharya had five disciples. One of them was pure-hearted. The other disciples were keenly studying the *Sastras*, the *Upanishads*, and other texts. They were also learning logic and grammar. One day, Sankaracharya was teaching these disciples the principles of logic.

One of them was primarily concerned with service to the *guru*; he regarded himself as a *dasa* of the *guru*. He was engaged in gathering clothes of the *guru* after the morning ablutions, taking them to the Ganga, washing them, drying them, and bringing them back to the *ashram*. Thus he was totally involved in attending to the personal needs of the *guru*. He kept the *guru*'s clothes clean, chanting all the while the name of the *guru*.

Once, on his way back from the other bank of the river, he did not realize that the Ganga was in spate. As he was crossing the river, it rose up to the level of his neck. He looked around, but had no fear whether he would be washed away by the swelling waters. His only worry was how to take the clothes to the *guru* even at the cost of his life. Placing the clothes on his

head and chanting the word, “guruji! guruji”, he continued wading through the river. Because of his intense devotion to his *guru*, at every step he took there was a lotus-shaped stone on which he could place his foot.

He thereby earned the appellation “Padmapada”. Sankaracharya called him and imparted his teachings to him. He told Padmapada: “Service to the *guru* is a great virtue. You have adored the *guru* as God. *Guru* represents the Divine Trinity and is the Supreme Self.”

God alone is the real Guru

Today, the scriptural saying that the *Guru* is Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswara should be understood not in the literal sense but in the sense that God alone is the real *guru*. Sankara taught Padmapada that individual preceptors should not be worshipped as gods. Then, he imparted to Padmapada the sacred truth.

The other four disciples used to treat Padmapada previously as an ignoramus. After receiving the teachings from Sankaracharya, Padmapada could repeat the entire *Vedic* texts at one stroke. He became a good exponent of *Vedanta*, better than many scholars.

One day Sankaracharya summoned Padmapada and asked him to whom he was preaching and what message he was giving to them. Padmapada burst into a hymn in praise of Siva and said that Sankara was the inspiration for all his teachings and all his discourses were an offering to Sankara. Who is Sankara? Sankara is one who is free from *sanka* (doubts).

No one should have any doubts about God. The doubting man can achieve nothing. With total faith and total love, you can accomplish anything.

It should be realized that proficiency in fields like music, literature, and the arts is secured by the grace of the Divine. All fine arts are gifts from God. Nothing can be claimed as one’s

own achievement. The recipient of God's grace will lack nothing. He will have no troubles, and he will commit no wrongs because he has surrendered to God. The person who considers God as his all becomes one with God (himself). Hence, direct your minds toward God.

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