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Flowers That Never Fade

*Eight are the flowers that please the Lord,
Offer Him the flowers of non-violence and
sense-control,
Compassion on all creatures, forbearance and
peace
Penance, meditation and truth above all
These are the flowers dear to the Lord.*

(Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

GOD does not expect you to perform rituals nor does He want you to study the scriptures. All that He desires from you is eight types of 'flowers'.

The flower of *ahimsa* (non-violence) is the first of the eight flowers that one should offer to God. Non-violence means not causing harm to any living creature by thought, word and deed. We find doctors performing surgeries on patients to cure them of their ailments. In the process of surgery, the doctors cut the body with a knife. You cannot call it an act of violence because it is beneficial to the patient. Some people may argue that even cutting the vegetables is an act of violence because the vegetables and trees have life in them. No doubt, vegetables and trees have life, but they do not have the mind. Consequently, they do not suffer any pain. Only man has got five sheaths, namely, food sheath, life sheath, mind sheath, wisdom sheath and bliss sheath. One with the mind experiences pain and pleasure. Men, animals, birds and insects are endowed with the mind, not the trees and vegetables. In some trees, you find the sap oozing out when you pluck their fruit. Oozing of sap from a tree is a natural phenomenon, but some people mistake it for the tears of suffering. The trees do not suffer any pain because they do not have the faculty of mind.

Control Over The Tongue

The second is the flower of *indriya nigraha* (sense control). All spiritual practices will prove futile if one lacks sense control. Control of the senses is very essential for one and all. Lack of sense control is the

main cause of all the unrest and agitation that you find in the world today. How can one control the senses? First of all, one should exercise control over the tongue.

*Oh tongue, ever sensitive to sweetness,
I tell you truly that which is sweet and
yet yields perfect health...
All this is contained in the sweet words-
Govinda, Damodara, Madhava.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

You must control your tongue as it always craves for a variety of delicacies. You must ask this question, “O tongue, how many bags of rice, wheat and vegetables have you devoured! How many delicacies have you consumed! Fie on you if you are still not satisfied.” *Bhikshannam Deharakshartham* (a morsel of food is enough to sustain the body). You should eat for the sake of satisfying your hunger and sustaining the body. Do not give undue importance to taste. Likewise, tell your eyes to see God instead of watching unsacred things on the television or video. Teach your ears to listen to the stories of the Lord instead of listening to vain gossip.

*O 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.*

(Telugu Song)

Think for a while, how you are benefited by listening to unsacred things. In fact, you are polluting your heart in the process. All that you see and hear gets imprinted on your heart. Once your heart is polluted, your life will become meaningless. The other day, while speaking to the devotees from Visakhapatnam, I made a mention of this. Human heart is like a pen. The colour of the words that you write will be the same as the colour of the ink in the pen. Likewise, when you fill your heart with love, all that you think, say and do will be suffused with love. God expects you to fill your heart with love and lead a sacred life.

Daya And Kshama

The third is the flower of *daya* (compassion) towards all living creatures. The *Bhagavadgita* says, *Adveshta Sarva Bhutanam* (do not hate anybody). Live in amity with everyone, but do not have too much connection with people.

The fourth is the flower of *kshama* (forbearance) which is very special and significant. The Pandavas suffered a lot at the hands of the Kauravas.

But never did Dharmaraja lose forbearance even when Droupadi was being humiliated by the Kauravas. It was the virtue of forbearance that protected the Pandavas and made them an ideal to the rest of the world. This flower of forbearance is very dear to the Lord. God will be pleased with you and confer boons on you only when you offer Him the ‘flowers’ which are dear to Him. No benefit accrues from offering the flowers, which fade away and decay. The ever-blooming flowers of *ahimsa*, *indriya nigraha*, *daya* and *kshama* are liked by God.

The Story Of Abou Ben Adhem

Students might have heard the story of Abou Ben Adhem who always offered *sarva bhuta daya pushpam* (compassion on all beings) to the Lord. Everyday he used to go round the streets to serve the destitute and the handicapped and return home late in the night. One night when he returned home, he found in his bedroom an angel writing something. When he asked her as to what she was writing, she replied that she was making a list of those who loved God. She replied in the negative when he asked her if his name was there in that list. The following night, when he returned home, he again found the angel writing something. He queried, “Mother, what is it that you are writing now?” She said, “Son, I am writing the names of those who are dear to God.” He again wanted to

know if his name figured in the list. She replied that his name was on the top of this list.

The sum and substance of this story is that God is pleased when you serve your fellow-human-beings. The scriptures have prescribed nine paths of devotion, namely, *sravanam* (listening to the Lord's stories), *kirthanam* (singing His glories), *vishnusmaranam* (remembrance of the Lord's name), *pada sevanam* (service to the Lord's Lotus Feet), *archanam* (worship), *vandanam* (salutation), *dasyam* (servitude), *sneham* (friendship), *atmanivedanam* (offering oneself to the Lord) i.e., complete self-surrender. But the path of service is the greatest of all.

*Neither by penance nor by pilgrimages
Nor by going through the sacred texts
Can one cross the ocean of worldly life;
One can redeem one's life only through
service.*

(Sanskrit Verse).

Abou Ben Adhem became the recipient of God's love because he spent all his time in the service of his fellowmen. God loves all, for He is the embodiment of love. But He will give Himself to those who show compassion to all beings.

Santhi And Thapas

The fifth is the flower of *santhi* (peace). One

should remain peaceful through all the vicissitudes of life. Only then can one attain divine grace. Great devotees like Thyagaraja, Tukaram and Droupadi underwent many hardships. They bore all sufferings with patience. Thyagaraja said, “One cannot attain happiness without inner peace.” Man needs peace at the physical, mental and spiritual levels. Peace is not present in the external world. It is present within. You are the embodiment of peace. In the worldly life, there are bound to be many hardships, but one should not be perturbed. One should bear all sufferings with fortitude and patience. Human life is given not merely to enjoy the worldly pleasures like birds and beasts. Life becomes meaningful only when one experiences the peace that originates from the heart.

The sixth is the flower of *thapas* (penance). Penance does not mean retiring to the forest and living on fruits and tubers. In fact such a life can be called a life of *thamas*, (dullness), not *Thapas*. True penance lies in controlling one’s emotions, thoughts, words and deeds arising out of *sathwic*, *rajasic* and *thamasic* qualities. One should contemplate on God at all times and achieve harmony of thought, word and deed. *Manasyekam Vachasyekam Karmanyekam Mahatmanam* (he is a noble one whose thoughts, words and deeds are in complete harmony). Do not be carried away by pain or pleasure. The *Bhagavadgita* teaches,

Sukhadukhe Samekruthwa Labhalabhau Jayajayau (one should be even-minded in happiness or sorrow, gain or loss, victory or defeat). One should discharge one's duty and serve society without any expectation of reward. Such even-mindedness and desireless state is true penance.

Dhyana And Sathya

The seventh is the flower of dhyana (meditation). Meditation does not mean sitting in *padmasana* (cross-legged posture) with eyes closed in contemplation of God. This is physical, worldly activity. No doubt, this is also needed, but true meditation lies in unifying the mind with God. Just as milk and water cannot be separated, likewise, the mind, once merged with God, cannot be separated. An iron ball cast in fire will become one with it. Likewise, your love should become one with divine love. This truth is contained in the Vedic dictum, *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati* (the knower of *Brahman* becomes *Brahman* Himself). Some people contemplate on God for a limited period in the morning and evening. This cannot be called meditation. *Sarvada Sarva Kaleshu Sarvatra Harichintanam* (contemplate on God at all times, at all places and under all circumstances). Perform all tasks with your mind firmly fixed on God. That is true

meditation. Thinking of God for a limited period cannot be termed meditation. That is only part-time devotion. Part-time devotion confers only part-time grace. You should have full-time devotion in order to attain full-time grace.

The eighth is the flower of *Sathya* (Truth). This is very important.

*The entire world has originated from truth,
is sustained by truth and ultimately
merges into truth.*

*There is no place without the principle of
truth.”*

(Telugu Poem)

Trikalabadhyam Sathyam (Truth is changeless in all the three periods of time, i.e., past, present and future). Everything may disappear, but Truth remains forever. So, Truth is God, live in Truth.

Only Service Can Confer Bliss

God will be pleased only when you worship Him with these eight types of flowers. The priests in temples worship God with various types of flowers. But God does not want these flowers. He says, “O priest, is it what you have learnt all these years? You are worshipping Me with lorry loads of roses and jasmines, which fade away in a short time. These are

not the flowers that I expect from you. Worship Me with the flowers of peace, love, non-violence, etc., which will never fade.”

Embodiments of Love!

People worship God with devotion and sincerity, but God is not-satisfied with external worship. You should serve society. Only service can confer bliss on you. By rendering service to society, not only can you alleviate the sufferings of the people, but you can also bring about transformation in their lives. *Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavati* (as is the feeling, so is the result). If you serve with sacred feelings, it is bound to yield sacred results. Serve society to your utmost capacity. You are doing bhajans in the morning and evening. The satisfaction that you get by participating in bhajans is temporary, whereas service confers permanent satisfaction. A few minutes ago, the students sang *Bhaja Govindam*, in which it is said, *Ma Kuru Dhanajana Yauvana Garvam, Harathi Nimeshath Kalah Sarvam* (do not be proud of your wealth, progeny and youth; the tide of time may destroy them in a moment).

Sanctify Time By Service

Youth and wealth are like passing clouds. Do not entertain excessive desires. Do your duty sincerely.

Whatever happens, be it good or bad, accept it as the gift of God. Understand that it is good for you. Time is the most precious gift of God, but you are wasting it in vain pursuits and unsacred feelings. Sanctify the time given to you by serving society. Through service alone can one get rid of worries, ego, pomp and show and other evil qualities.

The Vedas say, *Chittasya Shuddhaye Karmah* (the objective of actions is to purify the mind). Service alone is to purify the mind. Today people waste a lot of time, wealth and energy in performing activities which do not foster purity of the mind. That is why they are unable to experience peace of mind. The peace that one gets out of worldly activities comes and goes like a passing cloud. One should aspire for the true and eternal peace, which originates from the heart.

Though the Pandavas were subjected to many hardships, Dharmaraja always remained peaceful. When Droupadi was being humiliated by the Kauravas, Bhima became furious and tried to attack Dussasana with his mace. It was Dharmaraja who pacified Bhima saying, those who adhere to dharma will ultimately emerge victorious. Not all can attain the level of peace that Dharmaraja attained. It is possible only for a few. Where there is peace, there you find Divine power, grace and fame. The Kauravas were many in number, whereas the Pandavas were only five.

But the fame of the Pandavas remained permanent in society. Dharmaraja was liked by one and all.

Speak Sweetly And Softly

Today unrest and violence have gripped the world as Sathya and dharma have declined in the hearts of people. All that you find outside is nothing but the reflection, reaction and resound of your inner feelings. Human life is highly sacred, most precious and divine. Do not fritter away this life by indulging in unsacred activities. It has to be lived in the proper way by exercising control over the ten *indriyas* (senses). Speak sweetly and softly. You cannot always oblige, but you can speak always obligingly. Pray for the well-being of all. *Loka Samasta Sukhino Bhavantu* (May the whole world be happy!). Sanctify your senses by serving all. If you exercise control over your senses, you can achieve anything in life. If God is not pleased with you, you will be looked down upon by everyone in the world. You may think that you have given away ten bags of rice in charity and distributed clothes to five hundred people. Such accounts are to be submitted to the Income Tax Department and not to God. God is not interested in quantity, He sees the feeling behind your acts. So, whatever may be the act of charity you undertake, do it with the spirit of love and sacrifice.

What Is Your Dharma?

What is the teaching of the *Bhagavadgita*? Some people say that the path of action is the main teaching of the *Bhagavadgita*. Some others point to the path of wisdom as the main teaching of the *Bhagavadgita*. But none of these are correct. What is the first sloka in the *Gita*?

Dharmakshetre Kurukshetre Samaveta

Yuyutsava,

Mamaka Pandavaschiva Kimakurvata

Sanjaya?

And the last sloka reads as follows:

Yatra Yogeshwara Krishno, Yatra Partho

Dhanurdhara,

Tatra Srivijayo Bhutir Dhruva

Neetirmathirmama.

When you join the last *word* of the last verse and the first word of the first verse, it becomes *Mama dharma*, meaning ‘my dharma’. This is what the *Gita* teaches. What is your dharma? Your dharma is to lead the life of a human being. Remain yourself that you are a human being, not an animal. Having been born as a human being, you should cultivate human values. Do not behave like an animal. Adhere to truth and righteousness.

The entire creation is based on truth. Where there is truth, there you find plenty and prosperity. Human life is not meant to enjoy physical comforts and worldly pleasures, which are momentary. It is meant to set an ideal to the rest of the world. Having lived all these years, what is the ideal that you have set? What is it that you have achieved? Put a question to yourself. The answer is a big zero. You might have done a few good deeds in life, but they pale in comparison to the number of bad deeds you might have performed. That is not the quality of a human being. Cultivate good thoughts, speak good words and perform good deeds. That is true humanness. The names of ancient sages and seers are remembered even today because of the good deeds they performed. Do unto others what you would like others to do unto you. Do not indiscriminately follow the mind, for the mind is like a mad monkey. Follow the conscience, i.e., the principle of the *atma*. Your life will find fulfilment when you please God by offering Him the eight 'flowers' mentioned above. Love is the undercurrent of all this. So, lead a life suffused with love.

Krishna Janmashtami, 22-08-2000, Prasanthi Nilayam