

9. The Path of Bhakthi

The word *bhakthi* is sometimes also known as *prema* or love. To this word *prema*, we attribute many different meanings. We are also inferring for ourselves many different meanings. Sometimes a meaning for the word *prema* is given by describing it as, synonymous with *kama*. This creates an impression in your minds that *prema* and *kama*, to some extent, mean the same thing. Although *prema* and *kama* may look synonymous, we have to recognise that the experience of the path, the ways and methods of *prema* on the one hand, and the experience of the path, the ways and methods of *kama*, on the other hand, are different from each other. *Kama* is tying you up in bondage. *Prema* is bestowing on you happiness. *Prema* is a pure quality whereas *kama* is an impure quality.

We should make an enquiry as to the reason for *kama* becoming impure and the reason for *prema* remaining pure. The water that flows and keeps flowing remains pure. The water that is stagnant and does not flow becomes impure. A stage will come when even worms can breed and thrive in stagnant water. In the same manner, *prema*, which moves, flows from one heart to another, from one place to another, from one person to another, ultimately reaches the destination which is called the Grace of God; such *prema* is pure. But the kind of *prema* or love which gets tied up to one individual by saying “Oh! he belongs to me, he is mine,” does not flow but gets tied up to one individual. Such *prema* will be called *kama* or will be *prema* with an attachment to that particular individual. That kind of *prema*, which has a limitation, which is narrow and is confined to one place, cannot be called *prema* in the real sense.

Although both *prema* and *kama* look synonymous in a limited sense, they are being experienced in different ways and by different processes. *Prema* that has got this feature or that is confined to one or a few persons will land you in difficulties, sometime or

other. For instance, we have a rose plant. On the plant there are some rose flowers, but right below the rose flowers, you also have got some thorns. When you are seeking only the roses, then you do not have to touch the thorns. But because there are thorns, you are not going to give up asking for the roses. Our life is like a rose plant. On one side there are flowers, there are roses which give us the happiness and which give us the fragrance. On the other side, immediately below the roses, there are also the difficulties, the thorns. It is the same relationship that exists between the roses and the thorns. This is also the relationship which exists between *prema* and *kama*. Love is a flower; Lust is a thorn. *Prema* can be truly called *prema* only when it recognises the Divinity and only when it realises that we should love the Divine. That kind of *prema* alone can deserve to be described as true *prema*.

What is the special quality or what is the position of authority or merit by which Arjuna deserved to be taught the *Gita* by the Lord? Arjuna's brother Dharmaraja had all the good qualities; in fact, he had many more good qualities than Arjuna. Then how did Arjuna get the right to get the teachings from the Lord? Why did not Dharmaraja get the right to get that teaching? If we are taking into consideration the physical strength, then we should remember that there is another brother, Bheema, who has much greater physical strength than Arjuna. While on one side, there is a brother, Dharmaraja, who is intellectually far superior, and on the other side there is another brother, Bheema, far superior in physical strength; how did Arjuna acquire this right, in spite of the fact that he was arguing and himself raising questions? Even if we wish to ignore these two brothers, assuming that they do not deserve it, in spite of their strength and power, what about Bhishma who can be regarded as one who has no equal in the matter of his spiritual knowledge? Bhishma was a great person, highly mature and vastly experienced. Why is it that Bhishma also did not have the right to get the Lord's teachings? Arjuna himself had this doubt.

At one time, when the battle was all over, Arjuna himself asked the question of Krishna. Krishna replied in a very quiet and casual way: "Let us take your elder brother, Dharmaraja, yes, he is a very good person, he has got many good qualities, but look at him, he never had any forethought. He is having an afterthought, he is feeling now after the whole thing is over and asking himself why he entered this battle. He is asking himself why we killed so many people. This is a kind of feeling that has come to him as an afterthought. This after-thought, by which one feels the guilt of some action after it is over, is the nature of man. Everybody will feel guilty and sorry after the thing is over. Such human quality is characteristic of Dharmaraja and therefore he does not deserve to be taught the *Gita*. If we consider the case of Bhishma, the great experienced scholar, valiant son of Ganga, he is in a very different situation. On the one hand, he realises and states that righteousness or *Dharma* is on the side of Pandavas. On the other hand, contrary to what he has been saying, he is the head and the chief of the Army of Kauravas. This is a contradiction and a paradox in his life. Thus in Bhishma's case, what he says is one thing and what he does is a different thing. Thus he is riding a chariot with horses running in different directions. He does not deserve to be taught the *Gita*.

Let us take the case of Arjuna. He had the forethought, all the suffering and all the miseries that are likely to accrue if he fought this war, were thought of even before he commenced the war. He asked the question, why do I kill all my relations and all my elders? He said that he would rather go out and beg for his food than ask for the kingdom after killing all these people. He further said that apart from the kingdom that he would get if he won this war, even if he was promised heaven itself if he won the war, he would not be willing to enter the war and kill all his relations. He would rather give up both. He prayed to Krishna to get him out of this mess. Thus, Arjuna gave up all desires and prepared to sacrifice all the pleasures of this world and the other world and he surrendered completely to the

Lord. We can recognise in him a person who deserves to be taught the *Gita*.

What earned for Arjuna the right to be taught by the Lord is the fact that he stood in complete and total surrender and was prepared to take whatever instructions the Lord would give. It is to such a person and under such circumstances that one can give the sacred meaning of the *Sastras* or the sacred significance of the Divine. Everyone will have to deserve this, earn this by good conduct, by good behaviour and by doing good things. Whether you are in difficulties or in joyous circumstances, whether you are in pain or pleasure, it is only when you have faith in God and accept Him as your very life-breath, will you be in a position to derive real peace and happiness. Our own conduct is responsible for, and is the cause of, all our pleasures and pains. We cannot say that God is causing us either pleasure or pain. He is only a witness. For our pains and for our pleasures, for our sorrows and for our joys, our own actions are responsible. If we spend our life with good ideas, with good conduct and good deeds, then we do not have to ask anybody to give us happiness. That will come of its own accord as a result of our good deeds.

I will give you another example of what comes out of the good qualities and virtues that the Pandavas had. The two armies were standing poised against each other in the battlefield. In the centre, Arjuna was standing; on both sides these armies are ready for battle. In a few minutes, each one will raise his own individual war cry. In this circumstance and in such a perilous situation, Dharmaraja, who was standing on his chariot, removed his armour, removed all the shields, removed his shoes, and got down from the chariot to walk right into the centre of the enemy's army. The people who were in the Kaurava army looked at Dharmaraja, who was walking toward them in this unprotected manner, and raised a cry of joy, thinking that Dharmaraja was walking to them already in a spirit of weakness and defeat and wanting to surrender to them. No one understood why Dharmaraja undertook to walk barefooted into the

army of the enemy. There was one person who understood it, and that was Krishna. On one side, Bheema was very much upset with the behaviour of his brother. He was wondering why his brother was doing like that at that critical moment, and he got very angry and excited. On the other side, Arjuna was also feeling very much upset. He was looking at Lord Krishna in his chariot and his eyes were like two balls of fire. But Krishna just signaled to both these people and told them, "Look here! You have been following your brother in everything all your life; it is good for you to follow him and accept what he does even at this moment."

The eldest brother Dharmaraja was showing a path that they could not understand. He had given up his armour, and when the brothers turned to Krishna, the latter gave them the advice that they too should follow their brother. Though they could not make anything out of it, with a view to following the brother, all of them laid aside their armour and began to walk barefooted behind Dharmaraja. Looking at this sight, the Pandava army also lost heart, and they began to feel despondent. But there was confidence and faith in the Pandava army that Dharmaraja was not the man who would do anything without an appropriate reason for it. When all were looking on at Dharmaraja, he straight went to Bhishma, the old warrior. He touched his feet, made obeisance to him and addressed him: "Sire, we, who had lost our father, had been looked after by you like your own children. It was your love and care that nourished, nurtured, and brought us up. You are a person who has been everything to us and has been a father to us! Please give us the permission to enter the war today. You are in the place of our father; you are equal to our father. It is not possible to fight with one who is in the place of our father, unless you, yourself, give us permission. Unless you bless us, we cannot fight with you."

Bhishma, who listened to these words of Dharmaraja, was very much moved and was astonished that even at such a critical time, even under such difficult conditions, Dharmaraja was not swerving from the righteous path and was behaving in the most

faultless manner. Bhishma was so much moved by the situation that he lovingly caressed Dharmaraja all over the body and praised his strict adherence to righteous behaviour and said: "Yes, you will be victorious."

Then Dharmaraja went to his *guru*, Drona. He touched Drona's feet and said, "It is the greatest sin to fight against one's own *guru*. However, if I have to fight, it is only after getting your permission that I can fight with you. Please give us permission to enter the battlefield." At the conduct of Dharmaraja, Drona's heart melted. He was deeply touched. Drona felt so much that he even revealed the secret of his life to Dharmaraja and told him how he could be put to death.

The moral of it all is that if we shape our conduct and choose our path in consonance with propriety and truth, then they in turn will not only protect us but will even show us ways of winning victory. Just because it happens that the time was critical or that the time was one with difficulties or you happen to be in the midst of sorrows, for that reason you should not deviate from the moral path, you should not swerve from truth. Even if it is going to lead you to defeat, you must adhere to the correct path. Just because you want to avoid defeat and get victory, you should not deviate from the right path and take the wrong path. Even if we are doing a small thing, we must enquire into whether it is right or wrong. It need not be a big thing to call for such an enquiry. Leaving the right path and resorting to the wrong path will put you completely out of the game. Even if you are going to be defeated, provided you accept and follow the right path, you will have a chance of joining the game once again. If you swerve from the correct course and if you play a foul game, then you will create a situation by which you will have no place in future in any of the games.

You may have committed, knowingly or unknowingly, some wrong. Having committed a wrong, to go and tell an untruth would not be the right thing. On the other hand, having committed a wrong, if you go and tell the truth to your father or mother or *guru*, you will

be getting their grace. On the other hand, with a view to cover up the wrong that you have done either knowingly or unknowingly, if you want to hide it from your father or mother or *guru*, then you will simply harm yourself for all the future.

The first thing, therefore, to do is to acquire confidence in yourself. Today, a situation has arisen when self-confidence has completely disappeared amongst the students. An individual who has no self-confidence cannot achieve victory in anything whatsoever. It is only when you have self-confidence that you will attain self-satisfaction. When a small bird goes and perches on a small plant or a small branch of a tree, on account of the weight of the bird, that branch moves up and down. But the bird is not going to be upset by such a movement. What is the reason? The bird that is sitting on the branch is not depending for its safety on the branch. It is depending on its own wings. Even if the branch moves up and down or even if the branch breaks, because the bird is depending on its own wings, it can fly away. It does not worry at all. Even the small bird that is sitting on the branch has got so much confidence in its own wings and in itself that it is fearless.

On the other hand, a youth of today, who claims that he is very well educated, who claims that he is highly clever, who claims that he has got all the good qualities, is having no confidence at all in his own capacity. When he wants to do something, he gets into terrible doubt whether he should do it this way or that way. One who has no confidence in himself, whom is he going to trust? His whole life will become a bundle of doubts. He is not going to blossom into a complete, integrated and sound personality. Therefore, we should follow the path by which we can get rid of doubts and not enter the path by which we accumulate all the doubts in our hearts. So that you may get rid of all these doubts, you should cleanse your mind and your heart.

In order to cleanse and achieve the purification of yourself, you have to control your sight, your tongue, and your senses to some extent. As a prelude to your doing something wrong or some-

thing unworthy, there will have been an initial action by which your eyes must have seen something bad, or you must have heard some words which had excited you to do something bad, or you must have gone through an experience which will have made your mind wander and get excited. This is the way by which one becomes mad all through one's life. If you, the youth of today, take great care that your sight does not become impure, that your hearing does not become impure, that your words do not become impure, then you will be able to attain purity of mind and purity of thought.

Today, we know that there is a material world in which there are all kinds of material attractions. We think that because of the existence of those attractions, we are having pleasure and happiness. It is not so. So long as these material desires and material attractions do not reach your eyes, do not reach your ears and you do not participate in them, they cannot affect you in the least.

I will give you a small example. Now you are standing here. Your ears are with you. Somebody behind the gate is talking about you in a good way and praising you. Thus, some good talk about you is outside the gate; your ears are here. As long as the ears are away and not listening to what is being talked about you, there is no pleasure. In the same manner, if behind the gate somebody is talking ill about you, and you are not hearing it, there is no reaction, neither elation or depression. It is only when this particular talk falls on your ears, or when somebody comes and tells you that so and so has spoken ill of you, that it is possible that you may have some reaction; you may become angry or you may be hurt to some extent. It is only when the contact is established between the appropriate sensory organ and the action that we have been talking about that there can be any reaction and experience in our mind.

The distortion that follows our thought is even more fearful. Many people may be raising doubts and may be saying: Oh! Swami is calling a large number of experienced people, and a large number of students are sitting and these experienced people are talking to them. Just by these experts talking of their experiences and the stu-

dents merely listening to them are the students going to improve? Are they going to change? This kind of talk will go on, these kinds of doubts are raised by many people. Ninety-nine out of 100 persons have such doubts. Of course, by talking, the mind can be changed to a great extent. Because the whole world is filled with sound, sound can achieve many wonderful things. There is nothing in this world that cannot be achieved through sound.

Here is a small example. One teacher, having about ten students, is teaching them some good things. To such an *ashram* came one who had some position and power. This teacher did not go to the door to welcome and receive him. The man who came there, because he had some position and authority, felt somewhat hurt and he went right into the class and asked the teacher, "Why is it you didn't care for me? You have not come and received me. What are you doing?" The teacher said, "I am busy teaching the children some good things." The person who came in asked: "Just because you are teaching them some good things, are the hearts of these children going to be changed and become more sacred?" The teacher took some courage and said, "Yes, of course, there is every possibility of their minds changing by my teaching." The intruder said, "No, I cannot believe it," and the teacher replied, "When you cannot believe it, it simply means that you have no faith in it. Because of that, I cannot give up teaching these boys some good things." Then this person, who felt somewhat important, started arguing and said there is no possibility of changing a mind merely by words. The teacher, who was clever and who had known these things, asked one of the youngest boys to stand up. In the hearing of this visitor, the teacher told the young boy, "Look here my dear boy! You just get hold of the neck of this visitor and throw him out of the room." Immediately on hearing these words, the visitor became completely excited, and his eyes turned red, and he was very angry and he came to beat the teacher. Then the teacher asked, "Sir, what is the reason for your becoming so angry? We did not beat you, we did not throw you out, the only thing that has excited you to this stage of anger are

the words which I conveyed to this young boy. You said that you do not believe in changing the mind by mere words. What is the reason these mere words that I uttered to this young boy changed your mind so much that you got so excited! So, it is very wrong to say that with mere words you cannot change the mind. With mere words you can cause any excitement. With mere words you can cause any amount of affection. With mere words you can earn the grace of someone else.”

So, if in this world you want to promote friendship, you can do so by using sweet words, by talking in a very sweet manner and by speaking about sacred things. On the other hand, if you use harsh words, if you use painful words, you are not going to promote friendship in this world. I am hoping that you will be able to follow this path and use sweet words in all your conversations with others. You will notice that the eyes have only one capacity and that is to see, the ears have only one capacity and that is to hear. Similarly the nose has only one capacity and that is to smell, the skin has only one capacity and that is to touch and feel. But the tongue has got two capacities; one is to feel and taste and the second one is to utter words. This double capacity of the tongue should enjoin on you that you should take great care to control your tongue. With words alone, by using sweet words you can melt the Divine and you can earn the grace of the Divine. Bad sight should be avoided. All evil has to be avoided. By doing this, I am sure you will be able to earn the grace of the Lord and you will develop ideally in such a way that you will be worthy citizens of this country.

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