

Spiritual exercise wins His grace

Neither peace nor the devotion that gives it can be obtained through another; each one has to create and develop them for themselves. Still, one should also have the grace of the Lord, which is fundamental. As said in the *Upanishads*, “He whom He chooses gets it (*Yameva vrunuthe thena labhyah*)”. But the spiritual aspirant may doubt, “What then is the need for spiritual exercises?” Those who think of the Lord with devotion can overcome any type of inherited or accumulated *karma*. With His grace, they can experience even unattainable bliss. Do not doubt the usefulness of spiritual discipline; it can never be fruitless, no, not for anyone. Hold firm to that conviction. Unshaken devotion will win the grace of the Lord. Gajendra is an example of this.

Each is born for some task, but all can exist only on the self-same food and drink: peace. For without peace, there is no bliss. Peace embellishes every act; it softens the hardest core of humanity; it takes you to the footstool of the Lord and wins for you the vision of God. It knows no distinction; it is a force that establishes equality. It is the honey of love in the enchanting flower of life. It is a prime need for *yogis* and spiritual aspirants. Having acquired it, they can realize the reality tomorrow, if not today. They should put up with all the obstacles in the way, and peace will give them the strength needed for it.

Through peace alone can devotion expand and spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) strike root. Wisdom born of peace is the one and only means of living a full life or a life that knows no death. The inquiry “Who am I?” clears the path for realization. So, one must wait patiently and quietly, placing faith on the grace and wisdom of the Lord. Such an inquirer will be ever earnest and penitent. The inquirer becomes fearless and therefore full of peace through another conviction also: the Lord is everywhere, visibly present.

To earn peace, its inveterate enemy, anger, must be laid low. Anger is the harvest of the tantalizing mind; it enslaves you and fogs your understanding. Understanding becomes easy when you are full of devotion and your devotion is deep rooted. The form of devotion called peaceful devotion (*santha-bhakti*) is the best path for attaining eternal, everlasting bliss. Become the messenger of the peace that has no beginning or end. Hold forth the light of peace for humanity. Live the ideal life, ever contented, ever joyous, ever happy.

The spiritual aspirants and devotees of old reached their goal only through peace. Peace gave Ramdas, Tukaram, Kabir, Thyagaraja, Nandanar, etc. the fortitude needed to bear all the calumny, torture, and travail that was their lot. An aspirant who bases efforts on these examples will be free of anger, despair, and doubt. The accounts of their struggles and successes, if contemplated upon, are more useful to the aspirant than contemplation of the powers and accomplishments of the Lord. They will help the aspirant to try out in their own experience the methods developed by these others. One can attain peace by recalling how they overcame handicaps, how they bore troubles, and what paths they trod to cross over to the other bank.

It will be found that peace was the main instrument that saved them from the coils of anger, pain, conceit, doubt, and despair. Therefore listen, oh aspirants! Acquire the instrument, peace, by the grace of the Lord. Direct all efforts to that end.

Whatever the trouble, however great the travail, persist and win by means of remembering the name (*namasmarana*). Remember Bhishma! Though prostrate on a bed of arrows, he bore the pain patiently, awaiting the dawn of the auspicious moment. He never called out to God in his agony to ask Him to put an end to his suffering. “I shall bear everything, whatever the pain, however long the agony. I shall be silent until the moment comes. Take me when it dawns,” he said. Bhishma was chief among the tranquil devotees. He lay firm and unshakeable.

Peace is essential for everyone. Having it is having all, and not having it takes away the joy of everything. Although peace is the very nature of every person, anger and greed succeed in suppressing it. When they are removed, peace shines in its own effulgence.