

2. Sharanaagathi

I DO not give 'speeches'; My talks are more of the conversation type; I want that you should follow every word of what I say with reverent attention, for your *Aanandham* is My *Aahaaram*--*-your* joy is My food. You can get *Aanandham* only by following the advice I give you and this is why I am particular that you should listen carefully and take to heart all that I say. This is not a mere lecture, wherefrom you do not seek new lessons for life.

The Lord is a Mountain of *Prema* (Love); any number of ants carrying away particles of sweetness cannot exhaust His Plenty. He is an Ocean of Mercy without a limiting shore. *Bhakthi* (devotion) is the easiest way to win His Grace and also to realise that He pervades everything; in fact, is everything!

Sharanaagathi (total surrender), leaving everything to His Will, is the highest form of *Bhakthi*. (devotion) Once a Brahmin was crossing a river bed near which some men were washing clothes. Finding a nice new silk shawl on his shoulder, they fell upon him in a group, shouting that it belonged to the Palace and had been given to them to be washed, but had been stolen and had not been traced. The poor Brahmin yelled 'Naaraayana, Naaraayana,' when the blows rained on him and so, Naaraayana rose from His Seat in Vaikunththa and proceeded forward; but in a moment, He walked back and resumed His Seat much to the surprise of His Consort who asked Him the reason for the strange behaviour. Naaraayana said, "I wanted to help that poor Brahmin who has fallen into a den of scoundrels, but he has started beating them, blow for blow; My Help is no longer needed."

Conquest of ego needed

When *Bhakthi* is just emerging as a sapling, a fence is needed to protect the tender plant; that fence is *Sanaathana Dharma* (Eternal Religion) and its rules, regulations and restrictions, directions and commands. When the fruit is green, it will not fall even when the gale is furious; but when it is fully ripe, it drops to the ground even in the silence of the night. A small fire will go out in smoke even if a little green is placed on it, but the forest fire will

reduce to ashes even the greenest tree which impedes its fierce march! What is needed is the conquest of the ego.

The bullock shouts '*ham hai*' '*ham hal*' (I am, I am), in its egoistic pride. And so, when it is just a few days old, you tie it to a post, apart from its mother; you work it to skin and bones; but yet, the animal does not learn the lesson of humility. Even its skin when drawn tightly across a drum resounds *egoistically*, '*Ham Ham Ham*'. And so, the skin has to be cut into slender strings and then when the strings are pulled, the bullock reveals that it has benefitted by all the punishment it has undergone; it murmurs *thum thum thum*, (you you you), and its ego is gone.

The *Haridhaasa* (mendicant) goes along the streets, singing the glories of the Lord. He has the sounding cymbals, two of them, the eternal duet of good-bad, joy-grief, pain-pleasure in his right hand and he twangs the *thambura* (stringed musical instrument) of *samsaara* with his left. *Samsaara* (worldly life) is the tune to which his songs have to be adjusted, it is the *shruthi* (musical note). But both the *shruthi* and *thaala* (marking of time) are for the purpose of heightening the effect of the song which issues from his mouth, the song of the glow of God.

Three types of devotion

I remember telling a questioner in Maharaashtra, while in the previous Body, that there are three types of devotion: the *vihang*a method, where like a bird swooping down upon the ripe fruit on the tree, the devotee is too impatient and by the very impatience he exhibits, he loses the fruit, which falls from his hold; the *markata* method where like a monkey which pulls towards it one fruit after another and by sheer unsteadiness is not able to decide which fruit it wants, the *bhaktha* too hesitates and changes his aim much too often and thus loses all chances of success; and the *pipeelika* method, where like the ant which slowly but steadily proceeds towards the sweetness, the devotee also moves direct, with undivided attention towards the Lord and wins His Grace!

Bhakthi and *shraddha* (devotion and faith) are the two oars with which you can take the boat across the sea of *samsaara*. A

child told its mother when it went to bed at night, "Mother! Wake me up when I get hungry." The mother answered, "There is no need, your hunger will itself wake you." So too, when the hunger for God comes, it will itself activate you and make you seek the food you need. God has endowed you with hunger and He supplies the food; He has endowed you with illness and He grows the specifics you need. Your duty is to see that you get the proper hunger and the right illness and use the appropriate food or drug!

Man must be yoked to *samsara* and broken; that is the training which will teach that the world is unreal; no amount of lectures will make you believe it is a snake unless you actually experience it. Touch fire and get the sensation of burning; there is nothing like it to teach you that fire is to be avoided. Unless you touch it, you will be aware only of its light. It is light and heat both; just as this world is both true and false, that is to say, unreal.

Habit of judging others as atheists or theists

There is a widely prevalent habit now of judging others and labelling them as theists or atheists. What do you know, what can you know of the inner working of another's mind? There was once a queen who was a great devotee of Raama; she felt so sad that her husband, the Raaja, never even uttered the name of Raama and had no *bhakthi*. She had vowed that the first occasion on which she got evidence of his *bhakthi* or at least respect for *Raamanaama*, she would conduct *puuja* (ritualistic worship) in all the temples and feed the poor on a lavish scale. Then, one night, while fast asleep, the Raaja uttered the name of Raama thrice plaintively and prayerfully. She heard the *Naamasmarana* and was happy at the discovery of her husband's devotion to Raama; she ordered general rejoicing throughout the kingdom and the feeding of the poor. The Raaja did not know the reason for the celebration for he was only told that it was an order of the Raani, which the officers carried out. Similarly, a husband may not be aware of the excellence of a wife's spiritual attainments.

There is the case of a couple who were proceeding through a thick jungle on pilgrimage to an inaccessible shrine. The husband saw on the footpath a precious stone, shining brilliantly when the

sun's rays fell upon it from between the leaves. He hastily threw some sand over it with a movement of his foot so that his wife may not be tempted to pick it up and become a slave to the tinsel. The wife saw the gesture and chided the husband for still retaining in his mind a distinction between sand and diamond. For her, both were the same.

Keep the Name as constant as breathing

The Raaja who spoke in his sleep the sacred name of Raama felt very sorry, according to the story, that he let *Raamanaama* out of his mouth, for he believed that no one should know of his 'love' for Raama. There are many who will not shout about their *Guru* or their favourite Name and Form, but whether you declare them to others or not, keep them ever in your consciousness. *Raamanaama* or any other name must be as constant as breathing. For this, practice is essential.

A person once told Dr. Johnson, the famous English thinker, that he could seldom get time to recite the Name of God, what with the hundreds of things he had to do from morning till nightfall and even far into the night. Dr. Johnson replied with another question. He asked how millions of people found space to live upon the face of the earth, which is two-thirds water and the rest is too full of mountains, deserts, forests, icy regions, river beds, marshes and similar impossible areas. The questioner said that man somehow struggled to find living space. So too, said Dr. Johnson, man must somehow find a few minutes a day for prayer to the Lord.

Example of the highest type of detachment

Bhakthi and the attitude of surrender that is its final fruits will give you great courage to meet any emergency; such courage is what is called Renunciation. The story of Mohajith is a good example of this highest type of detachment.

Mohajith, the Prince, went to a Sage in the forest and sought guidance in the spiritual path. The sage asked him whether he had conquered attachment as his name indicated. The Prince said that

not only he, but every one in his kingdom had! So the Sage started to test the truth of this claim.

The sage took the Prince's robes, soaked them in blood and hastened to the Palace Gate with the gruesome stow of the murder of the Prince by some ruffians in the jungle. The maid whom he met refused to hurry with the news to the Royal apartments because she said, "He was born, he died; what is the special urgency of this news that I should interrupt my regular routine and run to the King and Queen?"

When at last he got an audience and was able to communicate the sad news to the father, he sat unruffled, whispering to himself, "The bird flew off the tree on which it had alighted to take rest." The Raani too was unmoved. She told the sage that this Earth is a caravanaserai, where men come and stay for the night and when dawn breaks, one by one, they tramp their different ways. Kith and kin are the words we use for the attachment to the travellers cultivated in the caravanaserai during the short term of acquaintance.

The wife of the "dead" Prince was also unaffected; she said, "Husband and wife are like two pieces of wood drifting down a flooded river; they float near each other for some time and when some current comes between, they are parted: each must move on to the sea at its own rate and in its own time. There is no need to grieve over the parting of the two; it is in the very nature of Nature that it should be so."

Grow with self-respect and dignity

The sage was overjoyed to see this steady and sincere *Vairaagya* (dispassion) in the rulers and the ruled. He came back to the forest and told the Prince that while he was away, a hostile army had invaded his Kingdom and slain the entire royal family and captured his Kingdom and enslaved his subjects. He took the news calmly and said, "All this is bubble,

impermanent, flimsy. Let it go the way of the bubble. Guide me to reach the Infinite, the Imperishable."

Such courage comes out of the Grace of the Lord; it needs generations of learning and struggle. Meanwhile, you must start with the first step, the cleansing of the mind and the cultivation of virtue. Even if you do not start with that step, at least do not laugh at those who do, and discourage them. Do at least this much! Then, do not depend upon others for doing your work, like attending to your personal wants. Do them yourself; that is real freedom. Again, never accept anything 'free' from others, pay it back, in service or work.

That will make you self-respecting individuals. Receiving a favour means getting bound to the giver. Grow with self-respect and dignity. That is the best service you can do to yourself.

There is no seniority or juniority among devotees

'Uncle' Moon is 'uncle' to all the children of the world. So also, the Lord is every one's Father, in whose property every one can claim a share. But in order to get it, you must reach a certain age, a certain standard of intelligence and discrimination. The infirm and the idiotic, He will not consider fit to receive property. His property is Grace, *Prema*. But if you have Discrimination and Renunciation, you can claim your share, as of right.

Bring '*Bhakthi*' and lay it here and take from here spiritual strength! The more such business is done, the more pleased am I. Bring what you have, namely, your sorrows and griefs, worries and anxieties, and take from Me joy and peace, courage and confidence. In My view, there is no seniority or juniority among devotees. The mother spends more time tending the sickly child; she just asks the older children to look after themselves; she feeds with her own hand the infant. That does not mean that she has no love towards the grown-ups. So too, do not think that because I do not ostensibly pay more attention to one person, he is beyond the ken of my *Prema*.

Note this also. In this *Avathaar* (Divine Incarnation), the wicked will not be destroyed; they will be corrected and reformed and educated and led back to the path from which they have strayed. The white-ant infested tree will not be cut; it will be saved.

Again this *Avathaar* will not select some place other than the place where the Nativity took place for the centre of Its *Leelas*, *Mahimas* and *Upadhesha* (divine sport, miracle power and divine instruction). This tree shall not be transplanted; it will grow where it first rose from the earth. Another speciality is this: the *Avathaar* has no affinity or attachment in Its Career to members of the Family wherein it appeared. Unlike the appearances as Raama, Krishna, etc., where the Life was played out mostly among and for the family members, this Avathaar is for the *Bhakthas*, the *Saadhus* and the *Saadhakas* (devotees, noble souls and aspirants) only. It has no *japa* (recitation of holy name), *dhyana* (meditation) or *yoga* (practising union with God). It knows no worship; It will not pray to anything, for It is the Highest. It only teaches you to worship and pray.

To a worldly man, a God-intoxicated person will appear mad and he will laugh at him for it. But to the God-intoxicated man, the worldly appear insane, foolish misled, blind. Of all the insanities that harass man, God-madness is the least harmful, the most beneficial. The world has suffered untold damage due to its "mad" rulers and "mad" guides; but nothing but harmony, peace, brotherliness and love have come out of the 'God-madness' of man!

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