

2. From Saalokya to Saayujya

Service of man is more needed than service to the Lord Himself. In fact, such service is equal to service of the Lord. That is the path of real *bhakthi*. For, what greater means can there be to please God than pleasing His children? The *Purusha Suuktha* speaks of the *Purusha* or God as having a thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet. That is to say, all are He. Though there are a thousand heads, there is no mention of a thousand hearts, there is only one heart. The same blood circulates through all the heads, eyes, feet and limbs. When you tend the limb, you tend the individual; when you serve man, you serve God.

So many thousands of you have come here to the Prashaanthi Nilayam for the festival. In most homes, guests and relatives are welcomed only when it is known that their stay will be short. But, here, however often you come, however long you stay, the joy you derive is undiminished; for, the kinship is not worldly, it is *Aathmic*. And, *Aathmic* Bliss knows no decline or change. When your goal is the

service of the Lord, the adoration of God every step is a spring of joy; even moment is a valuable chance. Perhaps you think that the *bhajana* and *sankeerthana* which you partake in here is all that is required of a *bhaktha*. No, these are only sanctifying acts which purify the mind; they are *karma* which elevate you and help to pass time purposefully. They promote detachment from the body and from objective pleasures. It is because you are encouraged to cultivate this attitude and taste the joy of renunciation that you feel happy while here.

Stages of relationship with God

Praise and blame are the obverse and reverse of reaction to the great and the sublime. The cinema screen is not affected by the volcanic eruption pictured in the films or by the turbulent sea with mountain high waves. It is neither singed nor does it get wet. A city has under its streets two varieties of pipes, one carrying drinking water and the other, sewage. The human body has veins for good blood and bad. The intake of food has to result in the discharge of offal.

The relationship with the Lord is described as developing from *Saalokya* (in the vicinity) to *Saameepya* (nearness), and from *Saameepya* to *Saaruupya* (Form of the master) and then on to *Saayujya* (absorption into the Form). You can understand this clearly, if you take *Saalokya* to mean, being in the kingdom ruled by the Lord as monarch, or as a servant in the palace where He dwells. You are under His *pari-paalana* (fostering care); you are aware that it is He who sustains you. In the *saameepya* stage, you feel you are a personal attendant on the Lord, in His entourage, privileged to be near Him and to be called upon by Him when occasion arises, for some personal service. You have neared the principle of Godhead, intellectually; you feel His presence ever, emotionally--that is *Saameepyam*. Then, the *Saaruupya* stage is reached when the devotee is so near, so kin, that he wears the "royal robes"--a brother, for example, can wear the same robes. So he has the same *ruupa*, he has the splendour, the glory that bespeaks the full blossoming of the Divine that is latent in him. Lastly, when you are the son, the Heir Apparent, the *Kumaara Raaja*, you approximate as much as possible to the Royal Power and so, you can say, "I and My Father are One." That is *Saayujya*, becoming One--Retainer, Attendant, Kinsman, Heir. These are the stages of the soul's journey to Realisation of the Oversoul.

Know the purpose of fasting

There are many among you, I know, mostly women, who practise fasts. But, there is a limit to austerity, which they do not respect! There is a meaning in fasting which they do not understand! They fast on Monday for it is the day of Shiva, on Tuesday for it is sacred to Lakshmi, on Wednesday for some other God, on Thursday for Me(!) on Friday again for Lakshmi, on Saturday, to propitiate Shani and on Sunday, for the Sun! Lal Bahadur Shastri, that good and simple man, pleaded that you miss a meal on Monday nights, but, these misdirected aspirants spoil their health and well-being by overdoing the vow of fasting.

Periodical fasting is prescribed in order to help the system overhaul itself and to give much needed rest to the processes. Again during the fast, you must not be aware of hunger at all! Are you sure that it is so? You must free yourself from all thought of food and concentrate on the thought of God. If thoughts of food bother you, if pangs of hunger disturb you, then, it is much better to eat and then start *Saadhana*. *Upa-vaasa*, the word for the vow of fasting, means "living in the proximity of God" (*Upa-near*; *vaasa-living*) and so, the vow is meant to liberate you from the worry and bother of preparing and eating food, so that you might dwell more intimately with God. Remember that the purpose of Fast is spending time in the contemplation of God and not simply punishing the body by cutting a meal or a series of meals.

Vows, vigils, fasts, etc. along with all kinds of voluntarily imposed or involuntarily suffered hardships are to be looked upon as promoting spiritual strength, not as weakening physical stamina. They dig around the roots and make the plant grow fast. They clip the wayward twigs and make the tree tall and truly trim.

Shivaraathri Festival March 1966

Look upon joy and grief as teachers of hardihood and balance.

Grief is a friendly reminder, a good taskmaster; even a better teacher than joy.

God gives both protection and punishment; for how can He be the Lord, if he does not insist on strict accounting and strict obedience?

Sathya Sai Baaba