

25. Role Of The Avatar

Marvellous are the beauties presented by Nature. They are sacred as well as wondrous. What Nature promotes or destroys, what it bestows or takes away are equally amazing. It is not easy to understand these marvels.

Man is born in this world but does not realise the purpose of his birth. Forgetting this purpose, he regards himself as the master of Nature and in his insane conceit forgets his own divinity. He is unable to recognise that it is Nature that provides or takes away, that blesses or punishes, that Nature's sway is extensive. Nature presides over every aspect of life. In his deep involvement with mundane concerns man tends to forget his divinity and what he owes to Nature. All things in creation are equal in the eyes of God. God is immanent in all of them. Hence God and Nature should not be regarded as distinct entities. They are inseparably interrelated like the object and its image. Man, however, looking at Nature externally, considers it as purely physical and intended to provide the amenities he seeks.

Nature is the best teacher for man. Every object, every individual, is offering lessons of various kinds to man every moment. This truth was recognised by Bharathiyas from the earliest times. It is the primary characteristic of the sacred Bharathiya culture. From a stone to a diamond, from an ant to an elephant, from a simpleton to a sage, everything and every being in Bharath was regarded as a manifestation of the Divine. Every object was considered worthy of worship. That was why they sanctified a stone image and worshipped it.

Divine love should be extended to all beings

Bharath is the land in which the tender Tulasi plant and the giant banyan tree were worshipped with equal devotion. Cows, horses, elephants and other animals were treated as sacred objects of worship. Even ants were considered worthy of care and protection and rice flour or sugar was offered to them every day. Crows and eagles, dogs and monkeys were deemed worthy of worship. Not realising the deeper truth underlying this attitude to various objects in creation, ignoramuses choose to regard this worship as a silly superstition. This is wholly wrong. Bharath considered that the expression of Divine love should not be confined to human beings but should be extended to all beings. This is the great ideal that Bharath has held out to the world. The profound secret of this knowledge and understanding has not been grasped by any country. Bharath is the land which has upheld this sacred spiritual truth and adhered to this vision of the Divine.

The sacred aspect of Indian culture

The *Gita* has declared: "*Adveshtaa Sarvabhoothaanaam*" (Bear no ill-will towards any living being). Hatred towards anyone is hatred for God. The scriptures have also declared: "*Sarvajiva namaskaaram Kesavam Pratigachhati*" (The salutation that you offer to anyone reaches the Divine). Few outsiders can understand or appreciate this sacred aspect of Indian culture. Even many Indians do not realise the purity and divinity which characterise Bharathiya culture. Bharath has always proclaimed that despite variations in names and forms, there is a unity that underlies the diversity in creation.

Because Nature is a reflection of the Divine, its laws cannot be transgressed by anyone. Man, who has taken birth to realise his own true nature, instead of seeking to understand the truth about the cosmos, is lost in the pursuit of material possessions. He does not realise, that the

human body made up of five basic elements, is bound to perish. This temporary, perishable body should be regarded only as a means for realising the eternal Reality. The body should be considered as an iron safe, in which the precious jewels of good qualities and good actions are kept. It is these qualities that should be cherished. If today, the state of the world appears deplorable, it is because man's actions and conduct are not good. Men should return to the ways of righteousness and lead a good and godly life.

Human birth is the result of *Karma*

God is not a separate entity. Man is the image of God. "*Daivam maanusha rupena*," (God appears in human form) declare the scriptures. God has no separate form.. It is to show to humanity how human lives can be divinised that *Avatars* come from time to time.

I have often declared that God does not come down as *Avatar* to relieve individuals of their troubles and sorrow and to confer joy and happiness on them. Difficulties, troubles and worries come in the natural course as a consequence of past actions. The *Gita* says: "*Karmaanubandheeni manushya loke*" (Human beings are bound by *Karma* in the world). As human birth is the result of *Karma*, there can be no escape from the consequences of *Karma*. As is your action, so is the reaction to it. When you stand before a mirror and offer salutation before the mirror, the salutation is reflected by the image. If you address harsh words to the mirror, the harshness is reflected by the image in the same manner. It will be evident from this example that the fruits of our actions are determined by the nature of those actions.

Bharathiyas have held fast to three beliefs: The law of *Karma*, the concept of *Avatars*, and the doctrine of rebirth. The law of *Karma* means that there is no escape from the consequences of your actions. The *Karma* doctrine lays down that one has to experience the results of his actions.

The concept of *Avatar* implies faith in God and in the divinity inherent in man. Man does not merely mean the human form. Man is distinguished from other animals and creatures by his capacity to judge what is permanent and what is transient, and his ability to recognise the past, the present and the future. Man alone has the capacity to comprehend this threefold nature of time. Man can ruminate over the past and speculate about the future. He can experience the present. However, man should not worry about what is past. The present is the product of the past. What has happened is beyond recall. It is futile to worry about the future because it is uncertain. Concern yourself only with the present. By "present" we may be thinking only of this moment. But this is not the present as Divinity sees it. For the Divine, "present" is what is "omnipresent."

"No thought of My future"

This means that both the past and the future are present in what is, because it is the result of the past, the seed of the future. Because man has no firm faith in the Omnipresence of the Divine, he worries himself about the past, the present and the future. For the Divine, these three categories of time do not exist.

The question has arisen in the minds of some devotees: As Swami is aware of what will happen in the future, should He not have anticipated and avoided the slip in the bathroom? I know all about the future. But I think only of the future of others and not of My future. You must note this fact carefully: "*Karthavyam yogam uchayathe*." (Doing your duty is *Yoga*). I think only of what I have to do at any particular moment. Some things might happen. They come and go. Happenings

in the world are like passing clouds. These incidents give rise to certain experiences. Students should take note of these experiences.

The purpose of *Avatar*

When the Divine comes down as *Avatar*--whether it be as Rama or as Krishna, Matsya (fish), Varaha (boar) or Vamana (dwarf)--it is only for one purpose. You recognise only the momentary results of the advent. But you should note that the Divine comes as *Avatar* only to teach mankind the truth about love. "Oh man, it is because you lack love and are filled with selfishness that the world is plunging in so much conflict and chaos. It is only when you develop love and the spirit of sacrifice that you will realise the divinity that is in the human." The man who has no spirit of *thyaga* (sacrifice) will be a prey to all ills. A man without love is a living corpse. It is love and sacrifice which make man divine.

Love alone is the fruit of love. Love is its own witness. There is no trace of self-interest in it. Because love exists, for its own sake, it has no fear. It is to teach humanity the way of love that *Avatars* come in the world. The world displays the diversity that has emanated from the One. The Divine demonstrates the unity that subsumes the diversity. Recognition of this "Unity in Diversity" can be learnt only from the Divine.

The Krishna *Avatar* has been described in various ways: As a sport of the Divine in human form, as an ideal for the world, as a sacred ruler, as a manifestation of the *Atma*. The Divine comes as *Avatar* to proclaim the pure, unsullied and disinterested love of devotees towards God. People may consider that the *Avatar's* activities include punishment of the wicked, protection of the good, weeding out of unrighteousness and restoration of righteousness. This is how they may look at the *Avatar's* doings. But that is not the way the Lord sees things. There is nothing bad in God's view. Hence there should be no hatred or ill-will towards any being. It is only when you love all, that you can be said to love God.

Think of the Divine at all times

The devotee's feelings determine his concept of God. When a devotee prays, "Oh Lord! Don't you see my sufferings? Don't you hear my lamentations? Can't you see the troubles I am going through?" the Lord appears to him only as a pair of eyes. The full form of the Lord will not appear to him.

The state of mind of spiritual aspirants today is like this: when they are in meditation they appear like *Yogis*. After the meditation is over, they return to their daily activities and are immersed in mundane pleasures. This is not the way of life preached by Krishna. He declared: "*Sathatham Yoginah*" (Be Yogis at all times). What we witness today is: "*Yogis* in the morning, *bhogis* (epicureans) during the day and *rogis* (sick) at night." How can such persons ever remain *Yogis* at all times? You have to think of the Divine at all times, in all situations in whatever you see, do, say or experience. To pray to God when you are comfortable and to blame God when you are in trouble reflects your selfish and narrow outlook.

You cannot know what may happen at any time, in any situation. What is bound to happen cannot be prevented. Hence you must regard anything that happens as a gift from God. It is only when you develop such faith and love for God that true spirituality can grow. You should not allow worldly attachments to multiply without limit. Attachment only to the Divine, which transcends all other attachments, is permanent. Wherever you go, whatever you see, develop the

sacred feeling that only what pleases God, delights you. The body is only an instrument. It is the Divine that animates it and makes it move about and experience things. Those, who cannot recognise this truth, go about proclaiming that they are devotees, that they are close to God and have renounced all attachments.

The *Gopikas*' devotion

Sri Krishna once enacted a small drama to demonstrate how the devotion of the illiterate cowherdesses of Brindavan was deeper and fuller than that of Rukmini or Sathyabhama or the sage Narada. He pretended that he was suffering from a severe headache and that only the application of the dust from the feet of a devotee would cure Him. Neither Rukmini or Sathyabhama nor Narada were willing to offer the dust from their feet as they felt that they would be condemned to live in hell if they allowed the dust of their feet to pollute the Divine head of Krishna. When Narada approached the *Gopikas*, they had no hesitation in collecting the dust of their feet, because their only concern was to relieve their beloved Krishna of His pain instantly without caring about what happened to them as a consequence. Even though they were warned by Narada about the dire consequences of their action, they told him that they were not concerned about the worst that might happen to them if only their Krishna would be relieved of pain.

The ways of the Divine

Krishna's pain was gone the moment the *Gopikas* offered the dust of their feet. Narada realised that the totally unselfish devotion exhibited by the *Gopikas* was *Parama Bhakti* (the highest form of devotion). The Divine exists in everything, in every being, in every foot as well as in the dust on the foot. He is also in the one whom you may consider as a thief.

The troubles besetting the world today cannot be removed except through the promotion of unity. This unity can be promoted only through love. There is nothing that cannot be accomplished through love. Love is God. God is Love. Live in Love.

Here is an illustration on how love works. For the past fifteen days I could not move about without feeling a "shock." Today when I came out and saw the happy faces of the devotees I was filled with joy and forgot the state of my body altogether. This is how the Divine works to experience your love and fill you with love in return. There can be no joy where there is no love. The *Gopikas* were filled with such love that they saw Krishna in all that they did.

Fill your hearts with love

When you fill your hearts with love, you have no ill-will towards anyone. Cultivate the faith that the Divine is in everyone. Surrender to the Divine in a spirit of dedication. The symbolic meaning in the relations between Krishna and the *Gopikas* is this: The heart is the Brindavan (in each person). One's thoughts are like the *Gopikas*. The *Atma* is Krishna. Bliss is the sport of Krishna. Everyone must convert his heart into a Brindavan and consider the indwelling *Atma* as Krishna. Every action should be regarded as a *Leela* of Krishna. Gokulashtami is celebrated by offering to Krishna *Paramaannam* (rice cooked with jaggery). The real meaning of *Paramaannam* is *Annam* (food) relating to *Param* (Supreme). *Paramaannam* is sweet. Your love must be sweet. What you offer to God must be your sweet love. Your love must be all-embracing. This is the foremost message of the *Avatar*.

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