34. Love - The Key To Human Unity

The root cause of all difficulties experienced by man is forgetting his spiritual reality and identifying himself with his body. The body is only the vesture of the Indwelling Spirit. By immersing himself in body-consciousness, man develops egoism and possessiveness, which result in promoting many bad qualities. He forgets his inherent divinity and fails to use the senses and organs he is endowed with for the purposes of the Divine.

Two different characteristics are to be found among men. One characteristic, which is rather common, is for one to delude himself that he is a good man, with many virtues, intelligence and talents. The other quality which is rare, is recognition of the good quality in others, their merits, abilities and good deeds and appreciate their ideals. Jesus belonged to the second category. He saw the good qualities in others, rejoiced over their virtues and shared his joy with others.

In his twelfth year, Jesus and his parents, Joseph and Mary, happened to go to a Jewish festival in Jerusalem. In the jostling crowds Jesus got separated from his parents. After a frantic search, Mary found him in a temple listening to a speech of the High Priest. When Mary told Jesus about the anxiety that they felt when they missed him, Jesus replied: "Why should you worry about me? When I am with God, who is my Father, why should you have any fear on my account?" Jesus thus revealed that he regarded himself as the Son of God.

Jesus prayed to God for three things

Jesus grew up at Nazareth till he reached thirty. After Joseph's passing, Jesus sought his mother's permission to embark on his Divine mission. He got baptised by John, the Baptist, and spent forty days in penance in a forest. During the penance, he prayed to God for three things: One---He should be blessed with the quality of loving equally everyone; Two He should have the strength and forbearance to suffer patiently any indignity or persecution that he might be subjected to by anyone; Three--He should be enabled to use his God-given body wholly in the service of God.

After forty days Jesus emerged from his penance with the faith that his prayers had been granted. Jesus encountered the fishermen, at Galilee, who became his first disciples. He told them that he had come to establish the reign of love on earth and that they would be his helpers in his mission. He spoke to them about the preciousness of human birth and urged them to seek the Kingdom of God within themselves.

By the way of illustration, Christ told them the following parable: In a river the water is flowing in a swift current. But even the tiny fish are able to swim in it and move about merrily. In the same river, a huge elephant caught in the rapids, is likely to get washed away or drowned in spite of its enormous size. Whatever the speed of the current, the small fish are able to swim freely in the river and enjoy themselves. But an elephant is unable to survive in it. The reason is: What you need for survival in a river is not bulk but the ability to swim. Likewise man who is caught up in the ocean of worldly existence *(Samsara)* needs, not so much metaphysics, scholarship or detachment, as the grace of Divine love.

Without faith in God one cannot experience bliss

Without any knowledge of Vedanta, if one is blessed with God's love, he can surmount all problems of life. Without faith in God, all scholarship, wealth or name and fame are of no avail. He cannot experience bliss.

Christ also taught that the body should be used for recognising the Indwelling Spirit and not to protect itself. It is the mark of ignorance to pamper the body and ignore the Spirit within.

If a tiny sugar crystal is mixed in a heap of sand, even the most intelligent person will not be able to separate the sugar from the sand and recover it. But without any extraordinary intelligence, an ant is able to make its way to the particle of sugar in the sand heap and relish its sweetness. The ant is aware of the sweetness of sugar and is able to get at the sugar even in a heap of sand. Likewise, man: should seek to distinguish between the permanent and the transient and realise what is everlasting. Man is endowed with the capacity to discriminate between the permanent and the evanescent, but unfortunately instead of using this capacity he is caught up in the delusions of the phenomenal world and is wasting his life.

"You must adhere to truth and not succumb to falsehood or unrighteousness. You must face with courage the vicissitudes of life. You must love even your enemies. Universal love transcends all other virtues. Love is the supreme virtue," declared Jesus.

Only Love of God is real Love

Jesus taught that God is Love. Instead of recognising this basic truth, men are allowing hatred, envy and other evil qualities to pollute their love. Man is gifted with the quality of love not to express it for selfish purposes but to direct it towards God. Jesus declared that them was nothing great about returning good for good. They should do good even to those who harm them.

As Jesus went on with his preaching and drew multitudes towards him, some of the priests and those in authority grew envious at his popularity. This happens in all countries. They started persecuting him and charging him with treason. Jesus, however, continued up to the end to carry on his mission of Love and Righteousness, first, as the Messenger of God, and later as the Son of God. There is a reason for anyone coming in the human form. This may not be known to all. Only the Divine knows the real purpose. Everyone should regard himself as a Messenger of God and try to lead an ideal life. This means that one has to give up selfishness and self-interest. This may not be easy. But with God's Grace, it should be possible to progress towards Self-realisation gradually.

Love is the means of developing devotion and achieving liberation, apart from other things. Only the love of God is real love. It is the royal road for man to realise the divinity in him and in everyone.

Sai Love unifies all from different countries

Here is an example of the power of love. Today in this hall are gathered people from many countries. They speak different languages and adopt different religions and culture and have different dresses, manners and customs. Forgetting all these differences, they are all moving here as brothers and sisters because of their love for Sai, which has unified them. They are expressing the joy of oneness because of the love in their hearts. When there is no love there is hatred. Faith in God promotes love. Love leads to peace. Peace prepares the way for truth. Living in truth, man experiences bliss, which is Divine.

Where there is faith there is Love

Where there is Love there is Peace

Where there is Peace there is Truth

Where there is Truth there is Bliss

Where there is Bliss there is God.

Hence, faith has to be strengthened.

Many forms, but one God

The Divine manifests Himself in many forms. God is worshipped in many forms for the joy to be derived from it. In ancient Rome, many Gods were worshipped, as in Bharath. At that time there was no belief in one God. Then came Christianity. The concept of unity in diversity came to be accepted. In ancient Greece, Plato, the disciple of Socrates, was the first to point out the immanence of the Divine in everything in the Universe.

Truth is one, regardless of the nation or religion. Truth or Divinity cannot change according to place or circumstance. That is why it is said: Truth is God. That Truth is within us. *Vedanta* (transcendental knowledge) has described it as *Sath-chith-ananda* (Being-Awareness-Bliss). The names and forms of human beings may vary, but the Supreme in them--the *Sath-chith-ananda--does* not vary. It is eternal and changeless.

Embodiments of Divine Love! Strike down the walls that separate man from man. Get rid of differences based on caste and creed. Develop firm faith in the oneness of humanity. Cultivate love in your hearts. Only then will the nation be united, prosperous and happy.

Look at the state of things in Bethlehem, the birth-place of Jesus. Christmas could not be celebrated there this year, because of the ill-feelings among the people. How unfortunate that while the rest of the world is celebrating Christmas there should be no celebration in the place where Jesus was born.

God belongs to all. He is Universal. All of you have to give up differences of every kind and give no room for narrow parochial and national loyalties. Consider yourselves as the children of one God. You may worship God in any form of your choice, but recognise the truth that God is only one. The observance of holy days like Christmas is an occasion for realising the importance of love and harmony among human beings.

It is not right to celebrate Christ's birthday by feasting, drinking, singing and merry-making. The ideals taught by Jesus should be put into practice. That is the right way to celebrate his birthday. Whomsoever you adore, you must try to live up to his teachings. What kind of devotion is it when the devotee does not practice what he professes? It is pseudo-devotion.

Remember the Lord with love. Worship Him with love. Sanctify your life with love.

Discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, Christmas Day, 25 Dec 1988