

**DIVINE DISCOURSES**  
**[VOLUME - 24]**



**HIS HOLINESS SHRI DATTA SWAMI**



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अवजानन्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम्।  
परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ॥ ९-११ ॥  
avajananti mam mudha manushim tanumashritam |  
param bhavamajananto mama bhutamaheshvaram || 9-11||

**Ignorant people disregard Me when I descend in the human form.  
They do not know My Supreme Nature as the Lord of all beings.**

Shrimad Bhagavad Gita IX, 11

## CONTENTS

1. WHY WAS JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED?	4
2. SOUL'S FREEDOM AND SALVATION	7
Are Souls Completely Free?	7
Was John the Baptist Fully Reformed and Saved?	15
3. REAL DEVOTION KEEPS NO ACCOUNTS	18
4. WORLDLY DUTIES OR DIVINE SERVICE?	22
Worldly Duty and Renunciation in the Gita	22
Service and Sacrifice Benefit the Soul; not God	23
True and False Devotees and Incarnations	26
Identifying the Incarnation of God	27
5. SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY FOR THE CANCELLATION OF SINS	29
The Logic Behind Cancelling Sins	29
Importance of Logical Analysis	30
Scriptural Authority	31
Reformation Through Realization	32
6. REQUESTING AN INCARNATION FOR A MIRACLE	34
Becoming an Incarnation	34
The Life and Miracles of Swami	35
7. A DREAM SYMBOLIZING A DEVOTEE'S LIFE	38
A Message from God Datta	39
True Devotion Is Impossible Without Dualism	42
8. RELATION BETWEEN ASTROLOGY AND VĀSTU	44
9. SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE	46
Can You please bless me to translate Your books to Indonesian?	55
10. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THREE EPICS	58
Two Parts of the Spiritual Journey	58
True Nivṛtti	59
Overcoming the Six Vices in the Journey	60
Contemporary Human Incarnation of God	63
11. SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE	64
Why do Your photographs on Your website show You mostly as a Hindu even though You preach about Universal Spirituality?	66
12. SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE	70
13. OVERCOMING NERVOUSNESS BEFORE EXAMS	74
Three Steps of Closeness with God	74
The Effect and Cause of Nervousness	74
Assuming Monism Without Committing Sins	76
Ascending to Monism and Descending from It	77

14. NERVOUS ENERGY—THE INDESTRUCTIBLE SOUL?	79
15. QUALITIES OF ANGELS, HUMANS, AND DEMONS	81
Qualitative and Quantitative Predominance of Qualities	82
Profile of Qualities	84
16. SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE	86
17. CAREER CHOICE AND WORLDLY HAPPINESS	92
18. ACT OUT OF ANALYSIS; NOT EMOTION	98
Lord Rama Hid His True Identity	98
Three Perspectives of an Incarnation	99
Emotions Lead to Tragedy	99
19. SATSAṄGA ON SHRI RAMA NAVAMI	104
20. REMOVING SELFISHNESS	115
21. SOLVING FAMILY PROBLEMS	118
22. GOD-LIKE ENJOYMENT AND CANCELLATION OF SINS	123
23. SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE	126
24. SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE	130
25. SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE	136
26. IS SERVING GOD UNFAIR TO ONE’S FAMILY?	139
27. REMOVING SELFISHNESS: SELF ANALYSIS AND DEVOTION	143
Devotion to the Contemporary Incarnation	143
Monism and Dualism	144
Self-Analysis and Knowledge of God	145
Knowledge, Devotion, and Service	146
28. INCOMPETENCE TO DO GOD’S WORK	148
29. CONTROLLING ANGER AND THE WAVERING MIND	151
30. HOW COULD THE GOPIKĀS RECOGNIZE KRISHNA?	153
Gopikās Were Reborn Sages	154
The Relevant Form of God for Humanity	154
Repulsion of the Common Medium	155
The Sages Recognized God Rāma	156
Worldly Relations and God	157
Recognizing Krishna and Overcoming Bonds	158
31. KRISHNA’S BEHAVIOR TOWARDS THE GOPIKĀS: AN IDEAL FOR SOCIETY?	161
Identifying Krishna as God	161
Passing the Tests of Krishna	162
Understanding the Bhāgavatam	164
Krishna Was Above Greed and Lust	165
32. SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE	169
33. PRACTICAL SACRIFICE TO THE SADGURU	179

Sadguru is an Embodiment of the Divine Trinity	179
Three Steps of the Spiritual Path	179
Theory and Practice	181
Service and Donation	181
The Recipient's Eligibility and the Donor's Attitude	182
God's Response is a Reflection of Your Approach	184
Practice Proves True Devotion	187
<b>34. CLARIFICATIONS ON DEATH RITUALS</b>	<b>189</b>
Real Purpose Behind Death Rituals	189
First Ten Days of the Departed Soul	192
Prayers to Reduce the Departed Soul's Pain	193

## Chapter 1

**WHY WAS JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED?**

December 23, 2018

**Shri Anil asked:** Padanamaskaram Swami! One person asked on Quora “Why did Jesus not save John the Baptist from getting beheaded?” Could You please answer this question? At Your Lotus Feet, Anil

**Swami Replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! God gave freedom to all souls so that they could do whatever they felt was good. God helped the souls in determining what is good and what is bad by preaching to them through holy scriptures, holy devotees and holy Incarnations. **Freedom means the complete freedom for all souls in this creation to act in any direction, without the slightest force on the mind, either here or in the upper worlds.** God always preaches to every soul to bring the realization of the truth to the soul and to reform the soul. The soul is expected to realize and get reformed only through this knowledge introduced into the mind of the soul. It is the only way the soul can be saved. **The only force used by God on the mind of a sinner is imparting knowledge. He does not use any physical force or miraculous power to reform the sinner.** The king tries to reform the sinner through physical force in the form of punishment, but such reformation is only temporary. Even the horrible punishments in hell cannot reform the soul permanently. Eternal reformation can never be attained through punishment. **In spite of this defect of punishment, it is still used to reform the soul temporarily.** Only the spiritual knowledge given by God-in-human-form can bring an eternal reformation in a soul.

Generally, the cloud rains everywhere and the rain makes the seed present in fertile soil to grow up into a plant. But a seed fallen on rocky soil cannot give rise to a plant immediately in spite of a lot of rain. Devilish or demonic souls are like the rocks present here and there on earth. The God-cloud does not use His miraculous power to change the rocky soil into fertile soil since God never interferes with souls using any type of force. Judas was like rocky soil. But due to his association with Jesus and continuously listening to His preaching, he realized, confessed his sin, and punished himself at the end. The priests of the temple never listened to the preaching of Jesus at all and so they never got reformed. They were like

solid rocks. Judas was like soil having some rocky nature. So, the seed of reformation at least germinated in him, even though it germinated late.

**For a person's reformation, apart from the divine force of spiritual knowledge, the receptivity of the person's mind is also important.** There are some good souls with high receptivity for the knowledge. They are like good soil and they get reformed immediately on listening to the spiritual knowledge preached by the Human Incarnation of God. Then there are some average souls, who are like rocky soil. They take some time to get reformed like Judas. Both these types of souls are reformed and saved. But there are some other souls like the priests who crucified Jesus, who have no hope of reformation at all. They are like solid rocks and they are condemned forever. This worst type of souls is punished in the liquid fire of hell forever. Their punishment is forever because such souls will never get reformed. They are kept aloof from mankind in the lives of wild animals, worms and so on (*Tānaham dviṣataḥ...*—Gita). God's attempts to reform are confined only to the first and second types of souls who are like good soil and rocky soil respectively. The moment a soul is reformed, it is saved forever.

Note that John, the disciple of Jesus, was different from the John who baptized Jesus. John the Baptist, was like good fertile soil with good seeds, but he could not hear the preaching of Jesus. This John had received the rain of God's grace in his generation and was already saved. That is why he was able to recognize Jesus as a Human Incarnation of God. Every soul upon hearing the knowledge of God-in-human-form need not be totally reformed since the reformation depends on the fertility or receptivity of the mind. The killing of John the Baptist by the king might be the punishment for some sin committed by John previously, which is unknown to us. In other words, it is possible that his death was not related to his spiritual life but the result of a sin committed by him in his worldly life previously. Also, just because he baptized Jesus, we cannot be sure that he was fully reformed. All pending punishments get canceled only upon complete reformation. We are not aware of the complete case history of John the Baptist to decide with certainty that he was fully reformed. Only the omniscient God knows the full truth. The death-punishment given by the king might also be a divine test given by God to test his faith. Even Jesus was given a death-punishment. Does it mean that the Saviour Jesus did not have salvation Himself? There are so many divine factors in the background, which are not understood by us. We should not be hasty in drawing quick conclusions since we are ignorant of the total background of the soul. **The nature of a person's death does not decide the quality of**

**the spiritual life of the soul.** The deaths of several Human Incarnations were very horrible. But the reason for it is that **the Human Incarnation bears the punishments for the sins of His dear devotees on His own body even in the last minutes of His life.**

## Chapter 2

**SOUL'S FREEDOM AND SALVATION**

December 26, 2018

**Dr. Nikhil asked:** Padanamaskarams Swamiji! I have two questions related to Your discourse given on December 23, 2018. I request Your kind clarifications on the same. Your servant. Nikhil

**Are Souls Completely Free?**

**Dr. Nikhil asked:** I feel that that only God is completely free; not souls. The freedom of the soul is always restricted by several internal and external factors on earth. So, it cannot be called as total freedom or the freedom to act in all directions. The restrictions by the internal and external factors put tremendous force on the person's mind and influence the person's decision. The choices made by a person are largely determined by these various forcing factors. Hence, in spite of knowing and wanting to do the right thing, a person may often be forced, by the internal or external factors, to do the wrong thing. Duryodhana's statement from the Prapanna Gītā (Paṇḍava Gītā) clearly brings out this internal force acting on a person's mind "*Jānāmi dharmam na ca me pravṛttiḥ jānāmi pāpam na ca me nivṛttiḥ* □ 57□". Arjuna also says something similar in the Gita "*Atha kena prayukto'yam pāpam carati puruṣaḥ*". Lord Krishna answers Arjuna "*Kāma eśa, krodha eśa rajoguṇa samudbhavam*". Lord Krishna's words point to the internal factors which force the mind of a person in choosing an action. Similarly, there are strong external factors too. They might be related to the influence of other people such as other people forcing a person to do something. They may also be related to external situations such as poverty or life-threatening situations, which force a person to act in a certain manner. So, I feel that the human being is never free to decide. The so-called freedom or free-will of human beings is a highly constrained freedom at best.

In any case, there is at least some relative freedom for those souls on earth who have got a human birth. But in the upper worlds, especially in hell, there is absolutely no freedom. Their freedom is taken away and souls must suffer. So, there is only physical force and zero freedom in hell. Also, animals and plants on earth are completely pre-programmed and have hardly any freedom. God clearly uses physical force on souls, to punish them in hell and sometimes on earth too for their intense sins. Could You kindly clarify how souls could be said to be completely free in this world and the upper worlds and that God never uses any force?

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! The word freedom used by Me in the earlier discourse does not mean the absolute freedom possessed by God-in-human-form as described in the Veda (*Āpnoti*

*svārājyam*). Such absolute freedom exists only in the case of God and no soul can even imagine it. The freedom enjoyed by a soul presently is limited by several factors as mentioned by you. But the freedom granted by God to the soul in the present age is greater than the freedom enjoyed by souls in the Kṛta Age. The basic fact that is common to all ages is that the freedom of the soul is highly limited compared to the absolute freedom of God. This basic fact has nothing to do with the little freedom given by God to the souls at the end of the Kṛta Yuga. This little freedom given by God to souls is further limited by the factors mentioned by you. But these factors are the results of choices made by us, souls. God did not create these factors to restrict the freedom already given to the soul. We were given full freedom to choose our actions by God. God gave us ample advice on choosing our actions through the scriptures, devoted messengers, and Human Incarnations. Through them we were warned that choosing wrong deeds will give rise to such negative factors, which will restrict our God-given freedom. Actually, **God did not want to give souls the freedom to choose negative actions. But souls deeply yearned (craved) for complete freedom. So, He gave them the freedom to choose even the negative factors if they wanted. But He strongly advised them not to select such factors by repeatedly blowing these warnings into their ears!** If this freedom to choose the negative were not given, the state would be the same state of strict discipline as in the Kṛta Age. Even in this strict discipline of the Kṛta Age, when the freedom to choose the negative was absent, the freedom to choose anything good or positive was present.

To explain this more clearly, we can say that in the strict discipline of the Kṛta Age, we were advised to eat any good fruit. But we were restricted from eating any poisonous fruit. After a long period, we got bored with the strict discipline and so to satisfy us, we were given the freedom to eat any fruit that we chose, including poisonous fruits. Along with this new freedom, repeated advice was given to us to eat only good fruits and not eat any poisonous fruit. In spite of all the excellent advice given by God, the granted freedom caused us to eat some poisonous fruits. It led to the inevitable punishment, suffering, and the restriction of our God-given freedom. Note that this freedom to choose the negative was our desire. Even though God gave us this freedom, as an antidote, He gave us more than sufficient advice to avoid bad and negative things. This completely frees God from any blame. **On one side, we blame God for giving this freedom to choose the negative. On the other side, we criticize God if He does not give us that freedom!** God showed the best balance by giving us our desired freedom while simultaneously giving us a strong warning

about avoiding the misuse of that freedom. Still, we manage to blame God! In that case, we should suggest a better way than what He did!

### **Why was bad created?**

One question immediately pops up. Why did God create negative or bad fruits? Why did He not create only good fruits? The reason is simple. Good and bad are relative. Can there be good without the relatively bad? Can there be day without night? **The recognition of the positive requires the presence of the negative.** Leave God's creation aside for some time. Do we prepare our meals without any hot dishes? Do we produce movies with only pleasant scenes, without a single tragic scene? Is there any game where there are only winners and no losers? If God had created creation with only good and no bad, we would be the first to blame God for creating such a meaningless one-sided creation! Hence, God planned creation consisting of *sattvam* which is good qualities, and *rajas* and *tamas*, which are the bad qualities. This plan of creation is just like the storyline of a movie which is fixed before the production of the movie.

### **Kṛta Yuga the childhood of humanity**

**The Kṛta Age was like the childhood of souls.** Parents take complete care of the child, without giving any freedom to the child so as to protect it from bad factors. As the child grows into a youth and an adult, he or she aspires for full freedom. The youth wants the parents to only provide good advice and not force him or her to do anything. God did exactly what good parents do to their children. Some grown-up children listen to their parents' advice and enjoy peace and happiness in their lives, whereas some grown-up children do not listen to their parents and end up in problems. Do you blame the parents or the grown-up children for their mistakes? If we blame God for the sins and suffering of souls it is exactly like blaming parents for the mistakes of their grown-up children. When parents are not expected to control their grown-up children using force, how can we expect God to control souls using force! If all grown-up children in the world were not listening to their parents, there would at least be a possibility of thinking that there might be something fundamentally wrong with the system. If all the students in a class were to fail, and not a single student were to pass, it might point to a possible defect in the teacher. But we know that there are several grown-up children who listen to their parents' advice, and there are several students in any class, who pass the examination with a distinction. **Even in this worst age, which is called the Kali Age, there are several good devotees, who totally surrender to God. They follow His divine scriptures which are properly explained by His devoted**

**messengers and His Incarnations.** There is a chance that the human parents and teachers might be defective or wrong. But the omniscient God can be never defective or wrong. Even then, God never tells us to follow His advice blindly. He wants us to logically analyze His words thoroughly. This is the last statement told by God Krishna to the soul, Arjuna in the Gita (*Vimṛṣyaitadaśeṣeṇa—Gita*). God has already given us a powerful intellect to analyze and decide what is good and bad. He also clearly preaches to us again and again regarding the fruits of good deeds and the fruits of bad deeds.

Coming back to our starting point, **in the Kṛta Age, the souls were acting, speaking and even thinking as per the direction of God given to them through the divine scriptures.** They were like babies in the hands of their parents. With reference to that disciplined state, I had said that souls were given full freedom to choose their actions by God in the subsequent ages. The full freedom given to souls means the maximum freedom that can be given to souls. As such souls can never have absolute God-like freedom in any of the four ages. In the Kṛta Age, the souls were like robots working as programmed by God. They did not have the full freedom to act as they chose. So, God took the total responsibility for their thoughts, words, and deeds. After a long time, the souls were very bored with that perfect and total discipline. It is just like a child on growing up becomes reluctant to follow the strictly enforced discipline of his or her parents. **Neither did the souls want the absolute freedom of God nor did God give His absolute freedom to the souls.** The full freedom given to souls, means the maximum freedom initially granted to souls. Later, souls, using this very freedom, chose bad deeds which reduced their freedom and caused suffering to themselves.

In the beginning, when God asked Adam and Eve not to eat a specific fruit, both were following the order of God strictly like robots. In this initial stage, all souls, both males and females, lived in strict discipline as per the laws given by God. After a long time, they got bored of their disciplined life. God understood their feeling of boredom and gave them the freedom to think, speak and to do whatever they liked. God strengthened the faculty of their intellect. The mind is the mental faculty that brings in doubts or different alternatives. It starts an internal debate (*Saṅkalpa vikalpātmakam manah*). The intellect is the mental faculty that analyzes the various options to arrive at correct conclusions. **When logical analysis starts, it is called intelligence.** The expected result of the logical analysis is the right conclusion (*Adhyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ*). The mind and intelligence did not have much work in the Kṛta Age. Later, God gave freedom to the mind and

intelligence of souls after which they started working very hard. The mind is not that important since it only starts the basic doubt which is needed for analysis. **But intelligence is very important. When its analysis is wrong, it arrives at a wrong conclusion. When the analysis is correct till the very end, it arrives at the right conclusion.** Intelligence is the driver and the individual soul is the owner of the vehicle as said in the Veda. Whether the journey will be safe or will end up in an accident is in the hands of the driver. Hence, God started His preaching of the Gita with *buddhi yoga* or *sāṅkhya yoga*, which is related to the analysis done by a sharp intelligence. A father, seeing his children getting bored at home, proposes to take them outdoors on a picnic to entertain them by providing a change. The careful father instructs the children on the precautions to be taken during their outdoor stay. Similarly, the careful **God gave freedom to souls but along with it, He also gave them the scriptures containing several precautions to be taken during one's life.** God also explains these instructions and precautions to every generation through His devotees and even by personally descending as an Incarnation. After that, God does not bear the slightest responsibility for the actions of the souls.

### **The effects of food on the body and mind**

**We are talking about the force used by God to influence the thoughts, words, and deeds of souls in the Kṛta Age on earth. Earth is called *Martya Loka* which is a *karma loka*. It means that it is a world in which souls choose their own actions. It is only in this world that above-mentioned little freedom is possible.** The upper worlds are called *bhoga lokas* in which the soul is destined to enjoy the fruits of its actions without the slightest freedom to alter the fruit. Hence, we need not touch the upper worlds in which there is not the slightest possibility of getting even a trace of freedom. In this *karma loka* or earth, during the Kṛta Age, all human beings ate only the prescribed food, which helps the soul in thinking, speaking and doing good alone. The state of the soul was like that of a hospitalized patient, who has the restriction of eating only the prescribed food. Food is said to influence the physical state of the body as well as the thoughts and the state of the mind (*Annānurūpāṁ tanurūpabuddhiṁ, Kāryam nidānāddhi guṇānadhīte*). Today, after getting freedom from God, human beings can eat any type of food. They can speak and do anything they want. If required, they can even do things that they want secretly! But the scriptures, the preachers and finally the Human Incarnations always exist in every generation to give souls all the

information with full clarity about merit and sin. **The ignorance of the law is no excuse for breaking it!**

Freedom can be enjoyed while simultaneously taking the necessary precautions of avoiding sin. **The freedom allows you to do any type of meritorious action. Within the boundaries of meritorious action, there is a great variety of actions that one can do.** Meritorious actions are like sweet, mild and good food which is called *sāttvika āhāra*. One has the freedom to choose any such good food for good physical and mental health. Hot and spicy dishes are like sins. You must take precautions to avoid all types of hot and spicy dishes in order to maintain good health. **There are actually several saints who eat only sweet and mild food in limited quantities. They totally avoid hot and spicy dishes.** The majority, like us, chooses to eat some spicy dishes too since God has given us the freedom of choice. Would you not criticize God if He had not given this freedom to us? Further, you may avoid sin and do only meritorious deeds. But if you do the meritorious deeds with the aspiration for heavenly enjoyment, here is a warning for you. It is like eating sweets which causes diabetes. Avoiding sins and doing meritorious deeds must be associated with true devotion to God. The devotion is like preventive medicine. It prevents the disease.

The type of food we consume affects our mind. The qualities inherent in the food we eat produce corresponding qualities in our minds, which force our decision-making. But we must clearly note that it is we who are responsible for these forces acting on our mind arising from the qualities in the foods consumed by us. After all, we use our freedom to choose what we eat. God has given us intelligence and has also described the effects of different types of foods in the scripture such as the last chapter of the Gita. We had the freedom to choose any type of good food. Yet we also chose some food that is not good. Thus, we see that within certain limits, we have full freedom.

**We can similarly analyze the association with good and bad people.** We have the freedom to associate with bad people just as we can choose bad food. But we can also use our intelligence and follow the divine instructions given by God. With right analysis, we can select the company of good people which is like good food. Among good people, we have full freedom to select any type of good people. In the Kṛta Age, souls only had the freedom to choose any type of good company. They had no freedom to choose bad company. Later on, God even granted the freedom to choose bad company. Some souls used that freedom, chose bad company and got spoiled. For that one cannot blame God because He always preaches to us all about good and bad without any partiality.

In the first half of the verse quoted by you, Duryodhana says that he knows what is justice and what is injustice since he has learned it from his preachers. But in spite of it, he is not able to practically follow justice and avoid injustice in *pravṛtti*. This is the state of the soul in the Dvāpara Age, which is the state after getting freedom from God. The preaching of his preachers had removed the *āvaraṇa*, which is theoretical ignorance in his mind. But the practical effect of the ignorance, called *vikṣepa* was strong in his mind due to the bad company chosen by him. **Since he had received correct knowledge from his preachers, he cannot be excused. He had full freedom to choose his company and he had chosen bad company. Their bad influences on his mind caused him to go on the wrong track and commit injustice.**

### The Cunningness of Duryodhana

In this first half of the verse, it appears as if Duryodhana is being frank in admitting the truth that his bad fate was the result of his own choices. But the second half of the verse reveals the cunning nature of this villain. He says “*Tvayā Hṛṣīkeśa! Hṛdisthitena, yathā niyukto’smi tathā karomi*”. It means that he will act as per the order of God sitting in his heart. But he addressed God as ‘*Hṛṣīkeśa*’ meaning the Lord of the senses of his body (*Hṛṣīkānām indriyānām Īśaḥ*). The Lord of the senses is actually the individual soul. The Veda explains this using an analogy of a chariot. The body is the chariot and the individual soul is its owner. The intelligence is the driver, the senses are the horses and the mind is the reins that control the horses. Souls in the Kṛta Age were completely under the control of God. The individual soul which is the owner, the intellect which is the driver, the reins which are the mind, the senses which are the horses, and the chariot which is the body; were all under the full control of God in the Kṛta Age. Since God is the controller of the senses of human beings in the Kṛta Yuga, it is justified to call Him *Hṛṣīkeśa*, which means the controller of the senses. But after the Kṛta Yuga, the situation has changed. In the case of any normal human being, it is the intelligence that controls the whole fate of the soul. God is not responsible for the soul’s fate since He has given the soul the freedom of choice. Right knowledge learned by the person, followed by the right analysis can take the person on the right path to his or her salvation. The clever villain that Duryodhana is, he addresses God as the Lord of his senses so that he can dump the total blame of the injustice and sins done by him on God! The two halves of this verse make a very strong hybrid misinterpretation. This misinterpretation is

generally adopted by almost everyone in this Kali Age to justify their sins and put all the blame on God.

### **Mental forces result from our own choices**

**The main point is that one should never blame God for giving freedom to souls. In the unfortunate situation of bad forces acting on the mind, one should realize that the bad forces are the results of his or her own choices.** The truth here is that God has given full freedom to souls in a limited sense. The person makes his own choices, which have inevitable results that are also known to him. The negative forces in his mind are these inevitable results of his own choices. Knowing that fire burns, he still puts his finger in the fire out of his own choice. Then he blames the fire, God and all the other factors influencing him! When the truth that fire burns is well-known to him and the negative factors influencing him are also the results of his own choices, he has only himself to blame for getting burned! Does any grown-up adult blame his parents for not forcibly preventing him from putting his finger in the fire?

### **Yoga can turn bad into good**

You acquired bad qualities by your own free will. Yet God has preached *yoga* to you. *Yoga* is the special talent of using your intelligence (*buddhi*) to analyze and find out the good sides of sins. This good side of the so-called bad deeds can be adopted. The analysis also helps you identify and avoid the bad sides of so-called meritorious actions. This special talent of analyzing and appropriately choosing deeds is the special talent or *yoga* preached by God in the Gita (*Yogah karmasu kauśalam*). The person who attains this talent can use his intelligence to turn the sin into merit. He analyzes the good and bad sides of the so-called bad deed and adopts only its good side. For instance, if you possess the quality of anger, which is generally considered to be bad, you can analyze where the use of anger is good and where it is bad. Anger can be used to condemn injustice and control your children and students from going on the wrong path. This is the good application of a bad quality, which makes it good. Similarly, even if you possess lust, it can be exercised in the case of your lawful spouse to generate issues. Even if you are greedy and selfish, you can use that quality to avoid donating your money to an undeserving receiver. Controlling anger, lust, and greed is mainly stressed in the Gita since these three are the main gates to hell. **You need not attempt to remove your bad qualities. They have been acquired over several births and have solidified inside you like a huge hill. It is impossible to eliminate them. All you can do is to divert the bad quality to its good side.** It will reduce the pressure that

the bad quality puts on your mind since any quality gets exhausted when the corresponding deed is done.

**God also warns you to be careful of the attraction for merit. Merit also has a bad side.** Donating to a deserving person is a good deed that brings merit. However, donating even to a deserving receiver, with the aspiration for some good fruit is bad. It is the bad side of the merit. If you donate to the good receiver without any aspiration for fruit in return, it will help you maintain the same attitude when you worship God. In the Kṛta Age, lust towards one's lawful spouse to produce children was considered meritorious. But having lust even after producing children was considered sin. So, **sages controlled their sexual life after producing children and such a stage in life was called as *vānaprastha āśrama*. In that stage, the husband and wife looked upon each other as brother and sister!** Of course, there are small changes in the definition of justice or merit in every age. This is done to accommodate the changes in the overall atmosphere of human society. But these changes are small and an outright sin remains a sin in all ages. In the context of lust, the maximum relaxation that can be given in the Kali Age is that avoiding sex with anyone other than one's lawful spouse itself is the highest merit! Intense lust for one's lawful spouse even up to one's dying day need not be considered as sin!

Being peaceful and silent is said to be a good quality. But keeping silent towards a horrible sin in spite of having the ability to control it is bad. Bhīṣma and Droṇa committed a huge sin by keeping silent while the villainous Kauravas attempted to take off the clothes of Draupadi in the royal court. So, we see that God has revealed this talented path of *yoga* even for the souls who are trapped under the influence of the bad sides of good qualities! **Can any human being having even the slightest trace of humanity still blame God?**

### **Was John the Baptist Fully Reformed and Saved?**

**Dr. Nikhil asked:** You had mentioned in the previous discourse that John the Baptist, was like good fertile soil with good seeds, but he could not hear the preaching of Jesus. You also said that this John had received the rain of God's grace in his generation and was already saved. That is why he was able to recognize Jesus as a Human Incarnation of God. I am confused whether these statements refer to John the Baptist or John the disciple. If they refer to John the disciple there is no problem. But if they refer to John the Baptist, then there is a contradiction.

Before Jesus arrived, how can it be said that the Baptist had received the grace of God? The grace of God is basically the divine knowledge preached by the Incarnation. But the Baptist never learned divine knowledge from Jesus. Then

naturally, it is not possible that the Baptist was saved. If the Baptist was already saved, he must be fully-reformed. If he was fully-reformed, how could there be an uncanceled pending punishment for him? The Baptist was not an Incarnation to bear the suffering of devotees upon himself, like Jesus. This means that his death sentence must have been the punishment for his own sin. It means that he was not fully reformed and saved.

**Swami replied:** John, the baptizer of Jesus, was another contemporary Human Incarnation. It is like sage Vyāsa, who was another Human Incarnation along with Krishna. The births of all these Human Incarnations were miraculous. Sage Vyāsa was directly born as a grown-up boy as soon as sage Parāśara met with Satyavati, the unmarried mother of Vyāsa. John was born to a very old barren lady and Jesus was born to an unmarried girl. While Krishna was born, Lord Viṣṇu, the Energetic Incarnation, appeared before His parents. After the birth of both Krishna and Jesus, wicked kings in their respective places and times, killed several children in search of both. Both Krishna and Jesus did several miracles. Both preached wonderful spiritual knowledge in the form of the Gita and the Bible respectively. When John was to be born, a divine angel told His father that God is sending this messenger to preach about the concept of reformation of the soul. Baptism was the external symbol of this reformation. Like sage Vyāsa, John also lived in a remote forest.

John was very bold due to His strong faith in God and so He criticized a king for committing the sin of unlawful sex. John's idea was that the king should repent and withdraw from the sin. For his bold criticism, He was imprisoned by the king. The king was actually not willing to behead Him since he recognized Him to be a divine messenger. But the king was trapped by negative influences which forced him to commit such a horrible sin of killing a divine preacher. Even in the case of Jesus, the Roman officer, before whom the trial of Jesus was conducted, could not find any fault with Jesus. But he was trapped in the plot of the priests of the temple, and was forced to order the crucifixion. As Jesus suffered the sins of His devotees through the crucifixion, John also suffered the sins of His devotees through His horrible punishment. **Every divine messenger is an Incarnation of God.** The difference between actual Incarnations like Krishna and Jesus and so on, and divine messengers like Vyāsa, Madhva, John and so on, is very small. In the case of the Incarnation, God actually merges with the soul, whereas in the case of the divine messenger, He remains very closely associated with the soul. **Śaṅkara and Jesus declared that they are God.** Śaṅkara said “*Śivaḥ kevalo'ham*. Jesus said “I am the truth and the light” It was the God who had merged into them who

spoke those words through them. The human being components in the Incarnations did not want to speak such words. No devoted soul, be it the soul in an Incarnation or a messenger, aspires for monism with God. God Himself merges with the specific soul and speaks about His identity, suppressing the desire of the devoted soul acting as His medium. Balarāma was an incarnation of Ādiśeṣa, who is a very close servant of God. But he is considered as one of the ten Incarnations of God. It is like an honorary degree granted to a person or a conferred IAS officer.

There is not the slightest difference between a messenger of God, a son of God and an Incarnation of God. The three represent the dualism of Madhva, the special monism of Rāmānuja and the perfect monism of Śaṅkara respectively. In fact, the Incarnation of God Himself expresses each of these three states based on the extent of ego and jealousy of His disciples. If the disciples have very high ego and jealousy, the Incarnation says that He is only a messenger of God. If the disciples' ego and jealousy is moderate, He says that He is the son of God. If the ego and jealousy of the disciples is negligibly small, He reveals His oneness with God.

**Even the divine messenger saves His disciples by undergoing the punishment for their sins.** The Incarnation is a homogeneous mixture of God and soul, like an alloy of gold and copper. The messenger is a copper rod welded with a golden rod. In both cases, if the gold is heated, the copper also becomes hot. **In both cases, the human being-component suffers by the will of God.** God, who is represented by gold in the analogy, is invisible and in fact, unimaginable. So, the heating of the invisible gold can only be expressed through the heating of the visible copper. In other words, we cannot see the unimaginable God. But upon witnessing the suffering of the the human-component of the Incarnation, we realize the fact that God suffers for the sins of His devotees. **Here, it is very important to note that God suffers for the sins of only His real devotees. He does not suffer for the sins of all humanity.** Emmanuel is the one who suffers for the sins of only His real devotees.

## Chapter 3

**REAL DEVOTION KEEPS NO ACCOUNTS**

December 31, 2018

Shri Kishore Ram remarked to Shri PVNM Sharma: It is very difficult to stay free of the aspiration for any fruit in return from God while doing service to Him.

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! **The point here is not to achieve this state of being free of the aspiration for any fruit in return with effort, but to attain this state in a natural and effortless manner.** Take the case of our love for our children. Our love for them is real. We practically serve them and we sacrifice our money for them without expecting anything in return from them. Our practical service and the sacrifice of our money to them proves the genuineness of our love for them. The service and the sacrifice can be said to be our practical love for them. We do not even expect anything from them in return and continue our practical service and sacrifice to them even if they behave badly with us. This aspiration-free real love that we have for our children is natural. It is not produced artificially by effort. We should feel such aspiration-free real love for God naturally. Such love arises spontaneously when we are impressed by His divine personality, which becomes known to us through spiritual knowledge. If we have to make efforts to develop such love for God, it not real and natural love. Instead, such effort is linked to our aspiration for some fruit from Him. It means that our real and natural love is only for our children. It also means that we are lying in our prayers to God when we say that God is above all worldly bonds for us or that God is higher than anybody or anything! We can fool any human being by telling lies, but not God!

**Let us not say that it is impossible to love God without expecting anything in return.** The word 'impossible' is an utter lie since we certainly love our children without any expectation. Would anyone believe if I were to say that I can lift a hill only in Mumbai and not in Delhi? If it is impossible, I should not be able to lift the hill in any place. But if it is possible in one place, how can I say that it is impossible in another place? **So, we should frankly admit that we have real love only for our children and not for God.** Our unreal love for God is based on the aspiration for some fruit in return. Such aspiration-filled devotion for God is either prostitution-devotion or business-devotion. In the former type of

devotion, we try to achieve practical boons from God in exchange for our words and mental feelings of devotion. Thus, prostitution devotion is expecting practical boons from God in exchange for our theoretical devotion. In the latter type of devotion, we try to achieve practical boons from God in exchange for some practical service and the sacrifice of some money. Thus, business devotion is expecting practical boons from God in exchange for our practical devotion.

We cannot say that even our devotion to our children is based on the aspiration for some fruit in return, such as the aspiration to be served during our old age. This is not true. **Even if our children refuse to serve us in our old age, we neither change our will written in their favor nor do we keep silent if they require any urgent help from us at any time.** At the most, we may scold them for their ungratefulness. But our true love for them, which is practically proved through our service and sacrifice for them, never changes!

We are afraid of the risk in serving God and sacrificing our wealth to Him without the aspiration for any fruit in return. We think “What if God does not help me in my time of need? All my efforts in serving Him and the wealth sacrificed to Him would be for nothing!” This is the exact point where we slip from the path! We have total confidence in our children, who are mere human beings, but we do not have even a bit of confidence in the omnipotent God! Our children are human beings having very little power, while God is omnipotent. You think that **the omnipotent God will not help you even though you have shown your love for Him practically through service and sacrifice. It means you are assuming that God is ungrateful! How did you assume that God has such a poor character?** Sometimes, our grown-up children are ungrateful to us. Even though they are capable of rendering service to us in our old age they do not serve us. They do not reciprocate the real love that we have for them. The reason for their lack of real love for us and the resulting ungratefulness is their ignorance. Due to ignorance, they have directed their real love towards other blind bonds instead of us. In other cases, the grown-up children might have difficulties of their own. Hence, they might be incapable of practically reciprocating our real love towards them. **Thus, souls could be ignorant or incapable of rendering service to us in reciprocation.** But the omniscient and omnipotent God has no reason to unnecessarily avoid helping us in our difficulties. It is true that sometimes He does not help us and remains silent even when we are facing difficulties. The reason is that difficulties reform the soul and improve one’s devotion to God. Unless we are reformed, we will continue to rotate in the endless cycle of sins and

punishments. So, God's decision is always the best. Whether He helps us in our difficulties or whether He remains silent, it is for our greatest benefit. In whichever way He responds, He is always helping us.

We should establish a relationship with God based on real love. In real love, one does not keep accounts. There is no balance sheet, no debit and credit. If you keep accounts between you and God, it is not real love, it is business. Such devotion is called business devotion. Real love is not based on keeping accounts and such real love is eternal. Draupadi cried for help when she was being declodded in the royal court. God Krishna supplied unlimited saris to her without keeping accounts. Earlier, when His finger was cut, Draupadi, without hesitating, had torn her sari and used the piece of cloth to bandage His finger. If God Krishna had kept accounts, even after adding a lot of interest, the piece of cloth could never have become more than one sari!

The young son gives his salary in the hands of his mother. The husband gives his salary in the hands of his wife. The mother or the wife looks after all the needs and comforts of the son or the husband respectively. No account balance sheet is maintained for the amount of the salary handed over and the amount of comfort provided. No party aspires for any fruit in return from the other party. We should establish such a bond of real love with God. The mother or the wife is not omnipotent and might not be capable of providing all the comforts needed by the person. Both are ignorant and might not even be able to understand the person's requirements each time. But God is omnipotent and omniscient. Sometimes, when the omnipotent and omniscient God remains silent even when we are facing difficulties, we should realize that there must be some very important valid reason for His silence. In such situations, His silence is undoubtedly in our best interest.

In this real love, which is not based on an account balance sheet, our love should be really real. What I mean is that our love should be real both inside and outside. A certain devotee tried to develop such real love for God. He served God and sacrificed his wealth to God without aspiring for any fruit in return. Later, when the devotee faced some difficulties, God kept silent. This devotee said to God that he had expected unlimited love from God in reciprocation of his unlimited love for God! This statement made by him shows that his love for God was real only externally. Internally, it was unreal! We must have real faith in God because He is omniscient. He knows our requirements even without our asking. He is omnipotent to meet any of our requirements, unlike other human souls. **We have full faith in the ignorant and powerless humans, who are related**

**to us. But we do not have even a bit of faith in the all-knowing, all-powerful and infinitely kind God. Is it not the height of blind foolishness?**

## Chapter 4

**WORLDLY DUTIES OR DIVINE SERVICE?**

January 06, 2019

Shri Hrushikesh asked Swami through Shri PVNM Sharma: One of my friends said “We have to do worldly work to support our families, so we cannot dedicate ourselves totally to the work of God”. I request You to please respond to his comment.

**Worldly Duty and Renunciation in the Gita**

**Swami Replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! If this point of your friend were valid, the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna in the Gita would have been as follows:

**Krishna:** O Arjuna! Give up this worldly work of fighting to win back your lost property and kingdom. Become a saint and propagate My spiritual knowledge in this world.

**Arjuna:** How can I withdraw from this war? I need to get back the property earned by my father in order to support my family. If I completely dedicate myself to Your work, would I not be doing an injustice towards my family?

In fact, the real version of the Gita is the reverse. Arjuna wanted to withdraw from the war. He was fighting the war to regain his lost kingdom, so, fighting the war was his worldly duty. Krishna forced Arjuna to do his worldly duty, which is essential in *pravṛtti* or worldly life. Krishna never said that Arjuna should withdraw from the war and dedicate himself to doing the work of God in this world. Arjuna’s wanting to withdraw from the war was not for the sake of doing spiritual work or *nivṛtti*. His reason for wanting to withdraw from the war was his blind love for his grandfather, teacher and other relatives. He wanted to avoid having to kill them even though they stood for injustice. All of them had been responsible for the injustice done on several occasions including the attempted undressing of Draupadī in the royal court. Some like Duśśāsana were the direct doers of injustice. Some like Duryodhana were the indirect doers of injustice. Some like Śakuni and Karna were the promoters of injustice and some like Bhisma and Drona were the supporters of injustice by keeping silent when they could have prevented it.

Arjuna was ready to withdraw from a war that was justified. His wanting to withdraw from the war was due to his blind attachment to his elders and relatives, and not for the sake of his spiritual effort or God's work. So, Krishna objected and told him to fight the war. **Even if Arjuna had said that he wanted to withdraw from the war for the sake of doing spiritual work, Krishna would still have objected.** If Arjuna had really wanted to withdraw from the war due to his interest in spiritual work, he could have done it before going to the battlefield. But before reaching the battlefield, he was motivated to fight. Only after reaching the battlefield, he saw all his respectable elders and beloved relatives standing together as his enemy. It kindled his blind attachment for these worldly relationships. His intellect was clouded due to the attachment and he failed to analyze their defects. This was the reason for his wanting to withdraw from the war!

### **Service and Sacrifice Benefit the Soul; not God**

Your friend has made God out to be a helpless person requesting the help of others to do His work. As if God cannot do His own work! Why would the omnipotent God need the help of powerless human beings? Your friend's wrong thinking is the result of his ignorance of God's omnipotence. In fact, God never asks anybody to help Him in His work. Even if He advises devotees to participate in His work of propagation of spiritual knowledge in this world, it is only for their spiritual welfare. The propagation of His spiritual knowledge strengthens the concepts in the devotee's mind due to repeated revision. It leads to the reformation of the devotee who is propagating the knowledge. By advising certain blessed souls to participate in His work, God is only providing an opportunity for them to rise higher on the spiritual path. This progress on the spiritual path is a permanent attainment that follows the soul in every birth. On the other hand, ***pravṛtti* is the work related to one's worldly bonds and is confined only to this birth.**

In fact, God never advises souls to proceed on the path of *nivṛtti*, which is establishing a strong personal bond with God. *Nivṛtti* is the path discovered by the devoted souls themselves. It was not introduced by God. In fact, God discourages the path of *nivṛtti* by creating several difficult hurdles which serve as acid tests to prove the deservingness of the soul. The only path introduced and encouraged by God is *pravṛtti*. It is the path of protection of justice and the rejection of injustice in worldly life. His entire focus is only on *pravṛtti*. He introduced worldly and heavenly benefits for following justice. To discourage sins and injustice, He also introduced punishments in this world and in the upper world. God descends into this

world in the form of Incarnations for this very purpose of establishing *pravṛtti*. In that case, how can anybody blame God for supporting *nivṛtti* at the cost of *pravṛtti*?

In fact, God created this world having all the souls and gave them the commandments to strictly follow *pravṛtti*. Souls are supposed to strictly follow justice and avoid injustice in their worldly life. God remained as the unimaginable domain, aloof from this world, which is the imaginable domain. It is just like parents staying aloof from their grown-up children after helping them settle down in life and giving them proper instructions on leading a happy life through discipline. **Had these souls followed the instructions of God and maintained the balance of society perfectly, God would never have had to visit creation. He would have been happy simply to see all souls living together happily.** This point answers the question of atheists, who ask why it is even necessary for human beings to think about God in their worldly life. If souls could have lived happily following the discipline necessary to maintain the balance of the society, there would have been no need for souls to think about God. Old parents, staying aloof from their grown-up children, are not interested in unnecessarily visiting the homes of their children as long as the children are leading a disciplined and happy life. When the children break the discipline and create havoc in their own lives and in society, the parents rush to their homes to set things right. They come to the homes of their children to solve the crisis created by the children and not to get free food or service from their children. Now, human parents are ignorant and they are not omnipotent either. In fact, they themselves might be in need of financial and other help from their children. So, it is possible that they might visit the homes of their grown-up children expecting some help. But God is omnipotent and does not require any help from souls either in terms of service or in terms of money. The service rendered by a devotee to God is called *karma samnyāsa* and his hard-earned money offered or sacrificed to God is called *karma phala tyaga*. Both service and the sacrifice of hard-earned money together are called *karma yoga*. *Karma yoga* or service and sacrifice of money are not needed by God at all!

In the case that the parents are strong and healthy and are also financially well-off, they need neither service nor money from their children. In spite of that, if the children serve the parents and give money to them, it is due to the children's love for their parents. The service and the money given are the practical proof of the mental love they have for their parents. God is like these strong and rich parents who do not need anything from their children. **Unfortunately, some clever children exploit this**

**point, saying that they do not serve their parents or give them any money since the rich and strong parents do not need any of it.** These grown-up children are missing the point. The service rendered to the parents and the money offered to them is not because of the need of the parents. It is the proof of the real love that the children have for their parents. Many people in the world also think in the same manner about God. **They too must understand that service rendered to God and the money sacrificed to Him is only the proof of one's real love for God.**

Your friend's comment is like that of a son, who says to his poor and dependent parents living with him in his home "If I serve you and spend my money on you, how can I look after my family towards which I am duty-bound?" The comment is completely out of place for the context of God and souls. The case of God and a soul is similar to that of rich and strong parents who have been caring for and financially supporting the son and his family from the beginning. So, whatever service the son renders to such rich and strong parents and whatever money he sacrifices to them, is not because they need it. It is only the practical proof of his real love for them. Thus, your friend's thinking, which is also the thinking of a lot of other people, is based on an illusion and ignorance. It is God who has been helping and supporting the devotee in all possible ways. He needs nothing from souls! The love that the devotee has for God is in the mind. It is theoretical. It cannot be seen. A person may falsely claim that he loves God. Therefore, proof becomes necessary. Service and sacrifice of one's hard-earned money to God are the practical proof of real love for God. They are called *karma samnyāsa* and *karma phala tyaga* respectively, and they are the proof of devotion. They can be said to be practical devotion.

Of course, the devotee can practically prove his theoretical devotion either through service or through the sacrifice of money. Service is work done for God. It is the sacrifice of one's energy for God. Money is said to be the fruit of one's work since we earn money in return for our work. Offering money to God is the sacrifice of the fruit of one's work to God. Service or *karma samnyāsa* represents the sacrifice of energy. *Karma phala tyāga* represents the sacrifice of matter since money stands for matter. Since both energy and matter are mutually interconvertible, service and sacrifice both constitute *karma yoga*. Both are equivalent and a person can do any one or a combination of both as per one's convenience. Service is convenient for a renounced saint who does not earn or possess money. For a householder, a combination of the two is usually convenient. Since he earns and possesses money, he can sacrifice some money. In addition, he also has some spare time in which he can serve God. The extent to which a

devotee should do this *karma yoga* is told as “*yathā śaktiḥ, yathā bhaktiḥ*”. This means that it can be done as per one’s capacity and as per the depth of one’s devotion. In this regard, it is very important to realize this essential truth and keep it permanently in one’s mind: God never needs any service or from souls, He never forces anyone to sacrifice anything to Him and He never has any intention to cheat any soul. **The service and sacrifice are entirely voluntary from the side of the devotee who is totally free to choose.**

### **True and False Devotees and Incarnations**

A false devotee is one who tries to escape from the practical service and sacrifice to God. He exploits the fact that the omnipotent God is not in any real need of service or sacrifice from petty human beings. A true devotee is one who performs the practical service and sacrifice to God along with pure theoretical devotion. He completely surrenders to God in both theory and practice. He proves the theoretical devotion in His mind by practically serving God and sacrificing his money for God. A false incarnation is a glorified beggar. He cheats devotees by saying that they must do practical service and sacrifice to him for the sake of their own spiritual welfare and not because he needs it. A true Incarnation never aspires for anything from the devotee since He has absolutely no need. He accepts the service and sacrifice of the devotee in the interest of the devotee so that the devotee may be truly uplifted on the spiritual path. **There are two perfect matches. The first is the true devotee and the true Incarnation and the second is the false devotee and the false incarnation.** When the true devotee meets the true Incarnation, the devotee is benefited. When the false devotee meets with the false incarnation, the false incarnation is taught a good lesson. Let us also see the cross-associations. When the false devotee meets the true Incarnation, only the false devotee suffers a loss. No loss ever comes to the true Incarnation. When the true devotee meets the false incarnation, the true devotee gets cheated if the devotee is not capable of doing a proper analysis in order to recognize the true Incarnation. **Just as the Incarnation tests devotees, the devotee must also test Incarnations.** Tests based on sharp and intelligent analysis are needed on both sides. The customer tests the golden ornament before purchasing it from the jeweler. The jeweler also tests the currency notes given by the customer to see whether they are genuine or fake. Krishna began His preaching of the Gita with the concept of *buddhi yoga*, which is sharp analysis using one’s intelligence. He even ended His preaching highlighting the same point of thorough analysis

(*Vimṛṣyaitadaśeṣeṇa...*). This intelligent analysis must be used to test the Incarnation. The devotee must never blindly accept the knowledge given by the Incarnation. He must accept it only upon being fully convinced after a thorough analysis.

### **Identifying the Incarnation of God**

How to identify a true Incarnation? Generally, people identify an Incarnation by His ability to perform miracles. People are attracted to these miracles since they are useful to solve their worldly problems. But the worldly problems are confined only to this birth. Such people realize their blunder only in the last minutes before their death when there is no time for rectification. Miracles can be done even by devils. They get miraculous powers from God through rigorous penance. **The main problem with miracles is that they increase selfishness in the devotee.** The devotee develops the habit of exploiting the power for solving worldly problems and getting worldly benefits. But the usefulness of these miracles is limited only this birth. **Unfortunately, the selfishness developed in the devotee as a result of the miracles prevents the divine grace from working on the devotee and spoils the spiritual growth of the devotee. This is a huge loss which affects the soul in all future births.**

Miracles are useful to deal with scientific atheists or atheistic scientists. These are people who do not believe in God but who are capable of objective and patient analysis. They are people who accept proof and are capable of changing their opinion in the face of contrary evidence. There is no need to attempt to change adamant atheists because they will never change even if they experience miracles. They lack the ability to conduct an objective analysis or change their opinion in the face of contrary evidence. Similarly, silent pure scientists are satisfied to study only science and are not capable of inquiring about anything beyond science. There is no need to show miracles and attempt to change them either. Miracles are useful to the devotee to solve the worldly problems of the present birth. But they increase the devotee's selfishness. Eating sweets serves the purpose of temporary pacification of hunger, but it increases the risk of diabetes!

The best identification of an Incarnation has been told as the true spiritual knowledge given by Him. This divine knowledge helps souls progress in worldly life (*pravṛtti*) by establishing justice and peace. It also helps souls progress in spiritual life (*nivṛtti*). This true spiritual knowledge is described in the Veda as "*Satyam jñānāmanantam Brahma*" and in the Gita as "*Jñānītvātmaiva...*". Why has the true spiritual knowledge been given such total importance? **The reason is that it helps in giving right**

**direction to the soul for its temporary welfare in *pravṛtti* as well as permanent welfare in *nivṛtti*.** A person usually has a strong fascination for worldly bonds of money, spouse and child. Driven by this fascination, he commits sins in the world. The true spiritual knowledge diverts a person's strong fascination from the worldly bonds towards God. Thus, it prevents the person from committing sins. Then the person naturally avoids punishment in this world and in the afterworld. This is the contribution of spiritual knowledge to a person's worldly life.

As the person advances further and further in the same true spiritual knowledge, in course of time, it brings the person closer and closer to God. The person gets the opportunity of not just becoming a Human Incarnation, but also the master of God. Becoming the Human Incarnation of God is attaining monism with God, which is the goal of the monistic philosophy of Advaita. The goal of the dualistic philosophy of Dvaita is to surrender to God as a devoted servant. But God out of love treats such a surrendered devotee as His own master. Thus, the goal of dualism is higher than the goal of monism. Of course, both these fruits are given by God only to those devotees who do not aspire for any fruit from God.

**Hence, attachment to God is the essential starting point for success in *pravṛtti* as well as in *nivṛtti*.** It is the railway ticket purchased right up to Delhi which represents the goal of *nivṛtti* or spiritual life. It allows you to break the journey at the intermediate station which is *pravṛtti* or worldly justice. If you learn spiritual knowledge, develop theoretical devotion and practice practical devotion to God, you have purchased a ticket right up to the abode of God, which is known as Brahma Loka. You can break your journey for a very short time at the intermediate station which is heaven or Svarga Loka. But if you only do good social service you have purchased a ticket only up to the intermediate station called heaven. With it, you can stay for a longer time in heaven, but you will have to return to earth thereafter. If you consider the attachment to God as *nivṛtti*, then this *nivṛtti* is essential from the very beginning of *pravṛtti*. The attachment to God leads to a simultaneous detachment from worldly bonds. In the first stage of *pravṛtti*, the attachment to God is only partial. The partial detachment from worldly bonds due to the partial attachment to God enables a person to follow the path of justice in *pravṛtti*. The attachment to God grows and becomes complete in the latter stage of *nivṛtti*. Both partial and full attachments to God can be called as *nivṛtti*. Thus, spiritual knowledge, which is the starting point for developing attachment to God is the essential requirement for both the worldly path of justice and the spiritual path of devotion.

## Chapter 5

**SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY FOR THE CANCELLATION OF SINS**

January 09, 2019

Shri Kishore Ram asked: Is there authority from the scripture regarding the cancellation of pending punishments by reformation, especially in this Kali Age? Some of my friends are asking for scriptural authority on this point.

**The Logic Behind Cancelling Sins**

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! **This concept is based on logic and hence, it is valid in any age because the logic of the concept is beyond time.** The logic is as follows. The meaning of reformation is that the soul passes through realization, repentance and finally non-repetition of the sin in practice. What is the aim of the punishment for sin? It is not revenge or tit for tat! It is only to create fear in the mind of the soul so that the soul does not repeat the sin. **But mere punishment without giving spiritual knowledge can only bring fear in the soul; not realization.** In the absence of realization, there is no question of repentance and the non-repetition of the sin in practice. Of course, due to the fear, there will be a temporary avoidance of the sin.

**The non-repetition of sin is most important since it is the final practical step.** Therefore, the soul is punished for its sins here on earth as well as in hell so that the soul does not repeat the sin at least for some time. After being punished in hell, when the soul is reborn on earth, its tendency to commit the sin is greatly reduced. As the child grows, it learns from its surroundings. Based on these external influences, the child picks up different qualities. **But generally, the soul picks up qualities that are matching with its own inherent qualities.** These inherent qualities have been accumulated by the soul over numerous previous births. As a result, in each birth, the soul usually develops a nature matching with his or her own inherent qualities. A change is possible only when the soul receives the true spiritual knowledge preached by the Human Incarnation of God. Such spiritual knowledge may bring total or partial reformation in the soul depending on how intense the soul's inherent qualities are.

**To speed up the reformation, God uses a combination of fear through punishment and realization through spiritual knowledge.** It is

like administering antibiotics along with vitamin B-complex to a patient so that the weakness caused by the antibiotics is overcome by the vitamins. The simultaneous exposure of the soul to both spiritual knowledge and the punishment for its sins is very essential. The punishment creates fear and weakness in the soul. The spiritual knowledge not only brings some strength to the soul overcoming the weakness but it also gradually brings permanent reformation in the soul. This is the basis of the divine system of God for managing and reforming souls. It involves these two simultaneous efforts of punishing souls for their sins and preaching spiritual knowledge to them through divine Incarnations.

Now, the main point is the cancelation of the soul's pending punishments upon attaining total reformation. This cancelation is perfectly justified by logic since the aim of the punishment is basically to bring about the reformation of the soul. By instilling fear in the soul, it prevents the repetition of the sin by the soul temporarily. The non-repetition of the sin is the final step and the practical proof of reformation, which is achieved through punishment even if temporarily. So, it is clear that the intention behind the punishment for sins is only the soul's reformation. But spiritual knowledge is far more effective in reforming the soul. Reformation attained through spiritual knowledge is permanent. **When permanent reformation has already been attained by a soul through spiritual knowledge, what is the use of punishing the soul further in order to bring temporary reformation?** The aim of the punishment was never taking revenge against the soul for committing the sin. The aim was only the soul's reformation, which has already been achieved in a permanent manner through the spiritual knowledge. So, the pending punishments for sins already done, get canceled. Actually, the file of these pending punishments is kept in an inactive state in hell as if in cold storage. It is never activated again as long as the reformed soul stays reformed. So, it is important that the soul remembers this point and does not go back to committing sins, thinking that the file of its deeds has been totally destroyed!

### **Importance of Logical Analysis**

There is a reason why I explained this concept on the basis of logic. **The powerful logic behind the concept itself is the strongest scriptural authority. When such strong logic exists, no separate theoretical quotation from the scripture is needed.** If strong logic to support a concept is absent and it is only supported by quoting the scripture, it must be rejected. If it is not logical, it should be treated as some insertion in the scripture. Such inserted wrong concepts should be rejected. There is no

need to feel sorry about calling such an insertion in the scripture as an insertion. In fact, knowingly treating a wrong insertion in the scripture to be genuine is very bad. It is said that if you are bitten on your finger by a snake, you should immediately cut off the finger without any foolish attachment towards it or else the poison will spread all over your body and kill you (*Aṅgulīvoragakṣatā*). A certain concept from a genuine scripture like the Veda or Gita might be accepted by others to be genuine. But if it is proved to be wrong upon analysis, it must be rejected. One must leave foolish and blind attachment towards the scripture in favor of the truth.

### **Logical analysis is greater than the scripture.**

Please do not think that I am criticizing the divine scripture by lowering its value. I have to say this because your blind fascination for the scripture, setting aside logical analysis, must be condemned. I am not criticizing the divine scripture. The wrong concept is not genuinely part of the genuine scripture. It is only an insertion made by an ignorant person who wants his wrong concept to be accepted by people like you. He inserted it in a genuine scripture so that people will accept it without question. He is exploiting the position of sacredness given to the divine scripture. You must realize one basic point: How can God, the author of the divine scripture speak such illogical wrong concepts? Such wrong and illogical concepts were definitely not told by Him! **This one point makes logical analysis occupy a higher place than the scripture. The logical analysis reveals what is actually spoken by God and what is inserted by ignorant or crooked people in the scripture.** The purpose of giving this entire background is to emphasize the point that a concept supported by sharp logical analysis itself is the scripture. Whether such a concept is found in the divine scripture or not is not important. In any case, there is always the possibility of insertions and corruption of any scripture, so accepting any statement from the scripture without analysis is foolish.

### **Scriptural Authority**

This concept of the soul's reformation is genuine not only based on logical analysis but also on the basis of the divine scripture. It has scriptural authority. The Veda says that a certain soul got rid of all its pending punishments (*Apahata pāpmā*) and that the sins done in the past cannot bind such a soul (*Na karma lipyate nare*). The Gita told by God directly, reveals this concept more clearly. God says that the realization attained through the fire of spiritual knowledge burns all the deeds done in the past along with their fruits (*Jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute...*). The Gita praises this spiritual knowledge as the boat to cross the river of sins

(*Sarvam jñānaplavēnaiva vṛjinam santariśyasi*). In this context, Śaṅkara says that all the pending punishments are cancelled except for the present ongoing punishments (*prārabdham*). The reason for His statement is that total and perfect reformation of a soul is impossible due to its strong human tendencies. Some imperfection remains, which requires the continuation of the ongoing punishment for rectification. It is for the same reason that the file of pending punishments is never burnt to ash but instead, is only kept in an inactive state, as if in cold storage. It is almost equal to burning it completely. However, if a blessed soul attains total and perfect reformation, the omnipotent God burns the file of pending punishments including the ongoing punishment. **If the reformation is absolutely real from the side of the soul, nothing is impossible from the side of the omnipotent God!**

This reformation resulting in the cancellation of the pending punishments is true in every age and in all times. This concept has become most significant in this Kali age since now sinners constitute the majority of humanity. During the Pongal festival, everyone wants to purchase new clothes. To attract customers to their shops, shopkeepers announce special discounts as a Pongal bumper offer. But customers should never forget that in spite of such high discounts and offers, the shopkeeper is smart enough to never undergo a loss. Similarly, God Datta has also announced this special bumper offer in this Kali age!

### **Reformation Through Realization**

**Observe this approach of preaching spiritual knowledge. A single question is answered and that single concept is thoroughly explained from all angles until the recipient gets full clarity. This approach is the best in this Kali age since the majority of human beings has fallen to very low standards of spiritual knowledge.** A single concept preached with a clear and detailed explanation brings full satisfaction to a soul of any standard. This is one extreme end. The other extreme end is to simply mention many concepts without giving any explanation. The middle path is stating many concepts with brief explanations of each concept. The first extreme end is the Gita, in which God answered every question of Arjuna with clear and complete explanations. The other extreme end is the Upanishads, which merely state many concepts briefly without any explanation. The middle path is studying the Upanishads with the brief commentaries given by the three divine preachers.

The Gita was told at the very end of the Dvāpara Age so it was the preaching meant for the Kali age. The three divine preachers wrote their commentaries on the Upanishads in the Kali age. The Gita serves the

purpose of preaching to the majority of humanity while the Upanishads with the commentaries serve the purpose of a minority of scholars in the Kali age. However, the Gita is suitable for the whole of humanity. So, even scholars are advised to study the Gita since the Upanishads with the brief commentaries might sometimes be misunderstood by the scholars. **Thus, detailed explanations which give complete clarity are necessary for every human being in the Kali age.**

## Chapter 6

**REQUESTING AN INCARNATION FOR A MIRACLE**

January 10, 2019

**Shri Shashi Kopparthi asked:** How to connect with and experience you Swami? In this age of Kali, choosing a guru is very difficult. As you said, many gurus like Satya Sai first did miracles to attract people and then imparted spiritual knowledge. I was looking for a living guru who can guide me. Can I get some miraculous experiences from a guru like you so that I can accept you as my guru? Shashi Kopparthi

**Becoming an Incarnation**

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! I am just a human being like you without the slightest capability of doing any miracle. I happen to be the human being-component of the Human Incarnation of God Datta and that is only because He selected me for the purpose. His mission is the welfare of the world of devotees which is achieved by spreading true spiritual knowledge. The essential qualification to become the human being-component of the Human Incarnation is that one should never aspire for being selected by God for this purpose and attaining monism with God. This is the necessary qualification for the entry of God Datta into any human being. After becoming a Human Incarnation, a second qualification is necessary to maintain God within oneself throughout one's lifetime. This second qualification is that one should never allow the ego to grow when one is praised by devotees around. If the human being-component becomes egotistic, God Datta will quit such a Human Incarnation and the human being-component will remain as a mere human being as in the case of Paraśurāma.

Externally, the human being-component in the Incarnation should not reject the praise of surrounding devotees. It should only reject the praise internally to save itself from the rise of the ego. The reason for not rejecting devotees' praise externally is that it is necessary for the devotee of the Human Incarnation to have a monistic view of the Human Incarnation. The success of the devotee is in maintaining an unshakable faith that the Human Incarnation is identical with God. This is the true Advaita. If the devotee develops a dualistic view of the Incarnation, that is, he or she thinks that the Incarnation is different from God, the devotee is lost. Hence, in the interest of the spiritual welfare of the devotee, the Human Incarnation has to keep

silent on hearing praise from the devotee. All that the Incarnation can do is to keep a smile on the face!

If the devotee adopts dualism towards the Incarnation, it is a terrible loss for the devotee. Similarly, if the human being-component of the Incarnation adopts monism towards itself, the human being-component faces a terrible loss since God quits it immediately. This is a very tricky and difficult situation of a reversible equilibrium between the human being-component in a Human Incarnation and its sincere devotee. It is due to this tricky situation, that Shri Paramahansa said that He would prefer to be an ant and enjoy sugar rather than becoming the sugar and getting bitten by ants. God is like sugar and the devotees are like ants. So, He meant that He would prefer to be a devotee rather than a Human Incarnation of God.

### **The Life and Miracles of Swami**

The owner of an institution selects a candidate for a job, who is already trained in the required work. If a trained candidate is not available, then alone does he think of selecting an untrained candidate and giving him the necessary training. When an experienced candidate is available, the owner does not waste time in giving training to the inexperienced candidate. Similarly, if a devotee suitable for a specific divine program is available, God selects that devotee to become a Human Incarnation for the purpose of that specific divine program. I had a lot of interest in spiritual knowledge since childhood, perhaps, due to some strong connection with spiritual knowledge from my previous births. I feel that God Datta selected me even when I was in the womb of my mother because later upon growing up, I had heard from my mother that while she was pregnant with me, she would regularly see temples, mosques, churches and Buddhistic shrines in her dreams. The dreams were an indication of my future divine program of Universal Spirituality. Another supporting miracle was that without studying Sanskrit from anybody, I became a deep scholar of Sanskrit scriptures and a poet in Sanskrit. I began composing verses in Sanskrit spontaneously. I wrote about a hundred books in Sanskrit on the correlation of the commentaries of the three divine preachers, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva, by the age of sixteen years!

Later, I became a Professor of Chemistry in a reputed engineering college in Vijayawada and worked for my livelihood while dedicating all my leisure time for God's work. I propagated divine spiritual knowledge in the form of my books to Sanskrit scholars, who were extremely few in number. One day, I performed a special worship to Lord Śiva asking Him to give me poverty and all sorts of difficulties so that I could progress fast

spiritually. I asked this in spite of my heavy worldly responsibilities of having a large family. The kindest Lord sanctioned my prayer immediately! Later on, God Datta appeared as Shri Satya Sai, another contemporary Human Incarnation of God and asked me to propagate divine spiritual knowledge full time. He promised me that He would take care of all my worldly problems. I left my job and entered this divine program full time. A little while later, God Datta appeared to me at the holy place called Shrishailam and merged in me. Just before merging into me, He conducted a severe test by asking me to jump from the top of the hill. He said this since I was singing a song composed by me, which says that I will even give up my life for Him if He asks for it. I jumped from the top of the hill at once, but He quickly caught hold of me.

I shared this brief background with you to reveal to you that I too am just a human being like you. Any human being has the chance of becoming a Human Incarnation if God selects him or her. Every person, including the human being-component of the Human Incarnation, is only an ordinary human being. Everyone has the chance of becoming a Human Incarnation and that chance is based purely on the will of the omniscient and omnipotent God alone. The Human Incarnation is not greater than the greatest devotee. In the Incarnation, God Datta and the selected devoted soul merge perfectly like gold mixing homogeneously with copper to form an alloy. Here the invisible God is like gold and the visible human being-component is like copper. It is the case of monism. In the case of the greatest devotee, the invisible God remains closely associated with the visible human devotee. It is like a golden rod welded with a copper rod, which is the case of dualism.

The excellent true spiritual knowledge radiated by the Human Incarnation comes only from the invisible God-component and not from the visible human being-component. Similarly, the miracles are also exhibited only by the invisible God-component and not by the visible human being-component at all. Your request for a miracle has been received by God Datta. If He feels that it will help you in your spiritual progress, I am confident that He will accept your request. I am just a postman between God Datta and you. If a miracle is not going to be useful in your case, He will not respond to your request. When I started the propagation of spiritual knowledge, several miracles were shown by God Datta through me for about two to three years in order to overcome the starting trouble in the divine program and for picking up initial momentum. But slowly, I found that the devotion of devotees shown towards me was only to exploit the divine miraculous powers for solving their worldly problems. This is not

healthy for devotees. It increases their selfishness, which, in turn, opposes the divine grace from falling on them. So, I submitted a special prayer to God Datta to stop the miracles since the mission had already picked up some initial momentum by then. I prayed to Him to do miracles only in the case of real devotees to help their spiritual progress.

One day, Smt. K. Padmaram, a devotee from Ramachandrāpuram, phoned me saying that I had not shown any miracle to her directly. I was in Vijayawada then. She requested me to show a miracle to somebody in Vijayawada at once and have that person call and reveal that divine experience to her. I scolded her over the phone for her foolish attraction to miracles and told her that even demons and devilish souls exhibit miracles after having attained miraculous powers from God through rigorous penance. I told her that the true spiritual knowledge alone is the identity mark of God since it is true knowledge alone that gives the right direction to the soul in both the worldly and the spiritual path. I did not know that God Datta had accepted her request. I came outside the house and was walking about in the front yard. Just then Smt. Rama, a neighbor who had arrived from Singapore and who did not know me at all, saw a radiant wheel rotating behind my head. She was terribly shocked. After some time, on my instruction, she phoned to my devotee and told her about her divine experience.

Surprisingly, at the same time, another devotee located in my native place, far away from Vijayawada, also saw this divine miracle. This lady-devotee was possessed by a deity called Shri Lakṣmi. The possessed lady called the daughter of my sister, Smt. Bhargavi, and told her that her uncle, which is I, had shown the divine radiant wheel called *Viṣṇu Cakra* behind my head in Vijayawada. My niece immediately called me asking why I had not shown any such miracle even to a close relative like her. I replied that even I could not see that wheel myself! Since the wheel was rotating behind my head whenever I turned my head around to see it, it would also turn along with my head to remain behind my head!

## Chapter 7

**A DREAM SYMBOLIZING A DEVOTEE'S LIFE**

January 20, 2019

**Dr. Nikhil asked:** Padanamaskarams Swamiji! I had a dream about You which was highly symbolic but am unable to understand its meaning. I feel that You were giving me some deep message through it.

In the dream, You visited our home in Coimbatore. It was a joyous occasion and surprisingly, You were in Your early fifties! Devi and Arsha took You to the balcony and were showing You something. You suggested that we could plant something in the open space to the northeast of the house and make arrangements for watering the plants. I was initially reluctant since it would take up too much time and I wanted to use all my spare time for Your work. But I agreed since it was Your wish.

Then You pointed to a stream flowing behind my house. There is actually a stream behind my house, except that it is always dry. The stream in the dream, however, had plenty of water. We all went to the stream and took a boat ride in it. We headed upstream and reached the origin of the stream which was a circular pool which had springs of water underneath. The plants around it had withered and dried. The spring-water was not very good either. You asked what had happened to all the good plants and I replied it was due to a recent policy of the university.

I got off on the left bank of the stream, near its origin, to explore a suitable place for all of us to spend some time. I realized that the place on the stream-bank where I had got off was part of a beautiful school campus. It was probably a holiday and so there was nobody around except a few essential personnel. But I soon realized that I was trespassing there. I wanted to get out of it but there were tall grilled fences and gates. I somehow managed to enter a building but could not find a way out. I also realized that by then You and the others had started moving downstream in the boat. I wanted to quickly come out of the campus, onto the road that ran parallel to the stream and then join You further downstream. But I was trapped.

Finally, I found a way to the main gate of the campus which had a security office. I did not want to create a disturbance for trespassing on the property unintentionally but I also needed to ask for directions to the road so that I could catch up with You. So, I decided to boldly approach the main gate as if I were a visitor who had come there for some official work and was now leaving the campus. Just then, I realized that I was barefoot. Probably, since I had got off from the boat, I was not wearing any footwear. I was hoping that the security officer at the gate would not notice it. Luckily, he did not notice it and he gave me directions to the road.

I walked hurriedly and reached a shopping area. I was tired and was looking around for something to eat. Just then someone told me that right next to where I

was, there was something like a temple or an ISKCON center, where I could get something. As I approached it, they dropped a packet of food and a packet containing the Gita from a window above. They said that it is their usual practice to support spiritual people with both food and spiritual knowledge.

I do not remember what happened next in the dream since I might have woken up. Although the dream began with Your visit to my home in Coimbatore, the school campus where I was trapped and the place where I got the food packet, seemed somewhat like the USA. During the dream, I was in a lot of emotional turmoil.

I feel the dream carried a lot of meaning and was related to my life. I would be grateful if You could kindly reveal its meaning.

Your servant, Nikhil

### A Message from God Datta

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! There are two types of dreams. The first is when strong feelings of this birth or previous births arising from the subconscious state appear in the form of dreams. Such dreams are worldly matters. The second type is when God sometimes, gives a message useful for a person's spiritual life in the form of a dream. Such dreams are observed in the case of some devotees. Your dream belongs to the second type. In such dreams, symbolic representations are generally used. I represent God Datta in your dream. It is just a representation and nothing else. The age of about fifty years indicates the matured state of the preacher giving his message. The age of fifty also indicates the junction between the earlier phase of a person's worldly life and the latter phase of spiritual life. It represents a balance between *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*.

**The northeast direction or corner is called *īśānya* and it represents the abode of God Śiva, who is the source of spiritual knowledge (*Jñānam Maheśvarāt icchet*). As per ancient Indian science of architecture (*Vāstu Śāstra*), this corner is where the source of water should be located. Hence, a well is always dug in the northeast corner of the property. Water represents knowledge, which washes away the dirt of ignorance. Drawing water from this corner indicates learning spiritual knowledge from the human form of God. The plants in your dream had grown to a certain stage after germinating from seed. They represent human beings who have progressed to a certain stage on the spiritual path. Their quest for true spiritual knowledge is represented by the plants' requirement for water. **The advice of watering the plants is essentially, the advice to propagate spiritual knowledge.****

The dry stream behind your house indicates the absence of the water of true knowledge. It is located behind your house, which means it represents your past. It refers to the early part of your life, in this very birth, when you lacked true knowledge. Later, you saw the stream filled with bad water, which is wrong knowledge. Wrong knowledge is also the absence of true knowledge. A stream full of bad water lacks good water. Hence, it represents ignorance. It is equivalent to a dry stream, which has no good water and which represents the absence of true knowledge. The source of this stream was a pool having several springs underneath, which indicates a whirlpool of illusions. **Several springs of bad water indicate several wrong preachers preaching wrong knowledge.** The proof that the water was bad was that the plants around the pool were not flourishing at all. It indicates that the devotees spoiled by the wrong preachers can never flourish in the spiritual field. It represents the present state of the world.

You commented that such a situation arose due to the wrong policy of the university. The university here means the highest level of knowledge, which is thought to be the monism of a soul with God. **This concept of monism, that the soul is already God, is misconstrued and is responsible for the pollution of the water of spiritual knowledge.** Hence, you were asked by God to go and check-up the situation. You went to the basic level of the university, which is the school-level. The basic concept, which is the foundation of the spiritual path is that of the perfect dualism between the soul and God. It means that the soul is eternally and permanently separate from the unimaginable God. The school campus represents the basic level in spirituality where this concept should be firmly established.

Finding the world in this bad state, spoiled by the preachers, you went to the school of preaching spiritual knowledge to rectify the situation on the instruction of God Datta alone. The school without proper personnel represents the system of preaching without proper guides. This defective system is protected by grills and gates, which represent the blind traditions in line with the monism of Śaṅkara, which lack correct analysis. They were so powerful that you were trapped in those traditions for some time. Finding you in the grip of that blind school of preaching, the Divine Guide left you for some time so that you could come out on your own in due course of time.

The school represents the unreal dualism that has descended from monism. The followers of the misconstrued monism or Advaita, believe that essentially, they are God already. They feel that at present, they are unable to realize their monism with God due to the effect of ignorance. So,

in order to purify their mind of the effects of ignorance, they temporarily practice dualism. It means that such devotees basically believe only in monism. Their apparent belief in dualism their practice of it is just a tool to attain monism. The school in which you were trapped represents this unreal dualism. Since you were trapped in such monism, without your knowledge, you lost your *chappals* (footwear). *Chappals* protect you at every step on the spiritual path. The two *chappals* are the true belief in the dualism between God and the soul, and the total surrender to God with devotion. You were sent to rectify this defect of false monism and you yourself got caught in it. It is what made you lose your protection at every step, which is represented by the *chappals*.

Your original intention of selecting the school campus for a spiritual debate was good since the school campus represents the basic concept of true dualism between a soul and God. God left you since you were trapped in the false monism, which presents an unimaginable attraction for any soul. The philosophy is so attractive because, according to it, you become God just by knowing that you are already God! Fundamentally, you were a perfect dualist as long as you were with God like your family members. But you got trapped in the attraction to monism once you left God. You got trapped even though you had left only on the order of God to rectify the wrong philosophy of monism hidden behind a false dualism. The temple of Krishna indicates the concept that monism is true in the case of a specific devotee selected by God for His entry, and that such monism should not be generalized to every soul. You recognized the concept of the Human Incarnation of God and got rid of your worldly miseries as well as spiritual ignorance. This was represented by the food and the Gita that were offered to you.

The food packet given to you and the school campus represent your life in the USA. The temple of Krishna represents your transformation into a true dualistic devotee without even a trace of aspiration for monism. This present state makes you perfectly fit for perfect monism whenever God wishes to do some divine work through you. This entire dream represents your present life. It was shown to you by God Datta for your spiritual welfare and is an indication of the infinite grace of the kindest Lord, God Dattātreyā, on you. Now, you have become perfectly fit to carry out the divine work of God Datta. This is the final essence of your dream, which is to be taken in positive sense alone.

## **True Devotion Is Impossible Without Dualism**

These Advaitins speak about fundamental monism on one side and they also speak about true devotion to God on the other side. But their devotion and worship of God is simply unreal! They believe themselves to be God and their devotion is only a tool for attaining the purity of mind as advised by Śaṅkara. **How can true devotion to God ever result without the faith in the fundamental dualism between God and the soul?** In fact, monism, which is thinking that you are already God, is the height of ego. In the lowest level of the spiritual path, which is like the school-level, this theory is used to attract ignorant atheists towards spirituality. It is like attracting ignorant children and encouraging them to attend school by offering them some chocolates. In this level, the effort is only to convert atheists into theists, which is taking the person from the lowest level to the immediate higher level. Since the ego of the atheists is at a hundred percent, they will never accept spirituality if it is told that they are not God. The teacher teaching in the school might actually be the greatest professor, but he can do nothing more at this stage. Śaṅkara was undoubtedly the greatest spiritual preacher, but at that stage, nothing more can possibly be achieved than converting atheists to theists.

The next stage is the special monism of Rāmānuja in which the soul's ego has reduced from a hundred percent to an intermediate value. The soul with this partial ego can then accept a partial oneness with God. He can accept that he is not God but is a part of God. This intermediate stage is like the college-level in spirituality. The final stage is the dualism of Madhva in which the soul's ego has reduced to almost zero. He can accept that he is completely different from God and is a devoted servant of God. To satisfy the remaining trace of ego in the devotee, a trace of similarity with God is maintained, in that both God and soul are said to be awareness. This stage represents the postgraduate level in a university. In the same university, a level higher than postgraduate studies, which is the level of research, has been invented by Datta Swami. At this level, the student must eliminate even the negligible traces of ego. As per this highest theory, there is absolutely no comparison and no commonality between the imaginable created soul and the unimaginable Creator God. The greatness lies, not in Datta Swami, but in this invented highest research level. God Datta only happened to reveal this highest level to Datta Swami.

I appreciate you for frankly expressing the hypocrisy that you felt in your dream regarding the *chappals*, when you pretended to be an official visitor to the school! Such frankness in exposing one's own defects is the

first step in real spiritual upliftment. **Generally, ego prevents us from revealing our own defects. We tend to only reveal our merits.** I know very well that you do not possess any hypocrisy or ego. You only appear to possess both for the sake of the welfare of spiritual devotees since you are standing as their representative like Arjuna. Arjuna asked questions in the Gita for the sake of all the devotees in this world and not for his own sake. You have been cast in such a role by the Director, God Datta, in this world-film produced for the welfare of spiritual devotees. You have acted well in your role and I have also acted well in My role in answering you. As an actor, you are far greater and more valuable than Me for God Datta.

## Chapter 8

**RELATION BETWEEN ASTROLOGY AND VĀSTU**

January 24, 2019

**Dr. Nikhil asked:** People generally treat astrology to be the subject related to reading horoscopes prepared based on the date and time of a person's birth. Vāstu Śāstra is treated to be the subject dealing with architecture. Is there a relationship between astrology and Vāstu Śāstra?

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! Astrology (Jyautiṣa Śāstra) is the subject dealing with bright planets and stars since *jyotiḥ* means a bright light. Astrology is said to be a subject consisting of five parts (*pancāṅga*). As per one classification, the five parts of astrology are *tithi*, *vāra*, *nakṣatra*, *yoga*, *karāṇa*. *Tithi* is the date as per the lunar calendar. *Vāra* is the day of the week. *Nakṣatra* is the constellation (star). *Yoga* is a calculation related to the positions of the sun and the moon and *karāṇa* is the duration of half a lunar day. These five aspects can be seen in the astrological calendar called *pancāṅga*.

As per another important classification, the five parts of astrology are *jātaka*, *gocāra*, *muhūrta*, *vāstu*, and *parihāra*. *Jātaka* means the horoscope prepared based on the date of birth, the time of birth and the place of birth of an individual. *Gocāra* is the horoscope built from the name of the individual applied to the running planetary transits. *Muhūrta* is an auspicious time calculated. *Vāstu* is the principles of architecture. *Parihāra* is the worship of God and doing charity to the poor for pacifying the bad effects rising from the first four parts.

Astrology partly involves astronomy, which is related to the imaginable domain. It is also partly the subject involving the deities of the planets and stars, which is related to the unimaginable domain. Thus, astrology is a mixture of the study of the imaginable and the unimaginable domains. The eclipse of the sun and the moon is an imaginable astronomical event. The points in space where the eclipse occurs are associated with the deities Rahu and Ketu, who deliver the fruits of the bad deeds of souls. The delivery of the fruits of the good and bad deeds of souls is a matter related to the unimaginable domain.

Similarly, Vāstu is also a mixture of architecture, which is related to the imaginable domain and the effects of the stars and planets, which is related to the unimaginable domain. Vāstu says that there should be a beam

after a span of twelve feet (*Dvādaśapade parighā*). This is an aspect of civil engineering to ensure the strength of the structure. Vāstu says that for any room, the star calculated by Navavarga Gaṇita should be good. This calculation involves multiplying the carpet area of the room in square yards by eight and then dividing it by twenty-seven (*Bham aṣṭa bhaiḥ*). The remainder is noted. Out of the twenty-seven constellations (stars), the one corresponding to the remainder is the relevant star. Vāstu also says that the door of the house should be fixed in the position of a good planet. These points are related to the deities of the stars and planets (*jyotiḥ*) and are based on the unimaginable domain. Thus, we see that Vāstu is indeed a part of astrology. Pārāsarī, Jaimini Sūtrās, Kālāmṛtam etc., are the scriptures of astrology.

A climax devotee of God need not bother about these stars and planets since God is the ultimate controller of the deities of the planets and stars. Even spiritual knowledge, which is the subject of God can be called as astrology (Jyautiṣa Śāstram). This is because in the Veda, it is said that God is the ultimate brightest light that illuminates these stars and planets and gives power to their deities (*Param jyotirūpasampadya..., Tasya bhāsā sarvamidam vibhāti*).

## Chapter 9

**SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE**

January 25, 2019

**1) Why is alcohol prohibited for human beings but not for angels?**

Shri Kishore Ram asked: Padanamaskaram Swamiji! One of my friends requested You to kindly answer the question given below: When angels like Indra consumed alcohol (surapānam), why is it prohibited for human beings? What is amrutapānam?

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! Angels have energetic bodies without any trace of matter. *Sattvam*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are the three fundamental qualities or principles that are inherent in every aspect of creation. At the cosmic level, they are expressed as the three constituents of creation namely awareness, energy and matter respectively. In our minds, *sattvam* appears as knowledge and goodness, *rajas* appears as dynamism and desire, and *tamas* represents ignorance and rigidity. The bodies of angels are made of *rajas*. *Rajas* actually means dust or particles. It means inert energy since energy is made of quanta or subtle particles. Angels also possess awareness, which is *sattvam*. But they are not made of matter and so they are almost devoid of *tamas*. Even in their minds, they are almost free of ignorance. Since they do not possess material bodies, angels never consume material food. So, there is no question of angels drinking alcohol, which is matter in the liquid state. Drinking alcohol is only confined to human beings. **It is a well-established fact that alcohol has serious mental and health effects and hence it has been prohibited in the scriptures.** Angels directly consume the energy present in the cosmos as food. '*Amrtam*' means immortality. **Energy is immortal and hence, the energetic bodies of angels are immortal.** The reason for their immortality is this cosmic energy and not some drink consumed by them.

**The scriptures describe a story in which angels and demons churned the 'Milk Ocean' in order to obtain the nectar of immortality called *Amrtam*. Space is comparable to an ocean and the gross energy obtained from space is the *Amrtam*.** The generation of gross energy of reduced frequency from space is metaphorically described as the evolution of *Amrtam* upon churning the ocean. The Mandara hill used for churning the ocean represents the inertia of the energy. *Sattvam* on one side and *tamas* on the other side are depicted as the angels on one side and demons on the other side participating in the churning. The middle is *rajas*, which is

energy or *Amṛtam*. During the churning, some energy was also evolved in the form of harmful radiation, which has been described as the horrible poison, ‘*Halāhalam*’. Its ill-effects were reduced by God and this is described as the drinking of the poison by God Śiva. The whole activity of generating gross energy from space was supported by God. This is represented by God Viṣṇu acting as the support for the Mandara hill in the form of a Tortoise. Thus, the inner meaning of the stories in the *purāṇās* is to be understood since they are expressed in a symbolic language. Sages used to offer the filtered juice of a plant called ‘*somalatā*’ to angels in their rituals. The Veda says “*Somaḥ pavitramatyeti rebhan*”. Here, the word *pavitram* indicates that the drink was filtered. Such offering of this drink to angels during rituals does not mean that the angels actually drank it. **Moreover, this juice of *somalatā* is only green tea and not alcohol.** Drinking alcohol is not recommended by the scriptures. In fact, it is one of the five serious sins called *panca mahā pātakās*. Human beings are prohibited from consuming alcohol and angels, of course, never consume any matter as food or drink.

## 2) Why was Indra made the king of angels in spite of his many defects?

[Shri Kishore Ram asked: Angel Indra made a lot of mistakes as mentioned in the Purāṇas. On what basis was he made or elected as the king of angels?]

**Swami replied: Due to the absence of *tamas* in them, angels do not have ignorance that arises from *tamas*. But they have some ignorance, which is generated by *rajas*. *Rajas* is the source of ego.** In the Veda, there is a story that angels became proud upon defeating demons in the war. A king is always having more ego than any citizen and hence, Indra has naturally more ego than any angel. **Angels are certainly better than human beings since human beings have double ignorance due to the presence of both *rajas* and *tamas*.** All three qualities always coexist everywhere. In human beings, all the three qualities exist in significant amounts even though *rajas* predominates. Demons predominantly have *tamas*. In angels, when it is said that they do not have *tamas*, it means that *tamas* is present in negligible traces. This trace amount of *tamas* in angels arises from the inertia of the inert energy that forms their bodies. It is the rest mass of a photon. Angels have *sattvam* or knowledge as the predominant quality. Human beings have *rajas* as the predominant quality. Demons have *tamas* as predominant quality. Due to the predominance of *tamas*, they have material bodies made of highly condensed matter. When we say that angels represent *sattvam*, humans represent *rajas* and demons represent *tamas*, we are only referring to their predominant qualities. It does

not mean that they do not have the other two qualities in smaller amounts. **Both angels and demons are not visible to human beings due to the will of God, which has unimaginable power. Angels lie above the earth and demons lie below the earth.**

### **3) Why is Islam associated with violence, meat-eating and other defects?**

**Shri Anil asked:** Padanamaskaram Swami! Suraj Advaita asked the following doubts in a forum and is seeking their clarification from You. Kindly give Your reply. At Your divine feet, Anil.

Why is Islam causing problems everywhere? Why is the Quran so negatively written? Why does Islam allow meat-eating, when Sanatana Dharma does not allow it? If meat eating is sin, why are Muslims allowed to eat meat? Is Islam the Devil's religion? Also, please let me know what things on your channel I should propagate? I have read most of your articles and I have liked them. Where can I find all your articles?

**Swami replied: Sin is sin irrespective of the religion a person follows. No divine scripture allows any human being to follow sin.** But when a certain sin is inevitable and when no single person can change it among the people belonging to a certain religion or region, the divine scripture neglects for the time being. The scripture, in its preaching, concentrates on the control of other sins at least. Even in Hinduism, non-vegetarian food is consumed by people belonging to several sects. You cannot blame Muslims alone for consuming non-vegetarian food since non-vegetarians are present in almost all religions. There are several good and bad qualities in every religion. **You should not blame any specific religion for non-vegetarianism since it is found in almost all religions.** Even in Buddhism, which is famous for non-violence, people consumed non-vegetarian food right from the time of Buddha. **Except for Jainism, non-vegetarianism has always existed in every religion of the world.**

Eating non-vegetarian food is a sin because it involves the killing of animals and birds to obtain their meat. There is no sin in merely eating non-vegetarian food if it does not involve the killing of harmless creatures. Eating non-vegetarian food obtained from naturally dead animals is not considered to be sin. Kāpālikās in Hinduism eat the meat of naturally dead living beings and it is not counted as a sin. Hence, eating either vegetarian or non-vegetarian food is not a sin directly. Eating non-vegetarian food becomes an indirect sin due to the killing of animals for their meat.

**We should not provoke quarrels among the followers of religions by finding faults with other people's religions. Faults are present in all the religions in one form or another.** Such fanatic behavior must be

avoided to bring peace to this world. An atom of goodness in us appears to us as a mountain while the mountain of badness in us appears to us as an atom! In the case of others, we reverse the policy: an atom of badness in others appears to us as a mountain and the mountain of goodness in others appears to us as an atom! Such biased behavior results in quarrels among religions. Actually, we must look at things in exactly the opposite manner. We must see an atom of badness in us as a mountain and a mountain of goodness in us as an atom. Similarly, we must see an atom of goodness in others as a mountain and a mountain of badness in others as an atom. By looking at things in this manner, we can avoid quarrels, not only with other religions but also with all our fellow-human beings. **Such behavior is the basis of bringing peace in our family, in our city, in our state, in our country and finally in this entire world.** If there is any human being who is trying hard to bring peace in this world, God likes that person to the greatest extent because God wants this world, created and maintained by Him, to run peacefully. **Anybody violating this main aim of God becomes the object of His terrible anger.**

In Hinduism, people kill animals in a ritual called *yajña*, which means sacrifice. But the Veda clearly says “*Manyuh paśuh*”, which means that the ‘animal’ to be killed is the rigid, animal-like foolishness, which makes a human being follow blind traditions without analysis. **As a symbolic representation of this concept, it is suggested that the flour of useless non-germinating grains be shaped into the form of an animal and that form be cut with a knife. The form of the animal made out of flour is called a *piṣṭapaśuh*.** This practice of cutting the flour-animal exists in the sacrifice or *yajña* which is performed with knowledge. Such a *yajña* is called *iṣṭi*. But people who were fond of non-vegetarian food exploited this concept by replacing the flour-animal with an actual animal in order to justify the killing of animals for meat. Such people will not stop killing animals for food even if the Veda orders them to stop.

For the sake of such people, the Veda introduced the concept of offering the meat to God after killing the animal. That way, the killer is at least introduced to the concept of the existence of God. He is reminded of the concept that all his sins, including this one, will inevitably be punished by the unimaginable God. The punishment is delivered to him in an unimaginable way so he can never escape from it. In the procedures of such *yajñas*, the Veda describes the killing of the animal only as an inevitable incidental step. It does not mean that the Veda is ordering you to kill the animal. The description of killing the animal is being included in the procedure since, due to your taste for meat, you will kill the animal anyway

and you will not stop even if the Veda orders you to stop killing. We should be clear that the Veda is not encouraging people to kill animals.

When the sin is inevitable due to people's hard-to-change habit, the Veda is temporarily allowing it, with the hope of changing the habit in the future. After killing the animal, at the very least, people can offer the meat to God before consuming it themselves. It will strengthen the concept of God in people's minds. Once the concepts of God, His unimaginable omnipotence and His punishment of sins are firmly established in their minds, changing their habit of meat-eating will be easier. So, the Veda contains descriptions of even the inevitable killing of animals, which is incidental to offering the meat to God. The blind ritualists (Pūrva Mīmāṃsakās) take these incidental descriptions of the killing of animals in the procedures of Vedic sacrifices as orders given by the Veda to kill! In this context, Śaṅkara clarified that the Veda is only stating the incidental step of killing, which you will do anyway and that it is not ordering or encouraging you to kill (*Jñāpakam na tu kārakam*). So, one can never put the blame of this sin on the Veda!

Similarly, the Quran also states the incidental step of killing the animal, while describing the procedure of offering the meat of the animal to Allah (Bismillah). These people who are in the habit of eating meat will not stop killing animals for their meat even if the Quran orders them to stop. So, you cannot blame the Quran for supporting the killing of animals. If you blame the Quran, you will have to equally blame the Veda too! **The intention of the scripture is only to temporarily follow the rigid ignorance of people who kill animals so that the crucial concept of God as the Punisher of sins can be established. Once this concept is established, controlling these people becomes a lot easier.** The same God revealed both the Veda and the Quran and hence, the concepts of the two divine scriptures cannot be different. Using this analysis, every human being in this world must develop Universal Spirituality, which is based on one God as the single Source of all divine scriptures and religions. Spirituality means the theoretical knowledge or philosophy. Religion is the practical path of worship of God and maintaining justice in the world. Upon understanding Universal Spirituality, each one must join the Universal Religion, while staying in one's own religion.

#### **4) Is it wrong for a born-Hindu to pray like a Muslim?**

Shri Hrushikesh asked: Dear Swami, One devotee asked the following question. Your servant, Hrushikesh.

[I was born into a Hindu family. But I have been following Islamic mode of prayer. Everyone says I have left my dharma. Have I done something wrong? My husband says a woman should follow her husband's dharma and that if she can't, she need not pray at all. All she has to do is serve him and he is her God and that she needs no other prayer. My husband insists that following Islamic mode of prayer is wrong when its not his dharma. Most of my Hindu friends have left me They say if i want them back i have to give up my Islamic mode of prayer. Some people are totally behaving with me as if I were a jihadi. One said I bear every sin of killing done by a terrorist. I am still the same person. I don't hate Hinduism. It is just that I like the simplicity of Islam. The philosophical part of me still follows Vedanta. Surely I am looking at Islam through my Vedantin mind. I don't call myself a Muslim. For me the term Muslim is not a religion. Its meaning just means one who surrenders. Gurujji please answer the questions below eagerly waiting for your answer.

1. Gurujji if in a personal journey do opinions of others matter?

2. Gurujji am I wrong? Because my husband said a wife can't leave dharma of husband so he said I can't pray Islamic way. Is my husband right in saying this? My calling is Islam.I follow my heart..is it wrong?

At your Lotus feet, Anonymous]

**Swami replied:** Certainly, you are not wrong and certainly, all others who say that you are wrong, are wrong. There is no trace of doubt in this declaration. You have not changed your religion by following certain modes of prayer belonging to another religion. Any mode of prayer belonging to any religion is correct and good. You are not criticizing the modes of worship of Hinduism. If you do so, you too can be said to be wrong. Not only can one adopt any mode of worship, but one can also pray to any form of God belonging to any religion, based on one's personal liking. **The different forms of God of various religions are not different since the one and only God exists in every one of them.** When this is the truth of even the forms of God in different religions, then what to speak of the different modes of prayer in religions?

You can adopt any mode of prayer of any religion if you like it. This is the basic right of every person in the Universal Religion, which is based on Universal Spirituality. The Universal Spirituality is the basic universal knowledge or philosophy. The one God, who created this entire creation and who is the kind Father of all humanity, preached the same common universal knowledge to people in different places and times. The Universal Religion is the universal practical path of worshipping that one God and maintaining justice and peace in the world. The mode of worship is a part of culture and the variations in it are a matter of personal choice. The spirituality and religion are thus the theoretical and practical parts of the spiritual path and both are universal.

Universal Spirituality and Universal Religion have been established by God Datta now through this Datta Swami. Earlier, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had experienced the unity of all religions by practicing every religion for some time. Śaṅkara had similarly, established the unity of all the sub-religions within Hinduism. Shri Shirdi Sai Baba and Shri Satya Sai Baba too had established the unity of world religions. Every **religion will lead a person to the same God. So, conversion to another religion is the biggest foolishness that any devotee can do.** When all roads lead to the same center, is it not the height of foolishness to leave your road and laterally cross over to another road that leads to the same center? **Good times for this entire world are very near. This Universal Spirituality and Religion will bring tremendous unity among all religions.** You said that you are following the philosophy of Hinduism. **In the spiritual knowledge or philosophy there is no name of any religion since knowledge is always universal.**

Parents take complete care of their children during their childhood. The efforts taken by the parents for their children is service, which is also known as the sacrifice of work. Finally, the parents also transfer all their wealth to their children through their will. This transferring of the wealth is called the sacrifice of the fruit of their work since wealth is the fruit of work. So, the sacrifice of the parents for the sake of their children in terms of the sacrifice of work and the fruit of work is complete. Yet most parents save some wealth for their own old age believing that they will live until they become old. They feel there is a risk in sacrificing their entire wealth to their issues while they are still alive. There is a possibility that if their children are not good, they might not take care of the parents in the future when the parents become old. **Sometimes, even if the children are good they could be incapable of serving their parents due to some unfortunate circumstances.**

The case of God is different from one's children. God is not bad; He is extremely good. He is also never incapable. **In fact, He is omnipotent. Another important difference is that while one's children are seen with one's eyes, God is not seen.** There is insecurity for those who depend on the children who are seen by their eyes. But there is complete security for those who depend on the unseen God. Ignorant souls only believe in perception. Giving more importance to their unreliable children who are seen, they shower their real love upon the children. The proof of real love is *karma yoga*. The sacrifice of work and the fruit of work together are called *karma yoga*. It is the proof of real love since we practically serve and sacrifice our money only for those whom we truly love. Ignorant people

truly love only their children and so they do this *karma yoga* only for their children who are unreliable. They do not truly love God and they do not do *karma yoga* for Him even though He is supremely reliable, just because He is unseen. Real devotees are the ones who believe in God through inference. They believe in the unseen, unimaginable God by observing His miracles which are visible but unimaginable. Inference, of course, includes perception since the miracles are perceived. This mentality of the majority of human beings is the climax of blind ignorance. **Such blind ignorance is actually not based on either perception or inference but is based only on solidified worldly fascination!**

### 5) Is God not to blame for the boredom of robot-like souls?

**Smt. Bindiya Chaudhary asked:** Upon reading a recent discourse, some questions have arisen in my mind and are confusing me. You have said that souls can never have absolute God-like freedom in any of the four ages. Since, in the Kṛta Age, souls were like robots working as programmed by God, God took the total responsibility for their thoughts, words, and deeds. But after a long time, the souls were of living in perfect and total discipline.

Now, I am thinking that if in the Kṛta Age, God had full power over souls and controlled everything including their thoughts, then how could souls have developed the thought of boredom? It means that God himself must have implanted the thought of boredom in them as well. Or was it that it was God who was actually bored and wanted to let souls be free? What is the purpose of first unleashing a dog and then trying to bring it back in the house by its own will?

Shat shat pranam to Swamiji who is the almighty God himself and is helping us souls rise in the spiritual path by his enlightening discourses. Any amount of love and devotion to him is insufficient and I am thankful to him from deep within. Thank you Swamiji.]

**Swami replied:** While clarifying your doubt, we must carefully understand the comparison of a human being with a robot. If God had not given any freedom to human beings, there would hardly be any difference between a human being and a robot. For some time, let us think that God did not give any freedom to human beings, which was actually the condition during the Kṛta age. In the Kṛta age, human beings were exactly like robots in the sense that both act as per the information available to them. **But there is a slight difference between the Kṛta Age-humans and robots. The Kṛta Age-humans got information directly from the external world. Robots, on the other hand, get information only from the information-chip inserted into them by the scientist who designed them.** The scientist, after all, draws information only from the external world. So, the information fed to the robot is indirectly from the same

external world. Thus, at this point, the difference between Kṛta Age-humans and robots disappears. **In the case of the Kṛta Age-humans, no scientist inserted any information-chip into them; they themselves filled it with the information directly grasped by them from the external world. The robot, however, is dependent on the scientist to feed information into its information-chip.** Leaving aside this matter of detail, the Kṛta Age-human, who did not possess freedom, is exactly like a robot in the aspect of acting as per the information available.

As time passed, the Kṛta Age humans felt bored. Robots, of course, never get bored and can go on working mechanically as per the program in their information-chip. This again is another difference between a human being and a robot. A robot plays a game of chess using the ‘intelligence’ programmed in its chip by the scientist. It merely executes actions based on the various possibilities of moves in the game. The Kṛta Age-human being was also just like the robot playing chess. Based on these similarities, it was stated that human beings in the Kṛta Age were just robots. Considering the large number of similarities, it was stated that human beings in the Kṛta Age were robots in the sense of a metaphor. Saying that a person is like a lion is a simile, while saying that the person is a lion is a metaphor. Both the simile and the metaphor indicate similarity between two items, while also acknowledging their differences. Neither the simile nor the metaphor suggests an identity between the two items compared. But in the case of a simile, the differences between the two items compared are larger than in the case of a metaphor.

Once God gave freedom to human beings, after the Kṛta Age, the differences between human beings and a robot increased. The robot continues to play chess based on the program in its information-chip whereas the free human being does not play as per any fixed program or policy. **The freedom given, allows the human being to freely choose to follow its information-chip or not follow it.** This freedom creates a huge difference between a free human being and a robot which never has any freedom. It is due to this freedom given by God to humans that God can never be blamed for the wrong choices made by human beings. Human beings alone are responsible for their own choices. If human beings had continued to be like robots, which never have any freedom, then God, who is like the scientist, would be held responsible for the behavior of human beings.

Also, there is no need to blame this freedom given by God. **In spite of giving this freedom, there are some human beings who still continue to follow their information-chips like robots.** All human beings have not

exercised their freedom. All have not deviated from the policy of behaving as per the information chip. Had all human beings deviated, it would be correct to blame the freedom and its Giver. But after granting this freedom, some human beings deviated from their programmed behavior while others did not. Hence, you cannot file a damage suit against God for granting this freedom. If upon granting freedom to human beings, all human beings had universally deviated from the programmed behavior, your advocate could have argued your case. But due to the absence of any such uniform behavior, you cannot support your case with arguments. In that case, your damage suit will be disposed with no costs!

### **Can You please bless me to translate Your books to Indonesian?**

**Shri Guna Darsana asked:** Om sai ram. Jay guru datta i have finished translate the books of divine discourse of Swami volume 1 to indonesian. I need blessing of Swami, so i can do more with this translating. I am verry glad if Swami can advice me for propagate it to serve Swami mission. SWAMI, PLEASE BLESS me, thanks you, jau guru datta, omsai ram

**Swami replied:** You are doing very good work, which is liked by God and God is giving blessings to you through this Datta Swami.

### **May I have the golden opportunity to serve You?**

**Shri Sathyamoorthy Renganathan asked:** Residential disciple at Ashram. Pranams. May Adiyen know if I shall have a golden opportunity to be with you in Ashram serving you please in a favourable climate like June or July 2019 being a senior citizen living in Tamilnadu ji. By, Sathyamoorthy Renganathan

**Swami Replied:** I am very happy about your proposal. Let us do the service of God, the Creator. Let us not get attracted only to creation without remembering its Creator. The beauty of creation should remind us about the beauty of the Creator.

### **Why should we use only the right hand for doing good things?**

**Smt. Lakshmi Lavanya asked:** I am left handed. I am facing many obstacles in using left hand. I want to know logic behind it. While worshiping god, while crossing door, i unknowingly use my left hand and left leg, is it really wrong? By, K Lakshmi Lavanya

**Swami replied:** These points are very simple and negligible before the spiritual knowledge, devotion, and service to God.

### **Could You please heal my father-in-law who is suffering from severe health problems?**

**Shri Sreenivas asked:** prayer & healing request dear swamiji, paada praanam, my wife's father mr.sriman narayana aged 69 yrs is suffering from liver cirrhosis due to which has gone weak, lost weight, not fluently speaking, indigestion, swamiji by your

healing power touch all the organs & heal him completely. swamiji with your grace & compassion heal him. paada praanam, sreenivas, By, Sreenivas

**Swami replied:** Pray to Lord Subrahmanya. He will help you.

**Is it not better to donate our earned money to God rather than saving it?**

**Shri Hrushikesh asked:** Dear Swami, I have a question about the Karma phala tyaaga and karma samnyasa. I have heard the statement "Nityam sannihito mrutyhu". Death always faces us and can occur any time. in that case what is the point in saving for retirement? Why can't we donate the saved income to God. Esavashya upanishad also says that even the earned income should be used for the basic needs and rest should be given to God. Saving one's earned income is also considered to be a theft. I request you to kindly enlighten us how to apply this in our lives. Your Servant, Hrushikesh

**Swami replied:** What you said is correct and noble. This concept is like the sky. Everybody cannot jump and reach it. Only a very few blessed souls can reach this concept preached by the Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad. When our life is not certain, we have to see both possibilities, which are that we might have a long life or a very short life. We have to be prepared for both these possibilities. **After preparing for the possibility of our long life, we can sacrifice the remaining efforts and wealth for God's work.** Only a very few exceptional devotees do not care about this possibility and surrender everything to God. Such exceptional devotion is not possible for everybody. Most devotees do not even show ordinary devotion, which is surrendering their extra wealth and efforts to God after first taking care of their old age needs. How can they even think of such exceptional devotion, which needs full practical faith in God? The Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad speaks about the normal devotion which is applicable to the majority of humanity. It involves taking care of oneself till the end of one's life and sacrificing the excess to God (*Tena tyaktena bhujñīthāḥ*). While earning, one should avoid earning sinful money at any cost (*Mā gṛdhaḥ...*). Sinful money brings problems later on in one's life and fills one's old age with suffering. Sinful money can be digested by donating it for God's work. **It does not mean that one should go on earning sinful money for the sake of God's work.** This point applies only to the sinful money that has already been earned. Such sinful money, when kept with oneself, destroys one's future generations. Hence, it should be donated for God's work which includes helping the poor. Mere social service is good, but it is not the best. **The best is to do God's work in which social service is a part.**

## How according to you is Islam the greatest religion?

Dr. V Jagannathan asked: Would you please enlighten us on the following:

How is Islam greater than any other religion? By Islam, do you mean the ideology as developed on the teachings of the Koran, Hadis, and Mohammed? Thanking you, Sincerely, DrVJ.

**Swami replied:** You must be knowing that in Hinduism we do some special rituals called *vratams* to worship God. Some examples are the Satyanārāyaṇa Swami Vratam, Varalakṣmī Vratam, Nandikeśvara Vratam, Maṅgalā Gaurī Vratam and so on. You must have observed that a common verse is read out in each of these rituals. The meaning of the verse is that this ritual is the best of all rituals (*vratānām uttamam vratam*). How is this possible when the superlative degree must be used for only one in a given group? You can say that this student is the best in the class. You cannot say that every student in the class is the best. This is the underlying doubt in your question. The answer for this reasonable doubt is that you must first know that God is the greatest as said in the Veda (*Na tat samah*) and in the Gita (*Mattaḥ parataram...*). The common object of all the above rituals and forms of worships is the same greatest unimaginable God existing in different divine forms. **From the point of view of the common God who is the greatest, every worship becomes the greatest.** Similarly, all religions are like different roads converging to the common center, which is the greatest God. Hence, every religion is the greatest.

**We should get rid of all fanatic behavior towards our religion. It causes us to look upon other religions as inferior to our religion.** Every religion says that God alone created this earth and humanity on it. If the Gods of different religions were different, there would have been different earths. But unfortunately, there is only one earth. So, we are forced to accept the existence of only one God! The God of the other religion is also the God who created us and the God of our religion is also the God who created them. There is only one God and one created earth! The external names and forms of the same God differ from religion to religion, but the internal God is only one. **If you disrespect the form and the name of the God of another religion, you are disrespecting the God of your own religion.** Do you respect a person only when he wears a certain dress and disrespect the same person when he wears another dress?

## Chapter 10

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THREE EPICS**

January 26, 2019

Smt. Bh. Kumari asked: Swami! Can you please explain the significance of the three holy epics of Hinduism, namely, Rāmāyaṇam, Mahābhāratam, and Bhāgavatam?

**Two Parts of the Spiritual Journey**

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! There are three stages in the spiritual development of any human being in this world. They are *duṣpravr̥tti*, *prav̥rtti*, and *nivr̥tti*. They are related to a person's fascination (overattachment or Moha) to worldly bonds. The three main worldly bonds of a soul are the bond with money, the bond with one's life-partner and the bond with one's child. A limited attachment to these worldly bonds is acceptable as long as it does not cross the boundaries of justice. Excessive attachment to these bonds causes the soul to commit injustice.

*Duṣpravr̥tti* is the lowest stage in which the soul is completely affected by the six vices. The six vices are lust, anger, greed, overattachment, ego, and jealousy. Such souls always support injustice and are severely punished by God here as well as after death in hell. **They are attached to illegitimate worldly bonds and they often neglect or even cause harm to their legitimate bonds.** In other words, they engage in illegitimate relations and illegitimate ways of earning money. *Pravr̥tti* is the middle stage in which the soul possesses good qualities and always supports justice. Such a soul is blessed by God with happiness here and happiness in heaven after death. **This soul rejects illegitimate bonds while maintaining a limited attachment to the legitimate bonds.** *Nivr̥tti* is the stage in which the soul is completely filled with the real love for God. Such a soul goes beyond justice and injustice. This soul rejects all worldly bonds, both legitimate and illegitimate, and is totally fascinated with having a single bond with God (*Ekabhaktirviśiṣyate*—Gita). In this stage, all the worldly bonds drop off naturally, as a result of the divine bond to God. There is not the slightest force involved in this detachment from worldly bonds. *Nivr̥tti* means total detachment since all worldly bonds are totally dropped in this stage.

If a person leaves his lawful wife due to his attraction for a prostitute, he is on the downward journey from *pravṛtti* to *duṣpravṛtti*. If a person leaves his lawful wife due to his attraction for God, he is on the upward journey from *pravṛtti* to *nivṛtti*. A soul starting from the lowest stage of *duṣpravṛtti* must first reach the middle stage of *pravṛtti* before proceeding to *nivṛtti*. The first part of the journey, from *duṣpravṛtti* to *pravṛtti*, is described in the Rāmāyaṇam and the Mahābhāratam. The second part of the journey, from *pravṛtti* to *nivṛtti*, is described in the Bhāgavatam. The Bhagavat Gita speaks about both these parts of the journey in both the upward and downward directions. Hence, it is recognized as the total authority for both ethical knowledge (*pravṛtti*) as well as spiritual knowledge (*nivṛtti*).

### True Nivṛtti

*Nivṛtti* does not mean the dropping of all bonds since the mind cannot remain without any bond. *Nivṛtti* means the natural dropping off of all worldly bonds due to the formation of a single, extremely strong bond with God. If the mind is forced to not have any bond, it is both unnatural and impossible. A person's soul is awareness and the thoughts and qualities in the awareness are the mind. The mind naturally seeks objects and develops bonds. Forcing the mind to be without bonds or thoughts is forcing oneself to become inert, like a stone. It is a pity that Advaita philosophers take a lot of effort to attain this unnatural forced state. They try to drop all their worldly bonds, feeling that the world is unreal and illusory. If all the worldly bonds drop off naturally due to the strong bond with God, then that state is correct. **But these Advaitins do not have any bond with God because they feel that they are already God. Having a bond with oneself is meaningless!** They neither have a bond with God nor do they have a bond with the world. This is a forced state of the mind which they call as the state of Advaita or monism. But unfortunately, it is neither the true state of monism nor can it be sustained for a long time.

The Advaita philosopher Totāpuri criticized Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa for His inability to reach this forced state of 'monism'. Later, one day, Totāpuri developed a severe stomach-ache. It was so unbearable that he even tried to end his life. But even that failed. Then, the universal Divine Mother appeared to him and preached to him the path of devotion to God, which is based on the fundamental dualism between God and the soul. It was the path that Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had followed all along. Hence, in all the three stages of *duṣpravṛtti*, *pravṛtti*, and *nivṛtti*, the soul always remains in a state of dualism with God. It cannot reach the state of

God in which this world becomes unreal to the soul. Therefore, *nivṛtti* does not simply mean the dropping of all bonds. **It only means the dropping of all worldly bonds due to the formation of a very strong bond with God, which is based on a fundamental dualism between God and the soul. From the angle of the soul, this fundamental dualism alone is true at all times. Monism is true only from the angle of the absolute God.**

### Overcoming the Six Vices in the Journey

*Duṣpravṛtti* is the result of the attachment to illegitimate sex (*kāma*), illegitimate anger (*krodha*) and illegitimate greed (*lobha*). The three are said to be the three main gates to hell in the Gita. Naturally, *pravṛtti* means rejecting the above three vices and adopting the opposite good qualities, which are legitimate sex, legitimate anger, and legitimate greed. **Overattachment (*moha*) to illegitimate worldly bonds leads to *duṣpravṛtti* while limited attachment to legitimate worldly bonds leads to *pravṛtti*. Excessive attachment even to the legitimate worldly bonds is a danger because it provokes the soul to commit sins.** The attachment to legitimate worldly bonds can be reduced by developing attachment to God. The attachment to illegitimate worldly bonds can be completely eliminated with a combination of the fear of hell and the faith in God. **Faith in God, the fear of hell and the development of devotion to God together completely reform the soul. The soul then rises from the first stage of *duṣpravṛtti*, through the middle state of *pravṛtti*, all the way to the third stage of *nivṛtti*.**

The last three vices are illegitimate attachment (*moha*), ego (*mada*) and jealousy (*mātsarya*). They automatically get associated with the first three vices which are illegitimate lust, anger and greed. ***Moha* is the overattachment towards worldly bonds. But the worldly bonds are related to lust and greed. So, overattachment is related to lust and greed.** Similarly, one develops pride or ego due to materialistic achievements, which are related to greed. One also develops jealousy (*mātsarya*) towards fellow humans based on their worldly achievements. So, the last three vices are based on the first three vices. Therefore, only the first three are stressed in the Gita as the three main gates to hell.

In the *Rāmāyaṇam*, the illegitimate lust of Rāvaṇa is condemned, while the legitimate desire of Rāma for His wife is appreciated. Rāvaṇa also had illegitimate anger towards Rāma even though the entire fault lay with Rāvaṇa's sister, Śūrpaṇakhā. Śūrpaṇakhā, had illegitimate lust for Rāma, even though He was already married to Sita. When rejected by Rāma, she tried to kill Sita and hence was injured by Lakṣmaṇa. The anger of Rāvaṇa

at his sister's insult and injury was thus illegitimate. Rāvaṇa was very greedy and had even robbed the wealth of the angels. On the other hand, Rāma even refused to claim His rightful kingdom for the sake of the word given by His father. Even though Rāma was actually an Incarnation of God, He is considered to be only an ideal human being. The very purpose of His Incarnation was to become an example of how a human being should ideally live in *pravṛtti*. So, He strictly lived within the boundaries of worldly justice, without showing any miracles.

Rāvaṇa had a fascination (*moha*) for beautiful ladies. He was extremely proud (*mada*) of his materialistic achievements. He was jealous (*mātsarya*) of Rāma. These vices in Rāvaṇa are condemned in the Rāmayaṇā. On the other hand, Rāma never had excessive attachment to His own wife Sita. In fact, when forced by circumstances, He even left her to fulfill His duty as an ideal king. Rāma was an Incarnation of God, yet He never showed ego. Even though sages praised Him as God, He replied that He was just a human being named Rāma, the son of Daśaratha. Rāma was never jealous of Rāvaṇa who ruled the golden city of Lanka. Rāma rejected illegitimate lust even though Śūrpaṇakhā who had assumed the form of a very beautiful lady was forcing herself upon Him. Throughout His life, He remained loyal to Sita and did not marry again even after leaving Sita.

Rāma was also against illegitimate anger. All His life, He remained patient and calm. He only expressed legitimate anger and that too on very few occasions such as to condemn sage Jābāli and Vāli for their unjust arguments. Rāma was never greedy. He unhesitatingly left His rightful claim over the kingdom to keep His father's promise. Rāma was the embodiment of all good qualities without even a trace of a single bad quality. Rāvaṇa was an embodiment of all the bad qualities without a trace of any good quality. The results of the *duṣpravṛtti* of Rāvaṇa and the *pravṛtti* of Rāma were clearly shown to both on earth during their very lifetimes.

In both the Rāmāyaṇam and the Mahābhāratam, terrible wars took place. The wars are violence, which is the practical form of anger. The anger of Rāvaṇa and Duryodhana was unjust and hence, both were destroyed. The anger of Rāma and Dharmarāja was justified and hence, both won the respective wars. The Rāmāyaṇam stands mainly for condemning the illegitimate lust of Rāvaṇa and the Mahābhāratam stands mainly for condemning the illegitimate greed of Duryodhana. Rāma refused illegal sex by rejecting Śūrpaṇakhā and by advising Rāvaṇa to return Sita on the first day of the war after He defeated Rāvaṇa. Dharmarāja avoided illegitimate greed. He took every possible effort to resist going to war with

Duryodhana in order to take back his rightful share of the kingdom, which Duryodhana had cunningly taken from him. Dharmarāja finally even begged to be given just five villages in place of his rightful share of half the kingdom. He finally fought the war only when all his requests were denied by Duryodhana.

Duryodhana tried to undress Draupadi and ordered her to sit on his lap. It shows his desire for illegitimate sex. Duryodhana was overattached to wealth in the form of the kingdom. He even tricked Dharmarāja and took over Dharmarāja's rightful share of the kingdom. Dharmarāja, however, never aspired for the share of Duryodhana. Duryodhana had a huge ego. He brutally insulted his own brothers and treated them like slaves after cunningly defeating them in an unfair game. Dharmarāja never had an ego. Even after being cheated, insulted and abused by Duryodhana, Dharmarāja freed Duryodhana when the latter was captured by a gandharva (angel). Dharmarāja never even spoke a single word of insult to Duryodhana after freeing him. Duryodhana was jealous of the wealth and fame of Dharmarāja whereas Dharmarāja was never jealous of Duryodhana. Thus, both the Rāmāyaṇam and the Mahābhārata are related to the first part of the journey from *duṣpravr̥tti* to *prav̥tti*. They preach to a person to reject injustice and follow justice.

The Bhāgavatam shows the second part of the journey from *prav̥tti* to *Niv̥r̥tti*. In this part, the devotee must overcome not only all illegitimate worldly bonds but also all legitimate worldly bonds for the sake of God. In other words, the devotee's devotion must exceed the desire for anything and everything in the world. Prahlāda rejected the legitimate bond with his father for the sake of God. He regarded God to be above even all legitimate bonds. The Gopikās showed the climax point of *niv̥r̥tti* by rejecting all worldly bonds for the sake of God. Among the worldly bonds, the three strongest bonds called as *eṣaṇas*, are the bond with wealth, the bond with one's child and the bond with one's life partner. Krishna, the Incarnation of God, tested the Gopikās for their ability to overcome all these three bonds in their love for Him. He stole their butter, which was the wealth of the cowherd ladies. He observed who among the Gopikās was pleased with His stealing and eating their butter, and who was annoyed about it. Those who loved Him more than their wealth were pleased with His stealing. Some even willingly fed Him. Also, the precious butter was meant for the children of the Gopikas. So, stealing it from them tested not only whether their bond with Krishna was stronger than their bond with wealth, but also whether it was stronger than their bond with their children. Later, by asking the married Gopikās to dance with Him on the banks of the Yamuna at

midnight, He tested whether their bond with Him was stronger than the bond with their husbands.

### Contemporary Human Incarnation of God

**One important point in all the three epics is the focus on the contemporary Human Incarnation of God. The Human Incarnation is crucially important for the first part of the journey from *duspravṛtti* to *pravṛtti* as well as the second part of the journey from *pravṛtti* to *nivṛtti*.** God Rāma's main focus was the first part of the journey, while God Krishna's main focus was the second part of the journey. Even though this is generally true, Rāma was also involved in the second part of the journey or *nivṛtti* when He tested Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān to find out whether their devotion to Him was stronger than their attachment to their worldly bonds. The test given to Lakṣmaṇa and Hanuman was especially severe since Rāma Himself appeared to be attached to worldly bonds, but Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān were expected to overcome their attachments for His sake. For example, during the period when He was in the forest, Rāma would be enjoying with His wife Sita in the hut. Lakṣmaṇa, who had left his own wife back in faraway Ayodhya, would be standing outside the hut like a watchman. Similarly, Hanumān had remained unmarried for the sake of serving Rāma and that Hanumān was employed by Rāma in searching for His kidnapped wife!

Krishna was also involved in *pravṛtti*. In the Mahābhāratam, it is described that He helped the Pāṇḍavās in the war which was fought to win back their rightful share of the kingdom, which had been unjustly taken from them by Duryodhana. But the main focus of Rāma was on the journey of the soul from *duspravṛtti* to *pravṛtti*, which is described in the Rāmāyaṇam. Similarly, the main focus of Krishna was on the journey of the soul from *pravṛtti* to *nivṛtti*, which is described in the Bhāgavatam. The most important essence of both *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* is recognition of the contemporary Human Incarnation of God. In these epics, the devotees recognized, developed devotion and served the living Human Incarnations during their times, namely Rāma and Krishna respectively. The contemporary Human Incarnation of God alone is relevant to human beings on earth.

## Chapter 11

**SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE**

February 17, 2019

**How can people suffering from incurable diseases or mental defects be cured?**

**Shri Anil asked:** How can I console a cancer-patient, who is known to me? Also, when mentally retarded people are unable to even pray to God, how can they be cured?

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! Any illness can be cured by the omnipotent God. But God is also omniscient. The sin is excused only if there is a real reformation in the soul. Real reformation is practically proved through the non-repetition of the sin. **The omniscient God must be thoroughly convinced that the soul is truly reformed.** You can deceive a human being by acting as if you have reformed by weeping, crying, singing devotional songs and so on. But all these pretenses (acting) are useless before God. He can never be convinced by such false actions and false words of repentance. If there is a real reformation in the soul, all these dramatic actions are not necessary for God. The real reformation of the soul is immediately recognized by God and the sins are excused by Him because there is no need for further punishment once real reformation has been achieved. **If God is convinced in the case of a particular soul, it means that the soul must have truly reformed. Such a soul alone will not repeat the sins in the future.**

**A mentally retarded patient is a condemned soul in the view of God.** It means that God does not have the slightest hope that the soul will get reformed. Such a soul undergoes punishment throughout his or her life. Such long and endless suffering is intended to reform the soul unconsciously. Reformation is possible in such a soul in the form of an aversion developed to the punishment. This strongly-impressed aversion to the suffering may prevent the soul from committing sins in the next birth when the soul is given a normal life. So, in view of the prevention of sinful behavior in the future birth, the soul's continuous suffering in this birth is helpful. Also, sometimes, the kith and kin of such a soul might sincerely pray to God. As a result, the soul might attain a healthier state in which the soul can get reformed. The omniscient God knows very well which souls have some possibility of getting reformed and which souls do not. Souls

with absolutely no hope of reformation will be born as a mentally retarded animal, like a mad dog.

All these are ‘administrative details’ regarding how the various cases of souls are handled. Each soul has performed different types of good and bad deeds. **Knowing exactly how each case is handled is unnecessary for us.** All we need to understand is that God is the best judge and the best administrator. He always helps each and every soul in the best-possible way. **Only when the administrator is a human being, is there a need for analyzing the person’s way of administration.** The person might err in his or her way of administration, in which case, we could suggest a better way. That is why even a country’s constitution, which is framed by human beings, often gets amended. Through such amendments, errors get rectified. **But there is not the slightest possibility of even a trace of error in the divine constitution.** So, there is no point in breaking our heads on these issues, which are being administered in the most meritorious way.

God is not only omnipotent and omniscient, but He is also an infinite ocean of kindness. He is the divine Father of all souls. He must have chosen the kindest-possible way to save any soul. All of us are mere brothers or sisters to our neighboring souls but God is the Father of all souls (*Aham bījapradah pitā—Gita*). A father is always far kinder to his child than the brothers and sisters of the child. **From all these angles, it is far far better to leave the administration and reformation of other souls to God.** Instead, we need to concentrate on our own reformation. This is an extremely important point which every soul in this world should understand. **Our focus should be on recognizing our own defects and reforming ourselves. This is the best and wisest path.**

The Divine Father is taking the best care of each soul. Even the punishments given by God here on earth and hereafter in hell, only indicate His anxiety to reform the sinful soul, which is His child. Hell is the reflection of God’s highest kindness, which helps in reforming souls. **Hell is not the reflection of His anger or desire for revenge.** If we understand this very subtle point, we will be very peaceful about things taking place in this world. There is no error taking place in the divine administration. **Everything taking place in this world is the result of the most perfect working of God’s wonderful administration. No soul can even dream of running the world in a better way than the way it is being run. It is our utter ignorance that causes us to misunderstand God and diverge from the path of self-purification.** We are ignorant of the deeds of other souls. We are ignorant of the most wonderful divine administration working in the background. We are ignorant of God’s supreme talents and capabilities in

administering and reforming souls. Above all, we are ignorant of the supreme kindness of God towards all souls.

We are worried about things, about which we need not be worried at all! People were worried about Jesus when He was carrying the cross. He told them not to worry about Him. He was under the direct supervision of the kindest Lord. Instead, He told them to worry about themselves and their children. He might have suffered for a few hours, but He was going to sit forever on the right lap of the Divine Father! These people, who were worried about Him, might be living happily on earth for a little while, but they were going to be thrown into the liquid fire forever along with their future generations! So, who should be worried? The spectators or Jesus?

A person may finish off the punishment of his or her sin by suffering for it here. The person may then get a wonderful new divine birth in the immediate future. Another person, who is wasting his time in sympathizing with this suffering person, instead of focusing on his own reformation, may finally get thrown into the liquid fire forever! **Hence, it is always advisable to focus on self-rectification than unnecessarily wasting time in investigating and judging God's administration of this world.**

### **Why do Your photographs on Your website show You mostly as a Hindu even though You preach about Universal Spirituality?**

[A question by Shri Hrushikesh]

**Swami replied:** Universal Spirituality or Universal Religion is like the central government of India and the specific religion followed by any person, is like the state government of any one state in India. The citizen belongs to both the central and state governments simultaneously. This means that you can be a follower of Universal Religion while still being a follower of your own religion. **Universal Religion pervades all religions in the world.** It means that you can continue to follow your own religion. There is no need to convert to any other religion. The important point you have to learn from Universal Religion is that you should never criticize other religions. The same God appeared in different forms at different places, in different times. Each time the form taken up by Him was according to the specific culture of each place. He preached the same spiritual knowledge in different languages. All religions have some merits and some defects. The merits are due to the original preaching of God whereas the defects are due to wrong ideas introduced by the followers later on. You have to be selective and pick only the merits of all religions.

Each religion has its own special merits that are seen prominently in that religion. It does not mean other religions do not have those merits but it

is just that they are more prominently seen in a certain religion. Spiritual knowledge is the merit of Hinduism. Knowledge is the intellectual part of the spiritual effort which is called *jñāna yoga*. Devotion to God, which is known as *bhakti yoga*, is the merit of Islam. It is the emotional part of the spiritual effort. The practical part of the spiritual effort is service and donation. Donation of one's hard-earned money is said to be the sacrifice of the fruit of one's work. Service and donation together are called *karma yoga* and it is the merit of Christianity. Purifying one's devotion to God by making it free of any worldly aspiration or desire is the merit of Buddhism. Practicing non-violence towards all souls is the merit of Jainism. Apart from the various religions, science too has its merit and it has a place in Universal Spirituality. The sharp analysis of any concept without blind belief is the merit of science.

Thus, on your spiritual journey towards God, you must pick the merits of all religions. Universal Religion or Universal Spirituality is not a specific religion to be listed along with the religions of the world. It is meant for the establishment of peace and harmony in this world. Since I am born as Hindu, I follow My religion. But I realize that all other religions are the equally-correct paths starting from different directions but all leading to the same God at the center. The six religions or philosophies mentioned above are like six bottles containing the same medicine of spiritual knowledge. Secularism means consuming the medicine-like spiritual knowledge from any one of the six bottles, realizing that the same medicine is present in all the six bottles. **But the so-called secularism of today is false secularism. It rejects all religions. It is like saying that since all the bottles contain the same medicine, there is no need to consume the medicines from any of them!**

**Among the various forms of God, why do You only stress on the form of God Datta?**

[A question by Shri Hrushikesh]

The absolute God, being beyond matter, energy, time, and space, cannot be perceived by us. He cannot even be imagined by us. Datta means the Unimaginable God who has 'given' Himself to souls, by entering into a medium and allowing souls to perceive Him. Datta is the first Energetic Incarnation of God in the upper world. Datta is not limited to any one specific religion. Datta, this First Incarnation of God, enters into other energetic and human forms to become other energetic and human Incarnations of God. All these Incarnations, energetic or human, can also be called Datta. Datta represents the concept of the unimaginable God giving

Himself to the souls for their perception. The form of God Datta, the First Incarnation, is also unique. It has many specialties. I will tell you the five most important specialties that attracted Me especially since they so perfectly match with the Vedic description of God.

- i) The Veda says that God is one (*Ekameva advitīyam Brahma...*). The form of Lord Datta has three heads but it is only one single form or one person as told in the Veda.
- ii) The Veda says that the one single God performs the three cosmic functions of creation, maintenance, and destruction of creation (*yatovā imāni...*). Just because the functions are three, the single God who performs these functions, does not get divided into three parts. Neither is it true that there are three different ‘Gods’, each doing one of the three functions. The form of God Datta perfectly represents this concept. The form of Lord Datta has three faces: the face of Lord Brahmā, the face of Lord Viṣṇu and the face of Lord Śiva. Even though the faces are three, the form or the person is one. The same God Datta shows each of the three faces while performing the three cosmic functions of creation, maintenance and destruction of the world respectively. In fact, the same God Datta appears to be the three different forms when viewed from three different angles. It is just like some pictures, which appear to be two different pictures when viewed from different angles. The power of the one God to appear as three different forms is unimaginable to us. This unimaginable power is called *māyā*. Any Incarnation, be it Energetic or Human, belonging to any religion, is one of the numerous forms of God Datta, viewed from a specific angle. It is God Datta Himself who is called Hiranyagarbha, Nārāyaṇa, Sadāśiva and Father of Heaven.
- iii) The Veda says that God does miracles (*Satya kāmaha...*). All the Incarnations of God Datta are famous for doing miracles.
- iv) The Veda says that God is an embodiment of love (*Raso vai saha...*). True to this statement, all Incarnations of God Datta are well-known for transferring the punishments of the sins of their devotees on their own human bodies. The Incarnations of Datta suffer for their devotees’ sins on behalf of their devotees. Can there be a greater example of love?
- v) The Veda says that God is the embodiment of spiritual knowledge (*Satyam Jñānam anantam Brahma, Prajñānam Brahma*). God Datta is most famous as the Divine Preacher of spiritual knowledge. He is called Guru Datta.

The simplicity, beauty and special divine radiance of the personality of God Datta is most highly attractive. It has always attracted My mind. It still attracts Me today and it will continue to attract My mind forever. God

Datta is not different from the Unimaginable God who merged with Him. They have become identical.

### **When the whole earth belongs to God alone, are the border disputes between countries justified?**

[A question by Shri Hrushikesh]

The concepts of *pravṛtti* should not be confused with the concepts of *nivṛtti*. *Pravṛtti* is maintaining justice in worldly life while *nivṛtti* is the path of devotion and service to God. Let us assume that the wicked Duryodhana from the Mahābhārata is speaking to the good Dharmarāja. He would say “My dear brother! This entire world is the property of God since the Veda says ‘*Īśāvāsyamidam sarvam*’. Why then do you bother about your share and my share in this Kingdom of God? How does it matter whether I rule this Kingdom or you rule?” Would Dharmarāja leave his share and go back to the forest? In fact, king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the father of Duryodhana actually played this trick on Dharmarāja when Dharmarāja and his brothers were living in the forest. He sent Sanjaya with a message for Dharmarāja. In it Dhṛtarāṣṭra accepted that his son Duryodhana was at fault and that Dharmarāja was a good man. So, he suggested that Dharmarāja, being the good man that he was, should remain in the forest along with his brothers and perform penance to reach God while allowing Duryodhana to enjoy the kingdom!

**But God Krishna never allowed such exploitation of the concepts of *nivṛtti* in the field of *pravṛtti*.** Such exploitation is very common. One kills the other saying that everything happens due to the will of God alone. He wants his crime to be treated as God’s will. In that case, you should kill him back saying that killing him is also the will of God! God expects unity and brotherhood among people. But the concept should not be exploited by cunning people to grab the land of other people and countries. **That is why soldiers protect the borders of their nation following the rules of justice in *pravṛtti*. They do not give up their duty of protecting their borders just because cunning people say that the whole earth belongs to God.**

## Chapter 12

**SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE**

February 23, 2019

**Why did Jesus on the cross pray to God to excuse His offenders since they were ignorant?**

[A question by Shri Anil]

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! The prayer of Jesus on the cross tells us that **we should have tolerance even towards our bitter enemies.** This is a very important and basic concept in the context of Universal Spirituality. Often, some followers of another religion criticize our religion so bitterly that we are unable to control ourselves. So, we retort to them even more bitterly. This further enrages them and the quarrel becomes more and more bitter. Sometimes, it even ends up in physical violence. To avoid this, we should do the opposite. **As our enemy becomes more and more bitter, we should become more and more cool and calm. With our minds calm and without any bitterness, we should respond to the basic points in the opponent's arguments and criticism.** Emotions are momentary and they subside in a very short time. If emotion is your answer, you will never be able to answer any question posed by your opponent. Tolerance and a calm mind are essential in any debate.

**It is far better to have debates on spiritual knowledge in writing rather than orally.** In oral debates, quick answers are expected. The debaters, in their haste, sometimes use improper words unintentionally. But these slips of the tongue can create an impression in the opponent's mind that is very different from the speaker's original intention. This can lead to misunderstandings between the debaters and the healthy debate can quickly degenerate into an ugly quarrel. In olden days, writing technology was not well-developed and it was very difficult to write a large amount of text and send it to another person. Publishing and mass printing, of course, were non-existent in those days. Hence, debates in the field of spiritual knowledge used to be oral, in which the improper presentation of one's ideas often leads to misunderstandings.

But today, writing is very convenient. Not only can we easily write and print on paper but we also have the technology to write and instantly send the written material to another person using email and other electronic media. This is the preferred mode of engaging in a spiritual debate. One can

take sufficient time to understand the opponent's arguments. Then one can think and analyze thoroughly with a cool and balanced mind. Finally, one can carefully choose the proper words to express our ideas and intentions.

Jesus wanted to bring reformation in the hearts of those ignorant priests, who had conspired to have Jesus crucified. Hearing Jesus pray to the Lord for the forgiveness of His offenders, moved the hearts of at least a few of the priests. It gave them a chance to analyze what they had done. **It was a door to reformation for those souls. The reformation of sinful souls was the main aim of Jesus.** His approach of praying for the forgiveness of His own offenders is so effective that it can bring true reformation even in a hard-hearted person. Eternal punishment in the liquid fire may only develop the fear of committing sin in a soul. The fear may reduce the tendency of the soul to commit sins in the future birth of the soul. But the effect is only temporary. The reformation through fear is thus only partial and temporary. **But the approach of Jesus was goodness and kindness. It was based on His extreme tolerance and peaceful nature. Such an approach is capable of bringing a permanent reformation even to a cruel heart.** It is the most powerful way of bringing realization, repentance, and non-repetition of the sin in a soul. Realization, repentance and non-repetition are the three steps in the permanent reformation of a soul.

**Preaching spiritual knowledge is the preliminary step. Practicing that knowledge and thereby becoming an ideal for the followers, is the final step.** In a time when harshness and cruelty were at their climax, God used this path of kindness to reform souls. This path of kindness was like a stream of fresh water used for washing away dirt. But first, He burnt the harsh and hard impurities to ash, using the fire of spiritual knowledge. Then He washed the ash with a stream of the water of kindness. God is omniscient. He knows the best way of dealing with every specific situation in any given time.

## **2) Why were women alone given the pains of delivering a child?**

[A question by Shri Anil]

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! God is omniscient. He knows what is to be given to whom and what is not to be given. When we pose such questions, they reflect our doubts about the fairness of the divine administration of God. If we have firm faith in God, we must have firmer faith in His capable divine administration also. Such faith will prevent us from doubting the administration of God. Before answering this question, I must tell you that a basic bias that many people

have about sex must be cleared. Sex between a man and a woman is essential for the woman to get pregnant and give birth to the next generation. **Yet, many people treat this subject as something shameful or vulgar.** Unless this false opinion is cleared, I shall not begin answering your question.

Sex or *kāma* is one of the four great goals of human life known as the *puruṣārthas*. The first *puruṣārtha* is *dharma*, which means following justice. The second is *artha* or earning money for one's livelihood. The third is *kāma* or sex for producing legitimate issues. The fourth is *mokṣa* or freedom from worldly stress by attachment to God. The aim of sex between a man and a woman is the continued existence of the human race. Without it, all the activities done by human beings in the world would be over in a single generation! This world with its dynamic human activities has been created for the entertainment of God as said in the Veda (*Ekākī na ramate*). Preventing future generations from being born, by withdrawing from sex, is an anti-divine activity since it would stop the divine entertainment. **Producing issues is, therefore, considered to be service to God. That is why we even find sex depicted on the walls of several ancient temples.** There is no vulgarity or sin in sex as long as the sex is legitimate and hence, the Veda encourages the generation of issues (*prajā tantum...*). Legitimate sex for the generation of issues is praised by God to be as holy as Himself (*Dharmāviruddhaḥ...—Gita*). **The unholiness and vulgarity in sex come only when it is illegitimate.**

The subject for this discussion is this holy legitimate sex for the sake of the continuation of the human race. It is the sacred subject of serving God by providing Him entertainment by continuing this world-drama. It is in this context that I am answering your question. In order for a woman to get pregnant, repeated sex is necessary. This is because the probability of conception is very low due to several gynecological factors. The lawfully-wedded couple engages in frequent sex in which the husband does most of the work to get his wife pregnant. The effort of the wife is minimal. Don't you think that men could argue that this is an injustice for men that they have to take all the effort? They might say that God has rightly compensated for it by giving delivery pains to women! So, men take the effort in the sexual act, while women bear the pain of giving birth to the child. Sometimes, even after the repeated sexual activity of the husband, the wife does not get pregnant. In that case, the wife does not undergo any delivery pain even though the husband has undergone a lot of pain in terms of his effort of repeated sexual activity. In such a special case, don't you think that the husband could argue that he has faced injustice?

Actually, God's divine administration maintains a perfect balance in humanity. No special favors are done for any one gender and equity and justice are always maintained. This matter appears to be a minor issue. Some people might even call this a silly matter. But are you not surprised to see the equity and justice of God even in such minor matters of life? So, we should never doubt the fairness of God's administration. We should maintain a strong faith in God. Such strong faith will prevent any such budding doubts on the capability and justice of God. **If you criticize the administration of God, you are indirectly criticizing God. It will spoil the purity of your devotion to God.** It is always better to focus on developing devotion to God instead of allowing our twisted brains to develop such useless doubts about the administration of God. Such doubts arise in our minds because we have not developed an unshakable faith in God.

Of course, I know that you have asked this doubt for the benefit of the ignorant public so that they may get clarity on the impartial administration of God. They must realize that God's administration always delivers justice to all souls, irrespective of religion, region, caste, age, or gender. Your intention is right. But some people want to criticize God. They take some aspect of the divine administration and try to prove that it is unjust in some way or the other. I am only criticizing such critics, who think that they are cleverer than God.

## Chapter 13

**OVERCOMING NERVOUSNESS BEFORE EXAMS**

March 09, 2019

Ms. Arsha (D/o Dr. Nikhil & Smt. Devi) asked: My examinations begin tomorrow. How can I overcome my nervousness?

**Three Steps of Closeness with God**

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! **You must think that God Datta is always with you like your bodyguard** to fight with the nervousness that attacks you and to protect you from it. Nervousness will surely be defeated by God Datta and it will run away. This is your close relationship with God. If you find the nervousness still attacking you, you should come closer to God by thinking that **God is in you**. This will almost certainly push away your nervousness because no thief dares to rob the house of the police officer. But if you still find that the nervousness persists, you should become closest to God by thinking that **you are God Himself!** Now, the nervousness has to run away and it dare not come even close to you since there is no worldly force that can attack the omnipotent God.

The three steps of (1) being a close devotee of God, (2) being inseparable from God and (3) being identical with God, reflect the three Vedantic philosophies. These three philosophies were given by the three divine preachers, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva respectively. The first step is Dvaita, the philosophy of dualism of Madhva, in which the soul is separate from God even though closely associated. The second step is Viśiṣṭa Advaita or the special monism of Rāmānuja, in which the soul is like an inseparable limb of God. Rāmānuja explains this through the Śeṣa-Śeṣi Sambandha or the Whole-Part relationship. As per this concept, God is the Whole and the soul is its part. The third step is Advaita or the monism of Śaṅkara, in which both God and the soul merge with each other leaving no room for even the slightest duality between the two. Devotees of God can make use these three steps for any good purpose.

**The Effect and Cause of Nervousness**

The student has limited energy in the brain to think and do useful work. Nervousness consumes that limited energy to such an extent that

hardly any energy remains to do useful work. As per the first law of thermodynamics, the energy supplied to a system is partly used in raising the system's internal energy and only the rest is available for doing useful work. Nervousness is like the internal energy of the system. If all the energy supplied through food is used only in raising nervousness, there is no energy left for doing work. **The situation will be like a computer with no electricity supplied to it. It has all the information stored on its hard disk but in the absence of electrical energy, no information can be displayed on the screen.** When the student's entire energy is consumed in the nervousness, there is no energy left to display the stored right answers in the brain and to write them on the answer script. The devoted student has prepared well for the examinations and the answers are properly stored in the brain. Studying hard and storing the answers in the brain is the duty of the student. But even when there is no deficiency in the student's effort, the right answers do not come to the student's mind. **The student is not lacking the answers, but is lacking the energy necessary to display the answer in the brain since all the energy is consumed by the nervousness.**

What is the cause of this nervousness? The punishment of some sin attacks the student in the form of nervousness, even though the student had performed his or her duty of studying sincerely. **The fruits of intense good and bad deeds attack the soul here itself** (*Atyutkataih pāpapunyaiḥ ihaiva phalamaśnute*). The fruits of normal deeds are received by the soul in heaven and hell after death. However, if the soul is highly devoted to God, God will provide some chance for the soul to get reformed. **Getting settled in life is essential before reformation.** Getting a good education is a prerequisite for settlement in life. Passing examinations is like crossing important landmarks in one's education. Souls who are not concerned about God, will be attacked by the fruits of their intense deeds in the form of nervousness. **One should not blame God in this context because God is impartial in implementing the established rules of the divine constitution regarding the *karma chakra* or the cycle of deeds.** But devotion to God is also a deed and this deed must also have its fruit as per the rule of deeds. Thus, the student suffers from nervousness as a punishment for his or her intense bad deeds. But as a result of his or her devotion, the student also receives help from God. Such help rendered by God to the devotee is justified based on the student's devotion and hence it does not violate justice in the divine administration.

The same three steps described by Me above were also preached by Jesus also through the following three statements: (1) I am in the Light. (2)

The Light is in Me and (3) I am the Light. The first statement says that the divine preacher is a messenger of God. The second statement says that the divine preacher is the son of God. The third statement says that the divine messenger is God or the divine Father Himself. Jesus also said “I am the truth” which also indicates His identity with God. The first statement describes a high devotee who is close to God. This is Madhva’s dualism. The second statement describes an even higher devotee, which is Rāmānuja’s special monism. The third statement describes the case of the Human Incarnation of God, which is Śaṅkara’s monism. There is a fourth special stage of the highest devotee, who is even higher than the Human Incarnation. Due to the devotee’s exceptional devotion, God becomes a servant of that highest devotee!

### **Assuming Monism Without Committing Sins**

In order to overcome nervousness while doing a good deed, a devotee can use any of these three steps. But the devotee should not exploit them to overcome nervousness while committing sin. Advaita philosophers claim that they are already God. Such a claim is not necessarily a sin. When the little son of a police officer holds a stick in his hand says that he is a police officer, the father, who is the police officer, smiles. He feels happy and is not angry with his son. If the son beats a real thief with the stick, the father becomes very happy saying that his son will certainly become a police officer in the future. But if the son beats an innocent person with the stick, the father becomes angry with his son. He takes away the stick from the son and slaps the son saying that he will never become a police officer and instead will become a thief! **Hence, a devotee assuming monism with God for doing good deeds is recommendable. Simply, assuming monism without doing any deed is also enjoyable fun for God. But assuming monism for doing bad deeds must be avoided.**

Śaṅkara, in His monistic theory stated that the soul is the absolute truth or God and that the world is relatively true with respect to the soul. Through this concept of monism, He was encouraging souls to do good God-like deeds. But the relative truth of the world was misunderstood by some as its non-existence. Yet, Śaṅkara kept silent allowing people to conclude that the world is non-existent. The idea behind His silence was that when the world is said to be non-existent, the follower of monism would at least not have a strong desire to do bad deeds, even if there would be no desire to do good deeds either. Any deed in a non-existent world is also non-existent like an action done in a dream. A soul doing neither good deeds nor bad deeds would remain more or less inactive, assuming the

world to be non-existent. At least such a person would not harm others. Thus, Śāṅkara allowed devotees to assume monism to encourage them to do good deeds and He allowed them to assume the non-existence of the world to at least prevent the soul from doing bad deeds. But He also warned any potential misusers of His concept of monism by saying that the punishment received for one's sins must be also treated as non-existent! To demonstrate this concept, He swiftly ran away to escape from an elephant rushing towards Him. When questioned by the followers as to why He was running away from a non-existent elephant, He replied that **not only the elephant, but also, His running away was non-existent** (*Yathā gajo mithyā...*)! On the whole, Śāṅkara preached that the world is non-existent to the real absolute God, while it is existent to every relatively-existent soul. The world is not existent to God and not non-existent to the soul. So, it can be said to be different from both existence (*sat*) and non-existence (*asat*). **He called it *mithyā*, which He defined as different from both existence and non-existence** (*Sadasat vilakṣanā*).

### **Ascending to Monism and Descending from It**

God is pleased when you use these three steps to overcome your nervousness while doing good deeds. He will be furious only when you exploit these steps to do sins. It is also very important that after ascending from the first step of dualism to the third step of monism, you must also descend back to dualism. There is no harm in continuing to be in the first step of dualism. It is, in fact, better to always continue in the first step. The first step is thinking that one is close to God. Even though an ordinary soul is actually far from God, it is better to think that he or she is close to God. It helps the soul remember that God is watching every deed done by the soul. So, every devotee should think that he or she is close to God, which means that God is always closely watching every deed done by the devotee.

Some devotees are eager to ascend to the step of monism but they never want to descend to dualism. That is very dangerous since the soul might easily commit sins as a result of continuing to be in monism. The soul begins to think that it is above justice since it is God and can even commit sins. **The Gita says that ascending is done for the sake of doing some action** (*Āruruḥṣoḥ...*) **and descending is done for the sake of maintaining peace** (*Yogārūdhasya...*). Devotees should clearly understand that ascending to monism in this context does not mean that the devotee actually has become God. It is only an assumption to overcome nervousness. Even the Human Incarnation, who has actually ascended to the third step, has to sometimes come down to lower steps while preaching

to devotees. Only if the percentage of ego and jealousy in the devotees around the Incarnation is nearly zero, does He declare His monism with God. If the devotees have a moderate level of ego and jealousy, He claims to be a Son of God, corresponding to the second step. If the ego and jealousy of the devotees is a hundred percent, then the Human Incarnation only claims to be a messenger of God, which is the first step. It is for this reason that Prophet Mohammad always claimed to be just a messenger of God. Another advantage of remaining in this first step of dualism with God is that there is place for the spiritual effort. **Only when the soul realizes that it is different and far from God, can it take the effort to come closer to God.**

Of course, there are people who do not want the closeness of God because it makes it inconvenient for them to do sins in the presence of the God who is so close! To avoid this inconvenient situation, some such people have placed God beyond this world. Others have denied the very existence of God! As a reaction to these two attempts of pushing God away, some people have developed the concept that God is omnipresent. This omnipresence of God serves the purpose of ensuring a constant closeness of God with every soul. But it also has a disadvantage. There is a danger of thinking that since God is omnipresent, He must also be in the sinner. In that case, it would mean that God is doing the sin! This, of course, is not true! Thinking that God is only beyond creation and thinking that God is omnipresent in creation are two extreme ends. The middle golden path between these two extreme ends is that God is beyond this creation, but He enters creation whenever and wherever there is a justified necessity. The omnipresence of God is not to be taken in the sense of His physical presence everywhere. It is to be understood in the effective sense. It means that even though God is not physically present everywhere, He is effectively present since He knows and controls everything in this creation.

## Chapter 14

**NERVOUS ENERGY—THE INDESTRUCTIBLE SOUL?**

March 10, 2019

**Shri Bharath Krishna asked:** Namah Shivaya Shri Datta Swami! I am Bharath from Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham. I tried to know about mahātmās and in every story, I heard, I found that even if they are affected by deadly diseases, their smiles never fade. It is said that all of them were able to do it because they have realized that they are not the body but the *ātman*.

But You have said that *ātman* (*jīvātmā*) is also inert because it is controlled by *Parabrahman*. You also said that *ātman* is just the flow of energy in the neurons all over our body. At least, I understood it like this. Now I have a doubt in this regard. If a person meets with an accident and loses one of his limbs then all the neurons in that part are lost. By this, I have to conclude that some part of the *ātman* is also lost. But in the Bhagavad Gita you have said this:

*nainam chindanti śastrāṇi nainam dahati pāvaka: |*  
*na cainam kledayantyāpo na śoṣayati māruta: ||*

Weapons cannot shred the soul, nor can fire burn it.

Water cannot wet it, nor can the wind dry it.

Based on this, my doubt is that *ātman* cannot just be neural activity. Please comment on this Swami. Padabhivandanam Shri Datta Swami!

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! *Ātman* means the soul, which is the awareness in a human being. The awareness is the result of inert energy working in the nervous system. When a limb is cut from the body in an accident, the nervous energy in that cut limb disappears at once. **Had the nervous energy been existing in the cut limb, you could have said that the *ātman* is cut.** When you cut a rope, the cut piece of rope remains a rope even after separating it from the main rope. In fact, when the limb is cut, the activity of nervous energy in it is also immediately lost. The cut limb does not feel pain whereas the main body having nervous energy feels pain. Pain is the result of the activity of neurons. This *ātman* is only a special work-form of inert energy when it gets converted to awareness in a specific functioning nervous system.

Matter can be cut but energy cannot be cut. **The verse from the Gita quoted by you and others like it, describe the characteristics of energy. You cannot cut heat, light etc. Only the bearer of the energy can be cut.**

When the limb is cut, the nervous energy is withdrawn from the limb and is confined to the major part of the body. It is not the cutting of the nervous energy. It is only the cutting off of the limb or the possessor of the energy from the major part of the body. The work-form of energy can be generated and it can also disappear. But the basic inert energy is neither created nor destroyed as per the law of conservation of energy. When you admit that *ātman* is awareness, you have admitted that, scientifically, *ātman* is a work-form of inert energy in a functioning nervous system. **The work, in this context, is the transfer of information from the senses to the brain.** This explanation clearly proves that awareness is only a work form of inert energy.

In an essential sense, awareness can also be treated to be the basic inert energy which gets converted into awareness. All the characteristics of inert energy are then applied to the awareness too. It is just like applying all the properties of gold to a golden ornament. When the scientific explanation of the nature of awareness is so clear and elaborate, it cannot be contradicted by the example of the accident given by you. The doubt related to the accident is only due to a misunderstanding. As soon as the limb is cut, the awareness ceases to exist in the limb. In deep sleep, it is said that *ātman* alone remains. But this '*ātman*' that remains in deep sleep is only the inert energy that remains in the gross body. This is because, in deep sleep, awareness does not exist at all. The nervous system is not at all functioning to give rise to awareness. The concept that *ātman* can also mean this inert energy is supported by the Gita, which says that the *ātman* is inert (*Sthāṇuh...*—Gita).

This *ātman* is clearly not God. It is only a part of creation and hence, one need not expect it to be absolutely eternal. **Ātman as the basic inert energy has the topmost importance within creation. It is the basic material of creation and even the basic material of awareness.** Awareness in the form of thoughts is *jīva* whereas the essential material of awareness, which is the basic inert energy, is called *ātman*. **Pure awareness, which is the awareness without any thoughts, can also be taken to be *ātman*. This pure awareness is almost like inert energy. The inert energy, has no thoughts because it is inert. Pure awareness also does not have any thoughts other than the single thought of self-awareness.** In that sense, pure awareness and inert energy are almost one and the same and both can be called *ātman*. The same awareness, when it becomes a complex bundle of thoughts, is called the individual soul or *jīva*. Due to the lack of scientific knowledge, in olden days, awareness was thought to be the Creator or God.

## Chapter 15

**QUALITIES OF ANGELS, HUMANS, AND DEMONS**

March 11, 2019

**Dr. Nikhil asked:** Padanamaskarams Swamiji! You have said in the discourse on January 25, 2019, that the predominant qualities of angels, humans and demons are *sattvam* or knowledge, *rajas* or activity, and *tamas* or inertia respectively. The underlying presumption appears to be that the body has an effect on the mental qualities. Angels have a body of energy along with awareness, but no matter. So, it might be alright to say that their mental quality is predominantly *sattvam* since the absence of matter (*tamas*) in their bodies allows the full expression of *sattvam*. But to say that humans are predominantly *rajasic* in their mental quality and that demons are predominantly *tamasic*, seems odd. Humans have very little energy (power) and demons have tremendous power. So, demons should be said to be *rājasic* and we should be said to be *tāmasic*. We have bodies made out of matter. Our intelligence is dull (low *sattvam*) and our energy is extremely limited (low *rajas*). So, we should be predominantly *tāmasic*. The goodness (*sattvam*) present in humans might be intermediate between that of angels and demons, but demons clearly have more *rajas* and *tamas* than us humans. Perhaps there is a need to distinguish between the absolute 'quantity' of each of the three qualities and the 'relative proportions' of each of the three qualities present in the three types of souls. In any case, it seems to be quite confusing.

There are some other issues that are also connected to this point. For instance, in the same discourse, You have also said that due to the predominance of *tamas* in demons, they have material bodies made of highly condensed matter. If demons have bodies made out of highly condensed matter how can they then interact with angels, who have non-material bodies. Demons and angels are said to have had many wars in the Purāṇas. War or any substantial interaction should be possible only between beings of the same kind. On the other hand, if the *asuras* are assumed to be energetic beings like the *devas*, then how could they come and harass humans, who are material beings? Many accounts from the Purāṇas seem to suggest that the *asuras* might be energetic beings like the *devas*. They have many miraculous powers, such as appearing or disappearing, growing or shrinking in size, and so on which are generally not possible with material bodies.

Another issue is that You have said that the Martya Loka, which is part of the Bhu Loka, is the only material world. All the lokas above and below it are non-material, energetic worlds. In the discourse on July, 1, 2017, You have also stated that human beings and animals on earth are the only material bodies that souls can take. Astronomers have found numerous planets, which might have earth-like conditions

and might be suitable for supporting life as we know it. They even feel hopeful that in the near future, we might be able to communicate with intelligent life forms on other planets. But You had said that no other planet has souls in material bodies as on earth (Martya Loka). This contradicts Your statement in the discourse on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, 2019, where You say that the *asuras* have bodies made out of highly condensed matter. These *asuras* are supposed to be occupying the lower worlds (*Atala, Vitala, ...Pātāla*). So, by inference, their lokas must also be made out of matter and energy.

A further contradiction comes from a story from the Purāṇas, which says that the *devas* and *asuras* are both the progeny of the same father, sage Kaśyapa from different mothers. If this is true, how could the *devas* have energetic bodies while the *asuras* have material bodies? Could You kindly resolve the contradiction?

### Qualitative and Quantitative Predominance of Qualities

**Swami replied:** The three fundamental qualities are inherent in all aspects of creation. In the context of the components of creation, *sattvam* is awareness, *rajas* is inert energy and *tamas* is matter. In the context of mental qualities, *sattvam* means knowledge, *rajas* means activity and *tamas* means ignorance. The Gita says “*Ūrdhvam gacchanti sattvsthāḥ...*”, which means that in the upper world, *sattvam* is predominant. In the middle world, *rajas* is predominant, and in the lower world, *tamas* is predominant. The middle world means the Martya Loka containing human beings. The upper world is the abode of angels while the lower world is the abode of demons. Actually, the bodies of angels are made of inert energy. The awareness in all beings including them is also a work-form of energy. Energy is *rajas*. So, *rajas* alone is predominant in them in quantity and they should have been said to be *rājasic*. But angels are more *sāttvic* in their nature than humans. **It means that predominance need not be understood in the sense of quantity alone. It can also be understood in the sense of quality.** Angels having energetic bodies are said to predominantly have the quality of *sattvam*. **This means that divine knowledge predominates in them.** Angels are also said to be more powerful than humans. Actually, the inert energy present in the body of an angel is quantitatively lower than that of a human. But angels have tremendous miraculous powers associated with them. So, they are said to be more powerful. The word ‘more powerful’ does not mean that the angels have more amount of inert energy in their bodies compared to humans. It means that the inert energy of the bodies of angels is associated with the more valuable miraculous power granted by God.

**The quantity of inert energy in the body of a human being is higher than the quantity of inert energy in the body of an angel. But the quality of inert energy of the angel is greater than the quality of the inert energy of the human being.** This is because the former is associated with a lot of divine miraculous power. Since the inert energy in a human being is quantitatively more than that of an angel, the human being is said to be more *rājasic* than the angel. On the other hand, awareness is qualitatively superior in the case of an angel as compared to a human being since the angel's awareness is associated with the miraculous power granted by God. Hence, the angel is more *sāttvic* than the human being, qualitatively.

If you take the demons of the lower world, the quantity of matter is greater in the body of a demon as compared to the body of a human being. Hence, the demons are more *tāmasic* than human beings. Of course, the demons in the lower world are not visible to the human eye due to the will of God. Due to the same will of God, the angels in the upper world are also not visible to the human eye. There is more free inert energy in the body of a human being than in the body of a demon. The activity of the body of a human being is greater than the activity of the body of a demon. Inactivity and laziness, which are the properties of *tamas*, are more in the demon than in the human being. The human being has quantitatively more kinetic energy than a demon. Hence, the human being is said to be more *rājasic* than the demon. **The demon is said to be more powerful than the human being due to the greater mass of the body.** Of course, demons also acquire miraculous powers from God including the ability to change their forms. So, they can be said to be more powerful than humans even in the sense of having more miraculous powers. **Thus, when it is said that demons are 'more powerful' than angels and humans, it refers to the greater miraculous powers acquired by the demons as compared to the other two.** It is due to these miraculous powers that we sometimes even find demons gaining victory over angels in the Purāṇas. The word powerful in this context can mean two things. One meaning is possessing a large quantity of inert energy since energy and power are similar in meaning. The other meaning is possessing a lot of miraculous power. In the case of demons, the miraculous powers possessed by them is vastly greater than the quantity of inert energy in their bodies. The greater power of demons as compared to humans should therefore be understood in the sense of their miraculous power. If we only go by the inert energy possessed by them, there will certainly be a misunderstanding.

Even though the father of both angels and demons is the same sage Kaśyapa, their mothers are different. The two mothers were different in their qualities and in the extent of God's grace on them. Angels never did penance to attain supernatural miraculous powers, whereas demons did a lot of penance to attain the supernatural powers. **Due to the good qualities of angels, God Himself gave miraculous powers to the angels even without any effort from their side. Due to the bad qualities of demons, God gave miraculous powers to them only after a lot of effort from their side.** As a result of the mixed qualities of human beings, they can get a certain amount of miraculous powers from God by some effort.

## Profile of Qualities

### Angels

*Sattvam* or knowledge is predominant in angels as a result of the God's grace. They possess divine knowledge, which is qualitatively greater than the knowledge of human beings and demons. Angels are not much caught up in the illusion of performing worldly activities with an ambition for attaining the fruits of the actions (*rajas*). Ego, greed, ambition, and worldly activity are the characteristics of *rajas*, which are very low in angels.

*Tamas* or matter is almost nil in them. Their bodies are not made of matter but are made of inert energy or light. Yet, it cannot be said that the energetic bodies of angels have absolutely no *tamas* or matter-like inertia. *Tamas* exists even in the bodies of angels, but in a negligible amount. Energy in the form of light or radiation comes in packets of energy called photons. The only matter-like inertia in angels is corresponding to the rest mass of the photons which constitute their energetic bodies. So, all the three qualities exist even in angels. In fact, the three qualities always exist everywhere; only their proportions differ.

Since the bodies of angels are made of inert energy, the characteristics of *rajas* must also exist even though to only a slight extent. The evidence for this is from the Purāṇas, when angels had once become proud after their victory over the demons and they had to be corrected by God. Even though the bodies of angels are made out of inert energy, there is quantitatively more inert energy in human bodies. Angels are said to be more powerful than both humans and demons due to the higher quality of their energy. The higher quality of their energy means that their energetic bodies have divine grace in the form of supernatural miraculous powers. It also means that their energetic bodies have divine grace in the form of divine knowledge.

Angels' bodies are made of energy. Knowledge or mind is made of awareness, which is also a work-form of energy. So, their body and mind mix easily since both are basically forms of energy. Thus, in terms of energy or *rajas*, angels are superior to both humans and demons. However, it is the supreme knowledge which is the most significant characteristic of angels. Thus, angels are said to be embodiments of *sattvam*.

## Humans

*Sattvam* is lower in humans than in angels due to the absence of God's grace. Humans only possess knowledge related to worldly activities, which are done due to ambition and greed. Hence, the *sattvam* in humans is of a lower quality than angels. Even though the inert energy in the body of a human being is quantitatively greater than that of an angel, it is not associated with God's grace which gives miraculous powers. Hence, the *rajas* of humans is qualitatively lower than that of angels. In the sense of the better quality of *rajas*, angels are more powerful than humans. In the sense of the quantity of *rajas*, humans are more *rājasic* than angels. However, humans have more of the inherent qualities of *rajas*, like worldly activities, greed and ego, since these inherent qualities are always related to the quantity of *rajas*. The human body is made of matter and hence, more of the inherent qualities of *tamas* are also found in humans as compared to angels.

## Demons

Demons have a lot of *tamas* in the form of the large amount of matter in their bodies. The inherent qualities of *tamas* like laziness, ignorance, sleep etc., are also found to a larger extent in demons as compared to both humans and angels. The body of a demon is not very active because of a lower quantity of inert energy in it. The lower quantity of inert energy is seen as the lesser kinetic energy of the movement of the limbs of a demon's body. Humans are more *rājasic* than demons due to the higher quantity of kinetic energy in the human body. As a result of the lower kinetic energy of their bodies, demons are less involved in multiple worldly activities as compared to humans. The *rājasic* activities in demons are, thus, mild due to the predominance of *tamas*.

As regards the existence of life in the form of material beings on other planets, it is not a scientifically established fact yet. Even if such life exists, whether it is expressed fully as human beings, is another doubt. At present, there is not the slightest trace of practical proof.

## Chapter 16

**SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE****1) How can the truth set a person free when no one knows the truth?**

March 12, 2019

[This is a question based on the statement of Lord Jesus in the Bible, “The truth will set you free”, and was posed by a person in an online discussion to Shri Anil.]

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! Truth means the fact in any subject. It also means an item which really exists. One must have the knowledge of both to uplift one’s soul. The true item is God. God is unimaginable, but He enters a medium to become an Incarnation for the sake of souls. **Recognizing this mediated God or Incarnation itself is the recognition of the true goal.** For this, one must have the capacity for logical analysis so that one can find the truth. After finding the true goal, one must get the knowledge of the soul or oneself. Specifically, one must know that one’s own self is not the goal. One must realize one’s own identity as a soul, which is an iota of the imaginable creation and not the unimaginable Creator-God. With this realization, the true knowledge of the soul is attained. Finally, one must know the true path to please God, which is developing real love without any aspiration for a fruit in return. The true goal, the truth about the soul and the true path to reach the goal is the threefold truth or *triputi*. The knowledge of this threefold truth is essential and only with it can a person succeed in the spiritual effort.

**2) In spite of being very powerful like God, why did Shirdi Baba not fight for the independence of India?**

March 12, 2019

[This is a question was posed by a person in an online discussion with Shri Anil.]

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! Did Lord Krishna directly fight in the war to establish justice? No! Yet, He was solely responsible for the victory in the war. Several human beings fought for independence but they could not succeed and many even got killed. On the other hand, Mahatma Gandhi got freedom for the country even without fighting, by the blessings of God. Shri Shirdi Sai Baba had told Shri Bal Gangadhar Tilak that independence would come to the country but that there was still some time left for it. The Gita says that a wise person finds

action in inaction (*Akarmanica karma yah...*). We seem to act a lot but our actions bring no result. Great Incarnations like Shri Sai Baba do not seem to act and yet the result is effortlessly obtained. **Thus, there is inaction in our actions and action in the inaction of God-men.**

### **3) Can God even forgive a person's *prārabdham* and give full relief to the person from the punishment of the person's sins?**

March 12, 2019

[This is a question was posed by a person in an online discussion to Shri Anil.]

**Swami replied:** *Prārabdham* means the cause for the present birth. It is that small part of the fruit of a person's deeds that remains after exhausting the major part of the bad and good fruits in hell and heaven respectively. This remaining small part of the fruit is required for acquiring a new human body and it gets exhausted as soon as the soul is born in this world. God is omniscient and omnipotent. **He knows everything about what is to be forgiven and what is not to be forgiven.** He is omnipotent and can forgive anything and nobody can question Him since He is the supreme authority. But He never misuses this unique power since He is omniscient.

### **4) Could You kindly enlighten us on the meaning of the Parable of the Workers from the Bible?**

March 12, 2019

[A question by Shri Anil.]

The Parable of the Workers

1. For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. 2. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. 3. About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. 4. 'You also go into my vineyard,' he said, 'and I will pay you whatever is right.' 5. So they went. He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. 6. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' he asked. 7. 'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. So he told them, 'You also go into my vineyard.' 8. When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last ones hired and moving on to the first.' 9. The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. 10. So when the original workers came, they assumed they would receive more. But each of them also received a denarius. 11. On receiving their pay, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12. 'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.' 13. But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being

unfair to you. Did you not agree with me on one denarius? 14. Take your pay and go. I want to give this last man the same as I gave you. 15. Do I not have the right to do as I please with what is mine? Or are you envious because I am generous?' 16. So the last will be first, and the first will be last.]

**Swami replied:** The first group of workers entered into a contract with the landowner, which shows that they had an aspiration for getting paid. The work done by them was with an aspiration for the fruit. It is only because the fruit was clearly specified that they entered the field to work. The last group of workers entered the field to work agreeing to accept whatever the landowner would choose to give. Since they had not entered into any contract with the landowner, they never aspired for any fruit. They were ready to accept any amount, even if it were next to nothing. This shows their lack of aspiration for any fruit in return for their work. **The landowner stands for God and first group of workers stand for the devotees who serve God but are full of aspiration for the fruit. The last group of workers stand for a devotee serving God without any aspiration for the fruit.** They did not ask for a specific amount and they worked without thinking of how much they would be paid. They represent the devotees having real love for God. The first group of workers represent businessmen-devotees. Business-devotion means devotion which is based on a fixed prior contract. The devotee promises God to do something for Him provided God fulfills his desires. So, there is business or mutual give-and-take in business-devotion. In fact, such devotion is not devotion at all! It is only business! **In true devotion, which is represented by the last group of workers, there is no contract and no keeping of an account between the devotee and God.** The last group of workers simply entered the field to help the landowner finish the work by that evening. They only looked at the need of the landowner and not the quantity of the work or the amount they would get paid. They would even have worked longer if more work needed to be done. Looking at their selflessness, the owner also reciprocated in the same way. He looked only at the need of the last group of workers. Both groups of workers needed the same amount to run their families for the next day. The owner saw that even though the last group of workers had worked less, their need was no less than that of the first group of workers. In the case of the first group of workers, it was not necessary for the owner to assess their need since they had entered into a mutually agreed contract. These two groups of workers represent business-devotion and real devotion respectively. The majority of us belong to the category of business-devotion or the first group. But the goal is to attain real devotion

to God, which is represented by the last group of workers. **When we, who belong to the first, become the last, the spiritual effort is fulfilled.**

**5) Are the total number of souls constant or are new souls being created?**

March 12, 2019

Shri Bhargav asked: Hello Swamiji! Are new souls being created? Are souls being born as human beings, animals, insects or birds for the first time? Or is the number of souls constant because some say that there is no such thing as first karma or first universe and that the universe is beginningless.

**Swami replied: Souls are approximately constant in number.** Do not just look at the rising trend of the human population on earth and think that new souls are being created. Souls exist in various worlds in the universe. The time for which souls stay in various worlds differs from case to case based on the intensity of the deeds of each soul. Even to study the total population of souls in this world, you have to count all types of living beings like human beings, animals, birds, insects, worms and so on. **If God wishes, He can create a new soul instantly in a particular situation.** But as soon as the purpose is over, such a soul disappears.

**6) If reformation is the reason for punishment, would it not be wonderful to start teaching spiritual knowledge in the jails of the country?**

March 12, 2019

[A question by Laxmi Thrylokya]

**Swami replied:** You are absolutely correct! You have understood the concept of reformation well. There are already some attempts in this direction taking place.

**7) Is it proper to make promises to God and offer bribes to Him? What if we fail to keep our promise?**

March 12, 2019

[Smt. Bindiya Chaudhry asked: SHAT SHAT Pranam to dear Swamiji! Sometimes when we humans are in trouble or have a disease or extreme stress we tend to offer God bribe...for eg we say "Hey God, please cure me and I will not eat non-veg for 40 days" or "Hey God, if you help me through this problem, I will give a donation of 1000rs in your temple" or "Hey God, please help me find my jewellery and I will distribute food to 11 poor people", and so on. My question is that does this bribe hold any value, and is it OK to do so? Also, what if the particular problem gets solved and we do not perform what we promised? Will God get angry and punish us? If we are unable to fulfil any promise to God and ask for forgiveness, will he still be upset with us? The human mind experiences what is known as a fear and doubt in the mind that

“If I don’t fulfil what I promised God will get angry and punish me either by ruining my health or work or anything else”. Is there any basis to this fear? Hey Almighty Lord Dattatreya Himself! The Almighty Swamiji! Please enlighten my ignorant human mind. Thank you.]

**Swami replied:** The Gita says that all beginnings are full of defects just as a newly-lit fire gives off a lot of smoke (*Sarvārambhāhi...*). God excuses those defects giving due consideration to the person who is in the initial stage of the spiritual journey. God even goes along with such defective ways for some time until the person rises above that state. The person who wishes to control a strong bull running full speed has to first run along with it for some distance. The person rescuing people fallen in a mud pond invariably get some mud splashed on his body too. **Hence, God accepts the bribe from you. But when you break your promise of doing something if God fulfills your desire, God does get angry. Breaking your promise to God is a big sin. Bribing God is a bigger sin. But let us say that God accepts your bribery considering it to be an inevitable initial defect. To add to it if you also break your word, it becomes the biggest sin.**

<b>Bribery</b>	+	<b>Breaking One’s Word</b>	=	<b>Complete Degradation</b>
(Bigger Sin)	+	(Big Sin)	=	(Biggest Sin)

Keeping one’s word is a good quality. So, if you at least keep your word, that good quality reduces the bigger sin of bribery to just a big sin. What causes God to get angry is after having committed a bigger sin, you are committing another big sin. It means, instead of progressing, you are further degrading. If you at least keep your word, that good quality reduces the intensity of your sin to some extent. It at least indicates that you are making some progress, even though it is only a little progress.

<b>Bribery</b>	+	<b>Keeping One’s Word</b>	=	<b>Little Progress</b>
(Bigger Sin)	+	(Good Quality)	=	(Big Sin)

So, compared to bribing God and breaking one’s word, bribing God and keeping one’s word is better. **Even rowdies and gundas can follow the bare minimum ethics of keeping their word, while doing the sins that they do. Then why can normal human beings not follow the same?**

There are two types of devotion. The first is ‘prostitution-devotion’ or *veśyā bhakti* in which the devotee asks for practical boons from God in exchange for his theoretical devotion. The devotee says that he will recite the Hanumān Chālisā 108 times if God grants him profit in his business.

The recitation of prayers is a mental or theoretical activity whereas gaining profit in the business is a practical gain. A prostitute also similarly snatches away money from the customer by speaking sweet words and singing sweet songs that praise him. She has no love for the customer; she only pretends to love him by the sweet words and songs. This is the worst type of devotion. Such a devotee is only cheating God through intelligent tricks! The second type of devotion is 'business-devotion' or *vaiśya bhakti* in which the devotee does some material sacrifice but it is only for getting a higher material benefit. Even a businessman gives you items in exchange for an equal quantity of money. But the devotee says that if God grants him a profit of a lakh of rupees, he will offer 10% of it to God! So, in this business-devotion too, there is a lot of cheating. But it is a lot better than prostitution-devotion, which would be like praising a shopkeeper through a song or poem and asking him to give an item from his shop in exchange for the praise!

**Entering into business-devotion and breaking one's word in it, is worse than prostitution-devotion. At least, no word is broken in prostitution-devotion. Actually, we will succeed in these lower types of devotion if we keep our goal as 'issue devotion'. Issue devotion is the highest type of devotion. It is the kind of love or devotion that we have for our issues. We practically serve our children and sacrifice our wealth for them without aspiring for anything in return from them. Service is work. Wealth and property is the fruit of our work, which we invariably pass on to them. We sacrifice both work and the fruit of our work to our children without expecting anything in return. We must do the same for God. Even if one is a sinner, one should at least retain some sincerity while doing the sin. Such a sinner is better than the sinner who not only commits a sin but is also insincere and cheats while doing the sin!**

## Chapter 17

**CAREER CHOICE AND WORLDLY HAPPINESS**

April 11, 2019

Following is a conversation between Swamiji and some devotees where Swamiji clarifies the questions posed by the devotees related to choosing one's career and worldly life.

**Shri Bharath:** Padanamaskaram Swamiji! I am Bharath from Amrita School of Engineering. My question is related to Pravrutti. Swamiji, I am going to finish MTech in two months and I have to find a Job. It has always been my desire to work in Aerospace Industry. By your grace I have confidence in myself that I will be able to become good engineer. But the problem is I don't want to work for that industry anymore. Actually I have lost my desire to work as an engineer itself because nowadays engineering is mostly used for increasing the comforts for humans which leads to unsustainable world. I believe it is ok if somebody wants to innovate something provided it is used only when it is needed. All the companies who sell anything see only if their customers has the money to buy or not. They don't bother if they really need it or not. For example if a person want to buy a car just for the sake of prestige he is very well allowed to buy if he has money but he actually doesn't need it at all. Nikhil sir told me that you wouldn't travel in AC coaches even when you can buy tickets to travel in AC coaches. You only prefer to travel in sleeper coaches. From this it is very clear that we shouldn't try to live a luxurious life. But we watch a movie also in a AC theatre! All these ideas of mine lead to following questions. Swamiji, I request You to kindly answer these questions which will help me a lot in my life.

**Bharath (Q1):** Is it ok to work for such companies who are responsible for causing unsustainability in the world?

**Swami:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! If you do not work, somebody else will work in your place considering the present rate of unemployment. So, even if you do not work, it

will not serve any purpose. If you want to achieve your aim of a sustainable world, propagate the spiritual knowledge related to this point and impress it on the minds of the people. The problem is that nobody is worried about the welfare of society. They forget that, after all, they are members of society. This crucial point must be stressed and used for the good purpose of bringing in people, some selflessness and a sense of responsibility towards society because every soul is inherently selfish. Environmental science is already doing this job and it is purely a point of science in the path of *pravṛtti*.

**Bharath (Q2):** We humans already have the necessary technology for even living a luxurious life. So, should we stop doing engineering? If not, how can we use engineering to create a better world? Is space exploration really necessary for humans?

**Swami:** Again, this point is about bringing a change in society, which is the subject of *pravṛtti*. It is not the subject of *nivṛtti*, which is about bringing a change in an individual alone and is purely personal. Hence, propagating the concept to the public is the only way. Space exploration is the scientific research that attempts to study items in space. There is no use of such research in *nivṛtti* because the scriptures say that the upper worlds cannot be seen by human beings due to the will of God. Thus, space research belongs only to *pravṛtti*. Science does not bother about God and is confined to the present life alone. Scientific rationality is confined only to physical knowledge. Even though there are several genuine miracles happening in this world, science does not bother about them. Atheists attempt to examine these miracles like scientists. But they differ from the silent scientists in their invariable strong negation of the miracles at the end of their investigation. Unless miracles are accepted, scientists and atheists will not believe in the existence of the unimaginable God. **A scientist may become a believer in God, but an atheist will never believe.** For believers in God, miracles are not necessary since they follow the advanced knowledge of *nivṛtti*.

**Bharath (Q3):** Like me, many youngsters have different kinds of passions. Please tell me what is meant by interest and what is

meant by passion. Should there be any restrictions in developing our interests?

**Swami:** An attraction to an item is interest. When the same interest intensifies, it becomes passion. **If the fruit of the attraction to that item brings welfare to the soul, then having a passion will give more benefit than having a mere interest.** But if the fruit is harmful to the soul, even having an interest for it must be avoided.

**Bharath (Q4):** Since I lost interest in engineering I have become very lazy. I have wasted a lot of precious time and even now I am wasting time. When I try to analyze the reasons for my laziness, I find that it is not only the loss of interest but also something else. Please tell me the different reasons why a person becomes lazy and how to overcome it.

**Swami:** Laziness is the most dangerous disease because it not only spoils one's mental health, but also one's physical health. Even if you stop mental work, you should never stop physical work, which is doing some physical exercises, at least. The body must have perfect health and you must give top most priority to this point. A sound mind always needs a sound body. **Only a sound mind can understand the real spiritual knowledge, which is helpful for the welfare of the soul forever.**

**Bharath (Q5):** Many students are forced by their parents to study something or to do something they are not interested in doing. I have even seen students committing suicide because they were asked to do something which they never liked and as a result they had failed miserably. In that case, should students listen to their parents? In my case though, I was not interested in doing an M.Tech. I still listened to my father and did it. As a result, I have got this divine knowledge from You. You gave me Nikhil sir as my teacher, who helped me understand this knowledge by patiently answering all my questions. So, by listening to my father, even though I did not like what he told me to do, something good happened to me.

**Swami replied:** Parents are always wiser than their children because parents have more worldly knowledge than the children. Worldly knowledge is also a fundamental necessity. Suppose, you are planning to present a devotional drama to

the public to develop their devotion to God. To perform the drama, a stage is essential. So, you must have all the knowledge of the stage too. The devotional drama is your spiritual effort. Maintaining yourself in the world i.e. securing your livelihood, is the stage. Worldly knowledge is the knowledge of the stage. If you are very rich and if you are interested in spiritual knowledge, it is good. You need not struggle to maintain yourself in the world. You can only concentrate on the spiritual effort which leads to the permanent welfare of the soul. It is certainly far far more important than merely the welfare of the body. But if you are poor, then as the first step, you should concentrate on the welfare of the body, which is securing your livelihood. **Even if you are a middle class person, you should concentrate on the welfare of the body in the first step. This is because, your limited savings might not be sufficient for your lifetime since the value of money might fall steeply in the future.**

As regards education, even if you do not have any interest in a subject, you have to develop interest in it since it is helpful for your profession. **You should choose a field of study which has better career prospects so that you may get good employment and develop interest in that field.** Even if a man is forced to marry a certain woman, he must develop interest in his wife, once the marriage has taken place. He married her under inevitable circumstances. If the circumstances had not been inevitable, he could have married the girl he loved very much.

**Similarly, in order to maintain yourself in the world, which is the basic stage for the spiritual effort, you have to study the subject in which you have no natural interest.** After entering in to the subject, you must show your interest in it to the climax. You should not withdraw from the subject saying that you have no natural interest in it. It would be just like saying to your wife that you do not love her because you were forced to marry her under inevitable circumstances! It would be real injustice. Until you are well-settled in life, you must continue your interest in that subject and in the profession related to that subject. Once you are established in

your profession, you can pursue your interest in another subject of your choice. But please do not extend this concept to the example of marriage that I gave you. It was only a simile. You cannot say that after getting married, you will also continue your interest in your lover on the side! A simile can be applied to a concept only in a limited manner.

**Shri Nivedhan:** What are all the ways of being happy in life?

**Swami:** You must actually see the other side of the coin. Instead of asking how one can be happy in life, you must ask how the happiness can continue forever. If you take the case of worldly pleasures, the happiness is not continuous and moreover, it ultimately ends in unhappiness alone. Temporary happiness, which finally ends up in sorrow, is not desirable at all! On the other hand, the Gita describes eternal happiness. **It says that the happiness which comes after some initial unhappiness during the stage when one makes efforts, alone is eternal** (*Yattadagre viṣamiva...*). You must not only see your need of happiness in the present but also in the future. Some people give importance to their happiness in their old age. They work hard earn and save enough money for their old age. They also take care of their health through good exercise and food habits. These people accept some discomfort in the present, so that they can be happy during their old age. But it is not enough. It is even more important to make efforts to ensure your happiness after death. Merely focusing on your happiness during the temporary period of this life, is not wise.

If you concentrate on God, you will be happy now, you will be happy in your old age and you will be happy even after death. **God is the best and only way for getting eternal happiness. His grace can be attained through spiritual knowledge and devotion.** You can realize this perfectly once you study spiritual knowledge completely. **You must be very careful in choosing the means of getting temporary happiness or the means of getting permanent happiness.** It is most important to analyze your own goal very very carefully. You must decide whether you are seeking temporary happiness or permanent happiness.

**Laxmi Thrylokya:** Padhanamaskaram Swamiji! I'm happy to get your blessings in choosing my career. Career is one thing I love the most in life for which I invested time, money and energy since childhood. Everything else used to be in second priority. Making huge money and earning good name were the prime goals of my life. Now, after meeting Amma (Mata Amritanandamayi Devi) and reading your discourses, I realized that I was running in wrong direction because right goal is the God. I feel blessed to have learnt the truth but a lot of tension has developed in my mind. I had to go through a series of bad dreams and sad emotions for some time. I want to continue this spiritual journey no matter what. Please forgive me for everything and give me situations to learn and grow. I'm not sure if my intellect can draw correct lesson from the incident I have gone through. Kindly tell me how to learn a lesson from incidents in life. I also want to know if every incident in life is a lesson or just some are lessons. My serious confusion right now is about the possibility of pursuing and progressing in the spiritual journey after taking up a career in Civil Services. I want to stand for justice and exercise honesty in duty. I want to make efforts in changing the Indian education system. I want to do many more things but now I'm scared that I may get lost in the Spiritual path doing such things. Even if I get into Civil Services, I may commit sins with wrong decisions due to limited knowledge and lack of overall background. Humans have limited intellect. Please tell me what is the eligibility for humans to perform administrative role in the society as Civil Servants or Politicians. Anyhow, we know that only God is deserving to receive our selfless service. Every human in society is selfish and cannot protect me anyways. My goal of life must be to please God and I want to progress in Spiritual path fastly. I request you to Kindly tell me directly what to do with my life. Your answer might give me pain right now but I feel that is better than wasting time in going wrong way and repenting later. Please navigate me in right direction. Thank you.

**Swami:** Please read the answer given by Me to Question No. 5 of Shri Bharath mentioned above.

## Chapter 18

**ACT OUT OF ANALYSIS; NOT EMOTION**

April 13, 2019 Shri Rāma Navami Day

**Lord Rama Hid His True Identity**

O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! Rama and Krishna were both complete Incarnations of God on earth. But the difference is that Rama said that He was only a human being and not God (*Ātmānam mānuṣam manye...*) whereas Krishna said that He was God on several occasions in the Gita. These days, the situation of humanity is worse than during the times Rama and Krishna. Hence, Shirdi Sai Baba, the recent Incarnation, followed the path of Rama by always saying that He was a servant of God (*Allah Malik*). Even Krishna said that He was God only in the Gita when He was speaking to Arjuna alone. **It means that the general policy of Human Incarnations of God is only to follow the way of Rama almost everywhere. They hide their true identity and only claim to be ordinary human beings and servants of God. Incarnations follow the way of Krishna only in special contexts when they reveal their true identities as Incarnations of God.** But even while revealing their identity, following the way of Krishna, they may do so in a modified manner owing to these worst times during the present Kali age. So, even on those special occasions, when the Incarnation of God reveals His identity, the Incarnation might say that God is in Him instead of saying that He is God Himself. **This modified claim does speak about the specialty of the Incarnation since God is present only in the Incarnation and not in every human being.** But it also limits the specialty of the Incarnation. If the Incarnation directly claims to be God Himself, it is beyond the limit of what a human being can accept. Even though the Incarnation's claim of being identical with God—being God Himself—is absolutely true, people will not be able to accept it and may react violently to it. This may put the Incarnation in danger as in the case of Jesus. Jesus' claim that He was God (*I am the truth...*) was perfectly true; but people reacted violently to it, leading to a tragic outcome. **The expression of the truth by the Incarnation is not as important as its acceptance by the public.**

### Three Perspectives of an Incarnation

When one special human being, upon becoming a Human Incarnation, says that He is God (“I am the Light”—Bible), it represents the true monism of Śaṅkara. Here, we should not forget that every human being is not God. The same Human Incarnation saying that He is only an ordinary human being and not God, is the dualism of Madhva. Statements such as “I am standing in the Light (God)” represent this philosophical view. Here, the Incarnation only claims to be like any other ordinary human being. Since the entire world is in God, every human being, including the Incarnation, can be said to be in God. What we need to understand from statements of this type is that although most human beings are not God, it does not mean that no human being can be God. In between these two extremities of monism and dualism, lies the golden middle path of special monism given by Rāmānuja. It is a type of monism since God and the soul are not considered to be separate from each other. But an actual basic difference between God and the soul is accepted. As per this philosophy, the Human Incarnation says “The Light (God) is in Me”. Note how this path avoids the danger of leaning to either side by mixing monism and dualism in equal proportion.

### Emotions Lead to Tragedy

Because of the policy followed by Rama, almost all devotees misunderstood Rama to be just a human being. When even Sita misunderstood Rama, what to speak of other devotees! Rama told Sita not to follow Him into the forest due to the danger of wild animals in the forest. But Sita retorted “Are You not man enough to protect me? You are actually a woman in the dress of a man! Without knowing this truth, my father gave me to You in marriage (*Striyam puruṣa vighraham...*)!” Here, Sita appears to be the most ignorant soul. But the fact is that she was acting in the role of an ignorant soul who was unable to understand the future tragedy that awaited her in the forest. **By this, she was preaching to ignorant souls, who will fall into difficulties if they neglect the words of the Human Incarnation, mistaking Him to be an ordinary human being.**

Rama also acted like an ignorant human being in order to preach about the tragic result of blind fascination. On seeing the golden deer, Sita asked Rama to capture it for her. Rama acted like a man fascinated by his sweet wife. He ran after the deer even though His younger brother Lakshmana warned Him seriously against it. **The incident teaches us**

**that we should carefully consider even the advice of people who are younger than us and not just neglect them.** The result of Rama's fascination for His wife was a big tragedy, which is well-known. Lakshmana had stayed behind to protect Sita when Rama went after the golden deer. But when Rama's cries for help were heard, Sita urged Lakshmana to rush for His help. Lakshmana refused to leave Sita and rush for his brother's rescue since he was confident that Rama could not possibly be in any danger. But Sita, who was extremely anxious about the safety of Rama, scolded Lakshmana in unimaginable words. She said that Lakshmana had followed her and Rama into the forest with the hidden intention of marrying Sita after the demise of Rama!

This again preaches to us that we are always swept away by extreme emotion which makes us see only one side of the situation. The emotion prevents us from analyzing from the other side. As a result, the situation ends up in a terrible tragedy. We should learn the lessons that the Rāmāyaṇa teaches us and make use of them in our practical life. Otherwise, simply enjoying the story of Rama is just like watching a movie for entertainment! When even great people like Rama and Sita slipped up, under the influence of strong emotions, what to speak of ordinary human beings? This is the message here. **It means that no matter how great one may be, it is very difficult to avoid mistakes when overpowered by emotion. So, one must always replace emotions with analysis.**

Vāli used vulgar language against Rama, after Rama, hiding behind a tree, shot Vāli with an arrow. Vāli asked Rama how a person like Him could be born to a pious soul like Daśaratha (*Katham daśarathena tvam jātaḥ?*). Vāli too was overpowered by emotion and so, he could not analyze his own sin. Vāli thought that Rama had killed him out of selfish interest. Vāli's brother, Sugrīva had promised to help Rama in searching for Sita if Rama could help him kill the invincible Vāli. This again was a Vāli's misunderstanding due to the influence of his strong emotions. He had mistaken Rama to be an ordinary human politician who can do anything for his own selfish benefit! The reality was very different. Vāli had been punished by Rama for his sins. Vāli had unjustly taken the wife of his brother Sugrīva by force and banished (expelled) Sugrīva out of the kingdom. Rama explained this clearly. He said that it was His duty to punish any sinner on this earth since His Central Government (*Sārvabhauma*) extended all over the earth. In fact,

He was God and could punish every soul in this world for its sins. But He did not reveal this truth in His answer.

Bhartrhari has explained the secret of why people quarrel with others (*Paraguna paramāṇūn parvatīkrutya...*). Your own hill-sized defect appears to you as a mere trace, while a trace of defect in others appears to you as big as a hill. Conversely, a trace of goodness in you appears to you as a hill and a hill of goodness in others appears to you as a trace. If you want to avoid quarrels, you must reverse your mentality. You should see a trace of your own defect as hill and a hill of defect in others as trace. Similarly, you should see your hill of goodness as a trace and a trace of goodness in others as a hill.

The enmity between Vāli and Sugrīva, the brothers of the monkey tribe, began when Vāli's thinking was overpowered with emotion. Vāli, the king of the monkey tribe, was pursuing a demon. The demon entered into a dark cave. Vāli entered into the cave behind the demon to kill it. He told his brother, Sugrīva, to stand on guard outside the cave. After a long time, Sugrīva saw blood flowing out from the cave. The blood smelt like the blood of a monkey. Sugrīva thought that Vāli had been killed by the demon. He was afraid that the demon would come out and kill him too. So, he closed the mouth of the cave with a big stone and returned to his kingdom. He became king after Vāli and married Tārā, the wife of Vāli, as per their law at that time. The law was that the wife of a dead brother becomes the wife of the surviving brother. Little did Sugrīva know that Vāli was not dead. He had succeeded in killing the demon. He came out of the cave and was furious with Sugrīva. Overpowered by emotion, Vāli thought that his brother, Sugrīva, had closed the cave to grab his kingdom and wife. Vāli did not analyze the truth patiently. In his fury, he banished (expelled) Sugrīva out of his kingdom and married Rumā, the wife of Sugrīva, by force. Vāli, who was driven by extreme emotion, did not even listen to the words of Sugrīva, who was trying to explain what had really happened. As a result, he committed sins and had to be punished by God Rama. **Emotion kills wisdom and raises the ego to such a high level that the soul refuses to accept its sin because the acceptance hurts the ego.** The soul does not change only due to this high ego. God does not immediately punish the soul because the kindest Divine Father gives some time to His children to change. If there is no change in the soul, divine punishment is inevitable.

We misunderstand Rama for sending Sita to the forest based on a false allegation made by a washerman. We criticize Rama that He gave more importance to His position as an impartial king than to the truth of Sita. Actually, it is not so. We have to understand Rama as God and not as a mere king. Rama only claimed that He had left Sita for the sake of the administration of His kingdom. He said this because He always hid His divinity. Actually, Rama had punished Sita for her terrible allegations against Lakshmana in the forest. Lakshmana was such a pure soul that he had not even looked at Sita properly. Out of respect, he would only look at her feet. He could not identify any of the jewelry of Sita except her anklets, which alone he would see every day while respectfully saluting to her feet (*Nityam pādābhivandanāt*)! One cannot even imagine that such a Lakshmana could have any impure intentions about Sita. Sita's bitter allegations on Lakshmana were a great sin.

God will tolerate a person scolding Him. But He will never tolerate anyone scolding His devotee. So, God punished Sita by creating an exactly similar allegation against her. Since Sita's sin was intense, its punishment had to be delivered on earth itself and not after death, in hell. But Sita's stay in the forest, in separation from Rama, was supposed to be only temporary. Some years later, when they met again, Rama asked her to prove her chastity before the people of Ayodhya by passing through fire, just as she had proved it in Lanka. But Sita reacted emotionally to this suggestion and entered into the earth, bringing her life to an end. Had she proved her chastity as Rama had suggested, she would have lived with her husband and children for a long time. **In all these incidents, Sita acted like an ignorant and emotional lady to preach to us that emotion without analysis is very dangerous in life.**

On seeing even a divine personality like Sita overcome by emotion, every great person will become very careful about his or her own emotions. Rāvaṇa also got emotional on seeing that his sister's nose had been cut off. He did not analyze what had actually happened. When Rama and Lakshmana refused the illegitimate love of Rāvaṇa's lustful sister, she angrily rushed towards Sita to kill her. It was then that Lakshmana had cut off her nose. In fact, he should have killed her for her atrocity; but he did not.

The emotions displayed by Rama and Sita were only apparent and they were meant to warn human beings to avoid emotion. The emotions showed by Vāli and Rāvaṇa were inherent and they led the two to their destruction. **Emotion leads to hasty action whereas patient analysis**

**leads to correct action.** This is the truth taught by the story of Rama to society.

## Chapter 19

**SATSAṄGA ON SHRI RAMA NAVAMI**

April 13, 2019 Evening

A spiritual meeting (*satsaṅga*) took place between Swami and several devotees on the day of Shri Rama Navami. Following are the discussions that took place.

**Shri Veena Datta:** What is the difference between astrology and devotion to God?

**Swami:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! Astrology gives a list of bad effects during a period governed by a bad planet (*daśā*). From this list, which specific effect will be faced by a specific person, can only be told by God's grace, which is obtained through devotion. For example, astrology gives a list of bad effects that a person might face during the period of Saturn, which include, theft, paralysis, accidents and so on. Suppose two persons approach you and both are passing through the period of Saturn. As an astrologer, you may predict that one person may become the victim of theft but the person may instead suffer from an attack of paralysis. The person will say that you have failed in your prediction. To the other person, during his period of Saturn, you may predict that he may suffer from a paralytic attack. But he might not get a paralytic attack. Instead, a theft might occur in his house. He too will say that you have failed in your prediction. Both these affected persons might even say that astrology itself is false. So, you need to understand that based on your knowledge of astrology, you can never predict which specific effect will be faced by a specific person. Astrology only enables you to predict that some good or bad effect will be faced by the person during a certain time. It is even possible for you to be able to predict the specific effect, provided you have the grace of God. The grace comes through devotion.

The ability to predict the specific effect for a specific person is called as the 'purity of word' or *vākśuddhi*. It can only be obtained by the grace of God. **Hence, the practice of astrology should be associated with the worship of God.** The medical degree, MBBS, means the study of medicine as well as surgery side-by-side. If you have a headache, it can be cured by a simple painkiller tablet prescribed by the doctor who is an expert in medicine. But if you go

to a surgeon, the surgeon will say that your head must be operated upon to find out the reason for the headache! If you get the grace of God through your devotion, there is no need of studying the astrological scriptures.

As per Vedic astrology, a human being, in his or her life, passes through the periods (*daśās*) of each of the nine planets, one after the other. Each planet may be good or bad for a person based on the nature of the planet as described in astrology, its placement in the person's birth-chart and the person's zodiac sign. Therefore, the period of each planet is also good or bad for the person. The so-called good planets deliver the results of the person's good deeds while the so-called bad planets deliver the results of the person's bad deeds. The period of each planet is further sub-divided into the sub-periods (*antar daśās*) belonging to each of the nine planets. Each of the sub-divisions are further sub-divided into even smaller sub-divisions (*vidaśās*) of the nine planets. In this manner, there are several levels of sub-division of these planetary periods.

The long span of the period of a good planet is generally good for the person. During this period, the person generally receives the fruits of his or her good deeds done in the past. But even during this generally good period, the person also experiences both good and bad results corresponding to all the nine planets, during their respective sub-periods. Similarly, in the generally bad period of a bad planet, the person also experiences both good and bad results from all the nine planets during their respective sub-periods. This sophisticated arrangement of planetary periods and their sub-periods made by God, ensures that the person never experiences continuous happiness or continuous pain. Continuous happiness for a long time invariably leads to boredom. Continuous misery for a long time becomes unbearable. **Frequent change prevents boredom and provides maximum entertainment to the soul. The sub-periods of all nine planets within any planetary period ensure that the person enjoys both good and bad fruits of his or her own deeds in an alternating manner.** It is like enjoying sweet and spicy dishes alternately in a meal. If the meal contained only sweet dishes or only spicy dishes, the meal would not be enjoyable. The combination of the two alone gives maximum enjoyment. **The Divine Father has made this wonderful alternating arrangement of delivering the good and bad fruits of the deeds of souls for the sake of their**

**maximum enjoyment.** He wishes that His children always remain happy.

**This alternating cyclic arrangement of the fruit of the soul's deeds is called the *karma cakra*. God rearranges the good and bad fruits in this alternating manner.** A soul might have committed a number of bad deeds, one after the other and a number of good deeds, one after the other. **But the fruits are not delivered to the soul in the sequence in which the deeds were done.** If all the bad fruits were to be given to the soul, one after the other, the long continuous misery would become unbearable for the soul. Similarly, the long continuous span of enjoying the all the good fruits, one after the other, would become boring. Hence, God rearranges them in an alternating manner in the form of the planetary periods and sub-periods. **Thus, every bad fruit is followed by a good fruit and vice versa.**

But when we face miseries, we do not want to bear them. The miseries are actually the results of our own bad deeds. On the order of God, the so-called bad planet is merely delivering the results of our own bad deed to us. But we, somehow, want to escape from the bad results. So, we worship God and force Him to remove the miseries and grant us happiness. Our demand is a violation of justice, which God never permits. But the kind Father also wants to satisfy the praying souls who are His own children. So, He postpones the present miseries to the future and prepones some future happiness bringing it into the present. The praying soul experiences immediate relief from the miseries and the enjoyment of some happiness. But there is big disadvantage in disturbing the original arrangement of the fruits of deeds in this manner. The postponed miseries grow in value due to interest, while the preponed happiness reduces in value; similar to the premature withdrawal of an investment. Even though such interference provides temporary relief to the soul, it is not in the soul's long term interest. But God allows such interference in the cycle of deeds only to help the soul in developing some devotion to God. Upon developing devotion, God expects the soul to work towards permanent reformation. Otherwise, by such repeated postponement of misery and preponement of happiness, the soul may face a life full of continuous misery in the future. **We sometimes find such people whose life is full of misery and not even a bit of happiness, in spite of their devotion to God.**

The sum of the periods of the nine planets is 120 years since the average life in older generations was 120 years. This human lifespan is called *puruṣāyusam*. Whatever may be the actual lifespan, the cyclic arrangement of the planetary periods, each consisting of several levels of sub-periods, is never affected. What I mean is that **even if the average lifespan of a human being were to become as short as one hour in the future, the arrangement of the planetary periods and sub-periods would not change.** In fact, this arrangement applies even to the souls present in the bodies of worms that might actually live only for an hour. Astrology is only an associated part of the spiritual knowledge since the nine planets are the executive forces of God. God is the author of the divine constitution which stands as the basis for the divine administration.

**Shri Ajay:** Please enlighten us about the Human Incarnation and His devotees.

**Swami:** Shri Paramahansa said that He would prefer to be an ant (devotee) rather than being sugar (Human Incarnation). He said so, even though He was a Human Incarnation of God. The ant eats sugar and enjoys. The sugar, on the other hand, gets eaten and gets no enjoyment. **The lack of enjoyment means inertness. So, Paramahansa rightly selected the inert sugar in this simile.** Based on this basic concept, a devotee should never aspire to become a Human Incarnation. A certain devotee might be forced by God to become a Human Incarnation to carry out His work, which is the special divine program meant for the welfare of the world. Even ordinary human beings like a devotee more than the Human Incarnation. This is because the devotee is exactly similar to them whereas the Human Incarnation is different from them and is special. Due to the natural ego and jealousy in every human being, no one likes to see any specialty in another human being. Miracles need not be considered to be the speciality of a Human Incarnation alone. Even a devotee can perform miracles by the grace of God. In fact, even a demon can perform miracles by the grace of God. Demons obtain miraculous powers from God through their rigorous penance. **People feel a repulsion from the Human Incarnation in the form of ego and jealousy. The basic reason for this repulsion is that the Human Incarnation is considered to be God.** They do not feel this kind of repulsion from a devotee since the devotee is not considered to be God. In fact, a true devotee never wants to become God unless God forces him to act in the role of God.

In a movie, an actor played the role of God and got a remuneration of one lakh rupees. In the same movie, another actor played the role of a devotee and was paid ten lakh rupees in remuneration. Hence, it is not the role played that brings value. It is the capability of acting that brings the value. God enters the human body of a devotee to become a Human Incarnation. The human devotee serves as the medium for God's entry. But the value of that devotee, who has become the medium in the Incarnation, comes due to his or her devotion. The fact that the devotee is acting in the role of God does not bring value by itself.

Other devotees around the Human Incarnation must always follow the path of monism of Śaṅkara. It means, they must believe that the Human Incarnation is God Himself. In this sense, monism is good for devotees and it gives them good results. But devotees must be careful in not applying the concept of monism to themselves! They should never think that they too are God. In contrast, the human being-component in the Incarnation must believe in the dualism of Madhva. He must never think that he is God. Instead, he should think that he is merely a servant of God and that acting in the role of God is his service to God. This dualism gives a good result for the human being-component in the Human Incarnation.

Arjuna doubted how Krishna could be God. So, he asked Krishna how He could have preached to Surya, the sun-god, in the beginning of creation. As far as Arjuna knew, Krishna was born quite recently. Paraśurāma, who was a temporary Incarnation (*Āveśa Avatāra*), thought that he was God Himself. As a result, he got insulted by Rāma, who in spite of being a complete Incarnation (*Pūrṇa Avatāra*) never thought that He was God. Even Krishna never said that He was God except to Arjuna when He was preaching the Gita to Arjuna. The devotee must be capable of accepting the monism between the human medium and God in the Human Incarnation without repulsion. To such a deserving devotee, the Human Incarnation may declare the truth. There are other devotees who are in the middle level. They are only partly capable of digesting the truth. Such devotees sometimes even praise the Human Incarnation as God by their words. But internally, they are not completely capable of accepting the same truth without repulsion. In response to such half-hearted praise, the Incarnation must keep silent with a smile. He should not confirm His identity with God. Finally, there are devotees who do not have any faith in the Human Incarnation. To such

devotees, the Human Incarnation must say that He is only an ordinary human being. **The Human Incarnation, being God, knows the actual level of the devotee before Him. So, He always behaves suitably. No matter how devoted the devotee claims to be, his true level of devotion is never hidden from the Human Incarnation.**

**Shri Phani:** How do you correlate the *vivarta vāda* of Śaṅkara with the *pariṇāma vāda* of Rāmānuja?

**Swami:** *Vivarta* means an apparent modification whereas *pariṇāma* means an actual modification. Water appearing as a wave is an example of *vivarta*. Milk getting modified to curd is example of *pariṇāma*. In fact, scholars call only *pariṇāma* as a modification. In the case of *vivarta*, the word ‘modification’ cannot actually be used. Standstill water itself appears as a wave when some kinetic energy is imparted to it. There is no actual modification in the water at all! But we can still use the word modification in sense of the different appearance which is the result of the association of the water with kinetic energy. We can define modification in terms of a change of qualities. In the case of water and the wave, the water remains the same, chemically. There is no change in its qualities as in the case of milk turning to curd. But even in the case of milk turning to curd, the change in qualities can be attributed to the association of the unseen bacteria. It means that the milk does not change its qualities on its own. The unseen bacteria are responsible for the change of qualities. With this deep scientific background, we can differentiate between apparent and real modifications.

The basic point in this topic is that the concepts explained above deal with items of the imaginable domain and their relationships with each other. It is only a scientific discussion since science only deals with the imaginable domain. There is no reference to the unimaginable domain. Of course, we cannot discuss about the unimaginable domain itself since it is beyond logic. **But the present topic is of the creation of the world from the unimaginable God. It is the discussion about the relationship between God, the unimaginable entity and the world, which is an imaginable entity.** We can naturally discuss about the relationship between two imaginable items. We can never discuss about the relationship between two unimaginable items because one can never define more than one unimaginable item. If we attempt to define two unimaginable items, they ultimately become only one unimaginable

entity since divisions or numbers cannot be imagined in the unimaginable domain. Similarly, no relationships can be imagined in the unimaginable domain since a relationship requires two items.

The present discussion is a discussion about the relationship between one unimaginable item and another imaginable item. In understanding the relationship between two items, the knowledge of both the items is essential. You cannot say that this lotus is produced from an unimaginable source. The lotus is understood to be a flower. But its source, which was said to be unimaginable, cannot be understood. Hence, we cannot understand the process of production of the lotus from that unimaginable source. **In short, the relationship between an unimaginable item and an imaginable item becomes unimaginable.** Both *vivarta* and *pariṇāma* are concepts about the relationships between imaginable items like water and a wave or milk and curd. **These concepts cannot directly apply to the relationship between the unimaginable God and the imaginable world.** Logic is only the study of items existing in the imaginable domain (world) and their relationships with each other. You are an imaginable item existing in the world, who cannot cross the boundaries of the world. Then, how can you take this imaginable world in one hand and the unimaginable God in another hand in order to study the relationship between the two? To hold the entire imaginable world in one hand, you have to first stand out of the boundaries of world, which is impossible!

Gauḍapāda says that the world is not born (*ajāti vāda*) at all from God. He says that the world is non-existent to the core. The soul is a part of the world and Gauḍapāda is also a soul. So, as per his own theory, he was also not born at all! He has no existence whatsoever! His theory is correct with respect to the unimaginable God before God created the world. At that time, the world was actually not born (*ajāti*) and had no existence. In contrast, Rāmānuja says that the world is existent to the core and that it is born from God. He is correct because he is a soul who is a part of the world. For a soul, the world is equally existent and equally real as itself. The imaginable world is born from the unimaginable God. The world is different from God. So, considering this to be a case of real modification or *pariṇāma* is justified. But *pariṇāma* between worldly items requires the association of a second item. For instance, milk requires the association of bacteria to transform into curd. In the case of the creation of the world, the single unimaginable God created this

imaginable world without the association of any second item (*Ekamevādvitīyam Brahma—Veda, Mattaḥ parataram kiñcit nānyadasti—Gita*). God is the Cause and the world is the product. The product is real and it is different from the cause (God). From this point of view, it is acceptable to call it a *pariṇāma* or a real modification. But from the point of view of the Cause, which is the single unimaginable God who remains alone without any other second item, calling it a *pariṇāma* is not acceptable. In order for it to be a case of *pariṇāma* from the point of view of the Cause, you have to say that God is really modified into the real and different world, even though there was no other associated item. This was possible for God due to His unimaginable nature or unimaginable power. It means that in the case of God, *pariṇāma* is really possible due to His unimaginable nature and not due to mere worldly logic. The end result is that the *pariṇāma* in the case of unimaginable God is an unimaginable *pariṇāma*.

A similar argument applies to Śaṅkara's *vivarta* too. Even for the apparent *vivarta* modification, the association with a second item is essential. The water must be associated with kinetic energy to become a wave. Without the associated kinetic energy, the standstill water cannot become a wave. The qualities of water in the standstill water and the wave of water are not different. Yet, we can say that the wave of water is different from the standstill water in its shape and form. **Since the product is different from the cause, we can call this too as a modification.** The difference between the water and the wave is only in one quality, which is its form. The modification is only physical. There is no chemical change. So, such a modification is very weak and it can be called as an apparent modification. **Whether it is the *pariṇāma* of Rāmānuja or the *vivarta* of Śaṅkara, the process of generation of the imaginary world from the unimaginable God is certainly unimaginable.**

When the Creator as well as the process of creation is unimaginable, one cannot state with certainty the existence of the product (world) with respect to the unimaginable Creator. **The world, which is the product, was non-existent to God before creation (*ajāti*).** After creating it, it exists either in very strong state (*pariṇāma*) or in a very weak state (*vivarta*) as per the requirements of God so as to give Him entertainment. Existing in a strong state means existing as something very real; as something that cannot be changed easily. Existing in a very weak state means existing in a somewhat unreal

state, like a thought, which can be controlled or changed easily. Such a weak existence can be treated to be a negligible existence. It can even be assumed to be almost like non-existence. Existence is called *sattā* whereas non-existence is called *asattā*. **Negligible existence, which is almost like non-existence, is called *mithyā*.** All these three states are possible for the world as per the requirement of God.

The world created by God can exist in a strong state as different from God. Such existence is also required whenever God wishes so for the sake of His entertainment. In that case, the *pariṇāma* of Rāmānuja applies. But this *pariṇāma* is an unimaginable *pariṇāma* and not the worldly *pariṇāma*. A non-existent creation, which is non-different from the creator cannot give any entertainment to the creator. If creation were non-existent and non-different from God, we would have to accept that God is just like an incompetent-imaginable human being. God as the Human Incarnation in this world is entertained by this real world that is different from the Incarnation. It is just like any human being who is entertained by this real world that is different from the human being.

When God is performing miracles, the world is very weakly existent for Him. Since the world is different from God, it provides entertainment. Also, since it is weakly existent, it can be changed as per His will, which becomes a miracle for us. In this context, Śāṅkara's *vivarta* applies to the world. But it is an unimaginable *vivarta* and not the worldly *vivarta*. A creation that is different from God, but is equally existent as God, cannot be changed by Him. In that case, no miracles would be possible. Then God would not be able to surprise any devotee with a miracle for the sake of establishing the unimaginable nature of God. In that case, we would have to accept that God is just like an incompetent-imaginable human being. God as the Human Incarnation in this world is entertained by this very weakly real world that is different from Him. The word *mithyā* can be applied even in the philosophy of Rāmānuja by saying that the world is real for soul and unreal (non-existent) for the unimaginable God before He created it. Since it is not possible to bring the angles of the soul and God together, one cannot decide for sure whether it is real or unreal. *Mithyā* is defined by Śāṅkara for broad application in this sense of uncertain reality (*sadasatvilakṣaṇā*).

Neither *pariṇāma* nor *vivarta* can be applied to an unborn and non-existent world (*ajāti*) before it was created from the unimaginable

God for the very first time. Subsequently, the world is repeatedly dissolved and then re-created in a cyclic manner. Gauḍapāda's philosophy of an unborn non-existent creation (*ajāti vāda*) cannot be applied to the state of creation before it is re-created after a dissolution. This is because, the world is not completely destroyed during the dissolution. It is maintained in a non-exhibited subtle state (*avyaktam*) during dissolution, only to be re-exhibited in a gross state.

In this way, all the three philosophies, *Advaita*, *Viśiṣṭa Advaita*, and *Dvaita*, can be correlated on the topic of God and His creation. The philosophy of Madhva in this topic is exactly similar to that of Rāmānuja with a few differences. Madhva says that God is only the intelligent cause and not material cause of the world. He agrees that God has full control over the world. But He says that the material cause of the world is *prakṛti* (nature) which exists separately. So, as per Madhva, *prakṛti* is an independent entity that exists along with God.

**One possible doubt arises here. Let us say that one Human Incarnation is performing a miracle in one place in the world. He is treating the world as having a very weak existence in order to perform the miracle. At the same time, in another place, another Human Incarnation is being entertained by the world, treating it to have a very strong existence. How can these two contradictory views of the same world held by two different Human Incarnations be reconciled? How can the same world exist strongly as well as weakly at the same time?** Do we reconcile this contradiction by treating one part of the world as strongly existing and another part as weakly existing at the same time? Actually, that is not necessary. Anything is possible for the unimaginable God due to His unimaginable omnipotence. There is no need to assume the world to be existing strongly in one part and weakly in another part. For the same unimaginable God present in the two Human Incarnations the two contradictory views of the world can certainly coexist. The unimaginable God identifies with the two different human media to become two different Incarnations. Through each of them, both these contradictory wishes of the unimaginable God are fulfilled at the same time.

A false serpent superimposed on a rope can appear to be a real snake. This is similar to the case of spectators who feel the magician's illusion is real. Simultaneously, the rope can appear to be a false

imaginary snake to the same God. This is similar to a person imagining a false serpent on a truly existing rope. For the unimaginable God, both these options are possible. He is the absolute truth, whereas world is non-existent. It can appear to Him as a relative truth with either a strong or weak existence. **The world cannot be another absolute truth, otherwise God could not have generated it, dissolved it, or changed it during its existence.** In a fundamental sense, the world is non-existent to the unimaginable God, who has an absolute existence. In contrast, for a soul, the world actually exists. This is because the soul is a tiny part of the world. This non-existent world may appear to have either a strong or weak existence as per the desire of the unimaginable God. In both cases, the world is non-existent before the unimaginable God in a fundamental sense.

## Chapter 20

**REMOVING SELFISHNESS**

April 28, 2019

Shri Balaji asked “How to get rid of selfishness?”

**Swami replied:** If the self is forgotten, selfishness also disappears from your mind. The self is indicated by ‘I’. Christianity says that the cross indicates the crossing out of the ‘I’; which means negating the ‘I’. When the ‘I’ is crossed, selfishness also gets crossed. When can we forget this ‘I’? When you are watching a movie, you forget yourself. You do not even notice the mosquitoes biting you and the bedbugs on your seat sucking your blood! It means that you forget the ‘I’, when you are strongly attracted to something. **The strongest and permanent attraction is the attraction to the personality of God. There can be no attraction equal to it.** But attraction to the absolute unimaginable God is out of the question since He is unimaginable. One can only develop an attraction for Energetic Incarnations or Human Incarnations. In other words, attraction is possible only for mediated God and not the absolute unimaginable God. Specifically, one must develop attraction towards the contemporary Human Incarnation of God. This is because, the contemporary Human Incarnation alone is the relevant and available form of God for human beings. Energetic Incarnations are relevant for angels who themselves also possess energetic bodies. Human Incarnations are relevant for human beings who possess material human bodies. Among Human Incarnations of God, the past Human Incarnations are not available to us anymore. Only the contemporary Human Incarnation—the Human Incarnation who is alive in our generation is both relevant and available to us.

Attraction to the personality of God means the attraction to His divine qualities. The attraction to the external beauty of the Human Incarnation of God can only be temporary. It can provide some initial attraction but the external beauty disappears in old age. Besides, the Incarnation might not be externally beautiful. Hanumān and Shirdi Sai Baba were not beautiful externally. The contemporary Human Incarnation is certainly the best, but the majority is unable to develop an attraction towards Him. This is because of people’s ego and jealousy. The Human Incarnation possesses the same medium of a human body as ourselves. As a result of the common medium, the human being experiences a natural repulsion from the Human

Incarnation in the form of ego and jealousy. All human beings invariably experience this repulsion of the common medium from other human beings including the Human Incarnation of God present before their eyes. So, instead of developing attraction for the contemporary Human Incarnation, most people develop repulsion.

For such people, statues and images of Energetic Incarnations and of past Human Incarnations serve an important purpose. In the case of the contemporary Human Incarnation, people experience maximum repulsion in the form of ego and jealousy. The repulsion is greatly reduced in the case of Energetic Incarnations and past Human Incarnations. But since they are not available to us, their statues or pictures, which are representative models, must be used. By worshipping these representative models, you can at least develop theoretical devotion towards God. This theoretical devotion is the source of the practical devotion that you must show towards the contemporary Human Incarnation in the future once you identify Him. **The greatest facility available in the case of the contemporary Human Incarnation is that you can serve God directly. Practical devotion means the service and sacrifice done to the contemporary Human Incarnation out of pure love (theoretical devotion). Such practical devotion alone gives the devotee the climax of satisfaction.**

When this attraction to the contemporary Human Incarnation of God is fully developed, it is so powerful that you forget the self or 'I'. Subsequently, selfishness also disappears. Constant devotion brings the eradication of selfishness forever. The Gopikās are the best examples of such constant devotion towards God Krishna, their contemporary Human Incarnation. Rāmānuja gave the concept of developing theoretical devotion to God. Before Rāmānuja, Śaṅkara had already given the concept of spiritual knowledge, which generates the theoretical devotion. Unless you have full information (knowledge) of an item, you cannot develop attraction towards that item. After Rāmānuja, came Madhva. He stands for practical devotion, which includes both service to God and the sacrifice of the fruit of one's work for God. Service to God is called *karma samnyāsa*. Since one earns money in return for one's work, money is the fruit of one's work. Sacrifice of the fruit of one's work, thus, means the sacrifice of one's hard-earned money for the sake of God. This sacrifice of the fruit of one's work is called *karma phala tyāga*. Service and sacrifice together are called practical devotion or *karma yoga*.

The practical devotion is the proof of one's theoretical devotion and the theoretical devotion is the mother of the practical devotion. The practical devotion alone brings the fruit. Practical devotion is like mango

plant that gives the fruit. The spiritual knowledge is like water needed for the survival of the plant and the theoretical devotion is like the manure needed for the growth of the plant. All the three are equally important. Spiritual knowledge, theoretical devotion and practical devotion are the three steps in the spiritual path. Simply stated, the three steps are knowledge, devotion and practice. The three can be considered to be the grandmother, the mother and the daughter standing in a line. The grandmother is highly respectable and the mother is all in all. The daughter is young and strong enough to get pregnant and deliver a child.

The first step of knowing spiritual knowledge is like getting all the information about Mumbai city. Upon getting all the information, one develops a lot of attraction for Mumbai and strongly wishes to travel to it. This is the second step of devotion. The attraction makes you practically go to the railway station (*karma samnyāsa*) and purchase the ticket for Mumbai (*karma phala tyāga*). This is the third step of practice or *karma yoga*. Once you complete these three steps, you must have patience till you reach Mumbai. No further effort is required from your side. All that you have to do is simply sit on your seat or lie down on your berth in the sleeper coach. You should not be in a haste to see Mumbai immediately after purchasing the ticket. Patience (*śama*) is very important everywhere. **Patience shows that you have realised the value of the spiritual fruit.** This point was well-explained by Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Once, the divine sage Nārada was flying towards the city of God. A sage doing penance requested Nārada to find out from God when he would be granted salvation. At the same time, a mad devotee was dancing under a banyan tree, singing songs in praise of God. He too asked Nārada to find out from God when he would get salvation. After some time, Nārada returned. He told the sage that he would be granted salvation after four births. The sage disappointedly remarked “Will it really take that long?” To the mad devotee, sage Nārada said that he would get salvation after millions of births. The devotee was overjoyed and remarked “Will I really get salvation so soon?” At once, the voice of God was heard from the sky “O devotee, you are hereby granted immediate salvation!” The sage had grossly underestimated the value of salvation. The devotee, on the other hand, had estimated its value correctly and was rewarded handsomely by God.

## Chapter 21

**SOLVING FAMILY PROBLEMS**

May 05, 2019

**Shri Balaji asked:** One of my friends told me that he does not have mental peace due to quarrels between his parents and in-laws. Can You kindly give some advice regarding maintaining peace in family affairs and broadly in the society?

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! If you follow the following simple rules, your family life and your life in society can be very smooth. It will help you focus your attention on the spiritual path, which provides eternal fruit.

**Be silent and avoid a quarrel**

Whenever there is an issue in the family, do not scold anybody. Even if someone scolds you, do not scold them back. Speaking harshly with others will only worsen the quarrel. Shri Shirdi Sai Baba said “The one who gets scolded must thank the person scolding him because the scolder is clearing the sins of the scolded.” Pointing to a pig, Baba said, “The scolder is comparable to this pig, which cleans the surroundings by eating excrement.” Shri Satya Sai Baba has said “If you keep silent in response to the scoldings of the scolder, the scoldings return to the scolder like unaccepted registered letters that get sent back to the sender”. This step of silence is very important. It is the primary step in bringing peace. **By your silence, you are leaving the law in the hands of the omniscient God.** He alone can know the truth behind the case. He will certainly punish the sinner at the appropriate time and place.

**Avoid biased judgments of people**

Everyone must understand that every human being has both merits and defects. Only angels have all merits and only demons have all faults. Human beings are in between angels and demons, having both merits and faults as said in the Gita (*Aniṣṭamiṣṭam miśram ca...*). **A human being may exhibit a merit in one context and a fault in another context.** Taking just one particular context, you cannot decide that a person is totally meritorious or totally faulty. Our observation about any person is only partial because we are unable to study the person throughout his or her life. Moreover, the person might appear to be of a certain nature externally, but internally he or she might be something else. We are unable to know any person in and out.

Based on a situation or incident, whenever we say that a certain person is either good or bad, we have made an error of judgement. You should never conclude that any person is 100% good or 100% bad. **The inquiry into the incident must be impartial; without the influence of caste, gender, blood relationships and so on. Such an impartial inquiry can only be done by the omniscient God.**

### **Impartially listen to both sides in a quarrel**

In any quarrel, there is invariably the contribution from both parties. It takes two hands to produce a clap. **You must be extremely careful and avoid forming your impression about a person based on someone else's report.** You should never be influenced by the report of only one party without hearing the other party's report. You should always keep your mind neutral till you hear the counter-argument from the other side. Then, you should use your sharp intelligence to analyze and find out the truth. But to arrive at the truth, you must pray to God for His help. The Veda says that one should be impartial till both sides are heard (*Alūkṣā dharmakāmāḥ...*). Keeping yourself neutral and impartial till you hear the other side, is called balance of mind. A person who has it is called a *sthitaprajña* (*Sthirabuddhirasammudho...—Gita*).

### **Reverse the quarrel-causing attitude**

The basic cause for a quarrel is the attitude inherent to every human being that “I am 100% correct and the other person is 100% bad.” Bhartṛhari has said that if we want to avoid quarrels, we must reverse this attitude (*Paraguṇa paramāṇūn parvatīkrtya...*). According to him, quarrels take place when you see a trace of your own merit as a hill and a hill of your faults as a trace; similarly, when you see the hill of others' merit as trace and a trace of others' faults as a hill. Quarrels will not occur when you reverse this attitude and start seeing a hill of your own merit as a trace and a trace of your fault as a hill; similarly, when you see the trace of others' merit as a hill and a hill of others' faults as a trace. Unless we change our attitude in this way and fix this new attitude in our mind constantly, peace is not possible.

### **Avoid ego, provoking words, threats, and revenge**

Showing your ego, using provoking words and threatening the other person must be totally avoided. If you use any of these in a quarrel, even a beggar will not bend before you. Finally, you alone will end up in a total loss. You must know that even a beggar is protected by God. You should always express peace, kindness and love for everybody. If you do this, even

a demon will eventually change and in the end, you will get total benefit. You must know that even in a demon, there is the possibility of change. Whether it is a total loss or a total benefit, the other side will also equally share it with you. **Can the loss to others provide even a trace of benefit to you? Never! But if you provide even a trace of benefit to others, it will yield a hill of benefit to you, in due course of time.**

In the Mahābhārata, Dharmarāja, the eldest of the five Paṇḍava brothers, was terribly cheated and insulted by their evil cousin, Duryodhana. In spite of that, Dharmarāja wanted to avoid a war against Duryodhana. He was prepared to accept just five villages in the place of his due share of half the kingdom. Eventually, due to the ego of Duryodhana, the war did take place and it caused a hill of loss to Duryodhana and his brothers, the Kauravas. Unfortunately, an equal hill of loss was also suffered by Dharmarāja and his brothers. All the sons of the five Pāṇḍavās, were killed. Knowing this possibility of unacceptable damage to both sides, Dharmarāja had wanted to avoid the war at any cost. But his wife, Draupadī wanted revenge and was rigidly bent on having a war. Revenge should never be taken by our hand; it should always be left to God. When a person slaps you once, you slap him back once in revenge. But if you leave the revenge to God instead, God might slap him a hundred times!

Jesus said “The revenge is Mine”. **One human being cannot punish another human being for his or her faults since only a faultless person can punish the other.** But it is impossible for a faultless human being to exist. The omniscient God knows every human being fully. He knows everyone; not only in this life but also in all their past lives. He knows each one both externally as well as internally. He also knows each and every deed done by all. Hence, God alone can judge any human being perfectly. He alone is eligible to decide the most appropriate punishment for each person and give that punishment to the person. When a prostitute was about to be punished by the public, Jesus told the people that the first person punishing her should be the one who has not committed a single sin! We do not know any person fully because we are not with the person all the time, throughout the person’s life. Besides, we can only know the person externally. Whatever goes on inside the person is unknown to us. **Our knowledge is neither full nor deep.**

On the other hand, the administration of God is always perfect and no injustice can ever happen in it. **There may be some delay in punishing the sinner because God gives some time to the sinner for rectification.** If you keep silent during that period, God will compensate your loss. If you are determined to have your revenge, you will also be punished by God

without any compensation to you! Had Draupadī kept silent and given up the idea of revenge, God would not only have destroyed evil Kauravas, who refused to change, but He would have also saved the children of Draupadī from their deaths. But Draupadī could not give up her continuous burning attitude of revenge and as a result, she was left childless. Besides, Draupadī was not a hundred percent free of blame. Duryodhana had not cheated the Pāṇḍavās and abused her for no reason. Draupadī had laughed at Duryodhana when he fell in the Mayasabhā, the wonderous court of the Pāṇḍavās. She had spoken hurtful words to him. If she had not done that, Duryodhana might not have got the idea of revenge towards Draupadī. Of course, Duryodhana was highly sinful since the magnitude of his revenge was extreme, even for the small sin of Draupadī. Hence, Duryodhana was punished by God severely. **Even Dharmarāja was punished by God in that he was forced to leave the kingdom and live in the forest for twelve years. Dharmarāja's sin was that he should not have accepted the invitation for gambling. Gambling is a sin that is prohibited by the ethical scripture.**

### **Focus on the spiritual path**

The analysis and method of arriving at correct conclusions is similar in both *pravṛtti* (worldly life) and *nivṛtti* (spiritual life). Rigid fools who are full of ego are like demons who neither know what is correct in *pravṛtti* nor what is correct in *nivṛtti* (*Pravṛttiñca nivṛttiñca, janā na vidurāsurāḥ*—Gita). Such people are always dominated by *rajas* (ego) and *tamas* (ignorance). **Due to ego, they do not listen to others and due to ignorance, they do not know what is right by themselves.** Even God cannot convince such people. Still more dangerous are those who are not actually asleep but are pretending to be asleep. Among the two paths, *pravṛtti* (worldly life) and *nivṛtti* (spiritual life); one should concentrate on *nivṛtti*. The fruit of *nivṛtti* follows the soul forever in all the future births and it leads the soul to the eternal goal. The soul travelling in the main line of *nivṛtti*, should not get disturbed by issues related to *pravṛtti* or worldly life. (*Vimūḍho Brahmanah pathi*—Gita). A student pursuing the main line of studies in an educational institute should not get disturbed by issues related to the hostel-administration. If you have the talent and capacity to simultaneously do well in both, it is good. **But if your capacity is limited, then you must confine yourself only to the main line of *nivṛtti*.** Even if it initially appears that your *pravṛtti* is not going very well, the divine administration of God will ensure that everything will get rectified in

Shri Datta Swami

Sri Datta Jnana Prachara Parishat

**due course of time. All you need is a little patience and the understanding that your knowledge is limited and superficial.**

## Chapter 22

**GOD-LIKE ENJOYMENT AND CANCELLATION OF SINS**

May 05, 2019 Evening

Shri Durga Prasad (Mumbai) asked: Will a soul who has been transformed by spiritual knowledge (*Jñānāgniḥ sarva karmāṇi—Gita*) be able to enjoy both misery and happiness equally (*Samatvam yoga ucyate—Gita*)? Can these two statements from the Gita really be reconciled?

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! **Anything is possible by the grace of God, even when it is not possible by the mere effort of the soul.** God becomes the soul in the Human Incarnation and enjoys both happy and tragic incidents equally just as one enjoys both sweet and hot dishes in a meal. This is *yoga (Samatvam yoga ucyate—Gita)*. While eating the hot and spicy dish, your tongue vibrates, your throat makes weeping sounds and tears flow down your cheeks. All these external indications associated with eating a very spicy dish are the same as weeping. But it does not mean that the person is weeping internally. Internally, the person is enjoying the spicy dish. But if you look only at the external indications while the person is eating, you might think that the person is weeping internally too. You will be astonished when the person says after eating that he enjoyed the dish! While he was enjoying the dish, he appeared to weep externally and you were thinking that he was weeping internally too. So, whenever we see a person who is weeping externally, it is possible that he is also weeping internally. But it is also possible that he is enjoying internally like the person eating a spicy dish. When Vasudeva, the father of Krishna died, Krishna wept a lot. Sage Nārada took Krishna aside and asked Him why He was weeping so much even though He was the Lord, who is above all worldly attachments. Krishna replied that He was weeping for the sake of His relatives, who would misunderstand Him if He did not weep at the death of His father! **Hence, we must differentiate between the external weeping and the internal enjoyment.**

**In the case of souls, generally, external weeping also indicates internal weeping, unless the soul is blessed by God.** *Yoga* is the state of equal entertainment in both happiness and misery. God always remains in this state and is the possessor of this state of *yoga*. God blesses the soul who tries for *yoga*; not the soul who does not try at all. Note that the soul

can only try to attain the state of *yoga*. The soul, by its own effort, can never become God, who is the possessor of *yoga*. A soul can become identical with God only when the soul becomes a Human Incarnation of God. But that happens only when God, by His own wish, enters a particular devotee and merges completely into the body and soul of that devotee. God enters only that devotee, who does not even have a trace of desire to become God. It means that the soul trying to become God, can never become God! Thus, a soul can try to attain *yoga* but must give up the desire to become God.

God has said in the Gita that His devotees will cross the worldly illusion called *māyā* by His grace (*Māyāmetām taranti te*). He has also said that for all ordinary souls, it is impossible to cross the illusion (*Mama māyā duratyayā*). Crossing *māyā* means attaining the state of *yoga*, which is the God-like state of equal enjoyment in happiness and misery. **It can only be attained by the grace of God; either directly as in the case of Human Incarnation or indirectly as in the case of a climax devotee. Only with God's grace is it possible for the soul to equally enjoy both comedy and tragedy in the world. Without the grace of God, it is impossible for any soul to cross *māyā* and attain the state of *yoga*.** Of course, the soul can enjoy both comedy and tragedy equally in a movie because it knows fully well that the movie is not true. God can similarly enjoy the world since the world is not true for Him just as the movie is not true for us. But the soul is a tiny part of the world and it cannot feel that the world is unreal or non-existent. Yet, such a feeling can come to the soul only by the grace of the omnipotent God.

God created the world for His entertainment as we go to watch a movie for entertainment. The world is non-existent for God and hence, God creates, rules and destroys the world. **An absolutely existent truth cannot be created, controlled or destroyed by another equally existent absolute truth.** Miracles would be impossible if both God and the world were equally existent absolute truths. A miracle means that God makes some change in the world that overrules the natural laws. This would not be possible if both were absolute truths. A Human Incarnation of God or a climax devotee can perform a miracle. These selected souls are able to perform the miracle by the will of God. The will of God is the only factor which makes a soul become God (Human Incarnation). It is the same will of God due to which the Incarnation or the devotee performs a miracle.

Advaita philosophers say that every soul is already God. They feel that the soul can realize that it is God by repeatedly thinking that it is God. We oppose to this concept. No soul can perform any miracle merely by

thinking that it is God since, in reality, the soul is not God. **In fact, the soul's aspiration to become God is a disqualification by itself.** It is important to note that every soul is neither God already nor does it become God by its own effort. Every soul indeed has the possibility of becoming God as an Incarnation, but only if God wishes so. Perfect monism between God and soul can only be achieved in the form of a Human Incarnation of God. **Trying to enjoy both comedy and tragedy in the world equally (*Samatvam yoga ucyate*) in a God-like manner is not a sin. But thinking that the soul is already God is the climax of ambition.** A servant is eating meals sitting by the side of his master. There is no sin if the servant wishes to enjoy the meals just as the master enjoys the meals. The whole problem comes only when the servant thinks that he is equal to the master. **The soul can wish to enjoy this world just like God. In fact, God also wishes that the servant-soul enjoys the world like Him.** But the servant-soul is not God, who is the Creator, Controller and Destroyer of this world as said in the Brahma Sūtrās (*Jagatvyāpāravarjyam...*). This verse on *yoga* from the Gita is purely confined to the state of God enjoying this world. It is a state that the soul can attain by the grace of God.

This verse on *yoga* has nothing to do with the second verse that describes the burning of all pending sins upon realization of the fire-like true spiritual knowledge. The verse “*Jñānāgniḥ sarva karmāṇi...*” speaks about the cancellation of pending sins in the case of a reformed soul. The first step in reformation is realization through spiritual knowledge. Once this realization through spiritual knowledge is attained, the subsequent two steps of repentance and non-repetition of sin are spontaneous and the soul is then said to be reformed. For such a reformed soul, God cancels the pending punishments of the soul's sins. So, once true spiritual knowledge is attained, the cancellation of pending sins follows spontaneously. Since spiritual knowledge is directly responsible for the cancellation of the pending punishments for a person's sins, it is said to be the knowledge-fire (*jñānāgni*) that burns all sins to ashes. **But the spiritual knowledge must be true without any doubt. Only then can that spiritual knowledge be claimed to be fire.** This second verse has nothing to do with the internal enjoyment of both comedy and tragedy by God or a blessed soul, as mentioned above.

## Chapter 23

**SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE**

May 06, 2019

**Can spiritual knowledge be presented differently to suit people's mentality?**

**Dr. Nikhil asked:** Many people say that they do not believe in the existence of God because they find accepting God's existence inconvenient. I am trying to change the mode of logic in such a way that the existence of God does not become inconvenient to them. Is it alright?

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! Śāṅkara did the same thing to convert atheists into theists. To accomplish this, it was necessary for Him to use some twisted logic. He used a three-step logic: (i) You are God, (ii) You exist (iii) and hence, God exists. In His time, people in India were mostly atheists. They either followed the ritualistic Pūrva Mīmāṃsā philosophy or Buddhism. Converting these atheists into theists was the need of the time. Śāṅkara's philosophy which said that every soul is already God, was tremendously attractive to the atheists. A number of them began to follow His philosophy and thereby became theists. After converting the atheists into theists, He slowly introduced the concept of devotion to God. He said that one can realize that one is God only through devotion to God. By this next step, Śāṅkara indirectly said that the soul is not God in a practical sense. It means that, practically, an all-powerful God exists separately and that He controls the world including all souls. This created the fear of God among the followers due to which they began to avoid sin. On the one hand, Śāṅkara said that every person is God and that in due course of time, the person would realize his or her identity with God. On the other hand, He said that until the person attained realization, the person is not God practically. So, temporarily, each person is under the control of God and hence, each person must fear the punishment from God and the sin that causes the punishment.

The basic concept is one and the same; be it olden times or present times. **If one accepts the existence of the omniscient and omnipotent God, committing sins becomes very inconvenient.** Unlike the judge in a worldly court, it is impossible to mislead the omniscient God. Also, unlike the police in the world, it is impossible to escape the inevitable punishment

from the omnipotent God. Once a person accepts the existence of God, there is no justification for committing sins. Accepting the existence of God is thus highly inconvenient for the person who strongly desires to commit sins. **It is due to this inconvenience that such people prefer to deny the existence of the omniscient and omnipotent God.** They become atheists. These atheists cleverly say that they are not in favor of committing sins; they only do not believe in the existence of God. They claim to be ethical atheists. **If you are not in favour of committing sins, what is the harm in accepting the existence of God?** You might be a highly elevated soul who will not commit a sin even if you do not believe in the existence of God. But all other ordinary souls are not of your high level and they will commit sins if there is no fear of God.

Actually, all this is only the hypocrisy of the atheists. The reality is that they want to commit sins secretly. They feel that they can escape from the law of the land through tricks and corruption. But the existence of the unimaginable God, who can punish the sinner through unimaginable ways, means that the sinner cannot even try to escape from the punishment. God's punishment becomes inevitable even if the sinner manages to escape the punishment from the law of the land. If they accept the existence of God, they cannot freely enjoy their sinful actions, due to the fear of God's inevitable punishment. So, they prefer to deny God and become atheists. Perhaps they think that they can behave sinfully and yet be exempted from the punishment just because they do not believe in God. How foolish they are!

God is greatly concerned about the discipline of this world, which was created by Him for His entertainment as said in the Veda. God is greatly pleased with the preacher who preaches about *pravṛtti*, which is the path of justice in the worldly life of a soul. Such a preacher is helping God in His day-to-day administration of this world. Preaching about *pravṛtti* helps all the souls in the world. Preaching about *nivṛtti*, which is the path of aspiration-free devotion, service, and sacrifice to God, only helps very few deserving souls. *Pravṛtti* is the aim of God and hence, God rewards the preachers of *pravṛtti* heavily. *Nivṛtti* is not the aim of God. God does not want anyone to be devoted to Him, serve Him, or sacrifice for Him. But doing all this is the aim of very few extraordinary souls. It is their wish; not God's. God does not encourage such souls who walk on the path of *nivṛtti*. Instead, He creates several hurdles in their path, which act as tests for the devotees. God only encourages *pravṛtti* which is related to the welfare of all souls in the world.

**Even if the atheist is converted into a theist, the actual purpose is not served until the atheist stops committing sins.** If you say to a student that he need not watch a certain movie since the movie is very boring, the actual purpose is not served. The actual purpose behind preventing the student from watching the movie was that the student should spend that time studying for the exam. If you manage to prevent the student from watching the movie but the student still does not study for the exam, can you say that you have succeeded? Hence, Śaṅkara did not stop at saying that soul is already God. He further said that the soul is ignorant of its own true nature (*avarāṇa*), which means that the soul is not God practically, at least for the time being. The ignorance (*avarāṇa*) had further solidified into a distorted view of the mind (*vikṣepa*), leading to impurity (*mala*), which is of the form of likes and dislikes (*rāga-dveśa*). He added that to practically realize the soul's identity with God, the ignorance (*avarāṇa*) along with its modifications (*vikṣepa* and *mala*) must be removed. To remove the mental distortion (*vikṣepa*), the soul must engage in dualistic worship (*upāsanā*). To remove mental impurity (*mala*), the soul must serve God like a servant (*karma yoga*). **In effect, what Śaṅkara taught His followers is that the soul is not God for the time being and that it must worship God like a servant until the soul 'becomes' God.** During this period of worshipping God, the soul is to be treated as different from God since there cannot be worship without dualism between God and the soul. **It automatically means that the soul is under the control of God and that the soul's sins are punishable by God. So, not only did Śaṅkara convert atheists to theists but He also prevented them from committing sins.**

All talented logic is fruitful only if you prevent the person from doing sins. Simply making the person believe in the existence of God is not useful by itself. Of course, the prevention of sin becomes very easy if the soul accepts the existence of the unimaginable God. Lord Krishna has told in the Gita that the purpose of His incarnation on earth is to establish justice by condemning injustice or sin (*Dharma samsthāpanārthāya...*). Almost all the spiritual scriptures in the world concentrate on *pravṛtti* alone. It shows how much importance God gives to *pravṛtti*. *Pravṛtti* also acts as the basic stage for the higher path of *nivṛtti*. Hence, even *nivṛtti* starts with an emphasis on *pravṛtti*.

### **Is it a sin to change one's spiritual preacher?**

[A question by Kum. M. Meenakshi]

**Swami replied:** The true spiritual preacher is identified as the personification of correct spiritual concepts and not as a certain physical

personality. Shri Shirdi Sai Baba, Akkalkot Maharaj and Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa were the Human Incarnations of the same God Datta. They were present at the same time in different places; in different physical forms. The spiritual concepts preached by them were one and the same. If you change your spiritual preacher from Sai Baba to Akkalkot Maharaj, it is not really a change of your spiritual preacher. Then, if you go from Akkalkot Maharaj to Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, it is also not a change of your spiritual preacher. The reason is that the same concepts are preached by all the three Human Incarnations simultaneously. Even the disciples of any one of these three preach the same spiritual concepts. So, if you become a follower of such a disciple, you have not changed your spiritual preacher because the disciple is explaining the same spiritual concepts with new and different examples. As long as you are following any of these four, you are still following the same spiritual preacher.

But if you go to a fifth new spiritual preacher, who preaches new spiritual concepts which appear sweet to you, but are actually not in the interest of your soul's spiritual welfare, you have changed your spiritual preacher. Such a change is a sin because following the wrong teaching of that preacher, you are going to commit sin. Your inner consciousness tells you which knowledge is the correct spiritual knowledge. It is the knowledge that convinces you from inside even though you may not like it. God always speaks to you through your inner consciousness. Your real welfare always lies in the truth and the truth is always bitter. Your fall always lies in the twisted lie and the lie is always sweet.

The fifth spiritual preacher aspires for some benefit from you. So, he speaks sweet lies to you in order to attract you to him. He expects you to pay him some offerings which provide temporary worldly benefits to him. A true spiritual preacher only speaks the bitter truth. He does not care for the offerings from the followers which provide only temporary worldly benefits to him. He only relies on God, who will grant him a permanent reward that is millions of times more valuable than the offerings from followers. Some of the false preachers actually know the truth, but they still preach sweet lies for the sake of momentary benefits from the public. They do not have faith in God, who is going to reward them tremendously for preaching the bitter true spiritual knowledge of God.

## Chapter 24

**SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE**

May 07, 2019

**Where are the fruits of our deeds enjoyed? On earth or in the upper worlds?**

**Kum. A. V. N. Kishori asked:** It is said that we are reborn on this earth to enjoy the fruits of our deeds (karma). But it is also said that we undergo the punishments (fruits) of our bad deeds in hell. Do these two statements not contradict each other? Also, what is the importance of the number 19 in numerology?

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! Your second question on numerology has no connection with your main spiritual question. This second question is like a black spot on the white moon! Yet, I am answering your second question first since it is the first time that you are posing questions to Me. **Our ancient astrological scriptures do not have the numerology that is being followed nowadays.** The numerology that is based on the ancient astrology is different from the present system of numerology.

The number 19 is related to Saturn (*Śani*), which is a very powerful planet in both materialistic life as well as spiritual life. Note that in Vedic astrology, when we refer to a planet, we do not refer to the inert planet but to the deity that rules that planet. The deities are the executives in God's divine administration and they deliver the fruits of the good and bad deeds of souls. *Śani*, the ruling deity of the planet Saturn, is said to be the initiator of spiritual knowledge (*jñāna kāraka*). From another angle, 19 also represents the moon (*Candra*) because  $1 + 9 = 10$  and the number 10 is related to the moon. The moon controls the mind. So, the significance of the number 19 is the control of the mind (moon) through spiritual knowledge (*Śani*) and the detachment of the mind from the materialism that is well-established in the world around us. If you are totally dedicated to God, all these details related to astrology and numerology are unnecessary.

Coming to your main spiritual question, heaven and hell indeed exist as separate upper worlds. After the death of a soul on earth, the soul enjoys the fruits of its meritorious and sinful deeds in those worlds respectively, for a stipulated period of time. Thereafter, the soul takes a fresh birth on earth. The person's life span on earth is separate from the time period spent by the soul in heaven and hell. Earth, heaven, and hell are all separate

places. **The places are different and the times spent by the soul in each place are also different. So, none is disturbed by the other.** Earth is meant for doing deeds with full freedom. Hence, it is known as the world of actions (*karma loka*). Heaven and hell are known as worlds of enjoyment (*bhoga lokas*), where the fruits of the deeds done by the soul on earth are merely enjoyed. There is no freedom in those worlds. The fruits have to be enjoyed for the stipulated period, without any choice. No new deeds are done in those worlds.

On earth, while the person is performing deeds, the enjoyment of the fruits of the deeds should not disturb the person. Similarly, while the soul is enjoying the fruits in the upper worlds, the performance of deeds should not disturb the soul's enjoyment. **Hence, the deed and its fruit are kept separate in place and time so that they do not interfere with each other.** This is the general rule but there are some exceptions. One exception is that the fruits of very intensive deeds of a soul are to be enjoyed by the soul on earth itself. Another major and overall exception is that God can draw any fruit from the life cycle of a soul and grant it to the soul to enjoy at any particular time. This is done with a view to reforming the soul. The soul is the disciple and God is the Divine Spiritual Preacher. Hence, God closely attends to the activity of reforming the soul. So, the separation of the deed and its fruit in place and time is not a hard and fast rule. The place and time of delivery of the fruits of the soul's deeds is ultimately decided by God, who is the Supermost Authority and the possessor of the supermost knowledge. His decision is most effective for reforming the soul and for providing eternal benefit to the soul.

Every soul on earth is made of the three fundamental qualities: *sattvam*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattvam* represents knowledge, softness of nature and devotion to God. *Rajas* represents ego, greed and activity. *Tamas* represents ignorance, rigid attachment to worldly enjoyment and inactivity. Each soul has its own specific ratio of these three qualities which remains approximately fixed although there might be slight changes. These three qualities are very intense on earth. Let us take an example of a soul having ratio of 60:25:15 in *sattvam*, *rajas* and *tamas* respectively. Let us say that the quantity of each of these qualities is in kilograms to indicate their high intensities. When the soul returns to earth after going to heaven and hell, this ratio does not change. However, the intensities of each of the three qualities greatly reduce. Thus, the soul which has just taken birth on earth has the same ratio (60:25:15) of the three qualities. The only difference is that now the quantity of each of the three qualities is in grams instead of kilograms. How did the quantity or intensity of each of the qualities reduce?

The punishments in hell reduced the intensities of the soul's *rajas* and *tamas*. Similarly, the enjoyment in heaven reduced the soul's desire for happiness, which means, it reduced the intensity of *sattvam*. This ratio of the three qualities, as the soul returns to earth, is called *sañcita*.

In the case of this example chosen by us, the soul's predominant quality is *sattvam* (60%). It will give a birth to the soul in the family of scholars of spiritual knowledge providing a congenial environment to the soul. This predominant quality (60% *sattvam*) causing that particular birth is called *prārabdha*. As the soul lives on earth, the quantities of each of the qualities will increase from grams to kilograms. The ratio will still usually remain approximately the same (60:25:15). Occasionally, this ratio may even change to a large extent. It may change to a new ratio such as 80:15:5. It means that *sattvam* increased a lot in that particular birth of the soul. This happens when the soul comes in contact with a divine spiritual preacher. The added and deleted amounts of the three qualities leading to a large change in the ratio is called *āgāmi*. **There is full freedom given to the soul on earth to change this ratio by acquiring spiritual knowledge and performing good deeds. Hence, it is said that even angels are eager to take human birth on earth!** If the soul wastes or misuses the precious time of this rare human birth by spending it all in petty worldly matters, such a soul must indeed be given the rare title '*the most unfortunate soul*'.

### **Why is the Shrimad Bhāgavatam said to be the highest scripture?**

[A question by Dr. Annapurna.]

**Swami replied:** With reference to any action, there is the doer of the action (*kartā*), the object of the action (*karma*), the action or the activity itself (*kriyā*) and the fruit of the action (*phalam*). Shrimad Bhāgavatam describes the life and the divine deeds of God Krishna as He interacted with His devotees, the Gopikās. It is the story of the highest action (*kriyā*) done by the highest Human Incarnation (*kartā*), to the highest devotees (*karma*), which caused the devotees to attain the highest divine fruit (*phalam*). It means that all the four parts of the action, as mentioned above, were the highest. Let us see this in greater detail.

1) God Krishna, whose divine deeds are described in the Shrimad Bhāgavatam, is said to be the **highest** Incarnation expressing His divinity to the fullest extent. The 1/16<sup>th</sup> fraction of God's unimaginable power is called a *kalā*. A *kalā* means a light or a ray of light. The 16 *kalās* also refer to the 16 phases of the moon. In the context of an Incarnation, the *kalās* refer to the extent to which divinity expressed by the Incarnation. An Incarnation expressing just one *kalā* is said to be a

*Kalā Avatāra*. An Incarnation expressing more than one *kalā* is said to be a Partial Incarnation or an *Amśa Avatāra*. An Incarnation expressing 12 *kalās* is said to be a Complete Incarnation or a *Pūrṇa Avatāra*. God Krishna expressed all 16 *kalās* and therefore, has been described by this scripture as the Most Complete Incarnation or the *Paripūrṇa Tama Avatāra*. In fact, it is said that Lord Krishna alone is the Most Complete Incarnation of God (*paripūrṇa tamaḥ sākṣāt, śrī kṛṣṇo nānya evahi*). Thus, the doer (*kartā*) of the action described in the Bhāgavatam is the **highest**.

- 2) The action, mentioned here, was done to the Gopikās. The Gopikās were the cowherd women of Vrindāvanam village, who were reborn sages. They were the highest souls, who had done immense penance over millions of births for attaining God. Thus, the Gopikās, who were the recipients (*karma* or object) of the action done by Lord Krishna were the **highest**.
- 3) As a result of the action done by Lord Krishna to the Gopikās, the Gopikās attained the **highest** divine fruit (*phalam*). They attained the eternal companionship of the Lord in the highest world called Goloka. Before the Gopikās, there were fourteen worlds altogether. It included seven lower worlds, earth as the middle world and six heavenly worlds above earth. Brahma Loka or Vaikuṅṭha Loka is the fourteenth world and the permanent abode of God. But God created the Goloka especially for the Gopikās even above the Vaikuṅṭha so that the dust from the feet of the Gopikās would fall on Him continuously. Even while He was on earth, God Krishna applied the dust of the feet of the Gopikās on His head to cure His headache.
- 4) The activity (*kriyā*) done by the highest doer Krishna to the highest objects, the Gopikās, which yielded the highest fruit called Goloka, must also be the **highest**. What was this activity involving these three highest items? The activity was stealing butter and dancing with the Gopikās secretly at midnight! How can this activity be the highest? It does not even seem to fit in with the other three highest items mentioned above. In fact, this activity seems to be the lowest. If at all it has to be called the highest, then it must be called the highest sin!  
Actually, it is the lack of proper analysis which makes people think of this highest activity as the lowest. This activity of Lord Krishna is related to salvation. Salvation means the liberation from worldly bonds. The highest salvation means the liberation from the highest or strongest worldly bonds. What are these strongest worldly bonds of a soul? The three strongest worldly bonds, which are known as the three *eṣaṇās* are:

(i) the attachment to wealth (*dhaneṣaṇā*), (ii) the attachment to one's issues (*putreṣaṇā*) and (iii) the attachment to one's life-partner (*dāreṣaṇā*). God Krishna tested the sages who were reborn as the Gopikās for their ability to overcome these three strongest or highest worldly bonds for His sake. These were tests of whether the Gopikās were more attached to God Krishna or to their worldly bonds.

To test the Gopikās' ability to overcome their attachment to wealth, He stole their butter. **Butter was the wealth of the cowherd women. They would sell it in the nearby Madhurā city (Mathura) in order to procure household provisions.** A portion of the butter was stored in earthen pots as food for their own children. By stealing the butter, both the attachments to wealth and issues were simultaneously tested by God. The Gopikās who could not overcome their worldly attachments for the sake of Lord Krishna, went to His mother and complained to her about His theft of their butter. They clearly were more attached to their worldly bonds than God Krishna and they failed the test of God. The successful Gopikās were the ones who were not only happy about the theft, but they also, gave extra butter to Krishna secretly on their way to Madhurā city. Their attachment to God Krishna clearly exceeded their attachment to the worldly bonds. The third strongest worldly bond is the bond with one's life-partner. Lord Krishna tested the Gopikās' ability to overcome this bond by inviting them to dance with Him secretly at midnight. The successful Gopikās willingly left their husbands and their families for the sake of Krishna. All the Gopikās who succeeded in overcoming the three strongest worldly bonds due to their attachment to God Krishna, were granted liberation from the worldly bonds. They reached Goloka, the highest world.

God Krishna performed this secret dance not out of lust, but with the attitude of an examiner evaluating His students, the Gopikās. He was like the male doctor who helps a pregnant lady deliver a child. The doctor's focus is only the medical treatment of the lady and not lust. Once the examination was over, Krishna neither returned to Vrindavanam throughout His life nor did He ever repeat such an examination elsewhere since eligible candidates for such an examination were not available at any other place. Had there been lust in the mind of Krishna, He would have either returned to Vrindavanam sometime to repeat it or He would have repeated the same elsewhere in His life.

So, we see that the theft and the secret dance of Lord Krishna were not the lowest sins. Instead, they were the highest tests to prove the devotees' detachment from their three strongest worldly bonds. The tests

were necessary to give the devotees, the highest salvation, which is the liberation from the three highest worldly bonds. The action done by Lord Krishna to the Gopikās was thus, the **highest** divine action.

In short, Shrimad Bhāgavatam describes the **highest** divine action done by the **highest** Incarnation of God, to the **highest** devotees, in order to grant them the **highest** divine fruit. Hence, Shrimad Bhāgavatam is treated as the **highest** spiritual scripture. In order to correctly understand the essence of this scripture, the highest analysis is also required. As a result, it is considered to be the acid test of the spiritual knowledge of scholars (*Vidyāvatām Bhāgavate parīkṣā*).

## Chapter 25

**SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE**

May 23, 2019

**How can the cravings of the soul be identified?**

Shri Hrushikesh Pudipeddi brought the following question to the attention of Swami. The question was posed by a devotee on an online forum after the devotee read one of Swami's discourses related to Advaita. The devotee asked "How can one know that the soul wants something? How can one identify if it is the craving of the soul?"

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! The correct term to be used when referring to the awareness present in a particular human being is the 'individual soul'. The term 'soul' refers to the inert energy that is required to generate the awareness (individual soul) in the person's functioning nervous system. The inert energy, thus, forms the basic essential material of awareness. This awareness takes different forms called as pulses (sphoṭa) and a bundle of these pulses is the individual soul. When we talk about cravings, it is the awareness or the individual soul that craves. **Non-aware inert items like stones can neither think nor crave for anything.** The individual soul is loosely called as soul. That is, the individual soul, which is a bundle of thoughts, is loosely called awareness. It is just like calling a bunch of golden ornaments simply as gold. This point is just basic commonsense and does not involve much logical analysis. The individual soul, which can be loosely called the soul, is what craves since only awareness is capable of craving. Inert items have no awareness and hence, cannot think or crave for anything. It is an extremely simple concept that is known even to a just born baby! **We recognize the soul by the existence of the process of thinking and the absence of thinking shows the non-existence of the soul.**

**Why does God allow people gathered for worship to get killed in terrorist attacks?**

**Shri Anil asked:** Padanamaskaram Swami! In the recent terrorist attacks, many people who had gathered for worship were killed. Some people are questioning why God allows such killings to take place in a place of worship. They are asking if God was sleeping while these people were being killed. Even if the killing were inevitable, God could have easily made it happen in some other place so that this blame would not come on God. At Your Divine Feet, Anil.

**Swami replied:** The time and place of punishment is decided by God Himself. God Himself is punishing the sinners by killing them. Krishna Himself killed several sinners and He also got several sinners killed. Prophet Mohammad also killed several sinners, who were creating violence by propagating the multiplicity of God. Of course, sometimes, even God gets killed by sinners! Jesus, Śaṅkara, Dayānanda Sarasvati etc., were Human Incarnations of God, who were killed in this manner. All these incidents have their own hidden backgrounds.

**When God is not present in any statue or symbol that represents God, what is the difference between temples, churches etc., and any other place?** The body of the Human Incarnation of God is the true temple in which God actually exists. Places of worship are mere buildings. God is not actually present in them. While speaking about the resurrection of the Church in three days, Jesus was referring to His body as the Church. Every Tom, Dick and Harry attacks the administration of God and finds fault with it. None of them understand the truths hidden in the background. **It is merely our faith that God exists in the statutes and other symbols representing God. It is not the reality. This is clearly told in the Veda (*Na tasya pratimā...*) and scriptures of other religions.** However, this concept must only be kept in mind by realized people. They should not express it out and disturb the spiritual progress of the common person who believes that God is in the temple or church or in the statue. The ordinary person believes that the representative model itself is God and through this belief he develops devotion to God. No assumption is wrong if it is helpful in making good progress in the right direction.

God is always holy and He remains holy in spite of the close association of unholy things. Such cruel acts of killing occurring in a place of worship do not make God unholy at all. **Besides, the devotees assembled for prayer in a place of worship need not be holy. They might even be sinners. By this incident, God is giving us the message that He will not interfere in the divine administration at any place, at any time and under any condition.** If a sinner is to be punished exactly at a particular time, the punishment will certainly be delivered by God at any place; even if the sinner is right before Him! On the other hand, devotees who are actually holy and free of any sin, will not be punished even if they are very far away from the holy place of worship. This shows the impartiality of the divine administration of God, which remains totally detached. If the son of a judge who lives in his father's house is found to be a criminal, an honest and impartial judge will call the police and have them arrest his own son in his own house. In that situation, the judge does not see

him as his son but only as a criminal. He gives no importance to the fact that the son is living with him in his own house. **Similarly, God does not give any importance to the fact that His devotee is praying in the holy place. If the devotee has previously committed a serious sin, God will call the terrorists to come and kill His own sinful devotee even in His own place.**

The person's devotion does not cancel the fruit of the sin. Both fruits are given separately. A student is supposed to receive a gold medal on a specific day. But on the same day, he gets arrested by the police for a crime that he had committed earlier. Can the student say that he is willing to forgo his gold medal if the police release him? Will the police release him taking his gold medal as a bribe? The duty-minded policeman will accompany the student to the award ceremony, allow him to receive his gold medal and then he will put the student back in police custody. **Hence, it is foolishness to think that the worship to God will exempt the soul from the punishment of sins.** Such foolish lies are propagated by selfish priests to earn money from people through their worship!

The only way to get rid of the punishment of not just one particular sin, but the pending punishments for all other sins is the three-step path of reformation. The three steps in the reformation of a soul are realization by knowledge, repentance by devotion and the non-repetition of the sin in practice. **Do you think that the devotion of the devotees standing near the holy representative model of God had brought this reformation in them. Had they attained realization? Had they truly repented? Had they reached the state of non-repetition of the sin, practically?** If there is any devotee, who has completed these three steps and is fully reformed, he will remain completely unharmed. He might be standing right next to the terrorist and yet no harm will come to him. Hence, the point is not about whether the place is holy or unholy. It is a question of the holiness or unholiness of the devotee, which decides whether the person will be protected or punished.

## Chapter 26

**IS SERVING GOD UNFAIR TO ONE'S FAMILY?**

May 25, 2019

**Shri Hrushikesh asked:** When a devoted soul is dedicated to God and is involved in practical service and sacrifice to God, the family members of the devotee suffer. Is it justified on the part of the devotee to let his family suffer as a result of his devotion?

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! **Certainly, I tell you, it is not merely justified but it is more than justified!** Śaṅkara, even though He was the only son of His mother, left her in her old age in order to serve God. His old mother lived alone in a hut far from the village and she did not even have the cooperation of her relatives. If you see these circumstances, you will say that Śaṅkara's action was not mere injustice, but it was more than injustice! The old mother, who had no attendant, suffered a lot at the fag end of her life. But just before her death, she had the vision of Lord Krishna and after her death, she was given total salvation by God. Her suffering in her old age was temporary whereas, the salvation achieved by her gave her permanent bliss. Śaṅkara had left His home for the sake of God's work. His mother was granted salvation because she sacrificed her Son for the sake of God's work. You cannot say that Śaṅkara's mother was a realized soul and hence, she did not suffer. In fact, it was not so. She was greatly attached to her beautiful Son and she always wanted her Son to get married and stay with her till the end of her life. She was not cooperating with God's work due to her very strong attachment to her Son.

Śaṅkara had to force His mother to sacrifice Him for the sake of God's work in the world. He created a divine drama in which a crocodile caught hold of His leg as He was swimming in the river. He shouted out to His mother who was on the bank of the river that the crocodile would let Him go only if she allowed Him to become a saint for the sake of doing God's work. He said that if she denied permission, the crocodile would surely kill Him. Of course, the old helpless mother had no choice but to allow her Son to become a saint and Śaṅkara was released by the crocodile as soon as she permitted. Now, is there any such crocodile, anywhere in the world, which realizes spiritual concepts and releases its victims if they are allowed to do God's work by their mothers? **So, frankly speaking, Śaṅkara simply cheated His innocent old mother for the sake of**

**servng God.** Such cheating of people for the sake of serving God is not a sin at all. Had He stayed with His mother in her old age, He would have done some temporary service to her. But she would not have attained salvation. Is there any comparison between that temporary service that He might have done for her and the eternal salvation that she got? Had He attended to His mother, she might have got some temporary happiness. But since He attended to God and served Him, after leaving His mother, she got the unimaginable divine fruit of eternal blissful salvation. Who has done real service to his or her mother: Śaṅkara or the ordinary person who serves his or her mother during her old age? **The truth is that nobody in this world has done so much service to his or her mother as Śaṅkara.** Similarly, the Gopikās cheated their families by giving butter secretly to Krishna and dancing with Krishna in the middle of the night, while their families were in deep sleep. **All those family members were given salvation since they were the relatives of the Gopikās.** The devotee, Viṣṇu Datta, donated food to God Dattātreyā Himself during the annual death ceremony of his father. All his ancestors were granted salvation for that service.

If you neglect your family for the sake of an illegitimate worldly bond, it is a sin and you will be sent to a horrible hell for it. **But if you put God in place of that illegitimate worldly bond, it gives you an unimaginable merit. That is, if you neglect or sacrifice your family for the sake of serving God, God gives eternal divine fruit not only to you but also to your family which suffered due to your sacrifice.** Sage Nārada is the author of the Nārada Bhakti Sūtram, which is a collection of aphorisms on devotion. One of the aphorisms (*sūtram*) in it is “*Jārāvātca*”, which means that a devotee must be dedicated to God just like a sinner is attached to an illegitimate partner such as a prostitute. Here, the devotee is compared to a sinner and God is compared to the illegitimate partner or prostitute. Both these comparisons are actually not acceptable and are the non-applicable parts of the simile. The only applicable part of the simile is the sinner’s strong fascination for the illegitimate partner, owing to which he even leaves all his legitimate bonds. A simile that applies only in one aspect is called an *ekabhāgopamā*, which means a ‘one part-simile’. Since there cannot be a more powerful simile than this bad simile, it has been allowed. But we must understand that the non-applicable aspects of the simile are to be ignored and that our attention should be focused only on the applicable aspect of the simile.

If the family of a devotee cooperates with the devotee’s efforts in serving God, it is the greatest fortune. In that case, the family will not suffer

and in fact, will be happy to also participate in the divine service. Both Vidura and his wife were strong devotees of Krishna and both served Krishna when He visited their home. Hence, the devotee must first start the divine service at home. It means that the devotee should first propagate spiritual knowledge and devotion among his or her family members, relatives and friends. **But one should not go on wasting time in preaching only to one's own family and friends' circle for too long. This is because such limited propagation leaves out many other deserving recipients of the knowledge in the world.** Will you go on making efforts to bring awareness into your inert house made of bricks and stone, just because it is your house? No matter how hard you try, the inert house is never going to become aware. Instead, can you not make some efforts to bring awareness into a sleeping person who is outside your house? He will become aware as soon as he wakes up.

That brings us to an important question. What can you do with your family, which is under the influence of deep ignorance and as a result, does not cooperate with your service to God? The family members obviously suffer when you serve God against their wishes and sometimes, they may even obstruct your spiritual efforts. Under such circumstances, you must serve God secretly (*Ātmānaṃ rahasi sthitaḥ*—Gita). Your service to God must remain top secret (*Rahasyaṃ hyetaduttamam*—Gita). The Gopikās are the best examples of this path of secret service to God. **In any case, you must not sympathize with your family members because they are suffering only because of their ignorance.** Instead, you must be extremely happy that your family is going to get eternal salvation without making any spiritual effort!

**The actual issue here, is not your concern for the suffering of your family as a result of your spiritual efforts. The main hidden reality is that you are unable to detach from your family.** You very well know this actual reason and you also know that this attachment to your family is your defect. Generally, people colour their defects to make them appear like merits! Here, the defect is your strong attachment to your family. But you color it to make it appear as a merit by saying that you are feeling sympathy for the suffering of the souls, who happen to be your family members. **Your family is suffering due to several other defects of yours. But you do not sympathize with them for that!** If your kind heart has really melted out of sympathy for suffering souls, why do you not sympathize with the several souls in the world who are suffering even more than your family? The reason is very clear: it is not a matter of sympathy for the suffering of souls but it is your attachment to your family.

This blind fascination that you have for your family can be slowly diluted in course of time by repeated spiritual efforts and detachment from your worldly bonds (*Abhyāsenā tu kaunteya, vairāgyeṇāca gṛhyate*—Gita). But in what way can we achieve detachment from these worldly bonds? You can never get detached from the worldly bonds by hating them. If you go on hating coffee, can you get detachment from coffee? No! But if you taste divine nectar, your fascination for coffee will naturally drop away without any effort. Similarly, if you develop a fascination for God, the worldly bonds will drop off naturally. The Gopikās got salvation from their worldly bonds not by hating the bonds but by developing a new bond with Krishna and strengthening the new bond more and more. **Śaṅkara was able to leave His mother not by hating her, but due to His overwhelming fascination for God.** Buddha left His wife, wealth and son not due to any hatred towards them, but due to His overwhelming attachment to God. Prahlāda remained in detached silence as his father was violently killed by God. But he never had even a trace of hatred towards his wicked father who had tortured him. The reason for Prahlāda's detachment during his father's death was not hatred but his unimaginable devotion to God.

You must not criticize Me for telling you this truth, which is so bitter. The point is that one should know the truth, at least once. The knowledge of the truth always gives great strength because the truth has immense power. Once it enters your brain, it will not leave your soul. It will remain as a strongly impressed concept (*samskāra*). It will follow your soul forever and liberate you even after millions of births. **If the truth is not known at all, there is no chance of your salvation, ever.** Hence, Śaṅkara said that true knowledge alone can give salvation (*Jñānādeva tu kaivalyam*). Once the true knowledge is received, the generation of devotion, followed by service and the sacrifice of the fruit of one's work, are natural consequences.

## Chapter 27

**REMOVING SELFISHNESS: SELF ANALYSIS AND DEVOTION**

May 26, 2019

Shri Kishore Ram asked: You have said that when 'I' is crossed the selfishness being related to the self ('I') also vanishes. You have further said that 'I' vanishes whenever one is attracted to God. This brings a temporary relief from the selfishness. How to get rid off selfishness forever?

**Devotion to the Contemporary Incarnation**

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! As long as 'I' exists, selfishness also exists just like the property of heat exists as long as the fire exists. The root source of selfishness is the I-thought or one's self-identity. **It means that one must try to keep oneself in the state of being attracted to God at all times. It is the only way to be relieved of selfishness forever.** A doubt arises at this point that if a devotee is always immersed in God, how can the devotee perform his or her necessary worldly duties? The answer to this question is found in the Gita. God says that in the case of such a devotee, who is always immersed in God, God Himself takes up the worldly responsibilities as well as the spiritual responsibilities of that devotee (*Teṣāṃ satatayuktānāṃ..., Yogakṣemaṃ vahāmyaham*). For such a devotee, God is everything. Hence, his mind will not be attracted to anything or anyone else in the world. For such a devotee, if God is present before him in human form like Krishna, it will be very convenient to develop attraction towards Him. Also, such attraction or devotion towards the contemporary Human Incarnation of God will actually be real. This is because, God can easily test the genuineness of the devotee's devotion. The proof of the purity or genuineness of the devotee's devotion is his ability to overcome his worldly bonds in order to practically serve the Incarnation and sacrifice the fruit of his work to the Incarnation. For such a genuine devotee, the contemporary Human Incarnation of God is everything as said in the Gita (*Vāsudevaḥ sarvamiti...*).

Instead of the contemporary Human Incarnation of God, if the devotee chooses to be devoted to the unimaginable God, even developing theoretical attraction becomes impossible. How can you develop attraction to an Entity which you cannot even imagine? So, the unimaginable God is

the most inconvenient to develop devotion as also stated in the Gita (*Avyaktā hi gatirduḥkham*). If the devotee chooses to focus on a representative symbol of God such as an image or a statue, it might be possible to develop some attraction towards it. But there is no way of proving the genuineness of the devotee's attraction or devotion to God. Whenever the devotee serves or sacrifices something to God in the form of a statue, God does not actually and directly receive the offerings. The statue cannot test the devotee's devotion as an Incarnation can. Even the devotee does not get complete satisfaction in worshipping a representative symbol of God as he can get by worshipping the contemporary Human Incarnation of God. **When the goal of one's devotion is God-in-human-form, not only does the practical service and sacrifice done by the devotee fully prove that the devotee's devotion is actually real but the devotee also gets full satisfaction.**

Sages are considered to be the topmost devotees in creation and are given a higher place than even angels. These sages realized the existence of the absolute unimaginable God (Parabrahman) after thoroughly analyzing and debating upon spiritual knowledge for millions of births. But they could not properly concentrate on that original form of God. They realized that even theoretical meditation on the unimaginable God is impossible. The sages also tried to concentrate on energetic forms of God. But they realized that God would only appear in these energetic forms for a very short time. **Finally, they approached Rāma, the human form of God, after having had a lot of theoretical debates and discussions for many births.** But Rāma told them that He would examine them in their next birth before granting them the certificate for total salvation.

### Monism and Dualism

'I' means the basic ego or self-identity, which is necessary even to continue on the path of devotion to God. Devotion requires the dualism between the devoted soul and God who is the goal of the soul's devotion. If the self is totally forgotten, the difference between God who attracts the soul and the soul which is attracted, also disappears. If that happens, the very attraction (devotion) itself disappears. **Devotees enjoy in dualistic devotion to such a great extent that they condemn the very concept of monism between God and the soul.** Their point is correct from the devotee's point of view since no devotee should ever aspire for attaining monism with God. But such dualistic devotees are seeing only one side of the picture, which is the side of the devotee. They are not seeing the other side, which is the side of God. If God Himself desires to grant the monism-

fruit to a certain devotee, how can you oppose it? Such monism with a certain devoted soul allows God to come down into this world in human form for the sake of the welfare of the world. The devotee cannot contradict this fact by saying that monism is impossible.

But it should be noted that even such Human Incarnations, do not express their monism with God at all times. Monism is expressed by them only on certain occasions, when it is actually required. **If God-in-human-form were to express His monism with God continuously, He would not be able to freely mix with devotees.** It is important to keep the devotees in a stable and normal state that is free of excitement. It helps the devotees openly ask spiritual questions to the Incarnation without any fear. After all, the Incarnation is the Divine Preacher whose primary purpose of incarnation is to preach the highest spiritual knowledge to people and resolve all the doubts expressed by them. If you are constantly aware that the Human Incarnation is God Himself (monism), you will constantly be in a state of excitement and fear. It will prevent you from frankly seeking the clarification of your doubts from the Incarnation. Krishna openly expressed the truth that He was God, only on the occasion of preaching the Gita to Arjuna. Hence, crossing the basic 'I' or self-identity is impossible even after death since the self-identity continues as long as the soul exists.

### Self-Analysis and Knowledge of God

The basic 'I' is not really the problem. **The problem comes only when this basic 'I' gets associated with the qualities of *rajas* and *tamas*. It then takes the form of egotism (pride) and ignorance respectively.** The cancellation of 'I' means the cancellation of egotism (pride). The difference between the basic ego, which is the person's self-identity and the perverted ego should be carefully noted. **It is only the perverted ego that has to be cancelled.** The perversion of the basic ego comes due to ignorance which makes a person think that he is this physical body alone. If one identifies one's basic ego with this physical body, all worldly bonds appear since they are related to the physical body. It leads to the perversion of the soul in many ways. The basic ego, 'I', is like the seed. The stem that arises from this seed is the ignorance of identifying this 'I' with the body. It is known as the basic ignorance or *avidyā*. The branches arising from that stem are the worldly bonds. This analysis was given by Śaṅkara, which helps us in detaching from the worldly bonds. In His commentary, Śaṅkara referred to the worldly bonds by the word '*mama*' or '*mamakāra*', which means 'my' (*Ahaṃ mameti naisargiko 'yaṃ lokavyavahārah*). These worldly bonds, which can be described as "My wife", "My son", "My

money”, “My property” and so on, arise from one’s identification with the physical body. This identification with the body was referred to by Śāṅkara as ‘*aham*’ or ‘*ahaṃkāra*’. Thus, ‘*aham*’ (I) is the stem and ‘*mama*’ (my) is the branches.

The self-analysis given by Śāṅkara certainly helps us in attaining detachment from the worldly bonds. It should be considered as a helper. But developing attraction (devotion) for God which is based on acquiring the complete knowledge of God’s divine personality has two advantages: (i) The first advantage is that it brings total detachment. In fact, it can also sometimes lead to the disappearance of even the basic ‘I’ resulting in the soul’s perfect monism with God (*Ekamevādvitīyaṃ Brahma*). (ii) The second advantage is that it not only leads to detachment from the worldly bonds but it also brings a permanent attachment to God. On the other hand, self-analysis can, at the most, only bring the detachment from the worldly bonds. It does not bring attachment to God, which is a big disadvantage.

But even though Śāṅkara’s path of self-analysis cannot bring attachment or devotion to God, is certainly helpful in developing devotion. Devotion to God is certainly far higher than mere detachment from one’s worldly bonds. Śāṅkara Himself said that devotion to God is the highest and most effective spiritual effort (*Mokṣā sādhanasāmagryāṃ, bhaktireva garīyasī*). As far as this spiritual effort of attaining devotion is concerned, the knowledge of self-analysis only acts as a helper. This knowledge of self-analysis is only a small part of the entire spiritual knowledge. The major part of the total spiritual knowledge is the knowledge of the personality of God. The total spiritual knowledge, which mainly includes the knowledge of the personality of God, is extremely important and it stands as the very basis of the entire spiritual effort. It alone generates devotion. The knowledge of self-analysis is the helper while the total spiritual knowledge is the very basis of the entire spiritual effort. In short, knowledge alone is both the helper and basis of the entire spiritual effort.

### **Knowledge, Devotion, and Service**

**The knowledge of the personality of God is the cause for developing attraction or devotion to God.** Both the knowledge of God and the devotion (emotion) that it generates are theoretical or mental. The devotion, in turn, generates service and the sacrifice of the fruit of one’s work to God, which are both practical. This practical part can also be called practical devotion and it stands as the proof of the theoretical devotion. Thus, the path to please God is the practice (*karma yoga*), which is based on devotion (*bhakti yoga*), which, in turn, is based on knowledge (*jñāna*

*yoga*). Knowledge, devotion and the practice, which includes both service and sacrifice, are the three sequential steps in the spiritual path. These steps are commonly known as *jñāna yoga*, *bhakti yoga* and *karma yoga* respectively. They were respectively emphasized by the three divine preachers, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva, who came one after the other in that same sequence.

## Chapter 28

**INCOMPETENCE TO DO GOD'S WORK**

June 07, 2019

Shri Phani asked: I feel that I am incompetent to do God's work. Please advise.

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! The doctor gives an antibiotic tablet to cure the patient's fever. **But the medicine has side-effects such as constipation, hyperacidity and weakness since the medicine not only kills bacteria but it also damages some healthy tissues.** Hence, along with the antibiotic, some antacid to control hyperacidity and some vitamin B-complex for overcoming weakness are also given to the patient. The antibiotic will not work to cure the hyperacidity and the antacid will not work to cure the fever. Similarly, feeling incompetent works to eradicate the ego. But this feeling has a side-effect and it is to reduce the person's enthusiasm to work for God. To overcome this side-effect, another medicine must also be given, which is praising the person. Krishna condemned Arjuna to cure his ego-disease (*yadahāṅkāramāsritya...*). But Krishna also praised Arjuna as being one with Himself to encourage Arjuna to fight bravely (*Pāṇḍavānām dhanañjayaḥ... māśucaḥ sampadām...*).

Theoretical knowledge (*saṁnyāsa* or *sāṅkhya*) produces theoretical inspiration or devotion. This theoretical phase is one path. The second path is that of practical service with the sacrifice of the fruit of one's work (*yoga* or *karma yoga*). Arjuna was confused regarding these two paths. He thought that they are two alternative paths and that one could reach the same goal by any one of these two paths. Arjuna felt that way since Krishna had said that both paths lead to the same goal (*yat sāṅkhyaiḥ..., saṁnyāsaḥ karma yogaśca...*). Many people have this same confusion. But the fact is that God has already clarified this confusion by saying that both paths are one and the same (*ekam sāṅkhyam ca yogaṁ ca...*). It means that these two paths are not two alternative lines leading to the same point, but they are two line segments joined together to form a single line. It is a single line having a first part and a second part. Knowledge generates devotion in the first part and the devotion generates practice in the second part. Śaṅkara, who emphasized knowledge and Rāmānuja, who emphasized devotion, form the first part. Madhva, who emphasized practical service with

sacrifice, forms the second part. The three divine preachers came in that same sequence.

Confused people think that one can reach the same goal either through the purely theoretical phase or the purely practical phase. A pure theoretical scholar thinks that he will directly reach the goal through knowledge. A pure devotee also thinks that he will directly reach the goal through his devotion. A rich man thinks that he will directly reach the goal through the sacrifice of his wealth (*karma phala tyāga*) and a healthy man thinks that he can directly reach the goal through physical service (*karma samnyāsa*). Actually, practice or *karma yoga* involves service, which is known as *karma samnyāsa* and the sacrifice of one's hard-earned wealth, which is known as *karma phala tyāga*. The service is like the certificate of one's qualifications and the sacrifice of one's wealth is like the certificate of one's work experience. Both must be enclosed as proof along with any job application. The application itself is comparable to the theoretical phase involving both knowledge and devotion. The job is like the attainment of God's grace, which is the fruit of the person's spiritual effort. Both the application and the proof, which is the certificates, are essential for the job interview. The job interview is the test given by God before granting the job, which is the the fruit. **The devotee must feel that his service to God itself is the fruit.** There cannot be another fruit for enjoying the fruit. You cannot claim a salary for doing the work of drawing your salary!

Practice is the mango plant, which alone gives the fruit directly. Knowledge is the water and devotion is the manure. Without water, the plant will die; but even a hundred tanks of water cannot directly give even a single fruit in the absence of the plant. Without manure, the plant will not grow; but even a hundred bags of manure cannot give even a single fruit in the absence of the plant. Of course, the plant alone, without any water or manure, cannot give a fruit either. So, all the three are essential and they form a single path to attain the goal, which is the mango fruit.

With the incompetence felt by you, destroy your ego. The feeling of incompetence will help you get rid of the ego of the doer. Then God will enter into you and do the work. You will gain immense confidence that you are God. This confidence will be given to you by Him. In fact, you will become God since He will enter into you and merge with you to do the work. When Krishna said that He is Arjuna, it was a fact. When God quits you after doing the work, you should come back to your state of incompetence again in order to live in the world without ego. Thus, as you do

your work, you should feel that you are God who is doing His own work. Such a feeling is not false because God enters and merges with you to do that work. This feeling is not ego. It is only helping you gain confidence. **But this feeling becomes true only when you do some good work and not when you do some bad work.** In this manner, you have to use the proper medicine at the proper time to cure a specific problem.

## Chapter 29

**CONTROLLING ANGER AND THE WAVERING MIND**

June 09, 2019

**Shri Phani asked:** How to control the wavering mind and frequent anger?

Swami replied: O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! When you are absorbed in something due to intense attraction, all the negative qualities of the mind naturally disappear without any effort. But the attraction must be deep. The mind should be completely absorbed through-and-through. In science, absorption is said to be a bulk phenomenon, which means that a solid soaks up a fluid throughout its bulk. It is different from adsorption, which is said to be a surface phenomenon. In adsorption, the molecules of a gas or liquid only deposit on the surface of a solid as a superficial thin film. The object of our attraction should capture our mind's attention through-and-through like absorption; not superficially, like adsorption.

As long as the wife knows that her husband is attracted to her, she behaves as she likes. She may even behave arrogantly or rudely with her husband. But when she comes to know that her husband is attracted to some other lady, the wife becomes quiet and stops behaving rudely with her husband. The same is true in the case of our mind. The mind is naturally attracted to worldly things. So, as long as you are attracted to the worldly bonds, which are congenial to the mind's natural inclination, the mind will dance as it likes and you have to provide the music that it demands! Such a dancing or wavering mind also gets angry when its desire is not fulfilled. This is explained in the Gita. Krishna says that if you constantly think about worldly affairs related to money and family, it results in an increased attraction towards them. It is followed by the desire for enjoying them and anger when one is prevented from enjoying them. One further develops an intense fascination for the enjoyment of worldly objects, which weakens the mind. The person is then unable to analyze logically and finally ends up in total destruction (*Dhyāyato viśayān...praṅśyati*).

So, instead of fixing your mind on the worldly bonds, you should fix your mind on the divine personality of God. It means that you should be attracted to God. The attraction or devotion to God is the result of spiritual knowledge. Once you have fixed your mind on God, the mind automatically becomes quiet. Its worldly aspirations naturally subside. It is just like the case of the wife, who upon finding out that her husband is attracted to another lady, starts behaving properly with her husband. So, by fixing your mind on God, all your mentioned problems will disappear without any effort. Without this more powerful new attraction (God), the mind's old attraction towards the world will never disappear. Prahlāda's mind was so absorbed in God that he never got angry when he was subjected to horrible punishments. He did not even get angry when his father was killed by God. The Gopikās too, did not get angry even though their husbands and in-laws were scolding them for dancing with Krishna and giving butter to Krishna secretly. In all these cases, the minds of the devotees were strongly absorbed in the unimaginable divine personality of God. But among all devotees, the Gopikās and Hanumān stand in the topmost place. This is because they were devoted to the contemporary Human Incarnation of God who stood alive before their eyes. The object of their attraction was not the personality of an Energetic Incarnation of God belonging to another world. Neither were they attracted to a past Human Incarnation. Practical devotion becomes meaningful only when the object of one's devotion is the visible living Human Incarnation of God. The importance of the two scriptures, the Bhāgavatam and the Rāmāyaṇam, is because of this very crucial concept.

## Chapter 30

**HOW COULD THE GOPIKĀS RECOGNIZE KRISHNA?**

June 11, 2019

Shri PVNM Sharma asked: The Gopikās were totally uneducated villagers. How did they recognize Krishna as the contemporary Human Incarnation, when recognizing the Incarnation is very difficult even for great scholars?

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! **Ego and the fascination for one's worldly bonds are the main hurdles in recognizing the contemporary Human Incarnation.** Males experience repulsion from a male Human Incarnation due to their gender-ego. But the Gopikās, being females, were free of this ego. Scholars have the ego of knowledge. They experience repulsion from the Human Incarnation since He preaches spiritual knowledge. The Gopikās were uneducated and illiterate and so were free of the ego of knowledge. People born in the so-called upper castes have the ego of their caste. They falsely believe that a person's caste is determined by birth. They even reject a Human Incarnation born in the same caste not to speak of an Incarnation who has taken birth in a so-called lower caste. The Gopikās were born in a low caste and hence, were free of the upper caste-ego. Krishna, the Human Incarnation during their time, was also born in their same low caste. So, the repulsion due to the upper-caste ego was eliminated in the case of the Gopikās. If the Gopikās had been of a higher caste than Krishna, they would have experienced repulsion from Him owing to their upper-caste ego. But it was not so.

The repulsion between people from the same caste is intra-caste repulsion. Since the Gopikās were of the same caste as Krishna, there was some possibility of intra-caste repulsion between them. But there is very little intra-caste repulsion between individuals belonging to the so-called low castes. It is much greater in the so-called upper castes. Hence, even the intra-caste repulsion was negligibly small between Krishna and the Gopikās. Vasudeva and Devaki were the biological parents of Krishna. But He was raised by Nanda and Yashodā. Both these couples along with the Gopikās belonged to the Yādava caste. The Yādava caste was originally an upper caste of warriors and rulers (*kṣatriyās*). But owing to a curse they could not become kings. So, they were treated to be a low caste. In any case, one should remember that all these caste

problems arise only when we consider caste to be determined by birth, which is wrong. As declared by God, caste should only be determined by the individual's qualities and deeds (*Guṇakarma vibhāgaśah...*—Gita).

### **Gopikās Were Reborn Sages**

The Gopikās were not ordinary souls but were reborn sages. They had dedicated their entire lifetimes, for millions of past births, to the deep analysis of **divine spiritual knowledge**. In the beginning of the Tretā Yuga, God Datta had appeared as a Human Incarnation. He had taken birth as the son of sage Atri and so, He was known as Dattātreyā, which means 'Datta (the first energetic incarnation) born as the son of Atri'. Lord Dattātreyā had preached divine knowledge to these sages. However, at that time, the sages could only accept sage Dattātreyā as their preacher (Guru). They were unable to accept Him as God. The reason for their inability to accept Lord Dattātreyā as a Human Incarnation of God was the different forms of ego.

Their ego created repulsion in their minds from the Human Incarnation. We know that likes repel. When we find some common qualities in another individual, it produces repulsion due to our ego. One human being invariably experiences some basic repulsion from another human being because of the common human medium. But, in the case of the sages, apart from the common medium that they shared with sage Dattātreyā, there were other important common qualities. They too were males like sage Dattātreyā. They too were highly learned scholars like sage Dattātreyā and they too belonged to the same high Brāhmaṇa caste. So, in their case, the ego of gender, the ego of knowledge and the ego of caste strengthened the basic repulsion that exists between any two human beings. The repulsion was strong enough to prevent them from accepting sage Dattātreyā as their contemporary Human Incarnation of God. **These sages, who were later reborn as the Gopikās, had minimal worldly fascinations. For millions of births, their worldly lives had been extremely simple, which was the way of life of sages in the past. But during all those births, they had possessed these three types of ego.**

### **The Relevant Form of God for Humanity**

These sages used to worship only Energetic Incarnations of God by doing a lot of penance. Anybody will be ready to worship God

Viṣṇu, the Energetic Incarnation from the upper world, even if it involves severe penance. But no one will agree to do penance for the sake of Krishna, the Human Incarnation, who is very much available in Dwārakā city. The sacrifices (*yajña*) and penance (*tapas*) done by the sages were only for the sake of Energetic Incarnations of God. Some of them even tried to concentrate on the unimaginable God, who cannot even be imagined not to speak of worshipping Him. The sages were involved in spiritual debates and discussions about God in the peaceful atmosphere of forests. Finally, they realized that the Human Incarnation alone is relevant for humanity and that Energetic Incarnations are relevant only for energetic beings living in the upper worlds. **This divine arrangement has been made by God for the greatest welfare of souls.** The human being who neglects the Human Incarnation, here on Earth and instead only worships Energetic Incarnations is going against the divine administration. Proper arrangements for the spiritual progress of all souls in the various worlds has already been made by God as part of His divine administration. The relevant form of God for human beings is the Human Incarnation who too is present in the common material human medium. An Energetic Incarnation is not the relevant form of God to be worshipped by a human being. **God discourages human beings from worshipping such irrelevant energetic forms of God by making such worship difficult.** Unless one does severe penance for a very long time, an Energetic Incarnation will not appear before the person. Even if it appears, it appears only for a few minutes and then disappears immediately.

### **Repulsion of the Common Medium**

The worship of the relevant form of God is most convenient. The only problem is that one must overcome the natural repulsion of the common medium. Souls are present in human bodies on earth and the Human Incarnation is also present in a similar human body. This common medium of the human body is the source of the mutual repulsion. The person's ego prevents the person from accepting the fact that the Human Incarnation is God because the Incarnation externally appears to be just another human being like the person himself. The same repulsion of the common medium exists between a soul in an energetic body and the Energetic Incarnation of God in the upper world. After all, it is the same souls which after death on earth enter into energetic bodies and go to the upper world. Hence, this repulsion of the

common medium affects the angels of the upper world as much as it affects human beings on earth. It prevents the soul from accepting the relevant Incarnation of God. This general repulsion increases even further when there are some more special qualities which are common between the soul and the Incarnation. They include a common caste, common gender, common scholarly talent and so on. When the sages were reborn as the Gopikās, as compared to Krishna, their contemporary Human Incarnation, they were born in a lower caste, they belong to the opposite gender and they were uneducated. So, they felt a much lower repulsion from the Incarnation even though the general repulsion as a result of possessing the common human body was inevitable.

### **The Sages Recognized God Rāma**

In their previous births, the sages lived long due to their spiritual power and in their long lives, they were able to patiently analyze the spiritual knowledge in depth. They finally realized the importance of the Human Incarnation by the end of the Tretā Age. At this time, they recognized Rāma as their contemporary Human Incarnation of God. The main purpose of Rāma going to the forest and staying there for a long time was to visit these sages and allow them to serve Him by accepting their hospitality. The sages recognized Rāma to be God-in-human form and they praised Rāma as God. Rāma had come to preach the path of *pravṛtti*, which is the worldly path of justice. It is the initial part of the divine path. In *pravṛtti*, justice is treated as the topmost goal. Unless the soul successfully covers this initial part of the spiritual journey (*pravṛtti*), the soul cannot start the latter part of the journey (*nivṛtti*). The goal of Rāma's incarnation was to be an example for souls in the first part of the spiritual journey (*pravṛtti*). It was essential for Him to behave as a normal ideal human being (*Ādarṣa Mānuṣāvātāra*). Hence, when the sages praised Him as God, He replied that He was only an ordinary human being called Rāma, the son of king Daśaratha. It was also a test for the sages to check whether they had perfectly recognized Him to be God-in-human form or not. The reply of Rāma could not mask His true identity from the sages. They had fully recognized Him to be God. They said to Him “You are God, our ultimate husband. We wish to become females by our spiritual power and embrace You as our husband”. Rāma refused it since He was behaving as an ideal human being and what they wished was against the path of *pravṛtti*. He told them that He would give them that chance in the next birth, when He would come as Krishna.

The purpose of the incarnation of Krishna (Kṛṣṇāvatāra) was to behave like God for testing the same sages who would be reborn as the Gopikās. The life of the Gopikās represents the latter part of the spiritual journey called *nivṛtti*. The incarnation of God as Krishna is therefore called *Līlā Mānuṣāvatāra*, in which God tests His devotees through various severe tests which are His divine play (*līlā*).

### Worldly Relations and God

Krishna was sure that the Gopikās were fully capable of recognizing Him due to the strong fascination they had for God in their previous births. **He even helped the Gopikās recognize Him by exhibiting a series of miracles right from His birth. Taking birth as the uneducated Gopikās had imposed ignorance upon the sages. Krishna's miracles helped them remove the ignorance and uncover their strong divine fascination.** But inspite of their strong previous fascination for God which was also supported by the miracles performed by Krishna, some Gopikās failed in the tests of Krishna. Only a few Gopikās passed the tests and they alone could reach the topmost upper world called Goloka.

Devotion may be expressed in various ways as per the personal liking of devotees. Some devotees like Prahlāda, Kuśa and Lava, Pradyumna and others treat God as their Father. Some like Daśaratha and Vasudeva treat God as their son. Some devotees like Lakṣmaṇa and Draupadī treat God as their elder Brother. Some like Balarāma treat Him as a younger Brother. Some like Sītā and Rukmiṇī treat God as their Husband. Finally, some devotees like the Gopikās treat God as their Lover or Darling. In fact, all the Gopikās did not worship Krishna as their Lover. Some of the Gopikās worshipped Krishna treating Him to be some other relative. In any case, it is the devotion that matters; not the type of relation one has with God. All the Gopikās did not pass the test of Krishna especially in overcoming their bond with money or wealth. They complained to Yaśodā about Krishna, calling Him a thief who had stolen their butter which was their saved wealth!

Note that the above-mentioned devotees worshipped God treating Him to be their Father, Son, Brother, Husband, Lover and so on. All these are normal worldly relationships. For a soul in *pravṛtti*, all these worldly relationships themselves are God. It means that worldly souls give the highest importance to their worldly relatives assuming them to be God. But for a soul in *nivṛtti*, God is all these relatives. It means that

the soul in *nivṛtti* has only one single bond with God and that God alone is His Mother, Father and all other relatives. These two views of seeing God in our relations can be better understood through the following example. The word ‘*mātr̥deva*’ from the Vedic statement “*Mātr̥devo bhava*” is a word-compound (*samāsa*) made of two words, *mātr̥* (mother) and *deva* (God). It can be interpreted in two ways. In one sense, which is relevant to *pravṛtti*, it means that one’s mother is God (*mātāca devaśca*). This interpretation is made considering *matr̥devo* to be a certain type of word-compound called a *karmadhāraya samāsa*, in which the first term, *matr̥* (mother), is given more importance. The same word, in the other sense, which is relevant to *nivṛtti*, means that God is one’s Mother (*Devo mātā yasya saḥ*). This interpretation considers *mātr̥devo* to be another type of word-compound called a *bahuvrīhi samāsa*, in which the second term *devo* (God) is given more importance.

Āñjaneya (Hanumān) interpreted this word in the first manner, which is relevant to *pravṛtti* because His Master, Rāma, represented the path of *pravṛtti*. In other words, Āñjaneya considered His mother Āñjanī to be God. With this assumption, He fought with Rāma for her sake, even though Rāma was actually the Human Incarnation of God. This *pravṛtti* interpretation of *matr̥devo* is not actually correct. It is only an assumption that is helpful in maintaining worldly justice. This interpretation allows one to give the highest position to one’s mother among all other worldly relations. But this assumption must be given up when one is faced with the real Human Incarnation of God. Āñjaneya realized His mistake and rectified it in His next Incarnation as Śaṅkara. Note that Āñjaneya Himself was an Incarnation of God Śiva. He was only playing the role of an ideal devoted servant. Śaṅkara was the next Incarnation of the same God Śiva. Śaṅkara, an embodiment of the *nivṛtti* path, left His mother for the sake of God. This is because the *nivṛtti* interpretation of *mātr̥devo*, is that God Himself is one’s real Mother. So, He did not give up God’s work for the sake of His mother but instead, He left His mother for the sake of God. Similarly, Prahlāda left his father for the sake of God since God was his real Father. Buddha left His wife (*dāreṣaṇā*), son (*putreṣaṇā*) and wealth (*dhaneṣaṇā*) for the sake of God. These three are the strongest worldly bonds (*eṣaṇās*).

### **Recognizing Krishna and Overcoming Bonds**

**The Gopikās were tested for their capacity to sacrifice these three strongest worldly bonds for the sake of God. But the test of the**

**Gopikās was most severe since the God for whose sake they were sacrificing all their bonds was in human form. Apart from overcoming their natural attraction to their worldly bonds, they also had to overcome the inevitable repulsion from the common human medium in which God was present in their time.** The sacrifice of the Gopikās surpassed even the sacrifice of Buddha because Buddha was male, a rich king and had relatively lower affection for His son. The Gopikās, on the other hand, were females. In the ancient society in which the Gopikās lived, it was extremely difficult for a woman to leave her husband. Being women also meant that the Gopikās had the highest affection for their children. Lord Krishna stole the butter that they had saved for feeding their children. In this way, He tested their ability to overcome *dhanēṣanā* and *putreṣanā* combined. Some of the Gopikās who passed the test went to the extent of secretly taking the butter from their own homes and giving it to Krishna on their way to Mathurā city! These Gopikās had clearly overcome their bonds with both money and their children. They gave butter secretly to Krishna only to avoid any conflict with their own family. Krishna’s stealing butter from the houses of the Gopikās is not theft because plenty of butter was actually available in His own home! Krishna also tested the Gopikās ability to overcome their bonds with their husbands (*dāreṣanā*) by calling them for the secret dance at midnight in Bṛundāvanam. The success of the Gopikās in all these tests indicates their detachment from their worldly bonds. **Ego is called *ahaṅkāra* and attachment to the worldly bonds is called *mamakāra*.** Both of them are very strong obstructions in *nivṛtti* or the spiritual path. As per Śāṅkara, the root of the problem lies in *ahaṃ*, which is ego (I) and *mama* (my), which is attachment (*Aham mama iti...*).

All the Gopikās could recognize Krishna as God due to the strong fascination (*saṃskāra*) that they had developed for God over millions of previous births. **Still, some failed in the tests due to their very strong worldly fascinations or due to doubts in their recognition of God Krishna caused by the strong ignorance of their current birth.** The Gita says that only after several births does a rare and fortunate soul realize the true knowledge that God-in-human form alone is relevant to humanity. That fortunate soul then surrenders practically to the contemporary human form of God (*Bahūnām janmanāmante, jñānavān māṃ prapadyate*). The true knowledge referred to in this verse is that the son of Vasudeva (Krishna) is the ultimate God (*Vāsudevah*

*sarvamiti*). Throughout the Gita, Krishna emphasized again and again that it is He who should be directly served. It only means that the contemporary human form of God is the ultimate goal in the spiritual path. Jesus also said that He alone is the path to reach His Father (God) and that He and His Father are one and the same (I am the Truth and the Light). The Gopikās had recognized Krishna immediately after His birth and this point has been told by sage Nārada in his scripture (*māhātmyajñāna...*).

## Chapter 31

**KRISHNA'S BEHAVIOR TOWARDS THE GOPIKĀS: AN IDEAL FOR SOCIETY?**

June 12, 2019

Shri PVNM Sarma asked: The Gopikās were married women and yet they loved Krishna as their Lover. As per *pravṛtti*, the path of worldly justice, relationships outside of the marriage are considered to be sins and are punishable in hell. Will the relationship between the Gopikās and Krishna not spoil the public and prevent them from following the path of *pravṛtti*?

**Identifying Krishna as God**

**Swami replied:** Krishna Himself said in the Gita that ordinary people follow the actions of a great person (*Yadyadācarati...—Gita*). He also said that illegitimate sex and greed are the greatest sins (*kāmaḥ krodhaḥ tathā lobhaḥ...—Gita*). So, illegitimate sex and theft are indeed the biggest sins. Krishna was the greatest Person because He was God who had incarnated in human form. Then why did He steal butter from others' houses even though He had plenty of butter in His own house? Perhaps He might have stolen in an emergency situation since stealing to save oneself from dying of starvation is justified (*āpaddharma*). However, that was not the case. There was no such emergency which forced Him to steal. He also danced with the married Gopikās secretly in Bṛndāvanam and was involved in illegitimate sex (*Suratanātha... Bhāgavatam*) with them. It appears that both these sins are unjustifiable and that the public might get spoiled by learning that the greatest personality, Krishna, was involved in such sinful actions.

In reality, this case had a divine background. Krishna was God and this point was well-known to the Gopikās. The Gopikās were reborn sages, who in their past millions of births had developed a very strong devotion for God. There is no doubt that their souls carried a strong impression or tendency of devotion to God. However, these sages were born as the uneducated cowherd women, the Gopikās and they lived in the uneducated village atmosphere. Usually, whenever a soul present in the upper energetic world is to be born on earth, it is granted a birth in a congenial environment. **In other words, it is ensured that the soul is born in a family and community where people have strong mental tendencies (*saṃskāras*) that are similar to that of the soul.** The strong mental

tendencies that yield a new birth to a soul are called the *prārabdha*. **This arrangement encourages any soul who has developed good qualities to strengthen and improve those good qualities.** Since the sages had a very strong spiritual mentality for numerous births, they should have been born as sages again in their next birth. Then why were they born in the uneducated village atmosphere against the rule of *prārabdha*?

It was indeed the will of God to give the most learned sages the birth of the uneducated Gopikās. It was done to rid them of the three types of ego namely the ego of being born in a high caste, the ego of being born with the male gender and the ego of having high education. It is, of course, a misunderstanding of the public that being born in the so-called high caste makes a person superior to others. In fact, the actual caste of a person is determined by a person's qualities and deeds alone; not by birth. Similarly, the male gender is misunderstood to be superior. Even though these beliefs are false, they develop ego among people. God wanted to free the sages from this three-fold ego of caste, gender and education. So, the will of God influenced the cycle of deeds in such a way that they were born in a low caste as women who were completely illiterate.

Apart from the effect of the strong mental tendencies from past births (*samskāras*) on the soul, the effect of the current birth is also very strong. Hence, the Gopikās were strongly ignorant. Ignorant people believe that miracles are the deciding factor that indicates Godly nature. Ignorant people do not consider knowledge to be the deciding factor in identifying a Human Incarnation of God since they do not recognize the value of knowledge. So, Krishna showed a series of miracles to the ignorant Gopikās to impress upon their mind the fact that He was an Incarnation of God. Two reasons helped the Gopikās identify Krishna as an Incarnation of God: (1) The very strong spiritual mentality coming from their previous births and (2) The miracles exhibited by Krishna since they were ignorant in their current birth. Given these two reasons, all the Gopikās certainly identified Krishna as God. **One may fail in identifying the contemporary Human Incarnation due to a defect in one's analysis arising out of a weak spiritual mental tendency from the previous births or out of the ignorance of the current birth.** But in the case of the Gopikās, both these factors are ruled out as described above.

### Passing the Tests of Krishna

Since all the Gopikās had identified Krishna as God, one would expect all of them to even succeed in the two tests given by Krishna to them. The two tests were (i) testing their ability to overcome their

attachment to wealth and their children for the sake of Krishna. Krishna conducted this test by stealing the butter that they had saved for their children and (ii) testing their ability to overcome their attachment to their life-partners, which was done by dancing with them secretly. Unfortunately, all the Gopikās did not pass both these tests. Only a few could pass. **This means that even though the souls had clearly identified God, they failed in the tests because they were more strongly attached to their worldly bonds than to God.** The soul cannot escape here by saying that it failed in the test because it was unable to clearly identify God. A student tries to justify his failure in the examination by saying that he was suddenly unable to see the question paper because of some problem with his eyes! The case of the Gopikās was not like that. They had very well recognized Krishna to be God and this fact has been recorded by sage Nārada in his Bhakti Sūtrās. Some Gopikās, failed in the first test in which Krishna stole the butter saved by them for their children. These failed Gopikās went and complained to Krishna’s mother about His theft of their butter. The Gopikās, who passed this test, were the ones who deliberately left their doors open so that Krishna could easily enter their homes and steal their butter. They enjoyed His stealing of their butter! Some of them even gave Him the extra butter that they had saved for their children. They carried it along in a separate pot and gave it to Krishna on their way to Mathura city, where they would usually go to sell their butter. These Gopikās passed the test since they gave more importance to God than to wealth and their issues.

With regard to the second test, several Gopikās did not come to Br̄ndāvanam to dance secretly with Krishna. For some of them, their attachment to their life-partners was stronger than their attachment to God. For others, even though their attachment to God was stronger than their attachment to their life-partners, they felt that cheating their life-partners was the greatest sin. They were afraid of being sent to hell for the sin. By avoiding dancing with Krishna for fear of sin and hell, these Gopikās, had voted for justice instead of God. Dharmarāja also similarly voted for justice instead of God by refusing to follow Krishna’s advice to tell a lie in the Mahābhārata war. **All such Gopikās and Dharmarāja, who failed in God’s test and voted for justice instead of God, only went up to heaven.** They had to return to Earth as normal human beings, after some time. But the Gopikās, who passed the test, went up to Goloka, which is the highest world situated even above the Brahma Loka, which is the abode of God. In the first step of worldly justice, also known as *pravṛtti*, the soul must vote for justice instead of injustice. In the second step of devotion and service to

God, also known as *nivṛtti*, the soul must certainly vote for God instead of justice (*Sarvadharmān parityajya...*—Gita).

### Understanding the Bhāgavatam

One must understand the Bhāgavatam very carefully. It is only in *nivṛtti* that the devotee votes for God even against justice. But a cheat imitating Krishna will violate justice for the sake of himself or for the sake of some other soul dear to him. Note that he is not voting for God instead of justice but is voting for some soul instead of justice. This is clearly a misinterpretation of the *nivṛtti* path depicted in the Bhāgavatam. The cheat may steal the wealth of others or engage in illegitimate sex, thinking that he himself is God. In that case, he is misinterpreting and exploiting the Advaita philosophy given by Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara said that He was God (*Śivo 'ham*), which was true since He was an Incarnation of God Śiva. The followers felt that every soul is God and so, they too were God. Therefore, when Śaṅkara drank wine, the followers imitated Him thinking that, being God, they too were above the rule that prohibits a person from consuming alcohol. Next day, to teach them a lesson, Śaṅkara drank molten lead and asked the followers to also drink the same. The followers realized their mistake and fell at His feet. They realized that they were not the omnipotent God but only souls who have very little power. Śaṅkara then confirmed their realization by saying that He alone was the Incarnation of God (*Śivaḥ kevalo 'ham*) and that other souls were not God.

You want to steal the wealth of others and engage in illegitimate sex. Fine, then why don't you also lift a hill as Krishna did? Why don't you lift a very big stone, at least? You need not lift it on your finger, like Krishna; you can use both your hands to lift it. You also need not lift it immediately like Krishna; you practice weight-lifting for several years and then lift the large stone. **The ability to perform miracles is the first test to indentify an Incarnation of God. It is like the first stage filter. It filters out most false Incarnations who claim to be God.** But sometimes, even demons can possess miraculous powers granted by God. Such demons can be filtered out by the second stage of filtration, which is testing if the person possesses God's special divine knowledge and divine love. Krishna did not just do miracles. He also preached the wonderful Gita which showed that He possessed special divine knowledge. He helped Draupadi, became the guide of the Pāṇḍavās in the war, ensured their victory and punished the violators of Draupadi. For doing this, He had to accept the horrible curse of Gāndhārī owing to which His entire dynasty was destroyed. He, thus, proved that He possessed divine love for Draupadi and the Pāṇḍavās who

were His devotees. As per the Veda, God is identified by His excellent knowledge (*Prajñānam Brahma*), marvellous love (*Raso vai saḥ*) for His devotees and the ability to perform miracles (*Satyakāmaḥ*). Of course, knowledge is the first and best identifying characteristic because it helps the soul progress in the right direction. The last identifying characteristic, which is the ability to do miracles, is possessed even by demons. Moreover, miracles mislead devotees by diverting their attention from the path of devotion to the selfish path of solving their own worldly problems or attaining worldly fame. It, thus, increases the defects of selfishness and the attraction to fame that are present in devotees. Hence, the power to do miracles is stated as the last identifying characteristic of God. All Incarnations of God (Datta) in the past possessed all these three identifying characteristics. They preached excellent spiritual knowledge. They showed wonderful love for their real devotees by transferring the punishments of their devotees' sins upon themselves and suffering on behalf of their devotees. **All of them performed miracles but they did so only in the proper situation. The miracles were done only when the devotee was really deserving and showed the hope of reformation if helped by a miracle.** Only demons perform miracles for exhibition and to gain fame. Krishna performed miracles in Bṛndāvanam to help the Gopikās identify Him since they were highly deserving. He did not perform many miracles after leaving Bṛndāvanam.

### **Krishna Was Above Greed and Lust**

People ignorantly think that Krishna's behavior with the Gopikās was an ordinary case of the violation of worldly justice. They consider Krishna to have human defects like greed and lust. Listed below are several points which not only prove that Krishna was completely free of greed and lust but also that His behavior with the Gopikās had the most extraordinary background.

- i) Towards the end of the Tretā age, the sages, who were later reborn as the Gopikās, had themselves expressed the desire to become females and embrace God Rāma. This desire for a physical union with Rāma, their contemporary Human Incarnation of God, was born in the minds of the devoted sages. Such desire was not initiated from the side of God at all! The desire of the sages was fulfilled when they were reborn as the female Gopikās and God took the Incarnation of Krishna.

- ii) The Gopikās, the reborn sages, themselves requested Krishna to let them dance with Him in the beginning of autumn (*śarad ṛtu*). Krishna tried to protect the rules of worldly justice (*pravṛtti*) by informing them that it would be a sin for which they would have to go to hell. But the Gopikās were prepared to go to hell for the sake of dancing with Krishna. They also threatened Krishna that they would jump into Yamunā River if Krishna refused them. They had crossed every worldly bond and every type of fear for the sake of uniting with Krishna. You cannot point out only to their illegitimate sex, since they had sacrificed everything and everybody for the sake of Krishna. All their worldly bonds were fully cut. For them, only one bond remained and it was their bond with God Krishna.
- iii) Krishna did not even have a trace of desire for illegitimate sex. If He had had any such desire, He would have returned to the Gopikās later, even after leaving Bṛndāvanam. But He never returned. Moreover, after leaving Bṛndāvanam, He never showed any illegitimate lust for any other girl anywhere and at any time in His entire life. If He had possessed illegitimate lust, He would either have repeated such behavior elsewhere or He would have returned to the Gopikās for more. But the truth is that dancing with the Gopikās and stealing butter from them, were tests that He conducted on His most deserving devotees before granting them eternal divine fruit. Except for the Gopikās of Bṛndāvanam, there were no other candidates who had to be tested for their ability to overcome the three strong worldly bonds for the sake of God. Hence, no such tests were repeated by Him anywhere else after leaving Bṛndāvanam.
- iv) Later, there were sixteen thousand and eight girls who came in His life. They all loved Him. But He married all of them legally and did not engage in illegitimate sex with anyone of them. His personality was wonderful in all respects. His charm and beauty were unparalleled. He was never attracted to anybody. In fact, the reverse was true.
- v) Sage Nārada has said that a devotee must be bonded with God like a person is bonded with his illegitimate lover (*Jāravat ca*). It does not mean that the sage approves of illegitimate sex. **It only means that the devotee's bond with God must be extremely strong just like the bond between two illegitimate lovers.** Here, the simile should be confined to only one aspect, which is

the strength of the bond. The simile should not be extended to any other point except for this one point of comparison. There is another such simile whereby it is said that the fame of a very great person is spreading like sin in this Kali age! Here, again, the simile is confined to only the point of spreading fast. It should not be extended to any other aspect beyond this one point. It certainly does not mean that sin has become pure and good like fame.

- vi) **Krishna was the highest Incarnation of God (*Paripūrṇa Tama Avatāra*)**. This is said in the sense that He expressed all the hidden divine powers possessed by Him completely. He expressed extraordinary divine knowledge through the Gita. He expressed extraordinary divine love for the Gopikās and He also exhibited many miracles. **The sages who were born as the Gopikās were devoted souls of the highest order.** They even had the power to curse angels. The fruit given by Krishna to the sages who passed all His tests, was Goloka, the highest world in all creation. It is even higher than the abode of God, called Brahma Loka. **Krishna's acts of stealing butter from the Gopikās and dancing with them secretly, were the highest tests since passing them yielded the highest fruit. Naturally, the Gopikās who passed these highest tests must have had the highest devotion. Their devotion was the highest since it involved the sacrifice of the three worldly bonds of the highest strength for the sake of God.** Since the attraction of the Gopikās to God was the highest, their detachment from all their worldly bonds occurred as a natural consequence, without any effort. **All the worldly bonds of the Gopikās had naturally dropped off due to their topmost attraction to God. Then, you cannot isolate their sacrifice of any one particular bond and say that it was a violation of justice.** A prostitute may sacrifice her bond with her life-partner. But the sacrifice of that one worldly bond does not mean she has total detachment from all the worldly bonds. She definitely has a bond with money. Moreover, her sacrifice of her bond with her life-partner is not done for the sake of God. It is done for the sake of her customers, who are ordinary souls. Hence, there is no comparison between a prostitute and the Gopikās.

Thus, we see that the case of Krishna's theft and illegitimate sex with the Gopikās was completely different from any worldly behaviour of

similar nature. It was not a case related to the path of worldly justice (*pravṛtti*) at all! It was a case related to the spiritual path (*nivṛtti*). It was a case of the highest Human Incarnation of God testing the highest devotees in creation for their ability to overcome their strongest worldly bonds for His sake. It was a test that was necessary before granting them the highest eternal fruit of reaching the Goloka. Success in this test lay in the devotee voting for God over justice even though the same devotee had voted for justice over injustice, previously, in the worldly path of *pravṛtti*. **The same Gopikās, in their previous births as sages, had severely condemned unethical behaviour such as theft and illegitimate sex in worldly life (*pravṛtti*).**

## Chapter 32

**SARASWATI RIVER OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE**

June 23, 2019

**1) Is a pregnant woman a two-soul system?**

[Smt. Bindiya: When does a soul enter the baby who is in mother's womb? Does it enter after birth or before its birth? If the soul enters before birth, it means two souls exist in the single body of the mother. How does the baby's soul affect mother's soul?]

**Swami replied:** Some say that the soul of the baby enters mother's womb in third month of pregnancy and some say it enters in the fifth month through the food grains consumed by the mother. Sage Vyāsa says in the Brahma Sūtras that the soul enters into the sperm of the father through the food grains consumed by him and it enters the womb of the mother at the time of the fertilization of the ovum by the sperm. The baby's soul comes down to earth, covered in an energetic body and it enters the physical embryo, which is the initial mass that gradually develops into the body of the baby. **The soul always has its own separate body even while staying in the body of the mother.** The soul of the baby has its own qualities (*samskāras*), which may undergo some change after birth due to the influence of people and external conditions. **The genes of the mother and the father only impart certain physical mannerisms to the baby. They do not determine the qualities of the soul.** The qualities either come from the soul's previous births or from the external atmosphere in which the child grows or with which it comes in contact.

**2) After knowing the truth about the Human Incarnation of God, should I continue the representative worship of God?**

[Kum. Laxmi Thrylokya: If a person has prayed to God that the person will donate his or her hair to God at a holy temple after successfully overcoming a certain situation, can the person skip the donation of hair in that temple and instead donate it to any cancer foundation with inner devotion to God?]

Kum. Laxmi Thrylokya: After knowing the truth that God resides in the Human Incarnation, is doing *pūjā* everyday at home compulsory?]

**Swami replied:** Donation for some useful purpose such as to the poor or to sick people in need is always a better idea. It is more valid than donating to a temple in which our donation may or may not be used. **One can continue the worship of representative models of God to increase**

**one's theoretical devotion, ensuring that the worship does not cause any wastage of food materials.** Increasing your theoretical devotion will make you a better devotee of the Human Incarnation of God, whom you have identified.

### **3) Could you kindly elaborate upon the *sañcita*, *prārabdha* and *āgāmi* forms of *karma*?**

[A question by Shri Manikanta.]

**Swami replied:** All the three types of *karma* are based on the constant ratio of the three fundamental qualities namely, *sattvam*, *rajas* and *tamas* in a particular soul. *Sattvam* is the good quality of knowledge. *Rajas* is the bad quality of ego and *tamas* is the bad quality of ignorance and rigidity. When the soul reaches the upper worlds for enjoying the fruits of its good and bad deeds, the souls fruits are in this constant ratio of the three qualities. Let us imagine that the fruits corresponding to the three qualities are measured in kilograms. Let us say that a certain soul, who has died on Earth and has reached the upper world, has 60 kg *sattvam*, 30 kg *rajas* and 10 kg *tamas*. This bundle of qualities of the soul, as it arrives in the upper worlds, is called the *sañcita*. The ratio of the three qualities in this particular soul is 60:30:10 and it remains approximately constant for that soul throughout its journey through the various worlds.

After enjoying the fruits of the soul's bad and good deeds in hell and heaven respectively, the quantity of fruits or the intensity of *sattvam*, *rajas* and *tamas* in the soul, reduces to 60 gm, 30 gm and 10 gm respectively. Note that in spite of the reduction in intensity, the ratio of 60:30:10 remains constant. At this point, the soul is given a suitable new birth on Earth. The constant ratio of the three qualities determines the type of body and the external atmosphere in which the soul will be granted birth. The bundle of the three qualities of reduced intensity, in the same constant ratio, which results in giving the soul a fresh birth on Earth, is called *prārabdham*. After taking birth on Earth, the soul again performs actions as per the same ratio of its qualities. The performed actions lead to an increase in the intensity of *sattvam*, *rajas* and *tamas* to 60 kg, 30 kg and 10 kg respectively, while maintaining the same ratio. Thus, we see that throughout the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, the intensities of the qualities change and the place or the location of the soul changes. But the same ratio of the three qualities (60:30:10) is maintained.

***Āgāmi* is the bundle of qualities at the end of the soul's life on Earth. *Sañcita* is the bundle of qualities when the soul arrives in the upper world. Both the ratio as well as the intensities of the three**

**qualities are the same for *āgāmi* and *sañcita*. The difference is only in the place or location. *Prārabdham* is the bundle of qualities of a reduced intensity, in the same constant ratio, after the enjoyment of the fruits in the upper worlds, just before taking birth on Earth.** Different souls have different ratios of the three qualities and the ratio remains more or less constant through the various life cycles of each soul. But a drastic positive change in that ratio can occur when a soul, during its life on Earth, gets the fortunate association of the Human Incarnation of God. The soul learns and digests true spiritual knowledge (*sattvam*) from the Incarnation, which destroys its ego (*rajas*) and ignorance (*tamas*).

#### **4) If an animal is a condemned soul, how could there be animals at the beginning of creation, when there were no sinners?**

[Shri Bharath Krishna: Were all the fourteen lokas created simultaneously or were they created later on like the Goloka, according to the need? The Goloka was created only after the Gopikās passed the tests of God and was not there in the beginning. Did animals and humans come into existence at the same time? During the initial days of creation, assuming that all human beings had the knowledge given by God, there must have been no necessity of hell and heaven. Animals are supposed to be condemned souls. They can be condemned only after doing sins in their human births. But during the initial days of creation, nobody had the freedom to do sins. Hence, there should not be any animal existing at that time.]

**Swami replied:** The fundamental point is that there is a subtle difference between a human being and a robot. In the first age after creation called the Kṛta Age, human beings did not have the freedom to commit sins. But they still had some little marginal freedom. Hence, human beings, even during the Kṛta Age, cannot exactly be treated to be robots, which operate only as per the information programmed into them.

There are cycles of creation and destruction in creation. Within each cycle, there are four ages or yugās called the Kṛta Age, the Dvāpara Age, the Tretā Age and the Kali Age. The first age, is the longest and the rest are progressively shorter in duration. After passing through the four ages in that order, a new cycle starts.

At the very beginning of creation, which is the first age of the first cycle, the souls had very little freedom. Your question of whether animals were created in the beginning or not, actually pertains only to this first age of the first cycle. After the first four ages and the end of the first cycle, the second cycle starts. From this second cycle onwards, there is no difficulty in explaining the presence of animals in the first age, since souls which were condemned to be animals from the later ages of the previous cycle are always available. Actually, between two cycles, there is a gap (*pralaya*) in

which all souls remain in a subtle, unexpressed form called *avyaktam*. In this state, each individual soul retains its inherent qualities, which are a fixed ratio of the fundamental qualities known as *sattvam*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

An animal is called a *paśu* in Sanskrit. But *paśu* can also mean a human being or any soul. It is in this sense that God is called Paśupati, which means the Lord of all souls. **Here, the physical form of an animal is not important. It is the qualities of an animal that are being considered.** An animal like a cow has good qualities whereas a human being like Duryodhana has bad qualities. Ordinary lions in the forest are cruel animals that kill anybody. But the particular lion that Goddess Parvati rides, has all good qualities. Its cruelty is confined only to killing demons. There are several animals like cows, goats, horses and so on, which are not cruel and those souls are not sinners. They are soft-natured due to *sattvam* and they are ignorant due to *tamas*. There is no cruel nature in them which is the effect of *rajas*. The Veda says that these soft-natured animals were created even in the very beginning of creation. The Veda specifically mentions that cows were created (*Gāvoha jajñire...*), horses were created (*Tasmādaśvāḥ...*), goats were created (*Tasmāt jātā ajāvaḥ...*) and other animals having two rows of teeth were created (*Yekecobhayādataḥ...*). These animals have the basic ignorance found in animals (*tamas*) and a soft nature (*sattvam*). *Sattvam* is the quality of doing good work and avoiding bad work. *Rajas* is the quality of doing bad work. *Tamas* is the quality of neither doing good work nor bad work due to ignorance. **A combination of *sattvam* and *tamas* is not bad.** Souls with such a combination do some types of good work and they do not do some other types of good work due to their partial ignorance. Not doing good work is not a very serious sin. Doing bad work is a serious sin. Bad work (*rajas*) leads to hell and good work (*sattvam*) leads to heaven. Ignorance, due to which the soul does neither good nor bad work leads the soul to the middle world which is the abode of departed neutral souls (moon or Pitṛ Loka).

In the first age of first cycle, souls only had a minimal amount of freedom. They possessed some ignorance (*tamas*) along with good qualities (*sattvam*). This condition allowed the creation of some soft-natured animals, as described in the Veda, since these animals too have ignorance mixed with good qualities. Towards the later part of the first age of the first cycle itself, the freedom available to the souls gradually increased as they began to deviate more and more from the initial information given to them by God. This gave rise to increasing levels of bad qualities (*rajas*) leading to sins. *Rajas* and *tamas* mixed together gave birth to cruel wild animals and demons. Sages and soft-natured animals belong to the earlier time

whereas demons and cruel-natured animals belong to later time of the first age (Kṛta Yuga) of the first cycle. Gradually, as the other three ages progressed in the first cycle, *rajas* and *tamas* increased greatly and *sattvam* diminished a lot. Since there were demons and cruel wild animals in the later part of the Kṛta age itself, the first six of the ten famous Incarnations of God (Matsya to Paraṣurāma) incarnated on Earth to punish the sinners or demons. In these six Incarnations, wild animals were also represented by the Varāha and Narasimha incarnations.

It is not a question of human beings or animals. There are wise animals and ignorant human beings in creation. The wise animals are like four-legged humans and the ignorant human beings are like two-legged animals. We need not worry about the external physical form of the soul. **It is the good and bad qualities of the soul that decide whether a soul is really a human being or an animal.** As time passed in creation, good qualities changed into bad qualities. Actually, there is no specific good or bad quality. The good and bad are based on the direction in which a certain quality is applied in any situation. Anger, when used to keep students and children in discipline is a good quality. Kindness and love shown towards a bad person is a bad quality. Basically, any quality directed towards God, without any selfishness is divine. Conversely, any quality, even if it is coupled with sacrifice, is undivine, if it is directed towards oneself.

*Sattvam*, *rajas* or *tamas* never exist isolated from each other. Each of the three qualities always exists in association with the other two qualities. Even when we speak of pure *sattvam*, it is actually 99% *sattvam* and 1% *rajas* and *tamas*. **The preacher has to kindle and raise the percentage of *sattvam* in the disciple and reduce the percentage of *rajas* and *tamas*.** Hence, every human being is eligible to receive spiritual knowledge. The preacher has to adopt a suitable mode of presentation of the knowledge as per the receptivity and mentality of the disciple. To preach to atheists and convert them to theists, Śaṅkara Himself became an atheist in the beginning. He preached that the soul itself is God and that there is no God other than the soul. By this, He made the atheists agree that God exists because the soul exists!

After answering your question, I would like to give an important advice to you and through you to other people who ask similar questions. Suppose you meet God Krishna, who is the author of the Gita, which is the greatest spiritual scripture. What will you ask Him? Will you ask Him “O God! Please tell me whether Śaṅkara belonged to the sixth century or the seventh century”. Will such a question be useful to you for improving your present condition? You should ask Him “O God! Please tell me what I

should do to please You so that I can uplift my soul and rise towards divinity?” The former question is not at all useful for your spiritual progress or even for your materialistic life in this world. Śāṅkara calls such questions as grinding the already well-ground fine powder (*Piṣṭapeṣaṇameva bhavati*). The world created by God has various forms of living beings and inert items. What is the use of analyzing the process of creation to know whether human beings came from animals or animals came from human beings? This subject is part of science. It is not related to the spiritual knowledge, which is useful to us. **We should only worry about the technique of liberation, by which we can rise from a non-divine life to a divine life. It is what makes our present limited human life perfectly meaningful.**

### **5) How can we say that the karma cycle maintains justice when even innocent infants get abused?**

[Smt. Bindiya asked: Recently, it was reported that a two-year-old girl was raped. It is impossible for that child to have committed any sin. Yet the child was subjected to suffering. Do such incidents not indicate the failure of the divine administration in maintaining justice? If the child suffered as a result of her sin of the past birth, why was she not punished in hell, before being born on Earth? Punishing her on Earth when she is undoubtedly innocent in this birth, unnecessarily causes people to doubt God's divine administration.]

**Swami replied:** I have explained many times that our observations are always limited and that we lack the knowledge of the total background. When we see a criminal being punished by hanging him to death, we pity the criminal. We feel that the jailor is cruel to execute such a horrible punishment to the criminal. The criminal also acts very very innocent before his hanging, which makes us emotional and sympathetic towards the criminal. We feel like criticizing the administration established on the basis of the constitution. Had you seen that criminal earlier while committing the crimes, you would have killed him right then and there!

**It is not a strict rule that all the sins of a soul must be punished only in hell.** A separate jail does exist, where convicted criminals are punished as per the order of the court. But it does not mean that there is no prison-like lockup room in the police station itself. A criminal can certainly be held there for a day based on the decision of the police officer before presenting the case to the court. There are certain sins, which can only be punished on Earth in the soul's next birth. The animal slaughtered by the butcher thinks in its last moments that the butcher should be born as an animal and that it should be born as a butcher in the next birth. This is stated in the scripture as “*Māṃ saḥ yathā...*”, which means “As I am being

killed by him, so should I kill him in the next birth”. Meat is known as *māmsah*, (*mām sah*) in Sanskrit, which conveys this idea. The punishment for the sin of killing innocent animals for food, thus, requires the souls to be reborn on Earth. Intense sins and merits yield their corresponding fruits on Earth in this birth itself, as early as possible.

Sometimes, God draws a punishment that the soul was supposed to receive in a future birth and brings it into the present birth. God does this when there is an urgent need to accelerate the process of reformation of a certain soul. It is just like a doctor suddenly making changes to the schedule and doses of medicines to be given to a patient depending on patient’s condition. The baby looks innocent to your eyes, but it has memories of its past sins in its subconscious. The suffering experienced by the soul during its punishment leads, of course, only to a temporary realization.

Note that every sin committed in this world before our eyes does not necessarily have a background of some past birth. In other words, the crime committed by a criminal against a victim in this birth, does not necessarily mean that it is a retaliation of a similar crime committed by the present victim against the present criminal, in some past birth. We need not support the criminal saying that he is, after all, maintaining justice in God’s administration. **But whenever a sin occurs, there is a possibility that it might have had a background. It might have been the retaliation of a sin previously committed by the present victim against the present sinner.** If the sin is of that type, the sinner escapes punishment on Earth in spite of the most hectic efforts by the victim and the police. Seeing criminals escape in this manner, we immediately criticize God as a bad administrator since we do not realize that the crime was actually a retaliatory crime. Some people even go to the extent of saying that there is no God. But as said before, every crime need not be a retaliatory crime. **Only after all our efforts to punish the sinner have failed, are we forced to come to such a conclusion.**

Apart from retaliatory sins, we also have fresh sins that are committed which do not have any background from previous births. After all, even the retaliatory crime was a fresh sin in the previous birth. **The fresh sin will certainly be punished by God even without any effort from your side.** But you must be patient since God gives some time to the sinner to reform. During this time, the sinner is expected to realize, repent and not repeat the sin. The omnipotent God will compensate you for your loss if you patiently give your violator this time to reform. But if you get too emotional in this time interval and criticize your violator and God, your compensation will be withdrawn. In fact, you will unnecessarily have to face punishment for

your impatient reaction. Always believe that God is the most excellent administrator. Have patience and remember to leave the revenge to God. His administration will certainly punish the sinner as required. Never take the law in to your hands directly. Never even provoke others to punish your enemy.

Your husband is an advocate and argues on behalf of his clients. I think, he is your client here and hence, you are arguing on his behalf. So you are the advocate of an advocate!

### 6) Is it a sin to eat eggs?

[Shri Durgaprasad asked: My son was asking why eating eggs is a sin, when there is no life in it. Awareness or life develops in it only if the egg is kept in an incubator for hatching.]

**Swami replied:** Let us say that you have gone outside of your house to play. So, you are not seen in your house. Even though you are not seen in the house, your mother is preparing food for you because you will come home shortly. So, your absence from the house is only temporary. It also means that you exist elsewhere, even though you cannot be seen by the people in the house. When you return home after sometime and are seen by your people, do they say that you have just come into existence since they could not see you before? Existence is different from visibility. An existent item can be visible or invisible. **Being invisible for sometime does not mean an item is non-existent.** Awareness exists in the fertilized egg, even though it is not seen by you. **You only see the chick after it hatches and you think that awareness appeared only when the chick emerged from the egg.** The soul, which is present in an energetic body, enters the egg as soon as it is fertilized.

There is another type of egg which is called a vegetarian egg. It is unfertilized and so, it does not have a soul or awareness. Eating such an egg is like eating the meat of an already-dead animal, which does not involve any killing. There is no sin in eating such meat, since meat also has the same basic components as vegetarian food such as proteins, vitamins, minerals and so on. These components are just inert materials. The whole sin lies in killing the living animal for its meat. **Even if you say that the awareness in an egg is in a dormant state, it does not justify killing. You are taking away the future life granted by God to that animal for the sake of your food even though you have plenty of nutritious vegetarian food provided by God.** Plants only have the mechanical process of respiration but they do not have a nervous system for the generation of awareness. Mechanical respiration itself is called life

(*prāṇamaya kośa*). But it is not the real meaning of life. Real life is found only in animals, which are zoological beings and not in plants, which are botanical beings. The real meaning of life is the awareness generated by the nervous system (*manomaya kośa*). The awareness is produced in the nervous system as a result of the oxygen supplied by the process of respiration. **But the mere supply of oxygen, without a functioning nervous system, cannot be called life.**

### **7) Did Krishna give equal pleasure of motherhood to both Yaśodā and Devakī?**

[Shri PVNM Sharma asked: You have said that Krishna left Bṛndāvanam at the age of 18 years and never returned. He did not even return to see Yaśodā, His mother, who had raised Him in His childhood and who loved Him more than her life. But Devakī, His mother, who had given birth to Krishna, got the pleasure of His company for a far longer time. Is it not injustice?]

**Swami replied:** A child gives the maximum enjoyment to its mother during its childhood. So, the enjoyment given by the divine child Krishna to mother Yaśodā was of greater value even though it was only for a short time. The enjoyment that the grown-up Krishna gave to mother Devakī was very little, but He gave it for a long span of time. One gram of gold is equal to one ton of iron. **In this way, God has done equal justice to both mothers, Yaśodā and Devakī.**

Never doubt the administration of God. **His administration itself is justice and not vice-versa.** Such unshakable faith in God is the fundamental step. Sometimes, due to your limited information and due to your limited power of logic, you may misunderstand justice to be injustice and vice-versa. If you are firmly established in the faith that whatever God does is justice, you will be never a victim of such a misunderstanding. After all, the ultimate aim of justice is only to please God. He is pleased when justice is followed and He gets angry when injustice is done. **He is like an instrument that detects justice and injustice.** Krishna asked Dharmarāja to tell a lie in the context of killing Drona, who was supporting evil. Dharmarāja refused to tell the lie in the way Krishna wished. Due to this, he went to hell and Krishna, who provoked him to tell lie, went to His uppermost abode called Brahma Loka. A good saint, who was being followed by robbers, hid himself in a bush. A sage saw the hiding saint. The robbers came and asked the sage about the saint. The sage, thinking that telling a lie is sin, told the truth about where the saint was hiding. The robbers went into the bush, killed the saint, robbed his money and went away. For telling this truth, the sage went to hell. **Protecting good people**

**is a higher level of justice than merely telling the truth.** Telling a lie which harms good people is sin while telling a lie to protect good people is not sin. **No quality is good or bad by itself. Any quality becomes good or bad only by its direction.**

## Chapter 33

**PRACTICAL SACRIFICE TO THE SADGURU**

June 24, 2019

Some devotees including Shri Balaji, Shri Hrushikesh, Shri Kishore Ram, and Kum. Purnima, went to meet Swami. Shri Swami gave them a message that greatly inspired them. Presented below is the same message in brief.

**Sadguru is an Embodiment of the Divine Trinity**

O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! Sadguru (Satguru), the divine preacher is God Datta (*Guruḥ sākṣāt Parabrahma*). The same Sadguru is said to be God Brahmā, God Viṣṇu and God Śiva (*Guruḥ Brahmā...*). In any divine preacher, who is an Incarnation of God Datta, all the three divine preachers exist in harmony with each other. The three divine preachers are Śaṅkara, who was an Incarnation of God Śiva, Rāmānuja, who was an Incarnation of God Viṣṇu and Madhva, who was an Incarnation of God Brahmā. The preaching of such an Incarnation of God Datta involves the correlation of the philosophies of these three divine preachers. In ancient times, during every ritual, everybody would worship all these three divine preachers. This step in the ritual was known as Matatraya Tāmbūlam in which a Vedic hymn would be recited (*Trīṇi trīṇi vai devāḥ...*). The meaning of the hymn is that these divine preachers are the three forms of God namely Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. After sometime, this step of the ritual disappeared because devotees got divided between these three divine forms of God. The devotees began to exclusively worship only one of the three divine forms and completely neglect the other two forms of God. Each group began to follow only the philosophy of one of the three preachers. At times, the followers fell to such a low level that they began to abuse the philosophies of the other two divine preachers.

**Three Steps of the Spiritual Path**

The devotees of ancient times realized the importance of all the three divine preachers. They knew that the three philosophies are the three sequential steps in the spiritual path. Śaṅkara stressed on theoretical spiritual knowledge (*jñāna yoga*). Rāmānuja stressed on emotional devotion (*bhakti yoga*). Madhva stressed on practical devotion (*karma yoga*) which is a proof of one's theoretical emotional devotion. **Knowledge**

**generates devotion and devotion generates its practical proof.** The practical proof involves the sacrifice of one's work, which is service (*karma samnyāsa*) and the sacrifice of the fruit of one's work (*karma phala tyāga*), which is the offering of one's hard-earned wealth to the Sadguru.

On listening to all the interesting information (*jñāna*) about Mumbai city, one develops an attraction for the city (*bhakti*) and the desire to migrate to it. The first two steps, listening to the information and developing attraction for the city due to that information, are in the theoretical phase. The attraction for the city leads to the practical phase. The practical phase involves two parts: (1) the purchase of the necessary ticket for the journey, which is the sacrifice of the fruit of one's work and (2) the work or effort of travelling to the city, which is the sacrifice of work. The practical phase consisting of these two parts is called *karma yoga*. This practical *karma yoga* alone yields the ultimate fruit. But without the preceding theoretical steps of *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga*, the *karma yoga* is incapable of giving the divine fruit. **The generation of practice depends on the theoretical phase of knowledge and devotion.**

Practice is like the mango plant. Knowledge is like water and devotion is like the manure. All the three are essential to get a mango fruit. One person says that he has hundred tanks of water and that with that water alone, he can get the mango fruit. Another person says that he has hundred bags of fertilizer and that with that fertilizer alone he can get mangoes! The third person says that he can get mangoes since he has hundred mango plants. Actually, none of them will get the fruit. No amount of water or fertilizer can yield even a single mango, in the absence of the mango plant. Also, no amount of mango plants can yield a mango without water since all the plants will die without water. Similarly, no amount of mango plants, even if well-watered will yield mangoes since they will not grow into trees without the fertilizer. **The present-day followers of these three divine preachers must realize this agricultural engineering. They must correlate the three philosophies of these three preachers as three equally-essential and sequential steps in the spiritual path.** The divine preachers even came in the correct order. The first step is knowledge and hence, Śāṅkara came and emphasized knowledge. Next, the knowledge must develop devotion (attraction) in the follower and hence, Rāmānuja came and emphasized devotion. Finally, practice must arise as a proof of one's devotion and hence, Madhva came and emphasized service and sacrifice. **The three energetic forms of God, Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā, incarnated on Earth in human form as the three divine preachers. But the three energetic forms of God are just three roles taken by God**

**Datta in the upper world. Thus, the three preachers and their three divine forms of God are ultimately one and the same God Datta. God Datta is the ultimate form of God. The unimaginable God has given (Datta) Himself to the world of souls in the form of Datta so that souls may worship Him and obtain right direction in their lives through His preaching.**

### Theory and Practice

Both theory and practice are equally important. Theory is the mother of practice. **Without knowing the true knowledge, you cannot select the correct spiritual preacher.** Without theoretical devotion, mere practical devotion is invalid. Mere theory without practice is also useless. The Veda says that both the theoretical phase (*asambhūti upāsanā*) and practical phase (*sambhūti upāsanā*) are essential in the worship of God. Mere theoretical worship, aspiring for practical boons from God, is prostitution-devotion (*veśyā bhakti*). It is similar to a prostitute who talks cleverly (*jnāna*) and sings love songs (*bhakti*) to snatch money from the customers (practical boons). A better type of devotion than this is business-devotion (*vaiśya bhakti*) in which the devotee does business with God. He exchanges practical devotion for practical boons. He serves God practically or sacrifices some wealth to God, expecting practical boons from God. The best devotion is child-devotion (*apatya bhakti*) in which the devotee is totally involved in practical devotion without aspiring for any fruit in return. Total practical devotion means total practical sacrifice in terms of the sacrifice of work and the fruit of work. It is the proof of one's devotion and has the greatest value.

### Service and Donation

**God Datta does not see the total amount of your sacrifice. He sees the percentage of your total wealth that you sacrifice to God.** A beggar donating one coin was appreciated by Jesus because it was a total sacrifice. Even though rich persons donated hundreds of coins, Jesus did not appreciate them. This means that rich people cannot purchase the grace of God like poor people. The sacrifice of the fruit of one's work is stressed everywhere in the Gita. In the Veda, the same sacrifice has also been told to be the single path to God (*Dhanena tyāgena ekena...*). Sage Vasiṣṭa asked Rāma to sacrifice some fruit of His work as an offering before Vasiṣṭa could preach spiritual knowledge. **Datta never sees what you have given to Him. He only sees what remains in your pocket.** He directly gives you the ticket to the final destination if you pay Him one coin and no more coin

remains in your pocket. On the other hand, even if you pay Him hundred coins but a few hundred coins still remain in your pocket, He only gives you a ticket to the immediate next station. This removes any possible misunderstanding that might arise when Datta stresses on the sacrifice of the fruit of one's work. It shows that He is not interested in your wealth and also that the rich have no advantage over the poor. The sacrifice is clearly realized to be the practical proof of one's devotion.

*Karma samnyāsa* or the sacrifice of one's work has the word *samnyāsa* which means sainthood. It suggests that the sacrifice of saints is confined to *karma samnyāsa*; they cannot do *karma phala tyāga*. They can only serve, which is the sacrifice of their work or efforts. Since renounced saints do not possess any money, which is the fruit of work, they cannot sacrifice it to the Sadguru. For others, the sacrifice of work and the sacrifice of the fruit of work are both essential to prove their theoretical love for God. Work is energy. The fruit of the work, which is money, is matter. Matter is a highly condensed form of energy and hence, has more value. An employee works for the employer. It means that he sacrifices his energy (work) to the employer. In return, the employer pays him money, which means that the employer sacrifices matter (money) to the employee. Though this exchange should make both equal, the employee respects the employer and not vice-versa. The reason is the matter given by the employer is more valuable than the energy given by the employee. **If the employer has money which is the fruit of work, a number of employees are willing to work for getting it. They are eager to sacrifice their energy in order to get the money. In contrast, even if an employee is ready to work and sacrifice his energy, getting employment is very difficult for him.**

### **The Recipient's Eligibility and the Donor's Attitude**

This does not mean that you can purchase God with money alone; without theoretical devotion. Whenever you offer *dakṣiṇā* (money offering), you should offer it with knowledge, shyness and fear as said in the Veda. Knowledge means identifying the correct deserving person. If the receiver is undeserving, it is not simply waste of your money. You are actually purchasing the punishment for a sinful donation. Donation is a double-edged knife. One edge is donating to a deserving receiver and other edge is donating to an undeserving receiver. The former is merit while the latter is sin. It is better to avoid making any donation instead of making a sinful donation. We are always hasty while donating. We neglect the deservingness of the receiver and care only for the place and time. We think

“Today is Śivarātri and this place is the holy city of Kāśī. So, I must donate to somebody before the day ends”. This is our hasty psychology. If your donation goes to an undeserving person, you have purchased sin instead of purchasing merit. Of course, you should not do all this analysis in donating to a helpless beggar since there is an emergent need to save his life by donating food and life-saving items (*āpat dharma*). Donating money should be avoided in such emergency donations since money can easily be misused by the beggar. The donor then gets a share in the sin of that misuse. Other than these emergency-donations, when you make hasty decisions of donating to undeserving persons, you purchase sin. Instead, it is better to save your money and donate the saved money later on whenever you find a truly deserving person.

**When Krishna donated to Sudāmā, it was neither a festival day nor was the place, Kāśī city.** Krishna was so filled with emotion as He donated His wealth to Sudāmā that if Rukmiṇī had not objected, He would have donated all His wealth to Sudāmā. Sudāmā was a pitiable beggar and Krishna could have donated a little, which would have been sufficient for his livelihood. But Krishna gave immense wealth to him and the reason is that Sudāmā was far more deserving than a beggar. Sudāmā possessed correct spiritual knowledge because he had recognized Krishna as a contemporary Human Incarnation of God even though Krishna was his classmate, when they were young students. Sudāmā would always chant the name of Krishna, which indicates that He was devoted to Krishna. Sudāmā never aspired for getting anything from Krishna. Since they were suffering from utter poverty, his wife forced him to seek some help from Krishna, but Sudāmā visited Krishna and returned without asking anything from Krishna. Both these criteria, possessing correct spiritual knowledge and the lack of aspiration for anything from anybody, are the qualifications of the deservingness of the recipient of donation as mentioned by the Veda. The Veda says that the deserving recipient must satisfy two conditions: (i) He must possess true spiritual knowledge for preaching to and guiding the world in the right direction (ii) He must not have the aspiration for any fruit in return from anybody (*Śrotriyasyacākāmahatasya...—Veda*). When you offer *dakṣiṇā* to the Sadguru, you must have full knowledge about Him and must show full devotion to Him even as you serve to Him.

The receiver is God Vāmana and the donor is the demon Bali. **The donor, donating to the Sadguru, who is the Human Incarnation of God, should not even have a trace of ego. All the wealth of the donor was attained by the donor only by the grace of the Recipient.** Hence, while donating, the donor must donate with fear and shyness instead of ego. Ego,

jealousy, greediness etc., are the qualities of wrong knowledge, which can be washed out by bathing in the fire of knowledge (*jñānāgni*). Bathing with water only removes the external dirt whereas bathing with the fire of knowledge removes the internal dirt.

**Any bad mental quality cannot be removed by external physical actions like fasting, going around a statue of God, taking a cold-water bath early in the morning and so on. A diamond can be cut only by another diamond.** Wrong qualities are based on wrong knowledge and they can be cut only by the true concepts which are part of true knowledge. You should at least hear the true knowledge. It will make a strong impression (*samskāra*) on your soul which will continue for all future births. Then, in some future birth, you will implement it. If you do not even hear the true knowledge, there is no chance of your upliftment in any future birth. Hence, theory is most important and learning it is the primary effort. Mere practice without theory does not give any result. I heard from a devotee that a false Human Incarnation is offering salvation for Rs. 50,000/-. A rich man will easily throw that amount and continue with his own business of cheating others. He will not even think about God and still finally get salvation. I said that the only salvation such a rich man will get will be an immediate salvation from his saved Rs. 50,000/-. It is the money that is bringing problems to him and upon its sacrifice, it will give him some peace and happiness, which itself is the salvation! The theoretical devotion and the practical devotion are like the two legs meant for walking. But with no knowledge or proper analysis, the person is blind. Due to the lack of right direction given by true knowledge, the blind person will go on the wrong path and fall in a well.

### **God's Response is a Reflection of Your Approach**

God said in the Gita that He will respond to you in the same way that you approached Him (*Ye yathā māṃ...*). If your worship is only in the theoretical phase, the fruits given by Him to you will also be in the same phase. If you praise Him as the great God, He will praise you back saying that you are a great devotee. **This is love in return for love.** If you analyze Him deeply avoiding any theoretical or practical devotion, He will also analyze you and reveal your personality to you through very sharp analysis. **This is knowledge in return for knowledge.** He will give more sharpness to your brain for your deep analysis about Him. He will give you a sweeter voice if you sing songs in His praise.

If you sacrifice work and the fruit of work for Him, He will also bless you by doing your work and giving you a lot of wealth. But while

sacrificing wealth to God and serving Him, you must also sacrifice your words and mind (theoretical devotion) to Him. If God were a beggar begging for materialistic benefits from you, you could have only made the practical sacrifice of work and the fruit of work to Him; practical devotion alone would have been sufficient. There would have been no need of having mental (theoretical) devotion for Him. But the reality is that He is not in any kind of need. He needs nothing practically from you. A beggar, who is in need of your offering of money will not mind even if you insult him while donating the money to him. He just wants the money. Even if you exhibit ego during your donation, the beggar will not mind it since he is in need of your help. But the Satguru, the Human Incarnation of God, is not in need of anything from anybody at all. He is only testing the truth of your theoretical devotion (love) and the proof is your practical devotion. In fact, what you possess is His property, after all. It was given to you by Him due to His grace on you. He is standing as the receiver asking you to sacrifice it, only to test your real love for Him, which is proved through your practical devotion.

A grandfather buys a packet of biscuits for his grandson. He gives it to the boy's mother, asking her to give it to the grandson. The boy is unaware that the biscuits have been indirectly given to him by the grandfather. Now, the grandfather tests the real love of his grandson for him by asking the boy to give him a biscuit while the boy is enjoying the biscuits. It does not mean that the grandfather is in need of that biscuit from his grandson. If a beggar asks for the same, the beggar is in real need of it. This point must be remembered well. King Bali gave the promised donation to God Vāmana, knowing that Vāmana was an Incarnation of God. He gave the donation with all humility even after knowing that God had come to punish him through that donation. This shows that his practical donation was associated with pure theoretical devotion. God was greatly pleased with him and became his gatekeeper in the afterworld!

A king does a ritual sacrifice (*yajña*) and gets the total result of that sacrifice because he is the one who has spent entirely for that sacrifice in practical terms. The priests, who have only shown theoretical devotion to God by reciting prayers, do not get even a trace of its practical result. The king alone gets the practical result because he worshipped God practically as well as theoretically. The priests were paid for their service by the king. Even if the priests worshipped God theoretically without taking any fee from the king, the priest would not get any share of the practical fruit of the worship. His theoretical devotion would be paid by God by sanctioning a theoretical fruit like the development of theoretical knowledge and

theoretical devotion in the priest. The theoretical phase of knowledge and devotion is like an application for a position. The position is the attainment of the grace of God. The application alone is of no value unless it is accompanied by the certificates of qualification and work experience. *Karma phala tyāga* and *karma samnyāsa* are like these certificates. Hence, mere theory without practice is like an application without enclosed certificates. It will not be considered. On the other hand, if one merely sends the certificates without any application, the certificates will be thrown in to a dust bin and the employer will consider the applicant to be a mad person. Thus, both theoretical and practical phases of the spiritual path are essential.

Swami Vivekananda wept seeing the terrible poverty of India in spite of its excellent spiritual knowledge and its excellent devotion to God. The reason for this situation is that practical devotion is weak in India. In the West, practical devotion is high and so, they are blessed with a lot of material development. The Veda says that God is just a reflection of the devotee (*Rūpaṃ rūpaṃ pratirūpo babbūva*). When both theory and practice are associated together, they form the complete real devotion. It is like scented gold. It does not matter who the devotee is and which form of God he or she chooses to worship. The relationship between these two is the devotion, which decides the value of the fruit. The initial stage of the relationship between God and the devotee is certainly based on business. But it should result in a real relationship in the course of time. Any initiative is always defective in the beginning, just as a freshly kindled fire gives off a lot of smoke. But after sometime, the smoke disappears and the fire burns brightly. Similarly, the devotee's attraction to the fruit in a business-like manner is not wrong in the initial stage. It becomes wrong only when that initial stage continues forever.

Two partners in a partnership business became life-partners, in the course of time. In the initial stage, both were very careful in calculating their respective shares of the profit in the business. But later on, when they both became life-partners, there is no such calculation. Each of them feel that the total profit is his or her own. As per the need, one extends help to the other. Draupadi tore a piece of her sari and gave it to Krishna as a bandage when His finger was wounded. Krishna only needed that small piece of cloth at that time. When Draupadi was being unclothed in the royal court by the wicked Duśśāsana, Krishna rescued her by giving an infinite number of saris, which was her need. Such is the real bond between a devotee and God.

The Gita says that the sacrifice of the fruit of one's work is the final step of the spiritual path (*karma phala tyāgaḥ, tyāgāt shāntiranantaram*). The employee who sacrifices his energy (work) respects the employer who sacrifices his money (the fruit of work) to the employee in return. The employer does not respect the employee as much. A lot of energy, when condensed, becomes a small quantity of matter ( $E = mc^2$ ). Hence, the sacrifice of the fruit of work (money or matter) is greater than the sacrifice of work (energy). We also see in the world that the climax of real love exists only where there is practical sacrifice of the fruit of work. Actually, theoretical love is greater than practical sacrifice because theory is related to awareness and awareness is greater than inert practice. But the practice is the proof of the truth of the theory. God is not in need of your practical sacrifice at all. He tests you for your ability to do practical sacrifice only to prove the reality of your theoretical love. Hence, you must also express theoretical love towards Him while doing practical sacrifice to Him. As told in the Veda, you must be attentive, respectful, full of faith, fearful and shy as you perform the sacrifice. You must always remember that He is not a beggar even though He might look like a beggar. He can take any form to test how real your theoretical devotion is based on your practical sacrifice. The fact is that He is the actual donor of even your energy (work) and the fruit of your work.

### **Practice Proves True Devotion**

Regarding the sacrifice of the fruit of work, the Veda simply mentions the sacrifice of wealth or money (*Dhanena tyāgena*). The Gita, however, is more specific. It says that one should sacrifice the fruit earned by doing hard work (*karma phala tyāga*). The Veda is said to be the cow and the Gita is said to be the milk of the cow. In this case, the milk (Gita) has further sharpened the statement of the cow (Veda). There is an important difference between just wealth and hard-earned wealth. A person's wealth might have been inherited from his ancestors. A person's bond with such inherited wealth is not very strong whereas the bond with his hard-earned wealth is very strong. Krishna stole butter from the houses of the Gopikās since it was the fruit of their hard work. If a person's bond with God is the strongest compared to all other worldly bonds, then all the bonds will be defeated before that strongest bond. Hence, the background of Krishna's stealing butter from the Gopikās must be properly understood. It was the God's main test of the Gopikās, who were reborn sages. By that one test, God tested both their bond with their hard-earned wealth and their bond with their children. The stored butter was their hard-earned wealth and it

was also meant for their dear children. So, their bond with the butter had the combined strength of the two bonds. The Gopikās had to overcome this bond of double strength for the sake of Krishna, who was God-in-human-form. The three strongest worldly bonds of a soul which are called *eṣaṇās*, are the bond with money (*dhaneṣaṇā*), the bond with one's children (*putreṣaṇā*) and the bond with one's life-partner (*dāreṣaṇā*). Out of the three, Krishna tested the first two bonds by stealing the butter of the Gopikās. Their third bond was tested by dancing with them in Bṛndāvanam. In this test, the married Gopikās had to overcome their bond with their husbands for the sake of Krishna. These two activities of stealing and dancing done by God Krishna have to be understood deeply. They were the tests of the three strongest worldly bonds of the greatest sages, who had been reborn as the Gopikās. The purpose of the tests was to grant them salvation, which is nothing but the liberation from all worldly bonds due to the strongest attachment to God. In the absence of the attachment to God, these two activities of stealing and dancing with illegitimate partners, become very serious sins.

## Chapter 34

**CLARIFICATIONS ON DEATH RITUALS**

July 13, 2019

Shri Suryanarayana's father passed away on July 6<sup>th</sup> and Shri Suryanarayana did all the rituals for his father as per tradition. In this context, he sought the following clarifications from Shri Swami.

**Real Purpose Behind Death Rituals**

**Shri Surya asked:** I am presently doing the death rituals for my father who recently passed away. Could You please give me some more clarity regarding the actual purpose of the death rituals and whether it is necessary to perform them in the traditional way?

**Swami replied:** O Learned and Devoted Servants of God! Even though I have preached the true background of these death rituals to you several times, you have to do these rituals. The reason is that you have to go along with the forceful flow of ignorant people when you cannot change them. You have to follow the majority even if it is wrong. In the Parliament, the Lok Sabha passes a bill when the Rajya Sabha approves it. The former often contains members elected by the public irrespective of the intelligence of the members while the latter contains members having some intelligence and education. The former is like the king while latter is like the wise minister. Similarly, the majority should always take the opinion of the intellectual preacher (Satguru) before adopting any tradition.

The wrong concept in these rituals is that the food eaten by the priest will reach the departed soul. The soul is basically awareness or nervous energy. At the time of death, the soul departs from the material body and enters into a body made of inert energy. Food is matter and the eater of the food is also present here on Earth in a material body. Material food is suitable for a human being having a material body whereas energy is the suitable 'food' for energetic beings. The 'food' of angels is the rays of the sun. Departed souls get their 'food' from the rays of the moon as told in the scriptures. So, it is clear that the departed souls neither need any material food nor can the food eaten by the priest somehow reach the departed souls. Sage Carvāka mocked at this false concept. He said that if food fed to the priest could reach the dead, then by feeding a person on the ground floor, the food should also reach one's father who is upstairs! Even though the

sage was an atheist, he should be appreciated for his systematic and scientific logic on this point.

If this concept is not true, then why did the ancient sages establish this tradition of feeding the priest? Actually, when you give food, clothes and a money offering (*dakṣiṇa*) to a deserving priest, *apūrvam* is said to be generated. *Apūrvam* means merit, which brings good fruit not only to the departed soul existing in an energetic body after death but also to the performer of the ritual. The most essential condition for that to happen is that the priest must be deserving of your donation. If the priest is undeserving, instead of earning merit, both will incur sin. **The fruitfulness of the entire ritual depends on the deservingness of the priest alone and not on the place of donation or on the time of donation. In other words, there is no necessity to do the rituals only on a certain date, such as the date of the death of one's parents.** If the receiver of your donation is undeserving, instead of the ritual helping the soul, it will bring trouble for the departed soul as well as the performer.

The Veda states two requisites in the receiver which indicate his deservingness. They are: (1) the receiver must be well-versed in spiritual knowledge (*Śrotriya*) and (2) the receiver must not aspire for anything in return from anybody for his propagation of the Vedic knowledge in the ritual (*Akāmahatasya*). **This means that the priest reciting the Veda during the ritual without knowing its meaning and without preaching the Vedic spiritual knowledge to the public is undeserving.** Moreover, the present-day priest demands money for his wrong performance of the ritual! Neither does he know the knowledge of the recited Veda in order to propagate it nor does he perform the ritual without aspiring for anything in return. In both ways, the priest is undeserving. The non-performance of the ritual is better than such wrong performance because inaction is better than sinful action.

In the ancient times of the sages, almost everybody was deserving and hence, this problem never arose. At present, almost everybody is undeserving and hence, this problem is at its climax. The food offered even to a deserving priest never reaches the departed soul. Then why is this lie propagated that if you offer food to a deserving human being present in a material body here, it will reach the departed energetic being there? The performer of the ritual is totally fooled by this lie. He performs the ritual out of worry for his departed parents, thinking that they would starve if the ritual is not performed. This lie was not created by priests for fooling the public and earning money from them. The lie was created by the sages so that greedy people would be forced to perform the ritual and donate to a

deserving receiver, at least on the occasion of the death of his elders. This correct performance of the ritual does not harm anybody because the donation is given to a deserving receiver which will help not only the departed soul but also the performer. Any lie that leads to good action is not wrong. It is called *arthavāda*, which means a lie told for a good purpose. *Artha* means for the sake of a good purpose and *vāda* means a lie told.

The mother tells a lie to her child that if the child finishes eating everything in the plate, the moon will come down to the child! The mother does not incur any sin in telling such a lie. On the other hand, speaking the truth can also be a sin on some occasions. A saint carrying some money was being chased by robbers. He quickly hid himself in a bush. A sage saw the hiding saint. When robbers asked the sage where the saint was, the sage, believing that it is always a sin to lie, told them where the saint was hiding. The robbers killed the saint, took his money and left. The sage went to hell because he told the truth when he should have told a lie! Even Śāṅkara told a lie that every ordinary soul is God. But that lie helped atheists believe in the existence of God since the atheists were sure about their own existence. Here, telling that lie helped the atheist become a theist and progress further. **Helping good people is a higher justice whereas telling the truth is a lower justice.**

This lie that the food fed to a priest reaches the departed hungry soul is not a sin since it is beneficial as long as the priest is deserving. People want to avoid the sin of not feeding a deserving priest. But due to their lack of proper analysis, they end up donating to undeserving priests. In their effort to avoid one sin, they end up committing another sin. Donating to the undeserving and not donating to the deserving are both sins as told by Vidura in the Mahābhārata. The present-day priests who are undeserving must be transformed to make them deserving. This can be done only by the performer of the ritual. The performer of the ritual is the customer of the priest's services and it is said that the customer is God. So, the customer-god must insist that the priest preaches the knowledge of the Veda contained in the verses recited by him. This is the only way to forcibly bring a change in the priest. The priest must be convinced that there is no need of the blind recitation of the Veda since the Veda is already well-preserved by printing. The priest must be advised not to waste time in the blind recitation of the Veda and must instead use the same time for studying the knowledge preached by the Veda. The Gita says that the rituals must be performed only after full analysis and correct knowledge (*Jñātvā kurvīta karmāṇi*).

If a deserving priest is not available, you can postpone the ritual to some later date on which the deserving priest will be available. You cannot find fault with such a valid postponement. Do you not postpone these rituals for the sake of even a mechanical astronomical phenomenon like an eclipse? People are hasty in making donations. They only give importance to the place and time of donation. They think “Today is the auspicious occasion of Śivarātri and we are in the holy city of Varanasi. So, we must donate today”. Thus, they make some hasty donation to somebody without checking whether the person is deserving or undeserving.

Lord Krishna made only one donation in His entire life, which is giving infinite wealth to Sudāmā. The day He made the donation was not an auspicious day and the place where He made the donation was not a holy city like Varanasi. All He saw was that Sudāmā was the most deserving person who had true Vedic knowledge. He had clearly understood the essence of the Vedic knowledge, which is seen from His devotion to Krishna, his contemporary Human Incarnation of God. Even though Krishna was his childhood classmate, he was not negligent towards Krishna. Moreover, Sudāmā never aspired for anything from Krishna in spite of his severe poverty. Instead, he offered to Krishna, a little parched rice which he had borrowed from a neighbor. That rice was his sacrifice of wealth or *karmaphala tyāga* to Krishna, the contemporary Human Incarnation of God.

### First Ten Days of the Departed Soul

[Shri Surya asked: Is it true that a departed soul will be around on earth for ten days after death, as people say?]

**Swami replied:** As soon as death occurs, the soul leaves this earth in an energetic body. The physical Earth that we live on is called *Martya Loka*, which is the first sub-world of the first world, called *Bhū Loka*. *Martya Loka* is called *Karma Loka*, which means the world of deeds, since souls are meant to perform deeds here. They are supposed to enjoy the fruits of their deeds in the other worlds, which are called *Bhoga Lokas* or worlds of enjoyment. After death in the *Martya Loka*, the soul enters into the second sub-world of the *Bhū Loka*, called the *Preta Loka*. *Preta Loka* means the world of the dead. In that world, the soul faces the inquiry of its qualities and deeds for ten days. After those ten days, the soul leaves *Preta Loka* as said in the scripture “*Itaḥ param preta śabdo nāsti*”. To indicate this, the priest throws away the stone representing the soul during the ritual on the tenth day. The soul then enters *Naraka Loka* or *Pitṛ Loka*. These two worlds are the third and fourth sub-worlds of *Bhū Loka*. *Naraka Loka* is

hell where the soul enjoys the fruits of its sins. *Pitr Loka*, which is located on the moon, is a place meant for enjoying the fruits of the soul's neutral deeds. Most people live and perform deeds in the *Martya Loka* (earth) only for the sake of themselves and their family. They work expecting some benefit in return. Such self-centered people can only reach *Pitr Loka*. *Pitr Loka* means the world of ancestors since most of our dead ancestors reach this world. But some souls, if they serve the public without aspiring for any fruit in return, can even enter the second world called *Bhuvar Loka*. Souls that have performed even higher meritorious deeds enter the third world called heaven or *Suvar Loka*. *Preta Loka* is right above *Martya Loka*. So, even though the soul has just completed its life in *Martya Loka* and is in *Preta Loka*, it has not gone far from the *Martya Loka*. Due to the extreme closeness of *Preta Loka* with *Martya Loka*, the soul in *Preta Loka* can almost be considered to be still present in *Martya Loka*. This is the reason why people say that the soul is close to earth for ten days after the death of its body. The reality is that as soon as the person dies in *Martya Loka*, its soul in an energetic body enters the second sub-world, *Preta Loka* to face the inquiry for ten days.

### Prayers to Reduce the Departed Soul's Pain

[**Shri Surya asked:** In the present day, when a dead person's son performs the death rituals, a certain verse is read. It is a prayer to reduce the pain of the soul as its body is being burnt. The verse is as follows "*Dahana janita tapopaśamanārtham...*". Do the death rituals or the prayers reduce the dead soul's pain as its body is being burnt?]

**Swami replied:** The soul had identified (*adhyāsa*) with the physical body for a long time in the *Martya Loka*. The same superimposition (*adhyāsa*) of the soul's self-identity upon the physical body continues even in the *Preta Loka*, just after death. When the body is destroyed, the soul is deeply hurt and pained due to this continuing superimposition. The superimposition continuing in the *Preta Loka* has a purpose in that it enables the soul to recognize the deeds done by its body as the deeds done by itself.

In any case, the soul certainly suffers from the pain of burning its body or of any other means of destruction of the body. The prayer done by the priest also certainly pacifies the soul provided the priest and the performer of the ritual know the meaning and purpose of the prayer. Mere blind recitation of the prayer, without knowing its meaning, does not create any feeling in the mind of the praying person. When there is no feeling associated with the prayer, God will not respond to the blind recitation of

those verses and there will be no pacification of the pain of the soul. Even if the ritual is done, it becomes useless when the meaning of the prayer is not understood. It is the meaning that generates the feeling of devotion in the heart of the praying person. Hence, blind recitation is ineffective. That is why the reformation of the priest is very very essential. It is the need of the hour. The priest should give up blind recitation. He should first understand the meaning of the prayers being recited. Then he should explain the meaning to the performer so that the performer will develop a feeling of sincere devotion in his heart. Pleased with the performer's devotion, God will then help the departed soul.