

## TRUE DEVOTION

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*True devotion is an aspect of Bhakti. A true devotee is one who is contemplative of God, surrenders to Him fully, and finds the purpose and meaning of existence in His Kripa. The devotee's communion replaces the mundane, worldly existence with the ultimate, his absorption in His reality, the vastness and abundance of His splendor. In fact, even the natural world owes its meaning, direction to His signals.*

**Key Words:** Devotion, Bhakti, Existence, Reality.

### INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda writes

'I pray, thou who bearest the universe, help us to bear the burden of this our life. Leave us not. Let us never be separated from Thee. Let us always dwell in Thee.'<sup>1</sup>

Great saints like Guru Nanak Dev ji, Mira, Kabir, Ramakrishna have realized souls. They are God manifest and are representative of the highest form of devotion. There is no duality between this planet and their presence in the other-worldly. They reflect only divine in their word, actions, perceptions, lyrics. Their wholeness of perspective is beyond man's comprehension. It is a rich spiritual heritage. The cosmic vision cannot be subjected to any intellectual analysis.

For a true devotee, God has to be revealed. The attendance in

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customs, rituals, and ceremonies does not cater to his inner thirst and hunger and does not fulfill the purpose of righteous living. In the Hukumnama, which is the word of Guru Nanak Dev ji, it is precisely pointed out that the cycles of birth and death can only be overcome by obeying His Word Divine command, Hukum. Our soul is united with the word of the Lord. That is only what we have to discover and forever bear the imprint of His love, compassion, and bliss. For otherwise, there is a terrifying ocean of darkness, and the Karmic debts are never cleared. There is a succession of births.

The significant point is that our origin, home is only in Guru's world, and our separation from Him is our horrible destiny. Only if we are genuine devotees, true seekers of His Kripa, we can evolve from our miserable human state to the sense of splendor, the rebirth of consciousness that may be described as divine. Guru Nanak Dev ji writes that a true devotee dies before his death. Human life takes a different direction when we seek to incorporate His word in our deeds, acts, everyday living.

The intriguing question is one of having real Guru in our lives. How do we know that God is truly manifest in human form and in whom? Guru Nanak Dev ji makes a distinction between two forms of individuals. Those who follow Guru are Gurumukhi, and those who follow their ego; selfishness is Mansukh. The former lives a life of renunciation, whereas the latter follow a life of greed, possessions, worldly goods. Their unlimited desire is only the poison of materialistic gains.

The need for a true spiritual guide in our present wasteland is extreme, where those disturbances tear our emotional-mental-psyche lives. Our sense impressions are intense. We live a life of anxiety, fears. Our bodily drives make us driven towards greed,

covetousness, avarice, worldly goals, selfishness. If the Maya world enslaves us, our material existence will finally remove us from the world of God. We are either masochistic or sadistic. We need to understand the difference between gross and subtle. We have to discriminate between the real and the unreal.

Ramakrishna has aptly summed up in the following words, 'Nothing exists except the One. That One is supreme Brahman. He reveals that it is He who, as the Primal Energy creates, preserves and destroys the universe.'<sup>2</sup> From this standpoint, what is clear is the life of a devotee. His concerns lie beyond the emotional-familial framework, attachments, bondages in terms of relations, men, women, property, possessions. The focal point has to be a direct experience of God. It is an area that lies beyond systems, beliefs, ideology, sanctions. The relationship with God, the consciousness of a divine world has to be aroused as also inner-outer existence; the subjective- objective entity has to find a dwelling in Him, His illuminated reality.

Swami Vivekanand writes: 'When love to God is revealed and is all-in-all, this world is like a drop.'<sup>3</sup> Kabir is a saint who finds his living in the abode of God. He writes, 'O how may I express that secret word? How can I say that He is not like this, and He is like that? When He reveals Himself, Brahma brings into manifestation that which can never be seen.'<sup>4</sup>

Kabir who suffered from madness and was in devotion trance. He was a mystic and experienced a state of nothingness where eyes, ears, mind, and speech cannot reach. For Kabir, the soul is synonymous with God. The soul is not affected by sin and darkness. It is ever shining, is bliss.

Mira, too, has something identical to say. She represents Bhakti for

Krishna. She is an eternal worshipper at His feet. She says:

'Mira's Lord is Girdhar Nagar  
She is slave of his lotus feet.'<sup>5</sup>

She has developed difficult bhava for Krishna – that of Daya (love), Sakha (friend) and is singing the praise of Lord through Kirtan or Simran (recollection). Mira writes

'Keep me as your servant,  
Girdhar' <sup>6</sup> She also addresses him as Yogi  
'Sorrow is one's portion  
If you love a Yogi.' <sup>7</sup>

It may be pointed out that the true and transcendental devotion lies in loving God for His sake. Rubaiyat (a Basra born saint from Iraq) does not believe in heaven or hell but in loving God for the sake of loving God, in having strong longing for Him and in taking upon herself the pain of others, in worshipping Him unhindered. That is the everlasting love of God, the sense of eternal which is practiced by saints alone.

The qualities of a devotee embody or imply embodiment of a Bhava. Some of the bhavas mentioned are Dasya (servant), Sakha (friend), Prem (beloved), Madhurmya bhava (love towards the beloved), Vatslya bhava (parent – father/mother for the child), Simran (recollection). Ramakrishna describes reverence as Maha Bhava.

A real devotee must experience a sense of attainment in his present predicament. When he engages himself in devotional practices, finds bhava in his life in acknowledging the presence of God, His interference, direction in his activities, as obvious. The outcome is a sense of elevation, upsurge towards another goal. The Guru always

lifts one from the world of darkness, ignorance to the world of beauty, knowledge, bliss. Ramakrishna addresses Mother Kali in his state of intoxication:

'Mother, I don't seek knowledge,  
Here take Thy knowledge  
Take thy ignorance,  
Give me only pure love for Thy feet.'<sup>8</sup>

Lord Krishna tells Arjuna in Bhagwat Gita regarding a devotee 'who accepts pleasure or pain as it comes, is centered on the Self, to whom a piece of stone or clay or gold are the same, who neither likes nor dislikes, is steadfast, indifferent alike to praise or censure. And he who serves one only with unfaltering devotion shall overcome the Qualities and be one with the Eternal.'<sup>9</sup>

The evident point is one of unconditional faith, surrender and obedience. The moot point is how God reveals Himself. For saints like Ramakrishna, Mother Kali in reality appeared when he was about to commit suicide. Om Shakti Baba ji spent fifteen years in a forest at Yuvat (Maharashtra) without any human conversation when he became witness to the presence of God even in a cobra. However, for worldly mortals like us the beginning lies in engendering purity in life, purity of body, mind, heart so that the passions are overcome. The worldly life is replaceable by inner calm, peace, tranquility and a state of beyond on honor, distance conflict. The poison of anger, lust, covetousness is destroyed. Our sense of immortality, infinite begins, when being mortal, clogged by death, the finite is annihilated. Only a true Sadguru can deliver us from the chains of birth and death.

The awakening towards another life is a regular encounter with Sadguru. Our purified inner self must respond to the highest Self. The evolution towards being divine must continue. Sadguru holds the

hand provided one accepts Him. Aurobindo states different planes of divine consciousness, 'the greater Life is attracted to what is beyond it; it always seeks the Splendor that is above its range.'<sup>10</sup> Our object has to be to unify with the divine ground of our being. The Bible states, 'He who has faith in me may die and yet shall live.' True devotion implies change in our personality, our system, our vitals. We must address Him with the totality of our being and not with fragmented, split selves. There will be a strange sense of bliss, joy, communion with friends, members of family and individuals at workplace. When we are receptive of His grace, we have to be vigilant and imbue in us those positives and set aside the negatives. Life has to be peaceful, happy, contented only. Our desires, wishes, expectations are constantly being screened by His word and we are not dominated by ego, selfishness, motives. The animal sense in human nature has to disappear. Our mental state has to be captured on our road towards being divine.

The birth of a new person, consciousness is a possibility with the blessings of Guru when we are finally in an illuminated divine world. Our vision rises from being paltry, limited. We rise to the sublime vastness of His knowledge.

Swami Sivananda writes, 'The sense of all life, the source of all knowledge is Atman, the innermost Self. There is no difference between Atman and Bliss. The Atman is Bliss itself.'<sup>11</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

The innermost self has to radiate the joy of living, brightness, hope, optimism. There has to be concerted action towards this end. The keynote of such a personality is that he has found his residence in God only. Swami Sivananda writes, 'Moksha cannot be attained by man so

long as knowledge of the Eternal is not attained. Such a devotee serves Him only and acts at His command.'

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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