

虔诚

爱是神；神是爱。在这世间，无人不具备爱。它是天生的，内在的，潜伏的并且是神恩赐的与生俱来的礼物。在这世上，爱可以表达和体验于不同的形式。爱之于同仁，我们称之为友谊。爱之于上司和长者是为尊敬。母亲的爱叫做骨肉之情。爱之于贫困者是为关心与同情。爱你的国家是爱国主义。爱之于资产是为占有。是故，一切皆依据爱的原则来操作。然而在人与神之间存有一种形式的爱，它是优越的，无上的，永恒的，亲切的和不朽的。这就叫做虔诚。执着，欲念，骨肉之情，友情，尊敬，关心，占有等等都是世俗的。它们来而复往，有如过眼云烟。它们顺着人的一生而到来。它们随着时间的推移或有增减，胥视地位和情况而定。然而虔诚决不改变，改变的是表达和体验的程度。但它不会完全消失。

虔诚是自然的。与人的关系和交往或许显得很自然，然而一旦些微的私利涉入，当某些该做的事被搁置一边时，当找到更好的方法可以把工作做好时，当疑惑的因素进入心念时，当不同的意见被提出时，这时，爱蒸发了，代之而起的是愤怒，憎恨，敌意和妒忌。一旦爱出了问题，这些负面的倾向就应运而生。薄伽梵警惕学生--“毕竟！这些友情又是什么。”它们仅维持在你逗留于此的两三年时间。你为什么让这短促的交往影响你自己？只要你口袋里有钱，你父亲有地位，人人都想巴结你，前来对你说“哈罗，哈罗”。然而一旦你口袋空空如也，而父亲又已退休，那就连“再见”也没人跟你说了。记得这神是唯一的朋友，祂一直与你同在，在你上下左右，在你之内，在你周围。祂全不在乎你的金钱，地位，身份及其他诸如此类的物质情况。祂要的只是你。要认清这就是神的爱。明乎此，其他剩下的世俗的爱形式就会消退，变得毫无意义和徒然无用。是故，对神的这个爱是自然的也因而是永垂不朽的。

虔诚是感恩。自然界的五大元素是神给天地万物的礼物。然而，当它落入人的手里，他就使之商业化了。地球是神给人的礼物，任人自由开发利用。但当我们购买一个场所或一块地皮时，我们必须缴付地产税。水是神给的礼物，没有人会特别制造水。所有河流，湖泊，瀑布都是祂的创造。但当我们通过管子和水龙头来取水饮用时，我们就得缴交水费。不是吗？电力处处都有。但当我们通过电线利用电流来操作电灯，电风扇，电冰箱以及其他家庭电器设备时，我们就得缴付电费。那么，我们缴交税收给赐给我们生命的人又如何呢？我们该付维系生命的氧气供应多少税额？我们该付血液循环多少费用？我们该付多少税额给我们在这世上所操作运用的知觉感官和行动感官？我们对神的虔诚是感恩。那即是我们欠祂的税。若果我们意外丢失了手帕而有人捡起归还给我们，我们尚且感激他。那么，对提供一切给我们的神，我们应该有什么作为？我们对祂的虔诚就是感恩。

虔诚是平等心或平静心。薄伽梵强调此乃虔诚的真正本质。祂经常指出，一个信徒不应该被生活中的撞击和突变所困扰。他不因褒扬而雀跃也不因贬低而沮丧。一个信徒在名成利就和胜利之际，他的内心充满着感恩之情。但他视失败为一个教训或信心的考验。他接受它为一个对自己好的矫正步骤。

《主祷文》说，“愿祢的旨意奉行在人间，如同在天上。”所以，虔诚是对神旨意的一个乐意的顺从。它不是一个妥协。它是对神旨意的谦卑的接受。这就是降服。虔诚带来降服。虔诚终至成为降服。虔诚的目的是降服。总之，我们可以这么说，虔诚的目标和目的就是降服。

虔诚是服务。薄伽梵说，“我不要任何人服务我。如果你服务贫困者，那就够了。”圣经也阐释同样的道理。主说，“当我饥饿时，你并不给我食物；当我需要衣着时，你并没有给我衣服；当我感到不适时，你并没有来探望我；当我口渴时，你并没有给我水喝。”他们问祂，“您什么时候到来？我们什么时候不供奉？”主澄清，那是神本身以这种要求到来，而不论我们施与何人，它都会抵达神那儿。因此我们要视服务为虔诚。在这关系上，我们必须提醒自己薄伽梵所说的，“服务的手比祈祷的口更圣洁。”

在这邪恶时期（Kali Yuga），最方便与最肯定的虔诚法门就是 **namasmarana** 或赞唱主的荣耀。这在何时何地都能执行。在黄金期（Kruta Yuga），得道有四大法门。在三分期（Treta Yuga），一个人可以遵循三大途径来体认神性。二分期（Dwapara Yuga）指示两个法门来体验神，而伽利期（Kali Yuga）则使整个过程缩小到一个途径，即，赞唱主的荣耀（**namasmarana**）。这就是传统中所谓的，法（**Dharma**）在黄金期，有四只脚；在三分期有三只脚；二分期两只脚，而伽利期则只有一只脚 -- 就是赞唱主的荣耀。它使我们忘掉自己而把时间用于忆念神上。

取自《薄伽梵斯里沙迪亚赛峇峇普及和实用的教导》第10章

问题：

1. “爱可以表达和体验于不同的形式，但只有对神的爱是自然的也因而是永垂不朽的。”请分享你对此说法的体验。【顺序讲述】
2. “在成功和失败之际，一个信徒的内心总是充满着感恩之情的。”你有在生命的一切发生中感谢神吗？你怎么做到的？【公开讨论】
3. 虔诚之道众多，目标则一。这全由信徒去采用他所心仪的任何一项。你的选项是什么？【顺序讲述】

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Devotion

Love is God; God is love. There is none in this world without love. It is innate, immanent, latent and inborn gift of God. Love is expressed and experienced in different forms in this world. Love towards fellow beings is called friendship. Love towards superiors and elders is respect. Love of a mother is termed affection. Love for the poor and needy is known as concern and sympathy. Love for the nation is patriotism. Love for property is possessiveness. Therefore everything operates on the principle of love. But there is one form of love which is superior, supreme, eternal, intimate, and immortal that exists between man and God. This is called devotion. Attachment, lust, affection, friendship, respect, concern, possessiveness etc., are all worldly. They come and they vanish like passing clouds. They come in the course of a life time. They increase or decrease with the passage of time depending on the position and circumstances. But devotion will never change. The measure of expression and experience varies. But it does not disappear totally.

Devotion is natural. Relationship and association with people may appear natural. But, once little favours are withdrawn, when certain obligations are not attended to, when a better substitute to get the work done is found, when an element of doubt and suspicion enters the mind, when there are differences of opinion, love evaporates giving place to anger, hatred, enmity and envy. These are the negative tendencies that develop when once love is in question. Bhagavan cautions the students – “After all! What are these friendships.” They last for two to three years of your stay here. For this brief association why do you allow yourself to be influenced? So long as you have money in the pocket, your father in good position, everyone will come to you and say “hello, hello”. But the moment pocket is empty and father retires no one will say even “goodbye”. Remember that this God is the only friend, who is always with you, above you, below you, in you and around you. He will not forsake you. He is not at all bothered with your money, position, status and such material things. He wants only you. Realize this is the love of God. When once we understand this, all the remaining forms of mundane love fade away, turn meaningless and vain. Therefore, this love for God is natural and hence is permanent.

Devotion is gratitude. The five elements in nature are of God's gift to the creation. But when it comes to man he makes it commercial. Earth is freely given to man by God. But, when we buy a small site or plot, we have to pay land tax. Water is God's gift, nobody specially manufactured water. All the rivers, lakes, waterfalls are His creations. But when we draw the same water for drinking purposes through our pipes and taps we have to pay water tax. Is it not? Electricity is everywhere. But when it passes through wires, we utilize it for our lights, fans, refrigerators, and such other domestic appliances; we have to pay electricity bill for power consumption. Then what about paying tax to the one who gave us this life? What is the tax you pay for the life sustaining oxygen supply? How much should we pay for blood circulation? How much tax should be paid for the senses of perception and action with which we operate, function in this world? Our devotion to God is the gratitude. That is the tax we owe Him. If we drop our handkerchief by chance, and if someone picks and gives us, we thank him. Then what about God who gave us everything in life? Our devotion to Him is the thanksgiving.

Devotion is equal-mindedness or equanimity. Bhagavan emphasizes that this is the true quality of devotion. He often remarks that a devotee should not be perturbed by bumps and jumps in life. He should not be elated by praise or depressed by blame. A heart of a devotee is full of gratitude in

times of success, profit and victory. But he views failure as a lesson or test of faith. He takes it as a corrective measure for his own good.

The Lord's prayer says, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." So, devotion is a willful and a happy submission to the Divine Will. It is not a compromise. It is acceptance to the Divine Will in all humility. This is surrender. Devotion leads to surrender. Devotion culminates in surrender. The end of devotion is surrender. In one sentence it can be said that the aim, purpose and the goal of devotion is surrender.

Devotion is service. Bhagavan said, "I do not want anyone to serve Me. It is enough if you serve the poor and the needy." The Bible also speaks of the same. The Lord said, "You didn't feed me when I was hungry; you didn't give me clothing when I needed most; you didn't pay a visit when I was unwell; you didn't give me water when I was thirsty." They asked Him, "When did you come? When did we not offer?" Lord makes it clear that it is God Himself who comes with such demands and to whomsoever we give, it goes to Him. Thus we consider service as devotion. It is in this connection we have to remind ourselves what Bhagavan said, "The hands that serve are holier than the lips that pray."

In this Kali Age the easiest and the surest path of devotion is namasmarana or singing Lord's glory. This can be done anywhere and at any time. Kruta Yuga provided four paths to reach divinity. Treta Yuga could make one realize divinity by following three paths. Dwapara yuga prescribed two methods to experience Divinity, while Kali Yuga narrowed the whole into one path i.e., namasmarana, singing the glory of God. This is what is meant in the conventional expression that Dharma walked on four feet in Kruta yuga, three in Treta, two in Dwapara and only one in Kali Yuga. This being namasmarana. It makes us forget ourselves and spend our time in constant remembrance of God.

Universal & Practical Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Chapter 10

Questions:

1. "Love is expressed and experienced in different forms, but only love for God is natural and hence is permanent." Share your experience about this statement. 【Sequential narration】
2. "The heart of a devotee is full of gratitude in times of success and failures." Do you thank God for everything that happened in your life? How do you do it? 【Open discussion】
3. The paths to Devotion are many, but the goal is one. It is left to the devotee to adopt any one that pleases and appeals to him. What is your chosen path(s)? 【Sequential narration】