

**OM SAI RAM!**

**Welcome to this Question and Answer Session,**

**Q. 317, "THE POWER OF FAITH AND DEVOTION"**

**April 27, 2024**

*This text excerpt is taken from Prof. Anil Kumar's book "Sathyopanishad, Vol. 2", pages 228-233*

**Swami! Now we understand from your divine discourse and by your grace, how important devotion is. But, faith is the base of devotion. How is one to cultivate faith, Swami?**

**Bhagawan:** What a foolish question you have asked! What do you mean by saying 'cultivating faith'? Can you cultivate it? Is it a commodity to be purchased from a shop? It can neither be given nor received. Faith is your natural quality. In fact, *visvasa*, faith, is your *svasa*, breath. Without it, there is a total stoppage of your breath.

Just think for a moment how you carry on your daily routine with or without faith. You will soon notice that your every action, both mundane and spiritual, is based only on faith. You give your clothes, costly shirts and safari suits to a washer man, in full faith that he would bring them back after washing and ironing. If you suspect that he would run away with your clothes, will you give them to him? Most valuable gold is given to goldsmiths to make jewelry out of it, in good faith that they would do so. Even if a trace of doubt arises in your mind, will you ever hand over your valuable gold?

You go to a barber for a haircut. Do you for a moment entertain the feeling that he would put his knife in the neck instead of on the head? You bend your head in good faith in front of the barber to have your hair cut. So also, in good faith, a patient will lie down on the operating table and allow himself to be operated upon by the surgeon. Do you doubt that your life is safe in his hands? No. So whether he is a dhobi or a goldsmith or a barber or a doctor for that matter, all transactions are made in good faith. So, faith is a natural gift of God to mankind. To be faithless is unnatural and artificial. But the pity of it is, that you have full faith in everyone but not in God. Isn't that very unfortunate?

Devotion and faith are like the two eyes of a living being or the two wheels of a bicycle or the two wings of a bird. Without faith, as we say, even an ant can't move an inch. A bird cannot fly high without faith. A bird perches on a branch. The branch may be drooping or swinging, yet the bird is not bothered. Why? It is because the bird has full faith in its wings on which it relies, not on the branch. So, everything depends on your faith.

How do you know your father? It is your mother who has the authority to show you your father and you have full faith in your mother. If not, there is no way to know your father.

You know the dates and the days from a calendar and you go by what the calendar indicates. Otherwise, how do you know that today is Monday the 14<sup>th</sup> of May? The day has not appeared in front of you with a signboard on the forehead, indicating the day of the week and the date.

You have full faith in all that you listen to from the All India Radio news bulletin and the various news columns that you go through in a newspaper. So much so that you believe what you hear on the radio, watch on the T.V., read in the newspapers, but you don't believe our *rsivakya* or the sayings and teachings of our sages and saints of yore embodied in the Vedas and other holy scriptures. The Vedas are called *isvariya*, *apauru seya*, which means compositions of God. You don't have faith in them. How strange and unfortunate it is! Think over it for some time.

***Swami! Why are some people not devoted to God? Devotion, it seems, has no place in their lives. Would you kindly tell us the reason?***

**Bhagawan:** Very simple. It is only sensual pleasure that makes people disinclined towards God. Meaningless worry about the future, excessive desires, building castles in the air are a way of life with them. Ambition to reach heights they don't deserve and too much attachment to the family and the world, all these are factors that make a man not devoted to God. There can be no other reason beyond these.

You know the seesaw on which children play. If one end goes up, the other end comes down and vice versa. If the stress is laid on the world, your love of God will be less, and on the other hand, if your love of God is greater (heavy at one end, as in the game), your attachment to the world becomes less (light as the other end, as in the game). This is how the balance works. Isn't it so?

I will give you another example, that of a magnet. It draws iron filings towards it. But sometimes it doesn't. Why? If the iron pieces are rusted and dusty, they are not drawn and attracted by the magnet. Likewise, people who are like iron pieces - dusty and rusted by worldly desires, are not drawn to God, the 'Divine Magnet'. Is it clear now why some are not devoted to God?

***Swami! Kindly give a direction to our spiritual pursuit? How should it continue? Like the flow of a river? What are the restrictions to be observed?***

**Bhagawan:** '*Nasreyo niyamam vina*' Everything must have limits, without which you will face risks and dangers. A river that flows under certain conditions with banks on either side, serves irrigation purposes better. Similarly, the river of life has two banks, one on each side, viz. *samsayatma vinas yati*, which means 'Never doubt' and *sraddhavan labhate*: which means 'By sincerity you develop wisdom'.

Your river of life should flow between these two banks. Your faith should not be shaken. It should never waver. Your faith should be strong and deep. No adverse situations and negative moments should make you lose your faith.

A life without faith is like a pot with holes. You know that we water only the roots of a plant. Yet, water is supplied to all parts of the plant. You do not water the stem, branches and leaves separately. Similarly, the water of faith is supplied to the roots of your life and will take care of everything else related to life. The tree of life can sustain itself if the water of faith is supplied to its root. Without this, the plant dries up and is no longer alive. It becomes firewood. Once you doubt, all that you do will go in vain and nothing will be fruitful. No amount of scholarship or *sadhana* can help you if you allow doubt to step into your mind.

A small illustration: There was a *pandit* in a certain village. Daily, a milkmaid from the neighbouring village used to bring him milk, crossing a river by boat. In the process, there was necessarily some delay in supplying milk to the *pandit*. One day the *pandit* questioned her and wanted to know the reason for the delay.

“Oh *panditji!* I have to cross the river by a boat every day to bring milk. I can only get into the second trip of the boat because the boatman will load all the elders of the village in the first trip. There is no alternative left for me. So I am late.”

Then the *pandit* said, “Look! Why do you need to come by boat? I suggest that you carry the milk pots on your head and cross the river chanting God’s name. The river will give way and you won’t need to wait for the boat.”

The milkmaid believed in what the *pandit* said and the next day she could come on time and gave him the pot full of milk. Then on his enquiry, she told him that she could bring the milk on time by simply following his instructions.

The *pandit* was very much astonished at this and could not believe her words and decided to verify the fact himself. He said to her, “Good! Now as you go back, I shall follow you and see you as you cross the river chanting God’s name and see how the river gives way for you to cross it.”

Both of them came near the riverside. The milkmaid acted exactly according to the *pandit*’s instructions, viz. chanting the name of God. The *pandit* also wanted to act in the same way. He stepped forward and lifted his dhoti up to his knees so that his clothes would not be wet. He marched into the river step by step, doubting if he would drown in the river. His doubt became true and he drowned. Faith made the milkmaid walk across the river, while the *pandit* had no faith in his own words. Hence he drowned.

The bank on the other side of the river of life is *sraddha*, sincerity and steadfastness, which confer *jnanam*, wisdom. You will be sincere only if you love the work you do. You should have full faith and love to become sincere.

More Divine advice in the next session! Thank you for your time.

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