

OM SAI RAM

Welcome to this Question and Answer Session

Q. 327, “THE EFFECT OF GOD’S GRACE IN OUR LIFE”

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This text excerpt is taken from Prof. Anil Kumar’s book “Satyopanishad, Vol. 1”, pages 23-29

Swami! What should we do to receive God’s Grace?

Bhagawan: There is no way other than devotion. Your wealth, scholarship, authority and physical personality cannot please God. It is only your devotion that He looks into.

Don’t you know Guha in the *Ramayana*? What scholarship had he to please Rama? Nothing. He was not even educated. You also must have heard of Sabari, an ardent devotee of Lord Rama. How rich was she to be close to Rama? Nothing. She was in rags at that time, the poorest of the poor. What made that bird Jatayu receive the special blessings of Rama so as to deserve the performance of his last rites at the divine hands of Rama? Even Rama’s father, Dasaratha, was not as fortunate as this bird Jatayu, because he died when Rama was in the forest, far away from Ayodhya. How about Hanuman, a monkey? By implicit faith in and total surrender to Rama, he could be successful, not only in the task assigned to him, but also came to be worshipped by the devotees of the Lord. His worship has been continuing since the days of the Ramavatara.

The *Mahabharata* clearly portrays Draupadi, the queen of the Pandavas, as Lord Krishna’s devotee of the highest order, always, in times of success or failure, pleasure or pain, calm or turmoil, anywhere, either on the throne in Hastinapura or in the forest. The Pandavas are known for their deep devotion and abounding love for Krishna. They are the best examples of equanimity and total surrender to God, so much so that Krishna identified Himself completely with them by saying that Dharmaja was His head, Arjuna His heart, Bhima His shoulders and the two youngest brothers, Nakula and Sahadeva equal to His two feet. This is true devotion. This is the ideal stature of a devotee.

In the *Bhagavata*, you come across the Gopis (the cowherd girls who were rustic, innocent and unlettered), whose *madhurabhakti*, total attachment to God, was backed by unconditional love and surrender. Their devotion was noble, pure, nectarine and exemplary. They saw Krishna in the bushes, thorns, leaves, branches and flowers. Is theirs not *Tadātmyabhava*, total identification? Isn’t theirs the *advaitabhava*, non-dualistic state? They could not bear the pangs of separation from Krishna even for a split second. This is the level of their devotion.

Have you not heard of Tyagraja, the South Indian saint-singer and composer who had put the question: '*Nidhi cala sukhama ramuni sannidhi seva sukhama?*' which means, 'Is it wealth that gives you happiness or proximity to God?' Ramadas, Surdas, Kabir, Tulasidas, Jayadev, Tukaram, Mira, and others are the very personifications of devotion. So they are remembered to this day. By reading about them, you will not only be the recipient of God's grace, but even have a claim on God's grace. You know, the moment you marry, your wife will have a claim on your property. This is due to the *mangalashtra*, the sacred knot tied at the time of the wedding. Similarly, devotion is *bhaktisutra*, the knot of devotion, which empowers the devotee to claim from God His grace. Therefore, for everything, devotion is most important. For most people, it is the proper and noble approach to Divinity.

Swami! Why are we not recipients of Divine Grace?

Bhagawan: It is not proper to feel so. You are wrong if you think so. God's grace is equally available to all of you. He makes no distinctions of caste, creed, sex, nationality and so on. You should know that the defect is in you. You have to cleanse the tumbler of your heart. For example, it is raining heavily now. If you want to collect water in a vessel, what you do is keep it straight. However, if you turn it downwards or put it upside down, is it possible to collect water? The downpour of rain will be of no help at all. Therefore, we have to keep our hearts always pure and ready to receive the rain of grace. We have to turn inward towards the rain of God's Love in order to collect it. Is it not so?

Swami! Our fortune is immeasurable! How many people get this opportunity? This is all Your grace. But, how are we to preserve this?

Bhagawan: Look! Out of the millions of devotees how many are able to be here? Is this proximity possible for everyone? Merit from several past lives has made you fortunate enough to be here. Out of a few thousand in our institutions, how many students are lucky enough to be here? Only a few of you could follow Me to this place, Kodaikanal. This you will have to preserve and sustain carefully.

A small example. Here is a roll of thread, which is the product of much rotating and winding. A time consuming job, really! If they take up this process in haste, and drop it in the middle, out of neglect or carelessness, all the thread will lie scattered on the ground. Similarly, your fortune is like this roll of thread, carefully and laboriously wound, due to the merit of good deeds that you have done in your past lives. If you neglect this fortune and lose it by any mischance, you can't get it back. All the effort you have put in will go to waste. The thick pad at the centre of this roll is like your faith, round which your meritorious deeds are wound. So, never neglect this good luck, nor take it for granted, nor view it as simple and ordinary. Negligence and carelessness are harmful to spiritual aspirants.

Swami! How does Your Grace affect our destiny and our prarabdha, past karma?

Bhagawan: God's grace and God's will can change anything. God is love. His infinite compassion makes Him change your *prarabdhakarma* or the *karmic* effects of your past lives. A devotee can arrest God in the jail of his heart. In this world, there is nothing that you can't achieve with devotion. God's grace can cancel all your karmic effects or the evil effects of your past life. Nothing untoward can happen to you.

A small example. You see many medicines kept for sale in a medical shop. On each of the medicines you find the date of manufacture and the date of expiry. The medicine will not act with efficiency beyond the date of expiry. It becomes just useless. What God does is exactly the same thing. He simply stamps on the medicine bottle the date of expiry, cancelling your *prarabdhakarma*, the suffering you are going through in this life. Right then, your suffering ends. This is how Swami, out of His sheer grace and compassion, gives you relief.

Swami! Can we be sure of God's grace if we do sadhana regularly?

Bhagawan: Certainly! As sure as anything! Why do you doubt? For example, you have a pet dog. You feed it every day and you will notice that it will get habituated to come to you exactly at the same time every day to be fed. Is this not true? When regularity makes a dog respond, why not God? You will definitely receive His grace.

Swami! We are here in your presence because of your infinite grace and mercy. Your blessings have brought us all here. We bask in the sunshine of bliss bestowed on us by your Divine Darshan, Sparshan, Sambhashan. Do we still need merit from past lives and the samskaras?

Bhagawan: The present state of bliss and the merit from past lives are both essential and they should go together. They are closely interrelated. Take this example. Here the soil is sandy. When there are heavy rains, water sinks into the soil or gets absorbed in the soil. The same is the situation with you at present. Therefore, devotion doesn't remain steady. But, suppose there is a flow of river water. What happens when it rains? Water will flow with greater vigour than before. Similarly, your present blessed opportunity of being with Me is like rainwater. If you have good *samskaras* from your past life, like the water flow of a river, the blissful state you are experiencing now will continue with more vigour.

God's grace is like a shower of rain. Your merit from the past will enable you to contain it. So, I tell you often to retain the good luck, the opportunity and the privilege given to you. You draw water out of the well in a bucket. But you have to pick up the bucketful of water yourself. On the other hand, if you drop it in the middle, what happens? You can't collect water, can you? However, there is one important thing. If you love God intensely, you can achieve anything. As human effort increases, God's grace also lends strength and intensity to the effort, which ultimately leads man to success!

Prof. Anil Kumar reveals more Sai pearls of wisdom in the next session. Thank you for your time.

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