

GURU AND ATMA NIVEDAN

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GURU AND ATMA NIVEDAN

THE Advent of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu into this world is a most marked event even to great celestials. Gods like Brahma, Siva, etc. and sages of repute like Sanak, Sanandan, Sanatan, Sanatkumar, etc. greedy of tasting the highest and rarest Transcendental Bliss are born in the material world and having been blessed with the Divine Name, they dance, sing and lose themselves on the wavelets of Divine Bliss. Exalted devotees like Narada, Prahlada, etc. are no exception. Assuming human forms, they too are drinking the ambrosia flowing from the never-ending fountain of the Transcendental Name. Lakshmi and other consorts of Sri Vishnu too, were born in this mortal world in human forms, tempted by the same desire and are having a taste of it. What to speak of all other persons ? Sri Krishna Himself is enjoying the sweetness of His Name ! As such, why wonder at the request of Mayadevi ?

GURU AND HIS FUNCTION

There are many who preach against the idea of accepting a spiritual guide. These people go round in different parts of the country and deliver vehement speeches criticising the whole principle. The duty of a Guru is to enlighten the ignorant people, by removing their misunderstandings in spiritual matters and throw sufficient light so

that they may not be misled by pseudo-propagandist. The Guru by his special mercy and influence helps the worthy disciple to change his aversion to Godhead into active conversion towards Him and His service.

A few, who are liberal amongst them and of a slightly milder nature, style themselves as moderate and come forward with different views. These people agree to the principles of service of the Supreme Lord. They, with all emphasis protest against the idea of submitting to another. They do not subscribe to the thoughts of another person, however great he may be in this world, to take control of their modes of life and dictate terms to them. They opine that there is no other suggestion more humiliating to a man than asking him to submit unconditionally to another man whom they believe to be of their stuff.

SPIRITUAL PRECEPTOR - INDISPENSABLE

There is nothing in this world, spiritual or material, which a human being can understand without the help of a guide. The importance of a guide is conspicuously felt in every field of knowledge. The imperative need of such a person can never be overlooked, even in acquiring the knowledge of those objects that are opened to the analytic and synthetic researches of human ability, not to speak of God, who is far above the reach of human intelligence. When the very understanding of the secrets about objects lying within the inspection of tangible senses, is utterly impossible, without the expert guidance of external help, how can we succeed in getting a conception of One, Who is declared 'Transcendental' by the best of the brains and our sacred Sastras, without any help ?

Let us try to follow what Bhagavan Sri Krishna has mentioned in the Gita:

tadviddhi pranipatena
pariprasnena sevaya
upadeksyanti te jnanam
jnaninastattvadarsinah(BG 4/34)

"Learn that Divine Truth with a submissive spirit, sincere inquiries and obedient services from those great persons who are not only erudite scholars, but Absolute-realised souls."

PERSONALITY OF GURU

The Position of both the Guru and disciple is explicitly expressed in this Sloka. The Guru, as some of the arrogant elements of society take, is not an ordinary man like any of us, not even a mere bookworm or a scholar of certain Sanskrit work, an adept in verbal jugglery. He is an Absolute-realised person who is competent enough to make others to realise the Eternal Truth. He who has not realised it cannot be a

spiritual preceptor. He is the one well-wisher without a second to the fallen humanity, who helps us to concentrate our diverse activities towards the Supreme Godhead. He is an embodiment of kindness who, with his prevailing spiritual influence, dispels all the darkness, which is the result of extreme ignorance on this relative plane, and opens our eyes by imparting to us genuine Divine Knowledge. He is an honest and perfect guide on our spiritual voyage, who leads us like an expert helmsman to the ever safe heaven on Transcendental Bliss, free from the onslaughts of any mighty rough wind or gale. He is a true messenger of the All-Loving-Godhead, yes. His transcendental mediator who is eager to establish a real tie of loving relationship between the Lord and those fortunate human souls who sincerely seek it. He is a pioneer of true love, a loving agent, an establishers of all relations of love, a trustworthy and expert destroyer of all our non-loving principles. If we can cultivate a devotional aptitude towards this representative of the All-Merciful Lord, we are definitely sure to reach our final goal. He saves us from all our changing views and wrong mentalities. The status that a real Guru occupies is too high; none holds such a lofty position as he. He is greater than Godhead in this respect as he can impart the Lord and His service to any one whom he favours. The Sastras even declare that

harau ruste gurustrata
gurou ruste na kachan
tasmāt sarvaprāyatena
gurumēba prasādayet (Aditya Purana)

"The displeasure of Godhead when directed towards any individual is not harmful provided he is backed by the divine master, whereas, one who is denounced by the spiritual preceptor finds no shelter in the infinite number of worlds."

Bhagavan remains silent and adamant to such a Person who disregards the spiritual preceptor, His loving agent. Without the mercy of an eternally liberated person, a conditioned soul can never free himself from the fettered state. One, who is already in fetters, cannot help another similarly fettered person. A free person could set an other bound one, free. Bhagavan while conversing to His old classmate and friend Sudama at Dvaraka said thus

naham ijya-prajātibhyam
tapasopasmena va
tusyeyam sarva-bhūtatma
guru-susrusaya yatha (Bha. 10/80/34)

"O friend ! I am the Supreme Lord and I reside in the heart of every person as the Indwelling Witness. I am not so much pleased with the performance of the daily obligatory sacrifices of Brahmacharis, the procreation, maintenance and the observance of prescribed duties by the householders, severe austerities of the Vanaprasthis and the practices of The Sanyasis in solitude, as with the loving services rendered to a spiritual preceptor."

Bhagavan mentions in another place,

prathamantu gurum puja
tatas caiba mamarcanam
kurban sidhhimavatpnoti
hyanyatha nisphalam vabet (Hari Bhakti Vilas 1/4/344)

"One must worship the Gum first before he starts with My worship: such a person alone succeeds in this efforts. Any violation of this procedure results in utter failure."

The Supreme Lord favours the individual Jiva through His medium, the Guru. Guru or spiritual masters are of three types. (1) Diksha Guru (one who imparts the initiation or Mantra), (2) Siksha Guru (one who imparts spiritual enlightenment), and (3) Chaitya Guru (indwelling guide, who inspires and directs from within).

naivopayanty apacitim kavayas tavesa
brahmayusapi krtam rddha-mudah smarantah
yo ntar bahis tanu-bhrtam asubham vidhunvann
acarya-caittyava-pusa sva-gatim vyanakti (Bhag. 11/29/6)

"O Lord ! The great sages who are blessed with the benefits of your various favours, can never feel themselves convinced of adequately discharging their deep indebtedness to Thee, even if they are provided with a long life as that of Brahma. In manifold ways Thou hast extended Thy Mercy to them. Thou dost destroy all their evil propensities and worldly attachments, as the spiritual preceptor in living form, appearing as Diksha and Siksha Gurus, and as Chaitya Guru, guide from within and lead to the attainment of Divine Love."

All these three Gurus belong to the same category. They are all transcendental personages. They are always engaged in the uninterrupted realisations of the Transcendental Activities of the Lord. Amongst the two visible forms of Guru, one becomes our Diksha Guru. He imparts Mantras and initiation to us. Diksha Guru is always one, but Siksha Guru may be one or more. Father is one, but uncles can be many. To certain individuals, both Diksha Guru and Siksha Guru may be one and the same.

tasmad gurum prapadyeta
jjnasuh sreya uttamam
sabde pare ca nisnatam
brahmany upasamasrayam (Bha. 11/3/29)

"Hence, those persons who are interested in the attainment of their eternal welfare, must submissively approach a Guru who is an erudite scholar in all the ultimate lore of Sastras and who is favoured with the full realisations of the Absolute, and seek enlightenment from him."

tatra bhagavatan dharman
siksed gurv-atma-daivatah
amayayanuvrttya yais
tusyed atmatma-do harih (Bha. 11/3/22)

"Fully believing in the transcendental nature of the spiritual preceptor as eternally identical with the Supreme Lord Sri Hari and accepting him as one's eternal benefactor, he should constantly and with single-minded devotion please him and receive from him enlightenment on the details of Bhagavata Dharma, by observing which Bhagavan is so pleased as to give Himself up to the devotee. "

The real import of the sastras, in spite of vast literary achievements, remains a hidden truth.

yasya deve para bhaktir
yatha-deve tatha gurau
tasyaite kathita hy arthah
prakasante mahatmanah (Sveta. Up.6/23)

"The Sastras unfold their real meaning only to those persons who have equal devotion to the Supreme Lord and His representative, the spiritual preceptor."

From all these valuable instructions of the Sastras, a wise person can feel the imperative necessity of accepting the spiritual preceptor and rendering whole-hearted services to him. Those who ignore the spiritual preceptor are under the evil dictations of their deceptive minds. Their condition is vividly described in Srimad Bhagavata thus: -

vijita-hrsika-vayubhir adanta-manas tura gam
ya iha yatanti yantum ati-lolam upaya-khidah
vyasan-satanvitah samavahaya guros caranam
vanija ivaja santy akarta-karna-dhara jaladhau (Bha. 10/87/33)

"O Lord ! Those unfortunate persons, who, avoiding taking shelter at the feet of the spiritual master, make a vainglorious attempt to control their restless mind, mad like an unbridled horse, which appears impossible even to great Yogis, who have a perfect control over their senses and breathing functions, meet with a disappointing failure. They find themselves helplessly placed in the midst of a series of difficulties and obstacles. Their condition is like that of those merchants who start their voyage without a pilot and who are caught in the deep rough sea, their vessel being mercilessly tossed by a strong gale."

TRUE DISCIPLE - HIS QUALIFICATIONS

The above are some of the ideas about the genuine Guru according to the Sastras. Here are some about the disciple. The disciple should not, at any cost, be like a modern student who attends an educational institution either for securing a mere degree or diploma with the object of drawing salaries in three digits or four, after getting through the departmental competitive tests or to gather some general knowledge to carry on one's family trade, or to have some status in society, etc. He must be a sincere seeker after Truth prepared to undergo any amount of hardships and sacrifices for achieving his goal. If the would-be disciple is an easy-going careless and indifferent person, his attempt to meet a spiritual master and the further developments

on their meeting, would be met by a severe disappointment. As already stated a worthy disciple should approach a true spiritual preceptor with due submission. In the mundane world too, none tolerates a haughty approach. A haughty man fails to enlist the sympathy even of his co-workers, not to speak of superiors. An appeal from an arrogant heart is never met with success. For favour of spiritual enlightenment, a disciple must approach an Absolute-realised person fully equipped with three qualifications viz. (1) Complete surrender. The disciple must unconditionally resign all his material ego arising from birth, age, wealth or popularity, material learning and pride or personal appearance. He should never make attempts to measure the spiritual master after accepting him. (2) Sincere inquiry after Truth. Unnecessary questions, either for showing of one's intelligence or for testing the ability of the master are to be always avoided. Questions even for satisfying one's curiosity are also most certainly to be dropped. Questions that are of vital importance and immediate benefit for one's spiritual uplift, are alone to be placed before the master. A disciple should under no circumstances argue with his spiritual master, and try to conquer him with one's own imperfect notions and views, gathered from this defective world through the assistance of the deceptive senses; on the contrary, he should wait with eagerness and submission for his Guru's spontaneous expositions. His explanations are entirely based on his continuous and undisturbed realisations of Godhead and His various Pastimes. And (3) Loving services. Without the least hesitation, a disciple should be prepared to render loving services of any nature, be it menial or dignified. The inspiring examples of Sri Krishna, Sri Rama, etc. and the ideal lives of world teachers are living monuments that illustrate the above ideal.

Sri Krishna and His Divine Descents like Rama, etc. do not require the least outside help in any matter. In fact, no one could have the fitness to be a preceptor to Them; yet, for the benefit on the world, to enlighten the fallen humanity, they set ideals before the people. Did not Sri Krishna go to the forest with an axe in His Hand, cut firewood, make them into bundles and carry them on His Own head for the service of the great Sandipani whom He accepted as His preceptor? Did not Sri Rama and Sri Lakshmana spend sleepless nights with bows and arrows in Their Hands, sometimes sitting on piled heaps of rocks and sometimes resting on bare earth for satisfying Their master? Are we to read those soul-stirring events as mere stories that do not concern us? Do we not require to grasp the meaning underlying such actions and translate the same in our lives too?

THE ACT OF SUBMISSION

Saranagati or the act of self-surrender to the Supreme Lord is an essential requisite, that an aspirant in the path of religious pursuit can never ignore. The Proud man, urged by his false ego, ignores the fundamental principles of human life, viz., a virtuous life, full of faith and love to his ever loving lord. But, providentially a day will come, when he must feel the necessity of this fundamental principle, realising the utter vanity of the worldly pleasures. The unfortunate man, falling a victim to evil influences of the sense-ridden ego, may revolt against his own Lord, the only benefactor of humanity; he may conquer worlds, he may be the architect of nations, he may build vast empires or he may do many other wonders which no ordinary man can ever even imagine; yet he is utterly helpless in crossing this unfathomable ocean of worldliness. At every moment, he is being violently tossed by the roaring waves of this ocean of never-ending sufferings. All his false hopes are frustrated, his

confidence in the efficacy of his own actions betrays him finally. He sees all around him threatening temptations, horrors and sweeping currents of cares, calamities, anxieties, and worries. He feels his helplessness and sincerely longs to come out of this terrible predicament. He gains more experiences in this transitory world of fleeting pleasures; he becomes wiser than ever before. He recollects wise saying and comes round to the above fundamental principle. He surrenders himself to the Supreme Lord. Did not Bhagavan Sri Krishna in unambiguous words, emphasise the imperative necessity of surrender ?

sarva dharman parityajya
mam ekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo
moksaisyami ma sucah (Gita 18/66)

"Discard all human element in religion addressed to embodied Atman, such as social duties, like Nitya, Naimittik and Kamya Karma; your confidence in your physical strength, your mental eligibility, your moral achievements, your social duties, reliance on your elders, wealth, properties, etc., and surrender to Me. I am here to shoulder all your responsibilities. I can save you from all your sins consequent on your nonobservance of edicts addressed to embodied souls. You need not worry even for a fraction of a moment. None else can do this deed for you. I assure you, I am the Supreme Lord; I am the only Saviour of humanity. Why do you depend upon others and other courses? They cannot help you. They too are in the same plight as you are. As such, how can they lend their helping hands to you ? Why do you hope to cross an ocean by catching hold a dog's tail? This is a tumultuous ocean of roaring waves, infested by various ferocious animals who are waiting with wide open jaws. They will swallow you within no time. Your efforts, however well designed, and however equipped they may be, in your light, can never lead you safely to the other shore. If you disobey Me and enter into its rough waters, you will be caught in a short while in its terrible eddies, surrounded by wild beasts that can easily swallow even elephants. Hence, the safest course for you is to come to Me. I am here with My boat. You need not have any fear whatsoever. You are once and for all saved for eternity. You do not repent for the failures in fulfilling the different duties you had to perform. All those duties are intended only to please Me finally. If I am favourably disposed to you, there is nothing else that you should gain in the infinite number of worlds. You can be sure that you have achieved everything. This is the final attainment of all fortunate souls-My Love. Go on, do not waste time, make haste and be free from all the worries that you are subject to, from time immemorial."

"Should the duties like meditation, etc. that I am performing, conform to the duties enjoined according to the code for one's own Asram of be exclusively by themselves ?The answer is this :- "Discarding all codes of conduct, prescribed for the Varnas (classes), as enjoined by the Varnasram Dharmas, take absolute shelter in Me alone." The word 'Parityajya', should not be interpreted as "discarding the worldly ties and attachments to become a hermit "; because Arjun being a Kshatriya, is debarred from being a Sanyasin. This should not also be taken to mean that Bhagavan Sri Krishna, having Arjun in view intended to convey His directive to the rest of the people. When it was proper for Him to give advice to Arjun only, others could adjunctively be included but not vice versa. The word 'Parityajya' should not be taken to mean "discarding only the fruits of one's actions" This is illustrated thus: - "O king!

That person who, discarding his duties enjoined by the Varnasram Dharma, takes sole refuge in Sri Mukunda-the Fittest Person amongst all yielding protection, is neither a slave nor a debtor to his ancestors, well-wishers, other animate beings, the sages, or the other gods." " When a mortal, who has cast aside all his worldly duties and dedicated his self to Me, in his desire to seek Me, attains immortality, then indeed he becomes fit to realise Me-the Self-Produced One." "Man should continue to perform his worldly duties, so long as he does not free himself, from the attachment thereof, nor is able to develop an attachment to the hearing, etc., of My Narratives."That person who, knowing the merits and demerits of My directives, though given by Me, solely serves Me, leaving aside all the moral and religious codes of his own Dharma, is the most virtuous of the virtuous. "All these words of Sri Krishna convey the same meaning, because of the prefix 'pari' meaning 'all-around', "Hence, the words 'take refuge in Me alone', imperatively means that you should not take recourse to Dharma, knowledge, Yoga, worship of their gods, etc. " In the beginning, I told you that you are entitled to devotion blended with religious rites, thinking that you have no claim to the highest form of My Bhakti-Ananya Bhakti (whole and sole devotion to Sri Krishna and no one else), as the sole resort. Now out of My sheer unlimited kindness to you, you have attained the right to My highest form of Bhakti-Ananya Bhakti, which accidentally and inexplicably (yaadicchikayaa), is obtainable only by the grace of My ardent devotees, who have solely dedicated themselves to Me alone, the peculiarity of which (Ananya Bhakti), is that I break My Own vows to fulfil those of My Bhaktas as will be indicated to you by the breaking of My own vow to fulfil Bhishmas's at the time of your battle with him. By My commands, you should not entertain any fear of obstacles that might befall you for the relinquishment of these daily routine religious rites. These daily routine rites were directed to be practised by Me alone, assuming the form of Vedas; but its discardment also, is ordered by My Own Self, i.e. Sri Krishna Himself. Hence, how can there be any possibility of a sin arising for not performing these routine rites? On the contrary, if you still persist in performing your daily routine religious rites, you would be committing sins, for disobeying the direct commands given (in Person) by My Own Self. Verily, he, who has totally dedicated himself to any protector, becomes entirely dependent on the latter like a beast, purchased for a price, doing what he is impelled to do, standing where he is asked to stand, and eating whatever he is provided with. These are all the principles of the codes of self-dedication. It is said in Vayu Purana :- "(1) Full acceptance of all that is favourable, (2) total rejection (abstinence) of everything that is unfavourable, (3) a firm faith that he will be protected, (4) the choice of the Lord, (5) consigning everything to His care, and (6) giving up of meanness are the six ways of Saranagati. The word 'Anukulyam' means, the conduct that is one of continued advance agreeable to one's chosen God or Diety, befitting the devotional code; 'Pralikulyam' is the exact opposite of that; 'Bhatritva' is the implicit faith that He alone is my Protector and no one else,' ' Visvas' (faith) is that unflinching faith that He will protect me even in the midst of adverse circumstances as those of Draupadi, Gajendra, etc., 'Nikshepanam' is the utility of everything belonging both to the mortal frame and the subtle body only in the service of one's own Sri Krishna; 'Akarpanyam' (or the giving up of meanness) is the non-display of one's meanness elsewhere; these six qualities constitute Saranagati, or complete self-surrender to the Supreme Creator. Therefore, from now onwards I take absolute refuge in you. Hence, as befitting You, I must do my duty allotted to me, whether good or bad (auspicious or inauspicious). If you ask me to do only the routine religious rites, there will be no anxiety; but because of Your Self-Willed Nature, arising from Your Overlordship, if You compel me to

practise unrighteousness (Adharma), then what will be my fate ? The answer to this (doubt) is given in the line 'Ahamtvam sarvapapebhyo mokshayishyami ma suchah'. I shall liberate you from all, both ancient (all existing accumulated sins of all past births), and future sins (those I may cause you to perform according to you). The sense is that I shall not be wanting in My ability to protect you like other protectors. It is on your account alone, that I am teaching these scriptural injunctions to the shale world. Grieve not. Do not grieve either for your own interest (Benefit) or for the benefits of another. May all people like you, by completely discarding all their own codes of conduct and those of other Dharmas meditating, performing Kirtan, etc., and taking absolute shelter in Me, live happily, because I have, an oath, shouldered the full responsibility of liberating them, from all their sins, of freeing them from their worldly bondage, and the charge of their attaining Me. What more ? "I have taken upon myself even to feed them. It is already said, "I bear the responsibility of looking to the welfare of those, who, being fully engrossed in Me alone, and without seeking any other protector, worship Me wholeheartedly and Zealously. " Do not grieve saying, "Alas ! I have thrust so much burden on my own Lord." Meditation on the Lord, Who is kind to His devotees, and faithful to His word, can be easily (without any effort) accomplished. Is there anything further and higher than this that yet remains to be told ?

dharman anyan parityajya mamekam bhaja bisvasan
yadrsi yadrsi sradha sidhirbhavti tadrsi
kurban nirantaram karma lokoyomanuvartate
tenaiv karmana dhyayan mam param bhakti mischati(Br.Sam.5/61)

It is said in Srimad Bhagabat -

tasmad tvam uddhavotsarjya
codanam praticodanam
pravrttim ca nivrttam ca
srotavyam srutam eva ca

mam ekam eva saranam
atmanam sarva-dehinam
yahi sarvatma bhavena
maya sya hy akuto-bhayah(Bha.11/12/14-15)

"O Uddhav ! For the reason already explained to you, take absolute shelter in Me-Sri Krishna (pointing to Himself with His Own Finger) alone-the Soul of all beings, with your heart and soul, discarding everything that the Srutis and Smritis expect one to perform and to reject, and giving up the attachment to and the discontinuance of worldly affairs and clean forgetting everything that you have so far heard, and giving up entirely any inclination to hear whatever yet remains to be heard. Be fearless as I am your Protector."

Surrender to Bhagavan is the safest path. All our Sastras repeatedly insist on this course. Any observance devoid of the spirit of surrender fails to invoke Divine Mercy. Surrender, pure and genuine moves the Heart of the Supreme Lord. It melts Him and He flies to the rescue of a surrendered devotee. How Many illustrations are there in the lives of many great saints that establish this fact with all emphasis ! The incidents

of Gajendra, Draupadi, and the lives of a host of devotees, ancient and modern are glorious examples that prove this idea in facts and figures. Words cannot adequately express the astounding effects of surrender.

ACTIVITIES FAVOURABLE TO DEVOTIONAL PROGRESS

anukulyasya sankalpah
pratikulyasya varjanam
raksisyatiti visvaso
goptrtve varanam tatha
atma-niksepa-karpanye
sad-vidha saranagatih(Hari Bhakti Vilas 2/11/676)

[The six divisions of surrender are acceptance of things favourable to devotional service, the rejection of things unfavourable, the conviction that Krishna will give protection, the acceptance of the Lord as ones guardian or master. Full self-surrender and humility.]

The course of Saranagati has got sixfold features as its special characteristics. The scripture explains it thus: A strong resolve to accept those activities that are congenial to the growth of Bhakti. An aspirant who is sincerely longing for advancement in the devotional path should practise with utmost care only such observances as are favourable to his rapid progress. The extremely turbulent senses, with all their evil propensities and madness, are to be engaged in the service of the Lord. Each activity of the aspirant of devotion, such as taking food, association, movements, etc., should be regulated fully under this principle. Such activities are of six kinds.

utsahan niscayad dhairyat
tat-tat-karma-pravartanat
sanga-tyagat sato vrteh
sadbhir bhatih prasidhyati(Upadesamrta-3)

[There are six principles favourable to the execution of pure devotional service: (1) being enthusiastic, (2) endeavouring with confidence, (3) being patient, (4) acting according to regulative principles [such as sravanam kirtanam visnoh smaranam - hearing, chanting and remembering Krsna], (5) abandoning the association of nondevotees, and (6) following in the footsteps of the previous acaryas. These six principles undoubtedly assure the complete success of pure devotional service.]

1. A genuine enthusiasm in observing the devotional activities is one of the invariable virtues necessary to strengthen our devotion towards Bhagavan. One who is indifferent to his real uplift and hence reluctant to practise all that is conducive to the rise of Bhakti, meets with hordes of tremendous difficulties in his path. Enthusiasm in the observance of prescribed religious practices, is a very congenial factor in building up Bhakti towards the Lord. In the absence of genuine enthusiasm, lethargy, indifference, desperation and such other despicable qualities dominate over us. Laziness is the worst enemy to religious progress. If an aspirant allows this evil the slightest scope, it will take undue advantage of him and ruin him totally. Reluctance

and lack of endeavour in observing devotional practices, make us victims, to this evil agent. 'Oak is not felled with one blow', is a very wise proverb. Lack of confidence in himself, and consequently, his efforts create desperation in him. An aspirant in the path of devotion should never fail a victim to this discouraging factor. He must rise above this.

nirvinnanam jnana-yoga
nyasinam iha karmasu
tesv anir vinna-cittanam
karma-yogas tu kaminam

yadrcchya mat-kathadau
jata-sradhas tu yah puman
na nirvinno nati-sakto
bhakti-yoga sya sidhi-dah^(Bhag. 11/20/7-8)

"Persons who are given to various desires are asked to follow the path of Karma by Bhagavan Sri Krishna. Those who have a spirit of renunciation in the daily, and occasional activities prescribed by the Sastras, should necessarily follow the path of knowledge. Due to some unknown divine virtues, in the past, those persons, who have ingrained in them a strong faith in the Glories and Deeds of Bhagavan, should invariably follow the path of devotion or Bhakti." They too may be indifferent to the observance of the daily and occasional duties, but they adopt those principles that are favourable to the growth of devotion. Those who are eligible for the path of Bhakti, are not extremely attached to the fruits of their actions. Without the physical body, the practice of devotional activities in the mortal plane, is an impossibility. As such, however unwelcome they may be, a certain amount of activity is unavoidable in the material world. Sincere aspirants after devotion should work for their livelihood, though with reluctance, and worship the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna with intense Bhakti to Him. They are extremely unattached to the various types of worldly actions, and with passage of time, become more devoted to the devotional practices of the Lord. The Merciful Lord, manifesting Himself in their hearts, destroys all their evil propensities. By the continuous remembrance of the Lord. their hearts become purified. They are freed for ever from the evil consequences of bondage. Their doubts too are removed. They become eligible to realise the Supreme Lord. Other efforts are not successful in bringing their results, if the votaries of those methods lack in the quality of dependence on the Supreme Lord. Their inability to destroy the terrible consequences of Karma must not dissuade them from their efforts. Hence, from the very beginning of an aspirant's devotional activities, keen enthusiasm should be preserved even at the cost of all comforts, and this is the very life of firm faith, a prerequisite for obtaining Bhakti.

2. Those treading the path of devotion must have settled convictions regarding the path they are pursuing and the final attainment. Till we are confident of the method and the results it would offer, we are under the influence of doubts. If an aspirant falls a prey to doubts, he is lost.

ajnas casraddadhanas ca
samsayatma vinasayati

nayam loko sti na paro
na sukham samsayatmanah(Gita 4/40)

"He who is ignorant of the true knowledge of relationship and lacks badly in faith for the performance of Nishkam Karma, is overcome by the feeling of hesitation, and meets with destruction. To a sceptic, there is no shining future. He never succeeds in attaining happiness either in this world or in the next."

Hence, strong belief in the statement of the scriptures, without the least possible doubt in it, is indispensably necessary for the growth of devotion.

3. Patience is another essential and favourable quality that is needed for every aspirant after devotion. 'Patience and perseverance will overcome mountains'. We are severely disappointed and non-plussed due to want of patience. Those who lack this quality are undone; they do not prosper in any line. By the influence of patience, an aspirant for devotion gains perfect control over himself, and finally the entire world bows to him.

vaco vegam manasah krodha-vegam
jihva-vegam udaropastha-vegam
etan vegan yo visheta dhirah
sarvam apimam prthivim sa sisyat(Upadesamrta-1)

Souls under the thralldom of Maya are the slaves of sixfold passions. Those who can effectively succeed in conquering all these six passions can master the whole world. These impulses are (1) an uncontrollable tendency for idle gossip, (2) various undesirable speculations of the wavering mind, (3) proneness to uncontrollable anger, (4) unusual desire for satisfying the tongue with delicious varieties of food, (5) longing for excessive eating, and (6) sexual appetite. These six impulses are highly detrimental to the development of devotion. Hence, with utmost patience, they are to be abandoned in the daily life of one aspiring after Bhakti. As long as the human body continues to exist till death, a sincere aspirant should make all earnest efforts to check the inimical incitements by engaging them in the service of the Lord.

All aspirants in the various religious paths are after some gains. Those who are observing the fruitive activities, long for the attainment of paradise and its varieties of pleasures unavailable in the same measure in this world.

People who are following the path of knowledge, do so tempted by a strong desire for eternal liberation for themselves. Similarly, those who are pursuing the path of Bhakti or devotion, constantly covet to render full satisfaction to the senses of the Lord. Delay in the achievement of one's goal, often causes ground for utter despair resulting finally in a downfall from his cherished goal. In order to avoid this evil consequence, an aspirant in devotional path, must be wholly wedded to this quality of patience. The Supreme Lord is an Ocean of Mercy. Either this day or some other day in this very life, if not, certainly in some other birth, He will shower His Mercy upon him. He never forsakes him who solely depends upon Him. "I will cling to His Lotus Feet with all hopes and never give Him up under any severe test." Such a firm determination helps the aspirant to achieve a glorious success. 'Patience is the best remedy for grief'. It is the plaster for all sores. Therefore, in all sincerity one must cultivate this virtue of 'Patience' in him.

4. In observing the prescribed devotional acts the Sastras lay down a series of activities for awakening and promoting devotional feelings in us. These activities must occupy the highest place in our daily performances. The sixty-four principles * on Sadhan Bhakti are all favourable activities that help us in our goal.

Sri Krishna advises Uddhav in the eleventh canto of Srimad Bhagavata thus -

sraddhamrta-kathayam me
sasvan mad-anukirtanam
parinistha ca pujayam
stutibhih stavanm mama

adarah paricaryayam
sarvangair abhivandanam
mad-bhakta-pujabhyadhika
sarva-bhutesu man-matih

mad-arthesu anga cesta ca
vacasa mad-guneranam
mayy arpanam ca manasah
sarva-kama-vivarjanam

mad-arthe 'rtha-parityago
bhogasya ca sukhasya ca
istam dattam hutam japtam
mad-artham yad vratam tapah

evam dharmair manusyanam
uddhavatma-nivedinam
mayi sanjayate bhaktih
ko 'nyo 'rtho 'syavasyate(Bha. 11/12/20-24)

"Faith in listening to My Nectarine Narratives, constantly repeating them, great attachment in performing My worship, singing hymns in My praise with a devotional fervour, natural regard for rendering service to Me, prostrated obeisances with all the Indriyas, special liking for the service of My devotees, feeling My presence in each and every created being, engaging fully one's Indriyas in My service, singing My Glories, dedicating one's heart to me, renunciation of all desires, sacrificing one's wealth, comforts, and pleasures for My service, consecration of all things that are worth desiring, performances of religious sacrifices, muttering of Mantras, observance of religious vows, and practice of austerities for My pleasure. O Uddhav ! By observing these, loving devotion to Me, is kindled in the hearts of those souls who have surrendered themselves unconditionally to Me."

5. All evil associations must be strictly eschewed. 'Man is known by the company he keeps'. Association exerts a tremendous influence on the building up of one's character, both in material and spiritual fields. Association is twofold- (1) Company of others, and (2) having attachment to other objects or persons. The first one is again of a twofold nature, (a) keeping company with non-devotees and persons addicted to women, and (b) having association with women. The second, too, is twofold, (a)

attachment to bad instincts, and (b) attachment to wealth, properties, house, ornaments, relations, etc. All these associations, either in the form of company or in the nature of attachments, are detrimental towards devotional progress. Sri Krishna explains their evil consequences in Gita thus:-

dhyayato visayan pumsah
sangas tesupajyatesupajayata
sangat sanjayate kamah
kamat krodho bhijayate

krodhad bhavati sammohah
sammohat smrti-vibramah
smrti bhramsad buddhi-naso
buddhi-nasat pranasyati(Gita 2/62-63)

"Association with the objects of the world awakens passions in man; passions when obstructed give birth to anger; anger leads to delusion; delusion is followed by loss of memory; when a man is deprived of sound memory, he loses his intelligence which consequently brings total destruction to him."

Fallen souls are weaklings in all respects. If they are left at the mercy of their material senses; their destruction is inevitable. 'Birds of the same feather flock together'. Material senses will slowly drag the man to similar sense-objects. Their association, gradually gives birth to attachment with those objects. The more he gets attached to these objects, the less he becomes interested in his spiritual goal. Thus in course of a short span of time, his condition gets deplorable and at the end he meets with a lamentable downfall. Householder devotees, who practise devotion, while leading a household life according to the injunctions of the Sastras, must associate with their wedded wives, in accordance with the rules and regulations laid-out in the scriptures. Both the husband and wife with the assistance of the other members of the family, such as daughters, sons, brothers, sisters, etc., must make sincere efforts to engage themselves fully in the service of the Lord. In such a family life, there would not be any fear of evil association or formation of worldly attachments. For householders or renounced persons, association with undesirable people, is unwholesome and objectionable. Attachment or addiction to one's previous evil instincts is to be totally abandoned. By its association with us for the last so many births, it becomes, more or less our inherent nature. It does considerable harm to our eternal welfare.

Attachment to material objects and persons, such as wealth, properties, houses, lands, ornaments, clothings, children, wives, brothers, sisters, their persons, etc., is like a highwayman who robs us of our spiritual wealth gathered while on the royal path to devotion. Addiction to intoxicants and stimulants too come under the same category. Eating objectionable foods like flesh, fish, egg, etc., are also not favourable to our goal. Humanity is saved from all these evils by the marvellous efficacy of 'Sadhu Sanga' or association with Bhaktas.

6. Following the course practised by the devotees is the wellknown effective and favourable way that helps the striver in his efforts for developing Bhakti. Sadhus, whose mode of conduct we are expected to follow for our spiritual benefit, are of two

kinds. (1) Householder devotees who lead an exemplary life while living in the family fold, and (2) those who give up all their family connections and exclusively devote themselves to the service of Godhead. Because of the difference in the station of life and responsibilities, certain traits of the two classes of devotees show slight variation. Yet, there are common principles as well. Scriptures describe a series of rules for regulating our conduct. The main object of all these rules and regulations laid-out in the Sastras, is to bring us back to a perfect life of faith in and love for Godhead from an uncivilised, and irreligious barbaric living. Those who lead a householders life, are expected to earn their livelihood and maintain their families by virtuous means, engaging themselves in the service of Bhagavan, Bhaktas and the chanting of the Holy Name. Entertaining guests is an important duty that every householder should unflinchingly and ungrudgingly practise. They must be frank in their behaviour and sympathetic in their attitude. They should never be given to foul ways of earning their livelihood and barbarous living. They should be kind even to subhuman beings. Avoiding all pseudo-types of asceticism, they must lead the life of a genuine devotee. Pseudo-asceticism consists in abandoning all objects of the world intended for the service of the Lord, with a feeling of contempt, imposing material attributes on them. Whereas, genuine asceticism is that which utilises, every objects of the world in the service of the Lord, without having the least attachment to any of them. A follower of genuine asceticism leads a well regulated life, earns by virtuous ways means for meeting his legitimate necessities. He is neither for excessive enjoyment nor for renunciation. He is the upholder of the idea of proper utility of all objects. He never runs mad after selfish and unnatural wants. Though in the midst of family surroundings, he is a true devotee in spirit engaged in the service of the Lord.

That striver who has given up all his family connections for exclusively engaging himself in the service of the Lord, i.e. Sanyasin must lead a very simple life. Constantly chanting the Holy Name forms an important item of his daily duty. Avoiding all worldly gossips at all times, delicious varieties of food, and showy dress he must, in all humility, utter the Holy Name. He should maintain his body and meet its bare necessities by alms from those who are faithful to Godhead and Sastras. Discarding all sense of pride and wandering from place to place undergoing all suffering in this ocean of worldliness he must render the maximum help to other souls, who are averse to Godhead.

UNFAVOURABLE ACTS THAT ARREST DEVOTIONAL PROGRESS

All should discard harmful activities that stand in the way of attaining Bhakti. Souls imprisoned in the physical and subtle bodies and guided by selfish desires are wandering in this world from time immemorial. They take births in different species according to their actions. They gather a variety of experiences in this world, both good and bad. If these experiences make them wise and persuade them to give up their leanings for enjoyment or freedom in any form-well-they have succeeded in their life's mission. The purpose of their human birth is fulfilled. If not, they are to rotate along with the world of worldliness ceaselessly. These latter displease the Lord and hence His love is not had. Without the least hesitation, we must refrain from these acts that are detrimental to the progress of devotion. Such undesirable agents are grouped under six heads.

atyaharah prayasas ca
prajalpo niyamagrahah
jana-sangas ca laulyam ca
sadbhir bhaktir vinasyati^(Upadesamrta-2)

[One's devotional service is spoiled when he becomes too entangled in the following six activities : (1) eating more than necessary or collecting more funds than required; (2) overendeavouring for mundane things that are very difficult to obtain; (3) talking unnecessarily about mundane subject matters; (4) practicing the scriptural rules and regulations only for the sake of following them and not for the sake of spiritual advancement or rejecting the rules and regulations of advancement, or rejecting the rules and regulations of the scriptures and working independently or whimsically, (5) associating with worldly-minded persons who are not interested in Krsna consciousness; and (6) being greedy for mundane achievements.]

1. A tendency to hoard anything more than the legitimate necessity is an impediment that we must all sincerely avoid in our daily activity. The enjoyment of the world through the sense-organs, i.e. eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and the skin, plays an important role in which every fettered soul is hopelessly engrossed in this world. Without a certain amount of indulgence in the workings of the senses, it is impossible for human beings to survive here. Devoid of these activities human life something that cannot exist. As soon as we give up all activities of the senses, we cease to exist. Activities are the inherent nature of man. Man cannot continue in this world without performing actions. Actionless life is nothing but death itself. When these actions are done with selfish purposes, independent of any devotion to Bhagavan, they are the cause of our bondage and the repeated cycle of births and deaths. Those very actions when done with a motive of pleasing the Lord, save us from the cyclic effects of this world. As such, all our daily activities are to be regulated in a favourably co-ordinated way, so that we may attain the Lord while performing them properly.

2. Over-zealousness in trifling acquirements is a weakness of many aspirants to devotion, who fall a prey to this false zeal. They put in innumerable tireless efforts in gathering knowledge, fame, etc. Unalloyed devotion to the Supreme Lord is the wealth of all wealths. Unconditional surrender and loyalty in words, deeds, and thoughts to Bhagavan form an important characteristic of Bhakti. These are ingrained in the inherent nature of unalloyed souls, as such, Bhakti is the natural function of all Jivas. No doubt, in our conditioned state, a certain amount of practice is unavoidable in awakening these dormant sterling qualities. All efforts other than those needed for awakening Bhakti, are impediments to the realisation of our highest goal. These efforts are commonly made in gaining more knowledge and benefits in fruitive activities. The zeal for gathering knowledge makes one go mad after the realisation of the Attributeless Brahman and finally getting absorbed in it.

jnane prayasam udapasya namanta eva
jivanti san-mukharitam bhavadiya-vartam
sthane sthitah sruti-gatam tanu-van-manobhir
ye prayaso 'jita jito 'py asi tais tri-lokyam^(Bha. 10/14/3)

"The Supreme Lord Sri Krishna though unconquerable in all the three worlds, is won over by those who discard all their vainglorious attempts to realise the Divine

Nature, Attributes, etc., of the Lord, through empiric knowledge, submit to his Feet and survive by hearing the glorious Narratives of Lord, spontaneously coming out from the mouths of great saints living in places sanctified by them, receiving and revering the same with body, mind, and words."

3. Idle gossip is another uncongenial factor that stands in the way of persons who are desirous of realising Bhakti. This is sure to bring disappointment in the long run. This ugly habit, if not nipped in time, brings in its trail so many difficulties. Unfortunately, as the Kali progresses, this habit has become a serious disease amongst the people, which starting as a sporadic one, slowly grows into endemic, then develops into an epidemic, embracing a whole region, and finally becomes pandemic, spreading throughout the world. Unnecessary indulgence in gossiping, fruitless verbal jugglery, speaking ill of others, indulging in quarrels, scrutinising the conducts and deeds of others, speaking falsehood, disparaging holy persons, discussing worldly topics with excessive zeal, etc., are all actions of the same category. These evil habits must be totally eschewed.

4. Undue addiction to the observance of the rules of the Sastras or its total neglect must be avoided. The entire teachings of the scriptures come under two heads. (1) Commandments, (Positive assertions) and (2) Prohibitions (negative assertions). The Sastras try to regulate our lives by all these methods, directly and indirectly, and inspire genuine devotion in us.

The highest stage of spiritual realisation is attained after a series of graduated stages. In each of these stages, it is imperatively necessary for the aspirant to practise certain observance pertaining to that particular station in life. The strict performance of these prescribed duties, makes him eligible for the next immediate stage. Failure in these observances, brings him a downfall from the spiritual path. Addiction to the duties of a stage which is already passed by the aspirant also stops his progress. Hence each Sadhak should perform the duties allotted to the particular phase of his development with sincerity and never be indifferent to it.

5. Evil company or association with persons who have not an iota of Bhakti in them is another serious obstacle that brings ruin to an aspirant of devotion. Mere conversation or sitting side by side are not acts of association. Any transaction or dealing with such persons in a spirit of too much cordiality and interest result in the form of association.

The Sastras though they forbid us to associate with evil persons, in any way, never encourage us to speak ill of any one including these evil person, at any time. By speaking ill of others we degrade ourselves. The Sastras recommend even imprisonment in a room surrounded by flames as better than living with evil persons.

6. Fickle-mindedness and greed cause the downfall of the aspirant and deter him from the pursuit of his goal. This waywardness is effected in two ways by the unsteady position of the heart, and that of intelligence. The affinity of the mind towards sense objects, creates in the heart both attachment, and hatred. These changes in the mind and heart disturb the tranquility of an aspirant. Just as, a strong wind tosses a boat in the sea, even so, these disturbances of the mind distract the aspirant from his practices.

FIRM CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD

A firm confidence that the Supreme Lord will protect us in all circumstances is needed. In fact, who is saving us from all the dangers and calamities that are hovering around us every moment ? In time of a severe trial, all of our acquisitions or the nearest of relations fail. There is no power anywhere in this universe that would do any harm to a person whose Protector is the Supreme Lord. On the contrary, the entire population and resources of the whole universe, cannot save him, if he is disowned by the Lord. This firmness in his belief makes him steady ever the more. This spirit of confidence saves him from the unsteady nature of the mind. It laughs in time of dangers. It strengthens his weak enthusiasm. It enables him to overcome his enemies within. It makes the life of a striver light and easy, and his journey remarkably smooth and pleasant.

visvasya yah sthiti-layodbhava-hetur adyo
yogesvarair api duratyaya-yogamayah
ksemam vidhasyati sa no bhagavams tryadhisas
tatrasmediya-vimrsena kiyam iharthah(Bha. 3/16/37)

"The very Lord Sri Hari Who is solely responsible for the creation, sustenance and dissolution of this world and Who is the Origin of all, Whose Yoga Maya cannot be conceived even by the great masters of Yoga and Who is Lord of all triple qualities, the same Lord of Pure Existence will come to our rescue. Why should we unnecessarily worry over the same?"

CHOOSING THE LORD AS PROTECTOR

Those who are averse to the Lord, depend on their material resources as the sole support of their life. They have their hopes well established in their bank deposits, insurance premiums, debentures, gold, silver, properties, animals, provident fund, pension, etc. How long can they rely on these perishables ? It is definitely sure that these would show their real nature one day. They have never saved a single person, so far, from the various worries he is subject to. In future also they will be incapable of doing what they cannot do at present. They are dead matter; how can they help human souls ? Surrender to Bhagavan must be complete in words, deeds, and thoughts. A surrendered person feels extremely delighted by the effects of such an act. By words he expresses it to the Lord, by the mind he feels what he speaks and with the body, he takes shelter in holy places sanctified by the various pastimes of the Lord. Success in our efforts in the devotional path, depends on this act of self-surrender. Variation in the results of spiritual practices is mainly due to the difference in the degree of surrender. Those who have fulfilled all the six qualifications of Saranagati, perfectly in their lives, get immediate response from the Lord. Failure in achieving our goal even after making various efforts, is due to the absence of absolute Saranagati, without any reservations. This indeed, is the very life of Saranagati. It is the one vital force that makes all other qualities of Saranagati fully energetic. If we have real confidence in Him as our Saviour, the rest of the duties automatically accompany. If this substantial principle is absent, the remaining functions are lifeless. This is like the main trunk of a tree to which the other five principles are depending branches. This noble idea is exemplified in the following Slokas:-

he gopalak he krpajalanidhe he sindhukanyapate
he kansantaka he gajendrakarunaparina he madhaba
he ramanuja he jagattrayaguro he pundarikaksya ! mam
he gopijananath ! palaya param janami na tvam vina(Sri Mukundamala Stotra-44)

"O Protector of cows ! O Ocean of Mercy ! O Lord of Lakshmi ! O Destroyer of Kansa ! O Embodiment of compassion with regard to Gajendra ! O Madhav ! O younger brother of Balaram ! O Preceptor of the three worlds ! O Lotus-eyed ! O Lord of the Gopies ! Protect me, I know nobody besides Thee."

pita tvam mata tvam daitatanayastvam priyasuhrt
tvameba tvam mitram gururapi gaticasi gajatam
tvadiyastad bhrtastaba pariyanastadgatiraham
prapatrascaibam sa tvahamapi tabaivasmi hi vabah(Stotraratna-57)

"O Supreme Lord ! For the innumerable Jivas living in the infinite number of worlds Thou art alone the Father; Thou art alone the Mother; Thou art alone the Beloved Son; Thou art alone the real Friend; Thou art alone the real Benefactor; Thou art along the preceptor; and thou are the Sole Refuge for all. I too belong to Thee, I am Thy servant, and Thou art my Goal. I offer myself at Thy feet. It is evidently certain that I too am to be protected by Thee alone."

SELF-DEDICATION TO THE LORD

All the activities of a self-surrendered soul are guided by the Lord Himself. Service of the Lord is his motto. A surrendered Sadhak feels that he is neither the regulator, guide, nor the dictator of his own life and activities. He loyally attributes these functions to the Supreme Lord. He is thoroughly confident that the Lord is the Guiding Agent behind each and every action of his. He becomes wholly subservient to the wishes of Bhagavan. His individual ego is completely surrendered at the Feet of the Lord. He has firm belief in all the wonderful powers of the Almighty Lord. Being independent of the Lord is the cause of the Jivas being immersed in sins. Submission to Him is the only remedy for it.

ahankara nivrttanam kesavau na hi duragah
ahankara yutanam hi madhye parvata rasaya(Brahma Baibarta Purana)

"Lord Kesav is never far from those who are totally free from mundane vanities. But He is separated from those under the tutelage of irrepressible arrogance by a multitude of mountains."

When Vibhishana from the opposite camp came to take shelter at the Feet of Sri Ramachandra, Sugriv informed Him, that the former should not be welcomed, to which Sri Ramchandra replied as under:-

sakrdeva prapanno yas tavasmi iti ca yacate
abhayam sarbatha tasmai dadamy etad vratam mama(Ramayana, lankakanda 27/33)

"If anyone (let him be even My enemy) having approached Me, says even once, "O Lord ! I am Thine", I always give him assurance of eternal protection, because this is My avowed practice (creed), which even I cannot transgress."

PRAYERS WITH REPENTANCE

One practising surrender, while observing this last stage is thoroughly convinced of all his inabilities and shortcomings. Recollections of the past deeds roll in his heart like waves on an ocean. He sees before him a picture of a series of his unworthy acts. He sincerely repents for all his past sinful deeds and evil propensities. He prays from the bottom of his heart. He weeps continuously before the Lord. This qualification of surrender is thus explained by a great saint in one of his devotional songs.

"My life is ever given to the commitment of sins. There is not even an iota of piety in it. There is no estimate of my misdeeds towards others. I have wounded their feelings oftentimes. I was an object of regular worry to others and have given them considerable pains. I was never afraid of committing the worst of sins for my own comforts. I was ever unkind and selfish in my attitude. It was a regular torture to me to see others in happy circumstances. I freely spoke lies and it was a pleasure to me to see others in sufferings. My heart was a repository of all evil desires. I was always given to anger and pride. Infatuated by worldliness, I was full of all the various vanities. Malice and pride were my ornaments which I frequently wore. Being a prey to sleep and laziness, I was devoid of any virtuous deeds, but over-zealous in evil deeds. All my actions were for winning fame in the world; full of duplicity and actuated by greed, I was a slave to lustful passions. I am a sinner who is abandoned by all virtuous souls and a worst criminal, terribly disposed to committing crimes constantly. There is not even a single virtuous deed to my credit and I am miserably disposed to evil activities. As such I fell a deplorable prey to multifarious sufferings. Now, old age has overcome me. I find not any help coming forth from any quarter. My pride is humbled, all my hopes are shattered. I am utterly helpless. O my Beloved Lord ! I submit all my grievances at Your Lotus Feet."

amar jivan sada pape rata nahika punyer leshta(Saranagati-5)

SUBMISSION AND TOTAL SELF-SURRENDER

Submission differs from total self-surrender slightly, though usually taken to be in the same category. Saranagati leads us to the realisation of liberation and finally Divine Love. The various secrets and specialities in the vast field of Divine Love, such as Sneh, Mana, Pranaya, Raga, Anurag, Bhav, Mahabhav, Dasya, Sakhya, Vatsalya and Madhurya are realised only by Atma Nivedan. Saranagati has no access to these specific realisation lying deep down the lowest depths of the Ocean of Divine Love.

Atma Nivedan is complete surrender of one's body, mind, words, deeds, thoughts, Atma, and all other things that he feels or claims as his own with the knowledge of relationship and guided by predominant feeling of rendering whole-hearted service to the Lord. Atma Nivedan has twofold characteristic, i.e. (1) Complete indifference to making any effort for one's own necessities of life, and (2) absolute dependence upon the Lord.

Saranagati is a mental attitude whereas, 'Atma Nivedan' is complete surrender of even the soul at the Feet of the Lord. It is not attained by the study of the Sastras or discussing philosophical problems frequently. It is effected only by the Grace of the Lord's internal potency or Svarup Sakti. To impress upon a huge audience the indispensable necessity of surrender, quoting innumerable striking examples from different Sastras is an easy achievement. To dilate on its marvellous benefits too is possible; but to feel its necessity in the heart of hearts, and to live up to it, constitute the most difficult problem that faces every man. Unless a man gains sufficient experience in course of his worldly sojourn, and is thoroughly convinced of his utter helplessness and the futility of his dependence on earthly objects, his pitiable condition continues to remain so for ever. As such, an inborn conviction that no other person except the Supreme Lord, is capable of saving him from the endless sufferings, he is at every moment subject to, is a favourable disposition in attaining this virtue.

Automatically, he gives up all other types of worship which he was hitherto pursuing and takes complete shelter in the Supreme Lord alone.

kirata-hunandhra-pulinda-pulkasa
a bhira-sumbha yavanah khasadayah
ye 'nye ca papa yad-apasrayasrayah
sudhyanti tasmai prabhavisnave namah(Bha. 2/4/18)

"The Kiratas, the Hunas, the Andhras, the Pulindas, the Pukkasas, the Abhiras, the Kankas, the Yavans, the Khasas, and such others born of sinful races, and others who by nature are given to the committment of sins, are all delivered of their previous sins by taking shelter at the feet of those who depend upon the Lord. We offer our prostrated obeisances at the Feet of such an All-Powerful Lord!"

aho baki yam stana-kala-kutam
jighamsayapayayad apy asadhvi
lebhe gatim dhatry-ucitam tato 'nyam
kam va dayalum saranam vrajema(Bha.3/2/23)

"O what a wonder ! Even the wicked Putana, sister of the demon Baka, who, prompted by a desire to kill Sri Krishna, suckled Him with the most deadly poisonous breast-milk and got in return from Him attainment of the position of a foster-mother. Hence, is there any one else more merciful than Sri Krishna to Whom we can offer ourselves for protection."

sarira manasa divya
vaiyase ye ca manusah
bhautikas ca katham klesa
badhante hari-samsrayam(Bha.3/22/37)

"How could physical, mental, and other troubles arising from a divine source or human medium or even from that of other inimical beings afflict one who has taken refuge in Sri Hari."

kim durapadanam tesam
pumsam uddama-cetasam

yair asritas tirtha-padas
carano vyasanatyayah(Bha.3/23/42)

"For those self-controlled men, ever addicted to Truth and who unconditionally surrender themselves at the Feet of Bhagavan Sri Hari, Which destroy all the worldly sorrows, there is nothing that yet remains to be attained in this world."

samasrita ye pada-pallava-plavam
mahat-padam punya-yaso murareh
bhavambudhir vatsa-padam param padam
padam padam yad vipadam na tesam(Bha.10/14/58)

"To those who have taken resort to the Boat of Sri Krishna's tender Lotus Feet, of ever-sanctifying excellences which even great gods and saints from time immemorial have adopted as their Sole Support, the Vast sea of worldly existence appears as insignificant as a calfs footmark of water. They cross this with the least difficulty. To them the attainment of their Final Goal Vaikunth, is always free from any obstacles."

na naka-prstham na ca paramesthyam
na sarva-bhaumam na rasadhipatyam
na yoga-siddhir apunar-bhavam va
samanjasa tva virahayya kankse(Bha.10/16/37)

"O Lord ! Those who have taken shelter under the Dust of Your Lotus Feet, never covet from You any reward, such as kingdom of heaven, sovereignty over the earth, the high position of Brahma, rulership of the uppermost heavens, attainment of supernal Yogic powers, or even Moksa itself which puts an end to the repeated cycle of births and deaths."

kah panditas tvad aparam saranam samiyad
bhakta-priyad rta-girah suhrdah krta-jnat
sarvan dadati suhrdo bhajato 'bhikaman
atmanam apy upacayapacayau na yasya(Bha.10/48/26)

"O Lord ! Truly You are the Beloved of devotees, ever truthful friendly, and extremely grateful for the services rendered. Which wise man, ignoring You (Sri Krishna) would take protection under any other god or goddess ? If any one at any time has rendered any insignificant service to You, You in exchange of such services grant all his desires. Even with that You are not satisfied, You give away even Yourself Who are eternally free from growth and decay."

* 1. Accepting shelter at the feet of the spiritual preceptor, 2. Receiving initiation and enlightenment on spiritual truths from the Guru, 3. Serving the spiritual master faithfully, 4. Following the examples laid out by saints, 5. Enquiry into the details of true religion, 6. Renunciation of enjoyment of material luxuries for the sake of Sri

Krishna, 7. Dwelling in sacred places of pilgrimage or shrines like Dvaraka, etc. or on the banks of the Ganges, Yamuna, etc., 8. Accepting means, etc. just enough to meet one's bare necessities of life, 9. Observing fasts on every Ekadasi day. 10. Showing respect to the sacred trees like Dhatri, Pipul, Tulasi, and to cows, Brahmins and Vaishnavas, 11. Avoiding the company of those who are averse to Godhead, 12.-14. Refraining from enlisting unfit disciples, the study of various books, and the arts of unnecessary controversy on the meanings of Sastras, 15. Giving up of meanness in one's day to day dealings, 16. Remaining undisturbed on account of sorrows, etc., 17. non-disparagement of other gods, 18. Never wound the heart of other beings, human or subhuman, by words, deeds, or thoughts, 19. Giving up all types of offences against the service of the Lord and His Name, 20. Intolerant in listening blasphemies on Bhagavan, His Bhaktas, etc., 21. Wearing the external signs of a Vaishnav such as Tulasi beads, beads made of lotus seeds, etc., putting perpendicular signs, specially prescribed, on the forehead and other parts of the body imposed by the Sastras, etc., 22. Writing the Names of the Lord on the body by 'Gopi-Chandan' or sandal paste, 23. Accepting and wearing the previous day's offering to the Lord, such as garlands, scents, clothings, etc. 24. Dancing before the Lord with devotion, 25. Prostrated obeisances, 26. Respecting the Lord and His devotees by welcoming them by getting up from one's seat, the moment he happens to see them coming in palanquins, chariot, or on any other such vehicles or arrangements, 27. To accompany the Lord or His Bhaktas on such occasions as mentioned in the previous one on either sides, in front, or rear according to the situation, and as necessity of service arises on the spot, 28. Visiting temples of the Lord and other holy places of pilgrimages, 29. Circumambulation of holy places, 30. Ritualistic worship, 31. Servitude, 32. Singing devotional songs, 33. Loud recital of Lord's Name, Form, Qualities and Activities, 34. Muttering of Mantras or Names 35. Accepting one's insignificant and helpless position before the Lord by different types of supplications, 36. Uttering various hymns on the Lord, 37. Honouring the sacred offering like Mahaprasada, Tulasi, etc, 38. Taking the holy Feetwash, 39. Smelling the consecrated incense, 40. Touching the Holy Image, 41. Beholding the Holy Image, 42. Witnessing the waving of lights and other rituals, 43. Listening the excellences, 44. Solely depending upon His Mercy, 45. Remembrance, 46. Meditation, 47. Accepting the servitude of the Lord, 48. Friendship, 49. Complete self-surrender, 50. Offering the best of articles liked by one, 51. To please the Lord is the be-all and end-all of all the activities, 52. Submissive attitude in every activity, in words, deeds and thoughts, 53 -56. Service of Bhaktas, Tulasi, Srimad Bhagavata and Mathura, Vrindavan, etc., 57. Celebrations on important occasions like the appearance and disappearance of great Bhaktas, Acharyas, Advent Days of the Avatars in the company of Bhaktas, 58. Observance of Kartikavrata, Damodaravrata or Urjavrata in accordance with the rules of Sastras, 59. Celebrating 'Janmashtami' the Advent Day of Sri Krishna, 60. Special liking for the worship of the Lord, 61. Listening to and relishing the reading and exposition of Srimad Bhagavata in the company of Bhaktas, of a higher order, 62. Association of Bhaktas, 63. The loud chanting of the Lord's Name, 64. Residing at the holy places.

