

śraddhā-bhakti-dhyāna-yogād avaihi

Seventh part of the serial article continued from August 2019 issue. Bhakti topic continues...

Our Vedic tradition has varieties of prayers and not simply broad-spectrum prayers. Prayers to each presiding *devata*. Dhanvantri *devata* is worshipped for health, Lakshmi is propitiated for wealth, Sarasvati for Education, Vigneshvara for removing obstacles in any endeavour etc.

We have specific prayers. Since the *kāyika-karma* produces more result than a *vācika-karma*, we need that result. I am just giving you the psychology of it now. When you perform a *karma*, a ritual, you are making an effort. Whatever little *bhakti* you have is converted into real *bhakti* when you make efforts. That is why Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “If one gives even such small things like a leaf or a flower or fruit or just water, but with *bhakti*, I accept it.”¹ Why should one give a leaf etc., when Bhagavān does not take anything? It is not for Bhagavān to take, but to make your *bhakti* real.

With *bhakti* you make an effort—you get a tulasi leaf, you get the fruit, you get a little water for offering as *arghya*, oblation. In all this, action is involved. What is important is *karma*. When you do that *karma* with *bhakti*, whatever *bhakti* you have in the form of fancy becomes real *bhakti*. You fake it and make it. When you do an action, the emotion becomes real. Therefore, you act it out. Someone said you walk the talk. You act out your emotions. You actualise your emotions through an action. The action makes the emotion real and the real emotion makes you act, and thereby you turn into a *bhakta*. Otherwise, this *bhakti* remains only as some kind of a feeling. *Karma* is necessary to make it real, because you have to make some efforts in doing the *karma*. You may ask, “Can I do this *karma* mentally?”

“You can do it mentally, but why not physically?”

“What will others think?”

“Others will think that you are doing *pūjā*. They will think that you are a *bhakta*.”

“I do not want to be branded as a *bhakta*.”

“Let them brand you as a *bhakta*. Get a name like that. Earn the name *bhakta*.”

For all the wrong reasons such as laziness, false ego, etc., we want to escape. Because of the very fact that we want to escape, we need to do it.

¹ *Patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati tadahaṁ bhaktyupahṛtam aśnāmi...* (Bhagavad Gītā 9.26).

There can be different types of problems in your *śravaṇa*, listening, to Vedānta. For instance, understanding may not take place while listening to the *śāstra* because the unconscious creates a disturbance in the mind. The more you bring in Īśvara, the less is the hold of the unconscious over you, because Īśvara becomes father, mother, everything. It is how you deal with the unconscious. Simple things become a problem because the unconscious will not let that knowledge happen. It will only create doubts. What is obvious never becomes obvious. You always wonder why you do not understand this. Therefore, *īśvara-anugraha* is necessary here.

Bhakti is meant for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. *Śraddhā* itself will lead you to *bhakti*. You need to have this *nitya-karma* for *antaḥ-karaṇa-śuddhi*. You do *kāyika-karma* to keep away all the obstacles. So too, *vācika-karma*, daily chanting of the Vedic hymns, reciting prayer verses, singing in praise of Bhagavān and *japa* of any name of the Lord is for *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi*.

You can sing what is to be sung. What is to be recited you recite. What is to be chanted you should chant. You should not sing a Vedic *mantra*. All the Vedic hymns are to be chanted. What should be read should be read. Prose is to be read, a verse is to be recited, a Vedic hymn is to be chanted and a song is to be sung.

Generally, we have all these three karmas in our daily prayers—*kāyika*, *vācika* and *mānasa*. This three-fold prayer produces *anugraha* and keeps all the obstacles away. Even if you have understood Vedānta, the clarity increases. You never do away with Īśvara. Either he is in the form of you, or he is in the form of your worshipful altar. He is never gone. All the above come under *iṣṭa-karma*.

The other set of karma is *pūrta-karma*, with which we fulfil the needs of the society, community, country and humanity in general. All reaching out *karmas*, so called charitable activities, are *pūrta-karmas*. Charity is not a very charitable word. Everybody lives on others' charity. Where is the question of our doing charity? We have our breakfast because of others' charity. Somebody has to produce the food. We cannot eat money. We are always indebted to a number of forces. So when we can give we give, and when we have to take we take. Everybody is a consumer and everybody is a giver. We give more than we consume; that is what maturity is. It is called *pūrtakarma* that produces *puṇya*.

A list of *pūrta-karmas* are given in the *smṛtis*:² Providing for water sources such as wells, ponds and lakes, building temples, distributing food, and building rest houses are called *pūrta-karmas*. You can include more according to the present day needs like providing for a clinic, a hospital, a home for children and so on. Only these two types of *karma*, *iṣṭa* and *pūrta* are there. You do them with *bhakti*. By acts of *bhakti* you gain the *adhikāritva*, competence, to study the *śāstra*. Once *adhikāritva* is there, which includes *śraddhā*, you gain this knowledge with the *guru's* teaching.

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