

## Pūjya Swamiji as *jñāna-karuṇā-samuccaya*, Combination of Wisdom and Compassion

During his last US visit, before being taken for his ambulance-flight, Pūjya Swamiji was brought inside the Gurukulam Temple for *darśana*. Looking at the emotion-laden faces of his devotees, even with his failing vision and voice, Swamiji mustered his strength to say several words of wisdom. One Gītā śloka Swamiji kept saying several times was “*jatasya hi dhruvo mr̥tyurdhruvam* (BG, 2.27), “Because for that which is born, death is certain...”

I found out later that this was not just a statement of wisdom combined with consolation, because when I looked at the above verse again, I found that in Pūjya Swamiji's commentary for that verse in the Bhagavad Gītā Home Study, which he taught in the 1980s, Swamiji said: “...*Fifty, sixty, or eighty-five years of life is nothing. By the time we are eighty-five most of our cells are already gone and the rest are old and worn out. They are unable to register anything new, and even what had registered previously does not come out. Regardless of what recall-button is pushed, nothing comes up. The floppy disk is all worn out. It was too flimsy to last very long anyway. What are a few more years? It is better to live only a few years with a floppy disk that works well, so that when you press the button, something happens.*”

I just wanted to highlight that Swamiji gave up his body when he was 85 years of age, just as he said in his commentary several decades ago, which we couldn't connect when Swamiji was repeating the above śloka to console us!

It is hard to completely understand and appreciate the messages of *mahātmas* or to grasp their vision. Even when Arjuna asked about *sthita-prajña* (wise person), Bhagavan in one of the śloka “*yā niśā sarvabhūtānām...*” (BG, 2.69), “The unwise is blind to the reality which the Wise sees like daylight...” This indicates that it takes a wise person to recognize another wise person. I am invoking the above śloka just to mention the impossibility for a *sādhaka* to present the wisdom of someone as great as our Pūjya Swamiji. Immediately following this, however, in the very next Gītā śloka, Bhagavān says, “*āpūryamāṇām acalapratiṣṭham...*” (BG, 2.70), giving the example of the fullness of the ocean, so that we can see and appreciate the *pūrṇatā*, completeness, of a wise person.

In this manner, Bhagavān diligently and compassionately leads us to grasp what constitutes a wise person. I am highlighting this much about Bhagavān's compas-

sion just to say a few words about my experience with Pūjya Swamiji, who was a combination of wisdom and compassion.

Pūjya Swamiji's acceptance of me into his Vedanta Course changed my course of life for the good. Although I felt encouraged when Pūjya Swamiji said I "had the vision" to join the course when I expressed my interest, I still think my admission was due more to Pūjya Swamiji's compassion than to my qualification. I should also add that Pūjya Swamiji surprised me by presenting to me other courses taught by other AVG teachers. This again was Swamiji's care extending to sustain other teaching programs in the AVG lineage as well. I remember when someone had a *satsanga* question about not being able to manage likes and dislikes even towards the end of the course, and would mention instances within the ashram where they felt like reacting to someone who was cutting the lunchline, for example. In response, Swamiji convinced the person not to be judgmental about themselves just based on situations within the ashram, and that the bigger outside world doesn't have such scenarios, which are unique only to ashram! I felt that there was so much care in Swamiji's response.

Sometimes people ask Swamiji about a problem, even though they have already decided what to do about it. This might not make sense to us – why would someone take Swamiji's time if they have already decided what to do – but it was not a problem for the compassionate and lending ears of Swamiji! At the end of my course, when I had my interview with Pūjya Swamiji, I told Swamiji how the course had changed me and asked him why won't Swamiji's other younger disciples give such long-term courses when Swamiji can do the same at his age? Pūjya Swamiji explained that in addition to teaching, such long-term courses also involve addressing peoples' "unconscious," and that might be one reason why there are only a few who take up this endeavor. This only made me appreciate Pūjya Swamiji's compassion even more. I would like to conclude that my experience is that Pūjya Swamiji was not about being lenient, but just being compassionate in the broadest scope – from man-making to organizing. Hence his compassion was difficult to grasp in its entirety, but was always a safe assumption to be discovered later. And that compassion which was natural to Swamiji, may it be my *sādhana*. *Hariḥ Om!*

- Article by Brhm. Suryanarayana