

LOVE OF GOD & GOD OF LOVE

(The gist of a talk given by Shri S. Satyamurthi at Ramakrishna Ashram, Gwalior on 24-11-68.)

I. LOVE OF GOD

The cream and essence of the Vedantic teaching is to know, to love and to serve God. To Love God is the first commandment of the Bible. Love of God is a growth from acts of virtue and it is only in the case of the Saints, the chosen few that God's spontaneous grace takes the place of self-effort. Love to God is nothing but the perfect blending of heart and mind, attuned to the loving service of God, sacrifice of worldly appetites to the surpassing love and beauty of God, carnal, that is, skin-deep love yielding place to spiritual love, non-adulteration of the senses and non-disposal of the heart to earthly things. Fear of the Almighty vanishes as soon as we realise that we are His children, the natural objects of His boundless love. We form part of His possessions and are thus rightfully entitled and fit to approach Him in love. Fear of God is wisdom's root and love of God, its ripest fruit. The very act of cultivating love, even before the reaping of the fruit, is itself an end, fraught with felicity.

Bhakti, the mysterious divine, love, contained in the Commandment of Brahadaranyakopanishad, Maitrayi Brahmana, consists in lovingly and intensely meditating on the Lord, (Nithithyasitavyah). However, not every one is capable of such meditation, particularly, the deluded, the worthless, those whose knowledge is carried away by sophisticated reasoning and those who have betaken themselves to evil spirits (like Hiranya and Sisupala)

न मांदुष्कृतिनो मूढाः प्रपद्यन्ते नराधमाः
माययाऽपहृतज्ञानाः आसुरं भावमाश्रिताः

Of the four types of people who take refuge in the Lord, for one reason or another, the ज्ञानि gnani is the best, he being the knower of the ownership

of the Lord, who considers the Lord as the Highest, rather the one and only goal and wants to be with Him for ever without brooking any delay, like tarrying in the shade of a tree on the way to a big city, full of wonderful things; such a one, whose means and the end are the same, unlike others who follow the Lord merely as a Means to secure other ends, is always with the Lord, while following the Means and after reaching the End, namely, the Lord Himself. His love to the Lord is beyond words and the Lord Himself says ;

तेषां ज्ञानी नित्ययुक्तः एक भक्तिविशिष्यते
प्रियो हि ज्ञानिनोऽत्यर्थं अहं सच मम प्रियः

“Even I, the omniscient and the omnipotent, cannot express fully how dear I am to him, because there is no limit to his love and how can the all-knowing and all-powerful know or speak of such love as if there is any limit to it ?” The “Eka Bhakthi” referred to in the foregoing sloka is loving the Lord with all thy might.

God sets greater value upon the devotion of the heart (searcher of hearts as He is Bhavagrahi Janardhanah) than the material value of outward offerings, which may be made. God hates hypocrisy and estimates the sincerity of the soul. It has been said that any flower could be offered to Him and any incense burnt before Him, without naming the particular kind of incense to be burnt.. No flower is taboo and, in the name of burning incense, as part of worship, even a heap of garbage could be burnt and smoke raised therefrom. No doubt, there is a shastraic injunction against the use of the flower, known in Sanskrit as “Kandakarika”, for the Lord’s worship but delving into it, it can be seen that the injunction in question was solely in favour of the worshipper, to eliminate the risk involved in plucking the flower from the thorny plant. The stress here is on the devotion beneath and the easy accessibility of the Lord. It should not be construed as an unbridled sanction for using any stuff for worship. In fact, an ardent devotee will always be keen on using only the best material at his command for divine worship. The outward offerings may be trifles but, in God’s eye, they carry much weight, when offered in humility and devotion.

This is the burden of the celestial song “Whoever offers Me, in faith and love, a *leaf* as Draupadi did, a *flower* as Gajendra did, a *fruit* as Sabari did, *water* poured forth as Ambarisha did, that offering I accept, lovingly made with pious will.”

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतम् अस्नामि प्रयतात्मनः

“Things easy of procurement for all, including the poorest of the poor, offered, not for expiation of sins or securing other ends but considering giving to Me as an end in itself, and out of *sheer inability to exist without making a love-gift to Me*. In the absence of the devotee’s ability to offer anything for eating, I consume even the leaves and flowers offered. It is not the gift itself but the love behind it, which pleases me. Vidura gave me poor porridge and poorer plantain skins and Kuchela gave me the poorest fried rice but I devoured them all with great avidity like a famished fellow.”

ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तुषुचाप्यहम्

“Those who mediate on me out of love, they are in Me and I in them—*they move with Me as my equals and I move with them as if they were My superiors*”.

Now let us see how devotion manifests itself The Lord says:

“मन्त्रित्” etc.

“My lover’s thoughts are rivetted on Me, their life is nestled in Me; their conversation is solely about Myself, full of mutual enlightenment and entertainment.”

The four phases of love are:—

- (a) absorption in it;
- (b) inability to abandon it;
- (c) inability to refrain from speaking about the object of devotion,
and
- (d) inability to refrain from listening to what others say regarding the object of devotion.

If men are love-smitten, they will dance in the streets like mad men. It is enough to witness a saint in his moments of rapturous ravishment, in union with God—moments when his whole being thrills with love and his eyes swim with pearls of tears of delight. Blessed be such saints! Practice has more effect than precept. We need no lengthy lectures from learned men. Only persons of melting tenderness of heart can tread the path of Bakthi and it is only to them that God reveals Himself quickly and with delight. New visions shine before the eye of a saint. He alone can see and enjoy the universal form (Viswaroopa) of the Lord. He hears the unheard melodies and enjoys divine scents unfelt on the Earth, and soars into “an ampler ether, diviner air.” Some persons use the term ‘mysticism’ as if there is any mystery or magic about it. Others ridicule

it, linking it with mist and mystification. Mysticism is exalted, radiant and joyful intuition, which functions when we shed desire and love all the children of God and adore the Father of all. Plotinus says, it is a vision, which is the birthright of all but which few use. The supernatural is the natural to the mystics. Dean Inge says:

“The mystics are the morning stars of the race, pioneers in an uncharted land. They can crowd eternity into an hour or stretch an hour to eternity; Emerson puts it admirably that it is devotion that blossoms into genius, virtue and love. When it breathes through his intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue and when it flows through his affection, it is love

The highest love to God is love rendered to God for God’s sake-love culminating in benediction or glorification of God. Love, so disinterestedly rendered, is love of purity and virginity, which carries with it the highest fruit (viz) the possession of God Himself. A devotee said to the Lord :

“I, a beggar ask of Thee much more than a thousand kings might ask of Thee, to serve their own ends. I have come to ask of Thee, Thyself.”

The compassionate hearts of saints, soaked in God-love, deplore the fate of men who are turned away from God and believe, out of sheer ignorance, that not God but lucre protects them. Here is a striking example of the morbid love of lucre. The worldlings are so much addicted to lucre as even to consider their life not worth its purchase. Such a man was accused of treason and his hands and legs were lopped off, as a punishment. When his friends came and tried to console him, he was found mighty pleased with his lot, having been let off lightly with the mere loss of a few limbs instead of being called upon to pay something from his dear money which was much more valuable than his own life.

Love to God, treated by analogies taken from the experiences of mankind, specially, the relation between the Lover and the Beloved, Mistress and Spouse, as between Soul and God, should not be mistaken as partaking of a sensualist’s love conversation. Arguments help you to believe God but love to God is the motive from which this belief should spring and be sustained. It is the union of the Soul and the Lord, in love, that becomes firm and meaningful. We believe that God holds an important personal relation to ourselves; He is our Creator, our Father, our Judge, Donor etc. We cannot think of these relations except as belonging to a Being, most intimately linked to us. The God-love literature of the Azhwars is superb and voluminous. Their emotional outbursts find but a feeble echo in the exclamations of the western Saints.

II. GOD OF LOVE

Saint Nammazhwar characterises God, in the opening line of the first stanza of his seintillating thousand and odd hymns, known as “Thirvoimozhi”, as one with perfections, all in the nature of bliss and love. Vishnu Purana corroborates this. In the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata, Karna said “Were all the worlds assembled together and were they all to praise the perfections of the Great Victorious Vishnu, born as Krishna, Vasudeva’s son, for a million, million years, would it even then reach the end of exhaustion ? Tara said to Vali, “In Him (Rama) the noblest Glories meet.”

The Lord is an inexhaustible fountain of bliss-Aparyaptamrut-insatiable nectar. After the desires of our heart shall have been fully satisfied, after they shall have been satisfied by the perfect possession of God Himself, we shall still acknowledge with indescribable joy that, far from exhausting this infinite source of bliss by beholding and enjoying IT, we shall ever have new perfections to discover, all infinitely amiable, infinitely capable of replenishing the heart (Sada pasyanthi Soorayaha). He is incessantly, habitually and superabundantly pouring into us marvellous communications of His Divine nature. Each undulation of it, as it reaches and informs our souls, is an even greater miracle than the creation of the Universe. One touch and we pass from darkness to light, one touch and all our eternity is changed (Apurva-vad vismayam aadadhanaya).

God will cease to be so far as the sorrowing mankind is concerned, if He was merely the Lord of Heaven, surrounded by Angels, unapproachable, unattainable and invisible. Our concern can and shall be with God, nearest, dearest and most patent to our heart and understanding, whose greatness lies, not in His might and majesty, but in His grace, condescension and easy accessibility. Thus and thus alone can He be God indeed. He has said “Paritranaya Sadhunam vinasayacha dhushkritham”, that he incarnates for protecting the Sadhus and destroying the evil-doers. The Sadhu Paritranam, referred to herein, is best achieved by the Lord’s incarnations, when He displays His innumerable auspicious traits and makes it possible for the Sadhus to sustain themselves down the years, by merely meditating on those traits, so condescendingly displayed by Him during His Avatars. If the Gnani’s love for God is unlimited and baffles description even by the omni-scient and omni-potent Lord, He loves the Gnani even more dearly. He considers the Gnani as His own Self (Gnani tu atmaiva me matham).

God’s love for His creatures is so great that He gives His own Saints to them, endowed with the powers of salvation. The Lord looks upon them as the true propagators of knowledge of the Lord (Tatva dharsis) and our

relationship with Him, shorn of all doubts and despair, discrepancies and deviations. When He deigns, out of love, to commune with the Saints, He becomes so absorbed in them as to forget for the time being everything else. The stream of love of God to His Saints is so copious as to overflow its continents and extend to all those who are devoted to the Saints. It is like one magnet transmuting, by mere touch, several iron filaments into its own virtue.

The Lord takes supreme delight in listening to the rapturous outpourings from the love-smitten and love-laden hearts of His devotees—“Naham vasami vaikunte.....” A devotee always carried about him, his nut wallet and in it, he had kept a Salagram Image as his constant companion. When, by accident, the tiny marble-like Image mixed up with the nut, and entered his mouth while chewing the nut; he would ofcourse feel the hardness of the marble different from the nut. He would then reverently take it out, wash it in water, dry it with his robe, dress it and taking cymbals in his hand, sing a song of praise from Saint Nammazhwar’s Prabandham and then lull it to sleep again, in his nut wallet. This confusion often happened with him. A vaishnava, more of the ritual type than of love to God, who observed this quite often and got enraged at the blasphemy, approached that gentleman one day, unable to contain himself any longer, and asked for a present to him of the desecrated marble-God. The holy property changed hands and the other Vaishnava took it home and started worshipping it, in all the strict details of ceremonial worship. The Image, however, appeared in his dream, on the first night itself, and said “Fool, I was happy where I was. I had the felicity of becoming bathed in the nectar-like saliva of his holy mouth, holy due to the constant chanting of Saint Nammazhwar’s hymns. I had also the supreme delight of listening lo the sweet canticles from the Drvya Prabandham, which he warbied to me, But now, you have deprived me of all this happiness and subjected me to the tedious trials of your formal worship.” Put into great trepidation by this dream, he forthwith restored the Salagram to the former custodian.

God is love and love is not that which merely creates and, after brief caressing, repudiates and discards but one which sustains, redeems, perfects and perpetuates. Here is Love’s secret and the mystery of the communion of Saints looking upon the Lord as everything, sustenance and all— “Vasudeva Sarvamiti”. Love redeemeth, love lifteth up, love enlighteneth, love advanceth souls.

The christian missionaries persist in misrepresenting Lord Krishna, the God of Love and heap contumely on his character. They contrast Lord Krishna with Jesus of Nazareth, to the detriment of the form

The contrast is between the purity of the one and the impurity of the other. The charge laid at Krishna's door is that the husbands were left behind and wives waited on, and played with Krishna. But from Jesus' own lips came the words:

“He who loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

(Math X-37; Math XIX-29 and Luke XIV-26).

In St. Francis de Sales “A treatise on the Love of God”, he says “This great king (Solomon), in order to facilitate the contemplation of that spiritual love which is maintained by a faithful correspondence between our hearts and the inspirations of grace, represent the Divine Lover and His chosen Spouse under the figure of a faithful shepherd and chaste shepherdess, whose mutual affections he describes. The shepherdess first appears on the scene: Solomon, in a transport of love, puts these words into her mouth: “Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.” One should read the whole of Solomon's song, the canticle of canticles.

“The virgins would flock fast, about the bridegroom; they would embrace and take hold of him and not let go.”

Mr. E. E. Sturdy has said on p 31 of his Narada-Bhakti Sutra:—

“The playing of Krishna with the shepherdesses, as described in the Vishnu Purana and elsewhere, perhaps, no Hindu allegory has been so aspersed; it has been used by the ignorant, by missionaries and others, as a weapon of hostile criticism against Hindu religion. We may safely assert that none of these have read the original but merely sought some means to destroy other people's religions. In order to advocate their own. Love is one whether it be called that of Christ, Krishna or any other individualised expression of truth.”

Madam Ginjon says:—

“Love is our only business here,
Love, simple, constant and sincere.”

Western writers (M/s Dupins and Volney) wrote at the beginning of the present century that the history of life and miracles of Christ are borrowed from those of Lord Krishna.

LORD KRISHNA STEALING BUTTER

The esoteric meaning of the butter-stealing event, on which the Christian missionaries delight to put such vicious construction, is that God incarnates among men and is so solicitous of serving them that He

takes their butter, even unawares. Butter is put into pots and hung up on hanging hoofs of rope (Sikyam-in Sanskrit). This net work symbolises the body, the butter in it, the soul, and the act of stealing, the solicitude on the part of God to save the soul or reclaim it, His own property. Two truths are exemplified by the stealing act of the Holy incarnation, viz, (i) God desires to be offered the food of His aspirants (Asrita kara sparsa dhravya)—He would not wait till the churning was over but would impatiently thrust Himself between and lay His tiny fingers on the half-made (creamy) butter, like hungry men not waiting till food was fully cooked, but eating it up, half-cooked and half-uncooked; and (ii) He is ever active in the function of salvation; It is a case of God desiring and man withholding and then, God getting, as it were, by stealth or by caress.

LORD KRISHNA STEALING THE GOPI'S GARMENTS

The lesson to be learnt from this is:—

When the soul is approaching the supreme Lord at one great stage of initiation, it has to pass through a great ordeal, stripped of everything on which it has hitherto relied, stripped of everything that is not of the inner self, deprived of all external aid, of all external protection, of all external covering; the soul itself, in its own inherent life, must stand naked and alone, with nothing to rely on, save the life of the Self within it.

LOVE OF GOD AND GOD OF LOVE (Contd)

(Resume of the second talk given by Shri S. Satyamurthi at Ramakrishna Ashram, Gwalior, on 2.2.69.)

In my last lecture I had, inter alia, stated that love of God, treated by analogies taken from the experiences of mankind, specially the relationship of the Lover and the Beloved, Mistress and the spouse, should not be mistaken as partaking of a sensualist's love conversation. Well, the Sanskrit word "Bhakti" means, in simple language, devotion or love. But then, the word 'love' is a comprehensive one, having many facets. Let us go to the Ithihasas. In his 'Adikavya' (First poetry) the immortal epic of Ranyana, known as Ithihasa Ratna, Valmiki, an unparalleled Rama Bhakta, has appropriately dealt with the 'Bhakti Marga'. No doubt, he has described the love of Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, Hanuman and a host of others. However, the tenets of Bhakti Marga have taken up the practical hint that it is only the attachment between man and woman, that is fully developed and described Bhakti as such love between the Lord and His Sweetheart. The Lord (i.e.) the Overself is the Loka Bharta, the only Purusha and the

individual Selves are 'Naris', who should develop into 'Nareenam Uttamees', to deserve the hand of the Purushottama.

Swami Sri Ramakrishna has said: 'The knowledge of God may be likened to a man, while love of God is like a woman. Knowledge has entry only to the outer rooms of God and none can enter into His mysteries save only a lover, for none but woman has access to the inner chambers. Knowledge and love of God are ultimately one. There is no difference between pure knowledge and pure love.

If you must be mad, let it not be with the things of the world; but be mad with the love of God.

All this theme has been fully developed in the love episodes of Sri Krishna and the Gopis. Great saints, who are absolutely ignorant of carnal, (i. e.) sexual love, often describe their own love towards the Lord as that of the Gopis to Sri Krishna. People who are prone, either out of ignorance or rash impudence, to belittle and denigrate Sri Krishna, the God of Love, will do well to honestly pause and look at it against this background. How could the great saint Sukadeva, who never knew anything about sex, describe the amorous sports of Lord Krishna and the Gopis, if they were the skin-deep variety instead of the supernal or spiritual love, as already pointed out in my last lecture? Valmiki's epic is verily the love-story of Rama and Sita, in all its aspects, union and separation. Its dominating note is 'vipralambha sringara' or love of the separated. In fact, separation is the touchstone of love; without it, love becomes insipid. Separation develops and purifies love. This is also the key-note of the hymns of Saint Satagopa about which I made a passing mention in my previous talk. It should, therefore, be understood that, by depicting the love of Sita and Rama, Valmiki is only describing the love between the Bhakta and the Lord.

Sita's ideal love is beautifully described by Valmiki, in several places and particularly, during her exile in Asoka Vana, when Hanuman saw her for the first time- Now, as all of you know, Hanuman was known for his rigorous celibacy (Naishtika Brahmacharya) and yet Valmiki has chosen him to describe the wonderful love of the Divine Couple; Hanuman concluded his soul-stirring description of Sita, her unparalleled love towards Rama and the indescribable misery she was undergoing on account of her separation from her Lord, by saying "ममपि चरित्त मनः" (i. e.) even my mind is pained at the sight of Sita's misery, It would appear that, when Hanuman met Sri Rama for the first time on the banks of the Pampa river, it was indeed puzzling, a veritable riddle to him, how that great hero, the descendant of the illustrious Ikshvaku race and the worthy disciple of

such learned sages as Vasishta and Viswamitra could lose himself, in grief, for the loss of a wife. Sugriva even bluntly told Rama that it was unworthy of him to grieve so; “Dear Sir, look at me, a sub-human creature, a mere monkey. I have lost my wife, kingdom and everything else. But still, I am bearing everything calmly and courageously. You are great in every respect, birth, nobility, education and so on. Should you not, therefore, control yourself? Please take courage”. Obviously, Sugriva thought in terms of his own, perhaps, sexual lust. If this was the attitude of Sugriva, what to talk of Hanuman, who had never known sexual love? We can easily surmise that he should have just been disgusted. But the very sight of Sita was a grand revelation to him. When he saw her unbounded love for Rama, Hanuman not only experienced a sudden revulsion of his feelings and reversed his former judgement but even went to the extent of criticising Rama. He exclaimed: “Having been separated from such a divine wife as Sita, Rama should have forthwith given up his life. By continuing to live, Rama was really performing an impossible feat.” Hanuman readily perceived the sublimity of the mutual love of the divine couple. *It can even be said that Hanuman became a perfect Bhakta only after witnessing Sita's Bhakti.* He began to describe and praise Rama's love for Sita, in highly emotional terms, such as :—

इयं सा यत्कृते रामश्चतुर्भिः परितप्यते
 कारुण्ये नानृशंस्येन शोकेन मदनेन च ॥
 स्त्री पुनर्पृति कारुण्यात् आश्रितेत्यानृशंस्यत्
 पत्नी नष्टेति शोकेन प्रियेति मदनेन च ॥

“This is the noble Sita whose separation the Lord is grieving for a four-fold loss, viewed from different angles, namely, the loss of a woman (स्त्री), dependent (आश्रित), wife (पत्नी), and sweet-heart (प्रिये).”

This is a superb analysis of Rama's grief which none but Hanuman, the Nava Vyakarana Vidwan cum devotee would be capable of. It is a matter of common knowledge that the grief over the loss of a thing varies in direct proportion to the value we attach to the thing lost. For instance, loss of a dear friend causes greater grief than that of an ordinary or casual acquaintance. Even with regard to the same person, one has more than one kind of attachment. Bharata said to Rama, आतुषिष्यस्य दासस्य (I am your brother, disciple and slave). Lakshmana introduced himself to Hanuman as :—

अहमस्यावरो भ्राता गुणैर्दास्यमुपागतः

(I was born Sri Rama's brother but having been attracted by His noble qualities, I have become his slave and hence his camp-follower even

in his exile). Similarly, Rama too was attached to his devotees in more than one way. Therefore, He naturally grieved on various counts, during their estrangement, Now Hanuman says in the verse, quoted above, that Rama's attachment to Sita and the grief which resulted from her separation were four-fold :

(1) श्रीमन्ष्टेति :—because a woman was lost; one of the noblest traits of Rama which came in for special appreciation by the citizens of Ayodhya was that, whenever any of them got into any trouble, it grieved Rama hundred-fold. This only shows his concern for humanity, in general, which earned him the appellation of 'Karuna Kakuthsa' So, when Sita was lost, he thought, "Alas ! a poor woman has been lost in the wild forest. I do not know what is going to happen to her,"

(2) आश्रितेति आनुशंस्यत :—grief over the loss of a dependant. It is the duty of the master to protect his dependants from getting into difficulty. Therefore, if a dependant came to grief, it would be considered that the master failed in his duty of protecting his dependants. Thus Sri Rama thought that it was his failure to protect Sita that led to her abduction and all the misery that followed. So Rama's grief on this account would naturally be greater than on the earlier count, there being a direct connection between the loss and the lost.

(3) पत्नी नष्टेति शोकेन :—grief due to the loss of a wife. The poignance of separation from a wife should indeed be more than that resulting from the loss of a mere dependant, the wife being more intimately connected than a mere dependant.

(4) प्रियेति मदनेन च :—grief on account of the loss of a sweet-heart. Even among relatives, all of them can not claim the same degree of affection. As a general rule, the sweet-heart is the dearest and the nearest relative, and, therefore, Sita's loss, taken as separation from the sweet-heart, was bound to cause the maximum amount of grief to Rama.

This wonderful analysis of the Lord's grief is indeed very heartening to us because we can feel assured of His attention for us all, similarly situated. I might recall that, at the very outset of my last lecture, I had stressed the point that we are the natural objects of the Lord's boundless love. The issue was further clinched at the commencement of this lecture, by describing Bhakti as the love between the Lord and His Sweetheart.

The end of scholastic or speculative theology is to teach us to know God while the object of mystical theology is to teach us to love Him (wisdom matured into Love of God). The former produces learned men, doctors and theologians, writing commentaries while the latter produces

Saints or ardent lovers of the Almighty, devoted to His service. Wisdom, matured into love of God, is nothing but the fullest blooming of the lotus-heart of man thirsting for spiritual communion with God. This again means the infinite expansion or development of the consciousness of man, so as to fully realise what it is for man to infinitely love his God and what it is for God to infinitely love His own creature. Whereas man's love to God is the culmination of his spiritual aspiration, God's love to man is the fulfilment of His purpose of creation. By love, God creates and creates. By love, man begins and attains to God. As I have already said in my last lecture, the Vedantas are not treatises which simply give us a mere knowledge of God but they are treatises revealing the doctrine of Love of God. The Bhagvad Gita is only a restatement of the central teachings of the Upanishads. Taking advantage of the opportunity presented to Him by His having to persuade Arjuna to fight, Sri Krishna promulgated the doctrine of Bhakti Yoga, led up to by Gnana and Karma, the path of loving devotion (which is the burden of all the vedantic teaching) by which the Lord is indicated as the only object of Love. So cherished, the Lord Himself becomes the Means to lead man to the climax of his ambition, viz., Moksha (i. e.) Salvation from all imperfect states or modes of existence. The doctrine of a Loving God is, therefore, as old as the Vedas. Not to cite many passages, one alone from Rig-veda says that love between God and the souls is as fervid (glowing or zealous) as between a lover and his beloved—

योषाजारमिवप्रियम्
(**Yoshajaramivapriyam**)

Sri Ramanuja's message to man was the inalienability of the relation between God and soul, in its several aspects of love. While Sri Sankara's system is Advaita (i. e.) absolute monism, that of Ramanuja has been called Visishta—Advaita, the doctrine of unity with attributes or monism with a difference. Of course, with Ramanuja also, Brahman is the highest reality, omnipotent, omniscient, but this Brahman is, at the same time, full of compassion, as distinguished from the icy self-sufficiency ascribed to Brahman by others. Even more important and more humanising is the recognition that souls, as Individuals, possess reality, that Chit and Achit, what perceives and what does not perceive, soul and matter forming, as it were, the body of Brahman, are in fact modes or Prakara of Brahman. This feature of the Vedanta is nothing new but it had failed to receive proper treatment at the hands of the earliest monistic philosophers and it was left to Ramanuja to expound it: Even in the Adi (first) Sankaracharya's well-known hymn, the prominent idea is contained in the words

“Bhaja Govindam, mudha matē” (i, e.) “To Govind or God come down on Earth, devote thyself, oh fool !”

The path of love to God is the greatest incentive to virtue, placing the highest happiness in obtaining the grace of God, by entire devotion, physical, mental, moral and spiritual. Speaking about offerings made to God, I quoted, in my last talk, the sloka from Gita “एतं युजं etc” and gave a fairly elaborate commentary thereon. Now, I crave your indulgence to revert to it and tell you one more anecdote, to re-inforce what has already been elucidated.

The Champaka flower is the favourite of God Jagannatha at Puri. On one occasion, some princes had a desire to offer these flowers. Going to the flower market, they found that all the flowers had been sold, a single one alone being left. In buying it, there was, therefore, keen competition amongst them. They bid and bid till one of them staked all the enormous fortune he had, bought the flower and offered it to Lord Jagannatha. That night, God appeared in the Prince’s dream and said, “The debt of thy flower is very heavy, I cannot bear its weight”, thus showing His gracious acceptance of the sincerely made offering, so much so as to be even beyond God’s capacity to repay.

During my last talk, I had also referred to certain types of people who are incapable of meditating on God. “Na mam Dhushkritino moodah _ _ _ _ _” And now, see how Swami Ramakrishna has mentioned this :

“The heart of the devotee is like the dry match and the slightest mention of the name of the Deity kindles the fire of love in his heart. But the mind of the worldly, soaked in lust and greed, is like the moist match and can never be heated to enthusiasm, though God may be preached to him innumerable times.”

It is with the advent of the Bhakti cult that God-love has become the pivot of religion. Other aspects of religion, such as rituals have become relatively unimportant. Ramana Maharishi and his followers emphasise on Rama Bhakti. Mira and others of her ilk were Krishna Bhaktas. Some Bhaktas like Kabir and Gandhiji gave more importance to Rama Nama than to Sri Rama’s deeds. Some Bhaktas like Kambar of the South and Tulsidas of the North have even radically changed the stories of Rama’s life, as told in Sri Valmiki Bhagwan’s Adi Kavya, on account of deep devotion. Among Rama Bhaktas, Hanuman is no doubt the foremost. It was because of his Bhakti that Hanuman could treat the ocean as a mere puddle and the Rakshasas as mere mosquitoes. The

fire on his tail did not burn him. His faith, attachment and love for Rama are boundless. The dasyabhava towards God, which is the nucleus of Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya, has been practised by Anjaneya. He introduced himself as "Dasoham Kosalendrasya". So great is his love for Rama that he can't set his mind on anything else. When Rama advised him to follow Him, on his return to the Celestium (Sri Vaikuntam), Anjaneya enquired of Rama whether, in Sri Vaikuntam, he will give dharsan as Rama and there was any possibility of his listening to Rama's stories there. But Rama replied in the negative. Therefore, Hanuman chose to stay on, in this world, meditating on Rama's form and hearing Rama's stories. Samarta Ramdas, the famous Saint of Maharashtra was another great Rama Bhakta, believed to be an incarnation of Hanuman.

Bhakti is the supreme devotion to the Almighty Lord. The devotee may have any of the five Bhavas, (viz) Shanta Bhava (taking the Lord as Father), Vatsalya Bhava, (taking the Lord as one's own child), Dhasya Bhava (Servant-master attitude-taking the Lord as Master), Sakhya Bhava (friendly attitude, taking the Lord as a friend) and Madhurya Bhava (Lover-beloved attitude-taking the Lord as the Lover). Sri Krishna Chaitanya's Bhakti is known as Madhuri Bhakti. His idea of Mukti is 'Ganga Sagar Sangama' (i. e.) union between the lover and the beloved.

The Lord's song in Chapter IX ends with

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तः मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु
मामेवैष्यसि युक्त्वैवम्
आत्मानं मत्परायणः

Fix your mind on Me, *Love Me*, worship *Me*, be humble towards *Me*, regard *Me* as the highest Goal. *Fixing the mind like this*, you will directly reach me.

This is repeated again, in Sloka 65 of the 18th chapter, where the Lord holds out a firm promise, for Arjuna is so dear to him.

मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसिमे

I truly promise you because you are dear to *Me*.

We have to cross the ocean of the Samsara of sorrows. God is the great but good, easily accessible, easily pleased Captain of the ship and the fare for the voyage is cheap-nothing but loving thought of the Captain leading us, sweet words, humble service and dutiful obedience to Him.

S. Satyamurthi

Love of God and God of love

1	11 from bottom	delete, comma between 'divine' and 'love'	
3	10	तुषुचाप्यहम्	तेषुचाप्यहम्
3	16	lover's	lovers'
4	11	Inverted commas after 'love'	
5	8	—do—after ?	
6	14 from bottom	lo	to
6	14 from bottom	Drvya	Divya
6	13 from bottom	warbied	warbled.
7	13 from bottom	Substiute comma for the fullstop after 'religions'	
7	13 from bottom	ln	in
9	10	Inverted commas after 'God'	
9	11	cpisodes	episodes
9	5 from bottom	व्यत्तित	व्यत्तित
9	3 from bottom	theP ampa	the Pampa
10	13 from bottom	depen dent	dependant
11	3	substitute comma before 'Now' by a fullstop.	