

Methods of God-perception.

By Jayadayal Goyandka.

TRUE love is the best means of obtaining a vision of the blissful Lord. Now the question is, how this type of love is to be cultivated and what kind of love makes it possible for the Lord to manifest Himself in visible form and bless the devotee with His divine presence.

The Lord can appear in visible form before one who meditates on His mental image with an unfluctuating mind and undaunted by obstacles, as Dhruva of yore did.

The Lord can appear in visible form before one who is prepared to suffer all sorts of persecutions and cheerfully offer his head to the sharp edge of the sword for the sake of the Divine Name like Prahlāda.

One can obtain a vision of the Lord by renouncing wealth and woman and proceeding to the forest for the sake of the Lord as Lakṣmaṇa did.

One can obtain a vision of the Lord by roaming about like the sage Sutiḥṣṇa of the *Rāmacharitamānasa*, mad in love of God.

The immortal Tulasidas graphically describes how the youthful sage is driven into raptures at the news of the advent of Śrī Rāma. Lord Śiva, who is narrating the story to His Divine consort, Pārvatī, relates how the sage goes into raptures over the prospect of beholding the Divine countenance of Śrī Rāmachandra, the very sight of which liberates the soul from its coils of birth and death. The sage knows not in what direction he is moving and what road he has taken. Nay, he has forgotten his own self and has no idea where he is going. Now he turns back and proceeds in the opposite direction and now he resumes the same direction. Sometimes he begins to dance and sing praises to the Lord, his attachment and devotion to Him is so

deep and solid. The Lord conceals Himself behind a tree and witnesses this rare spectacle. He cannot contain Himself for a long time, the intense love of the devotee compels Him to appear before his inward eye. The sage gets absorbed in meditation and sits motionless on the roadway like a statue. His whole frame is thrilled with joy and appears like a bread-fruit on account of its bristling hair. The Lord of Raghus now draws near and is delighted to find His devotee in that ecstatic condition. The Lord, who is naturally disposed to relieve the distress and want of His devotees, accosts the sage in loving accents and asks him to get up.

One can meet the Lord face to face by devoutly and lovingly surrendering himself to Him like Śrī Hanumān.

One can obtain a vision of the Lord by going mad in love for the Lord and yearning for His sight like Prince Bharata.

Goswami Tulasidas has in his own masterly way portrayed the ecstatic condition of Bharata, who may be called the very incarnation of love, at the expiry of the period of Śrī Rāma's exile (which extended to fourteen years).

Bharata was seized with dismay when he came to realize that the period of Śrī Rāma's exile was going to expire only a day afterwards whereas the Lord had not turned up till then, which he could not account for. He therefore wondered whether the Lord had forgotten him on account of his crooked nature. He envied the lot of his younger brother Lakṣmaṇa, who had

focussed his love on the lotus feet of Śrī Rāma. The Lord had surely discovered his deceitful and crooked nature, thought he; that was why He did not take him along with Him. It was no doubt true, he admitted, that, if the Lord took notice of his conduct and paid him his deserts, there could be no hope of his redemption even in millions of Kalpas or revolutions of creation and destruction of the world. The Lord, however, never took notice of the faults of his servants, a befriender of the poor and extremely tender-hearted that He was. He was therefore perfectly sure that the Lord would certainly meet him and the omens also confirmed his belief. If, however, he survived even after the expiry of the period of exile, there could be no greater sinner than he in this world. In this way Bharata was going to succumb to the anguish of separation from Śrī Rāma, when Śrī Hanumān, the Monkey-god, made his appearance on the scene in the disguise of a Brahman, just like a ship that comes to rescue a drowning man. Śrī Hanumān found him sitting on a mattress of straw with a tuft of matted hair on his head and the name of the Lord of Raghus on his lips and with tears streaming forth from his lotus-like eyes and bathing his emaciated frame.

The following is the description of the meeting of Śrī Rāma with Bharata after the latter's conversation with Śrī Hanumān:

Tears gushed forth from the lotus-like eyes of Śrī Rāma and His whole frame bristled with joy; the Lord of the three worlds hugged His loving brother to His bosom with great affection. It

looked as if grace and love had appeared in human form and locked each other in loving embrace. The merciful Lord enquires after the welfare of Bharata and finds Himself tongue-tied. The joy that flowed from this meeting is beyond the ken of speech and mind and can be known only by those who experience it. Bharata replied that he was quite happy, now that the Lord of Ayodhyā had blessed him with His sight and, taking compassion on his wretched plight, helped him by His own hands out of the unfathomable ocean of separation in which he was just going to be submerged.

The Lord can appear in visible form before one who, having relinquished the sense of honour and dignity, rolls on the dust containing the impressions of the lotus-feet of Śrī Hari, like Śrī Akrūra of the *Bhāgavata*. Of him it is said in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*:—

“He noticed in the cow-pen the foot-prints of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the dust of whose feet is kissed by the diadems of all the guardian deities of the different worlds constituting the universe,—footprints which adorned the face of the earth and could be easily recognized by the marks of lotus, barley, goad, etc., borne on the same. He was overwhelmed with joy at the sight of these footprints: a thrill ran through his whole body and his eyes were blinded with tears. He alighted from the chariot and, recognizing that the ground he was treading bore the footprints of the Lord, he began to roll thereon in ecstasy of joy.

“The fulfilment of earthly existence lies in looking on and hearing about the footprints and other symbols of the Lord under the advice of one’s preceptor, just as Akrūra did.” (X. xxxviii. 25—27)

The Lord can be perceived by getting mad in love for Him like Uddhava

who shook off his pride of wisdom or enlightenment on seeing the love of the cow-maids of Brindaban.

The Lord can appear before us if we cry for Him from the bottom of our heart like Rukmiṇī to whom every moment that passed without Him was like the day of final destruction.

The Lord can appear before a loving devotee who does not hesitate even to saw the head of his own son, when the occasion demands it, like the celebrated king Mayūradhwaja, who had taken a vow to carry out the behests of sages and seers, whatever cost he might have to pay for the same.

The Lord can appear before one who like the great *Bhakta* Narasi Mehta shakes off all sense of decorum, honour, fame and fear and roams about singing praises to the Lord in ecstasy of love.

One can obtain a vision of the Lord by passing the necessary tests in the nine forms or stages of *Bhakti* just as we pass University examinations like the B. A., M. A. and Āchārya Examinations.

The Lord not only appears in visible form but can partake of the food offered to Him with love just as He did in the case of Draupadī, *Gajarāja*, the celebrated leader of the herd of elephants, Śabarī, Vidura and others.

The Lord says in *Śrīmad Bhāgavad-gītā*:—

“I appear in person before the loving devotee who offers to Me, with disinterested love and purified intellect, a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water and, gladly partake of it.” (IX. 26.)

Hence it behoves every one of us to pine for the sight of the Lord with supreme love and intense yearning.

