

# The Flower of Prema.

By Swami Sivananda Saraswati.



*Prema* is the flower of flowers. It is the rarest of all flowers. It is cultivated in the hearts of devotees. *Prema* or *Bhakti* is intense love or highest form of devotion to God. It is supreme attachment to the lotus-like feet of the Lord. It springs from the bottom of the devotee's heart. There is not a bit of effort. There is a genuine, natural, spontaneous longing in the heart, for God. Just as the fish cannot live without water, just as the sunflower cannot live without the sun, just as the wife cannot live without her husband, so also a true *Bhakta* cannot live without God, without His Presence, even for a second.

*Bhakti* is of the nature of nectar. It gives freedom to the devotee and puts an end to the Samsāric wheel of birth and death and makes the devotee perfect and fully satisfied.

God is Truth. God is Love. God is Light of lights. God is Peace. God is an embodiment of bliss and knowledge. God is Infinite Beauty. *Nitya sukha*, Supreme Peace, Eternal satisfaction can be had only in God.

## WHERE IS GOD?

Rāma, a school-going boy, said to his class-fellow Kṛṣṇa, "Look here, Kṛṣṇa, if you can tell me where God is, I shall give you one Rupee." Kṛṣṇa replied, "Brother Rāma, I shall give you Rupees Ten, if you can tell me where God is not."

## GOD IS IMMANENT

God is an absentee landlord of this world. He is hiding Himself within these objects. He is the Indweller within these objects and the Interpenetrating Presence or Essence or Substance.

You will find in *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* —

एको देवः सर्वभूतेषु गूढः सर्वव्यापी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा ।  
कर्माध्यक्षः सर्वभूताधिवासः साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणश्च ॥  
( VI. 11 )

"One Shining Being sits hidden in every creature, pervading all, the Inner Self of all beings, the watcher of all acts, abiding in all created things, the witness, the pure Consciousness, the Absolute, free of all attributes."

The first *Śloka* of *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* begins with "ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वम्"—"All these movable and immovable objects are indwelt by the Lord." In *Kāthopaniṣad* you will find:—

एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढोत्मा न प्रकाशते ।

दृश्यते त्वग्रया बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः॥

( I. iii. 12 )

"This *Ātmā* ( God ) is hidden in all beings and does not reveal Himself. Those who are blessed with a penetrating vision can see God by means of their sharp subtle intellect."

Just as oil is hidden in the seeds, butter in milk, mind in brain, foetus in the womb, sun behind the clouds, fire in wood, sugar or salt in water, scent in the buds, sound in the gramophone records, gold in quartz, microbes in the blood, electricity in insulated wires, so also God is hidden in all objects. Just as you can see the bacilli of cholera, typhoid fever and phthisis through a powerful lens of a microscope, the distant, hidden stars through a powerful telescope, so also you can see God through *Jñāna-Chakṣu* or the eye of Intuition which Arjuna and Sañjaya had through the Grace of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Bhagavān Vyāsa respectively.

The intelligent and creative principle of the universe pervades the universe itself. This is a fundamental conception of Pantheism.

#### SIGNS OF BHAKTI

Face is the index of the mind. It is a good advertising board that registers truly whatever goes on in

the inner mental factory and indicates with scientific accuracy the different moods, sentiments, emotions, feelings that arise in the mind-lake.

As this body is the mould prepared by the mind for its operations and activities, the body produces different sorts of gestures and movements to correspond to the inner feelings of attraction or repulsion. The condition of the eyes speaks out everything. There is a tongue in the eyes.

You can make out the nature of a man's feelings towards another man by the signs, gestures and movements that he exhibits when you talk about the man. Similarly, you can clearly gauge the depth of devotion towards God and purity of heart of a man by the eight marks or *Chihnas* or *Lingas* of stupor ( स्तम्भ ), sweating ( स्वेद ), horripilation ( रोमाञ्च ), hairs standing on their ends), hoarseness of voice ( स्वरभंग ), tremor ( वेपथु ), paleness ( वैषण्य ), tears ( अश्रुपात ), and death ( प्रलय ), that he exhibits when you talk to him anything about God.\* When Guru Nanak was counting money in his shop, he uttered the number *tera* ( 13 ). "Tera" also means in Hindustani "I am Thine ( my Lord )." At once he renounced his house and parents.

#### GOD BECOMES A SLAVE OF BHAKTAS

*Nirguṇa Brahma* has made Itself *Saguṇa* and *Sākāra* ( Personal and

\* स्तम्भः स्वेदोऽथ रोमाञ्चः स्वरभङ्गोऽथ वेपथुः ।

वैषण्यमश्रु प्रलय इत्यष्टौ सार्विकाः स्मृताः ॥

( *Sahitya darpana* 116 )

Embodied) for the sake of pious meditation and worship of Bhaktas.

God tries His devotees very much in the beginning. He puts them under severe trials and tests. Then He becomes actually a slave of Bhaktas भक्तवश्य or भक्तपराधीन. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, "I have no will of my own. I am completely under the thumb of my Bhaktas. They have taken entire possession of my heart. How can I leave them, when they have renounced everything for my sake only."

God is full of mercy, love and compassion. He has been described as an "ocean of mercy." His mercy flows like the streams of the Ganges and the Jumna. He is depicted as having sold Himself, so to say, to His devotees. He willingly suffers endless pain in the eyes of the world in order to alleviate the sufferings of His devotees. He bears the scar left on His chest by the kick of Bhṛgu as an ornament. He wears the skulls of His devotees as a garland round His neck.

Lord Hari wears the dust of the feet of His devotees as *tilaka* on His forehead. He apologised and begged pardon of Prahlāda in the following words:

"O dear, you were too tender of age and too delicate of body to stand the terrible tortures inflicted on your person by your hot-headed father. A parallel of his atrocious deed I have never seen. Pray, therefore, excuse me if I was late in coming to your rescue."

He ran with His *Chakra* to kill the Asura who was in the form of a

crocodile, when He heard the cry from Gajendra, the lord of elephants, and gave him salvation (*Gajendra-mokṣa*).

Lord Śrī Rāma took the form of a soldier and did patrol duty, when his soldier *Bhakta* in the Punjab left his duty and attended a Sankirtan party.

He assumed the form of a Sub-Deputy Inspector of Schools and signed in the register when Rupa Kalaji of Ayodhya was very busy in the worship of Rāma and forgot all about his inspection work.

Śrī Rāma carried the palanquin of his devotee, the late reputed songster-Bhakta, Śrī Tyāgarāja of Trivayur, Tanjore District, South India. He carried water in a vessel for his ablution.

You are all aware that the dying Jaṭāyu was in the lap of Śrī Rāma. Śrī Rāma caressed the bird, which was mortally wounded in its heroic efforts to rescue Sītā from the clutches of the Demon King Rāvaṇa of Lankā. He wiped its body with the tresses of His hair. Mark here the unique, tender care and affection of Śrī Rāma towards His devotees.

When the boy Nāmadeva placed a dish of food before the Image of Vithoba (Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa at Pandharpur,) the latter had to assume a human form immediately to eat the food.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa became the skilled charioteer of Arjuna on the battle-field. He hastened from Dwārakā and ran bare-footed, when He heard the pathetic cry of Draupadī, to supply her cloth.

When Mira raised her feet from the ground to drown herself in the river, Śrī Kṛṣṇa stood before her and put her in His lap.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa guided the blind Bilwa-mangala to Brindaban by holding one end of his stick in His own hand. When His barber *Bhakta* was sick, He took upon Himself the duty of shampooing the Rajah. He massaged the feet of the Rajah during the absence of the barber.

He conducted the marriage ceremony of Narasi Mehta's daughter. He brought *ghee* for the *Śrāddha* of Narasi's father and patiently bore the rebuke of Narasi's wife.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa acted the part of a menial messenger in carrying money to a Nawab to pay the debts of his *Bhakta*, Damaji Pant. He has dug wells for His devotees in Pandharpur. Mark here! what kind of work the Lord Himself has done. Work never degrades a man. Work is worship. Work is *Pūjā* of Nārāyaṇa.

How merciful is the Lord !!! My hairs stand on their ends when I think of His merciful nature. I become silent and dumb. O *Prema* ! I really pity those Agnostics, Chārvākas and their friends, the nihilists, atheists, materialists, Socialists, Bolshevists, etc. May God bestow on them good understanding and

bliss. Intellect is a help if it is used in the right direction. Intellect is a hindrance if it becomes perverted and filled with wrong *Samskāras* and wrong notions.

In conclusion, let me say a word on practical *Sādhana*. The *Śāstras* are endless; there is much to be known. Time is short, obstacles are many. That which is the essence should be grasped, just as the swan does in the case of milk mixed with water.

O Nectar's sons! wake up. Open your eyes. Grasp the Essence (God) now. Remember the pains of *Samsāra*. Remember death. Remember the saints. Remember God. Sing His name.

"Hare Rāma Hare Rāma  
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare;  
Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa  
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare."

Cultivate *Bhakti*. Develop the nine modes of devotion (*Navadhā Bhakti*). Serve Bhāgavatas. Feel His Indwelling Presence everywhere. Have *Darshan* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this very birth, nay, at this very moment. Become a glorious *Bhāgavata*, a *Jīvanmukta*, and radiate Joy, Bliss, Peace, all around and everywhere. Friends! let me remind you once more: "Forget not even for a second that Flute-player of Brindaban, thy Immortal friend, thy Joy, thy solace in life." Repeat always His *Mantra* "OM Namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya." May the blessings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa be upon you all."

