

Love of God.

In the materialistic science-ridden world of to-day, Love of God, is a rare phenomenon, if not the fantastic phantom of an unbalanced and hallucinated brain. There may be a few people, here and there, who have fear of God but a LOVER OF GOD, it is not easy to find. One in a hundred millions or one in an age, is the most one could expect to hear about.

Even in this decrepit age of universal godlessness when surging waves of agnosticism are out to engulf the whole world, India could boast of sages like Swāmi Ramkrishna, Vivekanand, Swāmi Ram Tirtha and such other spiritual luminaries although, she herself could not fully understand, them much less follow them in their foot-steps.

Fear of God makes people bow to Him, for protecting them from misfortune or for beseeching Him to bestow upon them wealth, children, etc., etc. The very prosperity they banker after makes them soon forget Him when once they get it; if they do not get it, they begin to doubt the very existence of God.

But a true LOVER OF GOD wants nothing for himself. He pants day and

night only for the LORD. He finds immense joy in surrendering his all at the lotus feet of the Lord. Day and night he is ever cheerfully busy in serving the Lord, and therein he finds infinite bliss. He will not beg the Lord of anything for how can he bear the very idea of giving Him any trouble for his own sordid self? For him the Lord alone is all-in-all and having found Him what does there remain to be asked for? A true "LOVER OF LORD" does not even want the so-called SALVATION, for he knows, that once he is in that state, he can no longer have the good fortune of serving the Lord, who is the heart of his heart, the soul of his soul, the very breath of his life.

It was a feeling like this that made the Gopis dance to the tune of the Kṛṣṇa's lute. When Uddhava enjoined them to concentrate their mind on Brahma, with a view to achieve Salvation, they retorted thus:—

*"Udhavaji, one does not possess ten or
twenty hearts,
The one there was is gone with
Lord Kṛṣṇa,
Where is there another to contem-
plate on your Brahma?"*

*Have done with the Talk of Salvation,
We have no attachment for your
Brahma.
We have given up our hearth
and home.
Panting for the love of Our Beloved
Kṛṣṇa."*

This reminds me of a scene from the Mahābhārata. The Great War between the Kauravas and the Pandavas had ended. The victory of the Pandavas was being trumpeted on all sides. Arjuna with Lord Kṛṣṇa, as his driver, was out for a pleasure drive. His face was resplendent with the joy of victory. The mellow breezes were singing the songs of Arjuna's prowess and so were the birds singing on the blossoming trees. The whole nature seemed to have been loaded with the glory of the victory. The victorious hero of the Mahābhārata was chatting with Lord Kṛṣṇa, on the technique and tactics of war. The Lord Himself was humouring Arjuna with fulsome praise for his deftness in warfare.

In the very course of the talk, Arjuna was reminded of the VIRAT SWARUP—the UNIVERSAL FORM that he had seen before in the battle-field, previous to his deciding upon war. He began to ponder within himself:

"Nobody could be more blessed than I in having Lord Kṛṣṇa—the Lord of the Universe—for my charioteer. It was with the Lord's prowess that Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa and other great warriors were disposed off. The Lord who enabled me to kill Jayadratha through the great miracle of shadowed and illusory sunset, the Lord who is the Lord of the whole Universe, that the self-same Lord should serve me as a charioteer is because of my unparallel

Love for the Lord. The world must know that I am the truest and the most beloved LOVER of the LORD."

The Omniscient, All-benign Lord, feeling that His *Bhakta* was getting conceited, at once, chalked out a plan for making him shed off his vanity. He cannot let any drawback remain in His devotees.

Arjuna began to feel thirsty but looking all around he could not find water anywhere. He addressed the Lord thus, "Lord, I am feeling awfully thirsty. Pray drive me on to a place where water could be had."

The Lord reined in the horses and pointing to a thatched hut told that a poor woman-devotee of His was living there, and that Arjuna should go there to slake his thirst, but on no account, should he reveal his identity.

Arjuna ran towards the hut and was instantly there to find a beautiful hermitage, fragrant with heavenly flowers. He proceeded towards the door. Hearing the footfall, an old woman, seventy years old stepped out. She wore a loving smile on her face and fixing her imperious, bright sparkling eyes on the stately figure before her, she in measured tones, enquired, "Are you ARJUNA?"

Simply dumbfounded, reminded as he was of the injunction of the Lord, and trembling with the fear of a culprit Arjuna replied, "Mother, I am a thirsty way-farer and an humble devotee of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa."

"Good", rejoined the woman, "Come in, sanctify my hut with the dust of your feet. Excuse me, verily you are a *Bhakta* of my Lord, come, come. May the Lord protect you from all evil."

Overpowered with love for the *Bhakta* of her Lord, she took him inside, furnished him with a beautiful Kuśa seat, washed his feet and then engaged herself in arranging hospitality for him.

Arjuna looked all around in the cottage. Besides articles of worship, he was astonished to find on the walls of the hut, a couple of glittering swords, two extra sharp hatchets and a couple of spears, exquisitely well-arranged and heroically displayed.

The old woman re-appeared with a *Kamaṇḍalu* of water and sweet *Kadali* (plantain) fruits, neatly peeled and prettily arranged on a Kadali leaf.

With the look of one who was in fright, Arjuna, reverently enquired, "Mother, how is it that there are those sharp, deadly weapons in the hermitage of a pious, kind and saintly lady like you."

"You take water," curtly replied the woman, and then mellowing down a bit she added, "Excuse me, these are there for a specific purpose which I am loth to disclose."

Arjuna, mustering up courage said, "Mother dear, I must know the purpose of their being there and if you do not tell me, I must clear out without taking water. I say this deliberately."

"Then listen," retorted the old lady, "I am sick of the vanity of Arjuna, Draupadī and Uttarā. They call themselves *Bhaktas* of my Lord Kṛṣṇa. Would that that they came my way. With these weapons, I would tear them off and with the flesh and blood of their bodies I would feed the dogs and vultures. Are you satisfied?"

For a moment, Arjuna trembled with fear and rage, and then collecting

himself up, asked, "What wrong have these *Bhaktas* of the Lord done you? Why, you a sister *Bhakta* of theirs are so bent upon taking their life?"

The old woman sobbed and wept and then distressfully said, "Sonny, you call those conceited, selfish people, *Bhaktas* of my Lord. For life, do not disgrace my Lord thus. You call Draupadī, a *Bhakta*. She who forced my Lord to run bare-footed from Dwārka, just to save her from being stripped naked by Duśāsana? What, if she was rendered naked? Was she not naked when she came into the world? And would she not be naked when she leaves it? Is she a *Bhakta* who was the source of so much trouble to the Lord.

"And then, behold, it was the noon-day sun of Āṣṛāh (June-July). The scorching Sun was raining fire from above, the earth below was emitting flames of fire too. At such a time, you would not stir lest you burnt your skin. Even the birds keep to their nests and do not so much as look out. Ah, it was at such a time that the so-called *Bhakta* Draupadī made my Lord Kṛṣṇa, with His feet tender like the lotus, run to save her from the curse of Durvāsā," and flaring up with devotional rage, she asked, "Is that what you call *Bhakti*, LOVE OF THE LORD?"

"And as to Uttarā. What if the child in her womb had been burnt to ashes by the fire of Brahmāstra? But, no, that apostate of a *Bhakta* cried piteously and the Lord of my heart, Lord Kṛṣṇa had, perforce, to place Himself between Uttarā and the fire of the Brahmāstra. Fastening your own sins on the Lord, is that what you call *Bhakti*."

"And do you still want to know, what sham it is, that hoax of Arjuna's *Bhakti*. Well, listen. This arch-apostate, Arjuna, placed the darling of Yaśoda, the light of her eyes, the cynosure of the world, my tender Śyāma, the sweet notes of whose flute put stones and beasts into raptures, yes, that arch-apostate Arjuna placed the Lord, all-unarmed, in the front of his chariot to be the victim of the sharp, deadly arrows of warriors like Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Karṇa. And for what, all this? For regaining his lost sovereignty; lost by gambling, forsooth. I, Oh, what tortures.....!! My heart has become like a sieve. And the sufferings of my Lord for this cursed brood of Bhaktas, oh, they are too many and too, too varied. Is that the working of the heart of a true *Bhakta*, a true Lover of the Lord? Shall I not have a revenge from these self-styled Bhaktas. Those arms over there are thirsting for their blood." The old lady began once more to shed tears in devotional rage and holy remembrance of the Lord.

Arjuna was stung to the quick, as if bitten by hundreds of scorpions and amid that torrent of invective, with a voice half-stifled in the throat could only utter the words, "Ah mother, my mother."

As soon as the old lady had finished, Arjuna fell prostrate at her feet and after he had washed them with tears of love and repentance said, "Hail Mother, you are blessed. You have shown me the real, the true path. Bless me mother, so that I too may have real Love for the Lord and may propitiate Him, even as you have done."

By way of a blessing, the old lady asked Arjuna to take the water that had been lying there, in spite of the awful thirst of Arjuna. He took it, bowed and left.

Arjuna was cursing himself all the way back to where he had left Lord Kṛṣṇa. He fell at His feet and in the anguish of the soul, said, "Pardon me Lord, I am a great sinner. Moulder of my Fate! I have caused Thee endless annoyance for my selfish ends. I know not what repentance I could offer. Save me Lord, out of Thy abounding Mercy, save me, save this humblest of Thy humble slaves."

The Lord, with a smile took him up into His embrace and said, "O *king*, O son of Kunti, why so afflicted? What had happened to you, my darling brother? Warrior-heroes like you do not humble themselves thus."

Now the Lord and Arjuna got into the chariot. Arjuna repeated all that he had seen and heard and with folded hands said, "O Blessed Lord, O Lord of all Illusion, true, abiding Love of Thee is so difficult of achievement, unless Thy Mercy wills it. O Lord of the humble, let me drink deep into the fountain of your devotion, remove the weeds of sinful conceit and vanity and through Thy Infinite Mercy, sow the seeds of True Love and let them blossom forth with the water of Thy tender regard for the true *Bhakta*. Pray, do this, My Lord, the Supreme Master of the universe. My Lord KRISHNA pray do this."

The Lord cast a lovely glance with sweet smiles, once more.* (Kalyan)

