

## Offering of Self to God.

~~~~~BY JAYADAYAL GOYANDKA.

The subject of self-offering to God should be critically analysed and examined. The word 'self' here means all the three bodies† of men together with the soul, and offering means surrender. The things over which we exercise our right of proprietorship, to offer them all unreservedly to God is self-offering. This is one of the principal items of surrender to God. It may also be described as an essential item of Devotion. There are four states or phases of surrender. The first stage is marked by clinging to God's Name or His transcendent Form. The second stage is characterized by subordinating one's will to God, that is, acting in conformity with His will or doing as He may

direct him to do. The third phase of surrender consists in cheerfully accepting all the divine decrees; and the fourth stage is that of absolute surrender in which one commits himself to the loving care of God, and surrenders his whole being, his very 'I', to God. When I myself stand offered to God all that I possess naturally becomes His property.

Of the nine stages of Devotion, self-offering represents the final stage. If it is asked where lies the difference between the attitude of a servant towards his master and that of self-offering, it may be answered that apparently there lies no difference, inasmuch as the devotee who adopts the attitude of a servant of God

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\* Translated by Syt. Dharendra Chandra Roy, B. A.

† The three bodies of men are the physical, subtle and causal bodies.

will offer himself to God in the final stage, and the devotee who has offered his self to God is also a servant of God. But nevertheless the difference between the two positions may be brought out by the following illustration. There are two clerks working in a business firm; they hold all the assets and liabilities as well as the property of the firm to belong to the master of the firm. But whereas one of them takes in return for his services what is barely necessary for his maintenance, viz., food and clothing, the other in addition to this draws a monthly salary as well. While the latter expects something in return for his services the attitude of the former is absolutely disinterested. The disinterested worker naturally stands at a higher level. Both of them stand in the relation of a servant to the firm; but whereas the former has dedicated his self to the master the latter has not.

In ancient and medieval times there was another class of servants in existence. They were known as slaves or helots. They were born as slaves and died as such. They never received any emoluments for their services and could be given away as dowries. The system is still in vogue in some ancient kingdoms. The surrender of a devotee is even more complete than that of these slaves. In a war between two kings one is vanquished and surrenders himself to the other; addressing the victor he says, "I am completely at your mercy, you have every right over my person and my kingdom and may do as you like with them. You may either

kill me, release me from bondage or even return my kingdom to me." This is also a form of surrender, but the surrender here is actuated by fear, and not by love or reverence. If the victor king persecutes the vanquished, the latter may feel aggrieved by such treatment, for he has surrendered himself out of a sense of helplessness. Contrary to this, the person who surrenders himself to another out of reverence, devotion and love will experience a joy even if he is persecuted by the object of his love and devotion. Even slaves feel aggrieved when harassed and persecuted by their master; for the feeling of reverence and love is absent in their surrender. One who offers and surrenders himself through love, reverence and devotion will not feel aggrieved however much he may be ill-treated. The demon King Bali's surrender was actuated by love and reverence and not by fear and helplessness. He was warned by his preceptor Śukrāchārya that the child before him was no ordinary Brahman child and that he would strip him of all his possessions, nevertheless, with open eyes and in a spirit of loving devotion Bali offered his all to the Lord. He said to his preceptor, "When it is the Lord Himself who is going to take my all, there can be nothing more delightful to me." The mind, intellect and body, etc., of the devotee who offers to God in a like manner are no longer his; they now belong to God. He can no longer claim them as his own. Among material objects the puppet may be cited as an illustra-

tion of such absolute surrender. The puppet places itself entirely at the disposal of the wire-puller who does whatever he likes with it. He may attire it, make it fight or do anything else with it. It does not do anything on its own initiative. The puppet, however, is an insentient object; it has no consciousness. The person who consciously offers himself to God just as the puppet places itself at the disposal of the wire-puller automatically develops within himself other phases of surrender as well. I can not call to mind a better illustration of surrender than the puppet. The juggler's monkey may also be mentioned in this connection, but it supplies an illustration of obeying the commands of the master. This no doubt is an aspect of surrender, but the main thing is to offer ourselves completely to God. Just as the ownership of a cow which is given over to a priest is transferred to the priest, one who offers himself to God can no longer exercise any right or authority over himself. A close consideration will show that all things belong to God from the very beginning, and we have wrongly assumed our right of possession over them which should be relinquished. One who realizes this truth remains unperturbed and unshaken under all circumstances. Not only this, he gets absorbed in ecstatic joy; he derives happiness from the happiness of his Master and since his Master is never unhappy, he too is always happy. Whatever he now does he does at the bidding of his Master and in conformity with His wishes; for his

mind, intellect and body have been offered to the Lord. Everything now belongs to God, and he no longer exercises his authority over them. Having offered his self to God with devotion he resigns himself completely to the will of the Lord, so that he never forgets the *Paramātmā*, and is always immersed in His thoughts.

A devotee who has thrown himself at the mercy of the Lord is sure to attain Him, no matter if he meditates on Him as something apart from him or merges his identity in Him, whether he maintains his separate identity or identifies himself with God. But he has no independent will of his own in the matter. He surrenders all his proprietary right to his Master and will do whatever He bids him do. A devotee who has surrendered himself to God should never possess a desire of his own. If any desire ever appears in him, it should be regarded as a defect in his surrender. Yet that is not a vital defect. Did not Bali ask for permission to stay in the lower regions? He did not offer any suggestions of his own accord, but there was no harm in his expressing the desire of his heart when asked by the Lord. He is no doubt a greater devotee who does not accept anything from the Lord, even when He offers it; his, indeed, is a greater surrender than that of Bali. A devotee who has truly surrendered himself to God will address the following words or something approaching them to the Lord when offered the boon: "O Lord, whom do You offer this boon? Am I not Your own? Do You want

to get rid of me by offering this boon? If such is Your desire let it be so, since everything depends on Your will. A father may expel his son from home without giving him a pie, may dismiss him with a paltry hundred or two hundred rupees or make him the master of the whole property. The father asks the son to live apart only when he perceives that the son has a desire to establish himself separately. Otherwise why should he do so? Therefore, O Lord, when You ask me to seek a boon it is certain that the idea of living apart from You must be lurking somewhere in my mind, else why should You ask me to do so? Surely I must be guilty of misdemeanour and crave Your forgiveness. All that exists in this world belongs to You. If I therefore accept a boon from You, where shall I find a place to keep it apart from You?" This form of surrender can be made even by those who worship God as friend or as their master. Self-surrender is, therefore, an independent aspect of *Bhakti* (Devotion). Those who treat the Lord as their friend or master may adopt this form of Devotion, if they choose; and there is no objection if they do not adopt it. It may be argued that friendship will be complete only when there is full surrender to the friend. This is no doubt true; but one can remain a friend even without surrender. The surrender of Vibhīṣaṇa does not appear to be of a very high order. It was the Gopīs who truly surrendered themselves to Śrī Kṛṣṇa even as friends. They did not regard themselves as

independent and treated themselves only as chattel belonging to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. A devotee may develop all the nine aspects of Devotion or only some of them. One engaged in such forms of Devotion as remembrance of God or meditation, worship or salutation may not surrender himself to God. Of course if one has developed all the other aspects of Devotion, and has not been able to cultivate the spirit of surrender, his *Bhakti* is no doubt deficient to that extent. One who lacks the spirit of surrender may be a devotee and may be called a devotee, but the glory of a devotee who has made a surrender of himself to God is unique. That is why self-surrender has been recognized as the final stage among the nine different aspects or stages of Devotion. That is the highest form of Devotion.

The first stage of *Bhakti* is 'hearing' (of God's glory). Without hearing there can be no *Bhakti*. If any instance of *Bhakti* without 'hearing' comes to notice, past *Samskāra* or association will surely be traceable in that case, which shows that the individual in question must have gone through the process of 'hearing' in his previous life. Thus devotion begins. The individual first hears the glory of God and his interest being aroused thereby, he takes to the path of Devotion. Self-offering represents the final stage of Devotion—all other stages are covered by it. Once self-offering is made *Bhakti* becomes exclusive; all the aspects of surrender then manifest themselves of their own accord in the individual. What Patañjali has described

as ईश्वरप्रणिधान (meditation of God) is also achieved, and the fruit of that meditation, viz., attainment of *Samādhi* (oneness with God) is also realized. He no longer worries about his deliverance, for his deliverance is already an accomplished fact.

The devotee who has surrendered himself to God becomes altogether free from anxiety and care. He is no longer troubled by fear or worry of any sort, whether in relation to this world or to the next. A man of ordinary means who is running a school troubles himself day and night over thoughts to find the means of conducting the institution. But if a patron possessing sufficient financial strength takes up the work, the former becomes free from all worries. He may now and then attend to that work even now but he no longer feels worried. Similarly, if one goes abroad after entrusting his affairs to a responsible friend or officer, he does not worry about the conduct of his affairs during his absence. Even so, one who has offered himself to God can have no room for fear and anxiety. On the contrary, his joy will know no bounds. If a millionaire adopts a penniless child as his son, the child will gladly sit on the lap of his adoptive father and leave off all care about his future. He knows that whereas he was a pauper only the other day he is now heir to a property worth crores of rupees. His joy knows no bounds now, since his adoption has solved the problem of his food and clothing for ever. When such is the joy of a boy who has been adopted by a human father who can describe

the joy of a devotee who has surrendered himself to God? He can have no fear of any sort. When fear leaves even the child adopted by an ordinary man of wealth, how can he who has found shelter in the protecting arms of the Lord have any fear? One enjoys unbounded and ineffable peace in that state. An adopted child of a wealthy father may go to the length of designing against the latter if there is any clash of interests and his own interest is adversely affected; for wealth alone is the pivot of his interest. This will be a height of baseness and ingratitude on his part. No one, however, seeks the protecting arms of the Lord from any selfish motive. He simply rejoices in the fact that the Lord has taken him under His protection. We cannot comprehend the nature of his joy. It is something unique. Suppose the millionaire in question goes to interview the Viceroy accompanied by some of his men including the boy whom he proposes to adopt as his son. Questioned by the Viceroy the boy replies that he is the millionaire's adopted son, but unless and until the millionaire himself confirms the statement the Viceroy will not accept it. If the boy calls on the Viceroy a second time alone, the Viceroy will refuse to receive him and will insist on his producing a letter from the millionaire inasmuch as the Viceroy knows that it is the boy who says he is the millionaire's son, the millionaire himself does not acknowledge this fact. Thus the statement of the boy carries no weight. The boy who declares himself as the millionaire's son does not derive the

same pleasure as he does when the millionaire himself acknowledges the fact. Similarly, at present it is we who call ourselves His. But we shall be really His only when the Lord acknowledges us as His own. Who can describe the joy of the blessed soul whom the Lord takes under His protection? He is actuated by Love and not by any selfish motive. If the father tyrannizes over the adopted son the latter may rebel against the father, because he allows himself to be adopted only out of greed for wealth. But the devotee who offers himself to God through disinterested Love will consider himself blessed even if his body is hacked to pieces. We do not find an apt illustration to describe the condition of this devotee. A visitor approaches a Mahātmā and offers him a piece of cloth. The Mahātmā refuses the offer. Although the visitor makes the offer on his part the gift does not descend to the Mahātmā so long as the latter does not accept it. It descends to the Mahātmā only when at the repeated requests of the visitor the former at last accepts it. He congratulates himself on the Mahātmā having accepted his piece of cloth. When again instead of giving it to his attendants the Mahātmā takes the cloth for his own use how great should be the joy of the giver. Another visitor brings the present of a fan; the day is extremely hot. If the Mahātmā yields to his importunities for being allowed to fan him with his own hands, how great is his joy? The Mahātmā feels inclined to lie down and rest a while. The visitor requests

him to place his head on his lap and lie down. If after repeated requests the Mahātmā accepts the offer how great is the joy of the visitor? Now if it be examined whether the object of worship here is a true Mahātmā (great soul) or only a pretender, it will be difficult to ascertain it. It is our high regard for the Mahātmā that gives us such immense joy. Similarly, if God whom innumerable Mahātmās have realized in their lives condescends to make use of our body or even to hack it to pieces, how great should be our joy? The whole of our body should experience a thrill hitherto unknown. We should deem ourselves blessed if He decided to make a pair of shoes out of the skin of our body and wear it. We should be proud to think that our body is being put to such a use, and shall be filled with gratitude for the Lord. A devoted wife feels happy in the happiness of her husband. She is filled with joy when her husband makes use of her body. Although she worships the husband as the Lord Himself, she knows that he is Nārāyaṇa (God) only to her. Between two intimate friends if the possessions of one are used by another as his own the owner of the articles so used feels highly gratified. All these illustrations have been taken from our ordinary life. Similarly, if God were to make use of our things or of our body, nothing could be a source of greater joy to us. The joy and happiness of the person who thus surrenders himself to God knows no limit.

When Bhagavān Śri Kṛṣṇa accompanied by Arjuna and a lion went

to King Mayūradhwaja in the guise of a recluse. He asked for half the body of his son Ratnakumāra for being offered to the lion. The King said he had no objection to this, but it was necessary to consult the Queen as well in the matter. When the Queen too gave her consent both of them approached the son and wanted to know his pleasure. The Prince readily agreed to the proposal and deemed it a fortune to be of service to the recluse who he knew was none other than God Himself. The King and Queen took the saw in their own hands and began to split the body of the prince into two. The Prince smiled and beamed with joy; for he knew the recluse to be God Himself. He had reverence and love in his heart and was beaming with joy. The King and the Queen offered their dearest object to God, but Ratnakumāra offered his very self. The King and Queen could not experience the same thrill of joy as the Prince did. Observing a tear-drop trickle down the cheeks of the Queen, the recluse refused to accept the hospitality of the King. The Queen then explained that she did not lament the death of the son; she regretted that only half the body of the boy has to be of service to the Lord, the other half was not so fortunate. At the very instant God revealed Himself before the blessed three. And it was quite natural that He did so. If we can develop the attitude of the Queen all our possessions will be acceptable to God. Had any one of the blessed three felt the least regret in their heart,

the Lord would not have accepted the offering. An offering should be made with the greatest pleasure. God will manifest Himself the moment we develop the reverence of King Mayūradhwaja, his Queen and Prince Ratnakumāra. God accepts in His service him alone who offers himself as willingly and cheerfully as Mayūradhwaja did. He can ill afford to refuse an offering made with such love as Mayūradhwaja brought to bear on his offering. Even Mahātmas (great souls) accept, when necessary, a present offered with love. They know that if it is not accepted, the poor soul who makes the offering will feel disappointed. The Lord on His part has declared in no equivocal terms that He stands pledged to give protection from all creatures to him who surrenders himself only once and seeks His protection.\* Take the illustration of a piece of cloth belonging to a particular person: the cloth has surrendered itself to its owner. The owner may tear it to pieces, throw it away, burn it, spread it on the ground, cover himself with it or give it away to some one, it will not murmur; to whatever use the owner may be pleased to put it, it does not raise any objection. Whoever surrenders himself to God like this will unhesitatingly submit himself to whatever use the Lord makes of him. Such a devotee attains salvation even though living. Although possessing life he submits to the

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\* सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवासीति च याचते ।

अमयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद्गतं मम ॥

(Valmikiya Ramayana VI. xviii. 33)

control of the Lord as though he were dead. He would no more object than a dead body. He alone is a *Jivanmukta* (one who is liberated though living) who can even though living efficiently play the role of a dead man.

Such a liberated soul becomes fearless; he transcends all sorrows and attains eternal and unshakeable peace. Such a great soul moves in the world only for our good. He has no obligation to discharge.

“He who rejoices in the Self, who is satisfied with the Self and is contented in the Self has no obligation to discharge.”\*

He who has thus surrendered himself to God lives only for the good of the people. Just as things which are the common property of a caste or a brotherhood can be used by any member of the brotherhood according to his needs, even so every one may be said to have a right to derive benefit from that person. Such a person though living for others will never entertain the idea that he lives and moves for the good of the world, much less will he say so. One who says so in respect to himself is a braggart; he can never be a liberated soul; virtues like humility, etc., appear in a liberated soul.

The eyes get sanctified through a sight of such persons, the tongue gets purified through conversing with them and mind gets purified through

their thoughts. Thousands and hundreds of thousands of such persons have appeared on earth from time to time. In the sacred regions of the Himalayas in the extreme north of India many such Ṛṣis performed their austerities in the past. These sacred spots naturally rouse the spirit of dispassion. One cannot adequately sing the glory of Mahātmās (great souls) who enhance the purity of these spots by their presence. If any boon has to be sought from the Lord, let us pray to Him thus: “O Lord, give us strength and wisdom to follow the footsteps of those exalted souls whose glory You Yourself sing.” But what is the need of seeking a boon? One who surrenders himself to God and is accepted by Him can be instrumental in redeeming many souls, to say nothing of his own deliverance. About such souls the Lord says in the *Gītā*:—

“He who is alike to friend and foe and indifferent to honour and dishonour, cold and heat, pleasure and pain, and is destitute of attachment to the world, who takes praise and blame equally, who is silent, that is, constantly absorbed in meditation of God and content with whatever he gets for the maintenance of his body, who has no attraction for home,—such a person, firm in mind and full of devotion, is dear to Me.”\*

( *Kalyan* )

\* यस्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्मतुष्टश्च मानवः ।  
आत्मन्येव च संतुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते ॥

( *Gītā* III. 17 )

\* समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।  
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥  
तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी संतुष्टो येन केनचित् ।  
अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥

( *Gītā* XII. 18-19 )