

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Q. 291, FEAR AND GOD

Om Sri Sai Ram

Welcome to Prasanthi Sandesh, Question and Answer session welcomes you.

Q. 291:

We find many people who have faith in God because of fear. It's fear which makes them seek God's help. Their faith is only because of fear. Is this correct?

Man is afraid. This world is a strange world and man wants to be secure and safe. In childhood the father and the mother protect the child. But there are many people, millions of them, who never grow beyond their childhood. They remain stuck somewhere and they still need a father and a mother for protection. Hence God is called the Father or the Mother. They need a Divine Father to protect them. They are not mature enough to be on their own. They need some security.

For instance, you may have watched small children with their teddy bear or their special toy or their blanket or something that has a special personality to the child. So, you cannot replace this teddy bear. You may say that you can find a better one, but that does not matter. There's a love relationship between the child and his teddy bear. His teddy bear is unique and you cannot replace it. It becomes dirty, it becomes smelly, rotten but the child goes on carrying it. You cannot replace it with a new one, a fresh one.

Even the parents have to tolerate this. Even they have to respect it because a child will feel offended. If the parents are going to travel, they have to tolerate the teddy bear also. They have to treat it almost as a member of the family. They know this is foolish, but for the child it has significance.

What significance does the teddy bear have for the child? In a way, it is objective. It is there outside the child, so it is part of the child's reality. Certainly it's not just imagination. It's not just subjective. It's not a dream. It is there. But it's not totally there, not totally objective. Maybe some of the child's dreams are involved in it. It is an object, it is objective, but also much subjectivity is involved with it.

For the child, it is almost alive. The child has projected many things onto the teddy bear. He talks to the teddy bear. Sometimes he becomes angry and throws it away. Then he says, "I'm sorry," and takes it back. It has a personality which is almost human. Without the teddy bear, he cannot go to sleep. While holding it and hugging it, he goes to sleep. He feels secure with the teddy bear so the world is okay. Everything is okay. But without the teddy bear, he is suddenly alone.

So, the teddy bear exists in a totally new dimension, which is neither subjective nor objective. This may be called the transitory realm, I repeat, the transitory realm. It is a little objective and a little subjective.

Many children grow physically but they never grow spiritually, so they need their 'teddy bear' all their lives. Your images of God in the temple are nothing but these 'teddy bears'.

So when a Hindu goes into the Hindu temple, he sees something which a Mohammedan cannot see. The Mohammedan can see only a stone statue. The Hindus see something which nobody else can see in this 'teddy bear' which is represented by the idol. It is objectively there, but it is not totally objective. Much subjectivity of the worshipper is projected onto it. This subjectivity functions as a screen.

You go to a Jain temple. As you may be a Hindu, in a Jain temple you will not feel any reverence arising in you. Sometimes you may even feel a little offended because the statue of Mahavira is nude. So, you may feel a little offended and you may like to go out as soon as possible. You may not feel any respect. But then, here comes a Jain with tremendous respect. The Mahavira statue is his 'teddy bear' and he feels very much protected.

So whenever you are in fear, you start remembering God. Thus your God is a by-product of your fear. When you are feeling good, unafraid, you don't bother. So this is fear-oriented devotion. It is very dependent. It is almost neurotic. Maturity only comes to you when you realise that you are alone. You have to be alone because you have to face reality as it is.

These transitory 'teddy bears' are just your imagination. They are not going to help. If something is going to happen, it is going to happen! The teddy bear cannot protect you. When death is going to happen, it is going to happen! You may go on calling to God, but protection cannot come to you. You are calling nobody. You are simply calling out of fear.

Maybe calling loudly gives you a certain courage. Maybe when praying, the prayer gives you a certain courage. But there's no God to respond to it. There's nobody who is going to respond to your prayer. But, if you have the idea that somebody is there to respond to your prayer, then you may feel a little relieved and relaxed.

This fear-oriented religion is a religion of don'ts. "Don't do that and don't do this," because fear is negative. The Ten Commandments are all fear-oriented. "Do this! Don't do that!"

If religion is nothing but avoiding, by saying, "Don't do this and don't do that", then it means that one must close oneself in safety and security, never taking any risks, and never moving on a dangerous path. In fact, it means not allowing yourself to be alive.

So this religion is as negative as the one which we discussed earlier, with regard to ignorance. It certainly gives a certain stiffness or up-tightness. It is childish. It is a

search for security when security is not available anywhere. It is not possible for security to be available because life exists as insecurity. God exists as insecurity, as danger and as risk.

So the keyword for the fear-oriented religion is "Help!" Of course, It is also repression, continuous repression, 'Don't do this'.

The second type of person is always afraid. What to eat? What not to eat? To love a woman or not to love a woman? To make a house or not to make a house?

You are never free from whatever you have repressed. In fact, the more you repress it, the more you are in its power because when you repress a thing it goes deeper into your consciousness. It reaches your very roots and poisons your whole being. Deep inside you'll always carry whatever has been repressed. You may follow the religion as a ritual, but it'll never become your heart! I repeat, it will never become your heart!

Remember that repression is not a way towards freedom. Repression is worse than expression. Through expression a person is bound to become free one day or another. But, through repression one always remains obsessed.

Only life gives you freedom. A lived life gives you freedom. An un-lived life remains very attractive so the mind goes on roaming around to whatever you have repressed.

People who live through rituals out of fear may avoid one thing, but they'll fall into another because the understanding is not their own. It is just fear-oriented. It is hell that they are afraid of.

A religion gives you fearlessness! Yes! Let that be the criterion. If religion gives you fear, then it is not really a religion. This has to be understood completely.

Our Bhagavan said at one time, "Why Fear When I am here?" When we fear, it only means that we are not sure of the presence of Bhagavan, of the Omniscience of Bhagavan. So either we are fear-oriented or God-centred. But we are not definite about it. It depends on the circumstances!

Insecurity takes you towards God or religion. This is not fair. We should never fear God. We should love God. Love is different from fear. Fear is rather due to certain negative factors. Love is totally positive. Love is non-expectational. Love is a feeling, an expression of Divinity. Therefore let's not have fear-oriented religion because fear-oriented religion is negative and it will not take you anywhere.

So on the one hand, we have ignorance-oriented religion as discussed earlier in question number 290, and here we have discussed at length what fear-oriented religion is. This is also negative.

I know many people fear God. People go to the temple with closed eyes and sometimes they literally shake their body which is not necessary. It only means that you are under tension. You are under great pressure and stress.

Love does not take you to any tension, any stress, and any anxiety. Love establishes you in a balanced state of equilibrium, of equanimity and poise. Maybe that's the reason why Baba said, "Love is God. God is Love, Live in Love." That's what it is. On another occasion He even mentioned, "The only religion is the Religion of Love."

Perhaps our understanding of love is limited to the physical and sensual. But once it transcends these factors, it'll become transcendental, divine and spiritual.

Thank you for your time.