

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION: Q. 294, BOW DOWN, PURIFY YOUR HEART

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh, Question and Answer session welcomes you.

Q. 294:

It is said, "We need to bow down at the Lotus Feet of the Divine Master in trust and devotion." Please explain. This is the question.

Actually speaking, the word 'Guru' has no correct translation in other languages. So whom can we call a Guru?

The correct meaning of the word 'Guru' is this: When we have no idea about the Divine but through some other dimension or through some person from anywhere, when even a glimpse of the Divine is revealed to us, then that entity is a Guru.

A Guru is the one from whom one receives his first glimpse of the Divine. It does not matter who that person is. It is possible that even the person himself may not be aware of it. However, even if that person is not aware of it, the one through whom one has received their first glimpse of the Divine is his Guru. The whole meaning of a Guru is the entity through which one becomes aware for the first time that there can be such a phenomenon like the Divine in this world.

So, Guru is not a teacher. A Guru is the one who awakens you. A Guru is not someone who explains to you or tells you. A Guru is the one through whom the Divine has already been revealed to you. Even though he may not be aware of it himself, he is someone through whose existence you felt something or you realised something. Through his very existence, you experienced some fragrance. You had a glimpse. Something touched you. From that day on, your whole vision of life and approach to life has changed.

Sariputta, S A R I P U T T A, went to Buddha and attained enlightenment. Then he was sent away to travel and teach. Now Sariputta had become a Buddha in his own right. But nevertheless he kept a diary that showed in which city or village Buddha might be at any given time. He also had a map so that he could see in which direction Buddha may be moving. Every morning and evening he would bow down in that direction and put his head at Buddha's feet from hundreds and sometimes even from thousands of miles away.

His disciples would ask him, "What are you doing? To whom are you bowing? We don't see anybody here."

Sariputta would say, "Once I also saw nothing. But then, in this person I glimpsed the Divine for the very first time, and therefore I go on bowing down to him.

The disciples would insist, "But now you yourself are enlightened."

Sariputta would reply, "It is in this man that for the first time I had a glimpse of the state in which I am in today. And I know that if I had not had that glimpse, I could not

be who I am today. Then I was just a seed, while in Buddha I saw the whole tree! For the first time, this deep longing filled my being, 'How can I also become a tree?'"

The meaning of this is that the Master to whom you bow down is the one through whom you had your first glimpse of the Divine and through whom the Divine became meaningful to you. You bow down to the one through whom you came to pay attention to the existence of the Divine for the first time. This remembrance is vital so that one can move into one's heart.

Its significance is that the Master is a declaration of your future. He is a declaration of what you can be. What you can be is what he is right now. What will happen to you tomorrow is his today. Your future is his present.

You have no idea about the face of your own future, but this remembrance of the Master will give a direction to your future. It will create a channel for your life energy to flow. The whole reason for remembering Him is that when you do remember Him, your whole energy will flow in one direction. It is like when Sariputta remembers Buddha and bows down to Buddha. It is something he does before he meditates.

In this gesture, the whole process of meditation is being described. The remembrance has to be there right before entering into meditation because the energy that will arise from meditation will then flow along the lines of this remembrance. The seed will break open and its sprout will grow along the lines of the tree.

Who has dispelled all the impurities of our heart? We have removed the impurities of the body. We should also remove the impurities of the heart. We should make the heart pure. What are the impurities of the heart?

Buddha has announced four *Brahmavihar* (four Divine states of being or Divine virtues), which are methods for removing the impurities of the heart. Different religions have used different words. But the idea is very basic and almost the same. What are the impurities of the heart? Buddha has said, "Fill your heart with the feeling of compassion so then violence, anger, the tendency to hurt others and also jealousy will all be driven out." These are all impurities.

So Buddha used to say to his *Bhikkhus*, *B H I K K H U S*, his disciples, "First, before moving into meditation, feel unconditional compassion towards the whole world."

An interesting thing happened once. Buddha was staying in a village and he initiated a man into meditation. Buddha told him that the first principle of compassion is that when you sit for meditation you should begin by feeling compassion for the whole world.

The man said, "The whole world is fine; but please exclude my neighbour from it. It's very difficult to feel compassion towards him. He is very wicked and he has tortured me so much. We have a lawsuit pending. We had fights. He has sent ruffians after me and I had to do the same with him. I have no problem at all about having compassion for the whole world, but just exclude this neighbour from it. Would exclusion of one neighbour really cause some problem in my meditations?"

Buddha replied, "Forget about the whole world. In your case, to feel compassion for that neighbour will be enough because the impurity that fills your heart is on account of that neighbour. Don't be concerned with the rest of the world. That compassion for your neighbour will dissolve the impurities that accumulate in your mind and heart."

The second virtue Buddha talks about is friendliness. This friendliness is directed towards the whole world -- not only towards humans but also towards everything.

The third state of being Buddha speaks about is cheerfulness, a feeling of joy and cheerfulness. Remember that when we are cheerful, in those moments no impurity flows from us towards the world.

In contrast, when we are sad and miserable, we immediately start thinking of making the whole world miserable. A sad man wants to see the whole world feeling sad because that's what makes him happy. He has no other happiness. Unless he can make you feel more miserable than he is, he will never be able to feel happy. When a sad man sees sadness all around him, he is at ease.

So, Buddha has said the third method is cheerfulness. Be at ease with cheerfulness. Fill your heart with cheerfulness.

The fourth method or virtue Buddha talks about is indifference. This means that no matter what happens, whether something good or bad happens, whether something bears fruit or not, whether meditation happens or not, whether self-realisation happens or not, one remains indifferent. Come failure or success, good or bad, whatever comes, one remains indifferent. One remains centred and balanced between both good and bad. One does not choose between these two.

Buddha has talked about these four methods. But, similar things are said in almost all religions.

These will prove the fact that it is necessary to remove the impurities of the heart. After that, meditation will be an easy and natural thing. That's the reason for bowing down with all our devotion at the Lotus Feet of our Master.

When all is said and done, when the body is purified, when there is a natural posture of the body and we are in a lonely place, and when all the impurities of the heart have been removed, then this feeling of love and intimacy, of oneness with the whole existence, arises in the heart. This feeling is what devotion is.

The awareness that you are one with the whole, one with all of existence in this moment -- that is what meditation is. This is a very fundamental thing, which deserves repetition. The awareness that you are one with the whole, one with all of existence in this moment -- that is what meditation is.

Therefore, one who wishes to know the ultimate reality, who lives in the discipline of *sanyasa*, who has cleansed the body, and who sits in a comfortable posture in a lonely place, while keeping the head, neck and spine aligned and erect, converges the faculties of all the senses at one point.

The same one has bowed down to the Master in trust and devotion, dispelling all the impurities of the heart and moving beyond both sorrow and suffering, thoroughly contemplating the essence of devotion. Due to the fact that we all have our own concept of devotion, this has to be said once again with emphasis.

So this is the answer to the question about why we need to bow down at the feet of the Guru in trust and devotion. In this context, I can also share with you a couple of ideas.

Oh! I am sorry, but time is up. We'll take it up in the next session!

Thank you.

Sai Ram