**Devotion – Man’s Love for God**

**Objective:**

Understanding what is true devotion and how it can be the most effective path to the realization of your oneness with Divinity.

**What is Devotion?**

The spiritual path of Knowledge (Jnana Yoga) starts with intellectual inquiry into the nature of the Formless Supreme Lord (Brahman). The spiritual path of Devotion (Bhakthi) starts with the aspirant’s heart-felt feelings of love, adoration, and gratitude to God, usually in a Form that appeals to the aspirant.

**Quotes:**

“Devotion has been defined as supreme single-pointed attachment to God.” (Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VIII, pages 18, 109).

“Devotion is the state of mind in which one has no separate existence apart from God. His very breath is God; his every act is by God, for God; his thoughts are of God; his words are uttered by God about God. For, like the fish which can only live in water, man can only live in God – in peace and happiness”. (Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VI, page 119)

“…The true mark of devotion is pure love of God. Without this pure love, bhajans, worship, and the like are artificial exercises and are valueless.” (Source: Sanathana Sarathi, Sept. 1994, pages 228-229)

“For treading the path of Devotion, one needs no scholarship, wealth, riches, or ascetic rigors.”

(Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. I, pages 8, 51).

 “The path of Devotion is the easiest and most effective, for it is the Sadhana (spiritual practice) of the heart.” (Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. X, pages 14, 86).

**Steps in the Devotional Path**

**Quotes:**

“…You have the nine-fold path of devotion: Hearing; Singing His glory; Thinking of and chanting the Name; Serving at His feet; Obeisance; Worship; Serving Him as a servant serves the Master; befriending God; Surrendering body, mind, and soul…Love and Sacrifice constitute Devotion to God. There is nothing superior to this. Knowledge of the Self is essential. This was the main teaching of Adi Shankara throughout his life, as he was preaching and following the Vedic dictum: ‘The one Self is present in all beings,’ ‘The one Truth is described in many ways by the wise.’ He was also preaching that Wisdom was nothing but vision of ‘Non-Duality’. But, during his last days, Shankara realized that Devotion was greater than Knowledge. In his famous ‘Bhaja Govindam’, Adi Shankara emphasizes that only the path of Devotion will help you to get over the cycle of birth and death…There is no path superior to that of Devotion. Devotion does not mean doing puja (ritual worship), bhajans (spiritual singing), going on pilgrimage to holy shrines etc., Devotion means diverting the pure and unsullied mind towards God…Love of God is Devotion. All other love may be termed as Anuraga (Attachment associated with affection and desires), which results in bondage, while love of God leads to liberation…”

(Source: Sanathana Sarathi, October 1994, pages 266-267)

Among the nine steps of devotion, listening to the Name being sung and singing the Name are mentioned as the best. (Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XI, pages 43, 245)

“Devotion should also be the unified expression of love for God, action in the services of God and total surrender to the will of God. These are intertwined like the braid of a woman’s tresses. Devotion, worship and Awareness of the Self together demonstrate the oneness of the Divine.”

(Source: Sanathana Sarathi, January 1995, page 13)

**Form of Lord as Object for Devotion**

The object of Devotion expressed through spiritual practices such as worship (Puja), chanting of Lord’s name (Namasmarana), devotional singing (bhajans) can be any Form of God or Formless God that most appeals to the aspirant.

Quotes:

Devotion can be to a limited Form or to the Formless. (Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VIII, 51, 268)

Devotion to a Form of God is to a sugar doll that has caught your fancy; Devotion to the Formless One is to the sugar. (Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VIII, pages 51, 268)

Devotion has to be expressed as worship of everyone. (Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VIII, pages 35, 189)

Hallmark of Devotion is to see God as the resident in all and responsible for all. (Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. V, pages 9, 45)

Devotion does not consist of having a photo for worship and giving it Aarti (concluding prayer usually with waving of a flame) every day or shouting “Baba, Baba.” True Devotion means that there must be a transformation in your behavior. God is within you, around you, and in you. He is omnipresent. Recognizing this truth, you must arrive at the result that you and God are one. This is the truth that you must realize. (Source: Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1978, page 202)

**Benefits of Devotion**

**Quotes:**

The ego is most easily destroyed by Devotion, by dwelling on the magnificence of the Lord and by humility and service to others as children of the Lord. (Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. I, page 60)

Through Devotion alone can wisdom be attained. (Source: Sathya Speaks, Vol. III, pages 42, 201)

It is God’s word that if you have devotion to God, He will look after all your future. He will look after all the welfare that is due to you. (Source: Summer Showers 1972, page 105)

**Suggested Questions:**

1. How is one’s ego destroyed through Devotion?
2. Should the desire for one’s welfare and material benefits be the motivation for Devotion? Is it appropriate for a spiritual aspirant to have desires as motivation in devotion?
3. Is the Devotional path suited to every person, considering that devotion finds expression through feelings in the spiritual heart and not through the exercise of mind and discriminative intelligence in the head? Can the devotional path be cultivated by anyone?
4. How is devotion cultivated?

**Life Application:**

During the next few days, practice offering your love from the heart to Swami or any form of the Lord, in your devotional activity such as chanting or singing God’s name. Share your thoughts about your experience (sublimation of ego, feeling of oneness with the Lord, etc.) in the next study circle session.

Affirmation:

I will always try to remember that I have no separate existence apart from God.

I leave everything in my life to God’s will.