



The Path of Devotion

Ramakrishna

M: Under what conditions does one see God?

MASTER: “Cry to the Lord with an intensely yearning heart and you will certainly see him. People shed a whole jug of tears for wife and children. They swim in tears for money. But who weeps for God? Cry to Him with a real cry.”

“Longing is like the rosy dawn. After the dawn, out comes the sun. Longing is followed by the vision of God.”

“God reveals himself to a devotee who feels drawn to Him by the combined force of these three attractions: the attraction of worldly possessions for the worldly man, the child’s attraction for its mother, and the husband’s attraction for the chaste wife. If one feels drawn to Him by the combined force of these three attractions, then through it one can attain Him”

“The point is, to love Gold even as the mother loves her child, the chaste wife her husband, and the worldly man his wealth. Join together these three forces of love, these three powers of attraction, and direct them all to God. Then you will certainly see Him.”

“It is necessary to pray to Him with a longing heart. The kitten knows only how to call its mother, crying, ‘Mew, mew!’ It remains satisfied wherever its mother puts it. And the mother cat puts the kitten sometimes in the kitchen, sometimes on the floor, and sometimes on the bed. When it suffers it cries only, ‘Mew, mew!’ That’s all it knows. But as soon as the mother hears this cry, wherever she may be, she comes to the kitten.”

BRAHMO DEVOTEE: “What are the means by which one can see God?”

MASTER: “Can you weep for Him with intense longing of heart? Man shed a jugful of tears for the sake of their children, for their wives, or for money. But who weeps for God? So long as the child remains engrossed with its toys, the mother looks after her cooking and other household duties. But when the child no longer relishes the toys, it throws the aside and yells for its mother. Then the mother puts the rice pot down from the hearth, runs in haste, and takes the child in her arms.”

BRAHMO DEVOTEE: “Sir, why are there so many different opinions about God’s nature? Some say that God has form, while others say that He is formless. Again, those who speak of God with form tell us about His different forms. What is all this controversy?”

MASTER: “A devotee thinks of God as he sees Him. In reality there is no confusion about God. God explains all this to the devotee is the devotee only somehow realizes Him. You haven’t set your foot in that direction. How can you expect to know all about God?”

“Listen to a story. Once a man entered a jungle and saw a small animal on a tree. He came back and told another man that he had seen a creature of beautiful red color on a certain tree. The second man replied: ‘When I went into the jungle, I too saw that animal. But why do you call it red? It is green.’ Another man who was present contradicted them both and insisted it was yellow. Presently others arrived and contended that it was gray, violet, blue, and so forth and so on. At last they started quarrelling among themselves.

They saw a man sitting under it. On being asked, he replied: ‘Yes, I live under this tree and I know the animal very well. Your descriptions are all true. Sometimes it appears red, sometimes yellow, and at other times blue, violet, gray, and so forth. It is a chameleon. And sometimes it has no color at all. Now it has a color, and now it has none.’”

“In a like manner, one who constantly thinks of God can know His real nature; he alone knows that God reveals Himself to seekers in various forms and aspects. God has attributes; then again He has none. Only the man who lives under the tree knows that the chameleon can appear in various colors, and he knows, further, that it at times has no color at all. It is the others who suffer from the agony of futile argument.”

“Kabir used to say, ‘The formless Absolute is my Father, and God with form is my Mother.’ God reveals Himself in the form which his devotee loves most. His love for the devotee knows no bounds.”

“Yours is the path of bhakti. That is very good; it is an easy path. Who can fully know the infinite God? And what need is there of knowing the Infinite?...”

“If a jug of water is enough to remove my thirst, why should I measure the quantity of water in a lake? Suppose a man gets drunk on half a bottle of wine: what is the use of calculating the quantity of wine in the tavern? What need is there of knowing the Infinite?”

The Gospel of Ramakrishna (1907)

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