

Holy Talks of the Supreme Lord

Answer: The derivative meaning of *maya* is 'what is measurable.' *Bhagavan* is the Lord of *maya*; He cannot be measured. Where there is attempt to measure God, there is *maya* and not God. 'Ma' means 'not' and 'ya' means 'what', i.e., 'what is not God', is *maya*. The *maya* as said in the Shrimad Bhagavatam is not like the Satan in the Christian theology, a separate entity from God, altogether another entity. According to the *Bhagavata* school, *maya* is in *Bhagavan* (God) in the condemned state in order to award condign punishment on the atomic sentience (i.e. *jivas*) controllable by *maya*. In the Gita God has said: "Earth, water, fire, air, sky, the mind, intelligence and egoism - these constitute My separate inferior potencies, whereas other than this is My superior potency constituting the *jivas* by which is supported the universe." This inferior potency is the *maya* potency. This inferior potency has been stupefying the *jivas* that are apathetic towards God since before the beginning of time and causing misunderstanding in them, sometimes assuming the form of 'twenty-four items of entity' of Kapila (the originator of the *Sankhya* System), sometimes as the 'atom' of Kanada (of the *Vaisesika* System), sometimes also as Jaimini's principle of 'elevation' (in the *Purva Mimamsa* System), sometimes again as the 'sixteen objects' of Gautama (in the *Nyaya* system), sometimes as 'superhuman power and absolute oneness with God' of Patanjali (of the *Yoga* System), and sometimes as the pretence of search after Brahman (of the *Shankar* School).

Question: Why does such an event happen?

Answer: Because the *jivas* have free will of their own.

Question: How can this be reconciled with the teaching of the Gita which says: "God stays in the heart of all the creatures and makes them whirl round, in a machine, as it were, by the agency of *maya*"?

Answer: This instruction in the Gita rather supports the above statement. It is Shri Vishnu Who is God, the Controller of all beings. God gives the *jivas* their fruit according to the *karma* they perform. Their nature acts under the direction of God according to their previous *karma*. *Jiva* is the doer and God is the Giver. God's authority is seen in the giving of the fruits and governance of the cause and effect. So God is the Giver of the fruit and the *jivas* the enjoyers thereof.

Question: Why is there the independence of the *jivas*?

Answer: *Jivas* are the atomic parts of God, the *vibhu-chit* (Plenary Sentience). The property of the sea, viz. water, is present in an atomic degree in a drop, too. *Vibhu* (or Over Lord) God is totally independent; there is independence in *anu-chit-jiva* (i.e., atomic sentience) too, proportionally.

Question: Is the proper use or abuse of the independence of *jivas* instigated by God ?

Answer: If it had been God-instigated, then that would have amounted to the service of God and not caused the *jiva's* forgetfulness of Him.

Question: Then how can the conclusion be arrived at, viz., "everything depends upon God's Will"? I am putting these questions not for the sake of discussion, I am asking them because you are a great scholar and a great devotee at the same time. In the Hindi Gita of Shri Tilaka I read an *abhanga* (panegyric to God) by Tuka-Rama, the sense of which runs thus: "O God, if my *karma* brings me liberation then what should I have to do with You?"

Answer: The Shrimad Bhagavatam has given a reply to this. "He is an heir to liberation, O God, who, feeling Your Grace in everything and enduring the troubles caused by his own karma, bows down to You with mind, speech and body, i.e. wholeheartedly". He who has acquired fitness for being freed from the world understands that if the blame is laid at the door of God, then on account of the want of the tendency towards doing service to God, liberation is never available. Only a person who is fortunate to have the tendency for the *chit*-service aroused in him can easily become the possessor of the position of liberation, and he can be more attracted towards God, considering all the troubles and difficulties as His Grace.

Question: Then are the sins that we commit due to God's Grace?

Answer: No, they are not. The predilection for sins has been given to test us, in the same manner as money, paddy, a copy of the Shrimad Bhagavatam, etc. are placed before an infant at the time of the first-rice ceremony to see what it takes according to its innate tendency. Before the thread ceremony, too, the *Acharya* tests the tendency of the boy to be initiated. God's cruelty is what the human intellect apprehends when it is apathetic towards God. If one takes it to be a punishment, it is to be understood that such a one is wanting in a serving temper and in attraction for God. God is the shelter for all. He sends many obstacles and inconveniences to those who wish for shelter under Him, in order to test their ardour and steadiness. For example, when the *Vaidya* prescribes bitter and astringent medicines and distasteful diets, or the doctor opens the abscess with his lancet, if the patient is displeased with them on the ground that they are cruel and not his well-wishers, his decision is wrong as he has taken his real friends to be enemies.

"The divine potency, *maya*, has kept tempting objects as exhibits for alluring me just as the fishing hook or the net, or the rat-trap or the chain is set to delude fish, rats, elephants, etc. The object is that I may thereby get more and more entangled in the worldly meshes. Misled by these deluding traps, sometimes I become a wanton performer of misdeeds, sometimes a philanthropist doing good deeds, sometimes again I consider oneness with non-distinct Brahman as the good for me, feeling a high regard for the doctrine of Buddha, Shankaracharya or Kapila." *Maya*

Devi has placed in order alluring things according to the diverse temperaments of the persons who are deluded by the tenets of *karma* or *jnana* due to their having desires for things other than the Truth. *Jiva* will attain his true well-being when he engages himself in the accounts relating to God; there is no other way thereto. God does not set up obstructions against anyone, and He is not the destroyer of *chetana-dharma* or sentience in him. It would have been an act of cruelty on His part if He had placed obstacles against this sentience; He is only informing the sentient entities of what is the proper use of their sentience and what are its abuses.

Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has asked us not to act upon the instruction of the sage Jaimini about worldly elevations, nor upon those of Shri Dattatreya, Shankara, etc., about the culture of non-distinct *Brahman*, for that is not the proper use of our sentience or independence. Just work for doing service to God, and never do a thing which is not meant for it. He has said all this for the true well-being of *jivas* who have got material perceptions for generating, rather uncovering, their sentience. No one is engaged in a piece of work being propelled by a desire for distress. The bereaved mother is hitting her chest hard with her hands and hurting her head against a piece of stone only to destroy her grief. A patient is belching out by disturbing his throat with his fingers, only to obtain a speedy relief. The *Karmis* being desirous of the fruit of their *karma* are making different performances only to get such speedy remedies. Their inner motive is to secure instantaneous relief. Being duped by matters pleasant for the time being, they are running towards the mirage of *maya*. According to them, the method for the speedy end of worldly troubles is: "I shall be the overlord of the world, become Indra of the heaven, or enjoy and distribute the various worldly enjoyments. This is only apathy towards God. The culture of non-distinct *Brahman* is only another phase in our attempts to secure a speedy remedy. The fact is that we want some fees (i.e., the return of some good for our exertions) in some shape or another. We run for enjoyments when we think ourselves dissociated From God. Then we think that it is necessary to make the proper use of our canine teeth, to revel in the functions peculiar to youth, to bring round other people to civic order or social civilization and so forth. Those attempts are only the results of our forgetfulness about God. These predilections are only meant for enjoyment, as God has said : "All acts are performed by the *gunas* of nature or *maya* and being misled by egotism the soul thinks himself as the doer."

The *jivatma* is an entity beyond the *gunas*; he is above the *Mayashakti*, for he serves God. But the power of *maya* is far above. The aptitude or inclination of a *jiva* apathetic towards God is to be bound down by *maya*, to swallow the bait, and bathed in sweat from head to foot due to hard labour and wasting the invaluable life, to gather fuel for the enjoyment of the wives, sons, daughters, grandsons, great-grandsons, many of whom we shall not have any chance even to see, and leave it behind for their sake. I plant a palm-tree, the fruit of which will be enjoyed by others whom I shall never meet with and who will one day squander away all my hoarded wealth and property. All my efforts are to this end! There is a *shloka* to the effect : "Krishna, I have obeyed the wrong commands of *kama* (desires), etc., numberless and of any type, but yet they are not kind to me, nor feel ashamed, and

there is no cessation of these. Now I have got true intelligence, and having rejected them I have taken shelter in You with the prayer that I may be employed in Your service."

Those who are given to *karma* admit God indirectly; those of the *jnana-marga* wish for being one with God; but we do not cherish any such wrong desire. Our hope is to become the carriers of foot-wear for servants of Hari unlike those who adopt *jnana*. We do not claim to possess learning nor intelligence; we mind only the truth received from the lotus-feet of Shri Gurudeva in the capacity of his servants; we do not lay down any new proposition. We say only what we have got to say in favour of the realisation of that one Truth.

(This is an excerpt from a conversation with a member of the Indian nationalist movement, Syamasundar Chakravarty. This edition is taken from The Guardian of Devotion - the Calcutta edition of 1988. A more complete version of the interview - with different editing - can be found in Sri Chaitanya's Teachings, published by Sri Gaudiya Math.)