

Prahlada Stuti

Connect to the Divine
with Swami Tejomayananda

Translation
in English

Prahlada Stuti, Talk 3

Swami Tejomayananda

Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Powai

At the outset, Prahladaji, while singing the hymn in praise of the Lord, had said, “Oh Lord, until now Brahmaji, the devatas, Sanatkumaras, munis, as well as perfect sages (*siddhāḥ*), who are all endowed with *sattva guṇa*, (a pure mind, wisdom) have praised You in many ways and with devotion, yet they have not succeeded, nor could they please You in entirety. So then, how can I, of a maligned, demonic clan, succeed in pleasing You by offering my words of praise? But I am picking up courage to do so, because I have heard and understood that you are not enamoured by worldly wealth, etc.”

Prahladaji has enumerated twelve such qualities, which one might possess and offer the Lord, but yet be unable to please the Lord:

*manye dhanābhijānarūpatapaḥśrutaujas
tejaḥprabhāvalapauruṣabuddhiyogāḥ,
nārādhānāya hi bhavanti parasya puṁso
bhaktyā tutoṣa bhagavāṅgajayūthapāya. (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.9.9)*

dhana - wealth or money, which is an aid for worldly transactions such as trade activities.

abhijana – name and reputation of one’s family, which may help in some endeavors like politics.

rūpa - beauty, which can possibly help in winning beauty pageants.

tapas - penance through which one can attain various powers (*siddhis*).

shruta – knowledge of various subjects that can bring us erudition and other worldly achievements.

ojas – vitality, dynamism, enthusiasm, energy. With these, a person’s efforts (*pauruṣa*) can help one achieve a lot.

tejas – a lustrous aura.

prabhāva – an influential presence in the society.

buddhi – intelligence (this is different from **shruta** mentioned earlier, which means knowledge). Through this, one can obtain mastery of many subjects.

yoga – in yoga also there are various *siddhis*, for instance *aṣṭanga yoga*

nārāḍhanāya hi bhavanti parasya puṁsaḥ – all of the above are means for worldly attainments. But devoid of devotion, these fail to please the Lord.

In the Ramayana, when Lord Rama went to Shabariji, she said that she was merely an ignorant, uneducated tribal woman. To which, Lord Rama replied saying, “I only believe in a relationship through devotion.” (*mānahu eka bhagati kara nātā*).

bhaktyā tutoṣa bhagavāṅgajayūthapāya – There is a famous story of Gajendra, who was immobilized by a crocodile that caught hold of his foot while he was in the waters. Helpless, he prayed to the Lord to rescue him.

There is a beautiful description of how Gajendra plucked a lotus from the pond with his trunk and tossed it in an upward direction, offering it to the Lord who was coming to his rescue. Gajendra did not possess any of the above-mentioned twelve worldly qualities, but it was his unflinching devotion that had pleased the Lord (*bhaktyā tutoṣa*) and made the Lord rush towards him to save him.

*viprāddviṣaḍguṇayutādaravindanābha
pādāravindavimukhātsvapacaṁ variṣṭham,
manye tadarpitamanovacanehitārtha
prāṇaṁ punāti sa kulaṁ na tu bhūrimānaḥ. (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.9.10)*

In this verse, Prahladaji says that if there is a -

vipraḥ - a brahmin who is knowledgeable in the Vedas (*vedābhyāsī bhavet vipraḥ*).

viprāddviṣaḍguṇayuta – and he also possesses the above mentioned twelve qualities, that is *dhana, aabhijana* etc.

aravindanābhapādāravindavimukhāt – but is devoid of devotion in his heart towards the Lord’s lotus feet and instead has pride about his wisdom and other things, such a brahmin is disinclined to the Lord.

Disinclination to the Lord means absence of reverence, respect and devotion for the Lord. It also means failing to understand and acknowledge that all the qualities and possessions one has, is possible only by the Lord's grace. He assumes that they are all his own achievements.

Disinclination to the Lord could be of many types:

Not believing in the existence of the Lord; believing in the Lord but not having any faith, devotion and reverence towards Him; having no urgency and pangs to attain the Lord; and failing to acknowledge the Lord's grace in one's worldly gains.

manye śvapacam varīṣṭham – In comparison to such a brahmin, even a dog-eater, belonging to the lowest strata of society, but having pure devotion for the Lord, is considered superior.

A brahmin is respected for performing specific karmas, but entry into the abode of the Lord can be gained only by the one who has that one important quality – devotion towards You, even if he may be devoid of all other qualities.

tat arpita manaḥ - Surrender of the mind implies that all thoughts and desires are of the Lord alone. (*tanme manaḥ bhagavat saṅkalpamastu*). *Smaraṇam* which was previously mentioned under the nine-fold devotion, indicates surrender of the mind.

vacana – speech. Through speech one does *guṇānukathanam* (recounting the virtues and qualities of the Lord).

ihā – means actions. All actions are also surrendered to the Lord. This is also mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita, wherein the Lord says that one should surrender all one's actions performed by the mind, speech and body unto Him:

*yatkaroṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat,
yattapasyasi kaunteya tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam.*

artha – Realizing that all kinds of wealth, be it a healthy body or money, has been received with the Lord's grace alone. And using this wealth in the pursuit of dharma and for serving the Lord.



prāṇam – Offering one’s life, till the last breath, in His service.

Such a person, who has offered himself in his entirety to the Lord, even if he is a dog-eater belonging to the lowest caste, is superior to the Brahmin who doesn’t acknowledge the Lord and is devoid of devotion.

punāti sa kulam – Such a person purifies not only himself but his entire family lineage, including his ancestors.

na tu bhūrimāṇaḥ – But the other person (whether he is a Brahmin or non-Brahmin) who is endowed with all the worldly qualities and having no devotion, might be revered in society, but is unable to please the Lord.

In our scriptures, various illustrations are given, to emphasize the glory and importance of devotion.

Let us take an everyday example to understand the importance of devotion. When one goes for a bath, one may have a variety of scented soaps, shampoos, lotions, other toiletries and even a soft and fragrant towel, but in the absence of water none of these are of any use! And without a bath, even all makeup accessories are redundant! On the contrary, if one has access only to water and none of the other things are available, one can still have a bath with just water. Thus, devotion is like the water in this example, which alone is essential. The Lord is pleased with devotion alone, even if all the other qualities are absent (*bhaktyā tutoṣa bhagavān*). Hope this illustration has brought more clarity to the importance of devotion in one’s life.

Further, a person without devotion fails to purify his family. If a person has failed to purify himself, how can he be the source of purifying his family?

Bhagavan Shankaracharya also declares in his composition Gurvedhakam:

*śarīraṃ surūpaṃ tathā vā kalatram
yaśāścāru citram dhanam merutulyam,
manaścenna lagnaṃ guroraṅghripadme
tataḥ kiṃ tataḥ kiṃ tataḥ kiṃ tataḥ kim.*

If a person possesses all the worldly qualities but has no devotion for the Lord and Guru, these qualities can be of no great use. These qualities are like temporary glitter and will soon fade away and disappear.

Now, sometimes people have questions like, why does God need a temple? Or does God really need all the different offerings made by the people who worship Him?

We have already seen that the Lord is pleased by devotion alone. But love is a quality that makes us always want to give something to the beloved. Pujya Gurudev had said, “You may give without love, but you cannot love without giving.” In love, there is always a strong urge to give something or the other to one’s beloved.

The following is a beautiful verse in the context of whether the Lord needs our offerings or not:

*naivātmanah prabhurayaṁ nijalābhapūrṇo
mānaṁ janādauiduṣaḥ karuṇo vṛṇīte,
yadyajjano bhagavate vidadhīta mānaṁ
taccātmane pratimukhasya yathā mukhaśrīḥ. (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.9.11)*

prabhurayaṁ – this Lord

nijalābhapūrṇaḥ – who is ever fulfilled, being established in His essential nature, does not need anything. It is said, *āptakāmasya kā sprhā* – a fulfilled one has no desire. The Lord does not need nor want anything from the devotee because he is *nijalābhapūrṇaḥ*. It is the devotee who, out of his pure love and devotion to the Lord, wants to make the offering.

mānaṁ janādauiduṣaḥ –The Lord is not desirous of receiving honour from ignorant beings, because he is self-fulfilled. Also, what can one offer to the Lord when whatever one offers is actually obtained from the Lord Himself?

karuṇo vṛṇīte – But the most compassionate Lord, even though He is complete and self-fulfilled, accepts everything offered with love.

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The Bhagavad Gita says:

*patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyaṁ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati,
tadahaṁ bhaktyupahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ.*

In this verse, it is said that when a leaf, a flower, a fruit (all singular) or just water, is offered with devotion, the Lord graciously accepts the same. It does not say that only a particular kind of fruit, like an alphonso mango, can be offered. Shabriji had lovingly offered mere berries to Lord Rama. Even if nothing is offered, only a prostration done with love is sufficient. Thus, though the Lord doesn't want anything, when the devotee gives out of love, He accepts.

The next two lines are very beautiful.

yadyajjano bhagavate vidadhīta mānam – Whatever a devotee gives to the Lord, be it honour, love, objects or anything else, he is actually giving it to himself.

The example stated in this verse is a little complex and therefore it must be read carefully.

taccātmane pratimukhasya yathā mukhaśrīḥ -Whatever a devotee offers with love, even though the Lord accepts it, the ultimate benefit accrues to the giver alone. It is as if the devotee is giving the offering to himself, because as we know, the Lord doesn't need anything.

The example stated is of one's reflection in a mirror. When a beautiful person is standing in front of a mirror, the reflection is likewise beautiful. But the beauty of the reflection is of the beautiful person standing in front of the mirror. Similarly, when a devotee offers anything to the Lord, the Lord is like the reflection, and He appears beautiful because of the devotee's loving offering. Just like Lord Krishna's idol here is appearing so beautiful today after being adorned with this pretty garland! The Lord appears beautiful, because He is in fact reflecting the beauty of the devotee!

The beautiful thought of offering something to the Lord or of worshipping the Lord, first arises in the heart of the devotee. When we honour or felicitate someone, we have honoured our own wish and the benefit will also accrue to us. Here, when we see Lord Krishna wearing this beautiful garland offered to Him, there is joy. But who experienced the joy?

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The walls of our house don't demand from us to be cleaned or decorated. But when we do the same, we are actually cleaning and decorating our own mind!

The cleanliness of the mind is reflected in the action of cleaning the house and the walls. The one who has done the act of cleaning, alone experiences the joy of cleanliness.

Another example is: when one celebrates the first birthday of one's child and one dresses up the toddler in nice clothes. The parents alone feel thrilled. Whatever one does for the child, in reality, one is doing it for oneself. This shloka is a very beautiful one to ponder on.

yadyajjano bhagavate vidadhita mānam – Whatever we offer to the Lord be it honour, love, devotion, worship, objects, ornaments or any other offering, we actually are giving it to ourselves, as we alone feel happy doing that. Through the act of offering, our mind gets purified and that purity of mind expresses itself. When the Lord appears beautiful to us, it means our mind has become pure and beautiful.

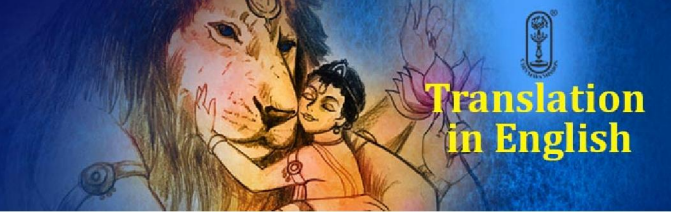
Also, one who worships and loves the Lord, the Lord makes him revered by the people around him. When we give honour to the Lord, He in turn makes us the recipient of honour and respect from society.

Such is the beauty of this hymn being rendered by Prahlada ji. Further on he says, "Oh Lord, having known that You are pleased by devotion alone, I now do not have any thoughts about being undeserving, fallen, etc. I will sing Your praise in whatever best way that I know."

When you ask a child, how do you like the Lord? The child will answer in a very simple way and may say something like, "The Lord is as sweet as chocolate." And even these simple words please the Lord! On the other hand, when Vallabhacharyaji writes *adharam madhuram vadanam madhuram madhurādhipaterakhilam madhuram*, the Lord is pleased with that also.

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I shall now sing a composition in the spirit of the two verses that we have seen today:

1. *bhakti se hī āpa tuṣṭa ho yathā
rūpa bala pramā se nahīm tathā,
sarva guṇa yuta vipra ho yadi
caraṇa vimukha to prabhu ko priya nahīm.*
2. *mānatā hūm maim bhakta amtyaja śreṣṭha vipra se kula uddhāraka,
ajña janom se prabhu na cāhate arpaṇā vidhi pūrṇakāma ve,
kimtu karuṇa ve svīkṛti kareṁ bhakta bhāva kī māna deṁ use.*

Om Tat Sat