

42. Conquest of Desire

Generally speaking, there are two ways of dealing with human desires. We often come across certain types of

ascetics who consider human senses and desires as enemies to all spiritual progress and hence treat them as such. They ill-treat their bodies, at times even torture them. So also they stifle and repress all desires as demons and Satan's emissaries. While this kind of treatment may be useful as a kind of discipline and as a way of strengthening one's will, it will not be helpful in the long run. Human body is as much divine as anything else is. It is also God-made, and it serves some purpose in His plan. So also our desires serve a purpose, they help the elemental essences to evolve. We ought to take a detached attitude and observe the inter-play of nature's forces. As the *Gita* puts it, the wise man sees only the attributes of nature interacting among themselves and remains unaffected. Everything here serves in some way the Plan. We must utilise everything for helping progress and evolution. A negative or militant attitude will not help. If one merely represses a desire without understanding its nature he may avoid yielding to it, but the attraction is always there—*rasa*. But if he sees its true nature and realises its place and purpose in the Plan, he will *drishtwa*), with the result that the lower desires wither away not fight it, he will replace it by something higher (*Param* by the side of those higher emotions. Do not fight evil; circumvent it, replace it by the opposite good and the evil automatically will cease to be.

There are some methods we might adopt to help us to achieve this. Devotion is a potent factor—I mean by devotion not any kind of sentimental exhilaration but real devotion which leads to the devotee surrendering himself or herself unreservedly, whole-heartedly to the Object of Devotion—*Bhakti* of the kind which filled the mind and soul of bhaktas like Meera Bai and Andal. They existed but for Him, the Object of their devotion. To them nothing else mattered but to please and serve their Lord and

Master. If such a devotion can be attained then all problem ceases; the devotees' individualities get merged, as it were, in the great Self of their Beloved. They reach an indivisible union with that Object. In the presence or contemplation of that Object of Devotion all their lower desires vanish, all their personal thoughts cease to be; there is only one desire and that is the desire to be like the Object of their adoration, to be one with Him.

Another practical way of achieving this mastery over desires is to forget oneself in one's work so that there is no occasion for any desire to intrude on his consciousness. They say: "Idle man's brain is devil's workshop"; it is true. Choose some mode of service which grips you and interests you, throw yourself heart and soul into it, always be thinking of how best to do that work. The lower promptings will get atrophied and wither away. This is a very effective way of dealing with the problem of controlling our desires.