

Nine Forms of Devotion

Dasyam

Cultivating the attitude of Servant to the Lord

“The best way to please me is to see Me in all beings and serve them just as you would like to serve Me.”
- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Dasyam is a form of devotion in which the devotee regards God as the Supreme Master and considers himself as the servant. To serve God and to carry out His wishes, realising His virtues, nature, mystery and glory is Dasyam or Dasya-bhakti. Serving the saints and sages, serving the devotees of God, serving the poor and sick people who are forms of God, is also included in Dasya-bhakti. The achievement of this form of bhakti is winning the grace of God through Seva (service) activity and thereby attaining immortality. Swami says, “Devotion begins with Dasoham- the attitude that you are the Servant of God, and progresses to the stage of Soham, where you become one with God.

Hanuman is a towering example of Divine Seva (service) to Lord Rama. Concentrating on the name of Rama and rendering service to Rama were Hanuman’s chief concern all the time. In Ramayana,



Hanuman, who had gone in search of mother Sita, was caught and brought before the demon king Ravana. When questioned by Ravana as to who he was Hanuman replied, “I am the servant of the Lord of Kosala (Rama)”. Hanuman was the son of the Wind God, disciple of the Sun God and chief minister of Sugreeva. But when questioned by Ravana he did not mention any of these by way of introduction. Instead, he proudly announced himself as a servant of Lord Rama. Of all the relationships he had in the world, he felt the relationship with the Lord as the dearest to him. Hanuman was no ordinary being. He had mastered the Vedas and Sastras and was physically, mentally and spiritually a mighty hero. Nevertheless, he served Rama with no trace of ego in thought, word and deed. This type of

Bhakti brings in real love for God and results in total purification of heart, thinning out of mind and annihilation of desires.

Bhagavan Baba has said, “Worship of God in temples and shrines has its place in sanctifying time and sublimating the instincts and impulses. Inquiry into reality has its use in clearing the fog of doubt. But activity in the shape of service charged with love fulfils the aim of our path to God. Through Seva you realise that all beings are waves of the Ocean of Divinity, that all bodies are altars where God is installed, that all places are His Residences. No other Sadhana (spiritual practice) can bring home the incessant contemplation of the Oneness of all living beings. You feel another’s pain as your own; you share another’s success as your own. To see everyone else as yourself and yourself in everyone, that is the core of Seva Sadhana. Seva makes the ego languish.”

Swami says, “Seva is the very essence of Devotion, the very breath of the devotee, his very nature. But do not believe that you can by means of Seva re-form or re-shape the world. You may or you may not. That does not matter. The real value of Seva, its most visible result, is that it re-forms you, re-shapes you. Do Seva as a spiritual discipline, then you will be humble and happy. Do not strut about that you are improving others; improve yourself. Make Seva, an extension of your Prayer beads and Meditation, Prayer beads and Meditation put into practice, so to say. How can anyone contemplate on a God who loves the poor and the grief-stricken and yet, be cold when the poor and the stricken are around him? Seva is a great opportunity to see the God indwelling in all.”

“Service must take the form of food for the hungry, solace for the forlorn, consolation for the sick and the suffering. Jesus wore himself out in such Service. The heart full of compassion is the temple of God. Jesus pleaded for compassion. Jesus spread the spirit of compassion and conferred solace on the distressed and suffering. Develop compassion, Live in Love. Remember, with each act of Love and Service, you are nearing the Divine Presence. Jesus said that the life of an individual was useless if he did not realise his duties towards society.”

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Zakah (alms) is an important pillar of Islam. Zakah is a manifestation of faith that affirms that God is the sole owner of everything in the universe, and what men hold is a trust in their hand over which God made them trustees to discharge it as He has laid down. "Believe in Allah and His Messenger and spend of that over which He made you trustees" (57:7). Zakah involves giving up a set proportion of one's wealth each year to help those in need. Zakah means both 'purification' and 'growth'. Our possessions are purified by setting aside a proportion for those in need and for the society in general. Like the pruning of plants, this cutting back balances and encourages new growth. Zakah is an act of devotion which, like prayer brings the believer nearer to his Lord.

Sikhism emphasises community services and helping the needy. Guru Nanak believed that true love of God is impossible without love of humanity. So he taught that men and women should be kind to their neighbours and share the fruits of their labour. In every temple or Gurdwara there is a common kitchen called Langar. Food and money given by worshippers are used to provide a communal meal after the service. The temple will provide a meal and a place to sleep for anyone who needs it. The Gurdwara is also a community centre and a base for charitable work in the community.



Swami says, "the more man pours out his love on others, the more is his inner bliss. Hence, man should expand his love for his fellowmen if he wants to increase his own inner bliss. This is the royal road to divinity. The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. This is the secret revealed by Buddha. The prayer 'Buddham Sharanam Gachchami' (I take refuge in the Buddha), is a call for cultivating wisdom and discrimination- the Buddhi (intellect). The power of discrimination must be used for doing right action- 'Dharmam Sharanam Gachchami' (I take refuge in Dharma). This right action must be used in the service of society- 'Sangham Sharanam Gachchami' (I take refuge in the Sangha). Swami teaches us that, "The real meaning of the prayer is: You must divert your Buddhi towards right conduct and the right conduct should aim at serving society. When this is done, society becomes purified."

Worship and Service cannot be isolated, but rather they must be integrated, if it is to be true worship. "Work is Worship" is the essence of Karma yoga. The term 'karma yoga' means 'path of mergence with God through performing selfless service'. The most important characteristic of karma yoga is the right motivation; one should not act for gain or reward. One should perform actions for the sake of helping other people, as acts of selfless giving. In practice, how can we form the habit of offering all our works in the spirit of yoga? Three simple steps can be followed: 1) Before you begin any action imagine that what you are about to do is a grand bhajan of the Lord. 2) As you go on doing the work, try to feel that the work is not being done by you, that you are a mere instrument in the hands of the Lord who is working through you. 3) When you have finished the work, offer it to the Lord. Let your last action be a whole-hearted arpanam (offering), which really says, 'the results are now in your hands', then all that we do will become yoga.

"Let Love be ever translated into Seva, into beneficial acts, sweet words of consolation and courage and thoughts of sympathy and compassion." - Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Help as **much** as you can,
As **efficiently** as you can,
As **silently** as you can,
As **lovingly** as you can,
Leave the rest to God,
Who gave you the chance to Serve.