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Vijayawada Gurupujas - 2010

"Ambarisha Upakhyanam" Discourse 2 (7-3-2010)

Fraternal greetings to the brotherhood.

After Prahalada, Ambarisha is next among the greatest devotees of the Lord. We were reading his story and discussing his virtues. If we praise a great devotee and know about his glory, then the Lord is very much pleased. Actually the devotee experiences happiness more than the Lord himself. The Lord himself being the experience, there is nothing that he can experience. One who eats sugar experiences its taste but the sugar itself does not have any experience of sweetness. Similarly devotee experiences happiness in the presence of the Lord but the Lord has no experience because he himself is happiness. There is nothing 2nd to the Lord to experience.

That is why it is said "If you become Lord, there is no happiness. It is only when you stand in the presence of the Lord and stay in alignment with him that you experience happiness." Someone times a devotee becomes the Lord but he again separates himself as 2nd to the Lord to experience the happiness in the presence of the Lord. We should exist and the Lord should exist to us to experience the bliss of the Lord.

So we were discussing the story Ambarisha who is one such great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Now continuing from where we left yesterday...

Ambarisha's actions and qualities were of such high degree that one could remember the Lord by seeing him. It is because he established himself in the Lord so much.

We should also try to see the Lord in everyone around us. Actually the name Vishnu itself means "The permeating one". Vishnu is the divine principle which permeates the whole creation. When we see a person, the first thing that should come to our mind is he/she is Vishnu or a Lord form. Only then, the name of the person, whether male or female, your relation with that person, etc. should come to the mind. Here we call it Vishnu. You can call it by any name you like say Krishna, Eshwara, Master, Narayana, Dattatreya etc. The principle is more important than the name. Do not get stuck in names and do not see everything differently. The one principle is given by different names and different forms in various Scriptures. It is just for

the sake of splendor and to ensure that one is not bored. It is just like making different curries from the same vegetable so that one is not bored by eating just one type of curry all the time. It is to taste the presence of the Lord in different forms and with different names that all this is given to us.

Ambarisha never had any kind of attraction towards a woman because he was seeing the Vishnu in women too. Such is the greatness of a devotee. He even considers a curse as the Lord's play when someone curses him. We have many stories of such devotees given in our Puranas.

It may be easy to remember the Lord in favourable situations but to remember the Lord even in unfavourable situations is very difficult. Only a devotee can do that. A devotee is never attached to his children and other family members and never possesses them because he sees the Lord in each one of them. It does not mean he does not love them or does not take care of them.

A devotee does not feel that someone belongs to him and someone else do not belong to him. As a result, he does not get any perverted thoughts. Such a one was Ambarisha.

Next Sloka....

Explanation:

After sometime, Ambarisha renounced all his wealth and family. It does not mean he left them and went away. It means he lost the thought that they were his family members and forgot the relation he had with them. He was seeing them as Vishnu. He knows that all relations are for the sake of experience and just performs the responsibilities that he has towards each one of them. This is what is to be attained to become a Sanyasi. Renunciation does not mean one leaves everything and goes away. It is to see the one Lord existing in all. Then we can stay in the mundane world without getting attached to anything. We should not oppose or reject anything in this world in the name of Lord because everything is a form of Lord. Detachment happens naturally when one gets more and more attached to the Lord. So Ambarisha had wife, children, relatives, friends but he was never attached to anyone of them. He was just staying with them but staying in the Lord.

Ambarisha started to live alone. What does "alone" here mean? It means alone=all-one. It does not mean living lonely without people around. By seeing the one existence in all he realizes that all is one. So he is alone. He is very happy by experiencing the one existence in all.

Next Sloka... Explanation:

Ambarisha was graced by Lord Vishnu who gave him the wheel of Sudarshana. There is nothing in this creation which stands above that wheel. The whole creation runs on the basis of this wheel of Sudarshana. It is just a symbolism given to signify the cyclic time as the basis of creation. It does not mean that the Lord holds a wheel in his hand and rotates it. It is a symbol given to us but we generally get stuck in the symbol and fail to understand the secret meaning behind that symbolism.

With the Lord in the background, the wheel rotates in the form of time for the creation to happen and this wheel is what is called the wheel of Sudarshana. This wheel was gifted to Ambarisha which means he was granted control over the whole creation. What do understand we understand by this? We should understand that the Lord with his all his omnipotence is existing as Ambarisha and working through him.

Next Sloka... Explanation:

Ambarisha's wife used to be his shadow. What does this mean? For every human being, his nature is his wife. Actually every man gets a wife who is a manifestation of ones own nature. This is true in most of the cases. If your nature follows your word, then your wife too will follow your word.

The best example is Lord Rama. His nature follows him and so does his wife, Sita. But that is not the case with Lord Krishna. Why? It is because all varieties of natures were present in Krishna. So he had wives of all kinds of natures. Krishna's life is a splendor and unique. All the qualities and natures were present in him.

Indian culture instructs us to have only one wife or one husband for life. We have to get adjusted to whatever type of wife or husband we get because it actually the adjustment of ones own nature that is important. Instead if we keep changing wives or husbands, the persons with same nature come back to us may be in this life or next life. That is why it is said "Marriages are made in heaven and they may result in experiencing hell." What does that mean? It means you get a life partner complementing your nature. This is true in the case of both man and woman. You may not like your life partner but you have to be adjusted because it was something that you owe in the past. If you do not get adjusted now, it again comes back to you in future. So if you accept in this life, your karma is cleared in this life.

So here Ambarisha's nature used to follow him and so does his wife. They lived as one. So depending on your nature, you are given a life partner. You should not question it but just accept it. Do not cry that someone else has a better life partner than you got. This is what you need for this life and it was given to you.

Next Sloka... Explanation:

Ambarisha perfumed a grand ritual by name “Dwadasi Vratam”. The Lord himself ignites some will in the mind of his devotees. Actually Ambarisha is one who has renounced his will. He does not propose or initiate anything by his quality of Dynamism. If at all he gets an idea he performs it as the Lord’s will.

Dwadasi means the 12th moon phase. In a year there are 12 such 12th moon phases. According to this ritual, a fast is done on the 11th moon phase and the fast is given up on the 12th moon phase. This is done on all the 12 12th moon phases. Here fast not only means that he is not taking food but also near to the Lord. It is called “Upavasam” in Sanskrit which means “Staying near the Lord”. This ritual should be planned in such a way that the last 12th moon phase (12th one) should fall in the month of ‘Kartika’ (as per lunar calendar). At the end of the ritual, fasting is done for 3 nights (on the days of 10th, 11th and 12th moon phases). On the 11th moon phase, Shodashopachara Puja is performed to Lord Vishnu and also water ritual is performed in a grand manner. Purusha Sukta, Sri Sukta and Vishnu Sukta are chanted during the water ritual.

After the water ritual, offerings are done. Ambarisha offered huge number of cows. It is described that there were so many cows parked at one place that one could see it as a “Milky Ocean”. The horns of all these cows were decorated with gold coated clothing and ornaments. Just imagine what it would be like to see huge number of healthy cows in milky white colour and with their horns shining in gold. It was Kruta Yuga. We cannot imagine such a scene in Kali yuga.

Ambarisha offered 600 crore such cows to the scholars learned in the Vedas. After the offerings, there was a grand feast was hosted to everyone who came to see the ritual. After all this, the one who performs the ritual should end his fast at the end hour of the 12th moon phase and before the 13th moon phase begins.

At the same time, Sage Durvasa comes to that place who was an embodiment of Shiva. He comes as storm always and cannot stay anywhere for long. That is what his name also suggests. It is due to his fiery nature. If Durvasa goes to anyone’s house it is equivalent to the sun coming to one’s house. Imagine how fiery he is. He is highly knowledgeable in the Vedas and is described as a ‘Moving Veda’. Each time he speaks, it is like glorious light coming out of his mouth. Penance is like child’s play to him.

Ambarisha washes the feet of Sage Durvasa, makes him seated, prays to him and requests him to accept food at his place. Sage Durvasa was very happy and accepts the offers. He goes to a nearby ‘Kalandi’ river to take bath before taking food. There he goes into a deep meditation. It is very common to Sage Durvasa that if he goes into meditation, it takes long to come out. He even does not know when he comes out because he was lost in the presence of the Lord.

The ending minutes of 12th moon phase were fast approaching. Sage Durvasa was still in meditation. Ambarisha should end his fast at least by taking water so that the grand ritual is fruitful but he should wait till the guest comes. What to do then?

Ambarisha asks the learned people what is to be done. Inside he thinks that “My Lord you came as a guest to my house to take food and it is time for me to end this fast and you are not coming. What should I do?” He thinks so because he considers Sage Durvasa as Vishnu.

The learned one suggest him like this “do not eat anything until Durvasa comes but end your fast. This is possible by taking water.” Ambarisha considers the suggestion as the advice of the Lord and takes water. To Ambarisha the idea to perform the ritual is Vishnu, the one performing the ritual is Vishnu, the one who came as a guest is Vishnu, the ones who advised him are Vishnu and what happens next is also a play of Vishnu. So he was not worried at all.

We stop here now and continue in the evening.

Swasti - the auspicious end.