

A Different View

by Satya Narayana Dasa

Nobody likes to be put into trouble. At least I do not know anyone who would relish being faced with misery. After the trouble is over, we may see that problematic event as an occasion for learning, though while undergoing the experience, we wish it would end as quickly as possible. Even in the midst of an unpleasant experience, we may maintain a philosophical outlook—hardships make us strong and wise, failures are stepping-stones to success, and so on. But the fact remains that we are relieved when the hardship is over.

Keeping this in view, we would not expect anyone to ask for trouble in a normal state of mind. If someone is praying for misery we would think him or her to be insane. However, there is an example in history of a perfectly sane person asking for trouble. In her prayers to Lord Krishna, Queen Kunti very explicitly wanted calamities without any break. She prayed: "O teacher of the universe (Krishna), let calamities befall on us forever." Usually people pray for health, wealth, and prosperity, which is understandable. But how to comprehend the prayer for calamities and that too for unending calamities. What must she have in her mind? She thinks that calamities are her prosperity.

Kunti Devi reveals her intention behind such a prayer. She says that whenever she has faced hardships, Krishna came to help her. Therefore she equates calamity with the visit of Krishna. And if she can see Krishna, she is most prosperous. There is no other prosperity that she would like to possess. She has experienced that in good times, Krishna does not come to visit her. And that is real misery for her. Her concept of happiness and distress is different from the concept of an ordinary person. Normally we call a situation that is favourable to our senses "happiness", and a situation that is unfavourable to our senses "misery" or "distress". But a devotee's concept is different. A devotee is happy when he or she can do favourable service to the Lord, and he or she is miserable when he or she cannot do favourable service to the Lord. He or she is not concerned about his or her personal happiness independent of the Lord's pleasure.

Whenever Kunti or the Pandavas, her sons, faced difficulties, the Lord came to their rescue. This granted them an opportunity to be with the Lord and serve Him. They relished being with the Lord and the so-called miserable condition turned into bliss. What is abhorred by people in general became a festival for Kunti.

It is seen that people usually remember God when they are in difficulty. Then they visit a temple, church or mosque. But when they are in a happy situation, they forget God. They go for a picnic. For a devotee, remembrance of God is the most important principle in life. His happiness is based on the remembrance of God, which is the essence of all scriptures. If that remembrance comes when faced with a calamity, then a devotee prefers calamity to a happy situation. A devotee may seem miserable externally, but internally he may be in bliss.