



~ Vasudeva's 'Amor Fati' Moment ~

Most individuals in the world who take to religion or God are often looking for something in exchange. After a religious institution designates them as God's chosen ones, they expect God to bend the rules of the universe in their favor. Succinctly put, they expect God to give them an ego massage by fulfilling their desires in exchange for the prayers and eulogies that they send up in the sky.

But why should God reciprocate with such narcissists? He understands perfectly that this never-ending cycle of "you fulfill my desires and I will placate your ego" is a vicious one and it can never lead to a truly loving eternal relationship. God is therefore very much interested in devotees who have embraced "amor fati" or "the love of fate irrespective of how it turns out".

The devotee who has embraced "amor fati" is the one who sees all occurrences in life - good, bad as well as neutral, as arrangements of God and does not expect God to bend the rules of the universe in his favor. Foolish, business-minded materialists may laugh at this proposition and say, "Oh what use is a God who doesn't even agree to favor his devotee?" but such materialists do not understand that the relationship was never about any gains or profits in the first place. The devotee does not see relationships as sophisticated mechanisms for achieving the barter of the fulfillment of each other's desires.

During the Mahābhārata war, all the sons of the Pāṇḍavas were slaughtered in their sleep by Aśvatthāmā, and Krishna (the Supreme Lord) did nothing to prevent it even though he was personally present on the battlefield. On the other hand, Parīkṣit was supposed to be killed by a brahmāstra sent by that same Aśvatthāmā, but Krishna intervened and saved him by entering into the womb of Parīkṣit's mother. The Pāṇḍavas never asked him why he chose to ignore their sons but save their grandson. They indeed had fully embraced the philosophy of amor fati, which is the hallmark of a true devotee.

Krishna too expects his devotee to be *anapekṣaḥ* (Gītā 12.16) or "expectation-less". This does not mean that as God, he will never fulfill any of his devotee's desires. It only means that he will retain complete freedom in deciding which desires of his devotee he wishes to fulfill.

At the same time, the mature devotees do not become dejected towards their essential duties simply because they have uncertainty regarding the will of God. The devotee's amor fati attitude is summed up in the following sentence — "I will do my best. God will give me a favorable or unfavorable result. I will happily accept whatever he gives me and I will unconditionally love him."

God's own father Vasudeva once ended up in an extremely distressful situation. On the day of his marriage, Vasudeva's brother-in-law Kaṁsa was informed by a voice in the sky that his death would occur at the hands of Vasudeva's eighth son. The ruffian that he was, Kaṁsa immediately took out his sword and prepared to slaughter his own sister Devakī on her wedding day.

Vasudeva was utterly powerless in front of Kaṁsa, but Vasudeva knew that there was still one thing that he could do to save his wife Devakī. He could use his logic, argumentation and convincing skills to try to convince Kaṁsa, even though Kaṁsa was a ruffian of the highest order and would most likely not consider Vasudeva's plea.

Vasudeva tried his best, and surprisingly Kaṁsa was convinced by Vasudeva's arguments. Kaṁsa spared his sister Devakī's life on the condition that Vasudeva bring his eighth son to Kaṁsa so that Kaṁsa could kill that son. The devotee poet Harisūri says at this point (Bhakti-rasāyanam by Śrī Harisūri):

[Sing like brahma-saṁhitā]

naitat kadācid api sambhavatīti matvā

kārye na jātu viduṣaivam udāsitavyam

yatne kṛte sati hareḥ kṛpayā su-siddhyaty-

etat sphuṭam su-phalake vasudeva-kṛtye

Translation: A learned person should never become dejected in his duty, thinking "Oh this is impossible to achieve". Having put diligent efforts, the impossible becomes possible by the mercy of Lord Hari, and this is the clear writing on the wall for everyone, after Vasudeva achieved success [in convincing the invincible Kaṁsa].