



Decorate the Christmas Tree of Your Inner Life

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Adorations to Lord Jesus and to the Blessed Self in all!

The tradition of finding a lovely Christmas tree, placing it in your home, and adorning it with lights and ornaments is an external personification of the Christmas tree of your inner spiritual life. Faith is the basis of this mystical tree. Embedded in its branches is charity,

which amplifies the rich green luster of the pine needles, and prayerfulness is the angel hair entwined across each branch. Goodwill, peace and harmony are the twinkling lights, and situated at the pinnacle of the tree is the Cross. To truly celebrate Christmas, you must plant such an auspicious and delightful tree within your very heart by comprehending and following the teachings of Lord Jesus.

Faith

Faith, called *shraddha* in Sanskrit, is the most important virtue to develop as the foundation for this Christmas Tree. If one cultivates genuine faith, childlike simplicity becomes an expression of one's personality. For a child, faith is instinctive. A child is not informed about the details or complications of life, not even about the nature of his

parents; but unconsciously, faith sustains the child and allows him to be completely relaxed within his home. You also are sustained by faith in a similar manner.

If you lived only by reason—trying to rationally determine in what direction you are headed and what each day will bring—your mind would explode. Science tells us that the earth is ever tumbling through the vastness of space, the whole universe is expanding, and within it there seems to be an accidental conglomeration of energy and atoms. When focusing your mind outwards thinking about all this, one surely could lose their faith and find it difficult to find any meaning in life.

However, focus inwardly, deep within your heart. Even your physical heart has continued to beat with the rhythm of faith from the time you were a child. Indeed, all of Nature operates on the basis of such faith. Consider the words of Jesus: *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?* (KJV Matthew 6:26). Indeed it is quite rational to assume that if little birds, as well as beasts, butterflies and earth's creatures have been safeguarded by the Divine system of life, that human beings, who are the crown of creation, who possess keen intelligence and a complex nervous system, must also be supported by that caring Hand.

Although faith is instinctive within everyone, due to

mental complexes, one is not aware of the power and potential of faith. As you watch your mind, you realize how your faith waivers. Sometimes when you pray and meditate, you find the tranquility of faith, yet at other times during contemplation, half of your mind is running wild with anxiety. You are praying and at the same time you are allowing fear to overpower your mind.

It is like the predicament of a child who imagines that a dragon or a ghost dwells in the corner of his room. Although he holds a flashlight in his hand, he is too afraid to even turn it on to see if anything terrible is really there in that corner. Similarly, prayer and faith are the flashlights, and knowing you have that light in your hand, there should be no room in any corner of your heart for any form of diffidence or fear. To give you another example: When trains first began running through the villages of India, there were villagers who boarded the train but kept their baggage balanced on their heads, not understanding that the train would carry the baggage as well. By the time they reached their destination, they were exhausted and stressed. It took them time to recognize that they could have faith that the train would carry everything.

Those who trusted the train placed their luggage down, relaxed, and enjoyed their journey. Similarly, as you travel through your life in the mighty Divine vehicle of this earth planet, make it your project to discover,

strengthen, and enjoy your faith. Put your baggage down, trust in God.

Such faith is not the blind, sentimental belief that suddenly, from today on, you will believe in God or Jesus and thereby be saved forever. But rather, it is the sublime and sincere internal conviction that you are sustained by the Divine Hand at all times, and that Hand ultimately carries the burden of the world with the most amazing strength and wisdom.

If you have not discovered that faith, then remind yourself of these examples to continue unfolding this quality and building an inner confidence in God, because that is the purpose of your life. When such faith blossoms within your heart, you have built the flourishing foundation for your mystical Christmas tree.

Charity

Charity produces beautiful foliage for this spiritual Christmas tree. Lord Jesus said: *Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.* (KJV Matthew 6: 2, 3)

This is a figurative way of saying that when you give in charity, do not keep a record within your mind of everything that you have given and to whom.

Generally, people are tempted to inflate their ego whenever there is an occasion of charity, feeling they have done so much for another. This is wrong. Then your charity lacks real generosity.

To understand charity from a deeper perspective, reflect upon several of the Biblical teachings according to St. Paul: *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.* (KJV Corinthians 8:1) If you only have intellectual knowledge, you “puff up.” But if you have charity you have developed something enduring that deeply enriches your personality.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. (KJV Corinthians 13:1) One may be magnanimous in words, (the “tongues of angels”), but if you don’t have charity, then all that you express intellectually to the world is empty or like tinkling brass, with very little value.

Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth nothing. (KJV Corinthians 13:3) Even if you give away all that you possess, including the sacrifice of your body, if you lack the attitude of charity, all that you have done is empty.

What then, is that true charity that the Bible exalts? Charity is an inner attitude of cosmic or unconditional love—an attitude that never makes the recipient feel inferior or of diminished worth. Rather, charity allows people to feel joyous, with a sense of dig-

nity, to understand themselves more deeply. When your attitude is charitable, you do not judge people, and you are ever ready to forgive. You spontaneously look at the positive aspects of a person, not the negative.

Suppose an awkward guest has visited your home and breaks one of your costly vases. Having broken it, he feels frightened, and you tell him that the item has a sentimental value, and no amount of money can compensate or replace it. But after your harsh words, you tell your guest that you forgive him because you are a Christian. Wouldn’t it have been more charitable to simply tell the person that breaking the vase was unimportant and the incident should be forgotten so that he does not feel degraded about himself? One who is charitable spontaneously promotes joyousness rather than humiliation in others.

The shining sun above is the epitome of charity. The sun shines on all—those who praise it and those who do not, those who are good and those who are evil. The sun allows all to feel free and to unfold their potential. Charity must shine with that same magnanimous feeling, or it is not genuine charity.

Prayerfulness

Prayer must be a prominent adornment of your inner Christmas tree. In the words of Lord Jesus: *...when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and*

thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. (KJV Matthew 6:6)

The subtle implication of this teaching is that prayer or spirituality should not be ostentatious, but the attention should be placed on the internal feeling behind your prayer that flows to God. God responds, not so much to your external display, but to the feeling that is conveyed within. What you offer to Divinity in secret, Divinity accepts and rewards you—for all to see; but if you offer it ostentatiously, God shies away. Prayer, in the deepest sense, implies constant awareness of that Mystical Presence—a meditative mind that withdraws from worldly values and focuses on Divinity. The spirit of prayerfulness should permeate every action, making that action itself a form of prayer to the Divine within.

Goodwill

Goodwill is another essential ornament for your inner Christmas tree. Lord Jesus admonished those who held the ordinary view that they should hate their enemy: *Ye have heard that it hath been said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.” But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.* (KJV Matthew 5: 43,44)

This ideal may seem impossible to most people, but when your goal is to attain

Enlightenment, the virtues you practice must be extraordinary. The normal, ordinary virtue is to love someone who has been good to you, but allows you to hate the person who has harmed you. To aspire to be a Godlike personality requires that you practice loftier virtues: *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* (KJV Matthew 5:48)

You love people even when their actions are inimical, and you do not hold any grudge against another; for whatever you hold within yourself against another erodes your vitality and harms you instead of your enemy. Further, you will realize that at a deeper level your enemies are only Divine Will reminding you of your own flaws through different personalities according to your karma. Therefore, keep your mind free from animosity and send out good will to all.

If you have revenged upon an enemy, that enemy will again return to you—if not that particular person, then his relative or someone else. It would have been far more glorious to have filled your mind with good will, which is the ultimate cure of all trouble.

Maintaining Harmony Around You

Another facet in the adornment of your Christmas tree is the quality of maintaining peace and harmony in daily life with other people, relatives, and close friends. Preserving harmony

requires adapting and adjusting. Bearing insult and injury necessitates constant vigilance and is a great aspect of *sadhana*, or spiritual discipline. If you are harmonious, your mind can transcend all superficialities and ascend towards God. If you are in disharmony with people around you, you cannot turn to God. Kabir said: *In every personality, there dwells God. Therefore, your dealings with people should be without bitterness.* To reinforce the importance of upholding harmony, Lord Jesus said: *Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* (KJV Matthew 5:24)

Although you may be ready to worship in the temple, abandon the idea of worshipping until you have reconciled with those you have offended. For at the back of your mind, the bitterness is simmering, and turning to God would only be ostentatious and limited. One cannot worship under tension, in a sorrowful or bitter state of mind, or in the spirit of running away from problems.

Rather you should amend the problem and create harmony so that your worship is a joyous experience, because in worship you are returning home for a glimpse of God. Peace, not disharmony, is the perfume emanating from your Christmas tree and it must be promoted within and around yourself. *Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.* (KJV Matthew 5:9)

Thus, plant this Divine Christmas tree within your heart with faith as the basis, charity as the foliage, and prayer, goodwill and harmony as the twinkling lights. A fragrant aroma will spontaneously emanate from its branches. At the top of the tree install the Cross, the symbol of transcending the relative and horizontal vision of life—yesterday, today, and tomorrow. This establishes the vertical vision: the amazing glory and majesty of God that permeates the world of matter, time, and space

When that vertical vision blossoms within your heart, you have taken up the Cross and your awareness has reached a magnificent profundity. Ego will no longer be able to dominate your perception. Christmas, then, is not celebrated just once in a year or confined to one particular day, but will be part of everyday life. With these virtues and this understanding, you will have a Christmas tree that will increasingly radiate its beauty within your heart—powerful and luminous. As days pass, you will obtain the freedom of Heaven that is the core of your birthright.

Make
every action
a form of
prayer to the
Divine within!