



THE MIRACLE OF FAITH

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The Sanskrit name for faith is *shradda*. Faith has many implications. In normal parlance, it denotes simple belief or trust. From a more profound point of view, however, faith denotes faith in God.

Many people who consider themselves rational look down upon faith. However, if you study yourself and the people around you in light of the practical realities of life, you will realize that you cannot live without faith for even a single moment. If you examine your life, you will realize that trust plays a major role in almost every situation.

For example, when you are being driven in a car you must trust the driver. If you were too rational, you would be very uncomfortable because you would not be able to determine what kind of driver the person was or how he might react. Or if you are in a plane, you have to have confidence in

the person who is flying it. If you are seated in a barber's chair and he has a razor at your throat, you have to have faith that nothing will go wrong.

Thus, it would be misguided to look down upon faith since your whole life is dominated by it. If those people who consider themselves highly rational, e.g. scientists and intellectuals, study their own relationships, they will realize that there is faith operating at all levels of human relationships. In handling various situations in life, you have to have faith and trust. You cannot always be dependent upon sheer rationality.

Reason has to be relaxed in many areas of life. This doesn't mean that reason should be abandoned. The fact is that faith in the truest sense will nourish your reason. It is the mother of reason. However, the vast majority of people do not have this kind of pure faith.

The confined and limited form of faith is blind faith. Some people, for example, develop superstitions that Friday the thirteenth will be dangerous or that a particular period of the day is inauspicious. This is blind faith. You are unnecessarily burdening your mind with fearful thoughts. If you begin to hate those who do not belong to your religion in the name of faith, then you are not promoting faith. That which engenders hate or a sense of superiority culminating in cruelty towards others is not faith at all.

The pure faith that must be promoted by an aspirant has four aspects, though these are actually expressions of faith in God within you. Let us examine these four aspects.

First, you must have faith in yourself. There is a spirit within you that has infinite possibilities. Do not distrust the power of the soul within you.

You must also have faith that the scriptures are the revelations of Sages. When you study scriptures such as the Gita or the Upanishads, you must have faith that those Sages were inspired by God when they wrote that happiness is with *Brahman* alone and that Self-realization is the goal of life. You must deeply trust that when they talk about these things, they are speaking on the basis of experience.

Then, you must have faith in Guru, the spiritual preceptor who guides you, and finally you must have faith in God. These are the four aspects, which, in their totality, are really just faith in God expressed in different ways.

Faith has immense power; it can heal sickness and diseases of the body and mind. History is replete with illustrations and examples of the wonders that faith can work. Lord Jesus was able to heal the sick and perform miracles. But, when he was around people who did not have faith in him, he was unable to work these wonders. This was so because, as he himself said, it was the faith itself that healed and worked the wonders.

For example, if you have faith when repeating your mantra, or offering prayer, or practicing meditation, then your spiritual discipline will become intensive. But, if you repeat mantra and internally develop the idea that it may or may not be good, or if you practice meditation and internally think that you may be wasting your time, then you are lacking faith. Your *sadhana* (spiritual practice) will consequently become weak and dull. But when you have faith, you will feel that the name of God has immense power and every time you pray it will never fall on deaf ears.

If you study the life of great men, you will realize how much they were dominated by faith. Anyone who comes into contact with a saintly personality will begin to develop faith in the spiritual values of life.

When Moses had the project of guiding his people, he did not know how he would do it. Before him stood the surging ocean and behind him raced the army of Pharaoh in hot pursuit. Yet, even in that perilous situation, Moses continued with his calm inner conviction and faith despite the frightened accusations of his people that he was bringing them there only to be drowned in the ocean. He had heard the Divine Voice and knew that a powerful Hand would help him.

When you develop faith, you do not become calculative; you do not begin to assist God with your mathematics. You must simply understand that the way God works it out is His business and

that He alone will do it. He created the whole world with the twinkling of an eye, so nothing is impossible for Him.

A parable is told about a husband and wife who were traveling in a ship. Suddenly a storm struck, and huge waves began to dash against the ship. Everyone was frightened that it would be engulfed by the ocean. The wife looked at her husband, who happened to be a great devotee of God, and saw that he was not frightened at all. She said, “Why aren’t you frightened?” Being a soldier, he drew his sword and placed it near her throat and asked, “Are you scared?” She replied, “Why should I be afraid of you? I know that you wouldn’t hurt me.” “Well then,” he continued, “why shouldn’t you feel the same way about God?”

If you love God, then why should you be frightened if he has figuratively placed a sword at your throat? Why should you become upset and lose your patience and balance of mind? The message is that if you have developed the feeling that God is the source of infinite love and that He is your sustenance, your mother and father, then you have nothing to fear in whatever situation arises in your life. With faith, you will overcome all impediments and obstructions, and you will attain the highest victory of all: Self-realization!

