

आवृतं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा ।

कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च ॥ ३९ ॥

āvṛtaṁ jñānametena jñānino nityavairiṇā
kāmarūpeṇa kaunteya duṣpūreṇānalena ca

O Arjuna, Knowledge (jñāna) is enveloped by this constant enemy of the wise, (a discerning soul) in the form of desire, which is insatiable like, fire. 39

Comment:—

'Etena'—This term has been used for desire, which has been declared by the Lord as most sinful, in the thirty-seventh verse of this chapter.

'Duṣpūreṇānalena ca'— As fire is never satiated, when clarified butter is added to it, it rather rages stronger, so is desire never satisfied, by enjoying the objects of desire, it is rather strengthened (Śrīmadbhāgavata 9/19/14; Manusmṛti 2/94). The fire of desire, devours everything which comes into its contact.

Sundaradāsa, has also expressed the same idea, when he says, "The richer a man grows, the more he hankers after worldly prosperity. A poor man, may desire to gain only a few rupees, but when he gains them, he has desire for a hundred and then a thousand, and after that a million and then a billion and trillion and then the ownership of the entire universe. Yet, this form of desire, will not be satiated. It is only, by contentment, that this desire can be subdued.

A poor man, is not so greedy, as is a rich man. When a man earns a hundred rupees, he desires to earn a thousand rupees. It means that he feels that he needs nine hundred more. When he earns a thousand rupees, he desires to have, ten thousand rupees. It means that he needs nine thousand more. When he gains ten thousand rupees he has desire to gain a lac of rupees. And he needs ninety thousand more. Thus the richer he grows, the more

greedy he becomes. On the other hand, a contented man, being free from all desires, is the king of kings.

In fact it is not wealth, but desire for wealth, which is an obstacle to God-realization. This desire, deprives the rich and the poor equally, of God-realization, as it can never be satiated. A man can only get rid of it by renouncing it.

'Kāmarūpeṇa'—The desire to derive pleasure, out of the affinity for the insentient is called 'Kāma'. This desire manifests itself in different forms, such as lust (for gold, power and of the flesh), craving (for things), attachment (to loving and charming objects), hope (to acquire something) and greed (to acquire more and more). When a man's desire is intensified, it is followed by solicitation. These are, the different forms of desire.

'Jñānino nityavairiṇā'—Here, the term 'Jñāninaḥ' stands for the wise striver, who remains engaged in practising the spiritual discipline, because it is he, who recognizes this enemy in the form of desire, and slays it. The worldly people consider it as pleasant.

The Lord declares, that desire is the constant enemy of a wise striver. As, soon as desire is born, a thought comes to his mind, that it will lead him to suffering. Desires involve dependence on the world and create importance of the world, which are stumbling blocks to the spiritual path. It pricks him at the outset, that it will result in adversity.

The ignorant, who are engrossed in sensual pleasures, hold that desire is their friend, because they derive pleasure out of the objects. Without desire objects cannot provide pleasure. But the fact is, that desire and the pleasures, lead him to sorrow, suffering, imprisonment and hell etc. Thus, desire is a constant enemy of the ignorant also, but they are not aware of it, while wise strivers are aware of it.

'Āvṛtam jñānam'—Every being is, endowed with

discrimination. In the case of man it can develop, but in birds, beasts and other births, it is confined to the maintenance of the body. In the case of men also, it is veiled by desire, which does not let them follow the spiritual (sentient) path of God-realization, but keeps them engaged in mundane pleasures.

Everyone, likes loving and true words, and hates harsh and false words. It means that every person has the knowledge (discrimination) of good and bad, virtue and vice, right and wrong. In spite of this knowledge, an ignorant person uses harsh language, tells a lie and does not perform his duty scrupulously, because his discrimination is concealed by desire.

A man thinks that he derives joy out of sense-objects, but in fact, he gets joy by renouncing them. Everyone knows that during wakefulness and sleep a man feels happy and sad, because of his affinity, for the sense-objects. But during sound sleep he does not remember, sense-objects at all. So, when he awakes he says that he had a very peaceful and sound sleep. Moreover, he gets tired during wakefulness, while he is refreshed after sound sleep. It means, that it is renunciation of the sense-objects, which provides joy or peace.

When a man desires money, his mind is attached to it. But when it is acquired, the mind renounces this attachment and so he feels happy. Had the money provided him joy, he would have never felt sad, so long as he had money. But he feels sad, even after possessing that money.

When a man desires anything, he becomes dependant on it. Suppose, a man has a desire to buy a watch he feels sad, without it; this is dependence upon it. He thinks that if he acquires money, he can buy a watch i.e., he feels independent if he has money, and dependent without money. But this is a wrong notion. If he acquires money and buys a watch he, instead of having dependence on the watch, has dependence

on money, because money is also different from, the self. When a man's discrimination is hid by desire, he realizes his dependence on objects, but he does not realize his dependence, on money. He thinks that he has become independent, because of money. It is very difficult to renounce such a dependence, which disguises itself as independence.

The world is transitory. All the worldly objects such as the body, wealth, property etc., are decaying every moment, and are separating from us. But while enjoying these, we forget that they are temporary, we regard them as eternal and permanent. Not to talk of the common people, even a striver gets entangled in pleasures by considering these as eternal and permanent. It so happens, because his discrimination is enveloped by desire.

An Important Fact

The Lord declares, that desire is the constant enemy of the wise, so that a man may save himself from it and may attain bliss, desire being the root of all sins and sufferings. Once, a man was looking for his wife. People asked him, "What is the name of your wife?" He replied, "Disgrace." They again asked "What is your name?" He replied, "Wicked." People said, "Don't be agitated, she is a very chaste and faithful wife, she will come to you, because disgrace ever accompanies the wicked." Similarly suffering automatically accompany the man, who hankers after perishable pleasures.

A man wants to avoid suffering, but he does not renounce desire, which is the root cause of suffering. In the Rāmacaritamānasa it is declared, "A man can't attain bliss, even in a dream, so long as he does not renounce desire" (7/90/1). The Lord, by the terms 'analena' and 'duṣpūreṇa', wants to explain that desire for enjoyment of worldly objects, is never satiated.

The more he enjoys them, the more, the desire for these is strengthened. In order to satiate it, he is inclined to sinful acts. When he has desire for wealth, he wants to earn it, by fair means or foul. Then, at the second stage the desire engages him in theft and robberies, while in the third stage it leads him to commit violence and even murder. Thus the desire for pleasure, makes life miserable, here as well as hereafter.

Appendix—The main obstacle to the practice of spiritual discipline is the desire for pleasure which is born by the contact of senses with sense-objects. This obstacle lingers for a long time. Wherever a striver indulges in pleasure, there his spiritual progress is arrested. As much as even the pleasure (joy) from trance, hinders his progress.* Even the desire of ‘Sāttvika’ happiness and attachment to it arrest his spiritual progress—‘sukhasaṅgena badhnāti’ (Gītā 14/6)†. Therefore the Lord has declared that desire is the constant enemy of a wise (discriminating) striver—‘na teṣu ramate budhaḥ’ (Gītā 5/22) and ‘duḥkhameva sarvaṁ vivekinaḥ’ (Yogadarśana 2/15).



Link:—In order to kill an enemy, it is necessary to know where it resides. Therefore, the Lord, in the next verse, mentions the seat of desire, the constant enemy of the wise (discerning soul).

इन्द्रियाणि मनो बुद्धिरस्याधिष्ठानमुच्यते ।

एतैर्विमोहयत्येष ज्ञानमावृत्य देहिनम् ॥ ४० ॥

indriyāṇi mano buddhirasyādhiṣṭhānamucyate
etairvimohayatyēṣa jñānamāvṛtya dehinaṁ

* Worldly pleasures are born of union with sense-objects while the joy derived from trance is born of disunion with sense-objects. Worldly pleasures lead to ruin (fall) while the enjoyment of joy derived from trance arrests (hinders) a striver’s progress.

† Attachment to Sāttvika joy is a hindrance in the path of God-realization and attachment to Rājasa-Tāmasa pleasures leads to ruin.