Don’t be an addict

Addiction is usually to substances. Devotion is towards something that you hold way above yourself. Devotion cannot be practised, it cannot be cultivated or cultured. When you are overwhelmed by something or somebody, when you see something or somebody far beyond yourself, devotion comes naturally. Addiction happens because you taste something and you like the experience of it. The more you taste, the more hooked and trapped you get.

Interestingly, a devotee looks like an addict himself. An addict can hide his addiction but a devotee cannot hide his devotion. Even a drug addict, who has a certain degree of control over himself, can look very normal and deceive the world, but a devotee is not capable of such deception or pretence. He just bursts forth anywhere; he cannot hide it.

A similarity between the two is that both can create a certain pleasant or ecstatic experience within a person. People get addicted to something because the experience is strong. Will you get addicted to eating leaves of a neem tree? Never. You have to eat it consciously. Every day you have to think, “Should I do it?” People get addicted to tobacco, coffee, alcohol and various kinds of drugs because it gives them pleasure.

Devotion means your emotions have become sweet. The ways of a devotee may look utterly illogical for a “thinking person”, but a devotee is very intelligent.

For example, suppose you have 24 hours to spend the way you want. What would you consider intelligent? Spending your time in utter intelligence or in complete turmoil with all sorts of problems having no relevance to the ultimate reality?

Such an approach to life may look silly to an intellectual person, but there is a very deep life sense involved in a devotee’s attitude towards living. The fact remains that more people have attained the ultimate through devotion than any other way.

Devotion causes ecstasy. Not like the limbs of chemicals that are labelled “ecstasy”; such pills just get you high for a while, only to dump you in a really bad way, ruining you completely in the process. Devotion, on the other hand, enhances you. The difference, therefore, can be summed up as: Addiction shrinks you, devotion enhances you.

Addiction can give you moments of pleasantness, devotion gives you a constant sense of pleasantness. Addiction pushes you to a corner, makes you totally exclusive to a point where it breaks your body and mind and makes you neurotic, whereas devotion makes you all-inclusive. One destroys you, the other enhances you. That is the big difference.

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