

|| **May the new year bring sweet harmony** ||

With the loving grace of the Almighty and the eternal blessings of revered Saints and our Gurujan (Spiritual Guides), we have the opportunity to welcome the new year with renewed zeal and fervor!

When used wisely, the intellect, gifted to us by the Lord, can elevate the varying experiences of this invaluable human life into a sweet combination of notes of high and low cadences in a divine composition. Expounding this perspective in an extremely important shloka in Srimad Bhagvad-Gita, the Lord declares:

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।
आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥५॥
uddharedātmanātmānam nātmānamavasādayet
ātmaiva hyātmano bandhurātmaiva ripurātmanaḥ

**One must elevate oneself by one's own efforts and thus prevent mortification of oneself.
One is one's own friend and one is one's own enemy. (Ch6, Sh5)**

This new year, let us rise above the basal animal-like nature and firmly resolve to become our own true friend. One who regularly studies the Holy Scriptures, earnestly tries to manifest those principles in daily conduct and practices complete control of the mind (through mental detachment), is indeed his own true friend.

In the Srimad-Bhagvad-Gita, Chapter 3, Shloka 34, the Lord explains that the tendencies of 'likes' (Raag) and 'dislikes' (Dwesh) in the five senses are in fact the formidable enemies in the path of ultimate welfare. No other person, material possession (or the lack of it), incident or situation is 'the enemy'. Human beings are blessed with the extraordinary ability of the intellect to ensure that present actions, interactions and thoughts are governed by the principle of objectivity instead of being influenced by likes and dislikes.

To help us become our own true friend in the coming year and also radiate the spirit of this friendship all around us, some key pointers compiled from the Holy Scriptures and commentaries of revered saints are:

1. Instead of judging the performance or non-performance of duties by others, the focus should be on discharge of one's own righteous duties in accordance with the scriptural directives in every situation.
2. Very often, we try to change or improve a situation, but in reality, each situation is a consciously structured part of the Lord's beneficent design to change and improve us.

3. 'Liking' must only be towards the Lord's lotus feet, wherein due love is shown towards all beings, knowing them to be His. The tendency of 'aversion', on the other hand, should be directed towards all the flaws and pollutants viz. distorted thinking that are hidden deep within one's own self.
4. An unflinching remedy to elevate oneself is to constantly chant the Lord's name through naam-japa, contemplate on His ever-merciful being, and seek shelter in His lotus feet with a fervent prayer for the strength to liberate oneself from all such internal 'enemies'.

As soon as the human mind is rid of 'likes' and 'dislikes', the mind instantly feels relieved and has an exhilarating experience of renewed energy and enthusiasm. In this new year, may our lives be infused with sweet harmony, as we practice this spirit of true friendship not only with ourselves, but also extend it across our circle of friends, family and our entire world to spread selfless love, affection and happiness in every relationship.

With these auspicious wishes, we wish you a very happy new year 2019!
