

19. The Moon And The Mind

THERE are many different stories in the scriptures to explain the origin of the *Sivarathri* (The Night of the Emergence of linga form of Siva) Festival. Some of them were related now by the persons who spoke to you. Another story is that this is the day on which Siva danced the cosmic dance in His Ecstasy, with all the gods and sages taking part in the cosmic event.

When He consumed the death-dealing poison that emanated from the ocean of milk, in response to the prayers of the worlds, which it threatened to destroy, the heat of the fumes was well nigh unbearable, even for Him. So, it is said, Ganga river was poured uninterruptedly on His matted locks — this is the explanation for the *abhisheka* (ceremony of pouring consecrated water, oil, milk, etc., on the idol), which is offered in all Siva temples for hours on end, and in some places, uninterruptedly. But Siva was only partly relieved. So the cool moon was placed on the head, which gave some relief. Then, Ganga was placed on the matted locks. That was of great help. After this, Siva danced the cosmic dance with all the gods. That is the story, but all this did not happen on a particular day, so *Sivarathri* cannot be said to commemorate that day.

Some say that Siva was born on this day, as if Siva has birth and death like any mortal! The story that a hunter sat on a bilva tree on the lookout for animals to kill and, without intending any worship, unknowingly, dropped the leaves of that tree, which happened to be a bilva, upon a *lingam* beneath, and so attained salvation, explains only the importance of this day. It does not explain the origin! Besides we have not only the great *Sivarathri* (*Mahasivarathri*). We have a *Sivarathri* every month, dedicated to Siva worship. Again, what is the significance of the *rathri* (night)?

The close affinity between mind and the moon

Well, the night is dominated by the moon. The moon has 16 fractions, and each day when it wanes, a fraction is reduced, until it is annihilated on new-moon night. After that, each day a fraction is added, until it completes itself on full moon night.

The moon is the presiding deity of the mind. “Out of the mind of the Godhead, the moon was born (*Chandrama manaso jathah*).” There is a close affinity between the mind (*manas*) and the moon; both are subject to decline and progress. The waning of the moon is the symbol for the waning of the mind, for the mind has to be controlled, reduced, and finally destroyed. All spiritual exercises is directed toward this end. The mind has to be killed so that illusion (*maya*) may be rent asunder and the reality revealed.

Every day during the dark half of the month, the moon, and symbolically its counterpart in man, the mind, wane, and a fraction is diminished; its power declines. Finally, on the fourteenth night, there is just a wee bit left, that is all. If a little extra effort is made that day by the spiritual aspirant, even that bit can be wiped off and mastery of the mind completed.

The fourteenth night of the dark half is called *Sivarathri*, for that night should be spent in the repetition of the Name of and meditation on Siva, without any other thought either of food or sleep. Then success is assured. Once a year, on *Mahasivarathri* night, a special spurt of spiritual activity is recommended, so that what is the corpse (*savam*) can become God (*Sivam*) by the removal of this dross called mind.

This is the purpose of *Sivarathri*, so it is foolish and even harmful deceit to imagine that “keeping awake” is the essential thing in its observance. People try to escape sleep on this night by playing cards, attending non-stop cinema shows, or watching plays or dramas. That is not the spiritual exercise that should be intensified on *Sivarathri*. That is a travesty of the vow of “sleeplessness”. It vulgarises you and encourages evil and sloth, wickedness, and hypocrisy.

Symbolic meaning of words used in scriptures

On *Sivarathri*, the mind must become reduced into nothing. *Lingam* means that in which this world attains nothingness, that into which this world goes. Examine the *linga*; the three primordial qualities (*gunas*) are represented by the three-tiered platform; the *lingam* above symbolises the goal of life. *Lingam* means “symbol”, the symbol of creation, the result of the activity of the three qualities and of the Brahman (Supreme Reality), which permeates and gives it meaning and value. When you worship the *lingam*, do so with faith in this symbolic significance.

Every word, every Form used in the spiritual texts has a symbolic meaning, which gives it value. The word *prapancha*, which you use so freely to indicate this “created world”, means, “that which is composed of the *pancha-bhuthas* —the five elements of earth, fire, water, wind, and ether.” Take the word *hrdayam* used for “the heart”. It means *hridi* (in the heart) *ayam* (He). That is to say, it means not the organ that pumps blood to all parts or the body but the seat of God, the altar where Siva is installed, the niche where the lamp of wisdom is lit. Again, Siva does not ride on an animal called, in human language, a “bull!” The bull is only a symbol of *dharma*, standing on the four legs of truth, righteousness, peace, and love (*sathya, dharma, santhi, and prema*).

Lingam is the symbolic form of the Godhead

The three eyes of Siva are the eyes that reveal the past, present, and future. Siva alone has all three. The elephant skin that forms His cloak is just a symbol for the elemental bestial primitive traits that His Grace destroys. He makes them powerless and harmless; in fact, he tears them to pieces, skins them, so to say, and makes them ineffective. His four Faces symbolise peace, fierceness, auspiciousness, and determination.

In this way, realise, while worshipping the *lingam*, the inner sense of the many attributes of Siva. Meditate thus on Siva this day, so that you may get rid of the last lingering vestiges of delusion.

Just as *Om* is the verbal symbol of God, the *lingam* is the symbolic form of the Godhead. It is just a form. Everything is delusion (*maya*), and to grasp it, you must deal with delusion. Otherwise you cannot realise the deluding power. God is as immanent in the Universe as life is immanent in the egg. The chicken is in every part of the egg; so too, God is in every part of the world. I prefer the description Inner Ruler of All (*Sarva-antaryami*) to the description Inmost Soul of All Beings (*Sarva-butha-antharatma*). All are in this Hall, each one has no Hall in him, is it not? In the same way, all are in Him; which is better than saying, He is in all.

It is delusion (*maya*) that binds and limits you; all spiritual exercise is to conquer delusion. A bit of iron will sink in water but if beaten and made hollow, it will float. So beat the mind and make it hollow. Then it will float on the sea of worldly life. Above all, have discrimination, and do not be led into taking any false step.

Grow not only physically but also spiritually

You need not waste time in trying to discover Me and My Nature. Understand what I teach, not “who is the teacher,” for I am beyond your intellect and your power. You will understand Me only through My work. That is why, sometimes, in order to reveal who I am, I myself show you my “visiting card,” something that you call a miracle. Know the mystery and carry out the duty I assign you.

In the next fifteen years, a number of young people now growing up will shine as devoted aspirants in the spiritual field; they know that each of them is eternal, truth, and pure and that they are children of immortality. They are growing in discrimination and detachment and are purifying themselves by repetition of the Name of God. But the elders are laughing at such boys because they have taken to the godly path. Perhaps they will be happy if their children loiter in the streets in groups, smoking and swearing and staring at posters.

The elders should be elated that their children are on the royal road to real joy and contentment and that they will be serving themselves and the world much better. You do not know how to make an ornament out of gold, so you give it to a goldsmith. Why worry if he melts it and beats it and pierces it and pulls it into wire and twists it and cuts it? Let Him who knows the art shape the child into an ornament of society; do not worry.

You must grow day to day, not only physically but in spiritual life also. How long are you staying on in the primary school, writing down the letters of the alphabet? Get up, demand an examination, pass, and move forward to the higher class!

The individual soul must master the inner world first

You are now sitting on the floor of the hall; seek the means to see the top floors too. Progress! Come forward! Then *Sivarathri* becomes an auspicious night for you. Otherwise it is just another night (*rathri*) wasted.

Many might discourage you and say that meditation and worship can be taken up after you reach a ripe old age, as if they are the prerogatives of or special punishments for the aged. Enjoy the world while you can and then think of the next — that seems to be their attitude.

The child takes its first few steps in the comparative safety of the home: it toddles about inside, until its steps become firm, until its balance is perfected, and until it can run about unaccompanied and without fear. Then only does it venture out into the streets and the wide world beyond. So too, the living being must master the inner world first; become impervious to temptations. It should learn not to fall when the senses trip its steps; it should learn the balance of mind, which will not make it lean more to one side than to the other. After mastering this discriminatory wisdom, it can confidently move out into the outer world, without fear of accidents to its personality. That is why there is this insistence on “sleeplessness” or vigilance.

You cannot claim to be educated or grown up unless you have mastered the science of self-control and destroyed the root cause of delusion. It is not this night alone that you should spend in the thought of Siva; your whole life should be lived in the constant presence of the Lord.

Man’s basic nature seeks inward contentment

Do not tell me that you do not care for that bliss, that you are satisfied with the delusion and are not willing to undergo the rigours of sleeplessness. Your basic nature, believe Me, abhors this dull, dreary routine of eating, drinking, and sleeping. It seeks something that it knows it has lost: inward contentment (*santhi*). It seeks liberation

from bondage to the trivial and the temporary. Everyone craves for it in their heart of hearts. And it is available only in one shop: contemplation of the Highest Self, the basis of all this appearance.

However high a bird may soar, it has sooner or later to perch on a tree top, to enjoy quiet. So too, a day will come when even the most haughty, the most willful, the most unbelieving, and even those who assert that there is no joy or peace in the contemplation of the Highest Self will have to pray, “God, grant me peace, grant me consolation, strength, and joy.”

Prasanthi Nilayam, Mahasivarathri, 1959-02-07

The ills of the country are due to under-nourishment – not so much under-nourishment of the body, but under-nourishment of the spirit, want of spiritual exercise, neglect of spiritual regimen.

Allowing the malady the fullest scope, people are engaged in reciting the names of the drugs in the pharmacopoeia! They do not make any attempt to take the drug in.

The means of conveying into every home and village the life-giving waters of the spirit have all dried up or got choked up.

That is why under-nourishment, with all its attendant symptoms of debility, nervous disorder, and mania, is so rampant today.

Sathya Sai Baba