

26. Destiny Is No Iron Cage

Velury Sivarama Shaasthry is not only a great scholar, he is a spiritual aspirant, too. Today, he gave you the gist of his scholarship and experience in the speech on the secret of incarnation (*Avatara rahasya*). In spite of all this, let Me tell you, the mystery of *Avatars* is beyond your understanding, beyond anyone's understanding. How can those in illusion (*maya*) grasp something that is beyond it? The body, intellect, thought, mind, heart — all are in illusion and operate only through illusion. But the disappearance of illusion is a fact, not a delusion. In algebra, the symbol x is used for the unknown quantity. When its identity is discovered, as it eventually is, the symbol x disappears from the equation. In the same way, God is x , the entity you have to discover.

To say that God is the prime cause of everything is true to a certain extent, but you are not thrust by Him into an iron cage of destiny from which there is no escape. He has endowed you with discrimination and detachment and, with a sense of awe and wonder, you have to use these for attaining Him. Though bound, you are not entirely incapacitated. A cow that is tethered to a post by means of a rope can walk around it and graze on all the area that the rope can traverse; when all the grass therein has been eaten, perhaps the master might loosen the knot and tether it to another post a little farther off. Graze freely as far as the rope allows, but do not stray far from the post and pull at the rope and inflict pain on your neck.

Do not blame fate for your condition

On the land that belongs to you, you can grow the food you need or you can sit idle and allow it to lie fallow. You are the cause of your ruin or uplift. The tools are in your hands; you can learn the skills; you can break the shackles and escape. But if you grovel in slavery and bondage, who can save you? Do not blame fate or writing on the head for your condition. The writing has been done by you yourself. You fail or pass and you are detained or promoted on the basis of your performance in the previous class, is it not? So also, the status in the present life is decided on the basis of the activities in previous lives.

When the headmaster gives a character certificate on the basis of which you apply for a job, he frames the sentences with reference to your conduct in previous years when you were in previous classes. You are responsible for the nature of the certificate. If your conduct was good, you get a good certificate and a good job; if it was bad, you get a bad one and a poor job. It is you who write, you who wipe the writing on the head, or “destiny”.

There was a great saint in Kerala some 500 years ago, Bilvamangala by name. He would call on Krishna, and Krishna would appear. Such was his devotion and spiritual practice. One man who suffered from chronic stomach-ache heard about this, and he pestered Bilvamangala to find out from Krishna whether it would end or not. Bilvamangala agreed and when Krishna appeared next, he asked him the question. Krishna replied, “When the rolling stops, it will cease.”

The unfortunate man interpreted it to mean “when he stopped rolling in pain,” and he got desperate, because he had perforce to roll in the agony of that ache. So he left Kerala and wanted to go to some holy place to meet some holier person who would procure for him a more satisfying answer. Bilvamangala told him that he had to suffer this trouble due to the result of his activities in previous births. He took rolling to mean, “rolling from birth to birth”.

Results of past action will melt when remembrance of the Name is done

On the road to Kasi that the man took, he came to a free feeding place run by a pious lady, Kururamma by name. When she saw his agony, she spoke to him kindly. He told her that he had decided to drown himself in the Ganga, for he was told there was no escaping the consequence of past sins. Kururamma called him a fool. She gave him the holy mantra, “*Gopijana Vallabhaya namah*,” and asked him to repeat it. She said the Name would cure him completely. The poor man uttered it when the attack occurred next, and he was surprised to find that the pain had gone! Yes, gone; even though he pounded his stomach, it did not return.

He finished his pilgrimage to Kasi, returned to Kerala, and fell at the feet of Bilvamangala, who asked about his ache; the ache with which he had to live because it was earned in past lives. When he was told that it had disappeared, he called on Krishna and asked what he had meant by “rolling”. Bilvamangala thought it meant rolling from one birth to another and acquiring good and evil; the sick man took it to mean ‘rolling in pain’ when the ache came on. But Krishna had meant rolling in this objective world (*prakriti*) and its changing phenomena. When the man lived in the name of God and had no other thought, the rolling had ceased; the Name and the chain of destiny cannot exist together. The result of past bad action will melt away like fog before the sun when remembrance of the Name is done. This was a revelation even for Bilvamangala.

You become that which you feel

Just reflect on this for a minute: How did man forget his Divinity? How did he fall into this delusion of little-ness? Then you will know that it must be the result of the mind running after momentary pleasures. What then is the remedy? The answer is just one word: Worship. Do everything as worship. “You become that which you feel (*Yath bhaavam thath bhavathi*).” You can get the feeling for the Divine only if you have a taste of the love of the Divine. The *Avatar* has come to give you a taste of that love, so that the yearning for the Lord will be planted in your heart. Mastery over mountains of information has been attained by man now; but wisdom has lagged behind. Hence, man’s capacity to probe and progress into the realm of the Universal and the Absolute has to be developed.

Vivekananda went once to a town during his wanderings. Lots of important persons, painters, scholars, philosophers, poets, and artists gathered around him and plied him with an endless array of questions. Vivekananda was engaged the whole day in answering them. A Harijan who was standing in a corner at last got the chance to fall at his feet, and Vivekananda asked him why he had come. He asked, “Swami, you must be very hungry; shall I bring you some milk? Or, if I get some flour, you can prepare chapathis (leavened bread) yourself if you will not eat those prepared by me; no one seems to have thought of your food.” That man had love (*prema*), which is a divine gift. That is more fruitful than all the knowledge packed in a library of ancient texts.

There are three types of men: (1) the non-believers, who consider worldly objects as real in themselves; (2) those who believe in a will behind all that they see and experience and bow to that will and try to explore that will so that they may adhere to it and not run counter to it; and (3) those who have realised that the objective world has only relative value, not an absolute value. The latter two will not blame anyone, even the Lord, for their ills.

As long as the son is a minor, he will not be entitled to the share of parental property. Similarly, as long as you are a minor in spiritual practice, not fully grown up and able to look after your own destiny, you will have to be suffering and struggling. Again, if you say, “I, I, I”, you are left alone, and you stumble and fall. But if you say, “Not I, but You,” then all things will be added unto you.

Object of performing miracles

What exactly has been won by people who have struggled for a hundred years? They have hungered and eaten, slept and awakened, laughed and wept — but what is the result of it all on the personality or on the world? Nil. When humanity flows purposelessly and meaninglessly into the sands, the *Avatar* comes to warn and show the way. The one task has to be fulfilled in various ways; that is the mission of the *Avatar*. The principle of incarnation (*Avatara Thathwam*), as mentioned in the scriptures, was explained by Velury Sivarama Shaasthry now. Let me tell you, only those who know the scriptures can understand Me. I am determined to correct you only after informing you of my credentials. That is why I am now and then announcing My nature by means of miracles — that is, acts that are beyond human capacity and human understanding. Not that I am anxious to show off My powers. The object is to draw you closer to Me, to cement your hearts to Me.

Getting to know Me is also a part of your destiny. The other day, on Vaikunta Ekadasi, when nectar (*amritha*) was being given by Me, a few who had come weeks ago, who had witnessed the creation of nectar on the riverbed and who had taken their seats in the long line of devotees, had to leave just as I was approaching their line, and they missed the chance of perhaps a lifetime. It is all earned opportunity. As a matter of fact, each one of you has to be saved: you have to escape from this net when the opportunity comes. I shall not give you up, even if you forsake Me; for it is not in Me to forsake those who deny Me. I have come for all. Those who stray away will come again to Me, do not doubt this. I shall beckon them back to Me. I bless you that you earn the vision of the Divine in this life itself, with this body itself.

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When Rama enters the mind, desire (*kama*) has no place therein. Desire ceases, when God seizes the mind. In fact, since desire is the very stuff of which the mind is made, it becomes non-existent and you are free. This stage is called the death of the mind, the merging of the mind, or the killing of the mind.

Sathya Sai Baba