

41. Swinging from yes to no

THE dharma that is the heritage of India is the staff of life for all men; it is the backbone of morality and well-being. It is the nectar which can confer immortality. Others may in their ignorance laugh at Indians for taking a stone to be God, but, what they do is to realise even the stone as God. It is transformed into God, an act which is a grand victory. The highest energies of man in this land are used for conquering death, while in other countries, they are misused in the diabolic attempt to make weapons of mass destruction. People here offer themselves to *Mrithyunjaya* (Shiva, the conquerer of death); those others fall at the feet of *mrithyu* (death)! Others are content with tinsel and trinkets; in India, people are taught to dive deep, and win the pear, and not wander on the sandy shore, collecting shells.

But, it is a pity that here, too, the infection is spreading and people are fast losing all sense of values and running after vanities and inanities. People attach more value to the many and they forget the One; they do not seek the One Persistent Truth; they follow the ever-changing falsehood and so, naturally, fall into grief and resentment. Take the simple rite of *namaskaaram--the* folded palms with which you greet reverentially elders and others. What does it signify, that gesture? The right palm is *Thath* (that entity, the unseen base, the other) and the left palm is *Thwam* (the I, the separate, the individualised, the thing that feels limited, alone, apart). When the two palms are brought together and kept in contact, the One-ness of that and this, of all that is outside you, and all that is in you, is emphasised and demonstrated: *Aham-Brahmaasmi* (I am *Brahman*), in fact. What greater and grander greeting can human aspiration discover and prescribe? You greet the other with as much joy as you would greet yourself; no man loves another more than himself; all are loved for the sake of the self.

Or, consider another interpretation of this act of folding the palms. The five fingers of the right hand are the five *karmendhriyas* (organs of action), the five of the left are the five *jnaanendhriyas* (organs of perception); they are together ten, dedicated to sage or guru or elder to be used for his service or at his bidding. That is the surrender which is called *Sharanaagathi*, the same that Hanumaan practised.

Principle of idol worship

Take the case of the Bhagavadh Geetha, to which reference was made. When and where was it taught? On the battlefield, in the midst of the opposing forces, to solve a mental crisis. It is when such crises affect man that the Lord starts His mission of instruction. For those who have realised the goal, there is no need; for those who have known neither goal nor path, neither thirst nor yearning, it is of no use. It is only to those who are afflicted by doubt, swinging from yes to no, that instruction will be useful. A mental crisis is solved by the word of God.

Again, the worship of idols has to be looked upon as but the worship of the Formless. Water or milk has no form as such; they assume the form of vessel which contains it, is it not? Take milk in a cup or a flask, or a kettle or jug or mug, it assumes those forms. So also the form of Krishna is the form of a vessel in which you fill the formless entity; the form of Raama, Shiva, Linga, Chaamundeshwari, Ganesha--all are forms of vessels in which, according to your fancy, you take the Formless, Unpicturable! The *Naama* is the nectar, the *Naami* is the cup, the idol.

Story of crow-demon and its meaning

Take the story which the Bhaagavathar related just now: the story of Kaakaasura, the crow-demon, that wounded Seetha when Raama was sleeping on her lap, when Seetha was there helpless to ward him off. What happened to him? Raama made him and all his race one-eyed; the one eye-ball rolls from the right to the left and from left to right so that he may see this side and that. The meaning is that if you crave for Seetha (*Prakrithi*, the pleasing, the objective world) you cannot get a perfect picture, a synoptic vision; you become one-eyed, warped, defective.

Again, the Bhaagavathar who gave the musical discourse on Santh Raamadaasa described how a *vimaana* (aerial chariot) came down from the skies to carry the saint to heaven, when his earthly career was over. The word *vimaana* does not mean an aerial chariot, as Bhaagavathars describe it; it has a deeper and truer meaning. It means that a person who has given up *maana* (pride or egoism), ascends to Heaven, that is all. Or else, consider this: *Vi* means a bird, *maana* means measure, dimension. So, the idea of going in a *vimaana* means that the soul moves through the infinite, like a bird through the sky, unopposed. It has gained freedom.

You heard the stories of the lives of Saints Thyaagaraaja and Naamadheva, described by members of this *Samaajam*. I hope you have learnt the lesson of prema, of *Vishwaprema* (Universal Love), that they conveyed. Imagine the *prema* of the *gopees*. One noon, Krishna stealthily entered the house of a cowherd and drank all the milk in the pot. The *gopee* discovered Him and when she admonished Him, Krishna took to His heels; when the *gopee* saw Him running over the hard cobble-stones of the street she shed tears of contrition. Those lotus feet must pain much, she felt, and wept. "O, what a great sinner I am!" she wailed. Krishna will make the wickedest heart melt in repentance. He is *Premaswaruupa* and *Shaanthiswaruupa* (of the embodiment of Love and Peace) and so He makes every heart sprout into prema and *shaanthy*.

Withdraw into yourself like a tortoise

His prattle, His pranks, His innocent tricks were all-conquering. He gave the *gopees* a heap of bother and a heap of joy. That was the *thapas* (penance) for them; the bother was *anugraham* (favour); the joy was *prasaadham* (grace). You cannot have only one. Bhadhram was reading from some piece of paper, on one side of which he had written the poems he hastily composed on Me this afternoon. The other side of that paper contained some scribbles, but he could not avoid bringing those also here. You cannot bring just one side of the paper, the side that you want; you have to bring the other side too though you may not like it. Do not get puffed up with pride when you succeed; do not get punctured when you fail. Be like the tortoise that is able to withdraw its feet under its shell; withdraw into yourself the outgoing senses and be happy in the contemplation of your reality. The Lord took the Tortoise *Avathaara* because it represents the true *saadhaka*. Be also like the swan, which on coming up from the lake, gives a vigorous shake to its wings, a shake which scatters the waterdrops off; so too, the *saadhaka* must shake off the attachments that are likely to grow when the world impinges on him.

Three friends you earn in this life

Mere scholarship is of no use; it results only in swelled heads. *Vedhaantha*, really practised, makes you fearless, like the lion in the forest. You roar and they flee in terror. The *Brahma thathwam* (Reality of the Supreme Being) expounded in *Vedhaantha* will make you master of the universe. So, do not attach yourself too much to this body or to the things that bring comfort to it. You earn three friends in this life.

The first: The riches you accumulate, which refuse to come with you when you move out of this life.

The second: Kith and kin who accompany your body up to the burial ground or cremation-ghat.

The third: The merit and demerit you have earned, which accompany you to the last.

Sleep inside the mosquito curtain; the insects can do no harm; so also, do not allow the insects of *kaama*, *krodha*, etc., to harm you. Get inside the curtain of *saadhana* while you are in the world. Be in the world, but do not let the world into you. That is the sign of *viveka* (discrimination).

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