

### 3. Follow His footprints

Shastry described the *Bhaagavatha thathwa* to you. This *Bhaagavth* is so called because it deals with the *Leela*, *Mahima* and *Upadesha* (divine sport, greatness and instruction) of the Lord, as manifested during His various appearances in history. The career of the Lord, whenever He appears, is made up of two strands, one earthly and the other Divine---one external and the other, inner. You heard just now of the breaking of butter pots by the infant Krishna. The outer meaning is that the child broke the mud pots wherein the milkmaids of Brindavan kept the butter they had prepared. The inner meaning is that Krishna broke the material casement in which their souls were imprisoned and liberated them from temporary attachments. He then appropriated to Himself what always belonged to Him---the butter of Faith. This butter is the result of the churning of the mind, the spiritual discipline of self-purification.

The Lord will manifest Himself only when the pillar is split in twain, with the sword of yearning. Hiranyakashipu did it and immediately, the Lord appeared from within that pillar. He had not hidden Himself there, anticipating the contingency. He is everywhere; and, so, He was there also. The lesson that Hiranyakashipu learnt was that the *deha-thathwa* must be split as under if the *dehi-thathwa* must reveal itself. That is to say, the "I-am-body" consciousness must go, if the "I-am-embodied" consciousness, must emerge. So long as you are in the *dehi* (I-am-embodied) consciousness, no pain or grief, pride or egoism can tarnish you. It is like sea water. Take a small quantity of sea water and keep it separate in a bottle; it will get foul in a few days. But, so long as it was in the sea, nothing could foul it. Be in the sea, as part of it; do not separate yourself, do not individualise yourself, do not feel that you are the *deha* (body), apart from the *dehi* ('I').

#### Unflinching discipline is essential

This must be your *deeksha* (steady pursuit). And, the *deeksha* must express itself in actual practice, as *nishtha* and *sikshana*. *Nishtha* means discipline, control; *sikshana* means training of the senses, the emotions etc. *Naashta* (food) should be subordinated to *Nishtha*. *The deha* is but an instrument to realise the *dehi*. *Yoga* is explained as *chiththavriiththi nirodha*---the curbing of mental agitations. It also means the Union which is possible when mental agitations are curbed and equanimity is achieved. Every chapter of the Geetha is called a *yoga*, in order to lay stress on this aspect of the Teaching.

*Bhakthi* or *jnaana* or *karma* must all lead to the achievement of equanimity; otherwise, they are simply pseudo. Water as such or fire as such cannot move a train; they must both co-operate to produce a third thing, steam. The steam moves the engine forward. The curbing of the mind takes you to the winning post. Kerosene oil and air must both unite to form the gas which ignites in the petromax lamp to give light.

To cross safely the flood of "birth-death-continuum" the bridge called *nishtha* or discipline of an unflinching kind is essential. It must be a sturdy safe bridge. Or else, you will fall into the raging waters and be drawn into the sea, infested with sharks---lust and anger. See how great heroes like Prahlaada did not loosen their hold on the Lord, in spite of heavy odds. Prahlaada never gave up the repetition of the Name of the Lord, though he was tortured, twisted and burnt. One must have that determination and that faith. Sorrows and disasters are as the clouds that flit across the sky; they cannot injure the blue depths of space. Your duty is to strive on, from this very moment. Do not vacillate or postpone. Who knows when death will knock? May be, he may knock this very

night, this very moment! Therefore, do not delay. Do not postpone for tomorrow the dinner of this day? Feed the spirit as scrupulously as you now feed the body.

### **Seek God with one-pointed attention**

Detach yourselves from the senses; then, only can the *Aathma* shine. I do not mean that you should destroy the senses. The mind must be withdrawn from its present comrades, the senses; it must be loyal to its roal master, the intellect or *buddhi*. That is to say, you must separate the grain from the chaff, through the exercise of *viveka* and then, fix your desire on the things that last and nourish, rather than on things that are flashy and corroding. Keep a lamp in a room with all its five windows open; the wind will blow it out, for the flame is swayed from all directions. To keep the flame burning straight, close the windows. The senses are the windows; the flame is the mind concentrating on the single purpose of God-realisation. What do the outward-bound senses know of that sweetness? They are like the frogs that hop about on the petals of the lotus; they are unaware of the nectar in that flower. Only the intellect can reveal that to you.

The Shastry said that Yashoda reached the place where the child Krishna had hidden himself, by following the footprints he had left behind him, with his curd-besmearred feet. He could not be caught when she attempted to tie a rope round his waist and drag him to herself. That rope was the rope of ego; how can the Lord be bound by your ego? It was found to be always short, two finger breadths short, every time! What does that indicate? It means that there were two virtues short---and that explains why every rope, however long, was too short. The two virtues were: *Dharmanishtha* and *Brahmanishtha*, steadiness in rectitude and in aspiration. It is enough if you seek him, through one-pointed attention and devotion, through his footprints: beauty, strength, truth, morality, love, sacrifice, goodness in Nature and in the heart of Man.

### **The great mystery of Adhwaitha**

*Adhwaitha* means, all this is *Aathma*; then, why this apparent variety? Variety is the picture drawn by the delusion that you are the body, that you are the 'character' the drama has cast on you! In the drama, you sing and speak, weep and laugh, always aware that you are yourself and not what the apparel and acting make you appear to be. Chandramathi bursts into tears when her 'son' dies of cobra bite; the spectators weep at her plight, but the person who acts so well is untouched by grief. The reflection of the Moon in the lake is broken into bits but the Moon above is unaffected. Do not yield to grief because the reflection is broken; it is due to the weakness of the medium, water. So too, when you think you are the body, which grows and withers, is elated or disheartened, you see the reflection as broken; but the genuine thing, the Reality is unaffected.

You must have heard the beggar at the door calling out in his crude jargon, "I am *anaadhi*" meaning "I am *anaatha*". He wants to tell you that he has none to support him but, his words mean, "I am beginningless." Yes, he is revealing to you the Great Mystery that makes all beings his kin! And then, when he says, "*bhikshaam dehi*," you take him to mean, "Give me alms." Just consider the word he uses for 'give'. He calls out "*dehi*" meaning also, he who is the owner of this body, he who resides in this body, the *Aathma*. He is teaching you that you are really the *Aathma*, wearing the apparel of the body and so, you and he are One.

### **Bhakthi is not a matter of beads**

Dwell always on high thoughts. When air fills a football, it takes the form of the ball. When it fills a balloon, it takes the form of the balloon, oval, sausage shaped, spherical or spheroid. The

mind assumes the form of the objects with which it is attached. If it gets fixed on small things, it becomes small; if on grand things, it becomes grand. The camera takes a picture of whatever it is pointed at: so take care before you click. Discriminate before you develop attachment. If you have attachment towards wife and children, land and buildings, bank accounts and balances and when these decline, you will come to grief. Develop attachment towards the Universal and you too will grow in love and splendour.

That attachment must be sincere and steady. *Bhakthi* is not a matter of beads and beards; nor does worship consist of flowers and camphor; to address people immersed in these as "*bhakthas*" (devotees) is blasphemy. With crooked vision, character, thoughts and feelings---how can *bhakthi* sprout or bloom? Do not be led away by bell ringing or incense-smoke. The field must be cleared of bush and thorns; it must be ploughed and furrowed; watered and dampened to depth; then the seeds have to be planted into the earth; scattered on the surface, they do not germinate. Plant the seeds, water the field, remove the weeds; keep away stray cattle, manure the plants; dust them with pesticides, and then, you can collect the crop. *Saadhana* (spiritual discipline) means and includes all these steps.

You are judged by your spiritual discipline; not by the number of temples you have gone into or the quantity and cost of the offerings you have made in those shrines. Do not calculate the length of time you have spent in the company of the Lord's Name, and exult. Calculate rather the length of time you have wasted, away from that contact, and repent. Have that name ever in your thoughts and you can brave any calamity. Remember how Seetha braved the taunts, insults and tortures of the aggressors in Lanka; what was it that gave her the mental stamina? It was *Raamaanaama* and nothing else. *Kaama* and *krodha* cannot co-exist with *Raamaadhyaana* (meditation on Raama).

### **Bad karma will spoil saadhana**

The action of *Raama dhyaana* will remould your mind. The most tasty dish will become uneatable if a drop of kerosene falls on it. One bad karma will spoil the spiritual discipline. Siddhartha, who was kept long inside the palace grounds, away from the world of grief, asked for a chance to go into the city and when, during that ride through the carefully cleaned streets, he saw one after the other the harrowing scenes of illness, old age and death and the tonic sight of a monk, his *buddhi* (intellect) was corrected in a trice. *Buddhih karmaanusaarini*---*intellect follows action*---it is said. The efforts of his father to keep him isolated and happy were foiled; Truth dawned on him in a moment; and the train of events which his father dreaded for 22 years did happen. Siddhartha left his wife and child and sought to find the secret of Liberation for all mankind.

Kamsa was himself driving the chariot whereon his newly wedded sister and her husband sat; he was riding on the crest of a wave of unmixed joy; just then, he heard a celestial Voice chiding him for that joy. It said, her eighth child would slay him. That sentence transformed him into a monster of hate. That one *karma* affected him so much. Engage yourselves in action that will direct your intellect and mind along divine and sublime channels. Win Grace through *karma*; do *karma* that will win Grace. If the lamp does not burn, it proves that you have not lit it. The Lord is neither benignant nor malignant; your progress is reflected back as Grace; your decline is reflected back as its absence. The mirror just reflects. It has no partiality or prejudice.

### **Immerse yourself in meditation**

Always have the meaning and purpose of life in view. And experience that purpose and that meaning. You are That; that is the truth. You and the Universal are One; you and the Absolute are One; you and the Eternal are One. You are not the Individual, the Particular, the Temporary. Feel this, know this. Act in conformity with this. Some one came to Ramanamaharshi and asked him thus' "Swaami! I have been doing intense *dhyaana* for the last 18 years; but I have failed to realise the Ideal on which my *dhyaana* is concentrated. How many more years should I continue thus?" Ramana answered, "It is not a question of a certain number of years. You have to continue *dhyaana* until the awareness that you are doing *dhyaana* disappears. "Forget the ego; let it melt and merge, with all its layers of consciousness.

There are some who, while meditating, strike at the mosquitoes that pester them! No, Immerse yourselves in *dhyaanam* until you transcend all physical and mental urges and impulses. Vaalmeeeki was covered by the ant-hill that grew over him; people discovered him by the sound of *Raama naama* that emanated from that mound. Ignore the *deha* (body) so that you may discover the *dehi* (indweller); do not get engrossed in outer finery but delve deep and discover the inner splendour.

What does the *saadhana* of ignoring the body imply? It means turning aside from the temptations of the sense, the overcoming of the six enemies: desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride and malice (*kaama krodha, lobha; moha, madha and maatsarya*). Anger turns a man into a drunken brute. The other impulses are equally vicious. Seek only salutary karma; eat only *saathwik* food--food that will not disturb the equanimity you earn through your *saadhana*. Do not break the even tenor of your spiritual practice. Remember how Raamadas never gave up his *Naama saadhana* in spite of jeers and jail.

You can be really healthy and happy only when you are immersed in the Universal. If you are in aathma *thathwa* (essential nature of the Self), you will be fresh, happy and healthy. When you separate, and feel that you are in *deha thathwa* (principle of body), you start declining.

### **Offer God the fragrance of your virtue**

The Bhaagavatha says that Krishna was stealthily eating the butter that was stored in the houses of the gopees. What is the significance of this behaviour? Did he go about stealing butter because he had no butter at home? It is not butter that he coveted; it is the cream of virtue kept in the (heart) pot that he wants. That cream is the genuine Aathma, secured after vigorous churning, And, was it 'stealing' that he did ? He is 'Hari', He who robs, who appropriates. He sees all, Himself unseen. As soon as He enters, you awake, your inner consciousness is alerted. You offer Him the fragrance of your virtue, the courage of your heart, the wisdom of your experience. That is the kind of thief He is! Cultivate love towards Him. Likes and dislikes are more the products of habit and training. The senses drag you away from Him; but, do not yield; they will lie low soon. Sincere yearning born of steady discrimination--this alone can help you. I bless you that you may grow in these from day to day. I won't keep you longer. Sing a Naamaavali or two and then, you can disperse.

*Prashaanthi Nilayam, 29-1-1965*