

25. Plenty of holy men

Matters of the spirit are matters of experience. Devoid of the underground stream of steady striving for experience, man's innate divinity and holiness are fast forgotten and ignored. This can be regained by means of *Vedhaantha* (philosophy based on *Vedhas*) and a proper study of the *Shaastras*. Some people carp at *Vedhaantha* and say that it makes men lazy and encourages them to run away from their responsibilities; but, the first responsibility of every one is to himself; he is the source and centre of all his attention.

This kind of cynical criticism has become a fashion nowadays; it only reveals the ignorance and egoism of the critic. They say that the *Sanyaasins* (monks) are like mistletoes fattening on the toils of others, a set of idle parasites. But, to condemn the institution of *Sanyaas* on the basis of a few individuals is wrong. Who can judge the inner urges, except the Lord? You may be misled by the quantity, variety and cost of flowers, or the tears flowing from the eyes, or the hymns sung by the tongue, or the hours of listening to divine stories that a man might have to his credit; but it is the resident within who knows the genuineness of the feeling. There are countless numbers of such devoted men and women in this country, even now. I know, because, I am with them.

The person who spoke on Saint Thyaagaraaja lamented that such saints are now so rare. They are not rare. There are many now, alive and happy. Those who seek will be able to discover them. Seek the company of the good, the seekers, the aspirants, the detached. Then, you will see the light. Listen to holy discourses; read sacred books. Your effort and the atmosphere of the place, these two will lead you to success. Holy place, holy river, holy company, holy day---when these conjoin, it is the chance of a lifetime; make the fullest use of it.

Be ever in contact with God

Now, holy days have become holidays when you make merry, eat your fill, go out on picnics and hikes, and generally indulge in sensual pleasures, which end in dejection, disease and discord. The place has a subtle and powerful influence on the man. Maarkandeya held tight the Shivalinga and so, Yama's noose bound both himself and Shiva; that was the reason the boy was saved. The story teaches you to be ever in contact with God, for you do not know when the noose will be thrown. Attach yourself to the Highest, call it by any name, conceive it in any form. But, remember, without *Dharma* you cannot attain it. Don't be led away into the by-paths; keep to the highway.

If you yield to *alpabuddhi* (inferior thoughts), you will be losing the *akhanda-thathwa* (principle of the Universal). Never give ear to slander, ridicule or praise. They are all bubbles on the surface. They are mere manipulations of words, the magic of vocabulary, the tamash of style, the dance of phrases. Learn the means of winning Grace and earning purity from those who know; the elders, the scholars who have put their learning into practice. Don't despair; don't hesitate.

Grace can wipe off the past; *Sath-prayathna*, *Sath-sanga* and *Sadaachara* (good self- effort, good company, good practices) can ensure happiness in future. The three cardinal principles of the Hindu faith are: Belief in a series of births: belief in *Avathaaras* of the Lord for the re-establishment of *Dharma* and the transformation of those who have strayed from it; and belief in *karma*, the fact of every activity having its inevitable consequence and of human destiny being shaped by cumulative effect of all these consequences. *Karma* is the cause of births, the *jeevi*

(soul) being compelled to undergo another ordeal for clearing its accounts and becoming free of both credit and debit.

Develop the inner joy that is everlasting

You might ask, "How is it, then, that, while in this life, we do not remember any single event that happened to us in previous lives?" It is something like a man knowing too many languages; when he speaks in Tamil, no Telugu word will come to his mind; when he speaks in English, his thoughts will be framed in that language only. If you forget this birth, and concentrate on the other, then you can know. But, you seldom give up the attachment to this life!

A volcano throws up its lava on the screen of the picture house; a dam bursts and the flood waters it had impounded roar along towards the sea, submerging vast states; but the screen is not burnt, nor does it get wet in the least. The screen is the truth; the film is an illusion, however realistic it was, however genuine the feelings it aroused. Know this and so direct your life that this knowledge is the background of all your actions. Thus, you will have great peace and great joy.

With a mind full of egoism and hatred, you can never hope to have peace and joy. A tree that bore plenty of fruits dried quickly; some one attributed it to the evil eye of the passers-by. Others said, perhaps it was not watered; but, the owner asserted he was watering it adequately. No one could diagnose the reason, except a forest officer, who said, "The roots have been affected by a pest," There was a *bhaktha* coming to the previous *sarira* (body) called Raadhika at Shirdi; he was always suffering misery, but, only for those who observed his external movements. At heart, he was supremely happy. Develop that inner joy; it is everlasting, full. The seed of the Lord's name has been sown

It is now two years since the Prashaanthi Vidwan-mahaasabha was started. So, it is natural that the question is asked, "What has it achieved?" You will be wrong if you thought I am having all these Pandits about Me and that I am going from place to place with them to get publicity for Myself or for them. I do not need any publicity, nor do they. They have to know themselves and they have to help you to know yourselves, that is all. The *Vedhas* and the *Shaastras* speak only of this. But, you must admit, because it is patent everywhere, that a great change has come as a result of the Prashaanthi Vidwanmahaasabha. Hitherto, even in these parts, the audience for spiritual talks could be counted on the fingers of one hand, one could easily tick off the names of the persons who usually attend. But, look at the flood of eager humanity that gathers now! The appetite for spiritual knowledge has increased tremendously.

This is some progress. The seeds have sprouted; they have become evident in the hearts of the people. Now, by careful fostering, the harvest can be won. The seed of the Lord's name has been sown in lakhs of hearts; *the poshana* (fostering) is your duty; its *rakshana* (protection) is My pleasure. Fostering the saplings is your duty; protecting them from harm is My pleasure. The Pandits too, must share with the hungry and the thirsty the knowledge that they have, the inspiration that they alone can give.

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