

39. Vitamin G

In the *Sharannavarathri* Festival, we have here *Vedhapaaraayana*, *yajna* and recitation of *manthras* and *sthothras*. Like radio waves, these carry to all quarters the prayers and praise they contain. Just as a *yanthra* (instrument) is needed to listen to the omnipresent radio programmes, a *manthra* is needed to communicate with the higher regions and their denizens. This journey of the word and the voice are far more subtle and significant than the journeys to the moon or around the world in space. Man must understand that the journey to his own inner realm and the discovery of its treasures are far more important than these engineering feats. That inner journey spreads love; this outer journey infects continents with fear.

Man is now mistaking his illness and running after wrong drugs. Or rather, he is mistaking the very nature of his health. He is quite well but he is deluded into the belief that he is unwell and that he must quickly acquire the panacea recommended by the most readily available quack, who flatters you by giving you just the drug that you desire most. Discovering that there is nothing the matter with one, is the illumination one gets, with the dawn of spiritual knowledge.

Just as there are four stages in the life of everyone---boyhood, youth, middle age and old age--- there are four stages in his acquisition of *jnaana* (knowledge of Supreme Being), contemporaneous with these stages. *Jnaana* is the ripeness of the fruit; which is the consummation of a long process, from the first appearance of the flower in the tree. The first stage is the apprentice stage: being trained by parents, teachers, elders; being led, guided, regulated, warned, reprimanded. The second stage is the junior craftsman stage: eager to establish happiness and justice in society, eager to know the world and its worth and values. The third is the craftsman stage: pouring out energies to reform, reconstruct, remake the human community. The fourth stage is the master stage' realisation that the world is beyond redemption by human effort, that one can at best save oneself by trying to reform the world, that it is all His Will, His Handiwork, His World, Himself.

Let the sense of equality feed all your activity

Along with this dawn of *jnaana*, there must also dawn the will to direct all activity in the light of that vision. When you realise that He is the innermost Reality of all, you can worship one another, with as much fervour as you now employ when you worship an idol. But, since the worship of an idol is more feasible, this is recommended; but the attitude must be that He who is in the idol is also equally found in all. Have the sense of equality feeding all your activity, but do not make all your acts equal with all, and for all.

A razor cannot be used for shaving a pencil or a beard or a wooden plank, without distinction. But a beggar who begs for alms, a King who prays for victory, are both beggars at the footstool of God. In order to test whether the King had a correct sense of spiritual values, once both Bharthrhari and Gopichand went to the Court and sent word that they were badly in need of bread. The King was delighted that these great men had come to his capital city. He sent a sizeable quantity of bread; but, when it was handed over to them they fell to fighting for shares. This was reported to the King and he declared immediately that the visiting monks could not be Bharthrhari and Gopichand. They would have no trace of greed or envy, he said. So the saints knew that the King was wise.

Minimum qualification for God's Grace

Reading that Krishna advises in the Geetha the giving up of all *Dharmas*, an enthusiastic devotee gave up all obligations and limits, but he had to be told that one obligation still remained and could not be given up, if the Grace of God had to be secured: *maam ekam sharanam vraja* "Surrender to Me only". When that surrender is complete and all acts, words and thoughts are dedicated to Him, along with all their consequences, then, the Lord has promised that He will free you from sin and sorrow. The *Aashrama Dharma*, the *Varna Dharma* and the various *Kula Dharmas* (dharma of ascetics, social groups and families) and *Deshaacharas* (customs and laws of the land)--are all means and methods of fostering this attitude of dedication and surrender.

Just as you prescribe minimum qualifications for every profession, the minimum qualification for Grace is surrender of egoism, control over senses and regulated *Aahaara* and *vihaara* (food and recreation). A man is made or marred by the company he keeps. A bad fellow who falls into good company is able to shed his evil quickly and shine forth in virtue. A good man falling into evil company is overcome by the subtle influence and he slides down into evil. The lesser is overpowered by the greater. A drop of sour curd transforms milk, curdling it and separating the butter, turns it into whey. Sacred books are also equally valuable for this transmuting process, but they have to be read and pondered upon and their lessons have to be put into daily practice. The *Gaayathri* is the *Vedhic Manthra* whispered in the ear during the ceremony of initiation into spiritual life. The *Gaayathri* is a prayer to the Supreme Intelligence that is immanent in the Universe to kindle the intelligence of the supplicant. It is a prayer that can well be spoken with yearning by men and women of all creeds and climes in all centuries. But, some people condemn it as meaningless jumble of words, and, though initiated, they neglect it. Repetition of this *manthra* will develop the intelligence.

Illness is caused more by malnutrition of mind

When the mind of man is unattached to the ups and downs of life, but is able to maintain equanimity under all circumstances, then even physical health can be assured. The mental firmament must be like the sky, which bears no mark of the passage through it of birds or planes or clouds. Illness is caused more by malnutrition of the mind than of the body. Doctors speak of vitamin deficiency; I will call it the deficiency of Vitamin G, and I will recommend the repetition of the Name of God, with accompanying contemplation of the glory and grace of God. That is the Vitamin G. That is the medicine; regulated life and habits are two-thirds of the treatment, while the medicine is just one-third only.

Man must reveal the divine qualities of love, humility, detachment and contentment. If he does not, he becomes worse than a beast and more deadly. There was a dog that pleaded with Raama for a place in the aerial car in which he returned to Ayodhya. When Raama asked the reason for this strange behaviour and request, it said that man had become worse than worms and fleas; he had started tormenting dogs, who were loyally serving him! One should so live that no pain is caused to other being through one's activities. And, one should be ever grateful for kindness received. Kaarthaveerya was treated with lavish hospitality by Sage Jamadagni but the wicked man coveted the *Kaamadhenu* (wish-fulfilling cow) that made the lavishness possible.

Bharthrihari, on the death of the queen, was so struck with remorse, that he wept and moaned on the cremation ground itself for days on end. Seeing his inconsolable plight, one sage came before him, with a mud pot in his hand. Right in front of the bereaved man, the pot slipped from his hand, fell on the hard ground and was broken. The sage wept and moaned and was inconsolable.

Bhartrihari consoled him and' said the broken pot cannot be made whole by any amount of lamentation. Suddenly, he realised the absurdity of his own behaviour and stopped crying; this was the purpose of the sage's ruse!

You come to Puttaparthi, listen to these discourses, nod approval and clap hands, in appreciation. But, when you pass through the gate on the way home, it all evaporates. Or, you apply the lessons you learn in an indiscriminate way and suffer. There was a merchant who used to attend discourses and when he heard a speaker say that cows should not be driven off while they are feeding, he looked on when a cow entered his shop and ate of a good portion of the grains he had kept for sale. Later, he was told that he should not take every bit of advice he received as valid for all occasions; and he advised his son, "Look here, you sit on the floor on a towel while listening to the discourse, is it not? When the discourse is over and you rise up, do you not wave the towel forcibly in the wind to shake off all the sand it collected? Shake off from your mind and brain all the ideas and advice you have collected during the discourse and then come home." If you do as that merchant advised, what is the benefit of coming and staying, hearing and being exhorted?

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