

41. Silence and solitude

Man is journeying through the stream of life from one act to another; it is one continuous activity, marked by *karma* throughout. But the pity is he does not know the correct technique of *karma*. The fruit depends upon the seed, the soil, the manure, the care, the fence. The fruit of *karma* has to take account of the tendencies and consequences of the activities in previous lives also. The potter takes clay and makes pots and pans; they are *mrnmaya*---of the earth, earthy. The potter, *Brahma*, makes men; they are *chinmaya*---of the nature of *Aananda*, *Sath* and *Chith*---absolute bliss, existence, consciousness. Note the difference and shape your activity accordingly. Act in accordance with what you profess to be; that is the real *Dharma*.

There was a consummate actor who went to the Darbaar of a king, in the role of a monk. The king honoured him as a great monk and asked him various questions on *saadhana* and philosophy, which he answered using profound vocabulary and appropriate terms. The king was very pleased and he ordered his Minister to bring a plate of gold coins as offerings to the saint. The monk spurned the gift. He said that as a *Sarvasanga parithyaagi*---one who has renounced all attachment and desire---he cannot even glance at it and left. The next day, the same actor came to the palace as a female artiste, a great dancer. Her dance was the most attractive exposition of the art, very orthodox and restrained. The king appreciated it highly and the Minister brought, forth the plateful of gold coins. The dancer refused to accept it, because it was too small a recompense for the skill exhibited! The king suspected from the voice that it was the *Sanyaasin* of the day previous that was standing before him as the female artiste. Finding that his surmise was correct, he asked him why he was asking for more today, when he had refused to take the same gift the previous day. The actor replied, "Yesterday, I was a *Sanyaasin* and so, it was my *dharma* to refuse; today, I am a dancer and so it is my *dharma* to earn as much remuneration as I can from my fans".

Practise meditation in silence and solitude

Man's *dharma* is to cultivate his faculties for the great adventure of realising his oneness with the basic substance of the Universe, a substance that is attributeless, but, yet is mistaken to have attributes like names and forms and functions. This is declared in the *Mahaavaakyas* (*Vedhic Dicta*) enshrined in the *Vedhas* and elaborated in the *Upanishads*. To get the mind and the intelligence fixed in that oneness, man must meditate on them in silence and solitude, under the guidance of a *Guru*. If the teacher himself gives the answers for the questions he asks, how can the pupil progress? If the pupil is left to himself, he would be helpless. If he is asked to scribble whatever he can, he can only doodle. So, the teacher has to hold his hand and train him in the movements. The skill of the hand and brain have thus to be reinforced by the guiding hand of the *Guru*. The pupil has to cultivate concentration. When attention flows in all directions, no progress can be made. A good teacher must love the pupil and lead him, step by step.

Practising meditation in silence and solitude, one can in due course establish silence and solitude in the heart, even in the busiest thoroughfares. Now, the *puja* room or domestic shrines are invariably found next to the kitchen; there, the smells of cooking attack the nostrils, the sounds of frying and boiling attack the ear, the mind is distracted by voices and noises. How can concentration grow in such an atmosphere? Silence has to be started with oneself; that is to say, one must talk less, and think more deliberately, more discriminatingly. One must try to empty the mind of impulses and prejudices and preferences. Thus, man must strive to reach down to his real nature or *dharma*, which is Divine, *Dharmaswaruupa* (righteousness personified).

One need not take to asceticism

This *sahaja-swabhaava* (innate nature) is to be found in children; at that stage man is untouched by the pulls and stresses of the senses. So, he revels in his own reality, that is, in joy, in *shaanthe* and in *prema*. Make that stage steady, so that you may lead a *dharmic* life. That is the *swadharna* of Man. *This, dharna* saves those who rely on it. That is why the Pakistan conflict ended, on the 22nd itself. This *Navaraathri* is the festival when the Mother, Durga, who defeated and destroyed the evil forces is propitiated and pleased; so, it was not cancelled here, as some people, who did not know that the conflict would end soon, did.

To discover one's reality and to dwell in that Divine peace, one need not give up the world and take to asceticism. There was a guru who advised one seeker to go to the forests and live there. "Go," he said. "How can you have peace in the market-square?" To another seeker, he said, "Stay where you are". The two seekers, later met and compared notes. "How is it that he gave such contradictory advice? Perhaps, we did not hear him correctly", they said and returned to him; but, he said, that his advice was based on the attainments of each of them and what was best for each.

Detachment is the crucial gain; one cultivates it either in the jungle or at home. When Shivaji came to the presence of Saint Tukaaraam and brought with him a decorated palanquin to take him with him to his capital city, Tukaaraam was rendered sad. "Why have you brought this stretcher? Which corpse are these men to bear?" he queried, in derision! Tukaaraam knew the *dharna* that a recluse should follow; he knew the dangers of yielding to the temptation for pomp.

A devotee is more than an emperor

There is no one higher than a *bhaktha* whose mind is fixed in the Truth. He is more than an emperor. So far as I am concerned, I give consideration to the *bhaktha*. Still, you may wonder why some are being given special seats and places here. You have heard the adage, "*Yatharaaja, thathaa praja*"---"*As the king, so are the subjects*". The rulers have to be brought here, so that they may see and hear, and know about things that matter, get inspired by the *bhakthi* that fills the air, so that through them it may be shared by the country at large. The laws they pass, and the administrative system that they operate are some of the means by which the ideals of the nation can be worked in practice. They have been selected by you for this purpose, with this end in view; they have your confidence and they have won the approbation of thousands of people and so they have to be treated with some consideration. Those thousands look upon them with some respect, and so, treating them with care is tantamount to treating those thousands with care. It is to give *aananda* to the *bhakthas* that I arrange this festival; I have no other wish. Do not muddy the pellucid waters of your faith by the slightest trace of doubt.

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