

22. Of Him, to Him, by Him

This day is dedicated to the worship of the *Naraakaara* (the Divine in human form) which the *Niraakaara* (the formless) assumed, in order to save man from the marshy terrain into which he had been drawn by the delusion which blinded his vision. Yama (God of death) can be countermanded by *samyama*; that is, death can be conquered by control of the senses, and of the desire that prod them on. When man forgets this fact and starts living as a slave of the senses, God out of His infinite mercy comes among men and guides him along the heavenly path into Himself.

Man has not evolved into the finely equipped animal that he is, so that he might eat, revel and sleep; he has to retrieve the meaning out of the meaningless, to attain liberation while in chains, to raise the *aathma* with the leverage of the *aathma itself--Uddhareth aathmaanaathmaanam*. How much land and how many bungalows can fill man's maw to satiety? Some clay or other, sooner or later, he will have to give up the accumulation and leave.

Some one had a hundred acres in the south; but he had an itching for more, at least a thousand. So he went in all directions seeking regions where he could get vast areas of uncultivated but cultivable land. At last, he came to a Himaalayan kingdom and the King gladly offered to give him all the land he hungered for; the only limit he placed was- his endurance. He said the man should start with the sunrise and start walking without tarrying; he should return to the starting point before the sun sets; all the land enclosed by his route, traced by his steps from start to finish, would be his. That was the generous offer the King made. The greedy migrant waited anxiously for the first rays of the rising sun and he started off on the circumference of a very wide circle, running in fact, until evening fell; he was so exhausted when he neared the starting point that within three yards of the starting spot, he dropped dead! His heart stopped beating. He had over-worked it in his mad race to appropriate as many acres as he possibly could before sunset.

Mental peace alone can generate health

Many people spend their years piling and piling, and then, are dragged away by death, ere they could preen themselves on the size of the pile. Money can purchase drugs but mental peace and content alone can guarantee health. Medical experts can be hired but life cannot be secured on lease. God incarnates to foster *saadhus*, it is said. By *saadhus*, they do not mean the dwellers in Himaalayan retreats; they mean the virtuous person who forms the inner reality of everyone of you, the outer appearance being but a mask which is worn to delude yourself into esteem. Every one is a *saadhu*, for he is *prema swaruupa*, *shaanthy swaruupa*, *amruutha swaruupa* (embodiment of bliss, peace and immortality). But, by allowing the crust of ego to grow thick and fast, the real nature is tarnished. By the action of *sath sang* (the company of God-minded persons), by systematic attention to self-control and self-improvement, man can overcome the delusion that makes him identify himself with the body and its needs and cravings.

When you feed the cow with fermented gruel so that it may yield more milk, the milk emits an unpleasant smell. When man engrosses himself too much with the trifles of the world, his conduct and character become unpleasant. It is indeed tragic to witness the downfall of the child of immortality, struggling in despair and distress. If only every one examines these: What are my qualifications? What is my position? They can soon realise their downfall. Will a tiger, however hungry, eat popcorn or monkey nuts? Aim at the goal which your lineage entitles you; how can

the parrot taste the sweetness of the mango if it pecks at the fruit of the cotton-tree? Let your effort be in keeping with the dignity of the goal. Never slacken effort, whatever the obstacle, however long the journey.

Do not postpone what you can do today

The goal will near you faster than the pace with which you near the goal. God is as eager to save you as you are eager to be saved; He is prema. He is *karuna* (loving and compassion), for all who flounder on the road. He is called *Bhaktha-ab-heesta-pradha* (He who grants the desires of the devotees). You say that I laugh within Myself, that I roll My hair on My fingers and draw them tight over My face-but let me say why. It is a sign of My *aanandha* over leaping its bounds, *aanandha* at the success of *bhakthas* in capturing My heart.

There was an emperor once who asked the sages who visited his palace, Who is the best among men? Which moment of time is most blessed? Which act is most beneficial? He could not get a satisfactory, answer for long. At last, his realm was invaded and he was defeated by rival forces and he had to flee into the jungle. There he fell into the clutches of a primitive tribe who selected him as a victim to their goddess. While in this precarious condition, he was seen by an ascetic, who rescued him and took him to his quiet hermitage where he and his students tended him lovingly back to health and happiness. Then he discovered the answers to his questions. The best among men is he who has compassion; the most blessed time is the 'present', this very second, and the best act is to relieve pain and grief. You decide to start *Naamasmarana* (remembrance of the Divine name) "next Thursday," as if death has assured you in writing that he will not call on you till that date. Do not postpone what you can do today, now, this very moment.

God intercedes in time to save the devotees

Now that I referred to *Naamasmarana*, I shall tell you another story. There was a merchant who was exhorted by his teacher to repeat the Name of the Lord; he pleaded he had no time to sit and repeat it: the shop took up all his time and energy. He had to go out a little away from the village every morning for answering the calls of nature. He spent about half an hour for this. So, the *Guru* asked him to use this time for the daily *smarana*. Hanumaan, the great *Raamabhaktha* (a devotee of Lord Raama) was passing through the sky, when he saw the merchant defecating and heard him repeat Raam Raam Raam while so engaged. Hanumaan was incensed at his impertinence; he was desecrating the Name by pronouncing it while unclean. So, he gave him a hard blow on the cheek and continued his journey to Ayodhya.

When he reached the Divine Presence and looked at the splendour-filled face of Raama, he noticed the swollen red print of a hand upon His cheek. Hanumaan was shocked and His grief was too deep for words. Raama told him, Hanumaan! Do not ask Me the name of the person who dealt this blow. I always anticipate the moment of calamity for my *bhakthas* (devotees) and I intercede in time to save them. That poor merchant, sitting outside the village, who was repeating My Name when you were coming here, could he withstand the terrible onslaught of your angry fist? The fellow would have collapsed on the spot. So, I intercepted the blow and received it on my own cheek, my dear Hanumaan. *Bhaktharakshana* (protection of devotees) is one of His main tasks. "'Yogakshemam Vahaamyaham'" (*welfare* and safety) is no empty assurance; it is the Vow of the Lord, and He is *Sathya-swaruupa*--very embodiment of Truth.

Dwell on the Supreme Love of the *gopees*

This is the day when you have to meditate upon the *Murali* (flute) of Krishna and the melody it aroused in the veins of mankind, animals, birds and plants, and even hills and rivers, rocks and sand-dunes. The *Naraakar* (God in human form) that appeared on this *Janmaashtami* (the birthday of Shri Krishna) gave the *Geethaagangodakam*-the sacred panacea of Ganges water, the Geetha eternally pure, capable of slaking the thirst and wiping off sins.

Dwell also on the *supreme prema* (Love) of the *Gopees*, their surrender of everything gross and subtle, of ego and egoistic attachment at the feet of the Sovereign *Purusha* or the *Purushottama*, the Supreme being. They spoke no word except prayer; they moved no step except towards God, they saw and heard only Krishna; they spoke only of Him, to Him, whoever might have been near them; Krishna had filled their hearts. He transmuted them into the most self-effacing group of devotees that the world has seen.

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