

23. The juggler behind this jugglery

If only the agony and toil now being experienced by man for keeping himself and his family in comfort and to accumulate the symbols of wealth and power are directed towards God, man can be infinitely more happy. The veil of *maaya* (illusion), however, hides from him the face of God which is shining from every being and thing around him. *Maaya* is of the nature of *thamas* (darkness and ignorance). In deep dreamless sleep, the self alone exists, but it is there supervened by *maaya* or *ajnaana* (ignorance) only. You are not aware then that you are *Brahmam*; that is the difference between the *jnaana* (spiritual wisdom) and the *sushupti* (deep sleep) stage.

The jnaani knows he is One with *Brahmam*; *the person in deep dreamless sleep does not know*. All persons experience it; so it is universal. It is not real, it is not explicable. We cannot pronounce it as *a-sath*, (non-existent), for its effects are everywhere; we cannot pronounce it as *sath* (existent), for when the Reality is experienced, there is no duality at all.

From the standpoint of wisdom, *maaya* is unreal; in the vision of the enlightened saint, *maaya* is absent. It is a peculiar, *anirvachaniya* (indescribable) phenomenon. To the *jnaani*, who has crossed the shores of change and difference, it is non-existent; to those relying on reason, it is inexplicable; to the ordinary man, it is a fact.

Maaya creates the universe; it spreads before the mind the vast paraphernalia of the objective world. It is a *narthaki* (juggler), an enchantress who entices the intelligence and traps the senses. This *na-rtha-ki* can be subdued by *kee-rtha-na* (mark the change of syllables). *Keerthana* is the concentrated contemplation of the glory of God. The mind is filled with admiration at a juggler's manipulations, so long as one does not know that it is willed and caused by the juggler; once it is known that all the tricks are enacted by him, one rests satisfied that it is mere *maaya*---temporary flashes, attractive displays which do not last. *Keerthana* reveals the juggler behind the jugglery and you know that He is capable of much more, for He has infinite wisdom, infinite power and infinite mercy.

You can make *Maaya* fall at your feet

As the shadow that you cast is reduced bit by bit with every step that you take towards the Sun, until the Sun shines right on the top of your head and the shadow crawls under your feet and disappears, so *maaya* too becomes less and less effective as you march towards *jnaana*. Then it is well established in your understanding and *maaya* falls at your feet and is powerless to deceive you further; it disappears, so far as you are concerned. Though you cannot know while in this dual world how *maaya* originated, you can know how it can be terminated and can succeed in exterminating its effects. *Maaya* has no beginning but it has an end, for him who wins the light by which the darkness can be negated.

A Guru once told his pupil to receive a precious gift, sweet beyond imagination, and preserve it free from ants, flies, rats, cats and men who lie in wait to remove it from his possession. The pupil did not keep it in a pot and put a lid over it; he ate it and it was safe in his stomach from external ravages. Seeing this, he gave him a *Mahaavaakya*, a profound spiritual truth expressed cryptically but sweetly, and asked him to take it in and enjoy its sweetness and refreshing taste. The *manana* and *nididhyaasana* (reflection and meditation) of the *Mahaavaakya* will develop the power of resistance against all doubts and diversions. When you pile up riches, fear and anxiety are also piling up in proportion. But pile up the rich treasure *Krishna-dhanam* and fear and anxiety disappear.

A merchant was once hauled before a magistrate for selling adulterated ghee which smelt bad and was a danger to health. Judgement was pronounced that he should either himself consume the entire quantity of ghee as a punishment, receive 20 stripes or pay a fine of a 100 *varaahas* (gold coins). He preferred the ghee and started drinking the stuff; but finding the smell was unbearable, he chose the stripes. He received about a dozen but he could not stand more. So, he finally told the magistrate that he might be let off with the fine. If only he had opted for it first, he could have avoided the foul drink and the excruciating pain. By his indecision, he had to taste the reek and the rod.

Man must opt to God, sooner or later

Similarly man does not opt for God in the beginning, when grief overtakes him. He has to opt for God, sooner or later; but he does not recognise the inevitability. Choose wisely. A merchant had four wives; he had to go to Bombay once on business for a long stay; he posted letters to them asking them what they wanted him to bring from Bombay

when he returned. The first wife (symbolic of *thamas* or dullness) wrote for some effective drugs which would ameliorate her physical illnesses; the second wanted him to bring fashion saris and choli pieces as well as jewels of Bombay design. Her behaviour marks her out as a symbol of the *raajasik* temperament. The third wife (the *saathwik* type) wrote that he should bring her some good books like *Dhyaaneshwari*, *Sai Sathcharitha*, etc. The fourth wife, however, (the *jnaani*, who had gone beyond the three *gunas*) wrote "I require nothing, I want only you." Of course, every one of them got what they had asked for; the fact one became the happiest of all. Have no desire, empty your mind of all cravings, become hollow and straight--be-come a flute and Krishna will breathe through you sweet melody to still the agitation of the world.

Burn away your sensual cravings like camphor

Cleanse the heart with the water of *prema* and the detergents prayer and contrition, so that the stains of desire might be removed. Then God will pour His Grace into it. You should give up *Iokabhraanthi* and *dehabhraanthi* (attachment to the external world and to the body), if you yearn for God. There is no use trying to have one foot in one boat and the other foot in another boat. You may be in this Prashaanthi Nilayam area for 20 or 25 years, but if you worry more about physical needs and comforts than *japam* and *dhyaanam*, your stay is a waste. You have made no progress at all. The waving of the camphor flame at the end of the *bhajan* sessions is to remind you that your sensual cravings must be burnt away without leaving any trace behind, and you must offer yourself to God for being merged with His Glory.

There was an old woman who had two grand-daughters, one a termagant and the other a modest girl. When they touched her feet before departure from her house, she blessed the termagant: "May the festoons and the auspicious Rangavalli drawings on your doorstep be ever fresh and untrodden, unwiped; may your purse be full, ever undisturbed." She meant, of course, to curse her with barrenness. She blessed the other girl, thus: "May your doorstep be unclean, may your purse be emptying fast," meaning that she would have a number of happy boisterous children, a mode of blessing for a married woman, usually given by a grandmother. On the face of it, the first one looks like a blessing and the other statement a curse. But, the inner meaning is different. This grannie blessed unasked; the modest and truthful person can also receive blessings out of the spontaneous Grace of the Lord, provided he is steady in his virtues. He should have no hypocrisy in his make up.

Obstacles are to be treated as ensuring safety

Have faith in yourself, your own capacity to adhere to a strict time-table of *saadhana*, your own ability to reach the goal of realisation. When you have no faith in the wave, how can you get faith in the ocean? A small lump of steel can become a beautiful efficient watch through the application of intelligence and skill; can man not be transmuted into a sage who has realised the ultimate through the instruments of *viveka* and *vairaagya*? *The* sacred books of all religions help man to reach his eternal Abode of Peace. All caravansarais are built to help the pilgrim on his way to the goal. He stays there for a time; he is instructed about the next stage of the journey and then he moves on refreshed by the stay.

Obstacles that come in the way are often treated with a certain amount of resentment by the pilgrims on the spiritual path; but these tests are to be treated as ensuring safety. You drive a nail into the wall to hang a picture thereon; but before hanging the picture, you try to see whether the nail has been well driven by shaking it; when you are certain it does not shake even when all your strength is used, you become bold enough to hang the picture on it. You must welcome tests because it gives you confidence and it ensures promotion.

Believe in your own experience

Do not give ear to what others say. Believe your experience. What gives you peace and joy (*Aathmaanandham*), believe in that. That is the real basis for faith. Why should you go about asking all and sundry whether something is either salt or sugar? Is it not foolish to wander about consulting people about this? Put a little on your own tongue; that will settle the matter. What you are now doing is to reject as salt what your own experience has proved to be sugar, simply because some one who has not tasted it like you proclaims it to be salt or because some one who is down with fever finds the thing bitter.

Gather wisdom from wherever you can acquire it; listen to the good things teachers of different denominations elaborate upon. I would advise you to weigh in your own mind, against your own experience, the teachings that you have heard. *Shravanam* (listening) should be followed and should be confirmed by *mananam* (reflection), on the implications, the background, the reservations, the limitations of what you have been told. Then there is another process: *Nididhyaasana--meditation* on the truth that you have garnered--planting it deep down in the consciousness to be made part of your spiritual make-up.

Prashaanthi Nilayam: Krishna Janmaashtami, 8-9-1966