

28. Economy and the elements

Dashara is the festival that celebrates the victory of the forces of good over the foes that resist the progress of man towards light. The sages who have decided on these festivals have a high purpose. They want us to imbibe the inner meaning and use each such day as a step in *saadhana*, as a reminder of the journey which each person has to undertake alone to the Feet of the Lord. The forces of good (*devaas*) are combating with the forces of evil (*asuraas*) in every living being and if they only rely on *Mahaashakthi*, the great Divine Force that fosters and fends the Universe, they can easily win and reach the goal.

People try' to reform the world without making any effort to reform themselves; for, it is easier to give advice and admonish others than take the advice and advance ourselves. The others are fundamentally reflections, whereas the original, namely, you yourself have to improve your shape! Strengthen the inner urges towards virtue and goodness; become impregnable there; then you can set about reforming the others.

I shall tell you of one form of worship which will endow you with divine strength. Godhead expresses itself initially as the five elements, the sky, the wind, the fire, the water and the earth. All creation is but a combination of two or more of these in varying proportions. The characteristic nature of these five elements are: sound, touch, form, taste and smell; cognised by the ear, the skin, the eye, the tongue and cite nose. Now, since these are saturated with .the divine, one has to use them reverentially and with humility and gratefulness.

Nature is in essence Divinity itself

Use them intelligently, to promote the welfare of yourself and others; use them with moderation and with the idea of loving service to the community, to all. They are all free and full of precious potentiality. Appreciate the plenty and the preciousness. You know from experience that excessive quantities of wind or fire or water are injurious to health. Drinking more water than needed is a torture; inhaling more air is suffocating. Fire in moderation can warm or serve to heat and melt; but, beyond a certain limit, it is a holocaust, liven sound, beyond a certain limit, is a calamity, a weapon which can distract and drive people mad.

So, efficient use of these is itself a form of worship. The body is equipped with mechanisms which ensure a steady degree of warmth, beyond which or beneath which man cannot be healthy and active. *Prakrithi* (Nature) is in essence Divinity itself, *lshaavaasyam idam sarvam*: all this is divine. *Vaasudevassarvamidam*: all this is Vaasudeva, God. So, tread softly, move reverentially, utilise gratefully.

There was an ascetic once who felt an intense desire for milk; he decided to pray to God, either tot its fulfilment or for its destruction. He knew that the Lord was reclining on *anantha* (thousand-headed serpent) on the Ocean of Milk and so he chose to pray to Him in that form, as Naaraayana. Though the original purpose of the ascetic's *thapas* (penance) was the purely physical need for milk, the Lord was so pleased with his steadfastness that, after proper trials and tests, He granted him Liberation itself. The man who initiated thapas for milk was rewarded with a permanent: denial of mother's milk. That is the greatness of the Grace of God. God in His mercy took pity on him and felt he was wasting his efforts in the pursuit of a cup of milk a day.

One must develop deep detachment. It is no use becoming so enthusiastic, to renounce some food or drink to which you have become bound, when you hear a discourse or when some

religious text is expounded within hearing. Detach yourself from all that keeps you away from God.

Maintaining silence is a step in *saadhana*

You feel the presence of God when silence reigns. In the excitement and confusion of the marketplace, you cannot hear His Footfall. He is *Shabdabrahma*, resounding when all is filled with silence. That is why I insist on silence, the practice of low speech and minimum sound. Talk low, talk little, talk in whispers, sweet and true. When you want to place a heavy thing on the ground, place it with care, do not drop it from a height and make great noise. Do not drop your bed from a height; bend and place it slowly, where you want to spread it. Examine each act of yours and see that you execute it with minimum noise. Transact all dealings with minimum speech. Do not shout to a person standing far; go near him or beckon to him to approach you. Loud noise is sacrilege on the sky, just as there are sacrilegious uses of earth and of water.

This is the reason why we have certain disciplines at the Prashaanthi Nilayam, which you are all expected to follow. Maintaining silence, as a step in *saadhana* which you learn here and practise wherever you go, is the most patent of these rules. Also, emphasis on the wise use of water and electricity, of earth space all around. You must see that your attention, when you are doing *bhajan* or listening to a discourse, is not divided between the task in which you are engaged and the pots and pans that you have brought with you. See that their safety is ensured and then come; or, better still, escape from undue attachment to material possessions. Then you are advised to spend time in meditation *or japam* or the quiet pursuit of *Naamasmarana*; for peace and joy are not to be found in external nature; they are treasures lying hidden in the inner realms of man; once they are located, man can never again be sad or agitated. So, use this holy atmosphere, this splendid chance, these precious days to the fullest. With every inhalation, utter the name of God; with every exhalation, utter the name of God. Live in God, for Him, with Him. That is the Message of the Prashaanthi Flag I am hoisting now.

Dashara, 15-10-1966

The lotus, born in slime and mud, rises up through the water and lifts its head high above the water; it refuses to get wet though water is the element which gives it life!

Be like the lotus

Sathya Sai Baaba