

## 19. The journey in the jungle

THE glory of Bhaarath is indescribable. Its people have reached the Himaalayan heights of spiritual endeavour and handed down vast treasures of wisdom for all mankind. But of late, little men search for coal in the diamond mine! Children of this land must seek and secure the gems and be proud of the achievements of their forefathers. The *Vedhaantha Shaasthra* (spiritual science) is the basic science for the happiness of the individual and of the community of man. It preaches unity, peace and the existence of the Divine in man.

Three texts are considered authoritative by the seekers of this land: the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavadgeetha* and the *Brahmasuuthras*. These three teach the essentials for the higher life of the spirit. In order to make the teaching clear to the uninitiated, three great commentators, one after the other, wrote elaborate interpretations of these texts, and since each of them had one particular viewpoint, the three saw in the selfsame texts three different but not divergent paths to the goal of liberation. Shankaraachaarya elucidated them from the *Adhwaithic* (non-dualistic) point of view, Raamanujaachaarya from the *Visishthaadhwaithic* (qualified dualistic) and Madhwaachaarya from the *Dhwaithic* (dualistic) point of view.

*Dhwaitha* philosophy or the dualistic point of view declares that the *Jeevi* (individual) is *Jeevi* and *Dheva* (Universal) is *Dheva* and the twain shall ever be only two. *The Adhwaitha* school of philosophy declares that there is only one Entity (*Dheva*) and that the *Jeevi* is a false improvisation which ignorance conceives, because it is not able to realise the Universal which alone exists. There are no two; *Adhwaitha* means 'No-two.' *Visishthaadhwaitha*, special or peculiar 'no-two-ness,' declares that *Jeevi* is a limb of the Universal, a component, but a distinct component of the One.

### **Faith should be patent even when suffering**

All three are genuine paths to the same goal; and, those who follow one cannot change over to another all of a sudden. A car cannot change over to another all of a sudden. A car cannot fly in the air, nor can a plane taxi along the road to the destination. 'I am the Son,' 'God is My Father,' 'I and My Father are one'---these declarations of Christ are significant in this context. As one's vision gets clearer and sharper, one's knowledge of oneself and the Universal in which he is involved becomes clearer, sharper and truer, until it becomes the very breath, the very core of his existence.

There was a famous scholar once who earned great fame as a *Vedhic* exponent, but no one could guess his caste. Many suspected that he was not a Brahmin, but there was no means of discovering. At last, the wife of a *Pandith* said she could easily solve the problem. The scholar was invited for a feast at the place and when he was fast asleep after a full repast, she applied to the sole of his foot a red-hot brand at which the *Vedhic* scholar yelled "Allah." Thus it was discovered he was a Muslim. Faith should not be a matter of exposition only; it should be patent even when you yell in pain.

Pathanjali in his *Yogasuuthras* says: "*Yogah Chiththa vriththi nirodhaha*"---"*Yoga* is restraining the agitations natural to the mind." Man alone is endowed with the equipment needed to establish mastery over the senses. Birds, beasts and other species have no such capacity to discriminate and renounce. They act on instinct or impulse; they cannot argue, assess, accept or reject.

### **Stick to your innate nature whatever may happen**

A hermit was one day bathing in the Ganga, when he saw floating downstream on a piece of wood a scorpion. This is God encased in the scorpion form and name, he felt; he wanted to save the scorpion. So, he took it on his palm; but, when it stung him, he dropped it on the waters. Then he was stricken with remorse and so, he lifted it up again. Thus it stung him five or six times; but, he persisted in his mission of mercy and at last, managed to drop it on dry land so that it could go its way, alive and happy. Many people watched his efforts and laughed at him for his stupidly exaggerated sympathy. The hermit told them that the scorpion had taught him a lesson and he was thankful for it. They asked him what it was. He said: "Stick to your innate nature, whatever may happen---that is what it has taught me." Its nature is to sting; it stung, regardless of whom or when.

Man's nature is to achieve *Jnaana*; *Aanandha* is man's essence. Love is the bloodstream that sustains him; peace is the vision that guides and directs him. That is the reason why he is addressed as '*Amrithasya puthra*,' in the *Upanishads*---he is the son of immortality; he is eternal; he has no birth nor death. In the *Geetha*, Krishna declares that among the mountains, He is Himagiri, the Himaalayas. From this, you should not infer that Krishna was a patriot who spoke a good word about a physical feature of His mother-country. To reach the Himaalayas, the abode of the pure, white, cool, snow (symbol of the *Saathwik* virtues) you have to pass through Haridhwar (the gate way of God-awareness) and through Hrishikesha (control of the senses). Then only can you be the liberated soul, which is of the same essence as He. That is the inner meaning of this statement by Krishna. Unless you know the inner and the correct meaning, faith will be uncertain and practice spasmodic.

### **The three tragedies and the cure to overcome them**

The consequence of avoiding the knowledge and practice of *Vedhaantha* is the increase of three tragedies: *Paapam*, *Thaapam*, *Ajnaanam* (Sin, Suffering and Ignorance). The Name usually given to the Reality that you are, namely, Raama, is the cure for all three. *Aathma* is known as *Aathmaaraama* because Raama means that which pleases and nothing confers such vast inexhaustible joy as the *Aathma*. So, the word Raama means the *Aathma*. That word consists of three components: *Ra*, and *ma*. '*Ra*' is the mystic representative of *Agni* (Fire) principle; it burns sin into ash, '*a*' is the symbol of *Suurya* (Sun) principle; it destroys the darkness of ignorance. '*Ma*' is the symbol of *Chandra* (Moon) principle; it cools the *Thaapam* or heat of suffering. So, '*Raama*' overcomes all the three tragedies and reveals the Truth, the Beauty and Goodness. Repeat the Name, Raama with this significance in mind and you can feel its effect very soon.

Man is *Aathmaswaruupa* (of the nature of *Aathma*), which is Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Peace and Love. But he craves against his nature, for the false, the fleeting, the crude, the inert and the chaotic. This is demeaning and disgraceful. Man must turn his face away from these and seek in himself the source of strength and joy. He must always have in view God, of whom he is an expression, when he does any act.

The *Kannakaanda* of the *Vedhas* which prescribes *Yaagas* and *Yajnas* (*Vedhic* rituals of sacrifice) is designed to secure for man the Grace of God and not, as is often assumed, a happy life in Paradise. The prompting should arise not from desire for Paradise, but from desire to obtain Grace, to dedicate the *Yoga* to God, leaving the benefits therefrom to the will of the Bestower. Nachiketa taught his father this superior outlook on the subject of *Yaaga* and *Yajna*. The emphasis must be not merely on ritual correctness, but unconditional surrender to the God

who is invoked and propitiated in these rituals.

### **Sacrifice the animal characteristics in yaaga**

For example, the texts speak of *Bhuthabali*---offerings to the Elements, as a rite to be observed. The common meaning of *bali* is sacrifice of an animal, but the correct meaning of *bali* is a tax, a tribute, an impost. It is from the taxes paid by the people that the government is able to provide various services and comforts for better living. So too, it is from the consolidated funds of these *balis* that the Divine in the elements are providing humanity the benefits they derive, which will facilitate the acquisition of *jnaana* (spiritual knowledge). In the *Yaagas* and *Yajnas*, *Bhuthabali* forms an important rite. Sacrifice the animal characteristics like pride, hatred and passion and save yourselves.

When you go to a shop to provide yourself with something you need, you know that you cannot get it without paying its price. You have come here in order to get some inspiration, or information, or some glimpse of the inner treasure that you possess and of the means of benefitting by it---call it *Aathmasaakshaathkaara*, *Moksha*, *Aathmathathwa* or Liberation, *Nirvaana* or anything else. You have come to this shop for it; we are selling the thing you need. But you are hesitant to pay the price. "The mouth is closed tight when the bit and the bridle are brought; it opens wide when gram or grass is brought" is said of horses. It should not be said of men. So, when you come to gatherings like this you must come, aware of the precious ware that is here available, and anxious to assimilate as much as possible. Eager attention now, reflection later on what has been heard---that is the price you have to pay.

### **There is no use of reading without practising**

Reflect and put into practice what you recognise as beneficial in what you have listened to. Practice gives you the golden harvest of blissful experience. If you spend all your time in erecting the fence, when are you to raise the crop? When you spend all your time in reading about agriculture and of the excellent crops that can be got by using high yielding strains of seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, etc., but do not plough, or sow, or spray or dig or pull out the weeds, how can the granary be full? Reading, reciting, listening---these are not enough; practise is what is needed.

If you are told that Nachiketa did this or Svetaketu said that, of what avail is it? Unless you adopt them as your ideals, exemplars, guides, these *Upanishads* and scriptural texts are only fairy tales! Try to understand their steadfastness, their faith, their sense of values, their virtues and their uprightness. And yearn to acquire them. They only can we have another Nachiketa and another Svetaketu. Or else, in the entire course of human history, there will be only one Nachiketa and one Svetaketu!

### **Learn lesson from the events around you**

You have seen hundreds of funerals; but no lesson has been learned. Buddha saw but one. It changed the course of his life and opened a new chapter in the history of the world. You have seen long processions of *Sanyaasins*; Buddha saw only one *Sanyaasi*. You have seen sick men by the hundreds. The renunciation of the *Sanyaasins*, the suffering of the sick, the pitiable condition of the aged---these made profound impression on Buddha. He left his palace, his wife and new born child to seek the remedy for the miseries of life. If you cultivate a mind that will welcome such transforming impressions, these discourses will benefit you.

When all the millions who gather all over this ancient land to listen to spiritual discourses, put

into practice a tenth of what they hear, Bhaarath will rise once again to the pinnacle of spiritual glory. But do not despair when confronted by the obstacles, the atmosphere, the handicaps, the dissensions and the doubts. They are all good omens, no unpropitious ones. You will soon delight in the restoration of *Sanaathana Dharma* to its pristine glory. This must happen, it will happen, it shall happen.

Meanwhile, without losing heart, you should determine your path and pursue it unwaveringly. A celebrated sage once advised an aspirant that he could get God-realisation, in thirty days, if he spent all the twenty-four hours in the contemplation of God. He went to his place, did as he was told and after thirty-six days (he continued for six more days!) he hurried to the sage, in great rage, for he was sadly disappointed. The sage asked him for an account of his daily schedule of activity during the thirty-six days. The disciple said, "Well, I rise from bed at four o'clock wash and get ready for *Dhyaana* by five, meditate until six, move about until eight, have something to eat, doze off for a few minutes, read a few pages, converse with friends for a while on the happenings in the world, bathe and drink something hot afterwards, etc., etc., with *Raamanaama* now and then, in the intervals." The sage answered, "Wonderful indeed! I did not anticipate you will behave so crudely. I directed you to use all the twenty-four hours in the contemplation of God, without wasting a single moment. I did not lay down any other schedule. Spend as much time as there is in thirty days, in the unalloyed contemplation of God; you will attain liberation."

#### **Meaning of unalloyed contemplation on God**

The best method of carrying out the sage's direction is to believe that this body is the residence of God; that the food you take is the offering you make to Him; your act of bathing is the ceremonial bathing of Him who is in you; the ground you walk on is his domain; the joy you gain is his gift; the grief you experience is His lesson. Remember Him ever, in sun and rain. day and night, asleep and awake. That is the unalloyed contemplation he advised the pupil to do.

Life is a jungle, where there is a great ideal of dry wood which harbours worms and insects. No one cleans the floor of the forest, or cuts away the undergrowth of bush and bramble. To wade through the thorns and the leech-ridden floor of the jungle, one has to wear boots. So too, one has to wear the boots of sense-regulation if one has to pass through the jungle of life, without harming oneself. This is the lesson I want you to carry home with you today, for pondering over and for practise.

*Prashanthi Vidwaanmahaasabha, Madras, 22-4-1967*