

35. The tricycle

BIRTH is the consequence of Kaama (desire, lust): Death is the consequence of *Kaala* (Time, the lapse of Time). The God of Desire (*Kaama*) was reduced to ashes by Shiva; the God of Time is *Kaala* or *Yama*. He was subdued by Shiva. So, one has to surrender to *Shiva* (God) if one has to escape the consequences of these two frightfully fatal forces. If between *Kaama* and *Kaala*, you take refuge in *Raama*, then you can escape the rigour. For *Raama* is the *Aathma* and *Aathma* (self, infinite) has no *Kaama* and is unaffected by *Kaala*.

Nature---both outer and inner---is ruled by the Sovereign *Aathma*, the Universal Soul, the *Paramaathma*. So, if you earn the Grace of the *Paramaathma*, Nature becomes your docile instrument. The body is nature; the vital air is *Paramaathma*. Living beings are pictures moving on the screen; the screen which is unaffected by the emotions, the raging fire or roaring floods that pass over it, is the *Paramaathma*. The worldly will be fascinated by the pictures, which through delusion, appear as if they are all real living incidents; the wise will concentrate on the screen, which is pure, white and clear. When water is poured into milk, it too takes on the nature of milk. Nature too appears to be capable of giving us stability, joy and peace; but, these are really the qualities of the Ultimate, the *Paramaathma*. Like the water mixed in milk, these qualities do not belong to Nature at all.

The three paths to attain God have equal efficacy

The Hamsa (a legendary swan) has the property of separating the milk from the water and drinking the milk only. So too, Paramahansa (realised person, who has achieved Truth) can separate the Illusory from the Real and experience the Bliss, communicated only by the Truth. Raamakrishna was a Paramahansa; he knew how to separate milk (Truth) from the water (untruth) added to it. When he was suffering from cancer of the throat, unable to swallow food, his disciples entreated him to pray to mother *Kaali*, that the cancer may be cured; they felt that *Kaali* will certainly answer the prayer if he but made it. But, Paramahansa refused to ask any such boon from God. His attention could not be diverted to any such low desire. "Why pray? If it is Her will, it will happen; if not, that too is Her will," that was the reply.

There is a great deal of useless discussion and controversy about the paths to attain God; some demarcate three paths, *Bhakti*, *Karma* and *Jnaana*. But there need be no controversy on their relative efficacy. They are like the confluence of the three holy rivers at Prayaag, the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the unseen underground Saraswathi. Ganga is the *Bhakti-maarga* (the Path of Devotion)---surrender, control of selfish, sensual pursuits; Yamuna is the *Karma-maarga* (Path of ritual and ceremonial worship, of dedicatory acts)---engaging in activities, irrespective of the benefits therefrom, doing all duties as worship, eliminating all attachment, all pride of I-am-the-doer type; Saraswathi is the *Jnaana-maarga* (the Path of Knowledge; of acquiring true awareness of the Reality)---cognising that ideas of bondage are all delusion that One is ever Free, devoid of change, full of Anandha. The three Paths are like the wheels of a tricycle---the wooden push-cart, which children are given, to train them to take the first steps, while learning to walk. *Bhakti* and *Jnaana* are two wheels in one line at the back and the forward one is *Karma*. The child learns the steps and walks towards the "City of Freedom from Fear and Illusion."

Each step of the Saadhana has to be understood well

Instead of relying upon mere enthusiasm to show the way, it is better that the spiritual aspirant receives guidance from a preceptor during the early stages. For, one has to observe the

disciplines, with the awareness of their meaning. *Dhyaana*, *Upaasana* (worship), *Pranava-recital*---these are best done under proper guidance; mere text-books may lead the saadhaka (spiritual aspirant) into disappointment. The significance of each step has to be appreciated in order to ensure the co-operation of all the faculties of man in the effort and ensure success. Mere mechanical imitation or automatic repetition is of no value.

Ask any one why green leaves are strung across the main entrance of the house; the reply will be, "It is the custom, since ages; every decent person does it." But, why? Few people know it; no one cares to know.

In the years gone by, every village home was stocked full of paddy bags, and so, the rats too inevitably infested every home. In one such home, they were celebrating every Full Moon Day the rite called *Sathyanaarayana* Puuja. This required the collection of good quantity of milk and ghee, the previous night itself. The rats attracted cats and the cats often preferred milk and ghee to the rodent food they are accustomed to. So, the milk and ghee were carefully kept in places unreachable to the cats. But, during the celebrations on the sacred day, the milk and ghee had to be kept open and available for use in vessels around the shrine. That was the chance for the depredatory cat; so, the master of the house caught the cat by the neck and put it under a heavy basket, and placed a stone on it, so that it could not play any mischief with the holy offerings. This was done so consistently every Full Moon Day as a safety measure in one home that the children and grandchildren felt that, *puuja* or no *puuja*, no Full Moon Day should pass without a cat being imprisoned under a weighted basket! They started searching for a cat and bring it home, so that the 'ritual of the cat and basket' could be observed without fail.

Surrender to the Divine Will will elevate words and deeds

The original meaning and purpose was lost during the passage of time and later generations were burdened with a belief that danger lurks if a cat is not dealt with, as their forefathers did! From being an insufferable nuisance, the cat rose to a new status of importance! This is blind imitation.

The fundamental factor in spiritual life is the suppression of desire' the surrender of the individual will to the Divine Will, which will elevate thoughts, words and deeds into acts of worship. When Raavana fell dead, his queen Mandodhari lamented over his body, "You conquered every enemy of yours, except your own lust!

You were pious, you were learned, you subdued even the most powerful foes---but, you allowed yourself to be enslaved by desire. That brought about your downfall." The magnifying glass draws the rays of the sun on a single point and can set fire to paper or grass. So too, concentration of attention can destroy the seeds of wanton desire. That is way I advise a few minutes of *Dhyaana* every day, both in the early morning hours and in the evening, after dusk.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 8-10-1967

The scriptures teach that life is unfortunately short. So, the Geetha advises man to appreciate three facts: (1) To be born as a human being is a precious opportunity; (2) To yearn to realise God is another precious piece of good luck;' (3) The greatest good fortune is the chance to be in the Presence of God, to be immersed in the service of God and to be engaged in fulfilling Divine commands.

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