

16. The lost key

YOU have gathered here in thousands, eager to partake of this festival banquet of spiritual discourses. That is the best and most profitable way of celebrating the coming New Year. The tiger lies in wait in a bush by the jungle track; it pounces on its prey and drags it to its lair. So too, death lies in wait for man. It trails behind him with silent paws and when the hour strikes, it leaps and snaps the thread of life. Flowers fade, fruits rot, and trees wither. Life is but the interval between birth and death, a procession towards the grave that starts at the very moment of birth.

Have God as your lamp, you can pass through life in safety. Have the Name of God on your tongue; He is bound to the Name, as Form! Resolve this day to adopt this *saadhana* of *Naamasmarana*, remembrance of the Name, Raama, for Raama means · He who is Bliss, He who confers Bliss--"*Ramathe Raamayathe ithi Raama.*" Read the *Adhyaathma Raamaayana*, the Raamaayana which emphasises the spiritual significance of the epic.

The entire epic hinges on two women and two passions: Manthara representing *krodha* (anger, resentment, vengeance), and Shuurpanakha representing *kaama* (lustful passion). Manthara plotted to send Raama into exile and Shuurpanakha caused the abduction of Seetha and the destruction of the *Raakshasas* (demons) as a consequence. The two women are insignificant characters in the story, but the roles they play are key roles, for they sparked off, by means of the passions they represented, long chapters of pain and grief. *Krodha* (anger) and *kaama* (desire) are more destructive than atom bombs; but when Raama is installed in the heart, they just fizzle out!

Pray for Grace and do some *saadhana* to acquire it

Welcome these epics as you welcome efficacious drugs; they can cure deep-rooted illnesses of the mind. Accept *manthras* (mystic formulas) as medicines, to cure the phobias of the mind, the disabilities of the inner senses, the defects of the inner consciousness. They clarify your vision and make you strong and steady, on the path towards God.

God's Grace is as the shower of rain, as the sunlight. You have to do some *saadhana* (spiritual practice) to acquire it, the *saadhana* of keeping a pot upright to receive the rain, the *saadhana* of opening the door of your heart, so that the Sun may illumine it. Like the music that is broadcast over the radio, it is all round you; but you must switch on your receiver and tune the identical wave-length so that you can hear it and enjoy it. Pray for Grace; but do at least this little *saadhana*. Grace will set everything right. Its main consequence is *Aathmasaakshaathkaara* (Self-realisation); but there are other incidental benefits too, like a happy contented life here below, and a cool courageous temper, established in unruffled *shaanthy* (peace).

The main benefit from a jewel is personal joy; but when one has come to the last coin in the purse, one can sell it and start life gain! That is an incidental advantage. The plantain tree has the bunch of fruits as its main gift! But the leaves, the soft core of the trunk, the flower bud, these are subsidiary items that can also be put to profitable use. This is the nature of Grace. It fulfils a variety of wants.

***Vedhic* injunctions are ignored in every home**

When you have no faith in God, you cannot gauge the efficacy of Grace. If you discard Raama and Krishna, they cannot stand by you in your hour of need. You do not attach yourself to Sai

Baaba and so you do not receive His Grace. If you start with cynicism and doubt and try to criticise and discover faults, the result is deeper ignorance and confusion. Unholy thoughts fog the mind with foul fumes. How can clarity come to the vision then?

A shepherd boy picked up a big diamond from the ground; he thought it was a piece of glass; he tied it round the neck of a sheep! It does not belong there. Man has ignored his own preciousness, his own Divinity. He is reducing himself to the position of a piece of glass, and is hanging on to the neck of a sheep? He sticks to the place where he does not belong.

The country too is sharing this devaluation. Bharath, which was long looked upon as the preceptor of humanity, the teacher of all nations who seek to earn lasting joy, is today forgetting its genuine role and standing at the doors of those nations, with downcast head and extended hand, begging for alms. The *Vedhic* injunction, "Revere the Mother as God" is ignored in every home; as a result, the "Mother Country" is not blessing her children with plenty and peace. Revere the parents, revere the teachers---that is the injunction of *Sanaathana Dharma* (Eternal Religion). Brothers must be treated with the affection due to brothers. The fate of those who hate the brothers will be total destruction; that is the lesson taught in the ancient epic, the *Mahaabhaaratha*, revered by millions as the fifth *Vedha*.

Saturate your thought, word, deed with Divinity

There was a *Guru* (spiritual preceptor) once, who gave back to his pupils the fruits offered by them, with the direction, "Take, each one, what he likes most." One pupil did not take any fruit but sat unconcerned, in a corner. The *Guru* asked him, "What do you like most?" He answered, "Myself." That is the proper attitude; if you like yourself most, make the most of your self know your self clearly and truly, revere your self deeply, be your best, make fullest use of your talents and skills, and lead yourself into lasting peace and joy.

Rely on the *Shiva* (God) in you, not on the *shava* (corpse) that the body is, without Him. With every breath, draw His Glory in; with every breath, exhale all that reduces His Glory. Saturate your thought, word and deed with Divinity. Then, you can conquer death, and become immortal. Recite the Name of Shiva and save yourself. You are truly the embodiment of truth, goodness and beauty. But you have misplaced the key which helps you to tap the springs. That key is in the realm of your inner consciousness; but, like the old woman who lost a needle in her dark hut, and searched for it under the street lamp (because, as she said, there was a patch of light underneath it), man is searching for it in the region of material objects in the outer world.

It is to persuade you to engage yourself in *Naamasmarana* (remembering of Lord's Name) that I am Myself concluding My discourses with a few *Naamaavalis* (string of divine names) which I sing. An Officer of the Indian Civil Service has to write on the slate, A, B, C, and D and pronounce those letters, in order to teach his children the alphabet. When you find him doing so, you do not infer that he is himself learning the alphabet, do you? Therefore, do not be surprised if I sing *bhajan* songs; I am but initiating you into this most efficacious *saadhana*. Strengthen yourself purify yourself educate yourself by this *Naama-sankeerthan* (devotional singing). Do it loudly and in company. Let those who join you listen and also imbibe the nectar of the Name. That is the New Year message I give you.

Realise the Lord through Love, Service, Adoration

I bless you that the New Year may endow you with devotion and sweet spiritual experiences. Today, the year *Plavanga* is taking leave and the year *Keelaka* is entering in. How often in the

history of man has this happened! The cycle of Time has seen such events in countless numbers so far. Do not let this chance too go by; *Keelaka* means lynch-pin, main support, pillar or column. Today's task for you is to discover the one column that supports all spiritual success. I shall tell you what that is: Love, adore, serve the *Sarveshwara* (Almighty Lord) who is resident in all mankind; through that Love, adoration and service, realise Him. That is the highest *saadhana*. Serve man as God. Give food to the hungry, food that is the gift of Goddess Nature (*Anna-poorna*); give it with love and humility. Give it, sweetened with the name of the Lord.

Celestial spheres are revolving and disintegrating; time is fleeting; age follows age; era succeeds era; bodies that have taken birth, grow and end; but, the urge to sanctify life with good works and good thoughts is nowhere evident; the fragrance of sincere *saadhana* (spiritual practice) is not traceable anywhere. Through the process of 'giving up,' great things can be achieved. Cultivate detachment, and the Lord will attach Himself to you. The past is beyond recovery; those days are gone. But, tomorrow is coming towards you. Resolve to sanctify it with Love and Service and *saadhana*.

Venkatagiri, New Year Day (Ugaadhi), 29-3-1968

The mansion called life must be built on strong foundations; the pursuit of artha and kaama---of wealth and welfare, of all desirable objects---must be regulated by the standard of Dharma. Dharma fosters those who foster it.

The strongest foundation is ever-present Faith in the Almighty. Some may ask, "If He is Almighty, why then is he not patent?" Well, He reveals Himself only to the person who yearns for the answer, not the one who puts questions out of impudence or ignorance.

He will be patent only in the transparent heart, the heart that is not clouded by egoism or objective attachment.

Shri Sathya Sai