

28. Acquire Me as charioteer

THE world is becoming more and more deeply immersed in irreverence and cruelty. Codes of decent behaviour are being ignored and laughed at. The material is receiving greater attention than the moral and spiritual. Faith in the victory of truth, justice and goodness is fast disappearing; the distinction between good and bad is seldom recognised. The child Raama, when he was brought into the hall where Dhasaratha, Koushalya and Vashishtha were together, touched the feet of Koushalya first, of Dhasaratha next and of Vashishtha last--thereby demonstrating that it was aware of the ancient discipline: "Revere the mother as God, revere the father as God; revere the preceptor as God." Gratitude for these three is absent only among animals which soon ignore the parents, once they are weaned. Keeping them as well as the preceptor in grateful memory is the sign of the human kind.

The world is a gigantic play designed and directed by the Lord to instil in man the sense of awe, reverence and wonder, so that, drawn by its beauty, charm, and mystery he is enabled to visualise the source of all this beauty, all this exhilaration and all this enticing mystery. Meera asked her mother, as a tiny girl, "Mother! We are playing a game. The other girls have all given out the names of the man each will wed; who is to be my husband---tell me, I must tell them his name"? When she worried her for some little time, the mother blurted out, "This Giridhar, installed in this shrine, He is your husband. Go".

The Lord is all Compassion, all Grace

Meera dedicated herself to the Lord Giridhar (Krishna) from that moment and saw everywhere, at all times, only His complexion and His compassion. The body is the bridegroom for the Life principle which is the bride; this is the wedlock in every life. As the body enfolds, guards and fosters life, the Lord maintains the vital principle enshrined in man, so that it may realise Him.

The Lord is all Compassion, all Grace. Bheeshma the grandfather of both the clans that were battling for supremacy in the field of Kurukshethra, had led the Kaurava hosts for eight days, but victory was not in sight. So the eldest of the Kauravas, Dhuryodhana, approached him and prayed for a more terrific onslaught on the enemy, to be guided and directed by him. Bheesma replied that it would be either death or victory for him, the next day. Knowing this, Krishna persuaded the Paandava Queen, Dhroupadhi, who was imbued with the deepest devotion to Him, to accompany Him to the camp of Bheeshma at dead of night.

Prayer was the source of strength for Dhroupadhi, that tormented Queen; her prayers could not but move the Lord. She entered the tent of Bheeshma, with her face hidden behind a veil. Krishna had asked her to leave her sandals behind, lest their pit-a-pat should disturb the silence and alert the guards. He wrapped them in a silken kerchief and carried the bundle under His arm! Dhroupadhi moved into the tent and fell at the feet .of Bheeshma, who blessed her, spontaneously as was his wont, "May you have many years of happy married life!"

Have faith in God, He will never give you up

Dhroupadhi revealed herself as soon as she was blessed thus; she prayed that the Paandava Brothers, her husbands, may be saved from his arrows. Bheeshma guessed that Krishna must be the author of this strategem; Bheeshma knew that he was doomed to die. "We are but puppets in His hands," he said and when he found Krishna at the entrance to the tent, he inquired what the bundle contained. Imagine his dismay when he was told that the Lord had condescended to carry

under His arms the sandals worn by His devotee! Have faith in Him; He will never give you up; He will guard and guide you until victory is won. Sincere devotion, unshaken faith---they can never fail to earn Grace.

Dhroupadhi had the faith to surrender unreservedly; she led a dedicated life. The five Paandava Brothers who were her husbands are the five vital airs (the *Pancha-praanas*) which activate and vitalise the body. She is the Energy that sustains the *Praanas*, by constant vigilant care.

To have that faith you must dive deep into the inner mystery of the *Avathaaras*, like Raama or Krishna, and not lose your way in the tangle of the outer events and emotional conflicts, the external adventures and activities. Do not take Raama as a brother, son, husband, entangled in the personal calamity of having his wife kidnapped and heroically rescuing her. You can be moved into adoration only by diving into the cool depths of the inner mystery. This process was specially discovered by the sages of India, and so, India rose to the status of the *Guru* of the whole world. Natural humility, instinctive reverence, continuous contemplation on God and His glory---these shall be your *deeksha* (path of dedication) for acquiring raksha (security).

Grief and distress are God's ways of shaping us

The role of India has been to remind mankind of this *deeksha* and to help it to attain this *raksha*. But this role is being neglected in recent times because the aim now is to acquire quick though transitory pleasure and not lasting happiness. The *Manusmrithi* (Code of Manu) which regulates daily life for the individual and sanctifies and salvages every moment is today cast away as an obsolete guide; its social and moral codes are condemned as outdated. Life, for the modern man, has to be an uninterrupted round of joy. So, man flits from one disappointment to another, and is ever in search of a joy that material gains cannot yield.

Joy is a deceptive trap; grief is the real preceptor, teaching caution, circumspection, discrimination, detachment, awareness and vigilance. Death is not the merciless foe he is made out to be, he is the friend and companion, the teacher, the kindly kinsman who takes you into his fold and clothes you with the halo of remembrance. The heart of man has to be toughened, not hardened; it has to be made soft, not slithery; this can be achieved only by the blows of loss, grief and distress. It is God's way of shaping us, in the Divine mould. But, man is blind to His Mercy; he revolts at the first blow of the sculptor's hammer! He leaves off one Divine Form and transfers his loyalty to another Form, which he believes to be more propitious. You bring a picture of Sai Baaba and install it in your domestic altar, and start offering flowers. If, a few days later, your cow yields less milk than usual, you decide that it is due to the evil worked by the new God who has come into the home or by the anger of the old God who has been superseded, and you cast away the picture!

Man can master disease and death

Do not offer flowers or worship any form of God for the sake of these low gains. Do not lose the great chance of association with the Divine, by identifying God with your trivial likes and dislikes, your tawdry aims and ambitions. "*Anithyam asukham lokam imam praapya, bhajaswa maam*"---that is the command. "Having come into this uneternal, unhappiness-filled world, adore Me, in order to save yourself."

How can the body escape disease and death? How can the mind escape agitation and anxiety? Of course, you can master disease and death, avoid agitation and anxiety, by taking the prescribed remedies and observing the prescribed regimen. Sing the Glory of God when you are afflicted by

grief or distress; for, it is at such times that you need Him most. It is when fever is on, that the tablets have to be taken at shorter intervals or in larger numbers.

The Paandavas knew this secret of success; they called on the Lord whenever circumstances conspired against them. Ordinary mortals start lamenting, "O, all my *puuja* has been in vain; all the worship I offered so sincerely and with such heartfelt yearning, has been a waste." Others too laugh cynically at the misfortunes of the devotees and draw them away in the dreary desert of unbelief. Do not give ear to these evil men. Be firmly rooted in faith; feed the roots with repentance and prayers.

Only those who are engaged in *puuja* (worship) in order to impress others, will give them up when fortune takes an adverse turn. The rest will accept whatever comes with the supreme indifference of the saint; fortune, good or bad, is for them only the observe and reverse of the coin of Divine Grace. The true sign of a *Sai Bhaktha* is this steadiness. He cannot swerve from this chosen path by cynicism or the call of luxurious pomp. He puts spiritual teachings into practice and knows the immeasurable gain it gives.

Saturate your mind with faith in Krishna's teachings

This Day is celebrated as the birthday of Krishna. You have the faith that this day is a great festival; but, have you the faith that induces you to follow-the teachings of Krishna? Do not derive comfort by filling the stomach with savoury and sweet dishes. Derive it by filling the brain with the teachings, by saturating the mind with faith in them, by shaping thoughts, feelings, emotions, impulses, attitudes, activities---all in accordance with them.

The usual activity of a person who calls himself a *bhaktha* (devotee) of Raama or Krishna or Sai Baaba is, as you must have noticed, planning to build a temple! A new temple rises up and an old one crumbles. Why should these people run about with appeals and donation lists, clamouring for contributions? Each one is induced by ego to build a temple, not for God, but for himself. "I shall build a house where my God, who has now no roof over His head, can stay." That is the vain and vulgar motive which is at the back of all this mania for raising *mandhirs* (places of worship). The persons who are approached feel superior, the person who appeals for help displays his want of faith in the God whom he adores; people imagine that the Mandhir is for a new God, a God who competes with older Names and Forms of Divinity for their patronage and support! Altogether not a desirable activity for a *bhaktha*, isn't it?

Do not hope to come nearer to Me by such means. I have no sense of distinction between *bhakthas* who worship this Form or that. All can come near, all who crave for heat and light. The heat of this splendour will destroy the chill of sensual pleasure; the light will scatter the darkness of ages. Cultivate *Prema* (Love) towards all; that is the way to gain nearness. I do not measure distance in terms of meters or miles. The range of Love decides distance for Me.

Transform your hearts into Prashaanthi Nilayams

Another point: You desire that I should come to your houses; you pray to Me to do so, you grieve when I do not come, you start reviling yourself that you are poorer than others, that you are less spiritually developed perhaps, and so on. Now, all this is irrelevant. I have no place in My heart for such distinctions and differences. You may believe this or disbelieve. But I must reveal the real response of My Heart. I have no enthusiasm to visit the houses of people; nor have I any disinclination to do the same. I do not care for the brick and mortar structures in

which you live; I care to visit and reside in your hearts. This Prashaanthi Nilayam is not my residence; when your hearts are transformed into Prashaanthi Nilayams, they are My residence.

When you pray that I should visit your village, I think of the facilities it has--not for Me, I need only standing space--for the thousands, the tens of thousands, the hundreds of thousands that gather to have My *Dharshan* (sight). How can I tolerate the slightest inconvenience to them, the women, the children, the sick, the aged, the blind, the decrepit, that come for counsel, consolation, courage and cure?

Justice shall be meted out to all

Let Me tell your another point also. Do not delay any more; take hold of this unique chance, even while you can. Ask Me about the *saadhana* you should adopt for your liberation; begin practising from this day. Later, it may be difficult to approach Me and ask Me. For, people are coming towards Me in full unending streams, and you may have to take *Dharshan* of Me from miles away! This is bound to grow into a *Vishwa-vriksha* (a World-tree), that sheds shade and shelter on all. This has come down in this Form with that very propose. It knows no halting, no hesitation. My name is *Sathya* (Truth). My teaching is Truth; My path is Truth; I am Truth.

In each *Yuga*, the Divine has incorporated itself as an *Avathaar* for some particular task. This Incarnation is different in that It has to deal with the crisis which is world-wide and world-shaking. Intellectual conceit has grown so wild that men have become foolish enough to ask, "What and where is God?" Immorality has put on the garb of morality and is enticing man into the morass of sin. Truth is condemned as a trap; justice is jeered at; saints are harassed as social enemies. Hence this Incarnation has come to uphold the True and suppress the False. I behave like you, moving, singing, laughing, journeying, but watch out for the blow I inflict of a sudden, to chastise and to warn. I shall scorch the wrong-doer for his wrong and soothe the virtuous for his righteousness. Justice shall be meted out to all.

Earn the unfailing Grace by sincere *saadhana*

Discard through *saadhana* the attachment to individuality, to sense pleasures; welcome through *saadhana*, the aspiration to expand the heart into the Universal. Do not cloud your minds with cheap desires, transitory hungers and thirsts, that need but morsels or mouthfuls. Yearn for the enthronement of your soul as the unquestioned Monarch of the Universe, when you merge in the Universal; celebrate your triumph over the foes within that hamper your march to victory. Acquire Me as your Charioteer; I shall lead you to that consummation. Earn that unfailing Grace, by your sincerity, simplicity and *saadhana*.

Monks are instructed to shave their heads, so that they can move about unrecognised by former friends and companions; but, now we find that they desire recognition and even appreciation, adulation and adoration---things that cater to the ego, things they are asked to flee from! A monk should, strictly speaking, eat like a dog and sleep like a fox---that is the popular saying. Eat whatever one gets and appease the hunger; sleep wherever one finds shelter; do not store food for another day or build a house wherein to pass one's days. Escape the entangling coils of the senses and of the ego that prompts them.

Engage yourselves in *puuja*, *dhyaana* or *japam* with single-pointed attention, so that when you rise, your face must be lit with the illumination of Awareness. The door is fitted in the house to facilitate the entrance of those whom you desire to come in. Watch the door so that dogs and donkeys, dust and dry leaves, do not rush in through that door. The senses and the mind are

doors through which malefic influences can infiltrate into your consciousness and find a home therein.

Consider all your acts as Worship. Duty is God; Work in Worship. Whatever happens, accept it gladly as His handiwork, a sign of His compassion. Thukaaraam was always in that mood. When he did not get something to eat, he thanked God for the chance to fast granted by Him. When he got some food, he thanked God for coming to him in that Form, and sustaining him so that he may sing His Glory. His glory, His compassion, His Grace---these are inscrutable; they shape themselves in manifold forms, as He wills.

"Turn your feelings towards Me"

Who are you to pass judgement on their validity or value? I do not like *bhajan* (group singing) that promotes rivalry, or envy or egoism or that emanates from intolerance. I appreciate and reward humility, fortitude, sympathy, service, brotherliness, and constant remembrance of God or goodness. When you yearn to have My picture on your heart, you must turn the lens of the camera towards Me, shouldn't you? Turn your intellect, your emotions, your feelings, your activities towards Me, then certainly, My picture will be imprinted on your heart. If your lens is facing the world and worldly things, how can it be imprinted upon your heart?

Of what benefit is this discourse of Mine if you do not receive it into your hearts and act according to it? I find that all the efforts all these years to awaken you to your duty to yourselves are not fructifying in you. You are like the rocks on the seashore that unflinchingly face the beating of the waves. The rock does not move; the wave will not stop. This predicament should end.

Awake and avail yourselves of this unique chance.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 18-8-1968