

5. Love and reverence

THE Glory and Majesty of the Lord is immanent in the Universe, as fragrance in the air, of heat in fire, or as butter in milk. He is the string that passes through and holds together all the beads. To know Him as such, to realise that He is the source, sustenance and *summum bonum* of all this Creation is the end and aim of human life. That is the sum and substances of the teachings of all the scriptures that man has inherited from the past, in all languages and in all climes. All religions are but essays at demarcating the path towards that consummation. All moral codes regulate human speech, action and feelings in order to enable man to see the path more clearly and to make his steps firmer thereon. India is the land where this precious knowledge was gained and spread by ardent seekers and sages.

But, today, we have to deplore the decadence of these ideals, and the downfall of Indians who have descended to the level of ridiculing the heights of spiritual bliss, these sages attained. The time has come now to revere the Culture that granted them that vision and that victory, to rededicate yourselves to the pilgrimage towards Truth, to discover in the jungle of manifoldness the basic Unity, which is the reality. As equipment for this arduous journey, the sages have laid down various regulations, disciplines, practices and paths; by adhering to them, man is able to remind himself constantly that he is destined to realise his essential Divinity. The fast and vigil prescribed on *Shivaraathri* Day are examples of such disciplines; for, the fast and the vigil are intended to lead the mind away from the senses and towards the Lord.

Five *yajnas* to be done by every man

The sages have laid down, for the same high endeavour, *five yajnas* for every human being, wherever he may be, to whatever denomination he may belong. These *yajnas* are not elaborate ritual exercises, accompanied by *Vedhic* recitation, prescribed for the attainment of specific states of Bliss in after-life or specific victories of a worldly nature. They are simpler and more democratic. They are being performed, casually and without the awareness of significance, by man everywhere. These *yajnas* do not ask for complicated credentials from those desirous of doing them. Any one can enter upon them and succeed. They are indispensable steps in spiritual progress.

The *five yajnas* (sacrifices) are: (1) Sacrifice for God; (2) Sacrifice to propitiate the sages; (3) Sacrifice to propitiate the progenitors; (4) Sacrifice to propitiate the visiting fellow humans; and (5) Sacrifice to propitiate the animal companions. They are called *Daivayajna*, *Rishiyajna*, *Pithruiyajna*, *Athithiyajna*, and *Bhuutha-yajna*, in Sanskrit.

1. *Daivayajna* · It is commendable practice, the allotment of one small room for the shrine, while building houses. In every Hindu home, we have a domestic temple or altar or shrine, where the members of the family, singly or all together, can adore God. Usually, there is a picture or idol placed there to remind them of the Vast Immeasurable which it represents. Daily worship is offered at this shrine, prayers are poured forth before it, meditation is done in that quietness, the Name of God is taken on the tongue and its sweetness enjoyed. This is the *Daiva-Yajna*; it purifies the household and brings God into the consciousness of man through all his activities.

Activities to propitiate the sages

2. *Rishiyajna* is the term used for the activities of man that propitiate the sages. They are mostly: the study and practice of sacred scriptures, that are the treasure of wisdom gained by the arduous

asceticism of the sages. The *Vedhas* are the earliest, the most compendious, philosophically the deepest, texts, the most practical of all the scriptures, and the most universal. Then, we have the *Raamaayana*, the *Mahaabhaaratha*, the *Bhaagavatha* and other narratives of the eternal struggle between right and wrong and the everpresent Grace of God which helps the triumph of the Right. These and other books cleanse and console, elevate and uplift, correct and convince, and fill the mind with courage and humility. It is indeed a tragedy that these vitalising springs of strength are neglected and people read, instead, books that are rabid and ribald, debasing and vulgar, describing the insane behaviour of demented unfortunates, without being aware of the harm they are causing to their own progress and mental health.

These books slowly bog man into the mire of sex and sin; they turn man back into bestial ways. Asserting that you are "men" is only half the task of life; one has also to prove through one's actions, speech and thoughts, that one is not a beast! That is the obverse of the first assertion; it cannot be ignored. Be human; keep away the beast; control your senses, passions and emotions with the reins of discrimination and detachment. That is what the good books teach. Go to them for counsel and inspiration.

Parents have to be cared for and obeyed

3. The third sacrifice is on behalf of your parents, the *Pithruyajna*. The command of the *Vedhas* is "*Maathru dhevo bhava; Pithru dhevo bhava*"---"*May the Mother be your God; may the father be your God.*" The stanza is repeated ad nauseum today, but, there is no sign of reverence towards the parents anywhere. A generation that does not respect and foster its parents is bound to end in disaster. Parents suffer great hardships, and deny various comforts for themselves in order to put their children through school and college; but, the children are ungrateful; they taunt and tease, they cause mental pain and physical hunger to their parents by ridiculing their habits and attitudes, and dismissing their advice with neglect. When the creators of your physical equipment and mental make up are thus treated with sacrilege, how can one expect you to adore the Creator of the Universe, God who provides for all? Honour your parents, so that your children learn to honour you.

There is a fine story mentioned in the *Puraanas* about this. The Divine Parents, Shiva and Paarvathi, once laid down a test for their two sons---Ganapathi and Subrahmanya. They were to go round the whole world and return to them; he who does it quicker will win the prize. Subrahmanya started quick and fast, and was pacing through highlands and lowlands; but, Ganapathi walked quickly round the Parents and claimed the prize. He said, the Parents are all the world--and the statement was accepted as correct. Ganapathi was installed as the Deity supervising the acquisition of knowledge and as the Deity who shall save all aspirants from obstacles on their path.

The moral of this story is that parents have to be cared for, and obeyed. That is the real *Pithruyajna*. They represent renunciation, tradition, the accumulated culture of the past, the permanent values, as contrasted with the fleeting vanities. That is the reason why *Shiva* is addressed as *Saamba-Shiva*, *Sa-Amba-Shiva*, *Aruba* meaning Mother and *Shiva*, meaning Father, and *Sa* indicating *Sathya*, *Sarvavyaap* (Omni-presence), *Sarvajna* (Omniscient) and *Saashaathkaara* (Self-Realisation).

Treat the stranger seeking food as God-sent

4. *Athithiyajna* means acts done to please and comfort the *A-thithi* (*he* who comes only for a day), that is to say, the Stranger, who comes to your door seeking food or shelter. Give him these, as an act of worship. Treat him as having been sent by God or as God Himself. This is a sacred rusk enjoined by the Vedhas. Share your meal with whomsoever asks for food when you are about to eat it. Appease his hunger before you appease your own.

5. The last of the yajnas is the *Bhuuthayajna*--steps to comfort and keep happy the animal collaborators and companions one has around him--bullocks, cows, goats, horses, which help you by their toil, and dogs, cats and other pets which make your home pleasant and full of joy. You should not keep them hungry or overwork them. If any animal depending on you for love and care sheds a tear in your home or farm, remember you will suffer greatly therefor.

Love and reverence--these are the real springs for sacrifice or *yajna*. Let all your acts, words and thoughts be filled with Love and Reverence. Then, you will have unshakable peace and joy.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 15-2-1969