

19. Yaaga is Thyaaga

ERADI told you just now that Bali Chakravarthi developed enormous conceit and as a consequence, he was punished by God, being trampled by Him into the lower regions. As a consolation, he was allowed to come up during this Festival and derive happiness, watching the prosperity of his old realm. Well, conceit is a poisonous weed in any field of activity. *Aham* (Ego) is the core around which the personality is built. It is the Form, which is essentially necessary for every embodied being. It is the *Aham*, which every being has to be within, temporarily, until he is freed. You should not burden yourself with attachment towards property power or authority. You may have them, on trust, as a sacred responsibility, as a temporary keeper, but, don't get attached to them, wailing when they melt or hailing when they grow! Of course, there must be the feeling of *Aham*, or 'I', until, by constant contemplation of the 'I', being 'He', the two merge and there is only We---He and I---at last.

Just consider the word *Aham!* A, (as in Alpha but shorter) is the first letter of the alphabet, the prime vowel that emanates from the throat, when the mouth is opened; the second sound *ham* is produced by the mouth closed sharp and tight. All letters lie in between. The vowels and consonants that intervene are called *A kshara*---the Indestructible, the Eternal, the Ever-present. So, *Aham* is the *A-kshara*, the Indestructible Self, that is all this and more. To identify it with lesser things or smaller conceptions is a sacrilege on its glory. It is due to the delusion that has overtaken the reason, the will, and the mind stuff that you imagine yourself to be this feeble body and its appurtenances. Arjuna confessed that he had got rid of that delusion or *moha*. *Nashto mohah*, he said. "My *moha* or delusion has gone; I have recovered the memory of my reality," he said.

God can be concretised anywhere by sincere prayer

Practise *swa-vimarshana* (self-examination): Who am I? Am I the mind stuff, the will, the discriminating faculty, the intellect, the senses, the body, the limbs? Realise that you are not any of these or all of these. You are the breath of God; it is through Him that you are alive, active, aware. But, when you are asked where God is, you point your finger towards the sky, and say, "Up above"! "When someone asks you where Swaami is, you say, Upstairs and point towards the room on the first floor!" You know that I am by your side also.

You remember God when distress assaults you; you forget Him when you are free from it. You do not realise that I am everywhere at all times, that God is not confined to the upper regions of the sky or to one little room where you keep his picture! He can be concretised anywhere by sincere prayer. Pray to Him, one-pointedly, with any Form or Name. He will answer; only, do not change the name and form, as fancy flits; then, concentration will be impossible. All names are His; all Forms are His; but, when you are striving to concretise Him, it is best to select the Name and Form that appeal to you most.

Bali was a grandson of Prahlada, the great *Raakshasa* (demon) devotee of the Lord! Bali was engaged in conquest; commandeering the wealth accumulated by others, exploiting, experiencing the elation of the satisfied ego, and such other demonic exercises. He had to realise that Divinity was his reality, that consciousness of that divinity is the *summum bonum* of life, and not eating and sleeping, earning and spending, saving and scattering.

The master of five elements can tread on all

Onam is not to be celebrated by feasting and fun. It has a deeper significance which has to be grasped. The *Yaaga* (holy ritual) which Bali celebrated attracted God, in the form of Vaamana-- "the young wandering student-disciple!" For, *Yaaga* is *Thyaaga* (sacrifice); not the sacrifice of animals but of one's own encumbrances, including wealth and property. The Lord was so pleased that He presented Himself before Bali and asked for gifts and homage!

Shukraaachaarya, the family priest of Bali, came in the way, and like all people who stand in the way of good deeds, he was punished; he lost his one eye! Why should anyone oppose gifts to God! For, how can you name the giving to the owner what belongs to him as "gift?" He who thinks that one can give God what does not belong to Him is 'blind,' has no 'vision,' that is what the experience of Shukra teaches.

The Universe is composed of the Five Elements and is cognisable by the five senses of perception. He who is the Master of the five elements can tread on all. That is what Vaamana did as Thrivikrama, when he asked and got from Bali, three feet of ground! With one foot, He measured the entire Earth; with the second, He measured Space. The third He planted on Bali's head and pressed. him into nether regions. One gets the Liberating Wisdom of the Reality through Grace or Prayer or *Prema* (Love). Here, Bali got it through Grace.

A gift must be made without pride or publicity

You cannot achieve the goal, through good works alone. In Good, there is an extra O; a something that is mere zero) That is to say, the desire which prompts you, the fruit which entices you, the reputation that tantalises you---these are all sheer Zero, a big O. Leave it off; then, we have Good with a zero less, with no self-intruding, that is to say, we have GOD. Desire plus Life, is Man! Life minus desire is God. Bali got blessed, through *Thyaaga* (Renunciation, Detachment)! He became monarch of the nether regions and God agreed to be his gate-keeper, guardian and guide! What a blessing!

He had the ambition to become Indhra, the God of Gods, the Ruler of Heaven. It is said that anyone who performs a hundred *Yaagas* in a row, with ceremonial rectitude, will automatically become Indhra. The Indhra who is installed thus once is ever reluctant to yield his chair to another *100-yaaga* person! So he tries his "worst" to disturb and desecrate the last few of the hundred, so that no one can complete a century! Bali too was within 36 minutes of completing the hundredth; the crisis of enthroning a *Raakshasa* (Demonic Individual) as God of Gods had to be averted. And, Vaamana arrived on the scene, asking for alms---just three feet of Ground! O, what a foot He grew, in a trice! Indhra was saved from becoming an ex-Indhra! The 100th *Yaaga* was abandoned, due to the calamity that happened to the Monarch, his displacement and his transmutation into a humble servant of God.

Dhaana (Gift) is a meritorious act, if it is rendered to the needy, at the time of need, in a manner that fulfils the need; it must be made without pride or publicity; without the superior air of the giver, without rubbing into the mind of the receiver that he is being helped to stand on his own legs, with no contempt contaminating the mind of the giver. Give, as an act of worship to the Divine that you wish to adore in the person to whom you are offering what God has given you for this very purpose! One person in heaven asked an angel how it was that he could get into Heaven, and sit on the very throne of Indhra! When told that his gifts on earth had entitled him to it, he gifted Heaven itself to that angel; so, he rose up to even higher status, it is said!

Naamasmarana will help to grow detachment and love

The qualities of detachment and love will grow in you, when you stick to one discipline: *Naamasmarana!* Have the name on the tongue, and in the thought, all your waking hours. See every one as the person whose Name you adore; hear all tales told by people around you as tales of His Glory, His *Leda!* Love will remove selfishness and expand your consciousness, through sympathy and compassion.

Today is Onam, the great Kerala Festival. Have special prayer today: Ask God to develop your sense of detachment; ask Him to put you on the road which leads to self-realisation; ask Him to endow you with light and reason to know and experience the Highest Bliss.

Devotion is not a part-time affair

Thyaagaraaja was invited by the Mahaaraaja of Thanjaavur, Sarfoji Maharaaj, the descendent of Shivaaji, so that he may be loaded with precious gifts (*Nidhi*)! But, the poet-singer-mystic-saint took it as a trial, trying to entice him into error. He asked the question: Is *Nidhi* more valuable as giver of joy, or, is *Sannidhi* (Divine Presence) more useful for the purpose? Of course, the answer was clear. Thyaagaraaja's brother who was counting on the treasure which the Mahaaraaja will bestow on him grew wild with anger at his refusal to go to the *Durbaar*. He pushed his brother out of doors, and did not allow him to re-enter! He threw the idols, which he was worshiping, through which he had realised Raama as the indweller of everyone, into the flooded river!

Thukaraam was honoured by the gift of a gorgeous palanquin and caskets of jewels by Shivaaji. But, Thukaraam said, "Raam! I will not take my hands from off Your feet, for, I know you are waiting to escape from me, the moment I release the grasp to hold anything other than your Divine Feet."

When Thyaagaraaja passed away, his wife kept his head on her lap, and when the saint was calling out "Raama!" "Raama!" in ecstatic agony three hot tear-drops fell from her eyes, on the face of the dying Thyaagaraaja. "O, I am the property of Raama! But, you are still the property of *Kaama!*" Thyaagaraaja exclaimed. Devotion is complete surrender; not a part-time affair or something taken on credit! Every bit has to be earned and deposited; there are no overdrafts. Grace is won by *Saadhana* and *Sath-sheela* (discipline and good character).

Sublimate the love you have for the pleasures of the world, for the objects of the world, into Love for God. Do not waste even a single second, in idle scandal or hollow praise. Bend your head before God, welcoming whatever be His Will, then, you too can have the Lord as your guide and guard.

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*Cleanse the heart
with the water of prema
and the detergents
prayer and contrition,
so that the stains of desire
might be removed.*

*Then God will pour
His Grace into it.*

*You should give up
loka bhraanthi and
deha bhraanthi---
attachment to the external world
and towards the body---
if you yearn for God.*

*There is no use trying to
have one foot in one boat and
the other foot in another boat.*

Sathya Sai Baaba