

## 45. The banana and the peel

THULSI DHAAS has said in his Raamacharithaamaanas that he composed the great epic on the story of Raghunaath for '*swaanthasukhaaya*,' that is to say, for his own *sukha* or happiness and joy. He engaged himself in that self-imposed task, not to any patron or even Raama, but to please, himself. He derived great *Aanandha* (divine bliss) while writing it and when it was finished. That was the urge which moved him.

In fact, all that a man does, is, ultimately, traceable to this urge---the urge to earn self-satisfaction. A man builds a house, writes a book, enters a job, executes a plan---all because he gets joy therefrom. The cuckoo coos sweetly, and derives joy therefrom, far more than those who happen to listen. The rose blooms on the plant, because of an inner urge, not an outer prompting. The father fondles his baby and receives thereby more joy than he ever gives. The various disciplines undergone by *saadhakas* (spiritual aspirants), monks, ascetics, and those on the march along the path of self knowledge are all adopted and adhered to, because they give joy to oneself, and fulfil an inner need.

### **Sacrifice, is at the very basis of Bliss**

This day is celebrated by you as the day when Emperor Bali was both humiliated and blessed by God, in the form of *Vaamana*. Emperor of the three worlds, Bali called himself, so, for, he had *bala* (power), more than any one else. He was saturated with egotism. God came to him, while he was busy with a *Yaaga* (an offering), in the form and guise of a Brahmin boy, and asked for a gift of just three foot-measures of land. Bali told him that he could ask for infinitely more riches and lands; but, the Boy insisted on that tiny gift only. The preceptor of Bali warned him about the identity and bonafides of the strange mendicant; he mentioned that he may be God Himself. Tiffs made Bali happier, for, if it was true, he was so mighty that even God came to his door as a mendicant. Such was the measure of his conceit.

But, when Vaamana drew Himself up to cosmic proportions and measured the entire earth with one foot and the vast expanse of space with another foot, Bali was humbled; he offered his own head as the third foot-measure, and let himself be trod-down into the nether-world. This day marks the day when the Incarnation of Vaamana happened, in order to teach this lesson that pride meets with doom. Once the ego was thus suppressed, Bali became cleansed and God blessed him, with various boons. He assured him that He would ever be his guardian. He permitted him every year, on Onam Day, to come up into the world and see for himself his empire and receive therefrom the homage of his people. So, this is the Festival of Vaamana's Advent as well as Bali's Transformation.

This day also extols the merit of gifts, renunciation, charity, however little, to any one, for, all are images of God. *Thyaaga* (Renunciation or Sacrifice), is at the very basis of Bliss, of Grace, of Immortality. *Na medhayaa na prajayaa dhanena, thyaagenaike amrithathwam aanasuh---say the Vedhas*. ("Not by intellect, not by progeny, not by riches, but, by renunciation alone can the Bliss of Immortality be attained"). Onam is the Festival which instils this message into those who observe it with an eye on its inner significance.

### **Every obstacle is a step that leads to *Aanandha***

Kerala has contributed a great deal to the preservation of *Vedhic* culture, and Sanskrit learning, Keralites have a name for faith and dedication. Witness the age-old privilege the Nambuudhiris

of Kerala enjoy, priest-hood of the great Vaishnavite shrine thousands of miles away from their land, namely Badhrihath among the Himaalayas.

Of course, wherever faith and dedication to God are evident, forces that tend to ridicule it, diminish its strength also are found. Where *Aasthika* (believer in God) is, there *Naasthika* (atheist) too will raise its head. But, disbelief in God or in some Supreme Will can be only a pose, assumed for the sake of personal aggrandizement or advertisement. It cannot stand the light of reason or of experience; even so-called atheists have Love in their hearts, honour Truth while dealing with Society and live on the basis of some eternal basic principles of justice. So, they are believers in *Sath-Chith-Aanandha* (Being, Awareness, Bliss Supreme).

You have the duty to stand witness in your lives to the courage, the joy, the strength, the generosity, the humility that true spirituality and faith can impart to man, while faced with disappointment, distress, defeat, defamation and other calamities against which the atheist has no such shield. Gold gains in value when it is melted in the crucible. A piece of diamond when it is cut into a many-faceted gem is thereby rendered more brilliant and more costly. The dull stone is not sought after by all. Prahlaadha, the grandfather of emperor Bali was subjected to torture by his irate father; but, that only added to his lustre. Bali himself shone all the brighter for the punishment he received from the compassionate Lord. This is the lesson you have to gamer today. Every obstacle is a step that leads you to the *Aanandha* that can never be destroyed or taken away.

#### **It is natural of man to raise himself up**

There is another duty that you owe to yourselves, which you have to recognise today. The world is the playground of *Nara* (human) and Naaraayana (God). *Nara* transforming himself into Naaraayana and Naaraayana transforming Himself *into Nara*, and playing their roles in unison. You know full well that Naaraayana has come in human form for reestablishing *Dharma* (morality) in the world, for feeding the roots of faith, in God and for interpreting God to man; you have to be assured that it is natural of man too to raise himself up, through spiritual discipline, moral elevation, expansion of love and other means to become Naaraayana. But, man is unaware of this high destiny. He misinterprets his skills and strength and is so absent-minded that he slides down the scale into a monster or a monkey. Of course there are many who struggle with these downward dragging tendencies and endeavour to elevate themselves; these most often grope in the dark and are badly led.

#### **Devotion 'must flourish, unaffected by time**

There are two truths that must be accepted by every pilgrim or devotee: (1) Devotion has to be full, free and comprehensive. (2) Divinity must be conceived as full, free and comprehensive. On the other hand, devotion today is almost always only 'part-time.' That is to say, whenever disease, defeat, or disappointment happen to assail you, you turn to God and pray for His Grace; but when you are happy, prosperous, healthy and in good shape, you ignore God and claim that they are all due to your own abilities and achievements. God is ignored in sunshine, He is wanted only when there is night. Devotion must persist and flourish, unaffected by time, place or circumstance.

God too has to be experienced in His fullness, and the *Aanandha* of that experience made one's permanent possession. Kasturi recited that poem, which, was sweet to the ear and full of Sanskrit words. But, words seldom come out of actual experience. It is impossible to experience

God and also talk about him. Words like *Sarvajnaana*, *Sarvavyaapi*, meaning that "He knows all," "He is everywhere" are used by people, since elders and saints have used them from ancient times; it is impossible for any one to have the fullest and the most comprehensive experience of these qualities of the Divine, and also speak about that experience.

The Geetha speaks of God as *achalam chalam evacha*, "immoveable as well as moveable," which strikes one as impossible. God appears to move, to act, to bless, to save, to test; but, He is unconcerned basically with these. Look at a tree. The branches, leaves, etc. might be moving with the wind; but the trunk is steady and unmoved. God is but appears as not is. The body moves, the intellect moves, the mind moves, but the *Aathma* is unaffected; it is steady, firm, unchangeable. The lake is unmoved; the surface is tickled into wavelets by every passing breeze. The colourless unmoved curtain or screen is unaffected by the pictures of fire, faction, floods, and glaciers that appear upon it in a realistic manner. When the pictures are seen, the screen is unseen; when the screen is seen, the pictures are unseen. But, without the screen (*Brahman*), the pictures have no meaning, carry no message, tell no story. They impart no *Aanandha*.

### **God is the stealer of hearts**

You may carry a match-box in your pocket, with no danger of fire emanating, though the components are there in that box. So too, there are the components of Divinity in you; only, it is not patent, it is not expressed. Take a stick and strike its head against the chemical coating given on one side of the box, and suddenly, in a flash, you get the flame of fire. So too, take the *Jeeva* (the individual) and strike it on the *Brahman-principle* that is immanent in the Universe, make it aware of it, so to say, and the Individual too manifests the Divinity latent in it. The tree is the Individual; the Forest is the *Brahman*. The one, apart from the Many is the individual. The Many and the Manifold is the *Brahmana*; Kasturi standing alone, apart, is *Vyashti*; when he goes and sits among you, the thousands who have come here for Onam, he merges in the *Samashti*. *Samashti* is *Brahman*; *Vyashti* is the *Jeevaathman*.

Prahlaadha's grandson, Bali whom you honour today, extolled the Lord standing before Him, as Master of the entire Cosmos, as "Arch-thief among thieves," (*Dongalalo gajadonga!*). For, God steals the most precious possession of man, even when its owner is awake. He steals the *chiththa*; He is the *chiththa apahaari*, the Stealer of Hearts. I disappointed you; I even requested you not to come so far, away from your homes for this festival; but, yet, your hearts have been stolen by Me and so, you could not stay away. Onam is the day when you Keralites feast on the banana; when you eat a banana, you have first to remove the skin. So, too, when we desire to eat a mango or a lime fruit. The sweet substance has to be reached after removal of the bitter skin. For Bali to be received and accepted by God, the bitter cover of egoism and power-mania had to be removed. Ignorance, *maaya* (delusion), illusion, pride, all are the components of the skin. Onams come and Onams go; but, people are no nearer the Goal. This is because though Onam is given a hearty send-off, generosity, renunciation, love and the spirit of service are not given an equally hearty welcome. You have to take this as the Onam Message---strive to manifest, cultivate and express Love, and suppress pride and egoism, so that you can win the Grace of God.

*Prashaanthi Nilayam, 30-8-1974*

*I ask only that you turn to Me when your mind drags you into grief or pride or envy. Bring Me the depths of your mind,, no matter how grotesque, how cruelly ravaged doubts or disappointments. I know how to treat them. I will not reject you, I am your mother.*

***Sri Sathya Sai***