

4. The cleansing process

*Cleansing the mind of dirt,
Grow in it pure and holy thoughts:
Then you can view the world
With Wisdom Vision, as Right and Light.
No fruit can grow on tree sans flower;
It cannot ripen into sweetness
Without emerging Grace.
Disciplined work alone can grow
Into devotion; and that alone
can transform into Wisdom deep.*

As the core of this Universe, about which we speak and which we describe, is *Paramaathma* (Supreme Self), about which we cannot speak and which is beyond all description. Both the cognisable and non-cognisable have emanated from the same One Indivisible Consciousness. Each is full and complete in itself. The individual consciousness is the manifestation of the Cosmic Consciousness. When the material sheath falls off, it merges in its source. The *Vedhas* declare, "That is full; this is full. From the full, emerges the full. When the full is taken from the full, the full remains full." So, the Cosmos, the world, the individual---all are embodiments of the Full. Nothing can be fractional or incomplete.

The symbol of the full is OM, the *Pranava*. *The Vedhas* announce: "The One indestructible sound *Om* is *Brahman*, the Universal Absolute." The moving and unmoving, everywhere are only paraphrasing *OM*, elaborating its nature, illustrating its potentialities. The past that has gone, the present that is here and the approaching future are all also *OM*. *The Pranava* is the Name, (*Naama*), and *Paramaathma* is the Named, (*Naami*). *The two are not separate. "Sarvam Khalu idam Brahma"*. All this is indeed *Brahman (Paramaathma)*. But, this awareness of the immanence of the Universal can come to man only when the I - consciousness is forgotten; when the 'I' disappears, man becomes fit to know the non-'I'.

The four steps in *saadhana*

In order to delve deep into the principle represented by the *Pranava* (OM), four steps have been demarcated in *saadhana*. One may doubt how the eternal unique integral *Om'* can be understood in stages! The steps, however, are designed to help the identification of the principle itself.

Wakefulness, dream, deep sleep and the "fourth" are the steps. They are known as *jaagrath*, *svapna*, *sushupthi* and *thureeya* in the *Shaasthra*. *Jaagrath* means "being awake", "exterior alertness" , or "outward vision." The consciousness is gross, while in this stage and in dreams the impressions that impinge on the consciousness are reflections and images of the Truth. In the *sushupthi* or deep sleep stage, the individual is not conscious at all; he is just a witness, who acknowledges later, (after awakening) that he slept well. The consciousness is not aware of itself. It is pure unaffected *prajna* or awareness. It has no contact with the objective world or the senses, outer and inner. It is pure *Brahman Consciousness (Prajnaanam Brahma)*. The last

stage is *thureeya*. It is the stage when the consciousness is fully aware of itself. It cannot be identified as such by any means! We can try to delineate it a little by saying that it is the silence that prevails, after one *OM* and before another *OM* follows it.

These four stages of *Pranava* are associated with the deities Vishnu, Brahma, Rudhra and the *Paramaathma*. Vishnu means that which is omnipresent. The visible Universe is suffused with beauty and beauty is God. Since the Universe is the Body of God, the Supreme Person, Vishnu, is also described in the scriptures as "He who delights in decoration" (*Alankaara Priyo Vishnu*). The material Universe is saturated in harmony, law and symmetry and is therefore charming and fascinating. Through this attraction, the external world, the Universe, draws man into various paths and exertions. The five elements, the five senses, the five vital airs and other phenomena teach man various lessons to mould his nature. So the objective world can be taken as his *Guru*.

Experiences in dream and deep-sleep stages

Vishnu is the deity who fosters and feeds, who moulds and masters. Moreover, He is the guardian of the Cosmos, the *Jagadrakshaka*. The scriptures teach man to sanctify the waking hours---*jaagrath* stage---for they belong to Vishnu, and are charged with the Vishnu-principle. They exhort man to avoid wicked deeds, polluting thoughts, and all types of errors and failings.

During the dream stage, we can experience holiness and bliss, only when we engage ourselves, while awake, in steady pure unselfish activities. In dreams, we see diverse objects and persons, strange worlds, of skyscrapers and castles. From where did these emerge? Through whom were they presented? *Prajnaanam Brahman*, the Supreme Consciousness, is the basis for the creation of this variety of dream appearances. *Brahma* is the deity that creates. So, the dream state is the *Brahma-phase* of consciousness.

Then, the deep sleep stage. Here, the experiences gained during the waking hours or gone through in dreams do not impinge on man. They have all been extinguished. *Rudhra*, the deity into Whom the Cosmos ultimately merges, is therefore associated with the *sushupthi* phase.

Next, we have the *thureeya* or the fourth stage, the stage of *Aathma-Consciousness*. When the salt doll is dropped in the sea, it reaches the bottom and is dissolved. The same happens to the seeker of the *Aathma*. He is dissolved. He becomes one with that which he sought to know. He cannot return and describe the experience.

"The A of OM is the *Vishwa*; the U is *Thaijas*; the M is *Praajna*"---,this is another interpretation in the scriptures. *Vishwa* is the Waking, *Thaijas* the Dream, *Praajna*, the Deep sleep stage. The *Pranava Saadhana* (the spiritual exercise of meditation on OM) is therefore very important for seekers. *The Vedhas* prescribe the repetition of the *Pranava* while studying holy texts, reciting the Name of the Divine, carrying out daily duties and offering gifts.

Nine essences and sustainers of human life

The *Pranava* is the essence of all sustenance, the embodiment of *Rasa*. Of all creation, moving and un-moving, the Earth is the *Rasa*; of the Earth, water is the *Rasa*; of the Water, food (*Oshadhi*) is the *Rasa*; of the food, the Human Person is the *Rasa*; of the Human Person, the word is the *Rasa*; of the word, *Rik* is the *Rasa*; of the *Rig Saama* is the *Rasa*; of the *Saama* (*Vedha*) *OM* is the *Rasa*. These eight Rasas, the earth, water, physic, person, word, *Rig*, *Saama* and *OM* lead to the ninth, *Aanandha* (Bliss). These are the Navarasas, the Nine Essences, the Nine Sustainers. *Aanandha* (Bliss) is the goal which man is seeking, the aim of human life.

Man struggles variously to attain *Aanandha*. *Aanandha* is the height of happiness, the embodiment of joy. It is sought in three different ways, according to the innate quality of the seeker---the *saathwik*, the *raajasik* and the *thaamasik*. The *saathwik* path is poison in the early stages and nectar while coming to fruition. It invokes firm control and regulation of the senses, of cognition and action. This will be very hard to accomplish. But as one progresses in practice, the joy increases and bliss is attained. How can such a goal be secured without undergoing hardships? The scriptures say, "Happiness cannot be won through happiness": *Na sukhaad labhyathe Sukham*. Happiness can be won only through misery. Pleasure is but an interval between two pains. To achieve the *saathwik* happiness that is positive and permanent, man must perforce take on trials and tribulations, loss and pain.

The Raajasik and Thaamasik paths

Now about the second type--the *raajasik*. In the early stages, this path is nectarine but later, it slides into misery, for the happiness is derived through the senses from objects of the external world. The pleasure soon reveals itself as unreal, false and exhausting. Once the process starts, it drags on with no facility for rest. Man becomes too weak to pursue the goals of *dharma* (righteousness) *artha* (prosperity) *kaama* (wish-fulfilment) and *moksha* (liberation) which are laid down for him. His intellect, imaginative skill, intuitive faculty---all are rendered lame. Man can even lose his human-ness. The blind pursuit of objective sensual pleasure has today resulted in this very calamity. Man has forgotten his true Divinity and surrendered his life to unholy activities.

Lastly, we have the *thaamasik* path. People who prefer this way of life are unconcerned with the problems of the world; they sleep away their lives, deriving joy in sloth and darkness.

Of these three paths towards the goal of *Aanandha*, man must accept the *saathwik* road, whatever the hardship, the loss, the misery, the anxiety and the labour. He must attain the awareness of Divinity, the experience of Godhead (*Bhagavaan*) and be established in the *Aanandha*.

Nine lamps that can illumine the mind

What is the inner meaning of the expression, *Bhagavan*? *The Vedhas* say, "*Brahmaithi, Param-Aathmaithi; Bhagava-theethi sabdyathe.*" (The *Bhagavaan* principle is the same as *Brahman, Paramaathma*). *Bhagavaan* is the Ultimate, the Full. *Bha* means having full auspiciousness and prosperity. *Ga* means deserving praise and adoration. In the Raamaayana, *Bhagavaan* is described in clear terms. He sustains the Universe using His creative power as the means. He creates and fosters what is created. So, He is *Sambhartha* or *Bhartha*, He who raises, He who rules and saves. *Bha* also means light, splendour. *Bhagavaan* is He who sheds and spreads Light. *Bhagavaan* is *Jyothiswaruup*, embodied Light, Effulgence. Since He can and does illumine all things and beings everywhere at all times, He is *Bha-ga-vaan*.

When do we need Light? Not during the day, but when night prevails. Then we need a lamp, a flame, the Moon. So too, until wisdom enlightens us, we need *saadhanas*; until we experience the One Unified Divine, we have to accept and practise discipline, regulations and *saadhanas*.

Ignorance is the Night. Knowledge is the Light. There are nine lamps that can illumine the mind and free it from darkness---*sravanam* (listening), *keerthanam* (adulation), *smaranam* (remembering), *padsevanam* (showing respect by touching the feet), *archanam* (ceremonial

worship), *Vandanam* (paying obeisance), *daasyam* (doing service), *sakhyam* (friendliness), and *atmanivedanam* (self surrender).

We must shape ourselves into fit instruments for the spiritual pilgrimage. There are four classes of persons: those who pay attention to their own faults and the excellences of others (the best); those who highlight their own excellences as well as the excellences of others (the middlings); those who pay attention only to their own excellences and only to the faults of others (the worse type) and those who present their own faults as excellences and the excellences of others as faults (the worst). Each one can discover for himself the group to which he belongs. Remember this: when one is yearning to become aware of the Full, the Sacred, the *Prema*, the *Aathma*, the *Bhagavaan*, he has to prepare himself for the first and the best group---discovering his own faults and observing only excellences in others. This is the most desirable *saadhana*.

Uphold-the true glory of man

Man is suffering today because he is engrossed in the external world, with no *saadhana* or steady practice to correct his vision. What can ten baths a day do to cleanse a person, when his mind is fouled by evil thoughts? What can the shaven head and the ochre clothes do to foster spirituality when his mind is riddled by desires and wants? You may rotate a ball of sweets outside the mouth but unless it is put into it and eaten, hunger will not be abated. So, develop sincere longings, cleanse the mind, purify the thoughts, and put the precepts into practice. In Vedhaantha, this process is mentioned as, *karma maarga*, the path of activity.

There is no fruit without a flower; there can be no devotion without *karma*. The fruit ripens and becomes sweet; *bhakthi* ripens into *jnaana* (wisdom). So, we must first take up holy activity with clean intentions: One *saadhana* that is cultivated on a large scale *today is dhyaana*: (meditation). But, the *dhyaana* that is done is not in consonance with the principle of Bhaaratheeya Culture. In the absence of a purified mind, *dhyaana* can never achieve the mergence. How can a house be built without brick and mortar?

By *saadhana* you can correct your faults

It is said that one can succeed in *dhyaana* by indulging in it whenever a little time is available and that one can be engaged in this *saadhana*, whatever the habits one is prone to, whatever feelings and thoughts reside in you and whatever path you follow. But this advice is not correct. If one has to remain quiet for sometime without being distracted or disturbed by fear or anxiety, one could indulge in drink or consume opium. *Dhyaana* must have far higher aims and far stricter credentials. Or else, the culture of Bhaarith will suffer great damage. Therefore, fine virtues have to be cultivated first, good thoughts have also to be entertained One should uphold the true glory of man.

Many people come to me distraught and pray, "*Swaami!* I have no peace. Give me peace" But peace cannot be got from the outer world; it has to be sought in the heart. Wicked desires breed misery; beneficial desires result in joy. The removal of desire ensures peace (*shaanthi*). When desire after desire multiply in the mind, how can peace be gained? After *bhajan and dhyaan*, you repeat *shaanthi* thrice, praying for physical, mental and spiritual peace. But the awareness of the *aathma*, being the reality of all, can only confer *shaanthi*.

A single mango seed is planted; the tree yields thousands of fruits and in every fruit, you find the seed! The same *aathma* is in every Being! The Lord is the seed that is manifested as thousands of

seeds. "*Ekoham* (I am single) *Bahusyam* (shall become many)", said the Lord. When we posit differences and distinctions due to ignorance of this fact, we are afflicted by fear and *shaanthy* disappears. When man doubts and disbelieves brother man, how can *shaanthy* prevail?

Now, the mind of man is tending towards evil. The *mathi* (mind) has become *durmathi* (bad mind). The year that begins today, Sunday, is "*Durmathi*" and people apprehend that evil may increase. The year begins on the day of Sun who is, according to ancient astrological texts, the King for the next twelve months. The Sun is also the Lord of the Peoples, the Lord of Rain Clouds, and the Lord of Curative Herbs. Moreover, the Moon is His *Manthri* or Minister. Since the Moon has no independent source of light and energy, the King and the Minister will move amicably and so, the year will be a happy and prosperous one.

But, whatever astrology may indicate, you can direct your mind (the Moon) and your intellect (the Sun) into propitious channels of peace and prosperity. By *saadhana*, you can correct your faults and mould your excellences and ensure *shaanthy* for yourselves, your society and your country. Pray everyday for the welfare of all the world: "*Lokaas samasthaas sukhino bhavanthu*". This is my message for the new year.

Prashaanthy Nilayam, 5-4-1981.