

23. Prema saadhana

*In your glorious quest for the vision of Brahman,
Why do you, O foolish mind, wander everywhere?
It is all the time in you; look for It there itself.*

The *Aathma-principle*, the God-principle and the *Brahma-principle* are but synonyms for the One. The *Vedhas* which contain the earliest questionings of man, declare that man asked for the answer to one problem above all: *Kim* (What?) What is the secret of all the mystery, all the multiple incidents and impressions? Is there a Person or is it Impersonal? Has it attributes or is it devoid of marks and motives? Has it consciousness or is it merely mechanical and automatic? Human inquiry proceeded along these lines.

And, when varied answers came from many directions, another question arose: "*Yath*" (Which?) Which among these guesses is the correct one? For, it was difficult, nay, impossible to delineate the Truth in words or even to delimit as an image for one's imagination. The wise seekers arrived at the conclusion that *Brahman*, the Universal Absolute, can be described only as "that from which the Cosmos was born, that by which it is sustained and that into which the Cosmos dissolves."

Still, the doubt lingered: "Can this conclusion be right? Can it explain all that is puzzling man?" Intuition gave them the answer, "Thath" (That). "That conclusion is correct," it affirmed. "Thou art That." There is no Thou separate or different from That. Both are one. That was the Truth which was revealed.

The *Vedhas* consist of three sections or *Kaandas*: *Karma Kaanda* (Action-oriented). *Upaasana Kaanda* (Worship-oriented) and *Jnaana Kaanda* (spiritual knowledge oriented). Of course, the *Thath* of which the *Thwam* is a projection is indescribable and unreachable by action, emotion or reason.

The four types of *karma*

Yet, these three sections pave the way for the ultimate realisation of the Reality. The *Karma Kaanda*, for example, cleanses the *chittha*, the levels of consciousness. *Karma* or activity cannot confer satiety or ecstasy, *thrupti* or *aanandha*. Even when some little is gained, it will be short-lived. It cannot last. For, there is nothing in all the worlds that lasts. How can things or events that do not last confer joy that lasts? Therefore, those who resort to *karma* believing that they can acquire lasting Bliss thereby are pursuing an illusion.

There are four types of Karma: Production (*uthpaadya*), Acquisition (*aapya*), Transformation (*vaipareethyam*) and Refinement (*samskaaram*). Let us take the first type, production. Land is levelled and ploughed, furrowed and fed, before seeds are sown, then saplings are guarded, and crops are fostered, before the grain is harvested. But, the grain does not give us lasting contentment and joy.

The second type is Acquisition. We acquire things which we hope will fulfill our wants, through the use or misuse of our status in society, position or authority, command over riches or other men, and our own physical prowess and intelligent skills. Even such gains and possessions do not confer lasting joy. While acquiring, while guarding what has been acquired and while

spending or consuming it, we have to undergo painful effort and be ever vigilant. Acquisition is therefore fraught with difficulties and it has only temporary value.

The third type is Transformation. An example is the change caused in milk to produce curds; forging a piece of iron into a knife or axe. Even these articles do not last long. They disintegrate soon. The fourth type of activity is Refinement, removing dirt and dross. When we decide to celebrate a holy day, we repaint doors and windows, clean the floor and polish door knobs etc., and make the house look spick and span. We wipe the dust from off the mirrors. The daily bath and washing clothes are also processes of refining. We have to refine the mind also. But refined things and minds do not last as refined; they have to be subjected to the same processes again and again.

One should treat all *karmas* as *yajna*

The conclusion is that the joy and pleasure earned by activities (*karma*) are only temporary. Nevertheless, one cannot desist from *karma*, one should not desist from *karma*. How then is one to act? One should practise detachment and desirelessness towards the results of *karma*. That is to say, one should treat all *karmas* as *yajna*, (sacrifice) performed for the glory of God (and not for selfish ends), for earning lasting merit (and not for temporary benefits). The *Nishkaama Karma* (desireless action) mentioned in the Geetha is really the truest *yajna*. *Karma* done in that spirit will not cause either greed or grief. It will cause only a sense of fulfilment of one's duty.

Karma can be considered under two heads: Worldly and Scriptural (*Loukika* and *Shaasthreeya*). The scriptural *karmas* comprise three types: *Shrouttha* (based on the authority of the *Vedhas* and in accordance with *Vedhic* injunctions); *Smaartha* (rituals and ceremonies laid down in the disciplinary moral codes or *Smrithis* like those of Manu, Paraasara, etc. (such as obsequial rites for the dead, rites of initiation, ceremonies for daily prayers, *Shraaddha*, *Sandhyaavan-danam*, *Upanayanam* etc); and *Pouraanik* (fasts, vows, pilgrimage etc., worship of idols, etc., recommended in the *Puraanas*).

Through *Vedhic Karmas* like *yaagas*, man can achieve *Swarga* (Heaven), say the *Vedhas*. But the same *Vedhas* declare, "One can be in Heaven only as long as the merit he has earned lasts; therefore when that quantity is spent, one has to enter the world again." So, Heaven, too, is a transient luxury. A person who secures a majority of the votes cast can be a member of the Legislative Assembly for five years. When that term is over, he has to return home. So also, he who enters Heaven has to leave it when his deposit of merit is exhausted. So, *Shrouttha Karma* does not grant perpetual joy. Where the *Shruthi* fails, how can *Smrithi* succeed?

Man symbolises the five elements of the Cosmos

The *Smaartha Karma*, too, has only limited force. The *Vedhas* can take you only to the proximity of the Almighty. For, the *Vedhas* themselves assert, *Na Karmanaa Na prajayaa dhanena* (not through *Karma*, not through progeny, not through wealth), *thyaagena ekena amrthathwam aanasuh* (by renunciation alone immortality can be gained). *Thyaaga* (giving up) is the means to gain eternal bliss. Of course, *karmas* (actions) can and do cleanse the mind of ego-sense and of sensual desires.

Consider the word *nara*, which denotes 'man'. Of these two syllables, *ra* means decline, decay, destruction, death. *Na* means 'without'. 'Man' or *Nara* has no decay, he is immortal as God, for he is God. It is pitiable that man is misled to believe that he is the decaying, daily dying, physical

frame! Whereas 'Nara' means Man, *Naaraayana* is the name for God. *Nara* symbolises the five constituents of the Cosmos, the five *bhoothas* (projections, elements) which emanated from God to form the Cosmos.

The expression *Naranaaraayana* which is used in scriptures implies that *Nara* is *Naaraayana*. This *yajna* is performed by these pandiths to propitiate the *Vedhapurusha*, (the *Vedhic* Divinity) the *Yajnapurusha* (Sacrificial Divinity), who is *Naaraayana* Himself in the *manthras* that invoke the deity. The *Vedhas* declare, *Anthar bahischa* (both inside and outside), *thatsarvam* (in all that is), *vyaapya* (immanent) *Naaraayana* (God) *sthithah* (exists).

Engage in *karma* as a means of adoring God

Gandhi told someone at the Round Table Conference this truth. One person had come to London during that Conference from Colombo and during a conversation, he suddenly asked him this question: "Where is God?" Gandhi replied, "God is that mysterious power from which the worlds around me originated, through which they disintegrate, which is the base on which all creation rests and moves." This power is so mysterious that, as the *Vedhas* declare, "Words which attempt to describe It turns back defeated; even the mind with all its imaginative power cannot reach It." All things rise from It, exists in It and merge in It, as the Geetha declares.

One point has to be emphasised now. Things which are not definable, which cannot be delineated, are usually dismissed as false. Only those things which can be perceived by the senses are accepted as true! We assert that we have minds but have we ever been able to see it in us? Has joy or bliss any form? They are experience-based not sense-based. God is not seen with these eyes but the vision is possible if one can earn the eye of *jnaana*, of clarified and purified knowledge. When you desire to see the *Aathma* in you, you look into the mirror. You cannot see your image, without a mirror to reflect you. How, then can you see your Reality without reflection through knowledge?

For every achievement, a path, a process, a discipline is essential. Without adopting the appropriate route, if one argues, objects and denies, he is only announcing his own foolishness.

Divinity is omnipresent. It can be cognised only by transforming oneself through Holy *Prema*, (Love). Love encompasses; it does not exclude. The Omnipresent God has, according to the *Vedhic* hymn, "a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet." This is to say, that the Effulgent Cosmic Person, God, the *Vishwa Viraat*, is the individual multiplied by infinity. The individual mind multiplied by infinity becomes the Cosmic Mind, *Hiranyagarbha*, the Universal Consciousness. Love expands the one into Infinity. 'I' merges in 'they' and 'we', friend and foe, known and unknown, of all races, creeds and lands, and all become *ONE*, the *Vishwa Viraat*.

Adopting this path and progressing in it is genuine *bhakthi* or devotion, which discards selfish narrowness. Develop this ever-expanding love and engage yourself in *karma* as a means of adoring God, accepting its consequences calmly and gladly, and contribute your skills and strength towards the peace and prosperity of the society wherein you are. This is my message to you. I bless you that you succeed in this great spiritual endeavour.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 2-10-1981.