

## 29. Nara and Naraka

The ryot, intent on agriculture, ignores even food and sleep, for he is too busy ploughing, levelling, scattering seeds, watering, weeding, guarding and fostering the crop. He knows that his family will have to subsist on the harvest that he brings home and that if he fritters away the precious season in idle pursuits, his family will be confronted with hunger and ill-health. So, he sets aside or postpones other pursuits and focuses all his attention on farming alone. He puts up with difficulties and deprivations, toils day and night, watches over the growing crops and garners the grain. As a consequence, he is able to spend the months ahead, in peace and joy, with his happy family.

Students and spiritual seekers have to learn these lessons from the farmer. The stage of youth is the season for mental and intellectual culture. These years should be intensively and intelligently cultivated; for, once wasted, they can never be retrieved or regained. One must decide to use them for one's progress, irrespective of difficulties and obstacles. Of course, obstacles have to be overcome. The clamour of the senses has to be silenced; hunger and thirst have to be controlled; the urge to sleep and relax has to be curbed.

The attainment of the goal is the aim. When the valuable years are frittered away in petty pleasure, flimsy gossip, feast and festivity, idleness and sleep, one becomes unfit to receive or retain spiritual knowledge---the vital harvest one has to gain. This is the reason why in past ages, sages left hearth and home and retired into forest hermitages and achieved Divine grace. Without concentrated effort, success can never be attained. Laziness is a demon that possesses man and debilitates him. Its brother's name is conceit. When both of them join to dominate *nara* (man) he is transfigured into a *naraka* (demon). One becomes a demon or God or human; Devaki's own brother Kamsa was a demon; her son, the nephew of Kamsa, was the Divine child, Lord Krishna!

### Lessons to be learnt from Narakaasura's life

Man acquires during his life three types of visions---The earliest is *A-jnaana drishti*, the vision through the eye of ignorance. He is able to visualise only his own body and its needs, his own kith and kin and their fortunes and his own class, caste, community or creed and its value and validity. The second vision sees beyond these considerations and pays attention to character and virtues only. The eye that sees the good in all, irrespective of personal relationship, is *the jnaana drishti*, the Eye of Wisdom. The third stage is *vijnana drishti*, the highest Universal Wisdom, the Eye of Divine Love. It sees the entire Cosmos as the Body of the living God. Beyond this stage, lies the Stage of Total Mergence. The mystery of creation is sought to be discovered by man but it is something unique and indecipherable. Man's talents can never fathom it. The how and why God's sport is known only to God. Man's task is to enjoy it and benefit by it.

Human beings are born into the world in which they live until they die. The body that is dead cannot be contacted again, at any time or at any place. But, even after death, one can be contacted, through either of two ways---the noble deeds one has done while alive or the ignoble acts one has inflicted during his life. Rama has become immortal as the embodiment of righteousness; Raavana has secured a place in human memory as a symbol-of demonic wickedness.

This day is the festival of *Naraka Chaturdasi*. It teaches man to remember how character decides destiny, designs achievements and demarcates one as either divine or *demonic*. *Naraka*, after whom this day is named, was a *nara*, human being. But since he grew into a demon, he earned

the meaningful title, "Narakaasura." Through his *asura* qualities, he proceeded towards *Naraka* or Hell. He was a king, who shaped his subjects through his counsel and commands, into images of himself in wickedness. The people in his kingdom were intoxicated with vice and violence. The Lord decided to eliminate Narakaasura and redeem the people from the total ruin that faced them and guide them into the holy *saathwik* path of humility and goodness.

### **Anger drastically reduces one's stamina**

Here, you must pay attention to a strange strategy that the Lord employed. The Lord invaded Narakaasura's kingdom, not once but again and again! Of course, He could have accomplished the *asura's* destruction during the very first campaign. But He did not do so. He forced him to explode into furious anger again and again, and each attack by the Lord made him automatically weaker. His resistance became feebler and feebler.

Anger is debilitating in its effect. 'The nerves become weak; blood is rendered warmer; its composition changes. A simple burst of fury consumes the strength gained from food during three months! Anger drastically reduces one's stamina. So, the Lord made Narakaasura flare up in anger, again and again, and even when he was rendered faint and flickering, the Lord decided that he did not deserve death at His Hands. He took His consort, Sathyabhaama, with Him and directed her to kill the ruffian. She could do it easily, for three-quarters of his might had been subtracted by the Lord's strategy..

The metropolis of Narakaasura's kingdom was named Praak Jyothishpuram. This is a very meaningful name. *Praak* means "previous," *Jyothi* means "lamp, light"---"city which was previously fully lit;" that is to say, it was effulgent and luminous (with *Aathmaic* Wisdom) until Narakaasura succeeded to the throne.

### **Significance of the festival of lamps**

This day is set apart to commemorate the destruction of such a demonic person. The significance of this festival is that, on this day, he killed the darkness of *A-jnaana*---the unawareness of the *Aathma* disappeared from people. "From darkness, lead me into light," darkness has no place. Where the light of *Aathmic* awareness shines, evil thoughts, wicked speech and vicious deeds flee in fear; so one should cultivate the wisdom which can cognise one's Reality. This lesson is ignored and instead people celebrate this day, the battle between the Queen and the Demon King.

One more point. This day we light thousands of lamps with a single lamp. We light many candles with the flame of a single candle. But, remember that only a burning candle can light other candles. An unlit candle cannot light other unlit candles. Only one who has earned wisdom can enlighten others who are in ignorance. One who is himself unilluminated cannot illumine others, dwelling in the darkness of *maaya*: One must light his own lamp from the Universal Light of Love and thenceforward he can transmit illumination to all who seek and strive. All lamps shine alike, since they are all sparks of that *Param-jyothi*, the Universal Luminosity, that is God.

### **Give up and gain is the Divine law**

Lamps are many but light is ONE. Every patch of water on earth has the reflection of the sun in it but the original sun is ONE. Just as the one sun is seen in a million pots or lakes, or wells or cisterns, the one *Paramjyothi* shines as wisdom in a million hearts, whether noticed or unnoticed. When the water in the pot or other receptacle evaporates, the image too disappears. But the sun is

not affected in the least. So too, *the Aathma* appears in the body (the pot) which contains desires (water). When identification with the body is given up and when, in consequence, desires dry up, the image *Aathma* merges in the genuine *Aathma*. This is the Eternal Consummation.

This is the *saadhana* that should be undertaken today. You must learn to understand that the *Aathma* in all containers is the reflection of the One Overself or *Paramaathma*. But, the tragedy is that the one is misinterpreted as the manifold! The fault lies in the prominence given to the petty desires of the puny self. How can one, attached to the self, turn towards the higher Self? Detachment alone can lead one to the awareness of the immortal Self. That is the price one has to offer to receive the reward. Give up and gain, that is the Divine Law.

When you seek to drink fruit juice out of a glass which contains water, you have necessarily to pour out the water and fill it with the juice. "In a head filled with junk, how can clean thoughts find place? When it is rendered free from junk, one can load it with good thoughts," says a popular song.

### **Remove evil habits to earn God's vision**

Our brain stores millions of thoughts. Among them only a few are really useful and valuable. As a result of this indiscriminate acquisition, concentration on any beneficial idea becomes difficult. Many people come to me and mourn, "Swaami! I am practicing meditation for ten years or twenty years, but, alas, I have not had the vision of God even for a second." I ask them, "But what are you meditating on, all these years? When your mind is contemplating all kinds of irrelevant objects, how can God find a place therein? Again, have you cultivated love? Have you developed compassion? These are the temples where God loves to instal Himself. Instead, you have grown in selfishness and so, the vision of God has become unavailable to you."

Gopala Rao declared just now that he gave up his selfish attachment to one dish at Kaashi and to another dish at Gaya, while he went to those places as a pilgrim. Renouncing the bitter gourd at one holy spot and the sour berry at another is not commendable as sacrifice. At sacred places, the pilgrim must renounce his evil habits and bad tendencies and attitudes. Then only can the pilgrimage be beneficial.

Similarly, this festival day, related to the killing of the Naraka demon, calls upon you to renounce the most harmful of vices Egotism, *Aham-kaara*. *Aham-kaara* means the assertion of I, 'I' as having power, authority, strength, and wealth; not the awareness of I as *jeeva* (which is *mamaakaaram*) or I as *Brahman* (which is Divinity), but the mistaken assertion, I am the Body.

"Thou art That," "I am *Aathma*." *This truth has to be realised to become free from ahamkaara*. 'I-am-the-Body' feeling often persists until death. So, it has to be overcome by continuous *saadhana*. The body is a vesture you have worn. One should not lament when it disintegrates after wear. Death is an inescapable fact of life. So, be warned. While life lasts, busy yourselves in activity: cross the lake while the boat is intact. Fill the reservoir when it rains, so that in times of drought, you can feed the fields. Do intense *saadhana* now, when you are young and strong so that you can be in peace and joy all your life. Many postpone spiritual exercises until old age, when they hope to retire from their professional activities. But, once you retire, every limb of yours will be too tired to work effectively.

Make the most profitable use of this present period of your lives. Do not waste the hours in irrelevance and irreverence. Do not indulge in the condemnation of others or in self-condemnation. These holy days have to be observed as days set apart for self-examination and

self-improvement. On this Deepavali day, people insist on wearing new clothes. Let your hearts too rejoice, clothed in fresh ideals and feelings and resolutions. Relish these sweets from this day on, and mould your lives into sweet songs of Love.

*Prashaanthi Nilayam, 26-10-1981*

*Prayer must emanate from the heart, where God resides, and not from the head where doctrines and doubts clash.*

*Prayer has great efficacy. The Vedhic seers prayed for the peace and happiness of all mankind, of all animate and inanimate things. Cultivate that Universal vision.*

*Sathya Sai Baaba*