

38. The Shivam night

A tree can be trained to stand up straight;

A stone can be chipped to a charming form;

A mind? Can it be so chipped and trained?

Answer if you can! The need is great.

Embodiments of Love! This day is reckoned holy all over this land. It is named *Mahaa-Shiva-raathri*. 'Raathri' means 'darkness-filled'. Of every twenty-four hours, we are experiencing this half the time. But this night is Shiva Night, the Night of Shiva, the Night that grants *Mangala*---the boon of blessedness. And, the *Mangala* is *Mahaa*, great, unlimited. *Mahaa* or limitless blessedness can be conferred only by the Divine Source; it cannot be acquired from worldly achievements and triumphs. It is dependent on the Immutable Triad, on *Sathyam*, *Shivam*, *Sundaram*.

It assumes all forms, this Shantham!

It assumes all names, this Shivam!

It is Sath-Chith-Aaanandh, this Only One!

It is Sath yam-Shivam-Sundaram!

The mountain peaks we see are rocks; the ground on which we stand is soil; the trees are wood; our bodies are flesh and bone. But, man manages to deal with these by attaching labels of names and imposing understandable forms on them. Really speaking they are only permutations of the five fundamental elements---Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Sky. Everything and every being is but a formation, a transformation, a *vikaara*. But at the very central core of every entity, *Shivam* is present as Effulgence.

The tragedy is, as Kaarunyaananda said, all are sunk in the sea of *samsaar*, of flux and fear, of conflict and discontent. The world appears dual according to our likes and dislikes. If we like a thing, it is good for us. If we dislike it, it is bad. When you like a person, everything he does, even if it is bad, is pleasing; when you dislike him, even the good he does strikes you as bad. So the sages advise that you must trek through a dark jungle alone and come out safe. They dissuade you from braving the same journey with a companion. No one can determine who is likable or when you may be bothered by fear when you go in the dark. But a person who dislikes you or whom you dislike is to be avoided.

Search for Truth has to proceed inward

Harmful tendencies and thoughts multiply fast in the mind of man, as fast as white ants, unless he establishes himself in his *Sathyam-Shivam-Sundaram* essence. Then, no one can dislike you nor can you dislike any other. Even those who injure and insult you have to be forgiven and loved, for, love alone can shower *aanandha*. The spring of love is in one's own core. The source of *aanandha* is your innermost reality. But, like the man who searched everywhere for his glasses and found them at last on his own nose, man too becomes aware that the search for Truth has to proceed in the inward direction within himself.

While describing the benefits of group *bhajan*, Kaarunyaananda said that its effect is like keeping banana bunches packed inside a smoke filled room to make them yellow, ripe and sweet. But only mature bunches can thus ripen and sweeten. The rest might change colour but their taste will not. Spoiled milk cannot become good yogurt. Every individual of the group has to sing sincerely and with a longing to visualise God. *Bhajan* should not be imitative, mechanical or forced. Then only can *bhajan* expand the heart, reveal the Truth and arouse the springs of Love.

The entire Cosmos is composed, according to the sages, of only five elements. The first of these is what we call the Earth. Though it appears dull and inert, it is resonant with Consciousness, *Chaithanya*, Energy. The second is Water. It is vibrant with vitality (*prajnaana*). For example, when one is prostrate with thirst or weakness and is apparently unable even to react to his surroundings, a cup of cold water can restore him to activity. The third element is Fire. Fire is luminous with warmth, wakefulness and attention (*jaagratha*). The fourth is Air. Air carries the life-principle, the *anima*, the *praana*. Air is not needed when there is no life in a thing. *Praana* is the image of the air principle. The last is Space (*Aakasha*). It is the expression of *OM*, the *Pranava*.

Be like children of God, seeking Grace

Every being has all these elements in its composition. This is the reason why the sages asserted, "*Ishwara sarva-bhoothaanaam*." So every being has to manifest activity, vitality, vigilance, watchfulness and the awareness of the *OM* in outer and inner space. Man has the unique capacity to know his destiny and destination. He should not fall into the whirlpool of desires and be carried down into the depths of grief. When breath starts to gasp, hair turns grey; teeth begin to drop, and eyes grow dim, man's greed to quench the clamour of the senses increases, instead of decreasing. *Sathsang* (holy company) is the only remedy, to make man live as man. Cruelty, jealousy, egotism, ingratitude--these should not emanate from Man, the crown of creation. Mutual help and compassion---these should serve man as his two eyes.

Embodiments of Love! Do not entangle yourselves in kinship that lasts only for a day or two, a span of months or years. Attach yourselves to God who is your closest kin, today, tomorrow and always. Where exactly are you now? Reflect on that. Each one will secure only what is proportionate to what one has renounced, however long or however near you might be. Ticks attach themselves to the udder which is full of sweet nourishing milk. But, ticks secure only the blood of the cow, not the milk. The calf which comes skipping from afar drinks the milk. You have to be like the calves, like children of God seeking Grace. Do not become ticks that cling close but do not long for milk. Near, nearer, nearer! That does not help. Become dear, dearer, dearer. That is the proper *saadhana*.

Man can be happy if he develops togetherness

The situation in India and in the world today is: "*Evarikivaare, Yamunaa theree*" (Each for each on Yamuna beach). The fingers of one hand do not feel that they belong to each other. Four members of a single home trudge along four separate tracks. There is no togetherness. How happy can man be if he develops togetherness! Can you eat a meal with a single finger? When the five fingers work in unison, the stomach is filled in five minutes! When ten men work together, the task is done. So, no attachment should be developed, no wish is to be welcomed, nothing is to be sought for, no defeat is to be taken to heart, without delving deep into the consequences.

Thyaagaraaja advises that even the Name of God has to be resorted to after full understanding. The mind is a Lotus; it needs *madhu* to grow through and Kara to blossom under. *Madhu* means water, and *Kara* means "the rays of the Sun." As a matter of fact, the Sun lifts up the water from the ground and pours it down again. The bees that are drawn to the Lotus flower are also called *Madhu Kara*; they carry away the flower and the fragrance. '*Madhu* means 'Sweetness,' 'honey.' It is another word for *prema*. When the evil and the blemish in man are cleansed by the waters of love, the heart can bloom and gaze at the glory of God. Or else, man has to lie low in the slush, weighed down by dirt.

Education must feed the roots of faith

Students! The life around us teaches us many lessons. When the cow delivers a calf, the baby is encased in placental matter. The mother starts licking off the matter and cleansing the child. Its *prema* is so overpowering. Then the new-born calf rises on its legs as soon as it is freed from dirt! Just think of this, dear students! When the pashu (animal) does this so lovingly and so thoroughly in order to help the child to rise, can *Pashupathi* (the Lord of living beings) refrain from cleansing His children in order to help them rise and progress? When the 'go' (cow) is so eager to save the child and help it to run about in joy, how can *Gopaala* (the Lord as Cowherd) allow you to remain dirty and handicapped?

Be firm in this faith in God. This is the gain that you must secure from your studies. Education must feed the roots of faith. *Vishwaasa* (faith) is *shwaasha* (breath). Faith lives and thrives on Love. *Prema* is *praana*. *Praana* must charge *bhajan* or worship with faith. Faith prompts sweetness in your thoughts, words and deeds. The *Uttharaayana* (the Northward Path) that begins today, must be marked by resolution to stick to the Godward path. Turn the mind towards God; that will keep it strong and sweet.

Thyaagaraaja said that if he is armed with the Grace of Raama, the planetary missiles can never injure him. Purandhara Daasa, another great saint, asked, "What are eyes for?" and answered the question himself, "To visualise the Lord," and adds eyes that do not yearn to see You are black balls: ears that do not hear Your praise are narrow mountain caves where jackals live; the tongue that does not relish the repetition of Your Name can only croak like a frog." This is the period of life when you must cultivate faith and draw strength from the Grace of God.

There are three types of people who are involved in work. The first can be named 'Non-doers' (*Akarmins*). They plan very pompously and pride themselves on their talents but, at the first sign of failure or discouragement, they get so dejected that they give up all effort. They renounce all *saadhana*, even attending *bhajan* sessions. They are afflicted with the *Thaamasik* (ignorant) nature. Keep away from such people; you should not allow even their shadow to fall upon you lest your enthusiasm is affected.

Sathya Sai's Shankraanthi message

The second type is "All-doer" (Vikarmi). He plunges into work, without discriminating whether it is good or bad. He is too enthusiastic and too active. His is the *Raajasik* (passionate) nature. The third type is the "Good Doer, the God-Doer," the *Saathwik* (faithful) worker (*Sukarmi*). He does work with devotion and discipline, as his duty to the Divinity resident in him. He offers his work as worship and is content when he has done it to the best of his capacity.

Man has taken birth, in order to suffer and purify himself in the crucible of life. His *karma* (work) caused his birth. The feelings of 'like and dislike' urged him to engage in work. He 'liked' and 'disliked' as a result of the impact of the environment he was in. That impact was helped by reason and rationalisation. They were moved by the influence of duality. Duality was the product of ignorance. If ignorance is overcome, one is in Bliss thereafter. Arjuna suffered from this basic ignorance and when Krishna granted him the light of wisdom, he was cured.

Have faith in the Truth that can remove delusion. You cannot be argued into faith, nor can you derive it from books. You can know and experience Truth when you cleanse your heart and broaden it through *seva* and Love.

Bheeshma, the unrivalled hero, the guardian of the cousins who fought among themselves in Kurukshetra, the great *Vedhic* scholar and *saadhak*, the paragon of virtue, the person who reached the acme of renunciation, postponed his moment of death for 54 days in order that he might pass into the heavenly regions. By drawing his last breath as *Uttharaayana* dawned, he recited "Krishna, Krishna" and merged in Godhead. That was the measure of his devotion. Take this as my Shankraanthi Message to you seek God in every one and you will be rewarded.

Brindhaavan Hostel, 14-1-1982

You can purchase drugs, but you cannot purchase health. You can purchase a bed but you cannot purchase sleep. You might employ even the most expert doctors, but you cannot ward off health. So, realise the goal of life, without delay.

Sathya Sai Baaba