

51. The lamb

Mergence in the Cosmic Consciousness (*Brahman*), of which each one is an expression, is not a novel achievement gained by effort. It is only the awareness, in a flash, of an existing fact. One is *Brahman* already, inherently, inseparably so. Salt, which is an expression of the nature of the ocean, might be noticed in many lands, on many occasions, in many forms and many compounds. But, it retains its truth which is cognisable in its taste. Originating from the sea, salt lends the quality of the sea to every article with which it is associated, whether it be milk or syrup or clear tasteless water. So too, though the individualised spark of consciousness has woven a cocoon around itself and assumed a form and a name, it---that is to say, man---can never give up its *essential Aathmic* nature

The Upanishads emphasise this duty and warn man of the danger that must follow when this responsibility is neglected or evaded. As the ocean announces that the salt crystal is its own, itself, so the Lord announces in the Geetha' *Maamaiva amsho jeevaloke jeeva bhoothas sanaathanah*---"A unit of mine, which is eternal, has become life, in this world of Life." No wonder, the *Vedha* addresses living beings as, "Children of the immortal One" and "Inheritors of immortal Bliss."

Some years ago, a rich zamindar played the role of a washerman in a village drama and won the appreciation of the vast gathering. He spoke and gesticulated, argued and bargained as vociferously as any washerman. But, that did not affect or tarnish his genuine Zamindar-hood in any way. So too, the body-mind-complex may have many forms and names or roles, but the *Aathma*, the Witness, has none.

Names and forms have temporary validity for daily living, as we noticed in the case of the washerman on the stage during the play. The washerman has to use a special dialect and conform to certain customs and conventions. Or else, the play cannot impress. As a matter of fact, every activity of man is a scene in the Divine Play and therefore subject to limits and bounds, relevant to the plan and purpose.

The Vedhic yajna and meaning of the rituals

Art engineer, for example, has been trained to respect and follow certain accepted practices and obligatory rules. The depth of the foundation has to be in proportion to the height of the structure. The space on the ground has to determine the area and height of the building erected on it. The painter too has to pay attention to proportion and balance, symmetry and harmony.

We are now watching a *Vedhic* ritual, a *yajna*, being performed by these pandiths well versed in the science of invoking Grace through *manthra*. They have to prepare the sacrificial altar according to the rules laid down thousands of years ago. The ceremonial fire which has to be lit and fed in the duly constructed altar has to be produced by churning to the accompaniment of *Vedhic* hymns in praise of the all-pervasive Fire-principle. Fire so sanctified becomes divine and can act as a messenger between man and God. The altar becomes a post-box, authorised by the highest, to receive prayers (letters) correctly stamped (with sincerity) addressed to the various facets of the Omnipresent Almighty.

The fire in the domestic hearth kept alive for cooking food and kept in other forms to benefit from its heat and light are secular and not sacred. The fire that consumes the corpse is taboo.

These fires too have some bounds and limits, but, this sacrificial fire has the largest number of restrictions and prescriptions and the most meaningful modes of feeding and fostering.

The myth about the sacrificial offering

For example, in *Vedhic yajnas* patronised by those who consider the letter to be sacrosanct, a lamb is sacrificed and its diaphragm offered as an oblation. But, the *karma* has to be examined in the light of *the jnaana* that is derivable from it. The *Vedhic* myth or concept is clothed in symbols. A symbol, like the word 'diaphragm' is capable of a wide range of interpretations, both allegoric and metaphoric.

Let us analyse this further. The young of the sheep is as tender as the human baby. It is innocence personified, full of charming playfulness. Sheep are docile and harmless, incapable of injuring others. The lamb is as holy as the purest of angels. The diaphragm which separates the thoracic from the abdominal cavities is only a symbol of the layer of *jnaana* which separates the worldly from the spiritual. It represents the casket in which the pure *saathwik* heart is enshrined. God will accept such an offering, and not inferior oblations. What is therefore meant by the text is that one has to maintain the heart as the source and repository of pure love and offer it to God. There was no intention to slaughter the dear little lamb. Be a lamb; offer the innocent heart encased in Love---that is the message. What can mortal man gain by killing another mortal being?

Karma Kaanda of the *Vedha* must purify the mind so that it may succeed in *upaasana* (worship, adoration of the Presence) and achieve the *jnaana* which releases one from bondage. This *Vedhic karma* or ritual is called *yajna*. *Yajna* means "giving up," "renunciation," *thyaaga*. What exactly has to be given up? Riches? That is easy enough One's home? That too is not hard. Does it mean retiring into a forest, breaking away from kith and kin? Many have done so and become proud of it. The *thyaaga* that the *yajna* demands is the casting off of pomp, pride, envy, greed, in short, the ego itself.

Every rite laid down in the *Vedha* has this aim only---to promote selflessness and universal love. Concentration on sensual gratification, anger, fury, hatred---these are bestial characteristics. Man must be ashamed to have even a trace of such traits. The characteristics of human nature are, and ought to be, love, forbearance, detachment, renunciation and truth.

Do not ask God for trivial glittering trash

Jesus announced, "Ask; it shall be given, Call; I shall answer. Knock; the door will be opened." Of course you are asking, calling and knocking. But, what are you asking for? Trivial glittering trash is what you prefer; not everlasting delight. When what you ask for is not given, do not condemn the mother as cruel. She does not feed a sick child the delicacies it demands. Her affection dictates that apparent cruelty. So, too, God's mercy is patent in His refusal to give what you ask for.

You are calling out but you are not answered often. Why? You address someone other than God. The call does not arise from your heart. The yearning is not total. The motive is selfish and impure. You are knocking at the door and complaining that it is not opened. God is residing in your own heart but you have locked that heart so that love cannot enter. So, He is silent and unresponsive. The door need not be opened, for you to become aware of the God within. It is

ever open for Love; knocking is unnecessary. Love will automatically make the heart bright with light and delight. When the One is known, there is no more asking.

The consummation of this *Vedhic Yajna* lies in the giving up of desire, in the awareness of the One without a Second.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 21-10-1982

Truth or God can flash only in a mind clear of blemish. Envy is the foulest of blemishes. Vanity, envy, egoism---these three are kin. They cut at the root of man's progress. To feel proud that you are a bhaktha, that you are nearing God, is also a blot, Though you may be a mountain, you must feel you are a mound; you should not pretend to be a mountain.

Sathya Sai Baaba