

28. To Divinity through Sacrifice

THE sacred and fragrant articles that are offered and the precious gems that are placed in the sacrificial fire are symbolic of the offerings which man should make in life. He should offer his pure heart and good qualities such as *Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Shaanthi* and *Prema* (Truth, Virtue, Peace and Love) to the Divine. The real spirit of giving to society and the community the wealth, knowledge and skills one possesses is the true *Yajna* (sacrificial rite). Without the spirit or sacrifice the performance of external rituals has no meaning.

Life itself is a *Yajna*. To make human life an oblation in the sacred fire of duties and actions is itself a *Yajna*. To get rid of one's bad qualities is *Yajna*. Every individual who seeks to lead an ideal life, to achieve bliss and attain self-realisation has to cultivate the spirit of sacrifice. *Yajna* is the means to lead one from sorrow to happiness, adversity to prosperity, darkness to light. Human life can be worthwhile only when it is based on sacrifice or the quality of renunciation. Thereby not only can it become meaningful but Divinity can also be experienced.

Life does not consist in eating, sleeping and such activities. The *Vedhaantha* (concluding essence of *Vedhas*) has declared that the human goal is Moksha (release from bondage). What is this bondage? It is not association with wife and children, with property or attachments and hatreds. Even the sense of 'I' and 'Mine' does not constitute bondage. It is the ignorance of one's true self that constitutes bondage. The process of liberation begins with the attempt to discover one's own Self. This *Yajna* is intended to reveal to man the truth about himself and lead him to the Divine.

The Lord is both the performer and enjoyer of *yajna*

From ancient times wrong conceptions about the purpose of *Yajna* resulted in sacrifice of living beings, and the true purpose of *Yajnas* was forgotten. *Yajna* is also called *Adhvaram*. *Dhvaram* means "killing". *Adhvaram* signifies "non-killing". Hence the inner meaning of *Yajna* is that in which there is no violence. All the *Manthras* (sacred formulas) used in *Yajnas* are aimed at achieving *Aanandha* (Divine Bliss). *Yajnas* must lead to Bliss and Self-realisation. Only when the import of the *manthras* is fully understood and experienced will there be Self-realisation.

The Lord is hailed as the *Yajnapurusha*. He is known as *Yajnabhruth*, i.e., the Lord of the *Yajna*. He is the Master of all that takes place in the *Yajna*. From this, the supreme significance of the *Yajna* should be obvious. The Lord is also known as *Yajnakrith* and *Yajnabhuk*. That is, He is both the performer and the enjoyer of the sacrifice. The Lord is thus the protector and the destroyer of the sacrifice. All the sacred things that are offered in the sacrificial fire, including the *manthras* (holy sacred formulae) and *yanthras* (ritual diagrammatic representations), are accepted by Him. When each offering is made with the *manthra*, '*Swaaha*', it means that it is being offered to the Divine. Hence, everything that is offered must be pure, sweet and enjoyable.

We have to look upon our body as the sacrificial platform. Our Mind is the altar on which the offerings are to be made. Our desires represent the ghee that is poured into the sacrificial fire. Our hatred is the sacrificial animal. Our mental conflicts are the blades of *Kusha* grass. Our heart is the sacrificial fire. It is with these elements that life should be turned into a sacrificial *Yajna*. Every pure thought should be regarded as a '*Samidh*' (holy twig) which is offered in the fire.

Man should offer to the Divine his pure heart

The essential significance of *Yajna* consists in the spirit of sacrifice. Knowledge or strength or wealth that is not used for the good of others is useless. The object of *Yajna* is to make man

realise that all the powers given to him should be offered to the Divine to elevate one's life.

To perform *Yajnas* and *Yaagas* in the true spirit no special sacrificial altars or priests are necessary. The external *Yajna* is only a reflection of the internal *Yajna*. Through the performance of the external *Yajnas*, by rituals, religious practices and righteous deeds, the Inner-Self is purified. At the time of '*Purnaahuthi*' (completion of the *Yajna*) many sacred and fragrant articles are offered in the sacrificial fire. Precious gems like diamonds, rubies, emeralds etc., are also put into the fire. Even pure silk cloth is offered. The significance of this is that man should offer to the Divine his pure unselfish heart and such noble qualities as *Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Shaanthi*, *Prema* (truth, virtue, peace, love), compassion and kindness for all beings alike.

Cultivate discrimination between right and wrong

The world has any number of wealthy persons, profound scholars and knowledgeable scientists. But if none of them has compassion and kindness, their wealth or knowledge is of no avail. It is only when we resolve to offer all that we have for the promotion of the well-being of the world and the good of society, will we be embarking on real *Yajna*. Without faith in God and this spirit of sacrifice all actions will only result in evil.

Man today has made considerable progress in science. He labours to acquire wealth, scholarship and skills of various kinds. What is the use of acquiring all these if they are not put to right use. The use of these things depends on the character of the persons possessing them. If they are good, these will be put to right use. If they are bad, these will be misused. If wealth, knowledge or scientific skills are possessed by persons with *Rajoguna* (quality of passionate activity) they will be used for wrongful ends. If persons with *Thamoguna* (quality of inertia and ignorance) have them, they will be used purely for selfish ends. The persons with *Rajoguna* may some time or other reform themselves, but those with *Thamoguna* will use their talents and energies in sinful and anti-social ways.

Man has, therefore, to cultivate primarily the sense of discrimination between right and wrong. The *Gaayathree Manthra* declares, "*Dhiyo Yo Nah Pracho-Dhayaath.*" It is a prayer to the Gaayathree Goddess to illumine the mind. Gandhiji's favourite prayer was *Sab Ko Sanmathi Dhe Bhagavan* ("O Lord, bestow good sense on everyone"). Because today evil-minded men are active everywhere the world suffers from violence, disorder and confusion.

Too many wealthy people nowadays prefer to hoard their wealth rather than utilise it for the good of society and for relieving the distress of the poor. They are behaving like a dog in the manger. It is high time every person who wishes to lead a purposeful and righteous life decides to engage himself in service to society and devotes all his wealth and energies to spreading happiness in the community. Men must realise that there can be no greater source of real bliss than *Thyaaga* (renunciation).

Those who are affluent should help the distressed

Look at the trees, the rivers and the cows. They are supreme examples of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. The trees grow and produce flowers and fruits for the enjoyment of others. A tree gives shade even to one who is felling it. The rivers keep flowing all the time to provide life-giving water to all living things. The cows offer the milk which is intended for their calves to man. If trees, rivers and cows can exhibit such exemplary qualities of sacrifice, it is deplorable that man, who has inherently noble qualities, should be lacking in the spirit of sacrifice.

Bhaarath had the reputation for centuries of being the land of *thyaaga*, *yoga*, and *karma*

(sacrifice, divine communion and right action). If today persons born in such a country have no sense of sacrifice it is a matter for shame. The educated persons and those who are affluent should try in every way to help the weak, the distressed and the poor in society. They must go to the relief of the sick and suffering. Those who go abroad to acquire scientific and other knowledge should come back to the mother country and use their knowledge for building up the national economy and serving their countrymen.

Engage in service to people around you

Instead of cultivating the higher human qualities we are developing selfishness and other undesirable traits. Many are engaged in looking at the faults of others and ignoring their own defects. The right attitude is to learn from the good qualities of others and correct one's own faults. If you do not like a person you may keep away from him, but you should not go about decrying him.

When you point your finger at the faults of others you must remember that three fingers are pointing at your own faults.

There are many *Saadhakas* (spiritual aspirants) and devotees who go to *Ashrams* (monasteries), cultivate the company of elders and listen to their teachings and who imagine that they have renounced everything. However, if there is no change in their mental attitude and way of life, of what use is this renunciation? If you cannot shed your envy or likes and dislikes, what is the point in staying in an *Aashram*? Many *Saadhaks* are in the habit of moving from house to house and indulging in gossip. Is this the kind of life that should be led in an *Aashram*? Instead of devoting their time to spiritual and Godly matters, indulging in idle gossip is a gross abuse of one's life in an *Aashram*. It is more important to put into practice even one or two good things that one learns from a preceptor than listen endlessly to discourses.

Your real wealth is the practice of Virtue

Embodiments of the Divine! On this auspicious *Puurnaahuthi* day, offer in the sacrificial fire of your heart, all your defects and bad qualities such as envy, greed, and antipathy and take a resolve to cultivate good qualities. All the wealth about which you boast is valueless. The real wealth is the practice of Virtue. Good character is real knowledge. This knowledge is wealth which will not decline however much you may use it, and no one can filch it away from you.

Today this *Yajna* has come to a close. This should mean that our spirit of sacrifice has achieved fulfilment. Henceforth, develop universal love and dedicate your self to the service of society. Life is constantly ebbing away. To utilise all your resources for the good of others is the way to experience real bliss. Whatever may have been your lapses in the past, begin a new life of dedication and devotion from today. Make the best use of the sacred atmosphere prevailing in the *Aashram* and engage yourself in spiritual *saadhana* (practices) and service to the people around you.

On this *Puurnathuthi* day I bless you that you should find fulfilment by becoming integrated personalities, enjoying unalloyed Bliss.