

26. Light the lamp within

*Peace has vanished
Truth has become rare
Arms have become a menace
Selfishness is at the root.
Of all these calamities
This is the word of Truth--the word of Sai.*

*Sathya, Dharma, Ahimsa,
Prema and Santhi
Are the five life-breaths
Of Man in this world.
Love is the foremost of these five.
Install love in your hearts.*

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! Bharatiya culture is boundless and unexcelled. Every Bharatiya festival is saturated with profound spiritual significance. These festivals did not originate to provide occasions for merriment, feasting and ostentation. When you examine them from the spiritual or scientific point of view you will find that they are full of sacred meaning.

For the Bharatiya every object is fit for worship. All objects, whether they are visible to the eye, audible to the ear, arising in the mind or inspiring the heart, are pregnant with the Truth of the Spirit. Every object, ranging from a piece of stone to a precious diamond, from a blade of grass to the celestial Parijatha tree, from an ant to an elephant, from a sinner to a saint, conveyed to the Bharatiya the truth of the Divine.

Bharatiya concept of social justice is unique

The great *Mahavakyas* (profound aphorisms) like "*Sarvam khalu idam Brahma*" (Verily, everything here is Divine), "*Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagath*" (The entire cosmos is permeated by the Divine), "*Isaavaasyam idam sarvam*" (All this is dwelt in by the Lord) were based on this concept and proclaimed to the world. The Bharatiya concept of social justice has no parallel in any other country in the world. Ignoramuses who are not aware of these profound truths tend to revile Bharatiyas. They refer mockingly to Bharatiyas as worshippers of stones and trees, of forests and mountains.

Bharatiyas are animated by the magnificent conception that love is not confined to living beings but is present in every object, animate or inanimate. It is natural for human beings to see the many in the One. But Bharatiya culture comprehends the divine concept of unity in diversity.

Every festival is intended to awaken in man the consciousness of his inherent divinity. The Bharatiya scriptures call upon men stridently: "Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached."

They exhort men to get rid of their ignorance, realise their primal divinity and strive for the realisation of that consciousness.

Dipavali ushers in the light of prosperity

From the very name of today's festival--Dipavali it can be seen that the Divine effulgence is manifest in it. Dipavali means "the array of lights." "*Thamasomaa jyotirgamaya*" (Lead me from darkness to light) is an Upanishadic prayer. This means that where there is darkness light is needed. What is this darkness? Sorrow is one form of darkness. Peacelessness is another. Loss is another. Disappointment is one form of darkness. Misery is yet another. Lack of enthusiasm is another. All these are different forms of darkness. To get rid of the darkness of sorrow, you have to light the lamp of happiness. To dispel the darkness of disease, you have to install the light of health. To get over the darkness of losses and failures, you have to usher in the light of prosperity.

These apparently opposing conditions are not totally separate from each other. They are inter-related. You see in the world the prevalence of heat and cold. They appear to be opposed to each other. But nevertheless, according to the prevailing situation, both are useful for man. During the cold weather, we welcome heat. In the summer, coolness is desired. Hence, it is clear that both heat and cold are aids to man and not harmful to him. Likewise, joy and sorrow, loss and gain are helpful to man and not inimical. If there is no sorrow, one cannot know the value of happiness. If there is no darkness, the value of light cannot be appreciated.

Hence, if the greatness of light is to be realised, darkness is necessary. It is rightly said: "Pleasure is an interval between two pains." The truth about sorrow and joy will be realised when they are considered as equal from the spiritual point of view.

From the practical worldly point of view, the festivals have one aspect. From the spiritual viewpoint they carry a different significance. But there is a common purport in both. Only the ignorant will give diverse meanings to them and miss the essential significance.

Origin of Dipavali from scientific point

Looking at the Dipavali festival from the scientific point of view, it should be noted that at one time in the distant past, our ancestors lived in the Arctic region (the polar region). In this region, darkness prevailed for six months. The sun appears on *Mesha Sankranthi* day (the sun entering the Aries sign of the Zodiac). The sun sets in this region on *Tula Sankranthi* day (when the sun enters Libra). In the movement between these two signs, there is an interval of six months. After the sun sets in Libra, the dark half-year starts.

Today is *Chathurdasi* (the fourteenth day) in the month of *Karthik*. It is *Amavasya* (New Moon day). The month is called *Kaumudi*. The people in the polar region used to start lighting their lamps from this day. The lighting of the lamp is not without other significance.

As they would be in darkness for a long period, they described the lamp that was lit as *Nithya jyothi* (the perennial light).

Different events that caused the celebration

Five thousand years ago there were some planets going round the earth. Some of these planets disappear from time to time. There was one planet called Naraka which used to go round the earth. In the course of their orbits, sometimes the moon and the Naraka planet used to get close

to each other. At one time, the Naraka planet appeared to be approaching close to the earth. The inhabitants of the earth were filled with dread of the approaching catastrophe. They prayed to the Lord for averting the imminent disaster and saving them. At that stage, Sri Krishna used His *Prajna* (extraordinary knowledge) to destroy that planet. This extraordinary knowledge of Krishna was termed *Sathya*. That is to say, Krishna destroyed the Naraka planet in association with *Sathya*. The denizens of the world started celebrating that day with lighting of lamps and adoring the Lord who saved them. That day of the Lord's triumph was celebrated as a festive occasion.

It was on Dipavali day that Sri Rama's coronation took place after his victorious return to Ayodhya from Lanka vanquishing Ravana and his Rakshasa brood. For a long period Ayodhya had been plunged in darkness when Rama was in exile in the forest. In the absence of the effulgent Rama, Ayodhya was a city of darkness. The forests were filled with light. The return of Rama was hailed by the people of Ayodhya as the return of divine effulgence and hence they celebrated the event by the lighting of lamps everywhere'.

Nor is that all. Today's festival is marked by other significant features. This is the day on which the Lord in His Vamana incarnation sent the Emperor Bali to the Nether World after He had got the promise of three feet of ground (measured by the Lord's foot) from Bali. Vamana (as the incarnation of Vishnu) used the gift of three feet of land to put down the *Ahamkara* (egoism) of Bali. Bali is described as *Chakravarthi* (sovereign lord).

Dipavali signifies suppression of the ego

In every human being there is a sovereign who presides over all his qualities. That sovereign is the Ego. This sovereign *Ego--Ahamkara Chakravarthi* suppresses all the good qualities in man. *Ahamkara* has another meaning. It is the very form of *Aham* the "I". The egoist is one who identifies the body with his Self. But you are not the body. The body is only an instrument. It is an agglomeration of material substances. How can this inert body be equated with the Self?. It is the association of consciousness with the body that it is able to undertake various activities.

Dipavali is a festival which is designed to celebrate the suppression of the Ego by the Higher Self. Man is plunged in the darkness of ignorance and has lost the power of discrimination between the permanent and the evanescent. When the darkness of ignorance caused by *Ahamkara* (the ego-feeling) is dispelled by the light of Divine knowledge, the effulgence of the Divine is experienced. Dipavali is also the day on which Emperor Vikramaditya ascended the throne.

It is for these various reasons that Dipavali has been observed by Bharatiyas, young and old, as a day of great rejoicing.

However, the lights lit on Dipavali day remove only the external darkness and not the darkness within man. Even when the sun shines brightly, his light cannot dispel the inner darkness. For this purpose, you have to learn a lesson from the external light. For instance, if you want to light a lamp, you need a container. You have to fill it with oil and place a wick in it. You need a matchbox to light the wick. Only when you have all the four accessories can you light the lamp. The lamp cannot be lit if any one of them is lacking. This lamp dispels the external darkness. As the wick burns, the oil is consumed. When the oil is exhausted the flame goes out. Saint Ramadas compared human life to a lighted lamp and declared in one of his songs that when the oil of life ebbs away, neither the wick nor the light will follow the departed.

Man has to dispel the darkness of ignorance

If the darkness of ignorance is to be dispelled, man needs a container, oil, wick and a matchbox corresponding to what an external lamp needs. For man, the heart is the container. The mind is the wick. Love is the oil and *vairagya* (sacrifice) is the matchbox. When you have these four, *Atma-jyothi* (the Divine flame of the Spirit) shines effulgently. When the light of the Spirit is aflame, the Light of Knowledge appears and dispels the darkness of ignorance.

The flame of a lamp has two qualities. One is to banish darkness. The other is a continuous upward movement. Even when a lamp is kept in a pit, the flame moves upwards. The sages have therefore adored the lamp of wisdom as the flame that leads men to higher states. Hence, the effulgence of light should not be treated as a trivial phenomenon. Along with lighting the external lamps, men should strive to light the lamps within them. The human estate should be governed by sacred qualities. This calls for the triple purity of body, mind and *speech--Trikarana Suddhi* (purity of the three instruments).

Where there is guilt, there is fear

The first requisite is purity of the heart. This should be accompanied by purity in speech. And one's actions should be in harmony with the purity of the heart and the speech. Where there is this triple purity, there will be no fear. The man who practises this threefold purity needs no other protector. Where there is guilt, there is fear. Where fear prevails, security is sought. There are many persons in the world who seek security. What for? Because they are filled with fear. The fear arises out of a sense of guilt. The innocent man has no need to fear and hence has no need for protection.

Man today is haunted by fear all the time because he is full of guilty actions. These have to be got rid of. Then he will be free from fear. Moreover, he must ensure that he does not commit the same faults again. Only the Divine perennial light of spirituality can redeem man from a life of anxieties, miseries, frustrations and insatiable desires. The spiritual light will be a divine lighthouse for him. For everyone caught up in the coils of worldly life, this divine light is essential. This light is like a compass which reveals the course you should take. All the pleasures, positions and riches of the world will not confer on you real peace and security. Only faith in the Self can ensure this. Man today has faith in everything except the Spirit. It is because it has lost its faith in the Spirit that Bharat today is racked by so many troubles.

Here is an illustration of how this lack of faith may be seen. Today is called Sunday. Who determined this name? Did it announce its name when the day dawned? No. You derive the name by looking at the calendar. You also note that it is the 5th day of the month. Who drew up the calendar? One who is versed in astronomy and astrology. You have full faith in the calculations of the astrologer. Wherefrom did he get his knowledge of astrology? All this knowledge has originated from the *Manu Dharma Sastra* (the Code of Manu). People today have no faith in the Code of Manu but place their faith in something derived from his scripture. The source is forgotten, but what has come in between is prized. This is the state of things today.

Abuse of Purusharthas

There are four *Purusharthas* (the goals of human life): *Dharma* (Righteousness), *Artha* (material welfare), *Kama* (desire) and *Moksha* (Liberation). Ignoring the first and the last goals, men are immersed in the pursuit of the two middle goals. The paradox of human existence today is that

life is without a head or feet but has only the trunk in the middle. What meaning can there be for such a life?

This shows that man is not realising what is most important in life. All the scriptures have declared: "*Tath Twain Asi*" (That thou art), "*Aham Brahmaasmi*" (I am the Brahmam), "*Prajnaanam Brahma*" (Awareness is the Supreme). While these profound truths have been proclaimed by the *Vedas*, people are not relying on them. Though people talk about self-confidence, they have really no confidence in the Self (the Spirit). It is essential for every man to have *Atma visvaasam* (confidence in the Self). Self-confidence is the foundation for the mansion of Life, with Self-satisfaction as the walls, Self-sacrifice as the roof and Self-realisation as the dwelling. The Self (Spirit) is at the root of everything. Without confidence in the Self, life becomes utterly meaningless. Life is infinitely precious. It should not be wasted in mere eating and sleeping. It should be lived for realising the Supreme. Man is endowed with a body for realizing the Divine. He must lead an ideal life. Life is a challenge, meet it. Life is a dream, realise it. Life is a game, play it.

Awareness means total understanding. All other forms of knowledge are only partial and incomplete. Awareness calls for a total comprehension of the nature of the cosmos. This is called *Chith*. Who can recognise *Chith*? Only *Sath* can recognise *Chith*. *Sath* means that which is permanent--Being, which is unchanging and immutable. When *Sath* is comprehended, *Chith* can be properly understood. The unified form of *Sath* and *Chith* is *Ananda* (Bliss).

Difference between *Santhosha* and *Ananda*

Today people seek *Ananda* (Bliss). But what kind of "Bliss" do they want? Is it momentary or enduring bliss? Can momentary "bliss" be equated with *Ananda*? Bliss is that state of joy which is lasting and unchanging. The joy that is experienced from moment to moment can only be termed *Santhosham*--temporary happiness. It is to be regarded as "*some-thosham*" (a little joy). To seek it is a *dosham* (error). Revelling in the transient and the momentary, men lose themselves. *Ananda* is bliss. *Santhosham* is pleasure. There is a wide gulf between "Bliss" and "pleasure." The latter is temporary. When one is hungry, he takes some *chapatis* and feels satisfied and happy. But again hunger appears after a few hours. Hence, this happiness comes and goes like birth and death. This is not the kind of happiness man should seek. He must aspire for the *Ananda* that is everlasting. This *Ananda* has been described in many ways as *Nithyananda* (perennial joy), *Paramananda* (Supreme bliss), *Brahmananda* (Divine bliss), and' so on. In all these states, what is ever-present is *Sath-Chith-Ananda* (Being-Awareness-Bliss).

Are *Sath*, *Chith* and *Ananda* separate entities? No. They are one. Being is Awareness and Awareness is Bliss. The same state (of bliss) indicates the three attributes. For instance, if you consider the example of *Agni* (Fire), it has three qualities: Redness, light and heat. These three are not separate from each other. They are the combined qualities of fire. Likewise, in the state of *Atmananda* (Spiritual bliss), all three----*Sath*, *Chith* and *Ananda*--are present. It is three-in-one.

The manifestation of Divinity

In man, all the three *gunas*---*Satwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*---are present. The three qualities manifest their nature in different situations. When there is a manifestation of what is permanent, the *Satwic* quality is to the fore. When one's fullness is manifested, *Chit* comes to the fore. When both these states come together, divinity is manifested in the form of Bliss. *Sath* may be compared to sugar, whose quality is sweetness. Water is tasteless substance. But when the sugar

is dissolved in water, you have neither sugar, nor water, but syrup. Likewise, when *Sath* and *Chit* combine, you have *Ananda*, which is not pure *Sath* or *Chith*.

Hence, man should regard himself as the embodiment of bliss. Man perpetually seeks bliss in one context or another in passing an examination with distinction, thereafter securing a good job, and then getting married, and getting a son, and so on. After realising all these, he encounters some trouble or other. Life becomes a perpetual pursuit of happiness, which all the time eludes him.

Man's goal is one, but paths are many

Man will experience real happiness only when he has recognised his true nature. As long as he identifies himself with particular physical form and name, happiness will elude him. Man constantly refers to "my body", "my mind", etc., but does not enquire into the nature of the 'I' that claims this ownership. Men have to learn to put these questions and seek the answers for them. It should not be imagined that there is only one answer for a question. There may be different answers. Teachers in evaluating answer papers should have regard for the possibility of different answers to the same question. This applies equally to life. The goal is one, but the paths are many. Concentrate on the goal. For instance, Swami is in Puttaparthi. Devotees use many different kinds of transport to come here planes, trains, buses, bicycles and by foot. Whatever the mode of transport, the goal is one. No one is entitled to claim that his mode of conveyance is the only right means.

Thus, to realise the Divine, there are many paths. Of the nine forms of *devotion---Sravanam, Kirthanam*, etc., any method can be followed. But people must note that the basic truth underlying all the different forms is only one. This was why the Upanishads called upon all the aspirants to realise the One in the many (Unity in diversity). The desires, the methods, the doctrines and practices may vary. But the fruit is one and the same.

Light the lamp that is ever shining within

The inner significance of Dipavali is to lead man from darkness to light. Man is perpetually plunged in darkness. Every time he is enveloped in darkness, he should light a lamp that is ever shining within him. Carry that lamp wherever you go. It will light your path wherever you may be.

Hence, the first requisite is the practice of the *Karma Marga* (Path of Action). For instance, if you have to travel ten miles in the dark and have a hurricane lantern with you, you cannot keep the lantern in one place and expect it to light your path all the way. If you carry the lantern with you, it will serve you all the way, even though it can illumine only ten yards at a time. Make the divine effulgence within you accompany you all the time by faith in its illumination.

Students in particular should bear in mind the main purpose of life and prepare themselves to lead ideal lives. Shedding selfishness, they must learn to serve others by cultivating Divine love. Then they will experience the Bliss Divine, which they can share with others.

Discourse in the Prashaanthi Mandir, on 5-11-1991, Dipavali Day.