

24. Offer everything to God

As in the sesame seed oil exists,

As in milk ghee is present,

As fragrance resides in a flower,

As the juice exists in a fruit,

As fire is latent in a faggot

So is the Divine immanent in subtle form.

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! Oil is present throughout the sesame seed. Ghee is present in every drop of milk. Fragrance is present in an invisible form in a flower. A fruit is filled with sweet juice. In every piece of wood fire is latent. In the same manner the Divine is immanent in the entire cosmos in a subtle form. God is present not in some country or some body. Like vision in the eye and hearing in the ear, God is present in the mind as *Chaithanya* (Consciousness). The cosmos is the visible manifestation of the invisible Supreme Self.

While the Divine is in such close proximity to him man in his ignorance goes seeking God everywhere. The Divine is effulgent in every man as *Sath-Chith-Aanandha* (Being-Awareness-Bliss), the Cosmic Consciousness.

Reflections of the sun shining in the sky can be seen in the oceans, rivers, the lakes and in wells. Though the reflections are varied, the sun is one alone. The Divine is present in man like the unseen thread which holds a garland of gems together. The entire cosmos is permeated by the Divine and is the visible manifestation of the Divine.

Man's essential humanness is common to one and all

Nothing in the world, no object, no human being, no creature can be found wherein God is not present. Though man appears in the world in different forms, speaking different languages, his essential humanness is common to one and all. There is only one race, that is the human race. God is only one. He is *Sath-Chith-Aanandha*.

Just as a seed sprouts and grows into a plant wherein a flower blossoms, so does the Divine seed grow in the heart of man and blossoms as a flower, *Sath-Chith-Aanandha*. Just as it is natural for a seed to become a fragrant flower, so is it natural for man to experience the bliss of the *Divine--Sath-Chith-Aanandha*.

There are many evidences to demonstrate the Divinity that is inherent in man. But few men are ready to make the sacrifice that is required to experience this Divinity.

The ancient sages regarded human life as full of fragrance to be enjoyed. They considered life as full of nectarine sweetness. When man is oblivious of this sweetness, he ceases to be human. *Thyaaga* (sacrifice) is the sweetness in *Maanavathva* (humanness). The scriptures declare' "Only through sacrifice can man realise the eternal Divine." But, immersed in selfishness, man fails to recognise this truth.

Thyaaga and Bali

A synonym for the word *Thyaaga* (sacrifice) is *Bali*. The term *Bali* has several meanings such as' offering, dedication, sacrifice and a tax levy. What is meant by tax? *Bali* means that which has to

be given as an offering in human life. But the ancients regarded *Bali* as offering a living object as a sacrifice. This is not the proper meaning of *Bali*. *Bali* is the recognition of the Divinity in man.

People pay a water tax to the authorities who make available water at their dwelling from a distant source. Likewise people have to pay dues for the electricity supply which they receive.

What is the tax you pay to the Divine for implanting divinity in you when you consider yourself to be remote from God because of your involvement in worldly affairs? You pay for small amounts of water supply and electrical energy. But what do you pay for the heavy downpour of rain which you get from Providence? God fills the tanks and rivers with water. He provides man with the life-giving oxygen in the air he breathes. The sun illumines the whole world by his light. What is the tax we pay for all these services? The *arpitham* (offerings we make to God) is the tax. That has been called *Bali*. One should not be frightened by the term *Bali*. It means only offering one's self to the Divine.

Greatness of Emperor Bali

In making such an offering, Emperor Bali was supreme. He was the grandson of Prahlada. Emperor Bali was dedicating his entire life to God. He was a great devotee. Moreover he excelled in acts of charity. He made his subjects rejoice. He never went back on his pledged word. He was full of such great virtues. Emperor Bali took good care of his people, promoting their welfare and endearing himself to them.

Bali's father, Virochana, was also a godly ruler. Thus from Prahlada to Bali the whole line of rulers were filled with love of God. They were influenced by the Divine power. Originally Prahlada's father, Hiranyakashipu, was Lord Vishnu's gate-keeper. Whatever their differences in behaviour and attitudes, all three (Prahlada, Virochana and Bali) were equally inspired by devotion to God.

In spite of the strong opposition from his preceptor Shukraacharya to Bali for giving an offering of land to Vaamana as promised by him, Bali was firm in surrendering to Vishnu all that he had. He told the Preceptor: "Guruji, what is the use of my possessing anything which is not of use to God? The seeker is God Himself. God has really no desires. But to redeem us from the consequences of our past deeds He creates situations which call for offerings, When the infinite Divine appears in the role of the seeker of favours, what greater blessing can there be than making the offering to the Divine? I do not seek any greater blessing than this. I am ready to offer my mind, my body and my life itself to God. There is no greater fortune than this."

This is the meaning of surrender. God does not ask for any offering of wealth or position. God is said to be pleased if a sincere devotee offers a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water. What is this leaf? It is the body. The heart is the flower, the mind is fruit. The water that is to be offered is that from the tears of joy shed by the devotee. This is what God expects from you. The Lord tells you "My dear man! The body does not belong to you. Who gave it to you? It is precious gift from God. It is inert like a leaf."

Eradi referred to the Gaayathri *manthra*: "*Om! Bhur-Bhuvas-Suvaha*". In this *manthra*, '*Bhu*' refers to the body, which is made up of material substances. It may be compared to a leaf, (which is also a material object). '*Bhuvah*' refers to that which activates the inert body. That *Praana* (Life Force) operates as vibration. '*Suvah*' What is the basis for the life Force? It is *Prajnaana*. The Upanishath declares: "*Prajnaanam Brahma*." *The Prajna* operates through radiation. '*Suvah*'

refers to this power of radiation. Humanness is made up of these three constituents' Radiation, Vibration and material inertness.

Make God your life-breath

The flower to be offered-to God is a pure heart free from all taints and evil tendencies like lust, anger, and pride. The fruit to be offered is a mind free from all bad thoughts and feelings. It should be filled with the sweet juice of goodness. The water that should be offered to God is the water that flows from the eyes out of joy in experiencing God. Tears are of two kinds: tears born of grief resulting from attachments; tears spontaneously arising *from Aanandha* (blissful experience of the Divine). Make God your life-breath, the sweetness of your existence.

It was with such sacred feelings that Emperor Bali offered himself to the Lord appearing as Vaamana. People make all kinds of offerings to God. But the greatest of them all is to offer oneself. That is what Bali did. He declared- "Oh Lord! I am offering to you the heart which you gave me. What else can I offer you? Please accept my offering at your feet."

Bali is such an example of supreme sacrifice. Thus he pleased God. God has no desires because He contains within Himself everything. Whatever He does is only for the good of the devotees.

The supreme quality of Emperor Bali is his spirit of sacrifice. He taught the people of Kerala the lesson of sacrifice. He also demonstrated that when it comes to upholding one's plighted word, one can disregard even the advice of one's preceptor. Nothing should be allowed to come between a devotee and the Lord. Bharata, Prahlada and Bali are examples of devotees of the Lord who set aside the *Vedhic* injunction regarding reverence for the mother, the father and the preceptor in their allegiance to the Divine.

Bali recognized that not a blade of grass moves without the power of the Divine in it. "No one knows the supreme power of God's will. He permeates everything in the cosmos from an ant to *Brahman*. Men are ignorant of this *truth*," declared Bali (Svaami recited a verse from the Bhaagavatham).

Significance of Onam

Emperor Bali surrendered himself totally to the divine. Under his reign, all the subjects were happy and led godly lives. Saddened by the thought of having to go away from his people, he told them' "Dear people! I cannot be without you and you cannot be without me. Every year I shall appear before you and give you joy."

Onam is the day on which Bali fulfills his promise. Waking up early in the morning taking a bath, wearing new dresses and worshipping God mark the celebration of Onam. What is the significance of wearing new *Vasthra* (clothes)? *Vasthra* is one of the names for the heart. Wearing new *Vasthra* (clothes) means purifying the heart. When the heart is pure the Divine elects to dwell in it. There is no meaning in wearing new garments if the heart remains impure.

Hence, the heart has to be kept pure. The ruler must be worthy of the subjects and the subjects must be worthy of the ruler. Harmony between the two is vital.

It is not easy to understand the ways of the Lord. Even the ancient sages felt that god's ways are inscrutable and that His attributes are beyond reckoning and praise. The Gopikas declared: "Oh Krishna! How can we know your true nature? You are subtlest among the subtle and vaster than the vastest. You are omnipresent. How can we know you?"

All belongs to God

The sages, probing the mystery of the Divine, came to the conclusion that God is everything and no one can claim anything as one's own. By this attitude they were able to realise the Divine. However, because of the influence of *Kali Age*, today everyone claims everything as "Mine." Indeed, nothing belongs to anyone. Men are immersed in the false and foolish concept of ownership. Possessiveness is rampant in every thought and action. And this leads to the inflation of the ego. Egoism has to be utterly eradicated. Possessiveness should be banished. Divinity should be installed in the heart. Be aware that all things belong to God. "You came with empty hands and you depart with empty hands." All that was got or spent in between are mere passing clouds. Emperor Bali taught this profound truth that nothing belongs to anyone. All are gifts from God.

Bali was a great devotee. Devotion has five qualities and nine paths to adore the Divine. These nine paths begin with *shravanam* (listening to the glories of God) and end with *Aathma nivedhanam* (complete Self-surrender). Bali taught his subjects the profound truths about devotion.

From then to our own times, the people of Kerala have been celebrating Onam as a festival dear as life itself. They greet the festival with ineffable joy. Not for the delicious dishes prepared on the occasion. It is the holiest of the holy days for them. They should come together to chant the Lord's name. (Bhagavaan sang a poem which glorifies how a holy festival day should be celebrated. By chanting the Lord's name, by listening to the stories of the Lord and by playing the host for godly men). Only that day is a sacred day when you chant the name of God, yearn for proximity with God and experience the bliss of His grace within you. All other days are days of mourning. The Divine is within each one. When one seeks this inner vision, there is no greater experience.

The Keralites have retained their faith in God despite conditions not conducive to theistic beliefs. Their devotion is deep and firm. As worshippers of Padmahabha, their devotion stems from the depths of their being.

Embodiments of Divine Love! Realise that you are not separate from God, who is the very embodiment of Love. God can be attained only through Love and not by any other means.

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