

## 14. Message of the *Avathaars* and the Epics

*EMBODIMENTS of Love!* This vast cosmos, consisting of moving and unmoving objects, is permeated with Truth. All names and forms are founded on *Dharma* (Righteousness). *Dharma* is the form of God. The *Aathma* (Spirit) which is present in the subtlest of the subtle and vastest of the vast as a witness, is verily the *Brahman* (all-pervading Consciousness).

All the objects in the universe are made up of atoms. The atom is the embodiment of the *Aathma* (Spirit). Hence there is no place in the universe without the *Aathma* or *Brahman*.

Forgetting the spiritual basis of the universe man gets entangled in misery through his worldly attachments. It was out of a recognition of this truth that Buddha declared: "Everywhere there is sorrow. Everything is momentary and everything is perishable." To consider the worldly things as permanent is the cause of sorrow.

If man recognizes that the world is permeated by *the Brahman*, which is all bliss, he will free himself from the cause of sorrow. He fails to recognise the divinity that subsumes the whole of *Prakrithi* (Nature or the phenomenal Universe). Instead, he regards the Divine as a natural phenomenon and though the workings of the Divine can be seen in Nature, man in his folly fails to recognise the Divine. Nature in its myriad forms is the effect. God is the cause. The entire cosmos is a manifestation of cause and effect. Hence the universe is a manifestation of the Divine.

### See the divine in every human being

Man should realise that the five basic elements which constitute the fundamental stuff of the universe are common to all mankind and should be enjoyed as such. He should see the divine in every human being. This was the purport of the prayer: *Buddham Sharanam Gachchaami* (I seek my refuge in the Buddha). The second prayer is: *Sangham Sharanam Gachchaami* (I seek refuge in the *Sangha*). The implication of this prayer is that, after getting enlightenment, one should enter society (to serve it).

The third prayer is: *Dharmam Sharanam Gachchaami* (I seek refuge in *Dharma*). The meaning of the prayer as a whole is that for the sake of upholding *Dharma* (Righteousness), one should use one's *Buddhi* (the enlightened intellect) and engage himself in social activity. Possessing intelligence, if a person does not do social service, how can he uphold *Dharma*? It has been said that man had been given a body essentially to pursue *Dharma*.

### Non-violence is the first *dharana*

The observance of non-violence has been described as the highest form of *Dharma*. All the violence in the world today is due to the fact that people do not lead righteous lives. People do penance and perform various kinds of rituals, but they have secured no peace. Why? Because they have not sought to find out who they really are.

This enquiry should lead to the realisation that one is the Divine in human form and deeming the body as the basic reality, men are misusing the body and the talents and qualities given to them. They are failing to recognise how to use their endowments for redeeming their human birth.

Among the teachings of the Buddha to the world the foremost was *Ahimsa* (not causing harm to anyone). Non-violence is not merely refraining from inflicting injuries on others with one's limbs

or weapons. Non-violence has to be practised with *Thrikarana Shuddhi* (purity of mind, tongue and body). There should be no ill-feelings which is a form of violence. To cause harm to others through the body is also *Himsa* (violence). No one should be harmed even by speech. The speech should be sweet, pleasing and wholesome. All actions should be helpful to others.

"Buddha laid down three rules for all actions. All acts done by the hands should be good. The proper ornament for the *Kantham* (throat) is truth. For the ears the best ornament is listening to sacred lore. What other ornaments does anyone need?" (Sanskrit shloka).

What are people doing today? They are listening to what is undesirable. They are looking at ugly scenes. How, then, can they hope to get peace? Only by the harmony of the mind, the heart and the tongue. There should be unity in thought, word and deed.

### ***Bhajans and Sathsang should make one purer***

Despite all the teachings, no real transformation is taking place in the behaviour of man. Of what use are *Bhajans* and *Sath-sang* (the company of the good) if one does not become purer? Through the company of the good, one should cultivate good thoughts, which in due course will lead one to *Jeevan Mukthi* (Self-realisation in this very life).

Men should act according to the dictates of their conscience, which can discriminate between right and wrong. They should rise above animal tendencies and realise the glory of human birth. Men should lead ideal lives, manifesting their inner divinity. Everything they do, their speech and their manners, should be exemplary. Even the smallest act should cause no harm to others.

Men today get easily enraged. Where can we find the example for such anger? In the *Bhaagavatham*. Likewise where can we find an example for Desire or lust? In the *Raamaayana*. Where is the example for the evil quality of greed? It is in the *Mahaabhaaratha*.

How do these great works contain warnings against three grievous evils? In the *Raamaayana*, the all-powerful Raavana, a great scholar well versed in the 64 types of knowledge and one who had performed severe penances, was destroyed because of the one evil quality of *Kaama* (lust). All his other virtues were burnt up by the fire of sensuous desire. *Kaama* (lust) is destructive of all other good qualities in a man. *Raamaayana* demonstrates this truth.

In the *Bhaagavatham* we have the story of *Prahladha* and *Hiranyakashipu*. *Prahladha* was a great devotee of Vishnu. His father, *Hiranyakashipu*, hated Vishnu. In his uncontrollable hatred of the Lord, he did not hesitate to subject his young son to the most terrible ordeals. His *Krodha* (anger) was the cause of his destruction.

In the *Mahaabhaaratha*, *Dhuryodhana* stands out as the example for the evil quality of *lobha* (greed). He declared that he would not part with even a needle-point of land to the *Paandavas* (who were his cousins). His greed turned him into a totally wicked person.

### **Bounden duty of all to get rid of evil qualities**

*Raavana*, *Hiranyakashipu* and *Dhuryodhana* were not men of common clay. They were all eminent in their own way. They were heroes by virtue of their accomplishments. But they proved zeroes in their lives because of their specific vices. What use is there in possessing great talents if one is subject to a grievous vice? *Raavana* had numerous abilities and had made Lanka veritable paradise. But of what avail were all these when he had no Control over the sense?

It is the bounden duty of every human being to get rid of his evil qualities and foster his good

qualities.

### ***Avathaars and Dharma***

The role of every *Avathaar* (incarnation of the Divine) is to establish the reign of Truth and Righteousness, banish all that is evil, false and unrighteous in the world, and help to manifest the divinity in mankind.

It was to establish the reign of righteousness *Dharma samsthaapana--that* the advent of the Raama *Avathaar* took place. No one should go back on his plighted word. There is no greater *Dharma* than Truth. In order to uphold the promises given by his father, Raama chose to go in exile to the forest.

Likewise, *in the Krishna Avathaar*, the Lord declared: "I incarnate from age to age to establish *Dharma*."

When you listen to these declarations, it will be clear that *Dharma* is the supreme ideal. What is *Dharma*? Any act that is done with purity in thought, word and deed is *Dharma*. But, how many act up to this dictum? Very few understand or live upto it. Practice is primary.

The history of Bhaarath is replete with stories of the great men who have upheld *Dharma*. Buddha also had to face criticisms from his contemporaries. These are the familiar experiences of all *Avathaars*. No incarnation was free from calumny. All good causes also suffer from criticisms. Peace and good result from the work of the, *Avathaars* in spite of these attacks and' impediments.

The following is the fourfold formula for all people. Welcome good company. Eschew all association with the evil minded. Perform meritorious acts ceaselessly. Always discriminate between the transient and the everlasting.

Buddha's first teaching was, "give up bad company." In his wanderings Buddha used to take with him some young men. Some persons criticized Buddha, charging him with spoiling the young men. Buddha gave a free rein to his traducers. He listened quietly to their accusations and left without uttering a word in reply. When the disciples asked him why he chose not to reply to the criticisms Buddha said that unanswered criticisms return to the critics who made them.

By not getting excited over the angry words of a critic, one becomes superior to the critic. Otherwise, one descends to the same level as the critic. Bear no ill-will towards anyone. That is the golden rule indicated by the Geetha. Buddha carried on his mission in this spirit of equanimity and tolerance.

### ***Animating principle of Avathaars is infinitely wide***

It is the quality of great men to face obstacles and opposition with courage and calmness. It is not easy to understand the inner urges of great men or the motives and actions of *Avathaars*. The animating principle *of Avathaars* is infinitely wide. Compared to it, the capacity of the ordinary man is infinitesimal. How can the atom comprehend the infinite? Can an ant measure the depth of the ocean? Impossible, Likewise the nature of Divinity is beyond human comprehension. Even the great sages like Vasishta and Vaamadheva could have no full understanding of the divine.

Instead of trying to understand the Divine, it is better to practise what you have learnt. Jnaathum, *Dhrashtum*, *Praveshtum* (know, perceive and commune) are the three which draws the divine

towards them. The *bhajans* should be sung with complete obliviousness of the body. Devotional fervour is more important than musical skill. The ladies who took part in the *bhajans* in the morning sang the *bhajans* whole-heartedly. Their hearts were full of sweetness. Hence sweet music flowed from their hearts.

It is significant that a large number of devotees from Sri Lanka should celebrate their national festival of Buddha Jayanthi at Brindhaavan in the presence of Svaami. It is their good fortune that they have been able to have this celebration here despite all discomforts and inconveniences. Their *bhajans* have sustained them in these celebrations. They have been singing the *bhajans* at all places and as often as they could. They could find happiness and peace because of the *bhajans*.

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*Sai is Sarvajanaapriya and so any name which gives you joy, you can take up. Tastes differ according to temperament and the character one has earned by generations of activity as a living being in this world.*

*Baba*