

10. Serve the Nation with pure hearts

Life in this world is impermanent;

Youth and wealth are transient;

Wife and children are not lasting;

Righteousness and renown alone are lasting.

IN this mundane world, human life is like a water bubble. Truth is like a fleeting cloud that does not stay long. Wealth is impermanent. Wife and children are equally impermanent. *Dharma* and fame are the only permanent things in the world.

Fire emerges from the rubbing of two sticks.

Butter emerges from the churning of milk.

By constant meditation on name and form

Divinity is experienced.

Listen, oh valiant son of Bhaarath!

(Telugu poem).

God is omnipresent. Just as there can be no light rays without the sun, this cosmos cannot exist without God.

In the modern age young people consider the phenomenal world as the only reality. This is not so. "Having taken birth in this impermanent and sorry world, adore Me," says Krishna in the Geetha.

The life span of man is melting away every moment like a block of ice. Youth is transient. The only permanent and changeless entity is the Divine. Forgetting this, man is going after fleeting, trivial pleasures.

What is it that is permanent in this world? What is the purpose of human life? When one puts these questions, he does not get the right answers. Men pursue studies, jobs, wife and children in the search for happiness. They find no peace in any of these. Why? Desires are the cause of peacelessness. Without purifying the heart, all desires can only lead to unrest. Moreover, impurity in the heart is the source of many diseases. When the heart is pure, man will be free from disease.

How, then, is the heart to be purified? There is no other way except cherishing godly thoughts. All other rituals are of no avail except to provide temporary mental satisfaction. But the mind does not get satisfied easily. It is continually wavering and is uncontrollable. What should be done is to divert the mind towards God.

The greatness of Ramaa's name

Once, a lady approached Kaushalya. When Kaushalya enquired who she was, the lady replied: "Mother! Don't you know that my son leapt over the sea in one jump? I am the mother of Hanumaan."

A short while later, another lady came there. She informed Kaushalya that the sea over which Hanumaan leapt in one hop, was drunk by her son in one gulp. "I am the mother of Agasthya,

who performed this feat," she said. Kaushalya smiled on hearing their claims. She said: "For your son leaping over the sea or for your son drinking the waters in one gulp, it was the name of Raamachandhra which made it possible. I am the mother of Raama." The three ladies were conversing in this manner. There is a saying that when three ladies meet even stars will tumble down during the day!

While they were discussing who among them was great, Raama joined them. "What are you discussing?" He asked. Kaushalya said: "Son! By chanting your name Hanumaan was able to leap over the sea. This was possible because of your grace." She went on: "Again, by the power of your name, Agasthya drank the sea in one gulp. This also was by your grace. I am supremely fortunate in giving birth to such a son."

Raama, who was utterly egoless, then told the three ladies: "These fears are not the result of my grace. This body was given the name Raama at birth. It is the power of this name that has enabled them to accomplish such heroic feats. It is because this name was given to me I was able to overcome the valiant Raavana."

Thus, the name of the Lord is all powerful. By chanting the name of God, all latent powers in man are awakened.

Only the Divine name helped Dhraupadhi

You all know Dhraupadhi. Her husbands were great heroes including the powerful Bhima and the valiant Arjuna. In their presence, Dhuryodhana sought to humiliate Dhraupadhi in the open assembly. Neither the powerful Bhima, nor valiant Arjuna, nor the very embodiment of *Dharma*, Yudhishtira, ventured to come to her rescue. Ultimately she cried out: "Oh Krishna! The kinsman of the hapless!" Physical prowess did not come to the rescue of Dhraupadhi. Only the name of the Divine came to her help.

People tend to treat lightly the name of the Lord. They do not realise the potency of the two syllables in the name of the Lord. All the powers of the cosmos are contained in those two letters. You must understand properly the significance of the name and use it the right way

Naamasmarana (chanting the Lord's name), is the panacea. It is the easiest path to God-realisation. It is the boat that will take people across the ocean of mundane existence.

How does the chanting of the Lord's name transform the devotee? Every word that we utter sets in motion waves that fill the world. The radio waves sent out from the broadcasting station in Delhi reach out to every part of the world.

***Naamasmarana* is the best way to purify the heart**

Today the atmosphere is filled with the discordant and disturbing noises of various kinds. These radio waves get into the minds of people and pollute their thoughts. Hence, if we wish to listen to pure sounds, the atmosphere must be free from pollution. The pollution cycle starts from smoke and clouds and ends in the food we eat. Hence the state of our minds depends on the kind of food we consume. The nature of the food depends on the environment. The environment is determined by human actions. Today men's actions are not along right lines.

Most devotees are like the fruits of the fig tree' attractive to look at from the outside, but infested with worms inside. Devotees should strive to purify their hearts. For this purpose they have to chant the Lord's name.

The effect of *Naama-smarana* has to be properly trader-stood. Chanting the Lord's name purifies the environment. The first step is to purify one's own heart. Transform yourself before you set out to transform others. The role of *bhajans* in purifying the atmosphere should be recognised. In this context, the role of community singing should be understood. Singing *bhajans* in your home, you may indulge in your fancies and derive whatever joy you get therefrom. *Sankeerthan* (community singing) calls for whole-hearted, soul-ful singing, which moves the hearts of the listeners. *Bhajans* should not be a routine ritual. You must put your heart and soul into the singing.

In reciting the names of the Lord you have to bear in mind another her. When you recite the names thousands of devotees are listening. You must chant names which are familiar to all of them. You should not expect people to follow whatever you sing. You should see that they can easily respond to your song. The names you chant should be short and sweet. If you use big words and complicated terms, the devotees will not be able to follow you. In that situation they may get depressed. What can they do when they do not hear you properly and cannot respond in chorus? They get disgusted.

Simplify the *bhajans*

Therefore, in your *bhajans* use short names like Raama, Krishna, Allah, Yesu and so on. Then all would be able to follow you with ease. If you use high-sounding words, few can follow you.

Eschew any aversion to any faith or nation. Have no ill-will towards anyone. Do not cause hurt to anyone. Look upon all alike. This feeling of oneness should spread all over the world.

Krishna declared: "The entire cosmos is sustained by a fragment of my potency" This means that the Divine permeates the entire cosmos. What, then, is our duty? To fill our hearts with love. Then the whole universe will be filled with love.

There is no use in singing *bhajans* if the singers hearts are filled with jealousy and hatred.

There is no greater spiritual recipe for people in the Kali Age than the chanting of Hari's *naama*.

Foolish people speak derisively about the *bhajans* conducted in the presence of Svaami. They have no idea of the joy derived by the devotees from the singing of the Lord's name.

Will the bees which are fond of honey

in the lotus go after any other flowers?

By constant eating even the bitter leaves of

the neem tree acquire a sweetness of their own.

By spiritual saadhana all objectives are achieved.

(Telugu poem).

Aadhi Shankaraachaarya's "Bhajagovindham"

Wherein lies the greatness of chanting the Lord's name? This was the discovery made by Aadhi Shankaraachaarya, the supreme exponent of *Adhvaitha* (Non-dualism), who declared that there was only one Absolute and no second. Even he had to seek recourse to dualism because he found that apart from chanting the Lord's name there was no easy way to experience the Divine. Out of this conviction was born the famous devotional song "Bhajagovindham" (Svaami sang stanzas from the song).

The message of the song is clear. There is no meaning in dry scholarship. The only thing that will save a man in his last moments is adoration of Govindha. Shankara called upon youth to realise that there is no room for feeling proud about one's youth and wealth, which may vanish in one moment in course of time.

Hence, when participating in *bhajans*, you should enjoy the singing and share that joy with others. Do not be indifferent to the reactions of others to your singing. Leaders in *bhajans* should realise that many overseas devotees are deeply interested in *bhajans* and are eager to take part in them. The *bhajans* should be simple and easy for them to follow.

The goal of all religions is one. The underlying meaning of all names is the same. You must appreciate this oneness. Whatever be the name used, all are children of one God. All belong to the caste of humanity. The distinctions between religions are the result of historical and geographical factors. People may use diverse names for God, but God is one alone.

Having been born in Bhaarith, you may feel legitimately proud about Bhaaritheya culture. But mere birth, alone does not make one a true Bhaaritheya. All those who adhere to *Sathya* and *Dharma*. (Truth and Right conduct) are Bhaaritheyas. They may belong to any country-- America, Japan or Germany. Truth is God. This is the cardinal principle of Bhaarith. Recognising this fact, people must strive to spread the message to all.

Two ways of God-realisation-devotion and knowledge

Sai devotees should understand the essence of our culture. Sacrifice and service are the two basic elements.

There are two ways of God-realisation. One is the path of devotion where the devotee considers himself a servant of God. By repeatedly declaring, *Dhaasoham* (I am your servant) he goes on reducing his ego till the bondage of worldly attachment falls off. The other means is *Jnaana-maarga* (the path of knowledge). By constantly developing the sense of oneness with the *Divine-Shivoham* (I am the Divine) his consciousness expands to the point where it becomes one with the universal consciousness and all worldly bonds are snapped.

Give no room for the ego. If any one examines his position in this vast cosmos, he will realise his infinitesimal smallness. Egoism arises out of ignorance. Expel the ego and develop love. With love, develop the spirit of sacrifice. Sacrifice alone can confer immortality, says the *Upanishath*. Sacrifice can confer bliss and health. Experience the joy of sharing. Renunciation is the key to sound health.

Do not indulge in criticism of others. Count your own faults and rectify them. See the Divine in one and all.

Elevate the quality of human life by living in amity with all. Chanting the name of God is the sure means of cultivating this universal love.

Melodious music can move the Lord

There is special merit in singing the Lord's name with due regard for melody and rhythm. The Lord is a lover of music. Moreover, when singing is done with fervour, it helps to drive out all bad thoughts from the mind.

Melodious music can move the Lord and move all the participants. (Svaami demonstrated the effect of melodious singing by rendering the song; "Raama! nannu-kaapaadumaa"--'Oh Raama,

protect me'). Melodious music will move the Lord Himself. Hence, when you take part in *bhajans* sing with all your heart and soul. You must sing with such love for the Divine that you forget yourself. When you sing the praise of God with a pure heart, you will purify your environment, your country and the world.

People are looking forward to April 14th as the New Year Day. The name of the new year is "Eeshvara." What does Eeshvara mean? As Chittibabu (who spoke earlier in Tamil) said, the Lord is "Ammal-Appa" (mother and father). Their coming together is represented by the concept of "Ardhanaareeshvara"---the Divine couple in one body. Every man is a symbol of "Ardhanaareeshvara". The body is inert. The *Aathma* is Consciousness. The body is *Prakrithi* (Nature). The *Aathma* is Eeshvara. The combination of *Prakrithi* and *Paramaathma* constitutes humanness.

Therefore, you should regard yourself as a symbol of "*Ardhanaareeshvara*" (The Divine Couple in one body).

Do good and reap good results

As the new year approaches people are wondering what it has in store for them. It is not the year that brings good or ill. Your actions determine what you will get. What have the years that have gone brought you? Each year brings you the fruits of your past actions. Do good and reap good results.

Your conduct should be good, befitting your human condition. Revere elders. Love all. Honour your nation. Give up attachment to the body. Then you will have fulfilment in life.

You all know what troubles the country is going through on account of the political situation. The basic cause is selfishness. Leaders are fighting for their own personal ends and not for the sake of the country. No one seems to be bothered about what is happening to the society, to the people and the country. "My power and my position" is all that each one is concerned about. How long will the chair last? When the body itself is impermanent, what is the meaning in chasing the chair?

Hence, all should develop a broad outlook. Banish narrow considerations. From the new year, cherish broad ideas, truthful ideas, loving thoughts and noble ideals. Only then the nation will be peaceful and prosperous.

Bhaarath lacks nothing by way of natural endowments. It is a misfortune that it is in its present plight today. Realise the sacredness and great culture of Bhaarath.

I bless you all that from the new year you should lead pure lives chanting the Lord's name and promote the prosperity of the country.

Discourse in Sundharam, Madras, on 11-4-1997.