

27. The Shiva in all

Shivoham, Shivoham---was the exclamation that rose from the souls that knew the Truth in a flash of illumination, after long years of cleansing the mind through the process of *thapas* (penance). I am Shiva; Shiva am I---Though denoted by many names and recognised in many forms, the Divine Principle is One, without a second. It is *Shivam* and it is latent in each being, including man. Holy days are to be spent in the contemplation of this Truth and in special exercises to make oneself fully conscious of one's Divinity.

God is the seed, which has expressed itself as all this. But, this fact, so deeply implanted in the hearts of every Indian for centuries, has been overlaid by veils of doubt and man has lost the courage and the energy that the faith had given him so long. This was the very core of Indian culture, but, children of India have neglected and very nearly lost this precious heritage. The fascination for Western fashions of thought weakened the belief in one's religion; that led to the giving up of the disciplines which shaped one's daily life; this in turn led to deterioration in moral standards; this has bred misery, disunity, hatred and disgrace. It is time to open one's eyes to the tragedy and retrace the steps.

Meaning of worship of the Snake

The saints and seers of this land never spoke lightly or acted irrelevantly. They had the good of the generations always in view. When they invested some places as holy and named some days as sacred, they also prescribed the rules and ceremonials to be observed by pilgrims and *Saadhakas* (spiritual aspirants), so that time, expense and effort could be used for the expansion of Love and the education of the instincts and impulses. The object of every rule was to bring the realisation of the *Aathma*, as one's Reality, a few steps nearer. For, the *Aathma* in the individual is the *Aathma* in all; *Shivoham* is the Truth; and the Truth alone can make man free and full of Bliss.

Take one prescription, the worship of the Snake. Those afflicted with barrenness or serious illness or skin diseases of virulent types vow to proceed on pilgrimage to shrines of *Subrahmanya* (conceived in the form of a Snake). People laugh at this practice. "Indians offer adoration to snakes, because, in their opinion, they have poison in their fangs!" The Truth is quite otherwise. The inner meaning of snake worship is quite different. The spinal column of man ending with the 'thousand-petalled lotus' in the brain is very much like a serpent poised on its tail with hood widely spread.

In the science of *Kundalini Yoga*, the vital energy of man lying dormant like a coiled snake, at the bottom of this column in the lowest *Muulaadhaara Chakra* (the Basal Plexus) is awakened and aroused, so that it courses up through six more wheels (centres of superior consciousness) until it reaches the *Sahasraara* (thousand-petalled Lotus Energy Centre) at the very top of the skull. The passage for the *Kundalini* is through the *Sushumna* nerve in the centre of the spinal column. The worship of the Snake, ridiculed as superstition, is the symbolic counterpart of this great *Yogic Saadhana* which confers vigour and vitality.

Every appellation of God has deep significance

Take the demarcation of Thirupathi as a holy place of pilgrimage; Lord Venkateshwara, the deity worshipped there is called the Lord of the Seven Hills, for Seven Hills have to be climbed before the Temple is reached. Obviously the six *Chakras* (energy centres) and the *Sahasraara* are

indicated here, for in *Raajayoga*, the supreme is revealed, only when the individual raises the Vital Energy---the *Kundalini Shakthi*---up to the seventh stage. One of the hills is named *Seshagiri*, meaning, Snake Hill. From the plains, the range gives the appearance of a snake with a raised hood.

And, what exactly does Subrahmanya mean? Spend a little thought on that. It means, 'He who has attained the realisation of *Brahman* the Universal Absolute, the Primal Cause, the Cosmic Consciousness.' Every appellation of God has deep significance. In the *Vedhas*, Vishnu, for example, is named *Parama*. It means *Paramanu*, the Atom: He is omnipresent, as omnipresent as the atom, found as the substance and substratum of the Universe. Vishnu is the cause as well as the effect, for, there was nothing else when Time began. The One became many; the many disappear, the One remains.

Cattle are different from horses; true. But, when four-footed animals are considered, they are both the same. Under 'animals' a vast variety of beings are included. Thus it goes on, until only One is.

Strengthen the belief that all objects belong to God

To teach the Unity behind the appearance of multiplicity, that is to say, to help realise the *Adhwaitha* (Non-dual nature of Existence), *Shankara*, the greatest expounder of that school of thought, established four seats of practical philosophy called *Mutts* in the four regions of India. The very first step in the endeavour to realise this Unity was, according to him, *Upaasana* or Worship of the concrete symbol of God, which gives one the experience of the ecstasy of Union.

One day, *Shankara* was seated in meditation on the bank of the Ganga River. Suddenly, he exclaimed, "Lord! I am yours; but, surely, you are not mine." His pupil, Thotakacharya was by his side then; he was astonished at this statement, which, according to him, went against the *Adhwaithic* stand. So, he asked him how he could ever declare any distinction between I and you. *Shankara* replied, "The waves belong to the Ocean; but, the Ocean does not belong to the wave. The wave is the ocean, but, the Ocean is not the wave." The main point to be attended to is, the elimination of the ego, the elimination of the identification with the body and its needs, satisfiable through the senses. For, you get joy when these needs are fulfilled; grief when they are not, anger when something comes in the way, pride when you win over that opposition.

To eliminate the ego, strengthen the belief that all objects belong to God, and that you are holding them on trust. This would prevent pride; it is also the truth. Then, when you lose a thing, you would not grieve. God gave; God took away. Of course you hear almost all talking in this strain and advising this reaction. But very few follow that advice themselves. This is the sin of all sins; saying one thing and acting quite the opposite, denying in practise what you assert as precept.

Shiva is eternally auspicious

Shiva is known also as *Eeshwara*, the 'repository of all the resources essential for Prosperity. The most important resource is *Jnaana* (Spiritual Wisdom). Three kinds of *Jnaana* are demarcated: *Jeevaprajna* (concerning the individualised Divine), *Eeshwaraprajna* (concerning the Cosmic-Manifestation of the Divine) and the *Aathmaprajna* (Concerning the Universal Absolute of which the individual is the temporary-particular). This is also mentioned in some other texts as *Delta-prajna*, *Jeeva-prajna* and *Aathma-prajna*, but, the meaning of the words is the same as in the other list. *Eeshwara* confers the *Aishwarya* of *Jnaana*. He is also known as *Shankara*, and

sages have experienced Shiva as conferring *Sam* or auspiciousness of all kinds, Happiness in all ways. Shiva is eternally auspicious; He does not come embodied in other forms, with other names, as often as *Vishnu*. So, He is not described as *Shri Shiva* or *Shri Shankara* or *Shri Eeshwara*. Shri is inherent in His very Person and so it is superfluous to add Shri to His Name.

When you realise *Shivoham* (I am Shiva), then, you have all the happiness, all the auspiciousness that there is. Shiva is not to be sought on the peak of a distant range of mountains, or in some other special place. You must have heard that sin and merit are inherent in the acts that men do; so too, Shiva is inherent in every thought, word and deed, for He is the Energy, the Power, the Intelligence that is behind each of them.

All energy, power and intelligence are in you; you need not search for them outside yourselves. God who is manifesting as time, space and causation is in you; why then do you feel weak and helpless? Man is tossed about by his ambitions and the craving to fulfil them. But, he must first know where he stands and where he should decide to reach. Now, his efforts are wanton and wasteful. He is an expert in mathematics, but, unable to do a small sum in arithmetic. He has mastered algebra, but unable to measure the area of his home. He knows botany, with all its Latin names; but, ask him about the uses to which the common *thulasi* plant and its leaves can be put; he has no answer. He has mastered all the physical exercises taught to him; but, he is helpless when asked to sit in *Padhmaasana*. He can talk loud and long on Moksha and of its being the final goal; but, he does not know that he 'is already free; he imagines himself as bound and behaves as such.

Do not get too bound with, or give up, the world

Attachments to illusory objects bind him. When the illusory nature of the objects is revealed, the attachment falls off and he is free. These attachments persuade him to tarnish the acts of worship also; for, he prays to God for granting him trivial boons. Pray to God for God; do not use Truth to achieve Untruth. Have the inner vision, not the outer. Do not be attracted by the objective world; concentrate on the subjective world.

You do not scatter seeds on the surface; you plant them deep enough for the roots to get a foothold. Do not dig the seeds into the soil too deep. Follow the middle path. Do not tighten the strings of the violin or *veena* too much; nor leave them loose. Do not get too bound with the world; do not also give it up.

The *Shivaraathri* Festival, as celebrated here, is an example for you. You might ask, "Swaami has often declared that all days are holy days, that there is no special rite or ritual that has to be observed on any single day; but, Swaami Himself is pouting *vibhuuthi* (holy ash) on the Idol and calling it *abhisheka* (anointing the idol); is this right?" *Swaami* is doing so, to teach you a lesson.

When desire is destroyed, Love reigns supreme

The *Vibhuuthi Abhisheka* has a potent inner meaning which Swaami wants you to grasp. The *Vibhuuthi* is the most precious object, in the truly spiritual sense. You know that Shiva burnt the God of Desire or *Kaama*, called *Manmatha* (for he agitates the mind and confounds the confusion already existing there) into a heap of ashes. Shiva adorned Himself with that ash, and thus He shone in His Glory, as the Conqueror of Desire. When *Kaama* was destroyed, *Prema* (Love) reigned supreme. When there is no desire to warp the mind, Love could be true and full.

What greater offering can you give God to glorify Him than the ash signifying your triumph over tantalising Desire? Ash is the ultimate condition of things; it cannot undergo any further change. The *Abhisheka* with *Vibhuuthi* is done to inspire you to give up desire and offer Shiva the ashes of its destruction as the most valuable of all the articles you have earned. Ash cannot fade as flowers do in a day or two; it does not dry and disappear or get soiled and unpotable as water does; it will not lose colour as leaves do, in a few hours; it does not rot as fruits do in a few days. Ash is ash for ever and ever. So, burn your viles, your vices, your bad habits; worship Shiva, rendering yourselves pure in thought and word and deed.

Shiva is the source of Bliss

Shiva is worshipped with the three-leaved *bilva*, for, He is immanent in the three worlds, in the three phases of Time, in the three attributes of Nature. He removes the three types of grief; He has no basis outside Him; He is the source of Bliss; He is the embodiment of the sweetness and efficacy of Nectar. Since every being is *Shiva- Swaruupa* (of the nature of Shiva)---for without Shiva, it is mere '*shava*' (corpse)---man has to live up to that Divine status. Scholars and *Pandiths* who propagate *Dharma* (right action) in our country are doing great disservice, for, they cast doubts on the very majesty of Godhead. Swaami Karunyaanandha spoke now of the episode where *Brahma* became jealous of Krishna, and stole the cows and cowherds from Him in order to bring discomfiture on Him. He said, Krishna created the same number of cows and cowherds, every one exactly similiar, and thus, foiled Brahma's conspiracy. People who hear such tales will naturally wonder how Gods can be envious of each other just like human beings; their faith in the Divine will be undermined thereby. These scholars are more 'intent on exhibiting their textual scholarship, than revealing the Glory of God. They do not mind the damage they cause to the very cause they are pleading for.

There was an old woman in a village,-some years ago. She sold a patch of land that she owned, and with the money, she had four gold bangles made, two for each arm. She wore them with great joy and went along the streets very proud of her new acquisition. But, she was disappointed, because no one in the village turned aside and looked at her bangles; she could as well have not worn them, for the villagers did not notice any difference in her. She tried various means to attract their attention towards the bangles, but, without success. One night she could not sleep at all, for, this neglect pained her much. At last she got a brilliant idea which, she decided, must succeed; the villagers must be drawn to notice the bangles.

All beings are actuated by the same Divine Power

Next day, after sunrise, she set fire to her own dwelling house! When the flames rose, and commotion ensued, the villagers rushed towards her, sitting and wailing in front of the burning house. She shook her hands pathetically, at the faces of the frightened villagers, causing the bangles to jingle and shine in the red light of the high flames, crying out, "Alas! My house is on fire," "O, pity my fate," "God, don't you see my plight?" Everytime she shouted a sentence, she put out her arms vigorously at some one, so that she or he could not miss sighting the bangles. The pity of it! She was so anxious to exhibit her bangles that she did not care for her house itself; the house was on fire but she was happy her bangles were noticed. The scholars who are lost in admiration of their own cleverness are as foolish as this old woman.

Do not say or do anything that will bring Indian culture into disrepute, or that will undermine the faith of people in Goodness and in God. Do not claim to be - orthodox and encourage heterodoxy or heresy. Cast aside the desire for happiness and prosperity, do not moan that you do not secure

Heaven; it does not matter, if you are smothered by difficulties. Stand up boldly in defence of the honour of your country. That will bring you all happiness and prosperity, all the Grace you yearn for.

Indian Culture teaches that all beings are actuated by the self-same Divine power, blessed by the self-same Divine grace. So, love all. Do not develop jealousy or hatred. There are many *Saadhakas* (spiritual aspirants) who enjoy perfect calmness and equanimity while sitting in *Dhyaana* (meditation) or while in the *Puuja* (worship) room before the shrine. But, once they rise and come out into the open, they behave like demons.

The Geetha says, *Sathatham yoginah---*"Be in *Yoga*, always." Be immersed in love, with no trace of pride or envy. This is the highest *saadhana* (spiritual practice). At the present day, all grades and groups of people all over the world resort to violence and hatred in order to satisfy their desires and demands, bringing about fear, anxiety, panic and revolution. The gains through such tactics are not much; the gains will be greater and more lasting if the path of love, tolerance and peace is followed.

Love brings people together; hatred drives them apart. You cannot be happy, when you cause misery to others. God showers Grace when the nine steps of *bhakthi* (devotion) are observed. Masters or rulers can be won over by the same means---sacrifice, love, devotion, dedication in the path of duty. When success is achieved by means of unrest and violence, it has to be preserved and prolonged only by further unrest and violence.

Therefore, let this be the lesson of *Shivaraathri* for you: Shiva is in all beings and all things. He is the inner motivator. Be aware of this always; do not cause pain to any one, do not harm or injure, anyone, or hurt his self-respect. Love all alike, cultivate tolerance and spread brotherliness.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 20-2-1974