

29. Towards Human Unity

Who gave man his digestive organs ?

Who is the author of birth and death ?

To know Him is the height of Wisdom.

Forget not this truth, oh Man!

The poet Bhartruhari said: "Salutations to the Lord of Time who sets everything in motion." Time is all-powerful. One should not waste even a single moment of this precious time. Everyone has to follow the dictates of Time, because Time is not subject to anyone. God is the embodiment of Time. Through good deeds one should acquire the grace of God and redeem one's life.

Bharathiya culture, which is world renowned, whose message has reached all corners of the world, which has withstood the vicissitudes of time and circumstance, which has remained unchanged through aeons since the beginning of creation, bears testimony to the eternal verities. *Yagas* and *Yajnas* (ceremonial offerings and sacrificial rites) reflect the image of this culture.

What is *Yajna*? It is not merely bringing together ten *Rithwiks* (scholars who perform rituals), getting them to recite the four *Vedas* and to perform *homa* (make offerings to various deities in the sacrificial fire). Every act done by man as an offering to God--offering all the fruits thereof--is *Yajna*. Whatever action one does, whether big or small, should be regarded as being done to please the Divine. It may be a sacred or secular act, it may be for the benefit of the world or hereafter, it may be binding or liberating, it may be material or spiritual---whatever be the nature of the action, it must be dedicated to God.

Everything in the Cosmos is permeated by the Divine

Every individual is a preceptor. Every man is *Rithwik*. Everyone is an embodiment of the Brahman (the Supreme Spirit). Everything in the Cosmos is permeated by the Divine. It is this truth that was proclaimed by the *Vedas* when they said: "*Antarbahischa thatsarvam vyaapya Narayanas-sthithah*" (The Lord Narayana is present inside and outside of everything in the universe).

Why, then, is man unable to recognise the omnipresent Divine? The *Upanishads* enjoined man to offer the fruits of all his actions to the Divine as the means of realising the Divine. In what form can the Divine be experienced? The answer is: "*Sathyam Jnanam, Anantam Brahma*" (The Brahman is Truth, Awareness and Infinite). Truth is not mere factual accuracy regarding any event or object. This is the Truth in the worldly sense. But Truth in the spiritual sense transcends the categories of Time and Space and remains unchanged always. This transcendental Truth has to be inscribed in the heart. It is in the light of this Truth that man should pursue the journey of life in the world.

What is *Jnanam*? *Jnana* (Spiritual knowledge) refers to the *Chaitanya* (higher Consciousness) and not to knowledge of various kinds. It is consciousness that inspires man, permeates trees and animates even the smallest insects. Saint Thyagaraja sang about the Cosmic Consciousness being present in the ant and the Brahman, in Shiva and Vishnu, in the form of Supreme Love. To experience this all-pervading consciousness is to experience the Divine.

God appears to man in the form envisaged by him

This Consciousness is *Anantam* (Infinite). It is omnipresent. In whatever form He is worshipped, whatever conception one may have of the Divine, whatever feelings one may have towards the Divine, the Divine responds in that form and image, to confer joy on the devotee. When a devotee prays: "Oh Lord, be by my side and walk with me, behind me and around me," the Lord keeps him company. The devotee can experience only the footfalls of the Lord. If the devotee cries: "Oh Lord! Can't you see my pitiable plight? Have you no eyes for my troubles?" only the eyes of the Lord will appear before him. When a devotee prays: "Can't you hear my lamentations, Oh Lord!" the Divine appears to him only as a pair of ears. Your experience of God is determined by your feelings and methods of approach to Him. The Lord has His feet, head and eyes and ears everywhere and He appears to every person in the form envisaged by him.

The Spiritual aspirant is the embodiment of Bliss

The fourth is *Ananda* (Bliss). Every person seeks Bliss. The aspirant has been described as the embodiment of Bliss. This Bliss has been described in manifold terms: Eternal Bliss, Supreme Bliss, the Bliss of *Yoga* (oneness with the Divine), *Brahmananda* (Bliss of God), *Atmananda* (Spiritual Bliss). But all these forms of Bliss are merged in one Bliss alone---the Bliss of the Heart (*Hridayananda*). Whatever small act a man may do he desires to derive joy from it. This joy is within him.

In the statement "*Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantam Brahma*," Brahma as Supreme Truth, Wisdom and Infinity is the embodiment of Bliss. Brahma means pervasiveness, being present everywhere. When there is no place where He is not, where is the need to search for Him? When the doors of the heart are opened, the Blissful form of the Divine can be seen. This was precisely the experience of the *Gopikas*.

The whole universe is the Lord's Abode

Where, then, is the street or door for that mansion ?

Play on the life-strings of your body,

Shed tears of devotion and offer your Spirit,

See Heaven in that experience.

That is the road and the door!

When you offer life, all your energies and potencies to the Divine, you experience ineffable bliss. Are we today seeking such bliss? Are we aware of it? No. The seat of all bliss is the heart. Vibrations emanate from the heart. These vibrations proclaim the Lord's name. There is no need to engage in any *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) if the power of the Lord's name is understood.

The three powers embodied in the name Rama

Tulasidas declared that there are only three powers that matter in the world: "*Krusaanu Bhaanu Himakarathe*"--*Agni* (Fire), *Surya* (the Sun) and *Chandra* (the Moon). These three are eternal witnesses. These are essential for everyone, whether he is a theist or an atheist, a *yogi* or an epicurean, a renunciant or a hedonist. Without fire, the body will get cold and perish. Without the radiations from the Sun no energy or vitality can exist in man. Solar rays are essential for the survival of plants or human beings. Equally the Moon is essential for existence.

Human birth is the consequence of past sins and ignorance. It is necessary to destroy sins, eliminate ignorance and achieve peace and serenity in life. *Agni* (the God of Fire) will burn our sins to ashes. The Sun-God destroys our ignorance. The Moon cools the agitations of the heart. These three are embodied in the name *Rama--Ra+aa+ma*. *Ra* represents *Agni* (the Fire-God). *Aa* represents *Surya* (the Sun-God). *Ma* represents *Chandra* (the Moon). The name *Rama* contains within it three deities, *Agni*, *Surya* and *Chandra*. Moreover, the name *Rama* embodies also the *Vedic* pronouncement "*Thath Thwam Asi*" (That Thou Art). *Ra* is "*Thath*" and *Ma* is "*Thwam*." The essence of the *Vedas* and the *Sastras* is contained in the Divine name. The Supreme significance of the name "*Rama*" is borne out also by *Sankhya Sastra* (the Science of Numerology). According to this science, the letters *Ra+Aa+Ma* make up seven according to their numerical equivalents. Seven is a sacred number as is evident from the sacredness of *Saptarishis* (the Seven Sages), the seven colours of the rainbow, the seven *swaras* (notes of Indian music) and the seven days of the week.

Meaning of the *Saptaaha Yajna*

Today we have completed the *Saptaaha Veda Purusha Jnana Yajna*. What does *Saptaaha Yajna* mean? It is the offering of the Seven Sounds within us to the Divine. The completion of the *Yajna* is described as *Samapti*. *Samapti* means *Brahma-Prapti* (attainment of Brahmic consciousness). The seven-day *Yajna* is performed for this purpose.

These seven days have sped like minutes! What is the reason? It is because the seven days were spent on thoughts of the Timeless Divine and in the activities dedicated to the Lord who is beyond Time, that we also transcended the limitations of Time. If we devote all our time to remembering God, time will cease to be a burden. "*Kaala-Kaala prapannaanaam Kaala Kimkarishyathi?*" (If we take refuge in the conqueror of Time, what can Time do to us?) When we enshrine *Kaala* (the Lord of Time) in our hearts, we become the masters of Time.

How is this to be done? The easiest means is chanting the name of the Lord. Community singing by an assemblage of devotees is to be preferred. This is known as *Sankirtan* (singing together the glories of the Lord). There are four types of *Sankirtan*: *Guna Sankirtan*, *Leela Sankirtan*, *Bhaava Sankirtan* and *Nama Sankirtan*. *Guna Sankirtan* means singing the attributes of God and dwelling on his numerous auspicious qualities. In describing Sri Krishna's qualities a devotee sang:

Can we comprehend you, Oh Krishna!
You are subtler than the atom,
Grosser than the grossest.
Immanent in the eighty-four lakhs
Of species, you are their sustainer.
With your infinite form
How can we ever know you?

While describing the Lord in these ways, occasional doubts may arise. If he is in the minutest atom and the vastness of space, why can't we see Him? The cosmonauts who circled the earth might have doubts about the presence of God. But there is a difference between the instruments

employed by them to explore the space and the *mantras* through which God is experienced. God is the embodiment of *mantra* and not a *yantra* (mechanical contrivance).

Leela and Bhaava Sankirtan

In *Leela Sankirtan*, the devotional songs glorify the *Leelas* (the extraordinary sports and other miraculous deeds of the Lord) and the different ways in which the Lord delights and tests the devotees. The Lord's ways cannot be easily understood. He makes one devotee weep and he wipes the tears of another. He turns an ascetic into a pleasure seeker and a libertine into a saint. He excites craziness in one and removes lunacy in another. These baffling sports of the Divine are the theme of the songs in *Leela Sankirtan*.

In *Bhaava Sankirtan*, the devotee's innermost feelings find expression in song. These feelings are of different kinds. Bhishma exemplifies the *Bhaava* (feeling) of peace and contentment. Arjuna exemplifies *Sakhya-bhaava* (the feeling of friendship). Hanuman is an example of *Daasya-bhaava* (the feeling of service) Yasoda displayed *Vaatsalya-bhaava* (the feeling of maternal love). The *gopis* exemplified *Anuraaga-bhaava* (the feeling of endearment). Radha revealed *Madhura-bhaava* (the enjoyment of the sweetness of the Lord). Among the different *Bhaavas*, *Madhura-bhaava* rank supreme as it is the state of ecstatic enjoyment of the Lord's name and form in all its sweetness.

Difference between Kirtan and Nama Sankirtan

Except in *Nama Sankirtan* (the chanting of the Name), the other forms of *Sankirtan* are liable to give rise to doubts and difficulties. Hence, in this *Kali Yuga*, the easiest and safest form of *Sankirtan* is *Nama Sankirtan--community* chanting of the Names of the Lord. This will not give rise to any doubts or excite emotional disturbances. As one goes on chanting the name, he experiences an inner joy, which is indifferent to praise or blame. The constant repetition of the name of the Lord should lead to an imprinting of the Name on the heart. This can only happen when the heart is softened by love of the Lord.

The difference between *Kirtana and Sankirtana* is that the former relates to chanting by the individual in privacy, while the latter relates to community singing. In *Sankirtana*, all the participants experience joy in common, hence it is superior to *Kirtan*, where the joy is confined to a single individual. Many a devotee who will never venture to sing aloud will join in a community singing spontaneously without reserve.

A "miracle" at Dharwar

In this context, I may recall what happened at Dharwar many years ago during my visit to the Karnataka University. That University was completely dominated by Veera Saivas (Fundamentalist Shaivites). They would close their ears to any name except that of Shiva. I began my Discourse in Kannada. My Kannada was sweeter than the Kannada spoken in Dharwar. In their linguistic attachment, they were immensely happy when I spoke in Kannada. It is My practice to end every discourse with a community *bhajan*. I looked at the gathering and reviewed the state of their mind. I knew the name of Vishnu was anathema to them and if "Narayana" was uttered they would close their ears and if Krishna's name was mentioned they would turn their heads away.

In such a situation, I began singing the *bhajan*: "Govinda Krishna Jai! Gopala Krishna Jai!" Instantly everyone in the audience responded with "Govinda Krishna Jai!" There was amongst

them a Veera Saiva Guru. Even he joined in the *bhajan* uttering "Govinda Krishna Jai! Gopala Krishna Jai!" At the end of the meeting, the Vice-chancellor, Mr. Adke, came running towards Me and said, "We used to have our own ideas of what Sai Baba's miracles mean. Sai Baba has made people, who had never in their life recited the name of Krishna, chant the name today. This is a great miracle !"

What is the inner meaning of this episode? It means that anyone, whatever his background, forgets himself in a *Sankirtan* and participates in it. Only the Divine Name can make one oblivious to everything and immerse himself in the joy of chanting the Name. Learn to go through the problems in life with the Name on your lips.

Transcend differences

Embodiments of the Divine! Having come here there is only one thing which is most vital for all of you to recognise and understand. Forgetting all differences of race, religion, caste and creed, disregarding considerations of class and community, you must feel that all of you are children of one God.

Our race is only one: the Human Race.

We worship only One: God.

Our caste is only one: the Caste of Love.

Our language is only one: the Language of the Heart.

When you recognise this oneness, eschew all differences and fill your hearts with love, you will be able to redeem your lives by constantly chanting the name of the Lord. That name will help you accomplish anything. It will fill your life with peace and happiness. It will enable you to rid yourself of likes and dislikes. The supreme quality of man is love. Develop love so that you may get rid of attachments and aversions. Thereby you will be sanctifying your lives!

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