

19. Present Is The Most Sacred Of All Time

ప్రవరపి జననం ప్రవరపి మరణం
ప్రవరపి జననోపరథకో నయనం
త్రుహి సంసారో నమో సాకో
కృపయాః సారో సాహాయశాకో.

మళ్ళీ పుట్టుట, మళ్ళీ గొట్టుట
త్రయోక దుప్పటి త్రయోక శుంకుటా
త్రయోక సంసారము దయగా
బాడం ప్రశునమ వస్తువజోవా.

*To be born again and again, to die again
and again, to lie dormant in the womb of
the mother before every birth, is an endless
cycle of Samsara. Please, Oh God! By your*

*grace, quickly get me out of this
troublesome cycle.*

Divyatma Swarupas!

Whatever is born into this world and takes a form is sure to change, decay and pass away. But before one dies, between birth and death, there is an intervening period. The changes that come about in that period, such as the growth and decay, are inevitable. These changes in life occur for all living things. Every human being must ponder over this aspect and make an enquiry about the manner in which he is spending time between his birth and death. Are we making proper use of our time and fulfilling the purpose of our life? *Vichar* helps to gain *Vairagya*—enquiry helps to gain detachment. He will see that most appearances which man puts on are only pretensions. As soon as the merit of his past births is exhausted, he will give up this transient life and die. He will take with him all the good and all the bad that he has done during this life.

We try to enquire into the significance of the phenomenal world when we witness birth following death and death following birth. Is this cycle of birth and death the only significant feature of this world? On an enquiry, we conclude that we die to be born again and that we are born to die again. This conclusion is not the right thing.

Generally speaking, people take medicine so as to

cure themselves of their disease, but correctly one should take medicine so that one does not have to take it again. Similarly an individual having taken birth should try that he may not take birth again. To be born to die and to die to be born again gets one caught up in the wheel of time.

Without having a body, one cannot do anything in the world. The body has got a gross form and this gross form is only a means to fulfil the main purpose of life. This body is as much responsible for bondage as it is for our liberation.

They say that man's mind alone is responsible for man's bondage and man's liberation. This is not the complete truth. Both body and mind are responsible for our bondage and liberation. Without the body, one cannot recognise the nature of one's mind. The life, mind and intelligence become evident only while accompanying the body. Therefore, we must use such a sacred body for the useful purpose of seeing truth. A human being is the most sacred of all the animals. To be born as a human being is an extraordinary gift. Therefore, man must use this life of his in a purposeful manner.

The disciples of Sankara have pointed out that man remains in a miserable state in the womb of the mother during this cycle of birth and death. He gets some relief from such suffering after his birth. Therefore, he must make life a sacred one.

The world is comparable to a big machine. Each

individual is a cog in that big machine. The totality of all beings constitute that machine of the world. We may feel the futility of our lives when we are compared to a small pin, a bolt or a screw in that huge machine, forgetting that the machine is dependent upon a small pin, etc.

For example, imagine a railway train running at a great speed. This train will not come to a stop even if lakhs of people try to stop it. Those who make an attempt to stop it may be harmed. But if the driver puts on the brake, with the help of a small pin, the train will instantly stop. This train, which is running at great speed and which could not be stopped by lakhs of people, has been stopped by the use of a small pin. In the same manner, when man uses his mind, his ideals, his intelligence and when he faces sorrow, trouble and untruth in this world, he can have the capacity to counter the sorrow in the world. This is so, in spite of his being only a small pin or a bolt in this big machine of the world. Therefore, he must regard himself as a good and useful person in the context of the prosperity of the world.

We should not at any time be afraid that life will fly away from this body. This body is made up of elemental substances and will perish sooner or later is an obvious fact and a natural phenomenon. When we think deeply, indeed it should not be a surprise that life will fly away from this body. What should cause surprise is that life could stay in the body for such a long time.

There is a small example for this. Let us take a

cycle tyre or a car tyre. If in that tyre, a small pin is pierced, all the air that is in the tyre will go out. While all the air that is in the tyre goes out under such conditions, we should really wonder how this tyre of our body, which has nine big holes in it, can at all hold life in it without its leaking out.

Everything is held together by God's strength. God is present everywhere. You are only a means through which God is seeing everyone in this world. You are only imagining that you are seeing with your eyes, but you are in fact seeing with God's eyes. This world is full of God and everything that you see is God. The body is like a water bubble, temporary and transient, destined to perish.

A poet describes this situation by saying that you cry when you are born, you cry when you die, you cry all the time in your life for one thing or another; but you do not cry when you find *dharma* declining. Each one of you is a small particle in the kingdom of God. You should try to keep in check all the organs of your body, only then will you achieve the desired result. If you take a stick and beat on the ant hill, will the snake die? If you punish your body, will the sensuous desires disappear? If you give up eating and drinking, will you realise yourself? Without knowing who you are, how can you have knowledge of the Divine? Therefore, the first thing to do is to find out who you are.

Here is a small story. A king used to ask three

questions of all the people who came to him. The first question was, who is the best among persons? The second was, what is the best of time, and the third, what is the best of all actions? The king was very anxious to know the answers to these questions. The king was never satisfied with the answers that he got from various people. One day, he went to the forest for pleasure. He was moving about the hills and plains and felt very tired. He saw an *ashram* and wanted to take some rest there. By the time the king reached the *ashram*, a *sadhu* was watering some plants. This *sadhu* saw that the king had come there rather tired. He stopped watering the plants, ran up to the king and gave him some good fruits and cool water. At that time, an individual wounded all over the body, was brought to the *ashram* by another *sadhu*. As soon as the *sadhu* saw this, he went to the individual, cleaned all his wounds and gave him some herbs which could cure the wounds. He was also telling him sweet words which could console the person.

The king came to the *sadhu* and wanted to express his gratitude and take leave of him. The *sadhu* blessed the king; but the king was still troubled by his three questions and wanted to see if the *sadhu* could enlighten him on that matter. The *sadhu* stated that the answers to the three questions were contained in the actions which the king had witnessed in the *ashram*. The king requested the *sadhu* to elucidate the matter. The *sadhu* said that when the king came to the *ashram* he was watering the

plants and that was his duty. At that time, on seeing the king, the *sadhu* had given up his duty and came to the king and gave water and fruit. This was in accordance with correct traditions, as the king was his guest. While relieving the king of his thirst and suffering, another injured individual had come to the *ashram*. Therefore, the *sadhu* had given up the duty of serving the king and went to the other individual and began serving him. Whoever comes seeking service from you is the best of individuals at that time. Whatever satisfaction you can give him by serving him will be your duty and this will be the best of work that you can do. The present, when you can do something, is the most sacred of all time. You do not see the future as your eyes cannot perceive it. Past has gone and you can do nothing about it. Thus, the present time in which you can fulfil your duty, the service that you can do to the person who comes to you, and he who comes seeking your service are the three best things. These are the answers to the king's three questions.

At this young age of yours, you should recognise the present time as the most important. You must fulfil your duty which is the best of work you can do. Your duty is to respect your mother and father. Your duty is to keep away from bad things and also to do whatever work you have undertaken to do in the best possible manner. In doing these things, you will do the best of things and serve the country in the best possible manner. It follows that at this age you must strengthen the three

qualities of discipline, devotion and duty. This present life of yours will not come back again and so you must attach importance to good qualities.

It is much better for you to live as a swan for a few minutes than to live a wasteful life like a crow even for fifty years. Prahlada had said that we should use our hands to do sacred tasks. At all times, you should use your mouth for uttering the name of the Lord. If you cannot show kindness and compassion, your birth is simply to ruin your mother's health. Since you have been in the mother's womb for so long and given her so much trouble, you must do things which will give her happiness.

You must express your gratitude. You have to pay four kinds of debt in this world: debt to your mother, debt to your father, debt to the saints and seers and the debt to God. Since your mother has given you her blood, her life and strength, and is responsible for your birth, you must show gratitude by respecting her. You must show gratitude to your father, who gives you money, education and protection. The *rishis* or saints teach you human qualities and so you must show gratitude to them. Ultimately, God is responsible for all these; so, you must show your gratitude to God.

In our country, there used to be a practice called the "sacrifice of an animal." This was referred to as *Bhoota Bali* or sacrifice of life. In ordinary parlance, *Bali* means killing something. The word *Bali* also means

a tax. We are paying tax for electricity, tax for water and so on because we are getting these things from inaccessible places and given to us in accessible places. In the same manner, *Bhoota Bali* is like paying tax to God for His having given us life and the chance of understanding *Atma*. So we have to pay tax to God in return for this good He has bestowed upon us. This tax is paid in the form of *sadhana* and good deeds. Man wants peace, happiness and bliss for himself. These can be had by paying taxes in the form of meditation for peace, prayers for happiness and bliss and various other *sadhanas* for similar good things.

In order to get what you want, you have to pay something. In an office, if you work full-time, you get full pay. If you work part-time, you get half pay. Today, we show only part-time devotion and we want full-time reward for this part-time devotion. How can we get this? If you give only part of your mind and ask for full return of the grace of God, it is like asking for full pay for half work. If you recognise with the fullness of your heart that everything that you do is by God's grace, then surely full return will be given by God. You try and you will get it.