

## 49. The lamp at the door

The human being is a composite of man and beast and God, and in the inevitable struggle among the three for ascendancy, you must ensure that God wins, suppressing the merely human and the lowly beast. This festival of Deepavali is to express gratitude at the defeat of the naraka (demonic) tendencies in man, which drag him down from Divinity. Naraka is the name for hell, and the asura whose death at the hands of Krishna is celebrated today is called *Narakaasura*, the personification of all the traits of character that obstruct the upward impulses of man.

He is said to be the son of *Bhumi* (the Earth) and he is also called *Bhauma*. This is very appropriate, for the earth and all attachments for things earthly lead us down into the regions of pain and grief. Earthly domain, earthly riches are powerless before spiritual domain over the senses, spiritual riches of self-knowledge and self-confidence. Man goes out into space with his rockets and space ships and sputniks, only to acquire superior striking power over his rivals on earth. Man must know the Universe as basically *Brahmam* and so as fundamentally knowledge and love and peace. He and the Universe are one; they are subsumed in the same unique entity.

The cosmic vision can be acquired either by watching the Universe or one's own inner Cosmos. Man has only to discover himself. In the citadel of the body, there is the lotus temple of the heart, with subtle *aakaasha* (space) within. In it are contained heaven and earth, fire and air, sun and moon, stars and planets---all that is in the visible world and all that sustains it and all into which it submerges. Instead of rotating round the earth in the higher realms of space and planning to land on the moon or Mars, if only man plans and prepares himself to travel into his own inner realm, what sublime joy and peace he can attain! His attainments at present in the vast silence of outer space are all prompted by fear and spread only further fear.

### Occasions to be celebrated as festivals

Victory won through weapons and guarded by armour is not something to be glad about; it is flimsy and fragile. It is fraught with danger and may topple at the lightest gust. But, victory won through love and sympathy transforms the defeated and makes him a willing collaborator for ever. *Nara* (man) falls into *Nara-ka* (hell), through over-indulgence in 'ca' or intelligence; 'ca' generally runs wild and like a raging flood, it spells destruction and grief. 'Ka' has to be subdued by humility and devotion, to the source of all intelligence, the Lord.

What is a festive occasion? It is when great men are born or when wicked men end their careers of vice. Deepavali celebrates the death of Narakaasura; and, how did he meet his end? He died at the hands of Krishna, with the Lord standing before his fading eyes. That is a consummation to be wished for. When virtues grow and vice is given up, man has to make it a festival. When your son evinces a desire to go to a temple or a math to worship or to offer homage to the *Swaami*, do not scorch that tender shoot of devotion; do not tell him that there is time enough for devotion when he reaches old age; encourage him, be happy that you have such a son; celebrate the day. Teach him the value of prayer and contrition; or, learn from him the lesson of yearning for God.

### Honesty is always the best policy

When young men realise that God is omnipresent and resident in one's own heart, then, they will certainly follow the *Vedhic* injunction, *Sathyam Vadha, Dharmam Chara* (speak truth, practise virtue). They will always speak the truth only; they will practise only moral justice. Some say that since this is *Kali yuga*, falsehood alone can succeed. But, in spite of all appearances, honesty

is still the best policy. One lie has to be buttressed by a hundred others; whereas truth is the easiest, simplest and safest line of behaviour. Be what you profess to be; speak what you intend to do; utter what you have experienced; no more, no less.

There was a thief once who broke into a house at night; the master of the house woke up when he heard some noise and when he shouted, "who is there?", the man thought of a ruse to escape his attention. He mewed like a cat, from the room where the iron safe was; the master said, "O, it is only a cat", and bolted *that* room from outside, shutting out all possibility of the thief escaping from the room into which he had gone! He heard the master tell his wife, "Let it be there the rest of the night. At dawn we shall open the door and if it is a real cat, we shall let it go its way". A mew will not help, if it is not truly yours.

It is a hard job to maintain a false stand and so, it is always safe to be straight and honest. Do not take the first false step and then be led, on and on, to perdition. Truth is one's real nature and when you are yourself, there comes a great flood of joy welling up within you. When you deny yourself and deceive yourself, shame darkens your mind and breeds fear. You take the path of falsehood because of the *Raajasik* passions of lust, greed, hate and pride. Contentment, humility, detachment---these keep you on the path of Truth.

A street-hawker had on his head a basket full of empty bottles, as he walked along to the bazaar. He hoped to sell the lot at a profit of ten rupees and, in ten days, he calculated his earnings would have accumulated to a hundred rupees. With that as capital, he planned to switch on to more profitable deals, so that he imagined he could make a pile of a lakh of rupees in a few months and build a bungalow with a lovely garden tended by a regiment of servants, beaming all round the house. There, he saw himself on a sofa in the greenery playing with his grandchildren. He was engrossed in that charming scene; suddenly he saw among his grandchildren, the children of one of the servants; he got angry at this unwanted intrusion. Believing his fantasy to be a reality, he suddenly grabbed the child and gave it a swift hefty push, only to find that the basket of bottles had fallen on the road and all hopes of even the ten rupees lost! That was the end of a dream built on the slender basis of greed.

### **Steady faith wins true wisdom**

Truth will always triumph; do not doubt that in the least. There are two eight-lettered axioms in the Geetha, which support the *Vedhic* dictum: '*Sathyam eva jayathe na anrtham*' (Truth only wins, not falsehood): They are, "*Samshayaathma vinashyathi*" (He who doubts is destroyed), and "*Shraddaavaan labhathe jnaanam*" (Steady faith wins true wisdom). If people are slaves of doubt, how can they save themselves?

Believe that the Name is the Boat, which will take you over the sea of worldly life. The Name is more efficacious than the contemplation of the Form. Droupadhi did not send a chariot to bring Krishna to her rescue; she uttered the Name in her agony and Krishna responded, and saved her from imminent dishonour. In the *Threthaa yuga*, when the Raamaayana story was gone through, Nala and his monkeys were building a bridge over the sea to Lanka; the boulders on which they inscribed the sacred name Raama, floated on the waters, but, they found that the boulders floated away due to wind and wave. They did not form a continuous bridge for the army to pass over. Some ingenious person gave a suggestion to write RAA on one boulder and MA on another and they found that the two stuck hard together. The name will serve as a float for you too; it will keep you attached to God and bring on you His Grace.

### **Spiritual renunciation gives strength and courage**

With the Name as the very breath of your life, you can engage in all life's activities, with no fear of a fall. Meera quaffed the cup of poison with the Name on her tongue and it turned into nectar. Bharthrihari bewailed his lot, "Lord, these pleasures are eating me up; they don't allow me to be myself; no; I will liberate myself from their clutches. I shall take refuge in the undiminishable Bliss, the Reservoir of Joy, the Lord. I shall not crave for *padaartha* (objects); I shall yearn for *Parartha* (the Highest Good)". Devotion and faith ensure the gift of knowledge of the Spirit---the great prize for the great adventure of birth, life and death. When the mind weds *pravritthi* (worldly activity), the progeny is bondage; when it weds *nivritthi* (spiritual renunciation), the progeny is freedom.

*Nivritthi* confers fearlessness, even while you accept a little of it. It gives strength and courage, for, it is desire that weakens man and makes him cringe before those in authority and with influence. Detachment endows you with selfrespect, and the capacity to stand up to slander and calumny. There are some who weep at the slightest sign of defeat or disappointment. This is despicable behaviour. Why should you have fear or sorrow, with the Lord installed in the altar of your heart? Do you not know He is there, guarding you and guiding you? He is in all beings, at all times. Endeavour to remember this fact whatever you may be doing, whoever you may be contacting, in whatever manner. You will succeed in this, provided you do not give up the recitation of His Name.

### **The genuine Festival of Lamps**

*The griha* (home) where the Name of the Lord is not heard is a *guha* (cave), and nothing more. As you enter it, as you leave it, while you are in it, perfume it, illumine it, purify it, with the Name. Light it as a lamp at dusk, welcome it at dawn, as you welcome the sun. That is the genuine Deepavali, the Festival of Lamps.

The three basic beliefs of *Sanaathana Dharma* are: (i) the inevitability of *karma* in life; (ii) the fact of re-birth and (iii) Divine Incarnations. If one has no faith in all these three, he cannot claim to be a Hindu; whoever believes in them can be reckoned as a Bhaaratheeya, child of Bhaarth. Mention was made of Krishna *avathaar* and of the Kaliya episode. The inner meaning of that episode is this: The serpent Kaliya and its minions are the desires that lurk in the depths of the human heart; into that depth, the Lord jumps, or rather showers His Grace and so, the poison is expelled and the place made safe and pure. When Krishna dances on the hoods, the serpents are tamed and rendered harmless. Without the extinction of desire, man cannot become Divine. Of what avail is it to repeat *Shivoham, Shivoham*, when you have not endeavoured to equip yourself with the qualities of Shiva? Why assert that you are Shiva and draw blasphemy on your head?

Do not get elated at the riches, status, authority, intelligence, etc., which you may have. Consider that they have been given to you on trust, so that you may benefit others. They are all signs of His Grace, opportunities of service, symbols of responsibility. Never seek to exult over others' faults; deal sympathetically with the errors and mistakes of others. Seek the good in others; hear only good tidings about them; do not give ear to scandal. On this Deepavali Day, resolve to light the lamp of *Naamasmarana* and place it at your doorstep, the lips. Feed it with the oil of devotion; have steadiness as the wick. Let the lamp illumine every minute of your life. The splendour of the Name will drive away darkness from outside you as well as from inside you. You will spread joy and peace among all who come near you.

*Prashaanthi Nilayam, Deepavali: 24-10-1965*

*The absence of modesty  
makes life for a woman,  
however rich in other accomplishments,  
a waste and vacuum.  
Modesty lifts her to the  
heights of sublime holiness.  
The modesty of woman wields authority  
in the home and outside,  
in community as well as in the world.*

***SHRI SATHYA SAI***