

7. The inner wheel

Forsaking the various attractions and distractions of this vast city, you have come here, to this stadium, drawn by the call of the Spirit; this is to be commended because the Light of the Spirit is the veritable Beacon for those struggling in the darkness of worldly affairs. That darkness creates confusion and makes you take one thing for another. The stump of a tree appears to be a thief, lying in wait to rob you of your purse. The knowledge of the *Aathma* is the Light which will disperse the darkness as well as the doubts and diversifies which it creates. Without this knowledge, man is lost in the wilderness; he behaves as if he has lost all memory of himself, as if he has forgotten his name, native place and the place to which he is proceeding. He evokes pity among the wise!

Awareness of his identity, of his being *Aathma*, is the sign of wisdom, the lighting of the Lamp which scatters darkness. That *Aathma* is the embodiment of Bliss, of Peace, of Love but, without knowing that all these exist in oneself, man seeks them from outside himself and exhausts himself in that disappointing pursuit. Birds that fly far from the masts of a ship have to return to those very masts, for they have no other place to fold their tired wings and stay. Devoid of *this jnaana*, all efforts to seek spiritual bliss and peace are futile. You may have rice, dhal (lentils), salt, vegetables and tamarind; but, without a fire to cook them soft and palatable, they are as good as non-existent. So too, *japam*, *dhyaanam*, *puuja*, pilgrimage---all these are ineffective, if the knowledge of one's basic Reality and Identity is not there to warm up the process. The *Aathma* is the source and spring of all joy and peace; this has to be cognised and dwelt upon. Without this cognition, human life is an opportunity that is lost. One has to come into this wilderness again and again in order to learn the way out. The quantities of food consumed, the hours of sleep spent in bed, the riches earned and enjoyed add up to a colossal waste, if the main purpose of life is neglected.

Virtue is strength; vice is weakness

Life is a campaign against foes, it is a battle with obstacles, temptations, hardships, hesitations. These foes are within man and so, the battle has to be incessant and perpetual. Like the virus that thrives on the bloodstream, the vices of lust, greed, hate, malice, pride and envy sap the energy and faith of man and reduce him to untimely fall. Raavana had scholarship, strength, wealth, power, authority, the Grace of God---but, the virus of lust and pride which lodged in his mind brought about his destruction, despite all his attainments. He could not dwell in peace and joy for a moment after the virus started work. Virtue is strength vice is weakness.

Man differs from man, in this struggle against the inner foes. Each gets the result that his *saadhana* deserves, that his acts in this and previous births deserve. Life is not a mechanical formula, where 2 plus 2 always make 4. To some, it may be 3, .to others, 5. It depends on how each values the 2. Moreover, in the spiritual path, each one has to move forward from where he already is, according to his own pace, in the light of the lamp which each one holds in his own hand. The demons were too conceited to bend before the Lord; they put too much trust in arms and number; they ignored the subtler and stronger forces of the spirit, which could carry mountains, bridges, oceans and annihilate the anger of the elements.

You must strive to diagnose your own character and discover the faults that are infesting it; do not try to analyse the character of others and seek to spot their defects. This self-examination is very necessary to bring to light the defects that might undermine one's spiritual career. People

buy clothes with deep colour, so that they may not reveal dust or dirt; they do not prefer white clothes, for they show plainly their soiled condition. But, do not try to hide your dirt in darkness; be ashamed of soiled natures and endeavour to cleanse them fast.

Man suffers from fever of the senses

Consider also the true nature of what is now named *bhoga* or luxury, a thing that drags people away into excitement and insane pursuits. All the variety in taste, colour, smell of the multiform items of food is, when you consider it fairly and squarely, a mere drug to cure the illness of hunger; all the drinks that man has invented are but drugs to alleviate the illness of thirst. Man suffers from the fever of the senses and he tries the quack remedies of recreations, pleasures, picnics, banquets, dances etc., only to find that the fever does not subside. The fever can subside only when the hidden virus is rendered ineffective. That virus will die only when the rays of *jnaana* fall upon it.

There are two things that draw man's mind, *hitha* and *priya* (the beneficial and the pleasant). Prefer the beneficial to the pleasant, for the pleasant might lead you down the sliding path into the bottomless pit. Vibheeshana spoke *hitha* to Raavana, but he lent his ear to the *priya* that his sycophantic ministers spoke. He exiled his brother and honoured his courtiers; he sealed his fate by this preference of *priya* over *hitha*. The true doctor is interested in curing you of all illness and so, he advises *hitha* to restore your health; the *Guru* is such a doctor. Obey him, even when his prescription is unpalatable, for, you can be cured only by him.

Cultivate quietness, simplicity and humility

Now this country is pursuing *priya* instead of *hitha* and that is the reason for all this distress and discontent. Indian Culture has always emphasised the hard way, the beneficial way; but, people are now after cultures that cater to the senses---the outer, the external, the frill and the fancies, the mirages and the momentaries. Indian culture advises the control of the senses, not catering to them. The car is driven by means of a wheel which is inside it; when that wheel is turned, the outer wheels move. So also, the inner wheel has to be turned in man, so that he may progress. Trying to move the outer wheels is a sign of ignorance; it is waste of precious energy.

Inner concentration is to be developed in preference to outer distraction. Cultivate quietness, simplicity, humility, instead of noise, complexity, conceit. Of the twenty-four hours which comprise a day, use six for earning and spending, six for contemplation of God, six for sleep and six for service to others. You are now spending not even five minutes in the contemplation of God and you are not ashamed. What a tragedy!

Best course to develop taste for liberation

Ponder over your *sthithi* (present condition), *gathi* (direction of movement), *sakthi* (capabilities) and *mathi* (inclinations). Then, enter upon the path of *saadhana* step by step, so that you approach the goal faster every day, every hour, every minute. Arjuna became entitled to the *Geetha Upadesh* (spiritual instruction) from the Lord Himself, because he evinced the *vishaada*, the *vairagya*, the *sharanaagathi* and the *ekaagratha*---essential to assimilate the Great Message. When the yearning for Liberation has become intense beyond expression, man can set aside all social conventions, worldly norms and codes of conduct, that do not subserve that high purpose. Then, Prahlada can give up his father, Bheeshma can counter his *Guru*, Meera can desert her husband and Shankaraacharya can play subterfuge with his mother.

To develop that taste for liberation *Naamasmarana* (rolling the sweet Name of the Lord saturated with sugar of His splendour on the tongue and in the mind) is the best course. This is an exercise that can be practised at all times and places by all, irrespective of creed or caste or sex or age or economic and social status. It will keep you in constant touch with the Infinite and so, it will transmit *to you something of the Wisdom and Power of the Infinite.*

Sardar Patel Stadium, Bombay, 16-3-1966