

40. The Name of God

Nine paths lead to the Grace of the Lord, say the *Shaasthras*. They are, *Shravanam* (listening to His Glory), *Keerthanam* (extolling His Glory oneself), *Vishnu smaranam* (keeping the Lord and His Glory ever in the memory), *Paadha sevanam* (worshipping His Feet), *Vandhanam* (adoring His image and His devotees), *Archanam* (ritual worship), *Dhaasyam* (service), *Sneham* (developing the attitude of a companion and comrade of the Lord) and *Aathma nivedhanam* (dedication of oneself to the Lord). They are the paths that lead one to the goal. Each individual must aspire for the Grace of God. That Grace will endow joy here and hereafter. But, unhappy man gets involved in the agitations of his mind and intoxicates himself with ignorance and so he denies himself the joy of basking in the Grace of God. In India, the special sacredness of human birth and the ways of making it fruitful have been known since ages. But, few realise this and benefit by it.

Nowadays, idol-worship which is considered a valuable discipline by Hindus, is being ridiculed. This is a big error.

For, as a cup or some other vessel is needed to drink milk, so too to imbibe the Grace of the Lord a vessel called Idol is necessary. The idol is a means and not the end; it is the outer form; the inner content is Divinity. Western critics laugh at idol worship and say that Hindus reduce God into stone; but the truth is, Hindus elevate stone into God. God is the seat of illumination; He scatters all darkness of Ignorance. That is why Shri Shankaraachaarya said *Bhaja Govindham* (Extol the Glory of Govindha) *Bhaja Govindham*, *Bhaja Govindham*, *Moodha Mathe!* (O Mind that is immersed in the sempiternal darkness of ignorance).

Feeling must saturate *Naama smarana*

There was a pilgrim once who reached a jungle at nightfall. He found that he had to go through five miles of jungle before he could get shelter in a village. He had a small lantern in the hand; he lighted it, but found to his dismay that the flicker could light only a yard ahead of him. How can I walk five miles with the help of this tiny circle of light, he lamented. A wise man passed that way and saw his plight. "My dear fellow, hold that lantern in the hand and walk on. You can go five miles or fifty, and always you will be in the circle of light around the lantern." So too, on a raft made of two logs tied together, a man can safely cross the ocean. The instrument may be small, but, the work it can do may be out of all proportion to its size. A small torch will help a man to pass through a thick forest. So, do not think that the Name of the Lord is just a mutter of a syllable or two. Though small, through it the Principle of Divinity can be realised. A tiny seed contains within itself the potency to produce the huge tree.

The Shaasthras say that in the *Kritha* Age, man was able to achieve liberation through *dhyaana* (meditation), in the *Thretha* Age, through *yajna* (ritual sacrifice), in the *Dwaapara* Age, through *Archana* (worship) and in this *Kali* Age, he can reach the goal through *Naama smarana* (constant dwelling on the Name of the Lord). It is not enough if you know the glory of the Name; it would be like the knowledge of the vitamins that a tablet contains. That knowledge cannot cure; swallow it; let it be assimilated; then, the tablet will cure. Mere exercise for the tongue is no good; feeling too must saturate the Name and the brain must be reminding one of the meaning of the Name. Then is the joy complete.

God seeks sincerity not outer show

Every one craves for *shaanthy*, but, performs acts that lead to the opposite end, *a-shaanthy*. He desires peace and courts worry. He plants the cotton tree and looks forward to the mango fruit. One must know how to earn what one needs. I am amused when I see man behaving like this. He is like the bird that sees the lump of flash and hops towards it, unaware of the net which is laid to trap it. Man is unaware of the trap, of his being bound. Through the contemplation of the Name of the Lord, he can escape from the net. But, for the Name to liberate him, his heart must be rendered pure. Otherwise, like the untinned copper vessel which turns food cooked in it into poisonous stuff, the vicious heart will turn all discipline into springs of dire pain.

People read the Raamaayana from beginning to end continuously for 50 or 60 years, but they do not evince even an iota of the devotion of Hanumaan. They make no attempt to bring the Raamaayana into their daily life. They discourse on the *bhakthi* of Hanumaan or of Raadha or they talk loud and long on Chaithanya, but, of what they speak, they do not practise a bit. They sing songs on the glory and the grace of God. Even radio receiver sets do; and tape recorders also sing. God seeks sincerity and steady faith, not outer pomp and show.

A King once ordered a building contractor to bring him fine straight smooth timber, without any knots; the poor fellow searched in all the depots throughout the land but could not find the timber without the knots, though he could procure a few lengths of smooth round wood. At last, he saw a plantation of bananas and there saw the tall straight smooth round knot-less timber he was looking for. He brought the banana trunks to the King, but, he derided him for his stupidity, for, though the outer qualities were there in the banana trunks, the inner strength and stamina were not there. Similarly, the Lord too looks more for the inner purity and strength.

Greed will spell man's doom

Of course, it is good to yearn for *aanandham*; but you must know also the means by which it can be acquired. Death awaits at every step and you must be conscious of the urgency of the endeavour. A farmer yearned to take up more land for cultivation and he went to the Thungabhadra area and the Naagaarjunasaagar area in search of land for cultivation. Finding that the price of land there was very high, he went to Northern India. He learnt that in a Himalayan state, good land was cheap and easily available. So, he proceeded thither. The Raaja promised to give him all the land that he could walk around from sunrise to sunset on a single day. So, in his uncontrollable greed, he rose with sun and without wasting a minute for breakfast, he walked fast--indeed, he ran very fast--in order to cover as much land as he could. He never took a second's rest; he was happy that he could get a pretty vast area free; when the sun was about to set, he was within a few paces of the point from where he had started. He was too exhausted to take even the few steps he needed; he fell down on the ground he coveted so much and breathed his last. His heart could not stand the strain of walking so fast, so long, with such hurry, and tension. At last, he got only six feet of ground for his grave. Greed spelt his doom. In spiritual matters too people have this greed. They are immersed in wordly tumult for 23 hours and 55 minutes, they remember God for 5 minutes only (when some fear overtakes them. it may be a few minutes more), but, except God to set right all their problems. To become pure enough to deserve Grace, you have to remember God, whenever you get the char e, wherever you get the prompting.

Know the method and means to realize God

Singing hymns makes the remembrance more vivid and the heart melts at the awareness of God's Glory, when praise is poured through music. The Lord has announced to Naarada. "Wherever my *Bhakthas* sing, I instal Myself." The Lord loves harmony, melody, music. The name when sung attracts more. Beat the time, sing in tunr. Birds that perch on a tree fly away when you clap hands beneath it and shout. So too. to drive away the birds of lust, anger. greed, attachment, pride and hate that perch on the tree of yourself, beat the time with both palms and shout, O Raama! O Krishna!--that is enough, that saves the time needed to cleanse the area of the mind also

The chance to realise God must be fully utilised. Of course, one must know the *maarga* (method) and the means. You may have a knife; but, remember the knife is to be used for slicing fruit or vegetables for the dinner. It is not to be used for cutting open one's own neck. So too, do not use the chance of this human career to ruin oneself; use it to liberate oneself.

The Naama (name) is a *Naara* (boat) by which you can cross the sea of life--so, take to see that it springs no leak. through *kaama*, *krodha* and the rest. These *gunas* (qualifies) cause leaks in the heart; so, if you have them, even Grace when poured into it by God will fall through and go to waste So, one has to be extra vigilant. I have said often that the mind is like the lens of a camera. Point it towards any object and click; it will create the impression on the plate. It is for you to choose the good and reject the bad. Try to merge with the vast, the magnificent, the Universal. When a glass of water is poured into the sea, it is transformed into sea water. Do not pour it into the drainpit, for it will become drainage water.

Name of Lord is the panacea for all ills

Again, spiritual discipline has to be practised regularly every day; it is like sweeping dusting the floor of the home. A day's negelect means accumulation of more dust. The altar of the heart will be clean if *saadhana* is regular. "*Sarvadha* (always), *sarvakaaleshu* (at all times), *sarvathra* (at all places), *Harichinthanam* (remembrance of God)," say the *Shaasthras*. You may not have any other resource, but, the strength derived by the repetition of the Name is resource enough.

To slake one's thirst, all the waters of the Ganges is not necessary; a glass is enough. For the cure of disease of "birth-death", the tablets of *Naama* are enough. They are like the B12 tablets now being given for various illnesses. The name is a panacea; there is no need to seek another. It has sufficient efficacy.

Samsaara (worldly life) is the *thraranopaaya* (boat for crossing over) and *Naamasmarana* (remembrance of the Name of the Lord) is the means of liberation. Take the instance of Naaradha. Some one asked him why he was continuing to recite the Name of the Lord even though he had access to *Kailaash* and *Vaikuntha* (the heavenly abodes of Shiva and Vishnu) and he had won the Grace of Lord in full measure. Naaradha replied, "What greater *Aanandham* can I have?" When Thukaaraam was walking along repeating 'Raam, Raam', some passerby asked him, "What do you hope to get by this incessant repetition? Is it *Kailaash* or *Vaikuntha*?" He replied, "I do not know what is meant by *Kailaash* or *Vaikuntha*; I only know that *Raam naam* gives me Heavenly Bliss." When the heart beats to the tune of *Raam naam*, that is heaven, indeed.

Saadhana is essential because the effects of karma have to be removed by karma alone, as thorn is removable only by another thorn. You cannot remove it by a knife or a hammer, or even a sword.

The knowledge that the world is unreal was itself spread by Shankaraacharya by means of activity in the unreal world, the establishment of mutts and the writing of books, the partaking in disputations.

You cannot desist from karma; only, you have got to take care that it is saturated with prema and promotes the welfare of the world.

Sathya Sai Baaba