

2. Stagnation in the same class

WHEN the Sun, the Deity that inspires the Vision, moves North, man too must develop the Northward or the Divine urge and engage himself in tasks that will take him nearer to God. That is the meaning of dividing the year into two---the Southward half and the Northward half. But that is just a warning and an exhortation. Man can overcome the limitations of South and North; he has always, throughout the year, the Northward or the Divine urge driving him onward and upward. He need not wait for the *Makarasankraanthi* (starting of Sun's Northward journey) or stop with the *Karkatakasankraanthi* (starting of Sun's Southward journey). All spiritual endeavour has as its aim the attraction of the Grace of God on ourselves. That is why when you go to a temple and stand before the main shrine, you strike the bell hung there; the sound will draw the attention of the Lord to the supplicant just arrived. The bell must be accompanied by a sincere prayer from the heart.

Spiritual effort should not become mechanical repetition of set formulae or execution of dry formalities. A sage who lived long ago had a cat in his hermitage; whenever he performed a *homa* (offering oblations to gods into the consecrated fire), the cat frisked about the Fire and gave a lot of trouble to him. So he used to catch it in advance and keep it under an inverted basket for the duration of the *homa*. His son who watched this operation for years thought that this cat-catching and cat-imprisonment were vital parts of the ritual itself. So he took great trouble to seek out a cat before every *homa* and felt happy when he got one which he could keep under an inverted basket in the same room. That is an example of meaningless mechanicalisation.

Maintain inner equanimity with all your strength

It is *Maayaa* (illusion) that makes man take the *Naama* and *Ruupa* (the name and the form) as real. Attachment is born out of this *Maayaa* only. It acts like a veil to hide the reality behind all this multiplicity. *Maayaa* is the vesture of *Maadhava* (God); he who believes it to be true is *Maanava* (Man). By *saadhana*, a man can escape from the enticement of *Maaya* and realise that it is all false, for it does not subsist for all time. Potharaaju knew that all is God: he writes that the *Bhaagavatha* was composed by the God in him. He is the One in all; *Maam ekam*---Me, the only One---as the Geetha says; he surrendered fully to God. Shrinaatha his brother-in-law, himself a great poet, pleaded with Potharaaju to dedicate his *Bhaagavatha* to the King, who was certain to reward him with heaps of precious gems. But Potharaaju brushed him aside; how can any one have a ride in two boats at the same time, he asked Shrinaatha. His mind refused to wander away from the feet of Raama, where it had tasted nectar.

Gopanna too had no other thought than the beautification of the residence of Raama, and the service of Raama, at Bhadrachalam. *Thyaaga* (renunciation) alone can grant the immortality of merging in God. You must be unaffected, ever in calm joy, in the inner depths; it does not matter if the waves play on the top, heaving and falling, for that is but the action of wind upon water! Do not lose the inner equanimity; maintain it with all your strength.

Three classes of devotion

How long can you stagnate in the same class? Have you no wish to get promoted to the next higher class? In *Bhakthi* (devotion), there are two classes, *Sahajabhakthi* and *Viseshabhakthi*. *Sahajabhakthi* is satisfied with worship, *bhajan*, *naamasmaran*, *vratha* (group singing, remembrance of Lord, vow-keeping), pilgrimage, etc. *Viseshabhakthi* craves for purity of character,

suppression of impulses, practice of *daya*, *prema*, *shaanthy*, *ahimsa* (compassion, love, peace and non-violence), etc., and inquiry into the why and wherefore of man. It is a matter of shame that people stick to the same class year in and year out. Then there is another higher class named *Paraabhakthi*, too. Cleverness can correct and solve external problems; concentrated *saadhana* alone can correct and solve internal crisis.

Four friends once started dealing in cotton. They had a godown for the storage of the bales; finding that the cotton seeds attracted rats into the godown, a cat was introduced by them to scare the rodent throng. They tied jingles to her feet and since they loved it much, the jingles were of gold! Once, when the cat jumped from the top of the pile of bales, it started limping on one foot. So they applied some balm and tied a long strip of bandage round the injured foot. The bandage got loose and the cat unaware of the long narrow cloth she was trailing behind her, sat near the fireplace. When the cloth began to burn, she ran helter-skelter and fled into the godown itself, where the entire stock of cotton was reduced to ashes in a trice. The four friends had assigned to themselves each one of the feet of the joint cat and the injured foot belonged to one of them; so the other three charged him with the damages which they claimed from him.

The six enemies that threaten man's domain

The matter went to court and after hearing arguments on both sides, the judge said, "The injured leg has no responsibility, for it was taken into the godown with the trail of fire by the three healthy feet. So, damages have to be paid by the owners of the healthy feet to the owner of the limping foot." What may thus appear correct at first sight, might prove wrong on second thoughts. There is a correctness from the worldly point of view and a correctness from God's. Find out what the point of view of God would be, by association with godly men; they can give you proper advice. You should seek and not avoid good men.

In the months of *Shravan* and *Bhaadhrapadh*, the crops are thirsty in the fields; but man is ever afflicted with thirst of a different kind, to drink the poisonous water of sensual pleasure.

Each one is entitled to a crown after the surrender, the total surrender, of the six enemies that threaten his domain' *kaama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *madha* and *maathsarya* (lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride and envy). He wears a crown with these foes still formidable inside him and carries not gems on his brow, but stones.

He is coolly carrying stone. The real coronation is that of *Vibheeshana*, performed under the auspices of *Raama*, a status won through surrender and sacrifice.

A tube in the bicycle tyre is punctured by nails on the track; "I" and "Mine" are two nails that puncture the progress of man. *Viveka* and *Vairaagya* (discrimination and detachment) are the two aides-de-camp of man. Keep them strong and give them full facility, for they help man to live unharmed and joyful. There was a son who, when asked by his father what course he would like to take after his school certificate, replied, "the Race Course." That is the consequence of not having these body guards.

Feel the Presence of God, revel in His Glory

When Krishna leapt down from his chariot with *Chakraayudha* (the wheel-weapon) in His hand to slay Bheeshma, Arjuna jumped down with Him and holding both His Feet, he prayed, "Oh Lord, you have given word that you will not wield any weapon. Let it not be said that you broke your word to save me from Bheeshma; I am prepared to die." That was the measure of his *bhakthi*. Bheeshma too had equal *bhakthi*. He did not step forward to fight the new challenge,

nor did he question the Lord. He stood silent, drinking in the charm of the Lord and filling himself with the vision of the magnificence of God. That was the measure of his dedication to His Will.

Become attached to God. Feel His Presence, revel in His Glory. Do not cause Him 'disappointment' or 'distress' by any act or word which He does not approve. Do not give Him the slightest 'bother' or 'worry.' He has none, but if you love Him deeply, you will be concerned about Him, just as if He is your Lord and Love. Jataayu had an unremitting stream of Raama-thoughts and he was rewarded by Raama; He came to him in his last moments and Himself performed his last rites, a duty He did not carry out directly even for His father!

When Krishna returned from the court of Duryodhana, after His Mission for Peace on behalf of the Paandava brothers, Sahadeva told Him: "Pardon us, Oh Lord. I knew the rogues would not pay heed; I would fain have stopped you from proceeding to their den, but you were so kind." God will serve you; He will save you and be by your side ever---only you have to cultivate your character and polish your interior so that He might be reflected therein.

Sweetness alone is the offering that God likes

Let His Will be done---this should be your guide-line. The Emperor of the Cholas sought to visit the Shrirangam Gopuram Temple, of which he had heard much. He got his chariot ready and moved forward many times in six months; but every time a recluse in ochre robes with a rosary round his neck and a halo around his head intercepted the vehicle. When the emperor alighted to honour him, he kept him engaged in conversation which was so enchanting that he forgot his journey and its goal.

One day, when he lamented over his failure to fill his eyes with the glory of Shrirangam, the Lord appeared before him and said. "Why do you lament? I am the Master who came to you so often as soon as you set out for Shrirangam; recognise Me in all, that is the genuine pilgrimage to Shrirangam." Consider all whom you meet as the Lord of Shrirangam, your Master. Show untarnished *Prema* towards all who come to you.

What is the service that the ocean with all its mass of water does? It cannot slake the thirst of single human being. What is the profit if a miser lives a hundred years? This is My message to you this day: Do not exhibit anger or grief or pain. Be happy, spread happiness around you. Sweetness alone is the offering that God likes.

There was a man once who hired an aged elephant for the bridal procession on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter. After the ceremony, when the procession returned home, the bride descended from the howdah and at that very moment, the elephant crumpled and died. The owner of the elephant was shocked at the news; he refused to take it as an unavoidable misfortune. He insisted that the identical animal had to be returned to him alive. He went to court on this issue. The judge had some mud pots kept at the back of the door which the greedy owner had to open for passing through. When he opened it, the whole lot was broken. The judge insisted that he had to restore those very pots! Thus was sense driven into that fellow's brain.

Do not have this type of stupid fanaticism; modify its rigour by a little discrimination. Be reasonable, considerate, sympathetic, full of toleration of the other points of view. Improve yourselves day by day in these matters. That is My Blessing for you today.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, Uttharaayana, 14-1-1967

Just as you prescribe minimum qualifications for every profession, the minimum qualification for Grace is surrender of egoism, control over senses and regulated aahaara and vihaara (food and recreation).

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