

### 39. Pouring ink on paper

WHEN asked, "Who are you?" each one of you gives out the name some one gave you years ago, or which you gave yourself. You do not give the name that has been with you life after life, that has survived many deaths and births, the *Aathma* that you really are. That name you have forgotten; it has been enveloped by three thick *veils*---*mala*, *vikshepa* and *aavarana*. *Mala* is the dirt of vice, wickedness and passion. *Vikshepa* is the veil of ignorance, which hides truth and makes falsehood attractive and desirable. *Aavarana* is super-imposition on the eternal Of the transitor<sup>3</sup> on the Universal, of the boundaries of individuality. Now, how is man to wash off or remove these three layers of dirt? By soap and water, certainly. The soap of penitence and the water of cognition will remove all taint of *mala*. The wavering mind that causes the frantic search for happiness from sense objects and external appurtenances will be transformed by *Upaasana* (steady application in worship) and adoration of the source and sustenance of all. The *Aavarana* veil can be tom off by the acquisition of *jnaana* which reveals the *Aathmic* essence of man, the *Aathmic* Unity of all creation. *Mala* is therefore removable by *karma*, *vikshepa* by *bhakthi* (devotion) and *aavarana* by *jnaana*. That is why Indian sages have laid down these three paths for aspirants.

#### Godly pursuit is like poison first, nectar at the end

There is no short-cut to any laudable achievement. Steady struggle alone can ensure victory. Things that are gained with little or no effort are not worth exulting over. The process of *yama*, *niyama*, *aasana*, *pranaayaama*, *prathyaahaara*, *dhyaanaa* and *dharana* (control of the inner and outer senses, regulation of posture and breath, withdrawal into one's inner consciousness, meditation and concentration) is hard; but, the final stage is *Nirvikalpa Samaadhi*, the condition of perfect undisturbed equanimity. Whereas the pursuit of material pleasures will be "*agre amruthopamam, parinaame visham*" (like nectar at first but like poison at the end), the pursuit of equanimity will be "*agre visham parinaame amrutho-pamam*" (like poison at first but like nectar at the end).

There was a seeker once who prayed to his elder brother to initiate him into spiritual life, with the imparting of a saving *manthra*; but the brother said, "It is always a hard job to teach one's kinsman, and to teach a brother is harder still. You should go to *Dakshinaamuurthy*, who is Shiva Himself come as teacher." The brother inquired how to discover that preceptor. Then the brother said, "He who considers all men and all things equal---he is the preceptor I have indicated."

So, the young man started his search. He went among the hermitages, with a gold ring on his finger; he interrogated the hermits, what the metal was. Some declared it was gold, some brass, some copper, others said it was tin or some alloy. So, he moved on. Then, he came upon a young ascetic, with shining eyes. He asked him whether it was gold; he said 'Yes.' He said, 'Is it not brass?' He replied, 'Yes it is brass.' He said yes, to whatever he said it was. He could not recognise any distinction. So he concluded that the ascetic before him was *Dakshinaamuurthy*. Equanimity comes as a result of the awareness of unity, not otherwise.

#### Embrace the *Shivam* in the core of your heart

Sanathkumaar was engaged in extreme austerity when God appeared before him. He asked him to place before Him his needs. But Sanathkumar said, "You are my guest now. You have come to this place, where I am residing for some time; so you may ask anything you need; I am bound

to honour the guest, granting him what he needs." Having *known Brahman*, he had become *Brahman* Himself. So he could talk as an equal to God. "I am you," that was the stage reached by Sanathkumar. No wonder he spoke like that. He is ever present; I is born only after the Individual separates himself from the He. So, with the birth of the *jeevi* (individual soul), the idea of *Dheva* (God) must also be born in the mind. That is the sign of safety and success. Embrace the *Shivam* (God) in the core of your heart; you become immortal. Embrace the *shavam* (corpse) which the body is without Him; you are mortal.

The spiritual preceptor has to emphasise that fundamental lesson. He should be like the Drill Instructor, among the teachers in the school. The others step into the class and instruct and leave. The history master holds forth on his subject and leaves. The science master does the same. The drill instructor has himself to stand before the pupils and swing his hands right and left, so that they may do the same. He has to bend and rise, as often and as fast as he wants his pupils to. The *Guru* has to be *Brahman* so that he may lead others to a knowledge about Him. He must be aware of the Named One, and not merely the Name.

### **Wealth cannot give happiness that lasts**

The desire to raise the standard of living is a thirst that can never be quenched. It leads to endless pursuit of sensory pleasures, multiplication of wants, and deeper and deeper involvement in worry. Riches are a deadly temptation. No whip can suppress the itch to gain money. Once *Lakshmi* (the Goddess of wealth) and *Naaraayana* (Her Lord) had a quarrel over who was supreme in the hearts of mankind. They decided to settle it by means of an experiment.

Lakshmi came down among mankind as a spiritual teacher; when people washed her feet and worshipped her, the plate and vessels used by the devotees turned into gold! So, she was welcomed everywhere and there was a terrible rash of devotees and a huge pile of brass, copper and aluminium vessels and plates in evidence everywhere!

Meanwhile, Naaraayana too was upon the earth as an exponent of the sacred scriptures, expounding to huge gatherings the paths to happiness and joy marked out by the sages. When people heard of Lakshmi converting metals into gold, they preferred her visits to those of Naaraayana and cared little for what he taught. He was actually sent out of cities and villages, when Lakshmi entered them, for his discourses distracted them from the profitable sessions of Lakshmi's *puuja*.

Do not listen to the tempting discourses of people who have no faith in God; they hold before you the prospect of sudden wealth through devious means, but they do not tell you that wealth cannot give happiness, real happiness, that lasts and satisfies. Their arguments are specious and clever and they ridicule the traditional and the real.

### **Each rite has a significance and meaning**

There was in Venkatagiri an orthodox Brahmin, who performed his *Sandhya* (rites laid down for performance during dawn, midday and dusk) regularly. During these rites, he has to take in small spoonfuls of consecrated water, thrice, one spoon after another, a number of times. The son who was watching him laughed and said, "Why have you to sip it so often? Swallow the water all in a gulp. That will make things easy and quick," he said. The father remained silent; but, later, when the son was sweating over his homework, and dipping his pen in ink once every few minutes, he laughed and said, "Why don't you pour the bottle of ink on the paper and be done with it? Why take all this bother of dipping and distributing it in droplets, line by line, thin, and emaciated?"

Each rite has a significance and meaning, which it is best to leave to the person who believes and acts accordingly.

There are only three ways of saving *oneself-Pravritthi, Nivritthi and Prapatthi*. *Pravritthi* (action, external activity) is a method of sublimating the instincts and impulses. *Nivritthi* (detachment, internal quiet), is a method of subduing the thirst of the senses and of the ego. *Prapatthi* (surrender) is a method of utilising the senses, the instincts and impulses, the intelligence, the emotions, for the glorification of the all-knowing, all-directing Divine. Do and dedicate; work and worship; plan and protect; but do not worry about the fruit. That is the secret of spiritual success.

*Prashaanthi Nilayam, 30-9-1968*