

12. Love, the *sine qua non*

The rays of the morning Sun induce buds to blossom into fragrance and beauty; they prompt the Divine in you, today, to blossom into fragrance, purity and holy endeavour. Earth and sky take on a golden hue, reminding us of the *Hiranya Garbha* (Golden Womb) from which all creation emanated in the timeless past. This is a sacred day, according to the traditions of this land; it has been revered and celebrated since numberless centuries. But, at the present time, people are content to listen to the praise of the Day and repeating what they have heard, to others, in parrot chatter. What really matters, however, is the experience of the bliss that it is designed to confer. The intuitively ready have surely visualised that the vow of fasting and vigil prescribed for this festival will guarantee certain results. But, the genuine practitioners are few, and even they do not communicate their ecstasy to others; so, faith in the cultural calendar has declined, and the validity of vows is being questioned.

People who go about this land will notice the large concourses that attend temples, that partake in *bhajans* and *Naamasankeerthan* where the glory of God is sung with demonstrative enthusiasm that; mill around venerable personalities who preach and teach the ways of God, and they infer that this is a sacred land full of pious individuals, who tread the pilgrim path to Divinity. But, these are hollow rituals, empty exercises, exhibitionistic picnics or hikes; the pilgrims are more interested in shopping, both in the temple and the bazaars, than in stopping the ungodly habits to which they are attached! They are unaware of the basic truth of God, nor are they anxious to earn that awareness, by the hard path of discipline.

Unwavering Love alone can win God's Grace

Without an intellectual grasp of the fundamentals of the Divine Principle, all vows, fasts and vigils are imitative, routine, mechanical activities that involve waste of time and energy. It is best that you impress upon yourself the need for this basic step on this *Mahaashivaraathri*, for, this *raathri* (night) is the night that has to usher in the dawn of realisation.

On this *Mahaashivaraathri*, you have to impress on your consciousness that Nature is alive, since God is life; that Nature appears ever-lasting, since God is eternal; Nature is but a reflection of God. He lends the colour of order, purpose, and activity to inert Nature. Without the motivator, Nature is helpless and powerless. Appearance is but a reflection of reality; *Ishwara* is but a reflection of *Brahman*, the intelligence behind the Awareness of all. *Shivaraathri* inspires us to learn this basic Truth and shape our lives in the light of that illumination.

The Grace of God cannot be won through the gymnastics of reason, the contortions of *Yoga* or the denials of asceticism. Love alone can win it, Love that needs no requital, Love that knows no bargaining, Love that is paid gladly, as tribute to the All-loving, Love that is unwavering. Love alone can overcome obstacles, however many and mighty. There is no strength more effective than purity, no bliss more satisfying than love, no joy more restoring 'than *bhakthi* (devotion), no triumph more praiseworthy than surrender.

Right living is the prescription of *Vedhaantha*

The achievement of *aanandha* through *prema* (of the highest bliss through the highest love)--- this is the teaching of *Vedhaantha*; *Vedhaantha* for which all seekers compliment the sages of this land. *Vedhaantha* is an often misunderstood school of philosophy. It does not mean the study of profound tomes, or the calculated breathing, through trained nostrils of measured quantities of

air, or even eating as a dog does and sleeping as a jackal does, (wandering without any assured abode or source of sustenance) as the saying goes! Right living, balanced living, true living is the prescription of *Vedhaantha*. The fair face of *Vedhaantha* has been disfigured by fanatics and false interpreters. They sought manifold meanings behind the axioms of *Vedhaantha* and landed themselves amidst a medley of wrong meanings! They created confusion where clarity existed and so people lost faith in spiritual discipline itself. *Vedhaantha* is Love, the philosophical basis for that love.

Love should not be rationed, on the basis of caste, creed or economic status or intellectual attainment of the recipient. It should flow full and free, regardless of consequence, for, it is one's nature to love, to seek out the dry dreary wastes which love can water and make fertile. Wherever there is a vacuum, in any heart, Love flows into it and is glad that it can fill the emptiness. It is never held back; it is offered in abundance, without guile or deceit; it does not wear the cloak of falsehood, flattery or fear.

The tendrils of love aspire to cling only to the garments of God; it senses that God resides, in His Infinite Splendour, in every heart; so, it probes silently into the innermost recesses of all personalities around it to discover the seat of God, so that it may bloom therein. That is real *bhakthi* (devotion). When the tendril clings to worldly objects, it is *bhukthi* (gourmandism), not *bhakthi* (godwardness). It is the direction that is crucial.

Love ennobles the least and the lowest

When love is directed towards things that cater to the senses or bodily happiness, it will dry up when they fail or disappoint. When profit is loved, loss will undermine it. Discontent will sap its springs, when you love with the motive of worldly contentment. Even when ten million disappointments combine to distress you, never give up love; fix it on the source of love, the spring of love, the Supreme Goal of love, namely, God. Whatever the handicap, howsoever you are tempted to loosen the grip, hold on to God; there is always a calm, after the storm. A bout of hot weather invariably brings welcome showers. Love saturates all activities with joy and peace. Love ennobles the least and the lowest. Love your self for the God that it embodies; love others, for the God that is enshrined in them, that speaks and acts through them.

This is the bedrock on which you can build the mansion of happiness, this recognition of the Divine, that motivates you from within. Thousands are here before Me now; you claim to be devotees, with hems full of love and devotion; you roll rosaries over your fingers, and roll the Name over your tongues; you indulge in breathing exercises or contortional feats, but, unless you revere all and worship all in the abandon of selfless love, you only insult the unique tradition of this land. Passion, agitation, anxiety---these degrade human nature. They are born out of hatred, greed, malice or envy, which love alone can counteract.

You become what you yourself feel

When you have here the very embodiment of love as your dearest treasure, why welcome into your hearts the waves of hatred, faction, fear and doubt? Why turn them into volcanoes of cruelty and wickedness, when they can smile as green valleys of fragrant flowers? When you have fear in you, the reaction of fear greets you. When you have hatred in you, it resounds from all whom you come across. All around you echo the sentiments that you carry in your own heart! *Yadh Bhaavam thadh bhavathi*---"You become what you yourself feel." Making or marring is the activity of your own mind. When you pronounce another person as vicious or bad, you are

making a pronouncement on your own wickedness or vice. Your own impurity casts upon him that suspicion. No one can judge another, for, when another is judged, you are yourself condemned!

You may ask Me, how is it possible for a man to be wicked or vicious, when his body is the temple of God. His words may be harsh, his actions may be reprehensible, his behaviour may be revolting, but, he is nevertheless Divine! For, look upon him not as a body with a name and form, or a mind with emotions and feelings, or reason with resolutions and conclusions, but, as the *Aathman*, the "Universal I" reflected as the "particular I", that I is as pure, peaceful, illumined and expansive as the I of which it is but a wave! Cultivate this attitude of observing everyone. Then, you can rid your mind of prejudices. The I in him and the I in you are identical, for, both derive existence, knowledge and bliss from the same "absolute I", *the Paramaathmam*.

Wisdom is compassion at its highest

If your devotion does not stand by you when you seek to revere the reflections of God in the body-mirrors that move around you, when you peer into and prostrate before these images of God that parade before you, wherever you cast your eyes, how can you claim to be devoted to God, the Original of which these are but faint and faltering echoes? This is the *saadhana* (spiritual discipline) I prescribe for you.

Without steady faith in this *saadhana* and sincere practice of this *saadhana*, if you simply group together, preparing and sharing *Prasaadhams* (eatables placed as offerings to God) on every conceivable occasion, or even singing and extolling God, I must say that your efforts are all in vain! Expand your hearts; enlarge your vision; enlarge the circle of kinship; take more and more of your fellow beings into the tabernacle of your hearts. And, adore them in loving worship. Wisdom is only compassion at its highest; for, through sympathy you enter the heart of another and understand him through and through, you go behind the veil of pretence and punditry, convention and custom; you go behind good manners and fashion that people put on to hide their agony and ignorance from the rest of the world. Finding the unity in this diversity of roles is true wisdom.

Have no other thought than God

You consider *Shivaraathri* to be a great event, a sacred festival, because of the emergence of the *Linga* from this body. The *Linga* emerged this day from the embodied Shiva, and the *Shaasthra* (ancient scriptures) say, Brahma and Vishnu who sought to measure its Glory could not succeed in their venture! Some superficial scholars say that Shiva was born this day, as if the *Sath-Chith-Aanandha swaruupa* has either beginning or end! Some say that He started *thapas* (penance) today, and some others that today marks the conclusion of His *thapas*! Even this is due to attempt to drag Divinity down to human level, so that man can peer into the face of God and move as His servant or slave! The affinity should elevate both, not degrade the outer and the inner Divine. No low desire or vulgar ambition should be ascribed to Godhead by the meanness of man.

God is all-powerful; God is everywhere; God is all-knowing. To adore such a Formidable Limitless Principle, man spends a few minutes out of the 24 hours, and uses a minute before an idol or image or picture! It is indeed ridiculous, it is practically futile.

Adore Him so long as you have breath, so long as you are conscious. Have no other thought than God, no other aim than knowing His command, no other activity than translating that command into action. That is what is meant by surrender. Render your self unto Him.

When you intend going on a journey, you hand over the keys of your car to the chauffeur and sit in comfort and security in the back-seat, forgetting the possible troubles on the way. You have surrendered your life into the hands of that man, his intelligence, alertness and skill. Some men do not fully surrender; they are too egoistic for that! They interrupt him every minute with tips, hints, and suggestions about driving; with questions and doubts regarding the condition of the car or the road! And, so, they confuse him and confound his confidence so much that they inflict accidents upon themselves! Be steady, have Faith, and reach the goal safe. Life is the car, your heart is the key. God is the *saarathi* (chauffeur). Surrender to Him and be rid of further bother. Travel safe and arrive happy.

You are atheist, if you have no Love in you

There are many who declare that they have surrendered to Me. They use the word, *arpana*. They have dedicated their *thanu, mana, dhana* (body, mind, wealth), their all, they proclaim! But, they still continue with their 'I did it,' 'I feel so,' 'I think so,' 'I like it,' 'I do not like it,' etc. The I raises its hood so that it may receive homage or praise! Now, it is a big lie to say that you have surrendered! It is sheer falsehood. The word *arpana* is a word that is just thrown about, without any value or purpose, to deceive people who do not dive into its authenticity. How can you surrender something over which you have no control?

You are the slave of your mind, of your passions, of your prejudices; but, yet, you dare claim that you have surrendered your mind, your thoughts, your plans to God! While you are struggling to escape from the coils of the mind and the stranglehold of the passions, how can you dedicate them to Me? No. You need not boast of such bravery, such sacrifice, such devotion. I do not need or ask for such declaration. It is not enough if you believe that God is everywhere and at all times, and that you are yourself no different from Him. When you are God yourself, to whom are you to surrender what? Think over this deeply and attain to that realisation.

Thousands of you have gathered here from all the corners of this world. You have put up with many discomforts, hardships, and inconveniences, in your struggle to earn Grace. It has been for each of you a lesson in love, tolerance, fortitude and patience. Your innate quality of love has enabled you to share in joy and peace. Love makes you all theists. You have to be labelled an atheist, if you have no love in you, however demonstrative your religiosity may be! If you believe that you can win the Grace of God by means of vows, fasts, feasts and recitation of hymns of praise, offering of flowers, etc., you are woefully mistaken. Love alone is the *sine qua non*.

The Geetha says, you must be *adhweshthaa sarva bhoothaanaam*---"without hatred to all beings"; but, that is not enough. A wall has no hatred towards any being. But, is that the ideal? No. You must positively love all beings, actively love, actively engage yourself in acts of love. That alone wins the Grace you crave for.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 23-2-1971