

13. Shivaraathri : its significance

THE scriptures composed by the sages of Bhaarath are testaments of genuine experience; they are to be interpreted and observed in practice, after reverential study by persons who have clarified their intellects by rigorous disciplines. They can confer eternal *Aanandha* (bliss) when they are thus utilised; but, scholastic or philological or grammatical inquirers which seek to comment and confuse can only lead to the neglect and loss of the precious content. They are ready to teach the Truth and lead the student towards the goal of *Aanandha*; they are eager to grant immortality and save man from the dreary round of birth and death.

Really speaking, children of Bhaarath are fortunate to have this invaluable heritage. The *Vedhas and Shaasthras* speak of this fortune; the sages extol this land on this score; the *Upanishaths* acclaim the people who have such gurus and guides; the achievements of generations of aspirants and seekers stand witness to this treasure and its worth. But, some blind cynics discard the treasure, and condemn it as something that draws men away into futility! One can only pity them from their lack of vision. Bhaarath is the name of a way of life, not an extent of land between the seas and the Himaalayas. It is another name for tolerance and mutual love, which have made it a garden of multicoloured religions and philosophies, creeds and faiths.

***Dharma* means a lot of things, do's and don'ts**

It is the land where the identity between man and God has been declared by persons who have attained that realisation. The individual is encased, while God is unbound; the individual believes himself bound, as having name and form, as the body and its appurtenances. The fire that is latent in the fuel can manifest only when it is lit by external fire. So too, the divinity of the intellect, the mind and the inner instruments of cognition can manifest only when the *Aathma* is prompting and urging them. Otherwise, if they are prompted and urged by the senses, they will lead only to perdition and delusion.

Every directive given in the scriptures on discipline is intended to help the *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) to realise this identity and to derive the *Aanandha* which recognition of this Unity confers. For example, take the exhortation in the Geetha *shloka*, which says, *Sarva dharmaan parithyajya maam ekam sharanam vraja*. What is the *dharma* that has to be given up? Are all duties and responsibilities to be discarded? Or, does *Dharma* here refer only to some of these? *Dharma* is an omnibus expression, which means a lot of things, attitudes, behaviour patterns and mores. It includes often mere rules, which are known as *vidhi* (fate) and *nishedha* (do's and don'ts). If you are anxious to catch a bus, board a plane or entrain for some place, you have to be at the stop or port or station before a particular time. That is a *vidhi*. When two brothers divide among themselves the possessions left by their father, they share half and half; this is *Dharma*, that is to say, right and proper, moral, approveable. Now, *Dharma* of this nature is laid down and observed, so that we get peace and content, so that *sukha* (happiness) may be promoted. It belongs to the relative world, the absolute has no concern with these relative advantages or benefits. It is in the realm of *ajnaana* that *sukha* is desired and *dhukkha* (sorrow) is avoided.

Know that you are the ever full, ever blissfull

Kaama (desire) is the urge for *karma* (action). It is regulated and modified by *dharma* (righteousness) so that happiness may be gained and sadness avoided. And, *kaama* is the product or expression of *ajnaana*. So, when the Geetha directs that all *dharma* be given up what is meant

is that *ajnaana* (ignorance which induces *kaama*, the progenitor of *karma* which has to subserve *Dharma*) is to be conquered, and overcome. Acquire *jnaana* (spiritual wisdom); know the truth of thyself. Then, you will be free from lust and hate, because you will know that you are the ever full, the ever blissful.

Imagine a person searching for things in a room. His eye falls on all the articles he wants to secure, but, he does not notice the person who searches! The seeker does not see himself! When you give up the search for objects, for things other than yourself, you see yourself and know yourself. When the *dhraishhta* (seer) is seen, the *dhrihya* (seen) is negated; when the *dhrihya* is seen, the *dhraishhta* is ignored!

Tideman said just now that in the very first meeting he had with Me, I told him that I am God. In fact, every one is God, limiting himself into this particular name and form in which he is encased! If you believe yourself to be the label that is now affixed on you, and call your self by the name that others have given you, you can never know your reality and have unshakeable joy. This is the lesson that *Vedhaantha* teaches. Each one is "*Sathyam jnaanam anantham Brahma* (Truth, Total Knowledge and Infinity is *Brahman*). " But, sunk in the morass of *ajnaana* which multiplies endlessly the desires that haunt the mind, man forgets the core of his being. Every one must get convinced that he is the *Aathma*, not the body which is its material residence. To instruct you about this is the special purpose of the festival of *Mahaashivaraathri*.

***Linga* is the symbol of the beginningless and endless**

People ask, "Why does Swaami produce the *Lingam* (Formless Form of God) from within himself on this day?" But, let Me tell you, it is impossible for you to understand the attributes of the Divine and to measure its potentialities, or, to gauge the significance of the manifestation of Divinity. It is *agamyaa* (unreachable) and *agochara* (un-understandable, mysterious). Therefore, in order to bear witness to the fact that the Divinity is amidst you, it becomes necessary to express this attribute. Or else, the atmosphere of hatred, greed, cruelty, violence and irreverence will overwhelm the good, the humble and the pious.

The *Linga* is just a symbol, a sign, an illustration, of the beginningless, the endless, the limitless--for it has no limbs, no face, no feet, no front or back, no beginning or end. Its shape is like the picture one imagines the *Niraakaara* (Formless) to be. As a matter of fact, *linga means---leeyathe* (that in which all forms and names merge) and *gamyathe* (that towards which all names and forms are proceeding, to attain fulfilment). It is the fittest symbol of the All-pervasive, the All-knowing, the All-powerful. Everything is subsumed in it; everything starts from it; from the *Lingam* arises *Jangam* (Universe), from the *Jangam* arises *sangam* (association, attachment, activity) and as a result of the *sangam*, one realises the *lingam* (attributeless *Aathma*). Thus, the circle is completed--from the beginningless to the Beginningless. This is the lesson that *Lingobdhavam* (emergence of the *Linga*) teaches. The *lingashareera* (the physical body) that is inhabited by the *Aathma* is but a vesture worn for this particular sojourn! Many a vesture has this soul worn, though its reality is eternal!

The lesson that Raamaayana teaches

People have not imprinted on their hearts the lessons that the ancient Hindhu scriptures and epics seek to teach. I have been, for example, asked often, why some persons who have associated themselves with Prashaanthi Nilayam for years leave off and do not appear again! The reply is evident for those who have studied the Raamaayana well. After ten or twelve years of 'devotion'

suddenly these people take a turn for the worse and stray away; as the *Shaasthras* say, "When the accumulated merit gets spent, they slip into the depth of mortality." Seetha is the daughter of earth, of *Prakrithi* (Nature), seeking the eternal comradeship of *Purusha*. She weds the *Purusha*, the Lord come as Raama. When Raama agrees to go into exile and proceeds to the forest for a stay of fourteen long years, Seetha too gives up all the luxuries she was accustomed to; she braves the perils of jungle life, for the sake of being in the presence of Raama. She renounced desire from her heart for the sole goal of Raama.

Thirteen years she spent with the Lord, in perfect bliss, as a consequence of the sacrifice she dared to make. Then, quite suddenly, desire sprouted in her mind, and carried her away, far away from the Lord! She saw a golden deer, and she coveted it! She who had renounced huge treasures of gold and diamond was attracted by a fantasy and this led to the agonising separation.

So too, for those long attached to Me, there arises some desire---for lands, jobs, family life, fame, position, possessions---and they move away! But Seetha repented for her mistake, and her mind suffered extreme anguish at the separation. She called on her Lord to redeem her, calling out in contrition, Raama, Raama, Raama, Raama, with every breath. And, finally, Raama Himself moved towards her and restored Himself to the devotee! So too, if you are agonisingly repentant and aware of the loss and anxious to rejoin, craving for the presence, this Sairaam too will move towards you and grant you Grace.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 23-2-1971