

46. The Vedhic rite

EVERY one of you ought to feel proud that you took birth in this holy land, long famous as the land of *Yoga* (divine communion), of *Thyaaga* (selfless sacrifice) and of God-oriented Karma (dedicated action). You are the children of Mother *Vedha*, whom she loves so affectionately that she has called you here to witness this great *Vedhic Yajna*. Bhaarath is the land that God loves, for, He has taken *Avathaar* (divine incarnation) here often, and is even now moving on this land, carrying out His Mission of restoring *Dharma* (righteousness) to people who are ignoring it. This *Yajna* (*Vedhic* ritual of sacrifice) is an item in that great Task.

It is a great pity that Bhaarath which earned such eminent renown in the spiritual field is today in the throes of a devil dance of vice and wickedness, in the background of falsehood, injustice, hatred and faction.

The land is sunk in anxiety and fear. Therefore, at this juncture, it is necessary to light the lamp of love and hope and impart courage and confidence, by both precept and example.

***Vedha* means "that which makes you know"**

The *Vedhas* (sacred ancient scriptures) are the very roots of Bhaaratheeya Culture. So, it is the bounden duty of every son of India to observe the rites and rituals, the injunctions and instructions, laid down in the *Vedhas*. Many have fallen into the habit of asking, what is the object of these directions, what can we gain from them? Well, let Me tell them that the one single object that the *Vedhas* have in view is to make man Divine, through a series of spiritual exercises. They lead man from the animal stage, when he believes he is just this body suffering hunger, thirst and desires of various kinds, into the state of human-ness, when he recognises that he is far higher than an animal and later, the *Vedhas* persuade him to use his intelligence and discrimination to sublimate his passions and emotions to the Divine level where he is in eternal bliss.

The *Vedhas* elaborate the *Sanaathana Shaasthra* (the primal science of the spirit). Understanding this science well and practising it form the duties every man owes to himself. That science results in the removal of ignorance, the gaining of knowledge; not the knowledge of material, worldly things, which changes and gets superseded every few years! It endows the seeker with the knowledge that is the key to the entire gamut of knowledge, that which if known, everything else is known.

That is why the *Vedhas* are called so. The word means, *Vedhayathi ithi Vedhah*, that is to say, "*Vedha* means that which makes you know." The cosmic principle is amenable to the mystic formulae and sound patterns that the *manthras* (sacred formulae) of the *Vedhas* represent; the four fundamental urges of man (*Dharma*, to be righteous; *Artha*, to earn and accumulate; *Kaama*, to desire and get the desires fulfilled and *Moksha*, to expand and get liberated from the 'here and now' into the ever and everywhere) get sanctified and sustained by the *Vedhic* path. The material physique of God can be adored by the *yanthra* (machine); his spiritual physique has to be propitiated by means of *manthras*.

There is nothing in creation that is not Divine

Coming to this ritual of *Yajna* which we are inaugurating, you will notice that when the sanctified offerings are laid in the holy fire, the *Pandiths* (scholars) utter the word, *Svaahaa*, as often as they offer. The reason why that word has to be uttered is, according to them, to enable

the offering to be totally' reduced and consumed by the fire. Now, it is the very nature of fire to consume and so, there is no need to call upon fire in this manner; it does not stand to reason to declare that fire has to be prayed to for being and behaving so.

It is uttered to acclaim the energy and splendour that are latent in fire and to invoke the Divine *Thejas* (lustre) that enables fire to shine and purify. The presiding deity is called upon to carry the offering to the particular God to whom it is dedicated, saying, *Indhraaya svaahaa*, *Kesavaaya svaahaa*, *Rudraaya svaaha*, *Varunaaya svaahaa* etc. Indhra, Kesava, Rudhra and Varuna will receive the oblation through *Agni* the presiding deity of Fire, only when He is invoked and aroused by the syllable *Svaahaa*.

Not only is Fire Divine; all the elements are Divine. In fact, there is nothing in creation that is not Divine. Kaalidhaasa in the *Kumaara Sambhavam* Poem has addressed the Himaalayas and the streams, glaciers, peaks and trees thereon as Divine, as symbols and signals of the immanent Divine. For every element and being, fire which gives heat and light is considered to be the very life-principle, the vital breath.

Activity declares whether the society is good or bad

There is another clarification which I feel I should make just now. The *Vedhas are countless---* '*Anantho vai Vedhaah*,' it is said. Now, the doubt may arise why countless *Vedhas* are necessary to lay down the path of spiritual progress. Let us take an example. To make a child understand the meaning of one word, the parent or teacher uses very often a whole barrage of words. Explanation means elaboration, repetition, re-emphasising. So, to make clear to men of average intelligence or no intelligence, it became necessary to have a number of supplementary or complementary texts and scriptures, and since their number is immense, they came to be known as *Aanantha* (countless). The aim of every *Vedha*, however large the number, however varied the approach, is the same: to lead man from the animal stage through the human into the height of Divine self-realisation.

From the Universal Absolute manifested the *Brahman*, the Cosmic Principle. From the *Brahman*, *Karma* (Regulated Activity) based on *Vedhic* prescriptions originated; from this kind of *Karma*, the Gods are delighted and they shower rain, directing the rain God *Parjanya* to bless the world and its people; since rain falls, crops grow and food is available for consumption; through food, man gets health and strength and vitality; as a result of this vitality, man multiplies and reproduces himself. This is the cycle, according to the *Vedhas--Karma*, Rain, Crops, Food, Fecundity. *Krathus* (elaborate rituals) of this type, are undertaken for invoking timely rains, congenial seasons and peace and prosperity for the whole world.

It is the activity which declares whether the individual or society is good or bad. The thermometer measures the temperature of the body and announces whether the body is well or ill. The *Karma* or activity is the indicator of inner character. Observing one's actions, their motives, their consequences and the extent of one's involvement, it is possible to declare one as a *pashu* (beast) or *Pashupathi* (the Lord of Individual Souls), that is to say as Divine as God Himself.

***Vedhic yajna* is for the prosperity of all mankind**

The *Krathu* is also a *Karma*, albeit a *Vedhic Karma*, dedicated to the acquisition of the welfare of the world. All *Karma* done to ensure the welfare of others, without, any aspiration for personal benefit, is good *Karma* which the Gods would appreciate as a *Krathu*. The evil consequences

that are sure to affect you when you have committed wrong *karmas* can be counteracted by engaging yourself in beneficial *Karmas*, thereby earning merit.

There is no attempt now to counteract evil by good and so, the country is fast sliding into ruin. How can the country uplift itself? The country is not just a piece of the map, or a slice of earth. It is a collection of men, women and children, bound together by tradition and certain common ways of life and thought handed-down as valid and valuable by generations of patriots and leaders of spiritual life.

Once upon a time, since the vices of greed and vanity developed uncontrolled among men, the *Vedha* was so incensed and insulted that it took the form of a black deer and fled into the forests. At this, it is said, the *Vedhic Pandiths*, sages and scholars followed it with prayerful importunities; but, it would not return. They had to come back, with just the skin of the deer and be content with that remnant. These *rithwiks* who officiate in this and other *Vedhic* rituals wear, as you can see, pieces of the skin of the black deer, to warn themselves against the recurrence of that catastrophe. They also take their seats on deer-skins. Every act and gesture, every accent and tone of the *manthras* has a meaning traceable to the deep past and the experiences of the makers of our culture. The skin is called '*charma*' in Sanskrit. But, worn during the ritual it gives '*sarma*,' which means joy and enthusiasm, *aanandha* and *sukha*.

Yajna means, as you know, sacrifice, *thyaaga* (renunciation). The *Yajna* celebrated here, has no particular individual desire to satisfy. The aim is to ensure the prosperity and peace, not of any one individual, nor of any region or community or country, but, all 'mankind.

Gandhi used to go round the country praying *Sabko sanmathi dhe Bhagavaan*: "O Lord, give every one, give all, goodness of mind." You who are attending this *Yajna* dedicated for the welfare of the world should pray likewise and, yourself entertain only *sanmathi*, so that the world will profit by the example.

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True human greatness consists of a continuous series of tiny acts executed with absolute sincerity and largeness of heart.

Sri Sathya Sai