

32. The inner yajna

HINDHUISM, as a religious philosophy, has existed since the days of the *Vedhas*, but it has had to encounter and overcome many obstacles, periods of ups and downs and even a few inroads of distinct cultures. It has survived all these and is still unharmed and unwavering. Those who are experts in this field acclaim the excellence of the Hindhu religion, because it encourages the co-existence of many cultural traits and moulds them into one distinct way of life. ·

The word 'Hindhu' has been interpreted by scholars in various ways, but the real meaning is, *him* (*himsa* or violence) *dhu* (*dhuur*, far from): thus, a people who keep away from violence. The Hindhus have been praying since ages for the "peace and prosperity of all the worlds": *Lokaas Samasthaas Sukhino bhavanthu*. Their conception of the Immanence of God is strong and unshakeable. The rituals, ceremonies, vows and rites prescribed in, Hindhuism, are all directed to the promotion and well-being of "all the worlds." This is the reason why Hindhuism is still alive and active.

Beneficiaries of yajnas are all living beings

Since several centuries and millennia, *yajnas* (*Vedhic* rite or sacrifice) like the *Vedhapurusha sapthaaha jnaana yajna* (Seven-day *Vedhic* Wisdom-sacrifice) which is being inaugurated here now, have been observed in India for the welfare of the world. These *yajnas* are not performed to benefit an individual, a family, a sect, a caste or those who follow a particular faith. The aim is universal and the beneficiaries are all living beings, for such *yajnas* calm the elements and propitiate the deities presiding over the earth, water, fire, wind and sky. The sages of old chose some place away from the habitations" of man, either on the bank of a river or in the recesses of a forest, for the celebration of *yajnas*. No one or no group of persons can claim any special attention being given to them.

The *yajna* is everybody's privilege; it becomes a success through everyone's effort. No one person can pride himself that he is indispensable. Handfuls of grain brought by those who had sincere desire to participate were heaped together and handfuls of ritual fuel sticks brought by the priests were stacked together. This was done as a symbol of the union of minds and hearts and as an assurance that each one can share in the blessings of the Gods invoked by the *manthras* (sacred formulae). When the ego of a few is given free play and fame is offered to one or many, as often happens in *yajnas* today, they are rendered unholy and infructuous. This is the reason why *yajnas* have become occasions for ridicule and adverse criticism.

Among *yajnas*, there are two types---the outer and the inner, the outer being a reflection of the inner. The inner *yajna* is the bird in the hand; the outer, the bird in the bush. But since the sanctified vision and urge are absent today, what is happening is the release of the bird in the hand with the attempt to catch the bird in the bush. The value and significance of the inner *yajna* have to be understood first. It involves awareness of the Divinity that is dormant but decisive in the very centre of our Reality. Worship It, propitiate It, please It, become It.

All animal traces of man must be sacrificed

The mind is the altar. Place the animal which is to be offered as oblation (the evil aspects of your character, behaviour, attitude etc.) and sacrifice it to the deity invoked. Though born as a human, man is burdened by animal instincts and impulses that have attached themselves to him during his previous lives as an animal. He has passed through many an animal existence and each has

left its mark on his mental make-up, like a scar on the skin when a wound has healed. For example, man is afflicted with the disease of aggressive conceit, what is called *madha* in Samskrith. This is not a natural trait of man, but a relic of a former elephantine life.

Man is sometimes pitifully a *moorkha* (foolish), which is a relic of his past existence as a sheep. Some have an inborn tendency to steal, which may be reminiscent of their past of creatures such as a cat, which is also a sly poacher. Some are endowed with profuse unsteadiness and waywardness, an inheritance of their monkey existence. Man is known in Samskrith as *nara* and the monkey as *vaanara*. When *vaa* (*vaalam*, tail) is subtracted, *vaanara* is reduced to *nara*. Man has lost the tail but he has still all the waywardness and unsteadiness of that animal. All such animal traces must be sacrificed on the altar of the mind as part of the inner *yajna*. The outer visible *yajna* is a means to convey this inner purpose and message.

When children are taught to read, the objects which they can see and identify are placed beside the written words which bespeak them. Under the picture of a chair, the word chair is printed and the child is taught to discover that c-h-a-i-r reads "chair." Later, the picture is discarded as superfluous. So, too, until the lesson is learnt, the external ritual of fuel sticks being offered to the sacrificial fire has to continue. The ritual is the casket, and the destruction of the animal impulses, the gem that it is designed to keep safe.

Significance of the activities at the *yajna*

Here we see *rithviks* (priests performing the rites) who are specialists in the different stages of *Vedhic* sacrifice. We hear the recitation of *Vedhic* hymns; we have *Pandiths* reading the Raamaayana (History of Raama), the *Bhaagavatha* (Legends of divine Advents) and the *Dhevibhaagavatha* (Exploits of Divine Universal Mother) from the original texts; we have the ceremonial worship of *Dhevi* on the lines of *Shaasthric* (ethical) injunctions; a *Pandith* is engaged in prayer of the thousand *lingas* (Symbolic Form of Divinity), while another priest propitiates the Sun God by means of ritual prostration to the accompaniment of *manthras*, praising His Glory. Godhead, in all Its Manifestations of elements and forces, is thus being adored for seven days as part of the *Vedhapurusha yajna*. The five senses and their impact, the five sheaths that enclose the *Aathman*, are all symbolised in these activities.

The outermost *kosha* (sheath) is the *annamaya kosha*, composed of the material body made of *anna* (food). *Anna*, the body built by *anna*, and the man, all are products of the self-same substance, *bhuumi* (soil, earth). To fill the material body with *aanandha* (felicity), the vital, mental and intellectual sheaths need to be sublimated. All the *koshas* have to be finally merged in the Illumination of *Jnaana* (Beautiful Wisdom). The *homa* (the oblation in the sanctified flame) is a symbol of this consummation.

The *Vedhas* are the embodiments of Truth

The fire you see is fed by fuel sticks and ghee, so that the flames of wisdom may burn out the last traces of ego, ignorance and desire. And what exactly is ghee, which feeds the flames? It is clarified butter---butter that is churned from curd which is in fact curdled milk. Milk is drawn from the four-legged cow which symbolises the four *Vedhas*. So symbolically, the *Vedhas* themselves help the Light of Wisdom to shine. The *Vedhas* are Embodiments of Truth. Recitation of the *Vedhas* purifies the environment and strengthens the will to become Truth. This is symbolically conveyed by the various ceremonial rites which are part of this *yajna* (sacrifice).

Many who are unaware of this significance find fault with those who partake in such *yajna*; they criticise the loss of grain and ghee and bemoan the waste of precious materials resulting from the irrational behaviour of the priests. But the seers who declared the *manthras* and the *Vedhas* which prescribe the rituals, and those who faithfully celebrate the *yajna*, are not foolish at all. Ignorant people lament the loss when the farmer scatters bags of grain on a ploughed field, for they do not know that when the harvest comes around, the farmer can collect from the field ten times more grain than was scattered by him.

A single tin of ghee offered with appropriate *manthras* in the holy fire will result in a million tins of ghee for mankind. The vibrations of the *manthras* and the effect of the oblations will ensure prosperity and welfare the world over. The sages and the seers of yore prescribed these *yajnas*, prompted by universal compassion, in order that they may result in the welfare of mankind. Thus all beings benefit from the persistence of the Hindus in observing the teachings of the *rishis*.

The Mahaabhaaratha declares that 'what is not in *Bhaarath* does not deserve reverential consideration;' and in *Bhaarath* the message has always been: tolerance, respect for all faiths and the practice of the essential teachings of love and service with the giving up of hatred, envy and pride. This *yajna* will help you to understand this message and live in accordance with it.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 25-9-1979

Naamsmarana is the most effective saadhana. Remember with each Name the glory behind the Name. Escape from the clutches of anger, jealousy, hatred, malice and greed. Do not seek to discover others defects; do not gloat over them; when others point out your defects, be thankful; or keep quiet as Buddha did.

Sri Sathya Sai