

## 14. Unity and purity: message of Ramzan

WHOEVER speaks, the expression begins with 'I' and revolves around 'I'. 'I am walking', 'I am sitting', 'I am eating', 'I am going', 'I am listening', 'I am seeing' .... 'I' is ever forward. 'It is then that man manages to live. 'I' am the doer, whatever the deed, whichever and whenever.

Who exactly is this 'I', the agent, the doer? There are three aspects connoted by the 'I'. 'I am this body' is the first; 'I am the life-force in it' is the second; 'I am the *Aathma* (Divine Self)' is the third.

'I am dark', 'I am *fair*', 'I am short', 'I am tall' these are statements generally made. 'I am young', 'I am old', 'I am a Braahmana', 'I am a Non-Braahmana'---these statements too are indulged in. 'These qualities concern the body only. When a person is unconscious or in deep sleep, or dead, he is not aware of any of these characterisations regarding his body. They are extraneous to the real 'I', for the attributes adhere or fall off when time elapses or when circumstances change.

Next, the *Jeeva* (individual being) principle or Life Force: The incessantly active consciousness is ever wayward and restless. We say, "My intelligence is not clear," "My mind is perplexed." These apply to the second facet of the 'I' only. This facet too is linked with the body through the objects-senses-mind-reason complex.

### **The *Aathma* is immanent all over the world**

Now, the third, the *Aathma* (Divine Soul): "I am Sadhaanandh, Nithyaanandh, Sathchithaanandh! I am Nirmal, I am Nischal. I am all. I am Brahman. *Aham Brahmaasmi*." The body is mortal; the *Jeeva-principle* undergoes transformation; but the *Aathma* is Immortal. The *Aathma* persists in unaffected glory in the waking, dreaming, sleeping and the fourth level beyond. The gross body is active in the waking stage; the subtle 1-consciousness is alert in dreams, the Causal *Aathma* is dormant as 'I' in sleep. The real I or *Aathma* has no exclusive affiliation to one body, one country, one nation or one sex. It is in every being everywhere, in bird and beast, plant and tree. Each of these reveals its existence. The *Aathma* is all pervading and immanent in Bhaarath (India), Russia, America, England, all over the world.

All founders of religions have heard this impersonal Voice of God revealing the *Aathma* that activates the entire Creation. Just as the *Vedhas* (revealed sacred scriptures) were 'heard' and propagated as 'heard' (*Shruthi*), the Quran too was 'heard' by Hazrath Muhammad. The Quran has *Salat and Zakat* as the two eyes. *Salat* means prayer; *Zakat* means charity. Those who consider charity as a high duty and elevate their consciousness through prayers and continuous meditation on God are Muslims. Islam is a word which denotes not a particular religion but a state of mind, the state of total surrender to the Will of God. Islam means dedication, surrender, peace, tranquillity.

Islam denotes the social community whose members have achieved supreme peace through surrender to the All-Merciful, All-Powerful God and who have vowed to live in peace with their fellowmen. Later, it came to be applied to communities that considered themselves separate and different and so hostile to the rest. Islam taught something higher. It directed attention to the One in the Many, the Unity in Diversity and led people to the Reality named God.

### **The *Aathma* can never be hurt by insult**

Every human being has three needs: food, clothing and shelter. Seeking to fulfil them, man has developed a variety of foods to fill his little stomach ignoring the purpose of eating them.

Clothing has to be worn to protect the body from cold. But we are attaching enormously exaggerated value to clothing. Of course, one must have a house to live in and lay the body down for rest. The Muslim, Gibran, asks why build these gigantic dwellings then? They are erected not for oneself but to hoard one's treasure and riches. Gibran says these mansions are tombs erected by the dead for the living.

Hazrath Muhammad announced the message of God that he had heard to the townsmen of Mecca. At that time, people did not give heed to the Divine Declarations. They forced him to leave the place. But, Hazrath Muhammad, knew that truth will win and God will prevail. He knew that the insult and injury were only for the body; the *Aathma* can never be hurt.

The Ramzan month is set apart for the holy task of bringing into memory and practice the teachings that Hazrath Muhammad conveyed and attaining that stage of unity and purity which is truly Divine. Islam gives importance to the Moon which regulates the months. Hindhus consider the Moon as the deity presiding over the mind. With the *dharshan* of the New Moon, the Ramzan fast begins and when the New Moon is seen again, the fast ends. 'Fast' does not consist in merely desisting from food and drink. The fast starts at sunrise and is broken' only after sunset and is observed most rigourously.

#### **During Ramzan month rivalry is avoided**

Waking as early as three or four, in the *Brahma Muhuurtha*, prayer is started, and throughout the day, the constant presence of God is sought to be experienced. This is the meaning of *Upavaasa* (fast). Also, during the Ramzan month, rivalry is avoided, hatred is suspended. husband and wife live apart though in the same home, mother and children both follow the same spiritual regimen and an atmosphere of brotherhood is maintained. The body, the senses and the mind are subject to rigorous discipline.

Periods of fast 'comprising a month are prescribed in all religions. The Hindhus observe it in *Maagha* and *Shraavana* months. Zoroastrians and Christians have allotted for themselves months for the same purpose.

The Quran lays down that all men should cultivate the sense of unity, of interdependence, of selfless love and of the immanence of Divinity. Generally, all men take food of some kind or other for the body five times a day: an early cup of coffee in bed, breakfast two hours later, a heavy lunch at noon, tea at four and a fat dinner at nine. Islam prescribes food for the spiritual nature of man and directs that it be taken five times a day, as prayer. For the arousal of the *Aathmic* consciousness, for earning spiritual joy and for promoting the manifestation of *Aathmic* illumination, prayer is prescribed as many as five times a day, from the dawn of discretion up to the moment of death.

#### **Unity is the basic teaching of every religion**

Prayer, in Islam, is also a congregational activity. Prayer in a group produces beneficial vibrations. Islam promises a greater flow of ecstasy when God is adored by a huge concourse of yearning hearts. All of them bow low at the sight of the Masjid. They sit in rows on their bended knees and lean forward until their palms and foreheads touch the ground in humble submission to God's Will. Misunderstanding, conflict and enmity should not disturb the serenity of the occasion.

Thus Islam emphasises the One in the Many, the urge for God which manifests in various degrees in various minds. Unity is the basic teaching of every religion. Faith in Unity is cardinal.

Without it, no system of belief and conduct can be a religion. God is One and the teachings in all faiths that exalt Him are all on Love, Compassion, Tolerance and Sympathy. The tragedy is neither the Muhammadans, nor the Hindus, nor the followers of other religions are practising these qualities in daily life.

Islam teaches that God's Grace can be won through justice and righteous living; wealth, scholarship and power cannot earn It. Holy Love alone can please the Lord. This is the message of every religion. But mankind has ignored this crucial point. Ramzan brings together in bonds of love kith and kin, near and far, friend and foe. This type of negligence is happening in every religion. The followers adopt the rules they like and break those which they find exacting. So, they become narrow-minded and crooked. And, they rationalise their defects and justify their failings. They have become habituated to this practice of self-deceit.

### **Demonstrate love and tolerance in daily activity**

Since Islam means surrender to God, all who in a spirit of surrender and dedication, live in peace and harmony in society, do really speaking, belong to Islam. Islam insists on full co-ordination between thought, word and deed. Muslim holy men and sages have been emphasising that we must inquire into the validity of the 'I' which feels it is the body and the 'I' which feels it is the mind and reach the conclusion that the real 'I' is the Self yearning for the Omniself, God. The Ramzan month, the fast and the prayers are designed to awaken and manifest this realisation. Whichever may be the religion, its emphasis is on unity, harmony, equal-mindedness. Therefore, cultivate love, tolerance and compassion, and demonstrate the Truth in every daily activity. This is the Message I give you with My Blessings.

*Discourse on Ramzan, Prashanthi Nilayam, 12-7-1983*