

## 5. Shivoham

ANANDA (sheer bliss), is man's real nature. But, alas, man in his ignorance and perversity, devotes all his skills, resources and time to acquisition of *Ananda* through his outward bound senses, rather than discover it by using the inward probing intellect and intuition. What he attains by his struggle and search is, at best, a pseudo-Ananda, a fleeting modicum of pleasure, an indistinct image visible in a murky mirror. It is not the everlasting Bliss of Atma (eternal self), indiminishable by the blows of fortune, ecstasy beyond even imagination. The delight one gathers from the objective world has to be continuously renewed and replenished, for it fades away soon. Therefore, man becomes a bondsman of Desire, which presents before him an unending series of targets.

Man is, in truth, the Atma, which is beyond the bounds of his mind. The Atma has neither beginning nor end. The mind, the senses and the body undergo decline, or development every moment and finally disintegrate and die. Man places faith in the instruments of exploration and experience that are superficial and so, he deprives himself of the supreme *Ananda*, inherent in the Atma. Like the sun hidden by the clouds, embers covered by ash, the retina overlaid by cataract, the sheet of water veiled by moss, the consciousness of man is coated thick with likes and dislikes; how then can the splendour of *Atma* shine through?

### The well-guarded treasure

The body of man is a receptacle designed to keep safe a precious treasure. Legends announce that cobras guard hidden treasures. The name of the cobra that prevents access to the priceless treasure hidden in man is *Aham*, 'the fascination for oneself and for one's belongings. In order to reach and recover the *Ananda* Treasure, man has first to destroy the snake of *Aham* (egotism).

The river is a part, a portion of the sea; it earns fulfillment when it returns to the sea and merges in its source. Fishes are of water. They live in water and die when deprived of water. The baby is a part of the mother. It cannot survive apart from the mother. The branch is a part of the tree. Cut it off the tree it gets dry and dies. Man is an *amsa* (a part) of God. He too cannot survive without God. He lives because of the urge to know God, his source. In the *Bhagavad Gita* the Lord declares (15-7) that "all living beings are My *Amsa* (part). I am in them as the Eternal Atma" He indicates.

Man lives for a high purpose, not for submitting as the beast does to every demand of instinct and impulse. He has to install himself as the master, not crawl as a slave. He has the right to proclaim *Shivoham* ("I am Shiva") , "I am *Achyutha*" (I am the undiminshable Fullness), "I am *Ananda*." As soon as one becomes aware of his reality, the chains that bind him, iron as well as gold, fall off and he attains *Moksha* (liberation).

### Two entities: the 'seen' and the 'See-er'

*Ananda* (Divine Bliss) is all around us and within us. It is *Ananda* that sustains and supports us, but this Truth is hidden by petty selfishness which prods us across the sea of storms in order to gather on the outer shore, the things which apparently give *Ananda* inherent in them. Man envelops them with a layer of the *Ananda* within him but, while imbibing it, imagines that the thing itself can confer *Ananda* on him! Really speaking, it is his own *Ananda* that he is receiving back. After a term of deep sleep, man declares that he had unbroken *Ananda*. The mind and the

senses, even the faculty of reason, had no contact then with any object, nor did they have any impact from objects. So, the *Ananda* was derived, during sleep, from within his own reality.

There are only two entities' the *Drasya* (the seen), and the *Drk* (the See-er). *Drk* is *Atma*, *Drasya* is the Creation. The *Drk* is Conscious; *Drasya* is inert. So long as man is immersed in the inert and the See-er the Witness or the *Atma* is neglected or negated, he cannot escape from distress and despair. The meat on the hook, hanging at the end of the rod, draws the attention of the fish and tantalises it, but the fish is hooked and has to give up its life. The man who yields to the desire for sensual pleasures has to suffer the same fate. The Rishis knew that the 'seen' cannot last or provide lasting joy. They renounced the lower cravings and the transitory comforts. *Thyaga* (renunciation) was, for them, the genuine *Yoga* (path to merge with the Divine).

### **The three levels of space in man**

There are three levels of *Akasa* (space) in man of which two are *Drasya* and the *Drk* is the third. The first comprises the earth, the solar system and billions of heavenly phenomena, reaching out to stars whose light, though emanated, has not yet reached this globe. This physical space is named *Bhootha Akasa* The second level subsumes the first and retains it in a miniature form. It comprises the area cognised and imagined by the mind and is therefore named *Chittha Akasa* (mental space). Even this area is a dot when compared to the *Akasa* (space) enfolded by the *Atma*, named *Chidaakasa* (space of Awareness or Consciousness). The two other spaces are but tiny fragments to the See-er, the *Atma*, the *Brahman*. The human being has this journey, towards the *Ananda* that *Chidaakasa* can offer, as the precious prerogative. The journey does not lead outward; it has to be inward, towards one's own Reality. The musk deer runs around frantically in its search for the source of the fragrance that fascinates it. When at last it is too exhausted to continue, it discovers that the source has been within itself all along!

So, too, man expects *Ananda* in a career, in a job, in business or farming and believes that the satisfaction he derives from these was worthwhile. But, he can soon arrive at *lasting Ananda*, if his career is converted into *Sadhana*, his business is transformed into calm serenity and his interest in farming is sublimated as cultivating devotion in the well ploughed weedless mental field. Even intelligent persons are being tempted by the pleasure which external effort can yield, rather than the Divine Bliss which internal search can confer.

### **The role of intuition**

The sages who declare the uniqueness of this Bliss yearned to discover their Reality and to identify that Reality with the Reality that projects, protects and absorbs the Cosmos; that is to say, to submerge their Truth in the Truth of Truths. This can happen only by *Prajnana* (total awareness), not by logic or reason. *The Vedic* declaration "*Prajnanam Brahma*" (God is constant integrated awareness) supports this conclusion.

Once man glimpses this Truth he can experience God in everything and everyone. *Sarvathah Paani Paadham Sarvathokshi Shiro Mukham* ("Everywhere His Foot and Hand, His Eye, Head and Face") is what *the Gita* states about Him. Investigators do not visualise God in all that they study; they see the apparent, not the genuine. So they are misled into the realm of multiplicity, instead of being led into the all-comprehensive region of Light.

Peace cannot prevail in the individual and society until he develops faith in the Unity of Mankind, in spite of the apparent differences. One has to renounce all thoughts of difference and

derive delight from the Vision of the One, in the tiniest and the most tremendous of the God's Glory. This is the real *Vairagya* (non-attachment).

People complain of grief, sorrow, distress. What exactly is grief? It is a reaction to the loss of something gained or the failure to gain something desired. Therefore, the only way to escape grief, sorrow, etc., is to conquer desire for the illusory. See the world as God (*Brahmamayam*). That vision will scotch desire. When the desire is limited to God and concentrated on God, success is assured and each step contributes its *Ananda*. The Gopis of Brindavan knew this and longed for the Lord, to the exclusion of all else. Pure undiluted Love expressed itself as selfless action. They were simple rural folk, with no knowledge of scriptural texts or of spiritual exercises. Unflinching faith in Krishna, endowed them with all the inspiration and instruction they needed. As Krishna told Arjuna, *Sradhhavan labhathe jnanam* ("Possessing faith, one acquires spiritual wisdom").

### **Two basic sadhanas that are important**

During this *Kaliyuga* (age of the all round moral decline), two *Sadhanas* (spiritual disciplines) are *important--Naamam and Daanam*. *Naamam* means the name of the Lord. It must activate every thought, word and deed and render them full of Love. It can certainly lead man to the Vision of the Bearer of the Name. The Name, the Sound, is the material which can reveal the non-material, the *Jada* which is the door to the awareness, the *Chaitanya* enshrined in it. This is the purpose of the *Sadhana---to* recognise both the *Kshetra* (Field) and the *Kshethrajna* (the Master and Manipulator of the Field) as the Lord.

*Daanam*, the second *Sadhana*, means gifting, caring and sharing. The gift of food to the hungry gives immediate contentment and relieves the pangs of hunger. *Annam Brahma* (Food is Divine) says the *Upanishad*. Gifts are to be given without inflating the ego of the giver or deflating that of the receiver. They should be offered with understanding, humility and love.

Love is quality, essential for propitiating Divinity. People may argue that rituals performed meticulously are effective for the same purpose. But the scriptures themselves announce that ritual worship and rites can at best contribute only to the purification of one's mind and heart (*Chitthasya shuddhaye karmah*). Or, as the promise reads, the rites might raise the person to Heaven. But, one can be there, only as long as his deposit of merit lasts. He has to come back to earth, as soon as the quantity is exhausted by use (*Ksheene punyam, marthya lokam visanthi*).

### **Three evils and three remedies**

Love is the most direct means of attaining God. One has to love all without distinction, for the Lord resides in every one and He is the very embodiment of Love. There are three obstacles which stand in the way of the full free flow of Love from man to God. They are man's inveterate foes---desire, anger and greed. Fortunately ancients in India have devised three holy texts which, when assimilated, can equip man to confront and conquer these wily enemies. They are the Ramayana, the Mahabharatha and the Bhagavatha.

Ravana is a warning to every one who fosters desire and allows it to vulgarise itself into lust. A spark of lust, if not scotched, is sure to become a calamitous conflagration. Ravana's evil deed destroyed the entire clan and reduced his capital into a heap of ash. The Bhagavatha holds forth many lessons to instruct man against the evil consequences of anger and its root, hatred.

The brothers Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu were angry at God Himself. Hiranyakasipu had by rigorous austerity and practice established his mastery, as modern scientists have done, over the

elements. He could transport himself through the hydrospheres as a fish, through the atmosphere as a bird, but he denied God who has projected the elements and who exists inside everything and outside too. Of what benefit are powers and skills, in the face of insolence and ingratitude? Hiranyakasipu believed that he had eliminated God. He exploded in anger when his own little son dared to praise God. Anger resulted in blind fury and heaped untold misery on his head.

The Mahabharatha epic depicts the disaster that greed can bring about. Duryodhana was so greedy that he was not willing to allow even those who had the legal right, to own the possessions that he had grasped. He who keeps as his own, what is not strictly his, deserves to be named as a thief. He was so greedy that he refused to yield even a pin-point of land to his five Pandava cousins, though they had a rightful claim for a vast and flourishing area. Naturally, his greed destroyed him and his clan and subjects. The three texts mentioned can be used to cure the three mental illnesses which impede the growth of Love.

### **The night of goodness and Godliness**

Today is *Shivarathri*, the *Rathri* (night) of *Shivam* (Goodness, Godliness, Good Fortune). It is an auspicious Night because the mind can be made to lose its hold on man by devoting the night to prayer. The Moon is the presiding deity of the mind, according to the scriptures. The mind is kindred to the Moon as the Eyes are to the Sun. *Shivarathri* is prescribed for the fourteenth night of the dark half of the month, the night previous to the New Moon when the Moon suffers from total blackout. The Moon and the mind which it rules over are drastically reduced every month on the fourteenth night. When that night is devoted to vigilant adoration of God, the remnant of the wayward mind is overcome and victory ensured. This month's *Shivarathri* is holier than the rest and so, it is called *Mahashivarathri*.

With firm faith and a cleansed heart, the night should be spent in glorifying God. No moment should be wasted in other thoughts. Time flees fast. Like a block of ice, it melts soon and flows away; like water held in a leaky pot, it disappears drop by drop. The time allotted for one's life ticks off quite soon, and the span ends sometime somehow. So, be vigilant. Be warned. Be alert and aware. Seek the shelter of the Lord and transform every moment into a sacred celebration.

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