

8. The perennial quest

The Lord shines throughout the Cosmos

He is immanent in everything

The friendship between the Lord and the

Cosmos is inseparable

This is the truth declared by Sai.

ISAAVAASYAM idam jagath. (The Lord is the indweller in the entire world). *Jagat* refers to the world in which beings are born, grow and pass away. The basis for this world is the earth.

The wind blows ceaselessly everywhere. But this is not visible to man. We have day and night. During daytime all kinds of activities take place. When night comes, Nature seeks repose in silent sleep. Man has to find out the relationship between day and night, between light and darkness. When man looks up at the sky during day, he sees the sun shining with all his effulgence. In the boundless firmament, the Sun alone shines.

In this world, all the time, every moment some activity or other is going on: Meritorious actions and actions in the discharge of *Purusharthas* (the four goals of human life); marriages and festivities; births and deaths. All these take place all the time and life goes on in merriment or sorrow. There is no end to this.

From the moment of birth, man is pursued by hunger. After the umbilical cord is cut, the newborn babe cries. When milk or other food is given, the crying stops.

The expansion of human life and needs

The first affliction for man is hunger. Man needs food grains for appeasing his hunger. Food grains can be got only through the use of water (for growing food).

As food production goes up, the population also increases. In this process of growth, agriculture develops and villages and cities come into existence. In this way, human life expands, the needs of people increase and men start enquiring into the problem of how to meet these needs. Mankind discovers in the process some secrets of Nature. It also recognises that there are many things beyond its ken. There is always an awareness that what is not known is far more than what is known. Man cannot create the earth. Nor can he create water. Fire emerges when two sticks are rubbed against each other, but man cannot inject the latent heat into the stick.

Examining in this manner, man realised that there is a power at work which cannot be seen by the eye or heard by the ear or conceived by the mind. That this power transcended the human was dimly inferred.

For every kind of power, proofs may be sought by *Pratyaksha* (direct perception) or by the *Anumaana* (process of inference). Men sought to find out by what direct proof they could experience this transcendental power. They found the proof in the Sun. Without the Sun there will be no light at all. Nor is that all. All activities will come to a standstill. In this world hydrogen is essential for the growth of plants and of living beings. The Sun's primary components are hydrogen and helium. Without hydrogen and helium, the world cannot survive. Hence, the ancients concluded that the Sun was the visible proof (of a transcendental power).

They also found some subtle secrets about the Sun. Hence, they adored the Sun as the principal deity in the *Gayatri mantra*.

The Gayatri mantra is the Mother of Vedas

"Dheeyo yo nah prachodayaath." (May the Sun illumine our intellects in the same way he sheds his effulgence). This is the prayer addressed to the Sun in the *Gayatri mantra*. In this way, they came to regard the *Gayatri mantra* as *Veda Matha* (the Mother of the *Vedas*).

This *Gayatri mantra* is not related to any particular time, place or person. *"Bhur Bhuvah-Suvah"* (occurring in the *mantra*) indicates that it relates to the three aspects of Time--the past, the present and the future. *"Tat Savitur Varenyam, Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi, Dheeyo yo nah Prachodayaath"* (Light dispels darkness). Without light darkness will not go. *"Bhargo devasya"* signifies that the Sun is the dispeller of darkness. In this manner, the ancients believed that there was a supreme power and looked upon it as God.

In course of time, they started studying numbers: one, two, three, and so on upto ten. Among these numbers, the primary number is one and the others are derived from it by a process of addition. Thus they found that all numbers are based on One. They regarded one as the primary number.

The One has become many

"Ekam Sath Vipraah bahudhaa vadanthi" (The Ultimate Reality is one, but the wise call it by many names). This is one of the declarations of the scriptures. The same truth was proclaimed by the *Vedas* in the statement: *"Eko-ham bahusyaam"* (I am One, let me become many). Without one, there cannot be other numbers. Through the study of numbers also, the ancients came to the conclusion that God is one only. Thus the faith developed among men that there was an invisible power in the universe and that it was One without a second. The One has assumed innumerable names and forms and permeates the entire universe.

On the basis of this truth, the ancients declared: *"Isaavaasyam idam jagath"* (The Divine is the indweller in the Cosmos). The ancients gave the name *Aditya* to the Divine. *Aditya*, as one of the 12 *Adityas*, was worshipped as Vishnu. Vishnu here does not mean the deity bearing a conch and discus. Vishnu refers to the One who permeates the entire Cosmos. For this omnipresent principle, a form was conceived: *Vishnutva* means that which is all pervading.

How was *Aditya* looked upon? You have vessels made of gold, silver, brass, copper and clay filled with water. In all of them the same reflection of the Sun is perceived. The vessels may be different, they may vary in value, but the Sun shines in all of them equally. Innumerable vessels may be kept, but the Sun's reflection will be one and the same. The ancients concluded that the contents may vary in value, form and name but the image is the same in all of them.

Divinity is the only One Reality

Proceeding from this, they considered the body as a vessel made of mud. In this vessel made out of mud, they found that *Chinmaya* (consciousness as Spirit) was present. This spiritual entity was called *Hiranyagarbha*. Expanding his comprehension in this manner, man came gradually to realise that there was only One Reality and that was Divinity.

Another name given to this Divine entity was *Easwarah*. That is, the Divine was regarded as the possessor of infinite and inexhaustible wealth. What is this wealth? Health is one kind of wealth.

Material riches are one kind of wealth. Knowledge, virtues, wisdom, are all included in the term *Aiswaryam* (wealth). They realised the truth that *Easwara* is the embodiment of every kind of wealth.

Probing further into the mystery of the Divine, they described Him as Siva. Siva means the One who is free from three *gunas* (*Satwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*). He transcends these three qualities. As one who is without qualities, He was also called *Suddha-Satwah*. Siva is that pure untainted *Satwa* quality. It represents the principle of *Mangala* (auspiciousness). This means that only when the *gunas* are absent, auspiciousness appears. When qualities are present, it is inauspicious. Hence, Siva is the *Mangala-swaroopudu* (embodiment of Auspiciousness).

As their comprehension developed, they began to describe the Divine as *Sambhavah*. *Sambhavah* means the One who can manifest Himself at any place, at any time, in any form, according to the requirements of the situation. This is borne out by the *sloka* in the *Gita* where Krishna says: "Whenever *Dharma* faces decline and *Adharma* rears its head, I manifest Myself. For the protection of the good and the destruction of the wicked and establishment of Righteousness, I make my advent from age to age." Because He can manifest Himself whenever necessary, He is called *Sambhavah*.

Thus, the ancients gave different names to the Divine after ascertaining the mysteries of the Divine. Another name given to the Supreme was *Isa*.

It is essential to understand how the ancient sages sought to explore the innumerable facets of the Divine. The term *Isa* refers to the possession of the six forms of *Aiswarya* by the Divine. These are wealth, riches, wisdom, fame, glory and *vairagya* (non-attachment).

God is immeasurable, all-pervading and infinite

As man's comprehension of the attributes increased with the growth of the intellect, he described God as *Aprameyah--One* who is beyond any kind of proof and who is immeasurable. It may be possible to measure, the vastness of the ocean or the boundless sky. But there is no measuring-rod by which God can be measured. God transcends the three kinds of proof: *Pratyaksha* (Direct Perception), *Anumaana* (inference) and *Sabda* (the authority of the spoken word). Hence he was called *Aprameyah*. They concluded that this infinite and immeasurable Divine entity is all-pervading.

If such a Divine Principle did not exist, the cosmos will not exist. Whether man believes in it or not, this Divine power is present everywhere.

Many sages started performing penance to have direct experience of Divinity. They felt that realisation of God should be the primary goal of life. Some of them gave up the quest after many efforts, feeling that it was beyond their capacity to experience the Divine. Some of them, from the very start, came to the conclusion that the wide gulf between the human and the Divine ruled out the possibility of man realising the Divine. This is totally wrong. The human has come from the Divine. Krishna has emphatically declared in the *Gita*: "*Mamaivaamsa jiva loke jiva bhutas-sanaatanah*" (The human being in the world of beings is a fragment of Myself). A son has to recognise his father. On this reasoning, some sages declared that whatever the odds and ordeals, man should not give up the quest for God.

Realisation of the Divine by the sages

Ultimately, by the power of their penance the sages were able to realise the Divine. Not content with their own realisation, they proclaimed to the world their great experience. They called upon men to "Wake up! Stand up and stop not till the goal is reached!" They exhorted mankind: "Oh ye who are wallowing in ignorance, wake up! wake up! Behold this divine effulgence. We have seen It. Where did we see It? Inside or outside? We saw It everywhere." "*Antarbahischa tatsarvam vyaapya Narayanas-sthithah*" (The Supreme Lord is present inside and outside, pervading the entire universe). How does He appear? "*Vedaahametham Purusham Mahaantham Adityavarnam Tamasah-parastaath*" (We have known the *Purusha* the Supreme Lord, effulgent like the Sun, who is beyond the darkness).

Get rid of *Tamas* to realise the Divine

We cannot realise the Supreme unless we get rid of *Tamas* (*the darkness of ignorance*).

Without giving up Tamas,

How can you become Satwa?

Unless you give up the Rajoguna

You cannot acquire Bhakti.

The Satwaguna is itself the Divine discipline.

Do not forget the Divine discipline.

Do not forget this good counsel.

You must get rid of *Tamas* at the very outset. The body has not been given for indulging in eating, etc. Such a life is only animal existence. There is only one quality which transcends this *Tamas*. It is Discrimination. Without the removal of *Tamas*, this Divine *Jnana* will not come to man. When *Tamas* goes, *Rajas* remains. This *Rajoguna* fills a man with innumerable desires. So, this also has to be given, up. Only then, the *Satwic* quality will emerge and then the effulgence of the Divine will be experienced.

The mystery of the *Veda* is unfathomable. But it will become clear to those who have *Sraddha* and *Bhakti* (earnestness and devotion). For a man who opens his eyes, the myriad stars will be visible. But for a blind man or a man who has closed his eyes, nothing will be visible even if the most powerful light is placed near their eyes. You have to open the eyes of *Sraddha and Bhakti*, not these physical eyes. When you have acquired the Eye of Wisdom, the light of the Divine will be visible to you everywhere.

Where is God? When the students sit for their meals, before taking food, they recite a *mantra*. But they make no effort to understand its meaning.

"Brahmaarpanam Brahmahavih

Brahmaagnau Brahmanaahutham

Brahmaiva thena ganthavyam

Brahma Karma Samaadhinaa. "

This prayer is chanted and the food is offered to *Brahma*. Where is *Brahmam*? The answer is given in the *sloka*:

*"Aham Vaisawaanaro Bhutvaa
Praaninaam deham Aasritah
Praanaapaana Samaayuktah
Pachaamyannam Chaturvidham."*

"You simpleton! I am residing within you in the form of *Vaiswaanara*. If I am not within you as the digestive fire, you will die from indigestion. The four kinds of food you eat are being digested by Me."

Appearance is different from reality

Thus, there is no room for any doubt for man regarding *Brahmam*. For the man with doubt there is none who can remove it. You can wake up a man who is asleep or who has just closed his eyes. But can anyone wake up the one who is pretending to be asleep?

There is nothing like sleep for God. If God sleeps, the whole universe will go to sleep. There is also nothing like a waking state for God. There can be waking state, only if one goes to sleep. When a person is never asleep what need is there to wake him up? Waking and sleeping are confined to man. These states are related to day and night. In reality, there is neither day nor night. Day and night are based on the motions of the earth around the sun and the daily life of man according to the region where he lives.

In the spiritual path differences cease

Likewise, on the basis of the direction in which the Sun appears to rise and seems to set, East and West are described. The scientists are aware that these descriptions of the directions have no inherent reality. But in practical life they are recognising these directions. This is because in daily life, such conventional descriptions cannot be avoided. When one takes to the spiritual path, everything is alike and differences and distinctions cease. As long as you are in the phenomenal world, you have to observe the phenomenal appearances. Differences will remain as long as you think in terms of "I," "you" and "he." These three different entities have to be eliminated. That is the state of the *Atma*. One has to get rid of the feelings of "mine" and "thine." This is not so easy. However, by constant effort, it can be realised. But man does not make this effort with earnestness and devotion.

Evolving from the animal, man developed the mind and in due course was able to invent whatever was necessary for his comforts. He discovered many things but could not discover the cause of birth and death. What is the secret of this phenomenon? "*Jaatasya maranam dhruvam*" (Death is certain for one who is born). But one does not know whether a dead person is born again. The ancient sages sought to unravel the mystery of birth, death and rebirth. They found that this secret is beyond the power of man. They realised that this was due to Divine Will and not the result of human effort.

If one wants to live, can he live as long as he wants? A man may think: "I am healthy and strong and I can live for ten more years." But he may die the same night in a car accident. Is health the cause of longevity? No. What, then, is the means of preventing death? Not our health. Nor our

own abilities and devices. Not all our various possessions. Not at all. The root cause of death is Divine Will.

There is nothing greater than the Will of God

Innumerable things are happening in the world without any effort on man's part. Is man doing anything for the functioning of his heart? What is he doing for his continuous respiration? Is he responsible for the circulation of blood in his body? These are not dependent on human effort. They are the result of Divine Will. Consequently, the sages concluded that there was nothing greater than the Will of God. "Oh man, though human life is said to last for a hundred years, do not believe in it. Death may come in childhood, youth, middle age or old age. Death may overtake one in a village or forest or in a river. You have to realise God even while you are still alive. Do not concern yourself as to when death will happen, where and how. No one can alter what is destined by the Will of the Divine." Hence the sages advised mankind to pray to God for His grace.

What is *Prana* (the locus of life) in man? The *Veda* declared: "*Neelathoyatha madhyasthah vidyullekheva bhaaswarah*" (He shines like a lightning in the heart of a dark blue cloud). Behind the back of a person, there is the spinal column with 33 vertebrae. Between the 9th and the 12th vertebra, there is the *Sushumna naadi*, which shines like a lightning. People imagine that life resides in the heart. The heart is like the main switch. But life does not reside there. What happens to life when heart surgery is performed? When the heart is transplanted, it is like changing the main switch. But it is because of the vital force in the middle of the spinal column that life exists.

People today regard the ancient sages as ignoramuses, who knew nothing about science. But they knew more than the scientists of today. One of the greatest scientists in ancient times was Hiranyakasipu. He was the master of all the five elements (ether, air, water, fire and earth) and explored the depths of the ocean, all the regions of the earth and the farthest reaches of the sky. He probed the secrets of the atom. But with all this vast knowledge, he did not know his own reality.

Powers possessed by the ancient sages

It is meaningless to compare the knowledge of the ancient sages with that of modern scientists. How many sages performed arduous penances to acquire divine potencies. Today's doctors perform surgical operations. They acquire this skill after long training here and abroad and after many successes and failures. They use sophisticated instruments. But in ancient times, there was a highly skilled master of medicine and surgery, the sage Bharadwaja. He taught surgery to the world. He was the author of the science of Ayurveda--the Science of Life. People consider that *Ayurvedic* medicines do not yield quick results. People today have a craze for quick results. Quickness may operate both ways. Today antibiotics are used. A few drops of the medicine brings down the fever. But later fever goes up. There are also adverse reactions.

In the treatment employed by the ancient sages as a result of their penances, there were no such reactions. Because of their penance, their vision transcended the barriers of distance. They could directly converse with the powers of Nature. Today crores are spent on telecommunications, radio and television. In those days there was no expense at all of this kind. When the mind was purified and divinised, they could acquire super-human powers.

Determined efforts always ensures success

Students! You have to enquire into how man through various stages developed his potentialities to higher levels. No one is a scholar or a man of knowledge at birth. It is only gradually that he acquires knowledge and skills. For getting degrees like B.A. or M.B.A., you go into so much trouble. What effort are you making to realise the Divine? Nothing at all. You must make this effort. There is nothing that cannot be achieved by determined efforts. You should not give up the effort out of a feeling of incapacity. The ancient sages persevered ceaselessly in their quest. They succeeded in their efforts after going through every kind of ordeal, braving heat and cold, gain and loss, joy and sorrow.

Today whatever endeavour people undertake, they want to have all comforts and conveniences. They do not relish any impediments. There is, however, no easy way to any worthwhile accomplishment. No one who wishes to accomplish something should seek the path of pleasure. You must be prepared for any sacrifice, offering everything to God. Only then you can acquire extraordinary powers. Whatever studies they pursued, whatever great knowledge they acquired, the ancient sages were never filled with conceit. Most scientists today get puffed up with pride after making some small discovery. A true man of knowledge should be free from pride. Students should give no room for conceit.

Divine grace is vital for any achievement

Humility is the hallmark of knowledge. People boast about the achievements of science. But there is still a long way to go. For instance, out of the energy coming from the Sun we have been able to use only 2 out of 3000 parts. We are yet to make use of the rest of the vast solar energy. If by harnessing a minute fraction of solar energy, mankind can accomplish so much at present, how much more can we achieve for humanity if the entire energy can be utilised for the benefit of man?

This means that if a single ray of God's grace is got, a great deal can be achieved. The ancient sages prayed to God to shower the rays of His grace on mankind. Even if a fragment of God's grace is secured, a great deal can be accomplished. But without Divine grace, nothing can be achieved.

Human effort is also essential. If it does not want to fly, even an eagle will not get off the ground. But an ant that wants to move along can cover miles in due course. Efforts are in human hands; success or defeat rests with the Divine. So, when you rely on the Divine, success will be yours.

The quest for God

Dear students! The Vice-Chancellor today posed a big question. He wanted to know how God is to be realised, what is the *sadhana* to be pursued and so on. These are apparently big questions, but the answer can be given in a trice. There is no need for any *sadhana*. Gajendra (the Lord of the elephants) carried on his fight with the crocodile (which held him by the leg) for many years, relying on his own physical prowess. When it proved unavailing, he surrendered to God and cried out to the Lord as his only saviour. Only then God came to his rescue.

Arjuna also on the battlefield came ultimately to realise that he had to take sole refuge in Krishna. He told the Lord: "*Karishye vachanam thava*" (I shall do your bidding). The Lord then assumed full responsibility for the outcome of the great war.

It is only when everything is dedicated to God that our actions can be carried out smoothly and successfully. However, today's devotees and *sadhakas* do not resort to dedication. They tend to behave like shareholders in a company. They want to strike deals with the Lord, saying, "I shall do my work, you give me the benefits." They want to go into partnership with God. This won't work. You make your offering. God will see to the rest.

The students have related their experiences at Kodaikanal when they were with *Bhagavan*. They said that when they were in the company of *Bhagavan*, enjoyed His love, listened to Swami's discourses and were in the sacred atmosphere of *Bhagavan's* divinity, they felt exhilarated, their hearts were filled with pure and sacred thoughts and were suffused with divinity. But all this changes when they are away from Swami. What is the reason? It is because they allow the external unspiritual atmosphere to influence their spiritual qualities imbibed from their stay with *Bhagavan*. If you are able to spiritualise the atmosphere wherever you go, your spiritual nature will remain unaffected.

Hence, you must always keep the company of the good and the godly. It is only when you remain with good people and perform good actions that your devotion will remain firm and unshaken. Verbal utterance of *mantras* or the ritual reciting of the Lord's name is not enough. Engage yourselves in godly activities. This was the lesson Hanuman taught to Vibhishana when he bemoaned before Hanuman that in spite of his constant chanting of Rama's name he had not been blessed with a vision of Rama. Hanuman then told Vibhishana that though he had been reciting Rama's name he had done no act of service to Rama such as comforting Sita or trying to see her during her ten months ordeal in Lanka. "*Dil me Ram! Haath me Kaam*" (Have Rama in your heart and do your duty with your hands).

The ancient sages functioned in this spirit. Their investigations were also made in this manner as an offering to the Divine. To sanctify your precious human birth, you must fill yourselves with sacred thoughts and embark on the quest for God.

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