

Light the lamp of wisdom

*In this supremely sacred land of Bharat,
forbearance is the highest wealth.
Of all forms of rituals, the most important
one is adherence to truth and integrity.
The sweetest of feelings in this country is
love for mother and the motherland.
In this land, character is more important
than the life itself.
Such sacred principles have been totally forgotten,
and in the name of freedom
People lead a perverted life imitating
western culture.
Just as the mighty elephant is not aware
of its own strength,
Bharatiyas are not aware of the greatness
of their own culture.*

[Telugu poem]

Embodiments of Love! All festivals of Bharat (India) have an inner divine significance. In Bharat, the festivals are celebrated to prove the immanent divinity in humanity. This day's festival, Deepavali, teaches a sacred inner meaning to humanity. No other element in this world is as significant as light. It is the light that shows us the way by dispelling the darkness. It is because of the light that man is able to attend to his daily duties.

The flame of a lamp has two significant qualities. One is to banish darkness; the other is a continuous upward movement. Even if a lamp is kept in a pit, the flame is directed upward. The ancients have taught that the upward movement of the flame denotes the path to wisdom and the path to divinity. However, the external light can dispel only the external darkness, but not the darkness of ignorance in man.

When Hanuman set Lanka ablaze, though there was light all around, Ravana's heart was filled with darkness. Ravana was no ordinary person; he belonged to the lineage of Brahma. He was the brother of Kubera, the god of wealth. He had a brother, Kumbhakarna, who was very powerful. He had a son by name Indrajit, who conquered the mighty Indra, the king of gods. He was a master of four *Vedas* and six *Sastras*. Such a powerful and highly educated Ravana could not get rid of the darkness of ignorance.

Dispel inner darkness

Ignorance is the cause of birth and death. One with ignorance is born again and again (*punarapi jananam punarapi maranam*). But one with wisdom has neither birth nor death.

God has neither birth nor death.

He is eternal; he has no beginning, no end.

He is in the form of Atma.

That is jnana jyothi (light of wisdom). [Telugu poem]

If you want to light a lamp, you need a container. You have to fill it with oil and place a wick in it. You need a matchbox to light the wick. Only when you have all four accessories can you light the lamp. This lamp dispels the external darkness.

Similarly, to dispel the darkness of ignorance, you need to have *vairagya* (renunciation), the container; love, the oil; one pointed concentration, the wick; and *tatwajnana* (spiritual wisdom), the matchbox. Only when you have all these four can you light the lamp of wisdom.

Even detachment has to be within certain limits

Renunciation is a must for every spiritual aspirant. Renunciation does not mean leading a life of seclusion, leaving wife and children. Giving up evil qualities is the real renunciation. That is the real *thyaga* (sacrifice) and *yoga*. So, first and foremost, develop detachment.

But even detachment has to be within certain limits. Extreme detachment will lead to danger. It is impossible to live in this world giving up everything. So lead your life with equanimity.

Once, the *gopikas* (cowherd maids) prayed to Krishna thus: “O Krishna! Your mother is trying to catch you to chastise you for your mischievous deeds. You don’t need to run hither and thither to hide yourself. There is a place that is beyond the reach of your mother, that is our Heart. Our Heart is filled with the darkness of ignorance. So enter our Heart and banish the darkness of ignorance.”

What is the inner significance of Deepavali? The capital of the kingdom ruled by Narakasura was known as Pragjyotishapuram. The name consists of four syllables: *prag*, *jyothi*, *sha*, and *puram*. *Prag* means before, *jyothi* means light, and *sha* refers to forgetting. The inner meaning of this name is that the inhabitants of this city have forgotten the ancient and eternal light (*Atma Jyothi*). Narakasura, the king of *Pragjyotishapu-*

ram had totally forgotten the *Atmic* principle and was identifying himself with the body and leading a life in darkness of ignorance.

One has to develop attachment to the Self, not to the body. Attachment to the body is the main cause for all sufferings. One who travels toward ignorance is *Naraka*, and one who travels toward wisdom is *Nara*, the human. To travel along the path of wisdom one needs to develop sacred thoughts, sacred words, and sacred actions.

God has His own master plan for everything

God does not like to kill the wicked Himself. So Krishna devised a master plan to kill Narakasura. Since Narakasura was very strong both physically and mentally, Krishna decided to weaken him gradually by subjecting him to fits of anger. The *modus operandi* was to provoke Narakasura, and when he would come chasing in a fit of anger, Krishna would withdraw.

Anger is the main cause for man to lose his physical and mental powers. If one gets angry, one loses the energy obtained from the food partaken over a period of three months.

When Narakasura lost all his strength due to his anger, Krishna made Sathyabhama kill him. God has His own master plan for everything because He is the master of everything.

Narakasura committed many sins in his life. He imprisoned thousands of women and tortured them. They were the sixteen thousand *gopikas* (cowherd maids). They could neither live nor die. Such was their pitiable condition.

After Narakasura was killed, Krishna freed them from prison and asked them to return to their respective homes and lead a peaceful life. But all the *gopikas* fell at Krishna's feet and pleaded that it would be impossible for them to live in dignity in their homes after being prisoners of Narakasura. They said that Krishna was their only refuge and prayed that He would take care of them. Krishna agreed to take the responsi-

bility of protecting them. Then the *gopikas* sang in praise of Krishna thus:

O Krishna!
It is impossible to describe Your glory in words.
Even Brahma, the Creator cannot understand You.
We have been longing for your divine grace.
Listen to our prayers and protect us.
You freed Devaki-Vasudeva from prison.
You saved the honor of Draupadi and
Protected the Pandavas.
You removed the poverty of Kuchela.
You turned ugly Kubja into a beautiful woman.
You freed sixteen thousand gopikas from prison.

[Telugu song]

It is ignorance that makes one suffer. Only the external world is seen, but not the *Atmic* principle. The human being is like a bridge between the seen and the unseen. That which is seen is bound to perish. It is the unchangeable and eternal wisdom that is important, not the transient world.

When Narakasura was killed, all those who suffered under him were overjoyed. Having led a life of darkness till then, both internally and externally, they celebrated the occasion by lighting lamps.

Significance of lighting lamps

There is significance in lighting lamps. The flame of one lamp can light the whole array of lamps. That one lamp symbolizes the *paramjyothi* (supreme effulgence). The others symbolize the *jivanjyothis* (lights in individual selves). Deepavali is celebrated in order to teach this truth to the world. People celebrate this festival by bursting firecrackers, signifying the victory of good over evil.

The inner meaning underlying the *Bharatiya* (Indian) festivals should be rightly understood. On each festival day, people have a sacred bath early in the morning, wear new clothes, and keep their houses and surroundings clean. Thus, the festivals teach us the importance of internal and external cleanliness.

The *Vedas* declare, “*Anthar Bahischa Tat Sarvam Vyapya Narayana Stithaha.*” God is present within and around. So one has to be pure both internally and externally. It is the water that helps to keep your body clean. But it is love that keeps your heart clean. You should celebrate the festivals in full realisation of their inner significance.

Because man has no purity of heart, he has become the cause of all the restlessness in the world. What is the reason of all suffering? It is the polluted mind. Never blame the world for your suffering; blame yourself. “*Yad bhavam tat bhavathi* (As the feeling, so is the experience).” If your heart is pure, you will find purity everywhere. So, purity of heart is essential. Only when you have purity of heart can you attain wisdom. In the absence of purity, you will be immersed in ignorance and restlessness.

Man can accomplish anything if he puts in effort

Ignorance leads to suffering. We do not know what ignorance is. We should try to know what we do not know. That is the true *sadhana* (spiritual exercise). It is only through effort that man can achieve anything. Even a small ant can travel miles together if it makes an effort, but a bird cannot move even an inch if it does not make an effort.

Man can accomplish anything if he puts in effort. He is able to travel lakhs of miles into space, spending crores of rupees. But he is not making an attempt to travel at least half an inch into his heart.

Yantra, Mantra, and Tantra

Man is undertaking space travel with the help of *yantra* (machine). It is the *mantra* that is important, not the *yantra*. Hiranyakasipu could even reach the pole star with the help of *yantra*, but what is the use?

It was child Prahlada who could win the grace of God with the help of *mantra*. The power of Hiranyakasipu was related to *yantra*; whereas, the Prahlada's power was related to *mantra*. *Yantra* may fail, but not *mantra*.

Yantra, mantra, and tantra — all the three are latent in human beings. We are repeating the mantra *Soham* 21,600 times a day. *Soham* means "I am God." There is no better *mantra* than this.

The human body is the *yantra*. Who is responsible for making the heart beat? Who is responsible for digestion and blood circulation in the body? The eye, which is not even an inch in size, is able to see the stars, which are millions of miles away. The eardrum, which is small in size, is able to receive sounds from far off distances. Television and telephone are within the body.

Having been endowed with such a powerful *yantra*, the body, and the sacred *mantra, Soham*, it is a shame if we do not work for the redemption of our life. *Hridaya* is the *tantra, Soham* is the *mantra*, and body is the *yantra*. Though all three are within man, yet he is in search of them outside.

Man is encased in five *koshas* (sheaths): *annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya, and anandamaya koshas*. The physical body is the *annamaya kosha* (the sheath based on food). Subtler than this is *pranamaya kosha*. Still subtler is *manomaya kosha*. Today, man has progressed up to the level of the mind. The moment he progresses to the level of *vijnanamaya kosha* (wisdom sheath) he will experience *anandamaya kosha* (sheath of bliss). That is the non-dualistic bliss.

“*Ekam Eva Adviteeyam Brahm* (God is one without a second.)” That is the *Atmic* principle. Just as the same current flows in different bulbs, the same *Atma* exists in all the beings. The culture of Bharat (India) speaks of this unity in diversity. Unfortunately, in the modern age, unity is viewed as diversity. It is this mistake that puts man to suffering.

*Nations are many, but earth is one.
Being are many, but breath is one
Stars are many, but sky is one,
Jewels are many, but gold is one.*

Once you understand this basic unity, you can understand the divine principle. You should not hate anybody. Hate your own anger. Do not fight with others; fight with your bad qualities. Give up your bad qualities. How is it possible? It is possible only if you surrender yourself to God.

Once you are unified with God, there is no separation

Markandeya was the son of Mrukandu. He was to live only for sixteen years, but he was not aware of this. One day he found his parents in a very dejected mood. When he asked the reason, they revealed that his end was approaching. On hearing this he immediately rushed to the temple of Lord Siva, hugged the *Siva Linga*, and started chanting His name. When the Lord of death came and cast the noose, even Easwara was caught up in it because Markandeya was holding fast to the *Linga*. Then Easwara manifested and burnt the Lord of death to ashes.

This means that once you are unified with God, there is no question of separation. How can this unification take place? For this you need not do any *sadhana* (spiritual exercises) It is enough if you have total and pure love.

All the worldly *sadhanas* are only to sanctify the time. Time is God. Do not waste time. Be happy. This is the *sadhana* you should do. Never be narrow minded. Expansion of

love is life; contraction of love is death. Expansion of love is possible only if you have love for God. God can confer anything if you have love. There is nothing that He cannot give. God is always ready to give Himself.

“Ask and it shall be given. Knock and it shall be opened.” But man does not ask, does not knock. He asks only demons and knocks at the doors of hell. You should call out to God whole-heartedly. You should knock the doors of liberation. The *moha* (attachment) has to be reduced in order to attain *moksha* (liberation). To reduce attachment, renunciation is very important.

In one of his songs, Bhadrachala Ramadas has compared human life to a lighted lamp and has declared that when the oil of life ebbs away none will follow the departed. Do not depend on this ephemeral world. Depend only on God. God is the basis for everything. If you totally rely on God you can achieve anything.

Since you rely on *padartha* (material world), you forget *parartha* (spiritual knowledge) and *yathartha* (the reality). All your material and secular knowledge are of no use in the field of spirituality. Give up materialistic thinking. Develop spiritual knowledge.

Removal of immorality is the only way to immortality

Pray to God, saying, “*Tamasoma jyothir gamaya* (Lead us from darkness to light.)” and “*Mrithyorma amritham gamaya* (Lead us from death to immortality.)” What is the way to Immortality? Removal of immorality is the only way to Immortality. Give up all bad qualities such as lust, anger, greed, etc., and install God in your heart. Do as I say.

*Some people do not listen to good words,
Though they are said whole-heartedly.
They readily pay heed to bad words.*

*Can such people ever know Me
What is the use of all their education?*

[Telugu poem]

Know thyself and you will know everything

Ravana was a master of all sixty-four types of knowledge, but he could not receive God's grace. Since he did not put his knowledge into practice, he suffered from 'indigestion'. That resulted in the sickness of sensual desires. Rama also learnt all sixty-four types of knowledge, and He put them into practice. Ravana was interested only in aggrandizement, whereas Rama was interested in practice.

Life without the knowledge of Self is useless, just like a tree without root, a tree without fruit, and a fruit without juice. If you do not know your true identity, what is the use of taking a human birth? Know thyself and you will know everything. This is the most sacred teaching of all the festivals. Think of God. Constant contemplation on the Divine will free you from all worries.

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