

25. Immortality Can Be Achieved Through Sacrifice Only

One's wealth is inconstant and waxes and wanes like the phases of the moon. It will vanish with the passage of time. Do not develop an attachment for the fleeting wealth. What I am now telling you is the plain truth and is what actually happens in this world.

Students, boys and girls!

Saraswathi which is the embodiment of our speech is also referred to by an alternative name *Vagdevata*. Sacred Saraswathi, starting as the embodiment of our speech and spreading all over the place, has been exhibiting her divine power. She has thus been identifying herself with speech, in the broad street

of your heart and harmonising herself with the intelligence and the thought that one has. By identifying herself with *vayu*, she has been moving about in the entire space and revealing herself to us as the *adhibhoota* and *adhidevata*.

Saraswathi has also another alternative name, *Saraha*. This sacred deity that we associate with the speech also takes the place of *aditya* the sun, *agni* the fire and *vayu* the air in our heart and represents the one common thing in these different aspects. It is said *Vacha Saraswathi Bishak* and *Bishak* is another synonym for Saraswathi. It is the common practice in this world to cure any disease of the human body by some medicine. While we cure the disease in the physical body by appropriate medicines, the impurities in our minds are cured by Saraswathi in the form of *vak* or speech. Thus, the name Saraswathi is justified by her capacity to cure the diseases of the mind. Because Saraswathi has the capacity to fill us with the *rasa* or *vijnana*, she is also given the name *Adhidevata*. Since Saraswathi with such capacities fills the sky, she also gives importance to *vayu* and *agni*. Because she fills the sky with water in the form of clouds, Saraswathi sometimes stands for a stream of flowing water.

There is need for us to enquire into the origin of this water that is filling the sky. The sun's rays fall on

the ocean and these rays change the ocean water into clouds bearing water vapour. *Aditya* or the Sun is responsible for the formation of these drops of water which later collect into clouds and become deposits of water. You have already learnt that *Aditya* is a name synonymous with Bharatha. Therefore, Bharatha joins *Aditya* and produces this aspect of Saraswathi. Here, we notice that *Aditya* joins water and thus the drops of water are produced. We see the oneness or the identical nature of the three aspects Ida, Saraswathi and Bharati. Latent in these three aspects of Ida, Saraswathi and Bharati are Indra, *Vayu* and *Vasu* as well.

In the light of the above analysis, if we try to understand the sacred meaning and place of Bharatha, we will understand that the sacred word Bharatha has got a *Vedic* origin and all the meanings of the word Bharatha can be ascribed to a *Vedic* origin. This aspect of Bharatha when it is regarded as having a *Vedic* origin with the necessary *Vedic* authority behind it, then it is possible to understand this aspect as capable of removing the faults inherent in a human being.

However careful and thoughtful a man may be and however much he may want to lead an unblemished life, five faults always stick to him. While breathing air, while

walking on the ground, while making domestic fire and while drinking water, we do cause great harm to *Jivas* and sometimes we may even have to exterminate several *Jivas*.

While performing these five actions we make use of our senses of action. In that process, we kill and destroy various *Jivas*. Hence, the *Vedas* have prescribed certain *yajnas* (sacrificial rites) to atone for the sins we commit in these actions of ours. The *yajna* relating to the *devas*, the *yajna* relating to the ancestors, the *yajna* relating to the *rishis*, the *yajna* relating to the lives of various *Jivas* around us and the *yajna* relating to the guests are the five different *yajnas* prescribed by the *Vedas*. If you perform these *yajnas*, it will be possible for you to compensate for the sins you may have knowingly or unknowingly committed in these five different actions.

The *Deva Yajna*, or the *yajna* relating to the *devas*, consists of your reciting the *Vedic manthras*, the *Upanishads*, and involving yourself in various ceremonies associated with *agni*, and reading the *Bhagavatha* and other sacred texts. All these actions constitute the *Deva Yajna*. All work and all actions which relate to God—constant contemplation of God in your mind—will constitute the *Deva Yajna*.

Pitru Yajna relates to the ancestors. In particular, it deals with the task of gaining the blessings and goodwill of your ancestors, ensuring their welfare in their afterlife and provide for their needs in their state of existence. This constitutes the *Pitru Yajna*.

Rishi Yajna stands for your understanding the aspect of *dhyana* which was the way of life of the *rishis*. The process of *Sravana*, *Manana* and *Nididhyasana* of the various things which the *rishis* have handed down to us constitutes the *Rishi Yajna*. To be able to participate in *japa* or *Kirtana* as a tradition would also be a part of *Rishi Yajna*.

Bhuta Yajna relates to your loving care and service to the living beings. For example in one's own house, there may be cattle, pet birds and pets like cats and dogs. The process of caring for them and feeding them will be called *Bhuta Yajna*. There may be people in the hospital who need your help and to do such things which will relieve the sorrow of living beings will be called *Bhuta Yajna*. Thus, *Bhuta Yajna* consists of serving and satisfying all living beings. They may be suffering from various kinds of sorrow and to relieve them of their sorrow and make them happy will be an aspect of *Bhuta Yajna*.

Since it is not possible to spend all your time in this kind of service, it has become the tradition in our country that once or twice a year we feed poor people and distribute clothes to them. It has become the tradition in our country to undertake such services occasionally. It is in this context that they have said “There is no gift greater than giving food to a hungry man.” There is no other person to whom you can show greater respect than to your father and mother. “In this world, there is nothing more sacred than *japa*, *dhyana* and following the path of *dharma*.” These are the most sacred things.

There is no greater enemy than your own anger. Such noble feelings have been given a very high place in our daily life and traditions. The next duty is extending hospitality to the guests. Either to the relations who come to your house or to the hungry people who knock at your door and ask for food, it is mandatory to offer them whatever you can and relieve their hunger.

A word of caution here. Do not attempt to undertake such sacred work beyond your capacity. You need to do it only within your means. A portion of whatever resources you have, must be set apart with a view to do some service and provide satisfaction to the *Jivas* in need. It is not correct to incur debt when you do

not have your own resources to do such service. Not only is it wrong to incur a debt to do service to the living beings, but it is also wrong to incur a debt even to go on a pilgrimage. Instead of going on pilgrimage with borrowed money, it is much better to give up such pilgrimage and make your own heart a sacred temple.

The *Veda* has given certain injunctions with regard to our daily life. These injunctions are given with a broad meaning. Not only have the *Vedas* given us injunctions regarding the duties of our daily life, but they have also given a code of conduct for us to follow in our daily life such as *dharma* and *moksha*. Thus, *Veda* has been telling us about various aspects which are beyond direct evidence and sometimes even beyond inferential evidence. *Veda* has always been taking the view that you cannot divide your duties and life into two compartments—temporal and spiritual. By regarding all the work—whether it is worldly or godly—as interrelated, different kinds of duties are prescribed by the *Vedas*.

The *Veda* has told us that it is a sin to divide our work into parts and say that something is your work and something is God’s work. In all the work that we do in our life, there is nothing that you can call your own work.

Everything is God's work. You should do all your work believing that it is God's work and then only the omnipresent Lord will take care of the results. He resides in you as the *Atma* and ensures success in all your endeavours if you have firm faith. If you are not able to satisfy and serve the human beings who are with you and who are like you, then how can you satisfy God whom you cannot see with your physical eyes and who does not live with you and who is not like other human beings? The *Veda* has also declared that if you cause harm to the *jivas* who are living with you, there is no meaning in worshipping the *Deva* (God).

Sage Vyasa who codified and demarcated the *Vedas* into different sections and undertook the compiling of the eighteen *Puranas* declared that the essence of all the *Vedas* and scriptures lies in doing good to others. He concluded that to help others always is *Punya* (virtue) and to hurt others is *papa* (sin). If for some reason you are unable to do a good turn to others, at least refrain from doing harm to others. That in itself is the greatest good.

Such sacred things which are connected with the incidents in our daily life are dealt with by the *Veda*. *Veda* does not differentiate between small and big things. An example or an ideal of this kind has been given by

Rama in the *Ramayana*. When Sumanthra came to take Rama to the apartment of Kaikeyi, Rama followed him although he knew everything that was to unfold later. When he reached the apartments of Kaikeyi, Rama learnt about what was happening, but Rama resolved to respect the wishes of his father as he knew that it was his duty to follow a path which would give happiness to his father and therefore he came back to Sita with a resolve to obey his father's commands. When he came home he found that Sita was doing puja to the Lord. Sita is herself divine and there is an inner meaning in the act of her worshipping the Lord. It was mentioned yesterday that great people, persons who have all the sacredness in them also do such things only because they want to set an example for others to follow.

Every individual looks to a leader whom he can follow. Thus, when Rama looked at Sita in worship, he asked Sita what she was doing. She replied that she was worshipping the Lord for the sake of maintaining the reputation of Rama and for the sake of happiness of the people in the kingdom. Considering that it was a good opportunity for him to give good advice for people in the world, Rama told Sita that it is not right for her to worship an abstract God when father and mother who

sacrificed so much to bring them up were available right in front of us as living gods. He said that one's father and mother were equivalent to living Gods.

You must understand that all life on earth is the aspect of God and in particular Father and Mother are to be regarded as living gods. If you cannot pray for the welfare of the community around you in whom God lives, how is it possible for you to worship an invisible God? The first thing that you have to do is to look after the welfare of the community around you.

In ancient times, even ordinary kings had such a broad view and they were always doing certain things with a sense of duty and were looking after their people very well. There is a small story to illustrate this. Once there was a king who considered the welfare of his people as his first duty and hence he was doing many things to promote this. He used to think that the people constitute the body of the king and that the king constitutes the heart of the people. In this way, a close relationship between the king and his subjects was established. Whatever the king did, he always had the welfare of the people in his mind.

One day he wanted to have an oil bath and sent for the queen to apply some oil to his body. In the olden

days, they were not engaging servants more than the minimum required. Whatever had to be done for the husband was being done by the wife only and not by a servant. Even if it is a small work, the work was done by the wife even though she was the queen. She may be a queen for the rest of the world, but she is a wife for the husband. The queen in this story is a broadminded person who was devoted to the service of her husband.

In the olden days there were long and big mirrors in all the rooms in which the king and queen were moving. The king was sitting and the queen was applying oil. The queen found that there were some grey hairs on the head of her husband. When the wife found that there were four or five grey hairs on the head of the king, she thought that the king was becoming older day-by-day. The appearance of grey hair is treated as the first indication for the onset of old age and a steady march in the life's journey. The eyes developing long sight is the second step and losing one's teeth is the third step and the last step is to develop wrinkles on one's face. The queen thought that the first step was already visible. She was very much worried and was shedding tears.

Today, due to the influence of the *Kali Yuga* everyone wishes to invent artificial things like

Viswamithra who created the Trisanku Swarga. When white hair appears, they dye the hair. When the teeth fall away, they put up false teeth. When the eyes develop cataracts, they undergo an operation and when there are wrinkles on the face, they apply some makeup and try to hide the wrinkles. In this way, they may try to counteract the first few steps, but the end has to come ultimately and nothing can be done about it.

In the big mirror in front of the king, he saw the queen with tears in her eyes and immediately he turned to the queen and asked for the reason for her tears. The queen told him the truth and explained the problem worrying her mind. The king was a good-natured person and he immediately realised that the thoughts crossing the mind of the queen were, in fact, true. He therefore, tried to convince her that no one can live for ever and that the body is sure to fall one day or the other. In the context of the inevitability of death, he resolved to hand over the reins of the kingdom to the ministers and go to the forest and spend the remaining time in the contemplation of God. This was the decision the king took at once. He had his bath and sent for the ministers. The requests of the ministers to change his mind had no effect on him. The king stuck to his decision and told the ministers that they should look after the kingdom and

that he was going away to the forest in order to enjoy the kingdom of the *Atma* and the kingdom of the Divine.

He requested the minister to inform the people of his decision. In a moment, the king's decision spread throughout the city. All the people-children, old people and young people came running to the king. They prayed to the king that he should not leave the city and go to the forest. They told him that he was like the heart in their bodies. If the heart leaves the body how can the body live? They informed that they would all give up their lives if the King went away.

The king however, did not mince matters and explained his position very clearly. The human body consisting of the five elements is not a permanent thing; it will have to fall one day or the other. Our ancients have told us that the life-span of a human being is one hundred years normally; but one should not trust this statement. Death may come anytime either in the childhood or in the youth or in the old age. The body is sure to fall at sometime or the other. One does not know whether it will fall in a forest or in a city or in the midst of water. Death is the only thing that is certain. Already old age has set in and I wanted to spend the remaining years of my life in the contemplation of God!

On hearing the firm decision of the king, all the people were in tears, and they informed the king of their resolve to accompany the king to the forest and pray to God that He might grant the king long life. As soon as he heard this, the king thought that it was not proper for him to act contrary to the wishes of his people and advised them that they may do as they like. These people prayed to the Lord whole-heartedly and the Lord was pleased with their sincere prayers. He appeared before them and enquired what they wanted. All the people in one voice requested the Lord that their king might be granted another hundred years of life.

Then God said that because of the unanimous request and their devotion He was very much pleased and that He would grant the king two hundred years of life. The people rushed back to the king with great joy and conveyed the good news of God's blessing to him. The king too was very pleased. The queen came to the king as soon as she heard this and told him that she was now going to the forest.

The people thought that the queen was angry because they had secured the boon from the Lord for the long life of the King but not of the queen. The queen went into deep meditation and had the grace and vision

of the Lord. When the Lord appeared before her, the first thing she asked was whether it was true that the Lord had granted two hundred years of life to the king. The Lord said that it was so. The queen said she was happy to hear that the king would live for two hundred years but asked "What is the good if the king lives for two hundred years, unless the loving people who secured this boon for the king should also live for two hundred years." Then the Lord granted the boon that the people would also live for two hundred years. The queen said "it is only when such good people can have a long life in the kingdom that the king's long life for two hundred years would acquire a meaning". This should be the kind of inseparable relationship between the people and the king.

The Lord was so much pleased with the queen's argument that He granted two hundred years of life to the king and the people, because she had such a broad mind. God was pleased with this broad-minded sacrifice on the part of the queen and granted her also a long life. The moral in this story is that the greatest of *yajnas* is sacrifice.

To be able to sacrifice is the most important of all qualities. Here, because the people had sacrificed and prayed for the long life of the king they deserved to live

for two hundred years. Similarly, the king was willing to sacrifice and leave everything and so he was able to get the boon and the queen too by her broad-mindedness and sacrifice was able to get a long life. There is nothing greater than sacrifice. Here we shall also try to understand the inner meaning of the word sacrifice. Whether it is for a house we occupy or for a piece of land or whatever it is that we own, we pay tax to the government, so that we can use them. If one does not pay the tax on any of these items, the government will sell away the property and realise the tax. This is the common practice.

In the same manner, to atone for the sins and the bad deeds that we commit, *yajna* is something like a tax which we must pay to the Lord. We should be able to sacrifice and with happiness pay the tax to the Lord for our sins. Sacrifice will give you such happiness which nothing else can give. Work, scholarship or anything else will not give you the same amount of happiness as is obtained from sacrifice.