

28. There Is An Inner Meaning For Every Story In Our Puranas

A good-natured person should never feel proud and boast that he knows everything. It is a sign of culture that one tries to put into practice the few good things he has learnt and not merely talk about them.

Occupying the position of authority, assuming the qualities of a demon, causing fear and terror to people, if one conducts oneself in an inhuman and ferocious manner, will he be entitled to be called a man? I have been searching, I have all the time been searching, then and now I have been searching for a man who is truly a human being and who displays righteous conduct and good qualities.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students! boys and girls!

From time immemorial our *Vedas* have been prescribing sacrificial rites like *yajnas*. In these *yajnas*, two parts are contained, namely *manthras* and *stotras* or recitations. Some people think that *manthras* and *stotras* are the same. That is not so. It is common knowledge that different flowers are collected and put together in the form of a garland. Here the flowers are not new. They are already there. The garland is new and is made by a person who puts the flowers together. On the same analogy, the *manthras* are like the flowers and the *stotras* are like the garland. The *manthras* are already there and are not new. The *stotra* is like a garland and is composed by the *Rithwick* by grouping the *manthras* together. This *Rithwick* or the *hota*, is protecting the *stotra* and is also called *Pushthi* (one who protects the *manthras* by regrouping them into *stotras*). This kind of song which comes from the two *Vedas* has been called *Sruthi*. Not only this, Indra is invited to come to the *yajna* with his chariot having the two *Vedas*—*Rig* and *Sama* as the horses. Here the word *Sama*, which has several other meanings in a different context, means a song. In order to invite Indra to the hall of *yajna*, they sing a song with one *rik* and it is called “One Rik Song”.

Sometimes, the inviting song consists of three *riks*. Then the three *riks* are associated with *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Aditya*. They have also been mentioned as *Bhuh*, *Bhuwaha*, *Suvaha* or earth, space and sun. The basis for all the three aspects is the primordial sound or *Pranava*.

This sound of *Pranava* has been recognised by the *Sruthi* as identical with *Aum*, the only letter that is significant. From time to time, people are making enquiries as to who can chant this sacred *Pranava Manthra* and who cannot. The *Vedas* however have made no such distinction. Since this sound of *Pranava* or *Aum* has been recognised as universal and is the life force in all the *Vedas*, it has been accepted that anyone can utter it at all times. Without the sound of sacred *Pranava*, the *Vedas* will become lifeless. Any individual, if he utters this sacred sound *Aum* towards the end of his life, will merge in God. The *Bhagavad Gita* has declared that this sound *Aum* is sacred to everyone and forms the basis of all creation.

We all know that the *Aum* sound consists of three distinct sounds, *A*, *Uh* and *Ma*. In *Bhagavatha*, *Bharatha* and in all our *Puranas*, this sacred sound of *Aum* runs like the life string. There are three reasons for man to be born. One is the sin, the second is an unfulfilled desire

or some experience and the third is lack of knowledge or ignorance. The feeling that he has not fulfilled a desire and his wanting to take birth again to fulfil such a desire is one main reason. Man does several bad things and commits a sin. He has to be reborn to experience the consequences. Ignorance makes you seek a rebirth under these circumstances. These three constitute the basis for our rebirth.

Sage Valmiki has stated in his *Ramayana* that uttering the name of Rama will enable us to free ourselves from the three shackles which lead one to be reborn. He has also given the meaning of Rama by splitting the name into three parts *Ra*, *Aa* and *Ma*. *Ra* is the basic letter for *Agni* or fire, *Aa* is for sun and *Ma* for the moon. The three letters respectively signify *Agni*, Sun and Moon. The fire burns away all the sins, the sun sheds light and removes the ignorance and the moon cools the agitation in one's mind. Thus, the utterance of the name Rama removes your sins, your ignorance, your agitation and eliminates the possibility of your getting a rebirth. In this context, he has also identified the sound of *Aum* with the name Rama since both bring the same result. As *Aum* is the very basis of all the *Vedas*, so also Rama is the basis of all the creation. The three important

aspects of *Agni*, *Vayu* and Sun contained in the name Rama are synonymous with *Ida*, *Saraswathi* and *Bharathi* and are the basis for the whole world.

Although *Ida*, *Saraswathi* and *Bharathi* are apparently different and described as distinct, yet they are inseparably connected to each other. Just as *Aum*, the sound of *Pranava*, is a total manifestation of three different and distinct letters and their aspects, the word *Brihaspati* or *Prajapati* is a total manifestation of all the three aspects of *Ida*, *Saraswathi* and *Bharathi*. This aspect of *Brihaspati* is also known as *Vachaspati* or the word of *Veda* and the same thing has been referred to as *Brahmana* or a *Rithwick* well-versed in *manthras*. *Bharatha* is a *Vedic* word and has nothing to do with *Bharatha*, the son of *Sakuntala*. There is a saying that one derives pleasure from the thought of God is *Bharatha* and the name *Bharatha* has a connection with this.

It has been mentioned earlier that *Hamsa* or the Swan is the vehicle for *Saraswathi*. *Hamsa* is synonymous with the sound “*Soham*” which stands for in haling and exhaling breath. By uttering *Soham*, the word is created and *Saraswathi* represents the word. That is why we say that *Saraswathi* rides over the swan. This is the inner meaning. In our *Puranas*, different Gods have

been described as riding over different kinds of animals making it look absurd. These are symbolic descriptions, all of which have sacred and significant inner meaning. But, the modern people fail to appreciate our culture, due to their ignorance of these inner meanings.

Just as we point to the moon who is far away in the sky with our finger, the indescribable contents of our sacred *Vedas* and the invisible divinity have been described, to some extent, in terms of commonly understood items like carriers, chariots and so on. This is only a method of conveying abstract ideas to people in terms of things they know in their daily lives. Sometimes, this process of learning causes confusion and error.

There is a small example for this. At one time a learned *pundit* was explaining a particular description of Lord Vishnu in our *Puranas*, to a group of people. Amongst the group was present an illiterate cowherd who had complete faith in God. He listened to the *Pundit* who described Lord Vishnu as riding on a white Garuda and giving *darshan* to devotees who pray earnestly, and answering their prayers. With implicit faith in what he had heard, he went to the forest as used along with his cattle and started praying to the Lord to come riding on a white Garuda and partake in the rice porridge which he

had brought for himself. He also took a vow that he will not eat his food until the Lord appeared before him and partook the food brought by him. The Lord did not appear before him. Days went by and the devotee was starving and becoming thinner and thinner. The Lord was moved at this distress of the devotee and came in the guise of an old Brahmin. The devotee saw the old Brahmin and since his appearance did not match with the description of God which he had in his mind, namely a dark-complexioned individual riding on a white Garuda, he would not recognise Him and closed his eyes and started praying for His *darshan*. After a little while, he opened his eyes and asked the Brahmin who he was. The Brahmin replied that he was the Lord come in that form; but the illiterate devotee would not believe it as the idea that the Lord would come riding on a white Garuda was so firmly imprinted in his mind. Thus, by adhering to a symbolic description intended only to help the illiterate people, without knowing the sacred inner meaning, he deprived himself of food and water for a long time.

We have to learn from this story that the *Puranas* have always described the Lord in many different forms as conceived by the writers, from time to time. In reality, no one can declare with any definiteness that the Lord has one form or another. The Lord is omnipresent and

can assume several forms. It is best for us to realise this truth and accept divinity in all living beings. Whoever comes to us and in whatever form he comes and seeks our love and attention should be given the love and attention we would give to God Himself.

God is immanent in all the living beings. When you see any one of them, you should respect him as you would respect God. If you cannot respect a living human being who is right in front of you, how can you respect God who is unseeable and unreachable? Your mother and father are the first people whom you should regard as God. Neglecting your mother and father, even if you spend all your time in God's worship, it becomes futile. You should worship God as a life force and not as an inanimate picture.

One devotee started worshipping Rama as a picture or a photo. Ever since he started this, he met with several difficulties. He thought that probably worship of Rama does not suit him. He kept that photo in a closed *almirah* and brought the picture of Easwara and started worshipping the picture of Easwara. Then his troubles not only did not disappear but they became worse. He was very disappointed and put away the picture of Easwara, also, in the closed *almirah*. He brought the

picture of Gayatri and started worshipping Gayatri. That day he prayed to Gayatri in the traditional manner and put up some incense for Gayatri. He found that the smoke coming from the incense sticks was going into the closed *almirah*. He felt very upset that the offering he made was going to the pictures of Rama and Easwara who never responded to his prayer. In his anger he took a piece of cloth and tied up the mouth and nose in each of the pictures, believing that thereby he would be preventing them from receiving his offerings and the fragrance of his incense. Immediately, the Gods appeared before him and he wondered how and why they did not respond to his prayers but responded spontaneously when he decided to punish them. However, he wanted to clear his doubt by asking the Gods themselves and ventured to enquire why they responded with their grace the moment he decided to tie up their mouths and noses. To this, the gods replied that all his prayers earlier were directed towards lifeless pictures, but the moment he started tying up the mouths with a piece of cloth assuming the gods as filled with life, they appeared before him.

The lesson we have to learn in this story is that God will respond only if we accept Him as being full of life force and not as a lifeless picture. We should develop firm faith in the divinity present in all human

beings and respect them. The respect should come from the depths of your heart. The fruits thereof will also be full of life. Worshipping the external form and ignoring the commands of God is simply turning ourselves into disbelievers. In this way several devotees today are turning into fake devotees. Even though you do not worship God, if only you bear in mind the orders that emanate from God and put them into practice, there will be no greater devotee than you.

Respect for mother, father, *guru* and God will be real and meaningful only when it comes from the depths of your heart. If it is superficial, the world may be deceived; but the Lord will not be deceived.

Pavitratma Swarupas! students, boys and girls!

It is not only in the spiritual sphere, but also in the worldly sphere that every action of ours is met with reaction and everything we say will have an echo. So, do good, see good and enjoy the good that comes to you as a reaction.

Today, if you smilingly give trouble to your parents, tomorrow, with sorrow, you have to suffer similar treatment from your children. So, if today you respect your parents, tomorrow, with pleasure, you can enjoy similar treatment from your children.