56. The rules of the game

Every man is engaged in searching for something lost. Life is the chance afforded to him to recover the peace and the joy that he had lost, when last he was here. If he recovers them now, he need not come again. But, he loses them through ignorance of their value and of the means of retaining them. If only he would stay in the consciousness of *Shivoham---"I* am Shiva; I am immortal, I am the source and spring of Bliss"---he would be supremely content; but, instead of this correct evaluation of himself, this recognition of his innate reality, man goes about weeping at his helplessness, his inadequacy, his poverty, his evanescence. This is the tragic fate from which man has to be rescued.

The deer is trapped, the elephant is drawn into the *kheddah* (the trap), and the serpent is charmed---all by taking advantage of their slavery to the senses. Man must demonstrate his superiority over the animal, by conquest over the senses. He must wriggle out of his animal shackles and assert his "humanity", which is essentially "divinity". When Emperor Bharthrihari gave up his throne and went into a hermitage in the forest, the subordinate rulers who were his tributaries laughed at the stupid step and asked him how he got the idea and what he gained. Bharthrihari replied, "I have now gained a vaster empire, a richer and more peaceful empire; I gave in exchange a poor barren torn empire; see what profit I have made."

Sacrifice the animality and bestial lust in you

Sacrifice, so that you may be saved. You have to sacrifice, not a bleating sheep or a horse or cow, but your animality, the bestial lust and greed, hate and malice. Sacrifice these and you earn the heaven of unflinching peace. Killing a sheep is a cheap trick, which will not deceive any one; for, you are asked to kill the sheep inside you, the cowardly beast that revels in the mass and perpetrates mob fury in blind anger. Gauthama Buddha saw sheep being driven to be slaughtered at a sacrifice *(yajna);* he tenderly lifted a sweet little lamb on his shoulder and followed the sheep to the special enclosure where the ruler of the State was performing the *yajna.* On being told that the ceremonial killing of the lamb will bring great good to the ruler and the state, Buddha said, "Of course you must admit that a man, a prince, a monk is much more valuable than a tiny trivial lamb. Kill me and win merit a hundredfold", and advised him about the inner weaknesses and vices that are symbolised by the victims of the yajna.

Buddha argued him out of his false attachment to the paltry benefits promised for ritual correctitude. He told him that the prayer that rose from every Indian at sunrise and at sunset was *"Sarve janaah sukhino bhavanthu"---"Let* all beings attain happiness." "The sacrifice of a living being to secure happiness here or hereafter though accompanied by the recitation of all the appropriate ritual formulae was a selfish act and so, it deserves discouragement. To kill, so that you may live longer and with fuller joy is a reprehensible act, Buddha declared. It is comparable to the disgraceful pride of those who swagger like bullies because they have the atom bomb which can reduce to ashes entire states and vast cities. They make mankind cower in fear, just as the sacrificer in the *yajnas* makes the victims shiver in terror.

Only those who base their actions on the universal principle of God that dwells in every being and prompts every deed, word and thought, can deserve the gratitude of mankind. All beings are flowers strung on the selfsame string to make a multicoloured garland for the Lord. You talk of international understanding, but it can come only when the idea of difference and separateness inherent in the word "nation" disappears and when man sees the Lord in all men. When a thorn

pricks your foot, you get tears in the eye. For, they are of the same body; so too, when a worm is crushed, your heart must react to its pain. This must be cultivated as a *saadhana* and practised until it becomes one's nature.

God is forgotten when self-interest demurs

A parrot taught to utter *Raam Raam Raam* was caught by a cat and when the cat dug its teeth into it, it forgot *Raam Raam Raam,* it screeched like any parrot when it is in great pain. *Raam Raam Raam* was forgotten! So too, all talk of the unity of mankind, of the immanence of God and the pervasiveness of the Divine is forgotten, when self-interest demurs!

There was a Sultan once who had a daughter always immersed in the meditation of God. She was so pious and pure that the father decided to give her in marriage only to a person who was equally busy in spiritual activities and study, and equally determined in spiritual practices. The Prince of the neighbouring State asked for her hand and pleaded for it so tenaciously that the problem of her marriage had to be faced quick.

While searching for a suitable groom, the Sultan one evening saw a young fakir, lost in meditation, in a corner of the mosque, his face lit with the glow of inexpressible inward joy. He watched him silently for hours and when at last, he came into consciousness of the surroundings, he asked him whether he was married, and when he heard he was net he was greatly pleased. He introduced himself and offered his daughter to him. The fakir argued that he was far too poor to maintain a princess as his wife, but, the Sultan described her *saadhana* and put his mind to rest, on that score. The *fakir* agreed, but the Sultan was to spend for the wedding ceremony only three paise, one for betel-nut, one for jaggery and one for incense. The conditions were accepted and the princess was sent to live with him in the caravanserai.

Have faith in God's capacity

A few days later, she discovered tied in a corner of his garment a small piece of bread; she asked him how it happened to be there. He replied, "I retained it for the morning." The princess said that by this act, he had declared himself to be an *unworthy fakir,* to be a non-believer. For, he had, by that act, doubted God's love and God's capacity to feed His children. He had no confidence in God and His Mercy. So saying, she returned to her father and continued her spiritual practices undisturbed. He who has planted the tender seedling .will fulfil his responsibility and water it into a sturdy plant. Have faith; do not simply profess and deny in practice.

God is no partial benefactor; he gives the fruit from every tree, according to the seed. You have planted the sour mango, hoping to use the fruit for pickles; then, why lament that the fruit is not sweet to the tongue? Do good and aspire to get the fruit of goodness---that is pardonable. It is not as bad as doing bad and blaming God that He has given you the meed for evil deeds. Once when the *Guru* of Naanak accosted him, he was writing something with rapt attention. So, Naanak did not answer. When later he was asked why, he said, "My heart was transcribing on my brain (paper) with the pen of God-centred thought using the ink got by burning all sense-pursuits." The fate of the country will depend on the character of its people and character is elevated and purified by *saadhana,* the hard way of regulation of behaviour and the control of desire. God is the guardian, and as guardian, He has to warn and punish to wean people away from harmful habits. If it is necessary, the guardian will resort to the infliction of pain too, as a curative and corrective treatment.

Rules of behaviour must be observed by all

Limit, control, regulate, set bounds and bunds; that is the way to succeed. If people let loose their thoughts, words and deeds, calamity will be the consequence. *Shaastra* means that which 'lays down limits'; interest in the art of living is created by these rules. Imagine a game of football which has no rules, the ball is never 'out', there is no foul, no corner, no offside, no hands, nothing by which you can decide who plays well or ill, who wins or loses. The game will lose all zest; it will be pandemonium, a free fight. Rules of behaviour must be observed by politicians, rulers, subjects, monks, who are leaders of the community and heads of monasteries, scholars and others, for they are exemplars and guides and their responsibilities are greater.

People talk grandly *of Adhwaitha,* of the one-ness of all, but, they are the very persons who exaggerate every difference and emphasise every distinction. People boast that they have been coming to Puttaparthi since 20, 15 or 10 years, as if we have some grades of senior or junior according to the years during which they have contacted Puttaparthi; but really speaking, one has to value only the beneficial changes brought about by that contact in the character and conduct of the individual. How much have you imbibed, the lessons learnt from here? How much have you succeeded in stopping the leaks which, as outer-faced senses, were draining y our discrimination and drying up the fountain of inner joy?

The eye scatters your vision in a hundred directions; the ear drags your mind to many false melodies; the hands hanker after hundred flimsy acts. They degrade and demolish man. Man being divine must have the divine all around him all the time, in order to be alive; like fish, he must have the water of divine joy all around him. Instead, he is now seeking to keep himself alive by artificial respiration and borrowed blood. He is himself *Amritha-swaruupa* and *Aananda-swaruupa* (Immortal and Bliss personified). So, why should he strive to get *aananda* from outside?

Man must have divine joy all around him

Above all, recognise this truth: Sai is in all. When you hate another, you are hating Sai; when you hate Sai, you are hating yourself. When you inflict pain on another, remember that the other is yourself, in another form, with another name. Envy causes pain on those who are envied. When another's fortune is green, why should your eyes be red? Why get wild when another eats his fill? Give up this vice of envy; be happy when another is happy. That is more pleasing to the Lord than all the *manthras* you recite, or all the flowers you heap on his picture or image, or even the hours you spend in *japam* or *dhyaanam.*

India is the home of many religions and philosophies; but, no one of them is observed reverentially by its adherents. They are used only as labels to identify persons or communities, or as uniforms for certain purposes on certain occasions. Persons take pride when they resort to clubs or gambling places; but, they are ashamed to go to a temple or a spiritual guide. People live beyond their earnings and enter recklessly into debt, since they are eager to gather all the insignia of high life, like transistors, bush coats, refrigerators and the like. Love of pomp, desire to beat others in standard of living, eagerness to appear superior to the rest---these make men fall into discontent and deceit. Be simple in your method of living, have *saathwik* food and *saathwik* recreations; let your mind be fixed on the ideals of service; let your thoughts be guided by *sathya, dharma, shaanthi* and *prema.* That is the blessing I confer on you today.

Prashaanthi Nilayam: Birthday Festival, 23-11-1965

The proof of the rain is the wetness of the ground. Likewise, the proof of true devotion is in the peace of mind, that the aspirant has been able to attain, the peace which protects him against the onslaught of failures, the peace in which he is unruffled by loss and dishonour.

***SHRI SATHYA** SAI*