21. Choose your God

THE times have gone awry. Relations between man and man, man and God, man and the human community; and man and those entrusted to rule over groups of men are getting tainted by hatred and anger. The people of this land are accepting wrong as right, and discarding right as wrong; they are journeying blindly along wrong roads. And, they are proud of this too; they believe they are progressing!

Happiness and misery are the consequences of the attributes one cultivates and foster---the three chief ones being *Saathwik* (selfless equanimous and tolerant), the *raajasik* (marked by activity, ambition, passion, emotion) and the *thaamasik* (marked by indolence, ignorance, inactivity, sloth, dullness). When *Saathwik* predominates, one is happy; when *Raajasik* predominates, one is discontented. When *Thaamasik* qualities are supreme, there can be no joy and no happiness. When the attributes pursue the path of attachment and pleasure, man is bound to the wheels of pain-joy, death-life. If they seek liberation and simplicity, they lead him to love, light and freedom from the birth-death wheel. Man is today caught in doubt and deviation; he does not know which road to follow, and with what preparation. He loses his precious heritage, degrades himself, and denies his Nature which is really Divine.

Mind has to be regulated and controlled by reason

People determine the nature of the Divine through the categories of logic and dialectics. But, intellect cannot grasp it; reason cannot delve into it. For, both are shaped by one's prejudices and predispositions. We appreciate only what we like; we see only what we would like to see. "When prayer is answered and one gets what one desires, God is real; when they are not answered, God is a fake, a figment of the imagination!" Arjuna acclaimed Krishna as the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God, when the foe was defeated, day after day. But when his son Abhimanyu was killed in the conflict, he raved in his grief that Krishna had not guided him properly and guarded him efficiently. His mind wavered with every wind of fortune. To many, the mind is master of the intellect also. One must be vigilant and preserve the impartiality of the instrument called reason or intellect. Clarify reason; then it will reveal God everywhere, even in you. Once you accept God as the core of the Universe and yourself have that faith strong and steady.

Of course, it is difficult in the atmosphere of "faithlessness" to light the lamp in one's heart and keep it burning, straight and sturdy, without falter or flicker. Today, the wife has no faith in her husband, the husband has no faith in his wife; sons doubt the father; father suspects the sons; students have no faith in the teachers, teachers cannot rely on their students; so, how can faith grow in one field only, the field of religion? This calamity .has happened since man has allowed his reasoning faculty to be blunted by passion and prejudice. Krishna says in the Geetha, "I am *Buddhi* (intellect) among the faculties." "I shall confer the discipline of *Buddhi* on you," He tells those devoted to Him. Reason is the instrument by which the mind has to be regulated and controlled; it should not be subordinated to the whims of the mind.

Reasons for God's incarnations

Talking of the Geetha, I shall mention one problem that might confront you therein. Krishna declares, *"Samoham Sarvabhuutheshu"* .... "I am equal in all beings. I behave equally with all. I have no love or hate, no partiality or prejudice. Joy and grief are brought on by you on

yourselves, not by me on you, through attachment or want of it." When such is His declaration a doubt may arise in your minds' Why did He also announce that He would be incarnating in every age, in order to foster the good and punish the wicked? How is it that He talks of good and bad men? Does it not mean that He likes some and dislikes others? Are not all parts of Him? Are not the waves parts of the ocean?

Yes. All are parts of Him. The hand is yours; the fingers are yours; the nails are yours. Why then do you pare and trim the nails? Urine and faeces are in you, of you, but yet you have to get rid of them, to maintain health. Under certain circumstances, one has to cut off a limb in order to save the body. In fact, the Kauravas were dangerous viruses that had caused a spreading wound; Krishna had to operate them off, through major surgery, with Arjuna as His 'assistant operator,' in order to save the 'body politic' of Bhaarath.

When one is sunk in the slime of 'desire' one cannot distinguish with clarity between 'good' and 'bad.' In order to achieve this, the intellect has to be pure and clear, sharp and straight. There should not be the slightest trace of egotism, envy or greed in the make-up of man; for these will drag the arguments at a tangent. Vacillating minds, wandering eyes---these cannot help the intellect to decide correctly.

Give importance to ideals of tolerance and love

When one chooses a life-partner now-a-days, the first consideration is paid to external beauty and charm. Next, the economic position is taken as the basis. How rich is he or she? How much does he or she earn? Questions like, how far they are educated, what is the social status of the families to which they belong are asked later. Carried off by mere external frills and foppery, people enter into wedlock, and get entangled in misery or a destructive 'family life. The family cannot be stable if it is built on such slender foundation. Prime importance has to be paid to the fundamental requisites of a good character, high ideals of tolerance and forbearance, love and service. When beauty fades or wealth wanes, the bond too becomes less strong.

It is same with the God whom you choose, adore, and yearn to live with. You should not choose God for the benefits He can shower on you Do not expect God to satisfy your worldly or materials ambitions; and when they are not realised, do not desert the Path towards God. "Baba, appear in my dream this night," you demand, and if it does not happen He is not Sai Baba, he is Rai Baba (stone Baba) and you go in search of some other God who will be at your beck and call. You must hold on. to your faith, whatever might happen, success or failure, appointment or disappointment. When God is your very core, irremovably fixed in your consciousness, there will be no room for elation or dejection. God is bliss, and when God is the undying spring in you, you will have bliss forever.

The two paths of *Bhakthi Yoga*

Man has to engage himself in activity, for his upkeep, as well as for the sake of happiness. But he has to choose his activity intelligently and without over-involvement in its consequences. Use the activity to earn what is really good. Seek something supreme, something of the highest value, something that is beyond diminution and decline--that is true *bhakthi* (devotion). *Bhakthi* is the love and longing directed to the attainment of such a-goal. The means adopted for this are Karma (activity). They are known as *Karma Yoga; for Karma* becomes *Karma Yoga,* when activity is disciplined, dedicated and demarcated with skill. True love directed towards God can reveal His reality, and grant the highest J*naana* (Supreme Wisdom).

A tree has a trunk and the trunk branches far and wide, into boughs, with leaves and flowers. *Karma Yoga* is the trunk for the tree of life; the branches, leaves and. the fragrant flowers symbolise the *Bhakthi Yoga;* and the ripe fruit and the sweetness, therein, is the *Jnaana Yoga,* the Wisdom. If the tree yields no fruit and if the fruit is not sweet, then, it could as well not grow at all.

Bhakthi can flow along two paths- *Saguna Bhakthi* and *Nirguna Bhakthi.* When' you feel that God is far away, far higher, far beyond you and when you plead for mercy, petition for Grace, and pray for boons, it is *Saguna---you* adore Him as Lord and Master, as Guardian and Saviour; you go through the ceremonials of praise, propitiation and prostration, submission and service. But when you practise the discipline of seeing Him in all beings, as the core of every cell or atom, alive and aware, and experience Unity with all Creation (for Creation is but His body and you are also in it and of it) then, it is *Nirguna.* The *Nirguna* is the contemplation on the sugar; the *Saguna* is the adoration of some one sugar doll, which has caught your fancy and attracted your love and loyalty. Among the ceremonials we have the *yajna* (sacrificial rite), the chief feature described in the *Vedhas.*

Meaning of rites performed in *Yajna*

An important rite in the *Vedhic Yajna* is called soma-pa. In order to grasp the tuner significance of the *Vedhic or* other ceremonials, one has to spend some thought on symbolism. For example, let us take this Soma-pa itself. Pa means 'drinking' and the rite is generally supposed to indicate the drinking of a juice called soma.

No! *Soma* means the Moon; and the Moon cannot be swallowed or drunk by man. It also means the 'mind' ---"the changing mind that waxes and wanes, is never the same for long," That is why the *Vedhas* say that the mind was mothered by the Moon. So, drinking the Moon means the process by which the mind is controlled, made defunct and harmless. That is the purpose of the *Yajna---the* sacrifice of the whims of the mind for gaining the realm of the Universal Eternal Truth. With the mind left intact, no *Yajna is* fruitful, for it has a thousand tricks by which it can drag you into perdition.

Fix the mind on the name (the sound symbol) of the Lord; then, it cannot wander away. The Divine is the flame of the lamp ever burning in the altar, namely the body. Keep the flame safe from the guffs of wind, namely the gusts of passion and desire, that blow from all quarters. Sit in a quiet place, away from crowded groups of men or sensations or thoughts that distract. When you have reached the stage when you can be wholly engrossed in the Name and the Form it represents, isolating yourself from distraction is not required. But, that does not mean that you can parade your spiritual practices in the market place as some crazy people do now. Do not yearn for approbation and appreciation from the public. Pray that God may approve, accept and appreciate your toddle and your prattle.

Soak every moment in Love, in God

Cleanse your emotions, passions, impulses, attitudes, reactions. That is the essence of spiritual discipline, as laid down in all 'faiths. Examine your mind, your thoughts; do not seek the fault-ridden person. See only purity. Speak ill of none; and if, you slip into slander, repent and resolve not to give vent to the habit another time. Do not humiliate any one; respect persons for the good in them. Their grief at your behaviour will haunt you during your last moments.

Let every act of yours stand as your credential when you quit the world. Let no single act be a drag, or a debit. Soak every moment in Love, that is to say, in God. Of what avail is it to spend hours in *dhyaan* (meditation), if, when you rise and move amongst men, you spread anger, inflict resentment by your words and deeds? The Geetha asks you to be *'sathatham yoginah'---"ever* controlled, ever restrained, ever yoked with the Divine." So, be vigilant, be steady, be earnest. The steady person earns wisdom. By the absence of careful tending, a spark can be nursed into a huge conflagration; by vigilant care, even a conflagration can be reduced to a splutter.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 23-11-1973