

19. The Moon and the Mind

THERE are many different stories given in the *Shaasthras* to explain the origin of the *Shivaraathri* (The Night of the Emergence of *Linga* form of Shiva) Festival. Some of them were related now by the persons who spoke to you. Another story is that this is the day on which Shiva danced the *Thaandava* (cosmic dance) in His Ecstasy, with all the Gods and Sages taking part in the Cosmic Event. When He consumed the *Haalahaala* (death-dealing) poison that emanated from the ocean of Milk, in response to the prayers of the Worlds, which it threatened to destroy, the heat of the fumes was well nigh unbearable, even for Him. So, it is said, Ganga was poured uninterruptedly on His matted locks---this is the explanation for the *Ab-hisheka* (ceremony of pouring consecrated water, oil, milk, etc., on the idol) which is offered in all Shiva temples for hours on end, and in some places, uninterruptedly---but Shiva was only partly relieved. So the cool Moon was placed on the head; that gave some relief. Then, Ganga was placed on the matted locks. That was of great help. After this, Shiva danced with all the Gods, the *Thaandava* dance. That is the story but all this did not happen on a particular day and so *Shivaraathri* cannot be said to commemorate that day.

Some say that Shiva was born on this day, as if Shiva has birth and death like any mortal! The story that a hunter sat on a *bilva* tree on the look-out for animals to kill and without intending any worship, unknowingly, dropped the leaves of that tree, which happened to be a *bilva*, upon a *Lingam* beneath, and so attained salvation, explains only the importance of this day; it does not explain the origin! Besides we have not only *Mahaashivaraathri*. We have every month a *Shivaraathri*, dedicated to Shiva worship. Again, what is the significance of the *Raathri* (the Night)?

The close affinity between mind and the Moon

Well, the night is dominated by the Moon. The moon has 16 kalas or fractions; and each day when it wanes a fraction is reduced, until it is annihilated on New Moon night. After that, each day a fraction is added, until it completes itself on Full Moon night. The Moon is the presiding deity of the Mind; *Chandramaa manaso*

jaathah---"Out of the mind of the *Purusha* (Godhead), the Moon was born." There is a close affinity between the *manas* and the Moon; both are subject to decline and progress. The waning of the Moon is the symbol for the waning of the mind; for the mind has to be controlled, reduced and finally destroyed. All *Saadhana* is directed towards this end. *Manohara*---the mind has to be killed---so that *Maayaa* may be rent asunder and the reality revealed.

Every day during the dark half of the month, the Moon, and symbolically its counterpart in man, the *manas*, wane, and a fraction is diminished; its power declines---and finally, on the fourteenth night, *Chathurdashi*, there is just a wee bit left, that is all. If a little extra effort is made that day by the *Saadhaka*, even that bit can be wiped off and *Manonigraha* (mastery of the mind) completed. The *Chathurdhashi* of the dark half is therefore called *Shivaraathri*, for that night should be spent in the *japa* and *dhyaana* of Shiva, without any other thought either of food or sleep. Then success is assured. And, once a year, on *Mahaashivaraathri* Night, a special spurt of spiritual activity is recommended, so that what is *shavam* (corpse) can become *Shivam* (God) by the removal of this dross called *manas*.

Symbolic meaning of words used in scriptures

This is the purpose of *Shivaraathri* and so it is foolish and even harmful deceit to imagine that "keeping awake" is the essential thing in its observance. People try to escape sleep on this night by playing cards, attending non-stop cinema shows or watching plays or dramas. That is not the *saadhana* which should be intensified on *Shivaraathri*. That is a travesty of the vow of 'sleeplessness.' It vulgarises you and encourages evil and sloth, wickedness and hypocrisy.

On *Shivaraathri*, the mind must become *laya* (reduced into nothing). *Lingam* means that in which this *Jagath* attains *laya*---*leeyathe*; that into which this *Jagath* goes---*gamyathe*. Examine the *Linga*; the three *gunas* (primordial qualities) are represented by the three-tiered *Peetha* (platform); the *Lingam* above symbolises the goal of life. *Lingam* means "a symbol", the symbol of creation, the result of the activity of the three *gunas* and of the *Brahman*

(Supreme Reality) which permeates and gives it meaning and value. When you worship the *Lingam*, you should do so with faith in this symbolic significance.

Every word, every Form used in the *Shaasthras* has a symbolic meaning, which gives it value. The word "*prapancha*" which you use so freely to indicate this "created world" means, "that which is composed of the *panchabhuthas*---the five elements of earth, fire, water, wind and ether." Take the word '*hrudhayam*' used for "the heart". It means *hrudhi* (in the heart) *ayam* (He). That is to say, it means not the organ that pumps blood to all parts of the body, but the seat of God, the altar where Shiva is installed, the niche where the lamp of *jnaana* is lit. Again, Shiva does not ride on an animal called in human language, a "bull!" The bull is only a symbol of *Dharma* standing on the four legs of *Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Shaanthi* and *Prema*.

***Lingam* is the symbolic form of the Godhead**

The three eyes of Shiva are the eyes which reveal the Past, Present and the Future. Shiva alone has all three. The elephant skin which forms His cloak is just a symbol for the elemental bestial primitive traits which His Grace destroys; He makes them powerless and harmless; in fact, he tears them to pieces, skins them so to say, and makes them ineffective. His four Faces symbolise *Shaantham*, *Roudhram*, *Mangalam* and *Uthsaham* (Peace, Fierceness, Auspiciousness, Determination). In this way, realise while worshipping the *Lingam*, the inner sense of the many attributes of Shiva. Meditate thus on Shiva this day, so that you may get rid of the last lingering vestiges of delusion.

Just as *Om* is the verbal symbol of God, the *Lingam* is the symbolic form of the Godhead. It is just a form. Everything is *maayaa* (delusion) and to grasp it, you must deal with *maayaa*. Otherwise you cannot realise the *Maayaa Shakthi* (Deluding Power). God is as immanent in the Universe as life is immanent in the egg. The chicken is in every part of the egg; so too, God is in every part of the world. I prefer the description *Sarvaantharyaami* (inner ruler of all) to the description, *Sarvabhutha antharaathma* (Inmost soul of all beings). All are in this Hall, each one has no Hall in him, is it

not? In the same way, all are in Him; which is better than saying, He is in all.

It is *Maayaa* which binds and limits man; all *saadhana* is to conquer *maayaa*. A bit of iron will sink in water but if beaten and made hollow, it will float. So beat the mind and make it hollow. Then it will float on the sea of *samsaara* (worldly life). Above all, have *viveka* and do not be led into taking any false step.

Grow not only physically but also spiritually

You need not waste time in trying to discover Me and My Nature. Understand what I teach, not 'who is the teacher, for I am beyond your intellect and your *shakthi*. You will understand Me only through My work. That is why sometimes in order to reveal who I am, I myself show you my 'visiting card,' something that you call a miracle. Know the *marma* (the mystery) and carry out the *karma* (the duty) I assign you.

In the next fifteen years, a number of young people now growing up will shine as devoted aspirants in the spiritual field; they know that each of them is *nithyam*, *sathyam* and *pavithram* (eternal, truth and pure) and that they are *amritha-puthraas* (children of Immortality). They are growing in *viveka* and *vairaagya* and they are purifying themselves by *Naamasmarana*. But the elders are laughing at such boys because they have taken to the godly path. Perhaps they will be happy if their children loiter in the streets in groups, smoking and swearing, and staring at posters.

The elders should be elated that their children are on the royal road to real joy and contentment and that they will be serving themselves and the world much better. You do not know how to make an ornament out of gold; so you give it to a gold smith. Why worry if he melts it and beats it and pierces it and pulls it into wire and twists it and cuts it? Let Him who knows the art shape the child into an ornament of society; do not worry.

You must grow day to day, not only physically but in the spiritual life also. How long are you staying on in the primary school, writing down the letters of the alphabet? Get up, demand an examination, pass, and move forward to the higher class!

The *Jeevi* must master the inner world first

You are now sitting on the floor of the Hall; seek the means to see the top floors too. Progress! Come forward! Then *Shivaraathri* becomes a *Mangala-raathri* (auspicious night) for you. Otherwise it is just another *raathri* wasted.

Many might discourage you and say that meditation and worship can be taken up after you reach a ripe old age, as if they are the prerogatives of or special punishments for the aged. Enjoy the world while you can and then think of the next---that seems to be their attitude. The child takes its first few steps in the comparative safety of the home: it toddles about inside, until its steps become firm, until its balance is perfected, and until it can run about unaccompanied and without fear. Then only does it venture out into the streets and the wide world beyond.

So too, the *Jeevi* (living being) must master the inner world first; become impervious to temptations, it should learn not to fall when the senses trip its steps; it should learn the balance of mind which will not make it lean more to one side than to the other; and then, after mastering this *viveka* (discriminatory wisdom), it can confidently move out into the outer world, without fear of accidents to its personality. That is why there is this insistence on 'sleeplessness' or vigilance.

You cannot claim to be educated or grown-up unless you have mastered the science of self-control and destroyed the root cause of delusion. It is not this night alone that you should spend in the thought of Shiva; your whole life should be lived in the constant presence of the Lord.

Man's basic nature seeks inward contentment

Do not tell me that you do not care for that Bliss, that you are satisfied with the delusion and are not willing to undergo the rigours of sleeplessness. Your basic nature, believe Me, abhors this dull, dreary routine of eating, drinking, and sleeping. It seeks something which it knows it has *lost---shaanthi* (inward contentment). It seeks liberation from bondage to the trivial and the temporary. Every one craves for it in his heart of hearts. And it is available only in one

shop---Contemplation of the Highest Self, the basis of all this appearance.

However high a bird may soar, it has sooner or later to perch on a tree top, to enjoy quiet. So too, a day will come when even the most haughty, the most wilful, the most unbelieving and even those who assert that there is no joy or peace in the Contemplation of the Highest Self will have to pray, "God, grant me peace, grant me consolation, strength and joy."

Prashanthi Nilayam, Mahaashivaraathri, 7-2-1959

The ills of the country are due to under-nourishment; not so much under-nourishment of the body, but under-nourishment of the spirit, want of spiritual exercise, neglect of spiritual regimen.

Allowing the malady the fullest scope, people are engaged in reciting the names of the drugs in the pharmacopoeia! They do not make any attempt to take the drug in.

The means of conveying into every home and village the life-giving waters of the spirit have all dried up or got choked up.

That is the reason why under- nourishment, with all its attendant symptoms of debility, nervous disorder and mania is so rampant today.

Shri Sathya Sai