

6. Griha or guha?

THE Deekshith spoke about the glory of the Lord and the other *Pandiths* gave you detailed accounts of the experiences of ideal men who struggled to arrive at the Truth. Every one must be interested in knowing about these, for, all should have an ideal to strive for, a goal to be reached. Otherwise, life is reduced to aimless wandering. For saplings to grow, soil is essential; for ideals to get implanted, knowledge of the struggles and successes of saints and sages is essential. These experiences are not uniform; each *saadhaka* has a different story to tell, depending upon his equipment and enthusiasm. So, the vision and the glory are different, though all are divine. The mansion of India's glory is built of charming stones, each block being the hardy *thapas* of some sage or other. No one sage can be neglected, for if his attainment is ignored, the wall of the mansion would be so much the weaker.

Take the case of Agasthya, for example. I mention him because some one gave out his name, while addressing you. He is called "potborn," but, remember, he and Vashishtha were both children of *Mithra-Varuna* and were both born from the same pot! He put an end to the evil deeds of the ferocious giants, Ilvala and Vaathaapi, by just three words, "*Vaathaapi jeerno bhava.*" He made the high- peaked Vindhya bow his head and become low; that is why he is known by the name, Agasthya! That is to say, he taught humility to the proudest in the land.

The home must resound to the name of God

Agasthya is also reported to have drunk off the ocean all in one sip. That is to say, he dried up the ocean of *samsaara*, with its waves of grief and joy, prosperity and adversity, success and failure. It is not any *sidhi*, this feat; it is a parable explaining that though he was a *grihastha* (a married man) with a son who recited the *Vedhas* as soon as he saw light, he had conquered all attachments of the world. Be attached only to the ideal---that is the sign of the sage.

Kabeer was weaving a *peethaambara* (yellow silk garment) for the Lord, for his Raama. He had to work the loom alone, by hand. He recited Raama Raama Raama and went on weaving ceaselessly. The cloth had become twenty yards long, but, Kabeer did not stop; his *thapas* continued unabated the *peethaambara* was becoming longer. The *aanandha* of the craft, devotion to his Lord, was enough food and drink for his sustenance. When he gave it to the temple priest for clothing the idol of Raama, the *peethaambara* was just the length and breadth, not a finger breadth more! Such men are the mainsprings of the joy that spiritual persons fill themselves with in India.

The *griha* (home) must resound to the name of Govindha; otherwise, it is just a *guha* (a cave), where wild animals dwell. The body needs a house but, the body is itself a house; in that house too. the name of Govindha must be heard. Or else, it is a *ghata* (a mud pot), not a man's body.

Offer God the fragrant leaf of *bhakthi*

An insidious disease is now rampant among most people, namely, unbelief. It sets fire to the tiny shoots of faith and reduces life into cinders and ashes. You have no criterion to judge, yet you pretend to judge. Doubt, anger, poison and illness---all these have to be scotched before they grow. Repeat the *Raamanaama*, whether you have faith or not; that will itself induce faith; that will itself create the evidence on which faith can be built.

There was a fisherman once, who spread his net over a lake and sat watching, for robbers might drag away his catch. He sat on a tree; and for getting clearer vision all round, he plucked leaves

and pulled off branches It was a *bilva* tree! The day was *Magha Krishna Chathurdhasi*, *Shivaraathri* day. *Mahaashivaraathri* (Great Night of Emergence of Shiva's Radiant Form), in fact. And, right under the tree, where *bilva* leaves fell, there was a *Shivalinga*! For want of food, he starved the night and so, he got the merit of a vigil and of a fast!

His wife too ardently waited for him in his hut; just when she was about to eat her supper a dog peeped in; she felt it was very hungry and so she followed it with the plate of food and fed it, in a spirit of *puuja*. She too kept vigil. In the morning, he went to the temple and prayed that he may merge in God; his wife prayed that he may be spared for her sake; but God had both of them merged in Him.

You attach importance to quantity; but, the Lord considers only quality. He does not calculate how many measures of "sweet rice" you offered, but, how many sweet words you uttered, how much sweetness you added in your thoughts. Offer Him the fragrant leaf of *bhakthi*, the flowers of your emotions and impulses, freed from the pests of lust, anger, etc.; give him fruits grown in the orchard of your mind, sour or sweet, juicy or dry, bitter or sugary.

Your homes must be immersed in highest *shaanthi* Once you decide that the orchard in your mind is His, all fruits will be sweet; that *sharanaagathi* (seeking refuge for protection) will render all fruits acceptable to the Lord and so, they cannot be bitter. And, for water, what can be purer and more precious than your tears, shed, not in grief mind you, but, in rapture at the chance to serve the Lord and to walk along the path that leads to Him!

All who aspire to be *bhakthas* must eschew *raaga* and *dhwesha* (attachment and aversion). You need not be proud when you are able to sing better or if your *puuja* room is better decorated. There must be a steady improvement in your habits and attitudes; otherwise, *saadhana* is a vain pastime.

This place as well as your homes when you return must be *prashaantha*---immersed in the highest *shaanthi* (peace)---undisturbed by any streak of hatred or malice, pride or envy. No *puuja*, *thapas*, no *vratha* can equal the efficacy of obedience, obedience to *aajna* (the command), given for your liberation.

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Individual reconstruction is much more important than the construction of temples.

Multiply virtues, not buildings; practise what you preach, that is the real pilgrimage; cleanse your minds of envy and malice, that is the real bath in holy waters. Of what avail is the name of the Lord on the tongue, if the heart within is impure?

Injustice and discontent are spreading everywhere due to this one fault in man: saying one thing and doing the opposite, the tongue and the hand going in different directions.

Man has to set himself right and correct his food, his recreation, his method of spending his leisure as well as his habits of thought.

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