

11. The Fifth Vedha

GULLAPALLI Buuchiraamayya Shaasthry spoke about the Mahaabhaaratha so well and with so much scholarship, as he has been specialising in its exposition for years. The Mahaabhaaratha is considered by many as not so conducive to *Bhakthi* as the Bhaagavatha for instance, or as the Raamaayana; but, if once you know the taste, no one will give it up or consider it as of lower value. It is called the Fifth *Vedha*, not without reason. The *Vedhas* reveal things that are beyond the reach of the intellect. The truths declared by the *Vedhas* are made practicable and simple, interesting and instructive, by means of stories and homilies in the Mahaabhaaratha.

The *Puurva Meemaamsa* (analysis of *Vedhic* statements concerning rituals) deals with the *Pravritthi maarga* (path of worldly desire) and the *Utthara Meemaamsa* with the *Nivritthi maarga* (path of renunciation). *Puurva Meemaamsa* deals with the *kaarana* (reason) and the *Utthara Meemaamsa*, with the *kaaryam* (duty), which is *jnaanam*. In the Mahaabhaaratha, both the paths are fully explained. So, it is called the Fifth *Vedha*. It is the *Vedhasaara* (essence of *Vedha*) itself. In Telugu there is a proverb, "If it is a question of listening, listen to *Bhaaritham*; if it is a question of eating, eat *gaarlu*." That is because the *Bhaaritham* gives in sweet simple style all the inspiration that a man needs for this world and for the next.

Where there is *Dharma*, victory is assured

The *Vedha saadhana* has four pillars on which it *stands*---*Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Shaanthi* and *Prema*. They have to be practised, experienced and their combined result, namely, *Aanandha* has to be enjoyed. Krishna told the Paandavas that He did not know anything about the fateful dice game, which started the succession of calamities. "I was in Dwaaraka at the time," He said. Dwaaraka means the citadel with the nine gates or *dwaaras*, the Body itself. Krishna is the witness of everything; anything done without His approval or without being dedicated to Him will be a failure.

The five Paandava brothers are the Five *Praanas* (vital energies), symbolised in story, and with the help of the Lord, they won the battle against the forces of evil. Where there is *Dharma*, victory is assured. The Mahaabhaaratha teaches that truth. The Pandavaas had many temptations placed before them to slide back into *A-dharma*;

but, they held on to the difficult path of *Dharma* and won. The status of manhood has been won after aeons of arduous struggle and to waste it in vain pursuits forgetting the *Dhivyathvam* (Divinity) which has to be manifested is indeed pitiable.

God weighs only the feelings behind prayer

Dhroupadhi praying in distress from the Assembly Hall of the Kauravas is an instance in point. The Mahaabhaaratha proves times out of number that the Lord answers prayers that come out of faith and agony in yearning. There was a cowherd called Maaladhaasa who was determined to see the Lord, as He was described in the sacred texts he had heard expounded in the village temple by a *Pandith*. So he prayed and prayed to the "black Lord riding on the white bird" all the time his cows were pasturing in the fields. Eleven days passed; but, there was no sign of the "black Lord riding the white bird," He had forgotten to take food and drink during all those days and so, had become weak, too weak to walk or talk. At last, the Lord melted at his entreaties and presented Himself before him as an old Brahmin; but the Brahmin was not riding a white bird, nor was he black, beautifully black, as the *Pandith* had described. So, he asked the Brahmin to

come the next day at seven in the morning, so that he may bring the *Pandith* and verify whether He was the Lord Himself. The *Pandith* laughed at the whole affair and refused to take part in it; but Maaladhaasa was so importunate that he agreed.

The entire village turned out on the river bank the next day, long before seven o'clock. The Brahmin was there, exactly as he had promised and Maaladhaasa showed Him to all. But, they could not see him! They began to laugh at the cowherd's antics and threatened him with a severe beating for bringing them along as butts for his joke. Maaladhaasa could see the Brahmin clearly but no one else could. At last, he got so enraged that he walked up to the old Brahmin and gave him a whacking blow on the cheek, saying, "Why don't you show yourself to all?"

That blow changed the entire scene. Krishna appeared in resplendent robes, smiling face, captivating form and the white bird. As the astounded villagers were recovering from the amazement, the *Vimaana* (heavenly chariot), floated down from the sky and Krishna asked Maaladhaasa to sit inside it. Then, with the Lord by his side Maaladhaasa rose up and soon was out of sight.

Mahaabharaatha is an inspiration for all time

The Lord always weighs only the feeling behind the prayer to satisfy and please; the Saguna form visible to the eye and cognisable by the senses, but something unapproachable by the senses (*In-dhriya-atheetha*), has to be offered. In this way, *karma* itself becomes *Upaasana*, by the addition to saturation point, of dedication. *Rathi* (attachment) is the seed; *Bhaava* (feeling) is the sapling; *Prema* (love) is the tree; *Sath-Chith-Aanandha* (Being, Awareness, Bliss) is the fruit. The *Vedhas* have *Karma*, *Upaasana* and *Jnaana* (action, devotion and knowledge) sections. The Mahaabhaaraatha teaches all three and so, for the *Vedhavriksha* (*Vedha* tree), the Bhaaraatha can be said to be the fruit.

You have heard that the Lord comes down when *Dharmaglaani* (the decline of *Dharma*) happens; well, *Vedhaglaani* (the decline of the *Vedhas*) is equivalent to the decline of *Dharma*, for *Vedha* is the very root of *Dharma*. There are five treasures which the good always try to guard, and which you should endeavour to foster---the Cow, the Brahmin, the *Vedhas*, the *Shaasthras*, and Chastity. If these are lost, then, life is lost; everything that adds value to life is lost.

You are your own foe and friend

Where there is *Dharma*, there Krishna is; so, think for yourself, each one of you! How far have you deserved the Grace of the Lord? You draw Him near; you keep Him far. You entangle yourself, bind yourself, and get caught in the trap. No one is your foe except yourself. No one else is your friend; you are your only friend. The *Guru* shows you the road; you have to trudge alone, without fear or hesitation.

The Mahaabhaaraatha clearly explains the bunds which *Sanaathana Dharma* has constructed to direct the wild flocks of the senses and the emotions, into the sea, without harming the banks. *Brahmacharya* (student celibate), *Grihastha* (householder), *Vaanaprastha* (recluse in the forest), *Sanyaasa* (ascetic)---these stages of life with the restrictions and regulations prescribed for each are such bunds to guard the individual and society from the upsurge of the beast in man. Even today, the Mahaabhaaraatha can be of great help; it is an inspiration for all time, for all humanity. The battle between *Dharmakshethra* (the camp of virtue-bound noble Paandavas) and

Kurukshethra (the camp of the egoistic wicked Kauravas) is ever on and however strong the *Kurukshethra* might appear to be, even if it has the

Yaadhavas on its side, so long as the Lord is the charioteer, victory is certain for the champions of *Dharma*. Even now, when the Chinese are pressing on the frontier, the best armour for the country is *Dharma*, which will win the Grace of God. What is not possible for a people who have won that?

Prashanthi Nilayam, 23-4-1963

If only men knew the path to permanent joy and peace, they will not wander distracted among the bye-lanes of sensual pleasure.

Just as the joy felt in dreams disappears when you wake, the joy felt in the waking stages disappears when you wake into the higher awareness, called jnaana. Use the moment while it is available, for the best of uses, the awareness of the Divine in all.

When you die, you must die not like a tree or a beast or a worm, but, like a Man who has realised that he is Maadhava (God). That is the consummation of all the years you spend in the human frame.

Sathya Sai Baba