

## 5. The Message of Shivaraathri

*The 'Chaathaka' bird yearns for moonbeams cool; The bee does yearn for honeyed floral charm; The sick man yearns for curative medicine sweet The devotees yearn for the Lord in Parthi dwells. That, when known, all is known, Which unknown, none is known, That is Brahman, beyond reach of words, This is the Truth, the Path, the word of Sai.*

EMBODIMENTS of the Divine *Aathma* ! Having achieved the rare fortune of a human body, one should ever strive to manifest the excellence which is its credential and to gain, as a result of that manifestation, Divinity Itself. When that is gained, nothing else need be gained. When the vision of That is won, there is nothing more to be visualised. When that is loved, nothing else would appear as worthy of love. All else would be trash and dust. When that is known, all is as good as known.

The 'Chaathaka' bird is all alert to drink the first few nectarine rain-drops that fall from the cloud. It does not allow either the fearsome typhoon, or the reverberations of thunder or the blinding flashes of lightning or even disastrous bolts from the clouds, to distract its concentration. The *Saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant), too, should in the same manner fill his heart with the yearning for God and await His nectarine grace of Love, not being distracted or disturbed by the joy and grief, profit and loss, honour and dishonour, that pummel him from all sides, or by the ridicule, the opposition or even hatred directed on him by his parents, kinsmen, and companions.

### **Prayers should rise from the heart, not from the lips**

But, most *Saadhakas* today are only acting the part and pretending to be spiritually progressing. Their prayers and petitions to the Lord rise, not from the heart, but only from the lips. If the Lord takes them at their word and presents Himself before them offering them the Liberation they demand, they start stuttering and shivering. "Lord! I asked for Liberation, only as a repetitive formula. I do not desire Liberation, if it involves deserting my wife and children and my hard-earned wealth. Confer this gift on me, after my death. That would be more welcome".

There was a woodcutter once who collected and bundled a heavy load of fuel one day, since he needed extra money that day. On the jungle track, he waited long for someone who could help to lift the load on his head. Pining over his tragic poverty he cursed his fate.

He prayed pathetically to Yama, the God of Death. "Why have you forgotten me. Take me into your custody. End this miserable life". And Yama appeared in answer to the call.. "Come, I shall take you to my *Kingdom*", Yama said. The woodcutter replied, "Not so soon, my dear friend. But, you can do me another service. Please lift this bundle of fuel and place it on my head".

These *Saadhakas* bargain with God. They try to use the Lord to solve their problems and promise to adore Him when He brings them prosperity. They believe they can tempt Him with gifts of money, coconuts or cranial hair, as if they possess them by their own unaided skill! No. Offer Him steadfast faith, pure unselfish Love. Man has not tried to understand the magnificence of Love, its precious possibilities. It is far more valuable than tons and tons of erudition and miles-long titles before one's name. Place these on one pan of the balance called 'Life' and place one single drop of Love Divine in the other. The drop will outweigh the junk.

### **The three criteria for the *Saathwik* quality**

The Saadhaka must adhere to *Sathwa* ideal - serenity, purity and equanimity. His inborn nature and social nurture might help him in this, but he must consciously and steadily cultivate this perseverance to attain purity of thought, word and deed. It is wrong to attribute the ups and downs in one's life to the will of God; they are due to the cultivation or neglect of this quality of perseverance.

Expansive Love, purity of intention and an eagerness to sacrifice--these three are the criteria for the *Saathwik* quality. They are the chief limbs of the spiritual body which require attention. Mental health and spiritual well-being depend on these limbs. The assertion, "I take refuge in Buddha" must be based on an illumined intellect. "I take refuge in *Sangha*" must therefore urge the Saadhaka to utilise the intellect as an instrument for the service of *sangha* (society). When the third statement, "I take refuge in *Dharma* (righteousness)" is made, it directs the Saadhaka to utilise it for strengthening and promoting righteousness, morality and virtue. The path of Love is the path of Dharma. Love results in enthusiastic service. Who deserves Love most? Nothing on earth deserves pure Love more than God, if one is aware of God in man, embodiment of Divinity. Everyone has passed through numberless lives in the past, lives spent in utter selfishness. So, egoistic impulses enslave him very drastically even now, preventing unselfish Love from sprouting and spreading. God seeks in man Love and Law. Love has to be regulated by Law. Without Law, Love cannot expand. It will be narrow and crooked. They are the negative and the positive.

#### **People take up social service to advertise themselves**

Love implies understanding and consequently, sympathy and compassion. These confer *Aanandha* (Divine Bliss). But man is lacking in Love and so in *Aanandha* also. When men form conflicting groups and plot to destroy each other, how can joy and peace reside in them? Ancient myths speak of wars of extermination between Gods and demons and between men and *raakshasas* (demons). But history today has to record wars between *raakshasas* who call themselves men.

Love is directed towards selfish ends. Sacrifice and charity are indulged in for the sake of self-aggrandizement. A person donates ten rupees and insists on the fact being published in a ten-inch long headline. People take part in social service in order to advertise themselves. How can the sweet contents be consumed when the bottle is tightly closed by the two corks--pomp and personal publicity. These have to be removed by the screw of selflessness. Then the innate virtues of Love and sacrifice can emerge and elevate your lives.

#### **Purpose of fast and vigil on holy days**

The nature of man is a mixture of progressive and regressive characteristics. He must take note of this and foster the former, to the exclusion of the latter. The will to renounce, to share, to give up, is a precious virtue. Curiosity, the longing to know, is another quality which must be used to know the Reality which appears as many and momentary. This knowledge can be attained only when the consciousness is purified, by the grace of God. Holy days like *Shivaraathri* are marked out in order to impress upon man's mind his duty to impose a 'fast' on the senses and a 'vigil' on his intelligence to keep away polluting impulses and inclinations. This is the Day when Shiva consumed the deadly poison that threatened to destroy the world and saved mankind from perdition.

The aspirant for Divine grace has to remember this day with gratitude. He must not exult when his happiness is promoted, nor be disheartened when misery becomes his lot. "Thy will, not mine" shall be his constant assertion to himself. This is seldom the case. Few seekers seek to unravel the intention of God, to tread the path that leads to Him, to follow the ideals He lays down. They follow their own instincts and judgements and get distress and despair as reward. They are not aware of the sacrilege they commit. They proclaim that God is the inner motivator and that He is present everywhere but they behave as if He is absent in the places they do not like Him to be. They fritter away precious time in dry discussions and controversies about God.

Each one can explore the Truth of God only as far as his capacity--moral, intellectual and mental--an delve into the mystery. One can collect from the ocean only as much water as his vessel holds. God is immeasurably vast; He is beyond the reach of the most daring imagination. A pupil of a particular standard in school has to study the texts prescribed for pupils of that level of intelligence. Annamaacharya, the mystic poet, realised the limitation imposed by one's own failings, He sang:

*"To what extent our minds do reach*

*To that extent your vision we get".*

#### **Do not allow the mind to dwell on others' faults**

God appears to each one in the Form and the magnitude of glory which he can contain. The feeling of separation from God, the Source and Sustenance, is a laudable quality. Nursing it and fostering it can help to consecrate one's heart. Do not allow the mind to dwell on the faults and vices of others; it will be contaminated thereby. Fix it on the fairness and virtues of others; it will be sanctified thereby.

I know that during moments of emotional frenzy, you set aside your real nature and you indulge in abusing others or wish that they come to harm or exult over their distress. Such evil thoughts get implanted in your own minds and grow wild, yielding for your consumption, distress and dishonour in return. Why worry about others? Speak to them if you like them. If you do not like them, leave them alone. Why seek faults in them and talk ill of them? To do so is to invite spiritual downfall. Such people lose all the gains they hope to secure by *japa*, *puuja*, *dhyaana*, or *dharshan* (repetition of Lord's Name, ritual worship, meditation and divine vision). They will remain bitter despite all these saadhanas (spiritual disciplines), like the bitter gourd which a pilgrim carried with him, intending to make it sweet by dipping it in holy waters.

#### **Mind of man should undergo transformation**

The mind of man has to undergo transformation. It must promote not bondage but liberation. It must turn Godward and inward, not world ward and outward. Then only can attempts at economic, political and social transformation succeed in uplifting man's destiny. The mind plays many tricks to please you and give you a great opinion about yourselves. It revels in hypocrisy, riding on two horses at the same time. You may prostrate before Swaami and declare that you have surrendered. But, once you are away, you may behave otherwise and allow faith to fade away. Even the thought that you have not benefited from the *puuja* or *japam* you do, should not pollute your faith. To practise *Saadhana* is your duty, your innermost urge, your genuine activity. Leave the rest to the Will of God. This must be your resolve on holy *Shivaraathri*.

*Prashaanthi Nilayam, 29 February 1984*

