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The Inner Yajna

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37. The inner *yajna*

THE deeds of man elevate him or engender his fall. All deeds of his that are in consonance with the principles of righteousness deserve the dignity of the appellation, *yajna* (sacrificial rite). There are two types of *yajna* mentioned in the sacred texts; the external and the internal. The outer form is not so important or productive. It is mentioned only to be discarded and dismissed, for, of what use is a shell without the kernel? Adoring the Lord while meditating on His Name and Glory is also a form of inner *yajna*.

The *yajna* in which animals were sacrificed at the altar (*bali-peeth*), is an external act, but it has an inner significance. The mind is the sacrificial post and the animal instincts still resident in the human character are to be slaughtered on the *bali-peeth* of the mind. The megalomania in man which urges him on to blind pursuit of power is the buffalo that has to be sacrificed. The foolishness that overwhelms man and renders him weak and docile is the sheep that has to be renounced. The slyness and stratagem-filled mind of man is the cat that has to be given up in the same manner. This is the inner *yajna* of which the outer *yajna* is but a reflection. When the external rites are being performed, their inner significance must be kept in view. It is a sin to go through with the outer formalities without any knowledge of their significance.

Man is many animals in one

Man has passed through many animal lives before he has come to earth in human form. Strains of animal nature such as cruelty, anger, greed and hatred still persist in him. Man is many animals in one. He has the jackal, the buffalo, the tiger, the elephant---all in him. He must east off these traits from his composition. When he indulges in needless and useless controversy on matters beyond his understanding, he is announcing himself as a sheep; when he jumps from one idea to another, from one ideal to another, from one project to another, without fully involving himself in any, he is exhibiting the nature of the monkey.

The nature of the Inner *yajna* can best be understood if we examine the story of Emperor Ball. He was the grandson of Prahlaadha, the celebrated devotee of the Lord. Prahlaadha braved a succession of inhuman tortures inflicted on him by his father to force him to retract his faith. Bali placed at the Feet of the Lord, as an offering to

Him, all the lands he ruled over, as well as Heaven Itself, which he could claim as a reward for his piety. Bali decided to perform the unique *yajna* named *Vishwajith*. One feature of this *yajna* is that it can be undertaken only by an emperor, signifying victory over his enemies and sovereign power over their peoples. The emperor announces by this *yajna* that he is the unquestioned master of the empire that he has enlarged, and immediately after this announcement he rids himself of the vast treasures he has earned and accumulated by force of arms, in lavish charity among all sections of his people.

Bali was a ruler who placed the welfare and prosperity of his subjects foremost in his consideration. He was the symbol of discriminating talent, *Prajna shakthi*. And the Lord who came to him as *Vaamana*, is the symbol of the Divinity latent in every one. When that Divinity manifests Its Omnipresence. It takes on the *Thrivikrama* (the trifold aspect), covering earth, sky and the heavens.

Reason for the Lord seeking charity from Bali

The Lord's Incarnation as *Vaamana* and His Manifestation as *Thrivikrama*, happened at the place later called Siddhaashrama, abode of achievement. This was the place also chosen by sage Vishwaamithra for his austerities. Vishwaamithra means "friend of the Universe." He was not merely a great sage, he was the embodiment of the Higher Will, the *Ichhaa Shakthi* (Power of desire).

Legend has it that the Lord sent Emperor Bali down to the nether regions. This only indicates the trampling of the ego into oblivion. The usual belief is that the performance of *yajnas* according to *Vedhic* regulations will confer worldly prosperity and heavenly joy. But Emperor Bali renounced material benefits and illusory joys. That is the reason why he could get Divine grace to such a large extent that the Lord Himself sought charity from him!

Yajna is an exercise in renunciation

Any act that is performed as a dedication to Godhead is a *yajna*. Manu, the ancient lawgiver, has declared that reverential prostration done before the mother, father and preceptor is indeed a *yajna*; when the egoistic pride or greed is absent and when the object is the good of all, certainly the deed is *yajna*.

Throughout the empire of Bali, there was none so poor that he was forced to beg for alms. Those who came into his realm from outside were also well provided for. The *yajna* is an exercise in renunciation; it should not emerge off and on, and then be submerged. The spirit of renunciation must be evident in every single act throughout one's life. Bali was an example of this type of consistent renunciation. Those who manage to go through life without caring for honest living are akin to the crow, and those who adopt devious ways to earn a livelihood are akin to the jackal.

Though Emperor Bali was born in a *raakshasa clan* (known for its demonic nature, but with the one exception of Prahlada), he had acquired a pure heart, free from hatred and pride. He had mastered the waywardness of his mind. The Lord then appeared before him as a mendicant, as a great tribute to his worthy nature. The Lord asked from him only three feet of ground. This was a symbolic request, for the three feet meant the *bhuu*, *bhuvar* and *suvar lokas*, representing the gross, subtle and causal bodies of man. The *lokas* (worlds) are not placed one over the other or one after the other. They are Immanent, each in the other. The visible *loka* is the *bhuuloka*, the vital atmosphere around it is the *bnuvarloka* and the world of *aanandha* which envelopes the vital is the *suvarloka*. Man has five *koshas* (sheaths) which encase him. The material and the mental comprise the *bhuuloka*, the vital and the intellectual comprise the *bhuvarloka* and the *aanandhamaya* is the *suvarloka*.

Man falls by attachment and rises by non attachment

The royal preceptor of Emperor Bali was Sukraachaarya. He had, by his austerities and scholarship, attained a place of high honour among the monks, but he stood in the way of the renunciation which Bali had set before himself. Sukraachaarya could teach, but he did not himself follow what he taught others as desirable. He was a highly respected monk, but he had this one great flaw. It is such people, who call themselves 'theists' and 'believers,' that promote atheism and disbelief. They have no faith in the validity of what they profess; their actions are contrary to their declarations. Scholars run after possessions which they declare are 'trivial and

temporary.' They preach devotion to God but are devoted to mammon. They accuse others for causing the decline of *dharmā* (righteousness) but they are themselves the cause.

When Bali came forward to offer to the Lord three feet of ground that He had asked for, Sukraachaarya, the all-knowing preceptor, protested and pointed out that the Lord had come only to ruin Bali and rob him of his possessions. But the pupil was greater than the preceptor. He replied, "Well, if He is the Lord Himself who is extending His Palm to receive the gift, I am certainly the most fortunate being on earth. The hand that creates and fosters the Universe is now held before me, and my hand held over It is dropping the gift into It. Do not prevent me. Be happy that It has become possible for me to do this. I shall renounce heaven, my empire and even my life for this one piece of good fortune."

Man falls by *apeksha* (attachment) and rises by *upeksha* (non-attachment). Bali reached the acme of *upeksha* and his preceptor failed to bring him down.

The *Vishwajith-yajna* was the external *yajna* (sacrificial rites), but the inner *yajna* was the great renunciatory surrender of Bali at the Lotus Feet of the Lord. In the consecrated fire of the heart he poured, as offering, his ego nature; he rose, humbler and wiser, and saluted the Divine within Himself, manifest as *Vaamana* incarnate.

Inauguration day of Yajna, Prashaanthi Nilayam, 15-10-1977

What is heard has to be pondered over. What is pondered over has to be put into practice. It is only when all three are accomplished that the realisation of Bliss can be attained.

Sri Sathya Sai