



NEW YEAR MESSAGE-2008 OF SHRI C. B. SATPATHY

The religious and spiritual works of Hinduism have produced an unimaginable body of books, treatise, scriptures and other similar texts. Carried away from the distant past are the most profound religious scriptures like the Vedas, Brahamanas, Puranas, Samhitas, Upanishads, Shrimad Bhagwata Mahapurana (which contains the 'Gita' etc.) and many more too numerous to be listed here. A study of these works, written primarily in Sanskrit or in other vernaculars, leads one to experience a sense of expansion in one's knowledge, imagination and consciousness.

From an academic point of view, these valuable texts teach spiritual philosophies, spiritual theories and spiritual sciences. These in their quintessence propound certain vital aspects of the spiritual realms. Understanding philosophy and theory is the first step for a spiritual practitioner. However, it needs to be clearly understood that a mere study of spiritual and philosophical discourses is not enough. Any knowledge, which is not put into practice, shall not be of much use as the path of spiritual progress calls for direct experience and knowledge. So it is necessary for the spiritual practitioners to graduate to practicing the applied aspect of spiritual science. Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Gyana Yoga, Laya Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Hatha Yoga and tantras etc. are the applied principles.

How does one achieve spirituality? As mentioned before, merely by reading spiritual or religious texts one cannot spiritualise oneself. In its generic sense, the word 'spirit' means an indestructible divine energy form whose continued and unlimited play, sets into motion a series of changes in all forms of existence including human beings, starting before his birth and going beyond his death. Different people understand the word 'spirit' differently. Some term it as 'jiva' (living entity), some term it as 'prana' (life force in the living being), some call it as 'chetna' (divine consciousness) or 'atma' (a part of the ultimate reality called God or Brahma). These four words, jiva, prana, atma and chetna are intrinsically related. However, 'atma' is primordial causative factor, of chetna, jiva or prana. In a way it can be said that, a continued consciousness beyond time and space is the very nature of the 'atman'.

'Atma' and 'paramatma' are the essence of the divine creation, 'ultimate realities' beyond time and space. The cosmos is nothing but the external manifestation of the 'paramatma'. Therefore, each created object contains a subtle and small part of the 'paramatma' termed as the 'atma'. Since 'atma' is a part of 'paramatma' it contains all the attributes of the 'paramatma'. It is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent in an unfathomable time continuum.

So then what is God realization? The word 'atma sakshatakara' (God realization) means, realisation of one's own 'atma' or consciousness. Even though these particles of 'paramatma' called 'atma' may be functioning in a 'Jiva' it is never separate from its root, that is 'paramatama'. Therefore, the realization of God is not the understanding of the material manifestation of 'atma', which includes all the living and non-living, visible and non visible things and forces of the Universe. Even if one can travel to all the Universes in space and gain knowledge about it he cannot have said to have realized God.

Consciousness in its various forms seen on the earth emanates from 'atma' or soul or 'paramatma'. All forms of energy in the Universe emanate from consciousness, and all forms of materials emanate from those energies. Thus, consciousness is superior to energy forms and materials of the Universe. Whereas consciousness can explain and control all energy forms and materials, however, the reverse cannot be true. Therefore, all religious worships of all deities in any form may not necessarily spiritualise a man. Any experiment in the spiritual science, means expansion of his own limited consciousness to the State of Universal Consciousness. That science by which consciousness can thus be evolved is called 'vigyanaya jagata' or spiritual science. To achieve this he has to introspect (dhyana) on his own conduct and thought processes continuously. Idol worship, mantras and rituals are prescribed procedures at the beginning to purify oneself. Once the mind is purified through the control of senses the consciousness slowly starts expanding. There is no short-cut to this.

If one studies Sri Sai Satcharitra, one would find that the actions of Sri Shirdi Sai Baba reflected this Universal Consciousness. To evolve spiritually, we should therefore try to follow his precepts and conduct in letter and spirit.