

THE POOR MAN'S YAGNYA

By

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बहूपकरणा यज्ञाः नाना सम्भार विस्तराः ।

न ते शक्या दरिद्रेण प्राप्तुं धर्मभृतां वरः ॥

विष्णु धर्मोन्तर पुराणे

“Performances of Yagna-Yagnyas involve a lot of money, materials and man power. It is not possible for the poor to perform them and get such results/benefits which the rich one gets” says Vishnu Dharmottara Purana.

Whenever we come across any wealthy, philanthropic, liberal minded and charitable persons, waves of ideas flash over our mind. “What a virtuous person he is”, would be the first exclamation. The liberal mindedness if accompanied with faith in God, it is not only praiseworthy but it also becomes the means to get the grace of God. Such persons are rich not only now but it is believed, they will be rich in the lives to come also. There is a belief that a person is rich now due to his virtuous deeds, he will be born wealthy subsequently too. Thus there are cumulative effects of virtues.

The following “SUBHASHITA” reveals how rare are the charitable ones:

शतेषु जायते शूरः सहस्रेषु च पण्डितः ।

वक्ता दशसहस्रा च दाता भवति वा न वा ॥

“Heroes are born one in hundred. One in thousand can be a scholar. An eloquent speaker can be found one in ten thousand. But a charitable person may or may not be found at any one time”. That is the emphasis of “SHUBHASHITA” on the personalities in question.

The wealthy charitable ones perform sacrifices, build choultries, wells, tanks and temples, go on pilgrimages, and distribute food, money and so on. Like this, they find each and every opportunity for something to give away. In other words, the charitable rich gives away his wealth, for good causes. As a result of this punya, he continues to be rich in future lives too.

But a poor's man lot is different. Because of poverty in this life, one can conclude that he did not give away anything in the past life. Now also he cannot give anything because of poverty conditions. As a result, no Punya is accumulated. Net result is poverty in the next life and subsequently too. Thus poverty is guaranteed. So there seems to be no better chances for him forever. This is also general experience of life. Under the prevailing conditions, therefore, a poor man cannot hope to get neither earthly benefits here, nor in the other world, which a charitable rich gets. Such disparities exist in a society consisting of people both rich and poor. Sometimes strange thoughts haunt the poor as to how to get the results in the other world that are gained by the rich.

This is the burning problem in life for the majority of us and it is the eternal problem. It may be interesting to note that VISHNU DHARMOTTARA PURANA solves this problem. The question which confronts most of us, has been put forth by VAJRA MUNI and it is answered by SAGE MARKANDEYA.

VAJRAMUNI asks that “the rich get benefits like joy in SWARGA, by performing Yagnya and by Daana, Yatra, and by building temples etc. which are expensive. But the poor cannot undertake any such expensive tasks. Is there any alternative spiritual pursuits by which a poor man also can get some results?”

SAGE MARKANDEYA replies as follows:

दरिद्रैरपि यथा प्राप्तुं शक्यं यज्ञफलं द्विजैः ।
सदोपवास निरतैः तस्मात् उपवसेत् नरः ॥

“Whatever Punya the rich people get by performing Yagnya etc. can be got by the poor also by observing Upavasa on the prescribed days”. Observance of Upavasa on the prescribed days like ‘EKADASHI’, ‘VISHNU PANCHAKA’ (fasting for five days in a month), ‘DHARANI-PARANI’ (fasting alternative days), JANMASHTAMI (once in a year) etc. have been prescribed in SHASTRAS and hailed as best spiritual practices. They yield lasting benefits and bring the grace of God. Thus if a poor person desires to get equal results like the rich in the other world, poverty does not pose any problem at all.

What would be the cost of observing each fast? Not even a paise. It does not need any materials nor any body’s help. Net result is one can get the same benefit as one can get by spending money. Then the so called poor ones can observe the methods which do not involve any money at all. It is easy to say, but the fasting routines require enormous will power. One has to bear the fatigue and forbear the depressions willingly.

The lazy who do not believe, will not follow any methods; nor worried about the results. Since they neither have any such aims in life nor the will to achieve an elevation.

मासोपवासात् अर्वग् वा यथा शक्त्या द्विजश्चरेत् ।
यावन् मासोपवासं तु तावत् 'तप' इह उच्यते ॥

For DWIJAS, observance of fastings like EKADASHI (fortnightly fastings), VISHNU PANCHAKA (fasting for five days in a month), DHARANI-PARANI (fasting alternative days), JANMASHTAMI (fasting once a year) etc. are called PENANCE.

उपवासैः प्रतत्पानां दीर्घं सुखं अनन्तरम् ।

Those who do penance through fastings will get eternal happiness.

उपवास तपः शीलाः नाकलोकं उपागताः ।
मोदन्ते त्रिदशौः सार्धं यथा देवगणस्तथा ॥

These persons will attain heavens and there they enjoy all types of pleasures as the Devas enjoy.

Acharya Sri Madhva, in his work “Krishnamruta Maharnava”, calls upon us to understand that one single minded cent percent devoted Namaskara to Lord is more than equal to performing ten Aswa-Medha-Yagas.

एकोपि कृष्णस्य कृतः प्रणामो दशा श्वमेधः अवभृतेन तुल्यः
दशाश्वमेधी पुनरेति जन्म, कृष्ण - प्रणामी न पुनर्भवाय ॥

He points out that as a result of ten Aswa-medha-yaga, one gets the happiest of living in Deva Loka for a very long time. After the expiry of this “very long time”, he has to take his birth again this world. But the one who offers his everything, observes, Upavasa and offers only one namaskara to Krishna, gains eternal happiness and no rebirth.

Again, extolling the greatness and effective results of Upavasa, VISHNU DHARMOTTARA PURANA says:

पापानां पाप - शमनं, सतां ईप्सित - कामदम् ।
उपवासो विनिर्दिष्टः विशेषात् देवताश्रयः ॥

उपवास तपः शीलाः नाक - लोकं उपागताः ।
मोदन्ते त्रिदशैः सार्धं यथा देवगण - स्तथा ॥

वासुदेवं उपाश्रित्य ब्राह्मणैः यैः उपोषितः ।
अनन्त - फलं आण्नोति (तु) अनन्त - संमतो हरिः ॥

वासुदेवं उपाश्रित्य ब्राह्मणैः यैः उपोषितम् ।
ते अद्यापि न निवर्तन्ते समुद्रेभ्य - इव - आपगः ॥

उपोषिता ये विधिवन् - मनुष्याः
ते नाकं आसाद्य सुरो - पमाना ।
देवाङ्गनाभिः सहिता मनुष्याः
भवन्ति लोके गत - सर्व - दुःखाः ॥

“There is no penance equal to Upavasa. Persons who observe penance like this would surely get long term happiness. They even enjoy their happiness with divine personalities in heavens”.

Those who observes Upavasa to please the Lord, and with no other intentions, get immeasurable benefits here and in the other world too. Just like river enters sea and not

return, similarly they would get in to the worlds from where they would never return back to this world of sufferings.

Those who observe the prescribed fasts, would attain the same benefits in the heavens as those get by performing yagas etc.”

Therefore, even though the Sadhanas of the rich and Sadhanas of the poor are different, the ultimate result is the same. If the rich man has the will power to mobilise all his resources, spend his hard earned wealth to perform a Yaga, the poor man to practice his own Upavasa Sadhana need equal will power to pursue a dedicated life-style, restraint, devotion and sincerity. Depending upon ones means and mental makeup, one can choose what type of Sadhana one should observe and get the grace of God. Irrespective of being rich or poor the code of DHARMA SHASTRAS provide golden opportunity for all those who would like to attain salvation.

VISHNU DHARMOTTARA PURANA of BHAGAVAN BADARYANA throws light on the Path of SADHAKAS and enumerates various alternative methods suitable to one's own eligibility and ability. The aim is to help everyone to get released from the bondage and attain eternal heaven