

12. The martyrdom of Mansur

ABOUT 400 years ago, there was a man by name Mansur in the city of Benaras. By virtue of his good *samskaaras* (inherited tendencies) and his preceptor's teachings, he had developed firm faith in the *Vedhic* dictum: "*Aham Brahmaasmi*" (I am God). When people heard him always repeating this aphorism, they questioned him whether he was really God. He used to emphatically tell them thrice, "Yes, I am God." In course of time, he became the target of envy and hatred among the prominent men in Benaras, including *Vedhic* scholars and heads of religious institutions. They went in a body to the King of Benaras and complained against Mansur, saying that he had no knowledge of Sanskrit or scriptures but was going about shouting, "I am God," thereby insulting eminent scholars and *pandiths*. The King summoned Mansur to his court and asked him, "Who are you?" Promptly came the reply, "I am God." The King got him examined by medical experts and found that he was not insane. Then the King advised him to give up saying "I am God," in view of the complaints from scholars and *Mataadhipathis* that he was guilty of blasphemy. Mansur firmly refused to obey the King's command and declared that he would sooner give up his life than forswear his unshakable faith and firm conviction in his oneness with the Divine. He questioned the King boldly, "Why do you want me to give up truth? The truth is: I am God; you are God; everyone is God."

One with purity of heart will find God in all

As he did not change his attitude despite all kinds of persuasions and threats, the King ordered that his hands should be cut off for the offence of disobeying the King. As the King's minions held Mansur tightly and raised their gleaming swords to cut off his hands, Mansur went on boldly shouting aloud: "*Aham Brahmaasmi*" unceasingly and smilingly. After severing both his hands, the executioners went to the King and reported that Mansur was fearlessly and smilingly repeating his declaration even after his hands had been cut off and he was bleeding profusely.

The King went to the scene of Mansur's ordeal and found that the place was reverberating with the sacred sound of "*Aham Brahmaasmi*" coming unceasingly from the tongue of the smiling Mansur as well as from the blood flowing profusely on the ground from his hands. In a short while, Mansur fell down dead with a smiling and calm face and "*Aham Brahmaasmi*" on his lips.

The King was deeply moved and he prostrated at the feet of Mansur. He sent for the scholars, priests, *pandiths* and heads of religious institutions who had complained against the saintly Mansur. On their arrival, he reprimanded them saying, "What is the use of your book learning? You could not recognise or understand the greatness of Mansur. He was a man who established unity in thought, word and deed. You don't practise what you read and teach. You are all a pack of conceited, book-worms, envious of truly great persons. Misled by your complaints, I have committed the sin of virtually murdering such a saintly person. However, he has become a martyr in upholding the highest truth of "*Aham Brahmaasmi*." In order to teach you a lesson and to provide a source of inspiration to you and your progeny, I am building a memorial for Mansur in your *Agrahaaram* itself."

The criterion for true devotion is not proficiency in scriptures or routine performance of so-called spiritual practices, but the realization of the divinity in oneself as well as in all others which can be attained only through steadfast adherence to truth, purity of heart and universal love. Where there is *Chittha Shuddhi* (purity of mind and heart), there will be *Jnaana Siddhi* (attainment of

wisdom). One with *Chittha Shuddhi* need not go to the forest or pilgrim centres in search of God. He will find God in himself and in others too.

Discourse in Thrayee Brindhaavan on 26-3-93 relating the story of Saint Mansur, who died as a martyr four centuries ago with the manthra, "Aham Brahmaasmi" on his lips.