

ANT AND THE SUGARHILL

- Dr. S. V. Raghavan

This narration is used as a metaphor to bring out the ineffable nature of the imperiences on the path towards the Supreme Reality. We are mostly tongue- tied and have to search for words to communicate what we have felt within the deep core of our Being. As the most often quoted upanishadic line goes, 'from where speech as well as the mind return without attaining-yato vacho nivartante apraapya manasaa saha'. It appears then that Silence is the only way of indicating what we imperienced. Silence is the hallmark of spirituality and even as the Master has said, 'Silence stands on the pedestal of Silence' and we have 'Silence Speaks' as one of the most inspiring works of the Great Master to help and guide us on the steep and slippery path of Realization.

This story begins in a remote forest and tells the tale of a humble, and may we say, that of a 'worker' ant which is busy as always moving about in search of food not so much for itself but for its queen and the rest of the colony of ants. One day it so happened that this ant strayed far away from its group while foraging for food and it did

not take too long for it to get lost so to speak in the forest wilderness. Soon it was night- fall and it had to rest and continued its exploration the next day and the day after too. It was singularly unlucky not to find even a morsel (according to its scale!) of food. It started feeling despondent firstly because it could not succeed in its tiresome efforts and secondly and more importantly it had lost all contact with its own family.

Soon by the grace of the Almighty it sighted a mound of Sugar; here for the purpose of this narrative I would ask the readers to assume with me that till then no ant knew anything called sugar, that is, its tribe had never seen, taken a lump in their mouths nor tasted the substance. To the ant's tiny little opening in its tiny head called its eye, the mound of sugar looked infinitely vast and big.

To the 'anu' this indeed was 'mahato maheeyan', no limits seemed to exist for the immensity that was the sugar hill.

We assume that the Almighty endowed this particular ant, the 'divya chakshus' and the 'divine understanding', even as the Lord gave to the warrior Arjuna, so that it could form some idea at least about the substance stretching before its curious eyes. The hungry ant rushed

forward and managed to be at the foothills so to speak of this 'sugar mountain'. It opened the tiny opening called its mouth and took as much of the sugar crystals as it could hold in it. It became too much of a job for it to hold the sugar and not only that, it was not too sure whether at all it should gulp it down into its tiny stomach! For this was a 'strange' and mysterious substance, whether it will save it from certain death caused by food deprivation or it would put it to a troublesome end, the Creator alone could say, so thought the ant. It had not heard anything about such a thing being discussed by the elders at the customary story sessions. As it was contemplating thus the sugar started dissolving in its mouth and what an unexpectedly delicious taste it was, something it had never tasted before. It was not only delicious but profoundly nourishing that all its pent up hunger vanished in a moment. A new energy surged in and through its vitals and it felt like it had taken a dose of the proverbial elixir.

Now it started helping itself with more and more of the substance and it appeared that it could keep on feasting itself on it.

After a while it remembered its companions and it felt that they too should have a taste and share of this

wondrously delicious and nourishing substance, which never seemed to exhaust itself, so abundant it was seemingly good enough to last for generations of its kind. Accordingly it wended its way backwards the way it came taking care to leave a trail so that it could get back to the sugar hill with its companions. As luck would have it, the ant was able to meet fairly soon some of its friends who had gone out in search of their brother ant. Immersed as was the ant in the bliss of the taste of that substance, it could hardly recognize its bosom pals.

The awakened consciousness of the ant was silently singing the paeans of praise to That supreme substance which had by now been assimilated and pervaded its entire being making its senses and limbs dumb and dormant. They had become virtually useless as if it were for normal transactions of its day-to-day world. After a while the ant came to its 'senses' in the sense of invertendo and greeted its bretheren who asked in amazement how it had kept alive what made it survive these many days and what indeed it was which had put it almost in a condition of deep intoxication as if it were.

Now the ant could not say a thing as it could get no words to describe its condition even in its state of awakening so to speak. There was simply nothing to employ in its normal 'antspeak' to say anything at all;

there was no similar experience all of them had had even as a species, which it could compare with what it had undergone a little while ago. All it could mumble was, 'I am extremely happy; I am blessed; I am supremely fortunate to have stumbled upon this 'divine' substance and I want all of you here and those back home to have a taste of it your/themselves for it cannot be communicated otherwise'.

So saying it led its bretheren to the 'sugar hill' and made them feast on it. No doubt it had itself a second helping, a third and many more. All of them forgot for many a day that they had their friends back home and when they remembered it they felt not alittle ashamed for not having hurried soon enough back home to lead them to this substance- the source, sustenance and nourishment. It soon so happened that the ants established a big colony in and around the 'hill' to partake of the same. Soon other species got wind of it and they too started enjoying the delicious substance.

Post script: The nuclear idea behind the above tale originated in the words, 'ant and the sugarhill' formed during one of my meditation sessions and I thought of weaving the story as above.