

GOT FAITH ?

Belief is when you accept an idea regardless of it being logical or illogical. Belief comes after reasoning and argument and it can be changed when there is a doubt in ones mind. But Trust and Faith are even closer, Trust has memory, Faith doesn't. Trust is intelligent, Faith is innocent. Trust comes after Love, Faith brings love. Trust observes, Faith believes.

FAITH = BELIEF + ACTION + CONFIDENCE. One of the most important spiritual qualities that one needs to cultivate is FAITH. Faith is the one true source of support on which we can always rely in the rough and tough journey called Life upon this earth. Faith is a knowledge within the heart beyond the reach of proof said Kahlil Gibran. It means complete trust or confidence in someone or something and in the Spiritual context it means faith in God or in the doctrines or teachings of religion. Some real time examples of people who had Faith...

Inspired by my friend Captain K.K. Venkatraman who was with the Kumaon Regiment (6'th Battalion) during the Indo-Pak war (Liberation of (East Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh) in 1971 and who narrated his Spiritual experience of doing the Narmada Parikrama (circumbulation/Pradakshinam) all by himself in the year 1987 covering a distance of 2620 kms by foot, i 'am writing this article on "FAITH."

While "Girivalam" (going round a hill) is common, going round a river is uncommon. In fact, there are only 2 rivers associated with this practice. People go round Ganga for a short stretch from Rishikesh to Haridwar using the bridges at these places. But, Narmada is the only river, people walk round the entire length (generally clockwise) on barefoot without carrying money and surviving only on sought or offered food. This parikrama is normally done by villagers living in the valley in 3 years, 3 months and 13 days, Captain Venkatraman did it in 131 days !!

Narmada is the longest of the west flowing rivers of India. The river originates from a holy tank in Amarkantak in M.P. situated 1050 M above sea level. The landscapes along the meandering Narmada are thickly forested slopes, rocky regions with falls and cultivated lands.

The 2528 kms journey walking round the river (covering both the banks) is difficult because one has to do it barefoot through rough terrain, forests which is the habitat for wild animals, snakes and to live only on bhiksha observing severe austerities, without carrying money. One should observe a vow of chastity, sleep on the floor, should not shave or cut hair, not use oil, soap and walk only from sunrise to sunset. Captain Venkatraman started his Parikrama on 26th October 1987 and completed it on 4th March 1988 walking a distance of 2528 kms in 131 days i.e 20 Kms/day !! Having confidence in himself, FAITH in the supreme Grace, (this task would have otherwise been impossible) and the physical toughness and mental robustness acquired during his Army service, he courageously undertook this arduous task. Regular practice of Suryanamaskar, Yogasana and Pranayama for years helped him in keeping effortlessly his mind under control and vision focused on the goal. He says nothing is impossible if one has confidence in oneself, unshakable faith in the Almighty and adds that a man of FAITH lives in Peace, with Stability and Equanimity. Faith is taking the first step even if you don't see the full staircase !! Walking cross country the ankles of Captain did not get twisted even once nor did he step on a snake !! His weight remained almost the same after his Narmada Parikrama. In fact, he did not carry any money but had deep faith in God who would provide him food and the villagers fed him generously. Only on 2 occasions he did not get food during the entire 131 days !! Captain accepts that it was because of his ego !!

The American effort to send astronauts to the moon has its origins in a famous appeal President John F. Kennedy made to a special joint session of congress on May 25 1961. I believe with great Faith that this Nation should commit itself to achieving this goal , before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to Earth. From belief to reason, through reason to knowledge, from knowledge to action with confidence to ultimate Faith, Apollo 11 landed on the moon after covering a distance of around 4,00,000 kilometers and Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin Jr set their foot on the moon.

Dr Mark is a cancer specialist in the U.S. He had set off on a long flight to participate in a conference and receive an award for his contribution in the field of medical research. He boarded the flight and 2 hours after the flight took off it had to land on an emergency basis since the aircraft had developed a technical snag. On alighting from the aircraft Dr Mark

went to the counter and tried to get a ticket in the next immediate aircraft but was dismayed to hear that the next flight was a at least 8 hours away; he was certain that he would not make it to the conference. The girl at the reception however told that if he could rent a car he could drive the distance to his destination in 4 hours. Frantically he rented the car and started driving towards the conference city at a full clip.

It was certainly not his day he thought, for suddenly the weather changed and a heavy thunderstorm. The heavy downpour made it very difficult to stay on track yet keep up the speed and half way through he missed a turn and was proceeding fast in the wrong direction. The weather grew worse and he realized that he had lost his way, the lights were receding and the road was deserted. He was searching for some habitation and he was happy when he saw an old dilapidated house. He parked his car in the front and with the rains pouring he crossed the road and reached the house completely wet.

A young lady opened the door and Mark asked her if he could use her telephone. The lady replied that she did not have a phone but requested him to come inside dry himself have some tea and something to eat before the weather cleared. Exhausted Dr Mark stepped inside gratefully and accepted her offer. The lady then asked if he could join in for prayers. Dr Mark smiled and said, "I don't believe in prayers, but believe in only hard work;" however he requested her to go about with her prayers. Sipping his tea he saw through the dim lights that the lady was sitting near a baby crib praying. Every time she finished with her prayer she would continue with another one.

Dr Mark sensed that the lady needs some help from God and that's why she was praying. Once the lady was through with her prayers Dr Mark asked her, "If I may ask you, what exactly are you praying to God? And who is the child in the crib?" The lady replied, "it's a sad story sir." The child in the crib is my son and he is suffering from a rare type of cancer." Mark said, "so why don't you have him treated by a specialist?" The lady replied, "I am told that for this particular type of cancer only Dr Mark can cure and I can't afford the fees and moreover he lives in a far away city." The lady continued, "but sir, God will definitely create a way one day and my son would definitely get cured; I will not allow my fears to quell the Faith I have in God, sooner or later God will help me."

Stunned and overwhelmed he fell on his knees and started crying. He said, all along he was neither a Theist or an Atheist nor an Agnostic but believed only in hard work. He spoke in a quiet voice and told her about the sequence of events that took place earlier during the day – malfunctioning in the plane, a thunderstorm hit and how he lost his way and finally her prayers. He declared, “ all this happened for God to not only answer your prayers but also for people who live in this materialistic world and give some time to the hapless people who do not have many resources but rich prayer and devotion to be helped. The storm did clear and the 3 of them went to the city Dr Mark was staying, the surgery was performed and after a few months everything became alright for the lady and her son. Faith works...Miracles do happen...

Faith without works is dead. Faith is seeing with the eyes of the heart. It has been said that faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible. Faith and fear do not exist together nor do faith and doubt exist together. Faith also means confidence, belief, loyalty or allegiance. To one who has faith no explanation is necessary. To one without faith no explanation is possible said St. Thomas of Aquinas.

The life of man is powered by Faith. We repose our faith in our parents when we are young. As we grow older, friends, family, spouses, partners are added to the list of people we trust. We have faith in the law of the land, in the system of Justice and governance, we have faith in medicine, doctors, engineers. Life cannot pose a question which faith cannot answer.. Faith is the key to the Universe. Faith does not however guarantee that we will never come face to face with sorrow, suffering, weakness or disappointment. But Faith can give us the courage, the right attitude and ability to face the problems and emerge victorious. Faith in God and in one's own self is virtue. Doubt is sin. Faith is like Wi Fi, It's invisible but has the power to connect you to what you need. Jesus said, "Truly i tell you if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.

Faith is the transference of responsibility and understanding that it is not my will but thy will which would prevail. God sometimes upsets your plans so that he could execute His and His plans are always right. Do you have Faith?

