

6. Who am I ?

THE Cosmos is a manifestation of the Divine. They are foolish who, while seeing the handiworks of the Divine everywhere, think that there is no God. Without recognising the omnipresence of God, men seek God somewhere or the other. This reflects the dualistic attitude of the persons who identify themselves with the body and alienate themselves from God. While God is omnipresent and can be recognised in the divine manifestations of Nature, the body consciousness prevents men from experiencing oneness with the Divine.

How is God to be experienced? The first requisite is purity of heart. All religions have affirmed the basic importance of purity. The aim of all *Sadhanas* is to achieve peace. Compassion towards all beings is devotion to God.

God cannot be experienced through the ostentatious observance of rituals and worship. Where there is pomp and show there can be no divinity. The bliss of the Divine cannot be found there. As a seed will not sprout on the rocky ground, the bliss of Divine cannot be realised by worship devoid of humility and sincerity.

All *sadhanas* (spiritual efforts) are not pursued for realising the *Atma* (Divine Self). There is no need to seek the *Atma*, which is all pervasive and present everywhere. *Sadhanas* are performed to get rid of the *anatma* (that which bars the vision of the *Atma*). Man forgets his real nature and loses himself in the consciousness of what he is not. He forgets that he is *the Atma* in reality.

In the state of deep sleep, one is totally unaware of his name, form, position, etc. But on waking, he realises that the "I", of which he is conscious in the waking state, was present in deep sleep too. The purpose of all *sadhanas* is to discover the nature of the "I" that is experienced in all different states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep.

***Atma* is the basis for everything**

Man identifies himself with a particular name and form and builds up all relations on that basis. But how real and permanent are these names and forms? They are all projections of the mind and have an existence only as long as the mind and body remain. The heart represents the *Atma*. It is self-effulgent. The light from the heart (*Atma*) illumines the mind and enables it to see the external world. Without this illumination the mind cannot comprehend the world.

The mind is like the moon which receives its light from the sun. It has no light of its own. It shines because of the light from the *Atma*. When the sun shines, the moon is hardly visible. Likewise, when there is awareness of the *Atma*, the mind is not perceivable. The *Atma* is the basis for everything.

Men are naive in imagining that the *Atma* is inside the body. The truth is the body, the mind, the entire cosmos is in the *Atma*. *The Atma* cannot be inside anything else. It is the All. It is the everything. Those who perform *japa*, *dhyana* or *puja* (reciting God's name, meditation, worship), conceiving God as separate from themselves, are the victims of dualism. Whatever their scholarship, they are ignorant of their own true nature when they alienate God from themselves. God is in the heart of man.

Essential objective of Spiritual Quest

All man's spiritual exercises are at the mental level. By these means, the *Atma* cannot be realised. The *Vedas* have declared: *Yatho vaacho nivarthanthe apraapya manasaasah* ("Whence

mind and speech turn back unable to reach it"). Neither the mind nor speech can comprehend the nature of the Atma. The mind is turned towards the external by the sense organs. It is only by withdrawing it from the sense objects, that it can be made to develop an antarmukham (inner vision).

The "I" principle is present everywhere. It begins with the Divine itself. The first word was "Aham" ("I"). Even the *Pranava* ("Om") came after "*Aham*". Before all creation "Aham" alone existed. That "*Aham*" became the many. One who realises the oneness of what he regards as his "I" with the cosmic "Aham" alone knows his Reality. The universal "I" appears under different names and forms in different bodies owing to time and circumstance. Even the same person goes through many changes in form and relationships in life. But the "I" remains unchanged. It is like an actor wearing different disguises, but himself remaining one and the same. The realisation of the unchanging and universal character of the "I" (the Atma) is the essential objective of the spiritual quest.

***Tapas* must result in softening of heart**

The sense of duality arises when the "I" (Aham) assumes a specific form and name. "*Ahamkara*" (the ego-sense) is the result of this change in form. It is only when one dissociates himself from name and form that he can discover his true divine self. To forget his essential divinity and identify himself with a changing and impermanent form is the cause of bondage and sorrow. It is the mind that is the cause of this wrongful identification, because of its involvement with the external world and the impressions received through the senses. When the workings of the mind are understood, the reality of the Atma, which is beyond the mind, will be experienced as the One omnipresent, immutable principle.

Duality is an obvious fact of every day life. All *sastras*, *puranas* and *ithihasas* (spiritual sciences, epics and ancient legends) have recognised this duality and sought to regulate men's lives on that basis. As long as men are engaged in activity in the phenomenal world in any capacity, the dualistic attitude is inescapable. All scriptural injunctions are designed to regulate men's conduct in the phenomenal and the temporal world. The *Vedas* attach great importance to time. The *sastras* prescribe duties in relation to time, circumstance and situation. The science of astrology prescribes what should be done according to changes in time. The *Panchanga* (almanac) indicates what are likely to happen on the basis of astrological data. During this new year, Prabhava, the indications are encouraging. Out of the nine *grahas* (planets), seven are favourably disposed. The moon is the ruling planet for the year. *Kuja* (Mars) is the Minister. Their influence is powerful this year. *Sani* (Saturn) is weak. There will be no scarcity of food and water this year. Food production will increase substantially.

However beneficial the changes may be in the sphere of natural forces, without a change in men's outlook and conduct, they will be of no use. Many persons claim that they are observing rigorous *tapas* (austerities). What is the outcome of these austerities? If their hearts soften and they show compassion towards the ailing and the helpless, only then has their penance any meaning. A compassion-filled heart is the real fruit of *tapas*. All the *sadhanas* performed by a hard-hearted person are utterly futile.

Meditation is implied in all daily chores

Many undertake meditation as a spiritual exercise and expend many hours on it, But, in fact, meditation is implicit in almost every act that is done from morning till night. Meditation (in the

sense of concentration) is implied in all the daily chores like eating, going to work, attending to business, etc. One is meditating while reading or playing or shopping.

Without concentration no activity of any kind can be done. When the concentration is on God, it becomes spiritual meditation. Does such meditation call for a specific time or place? There is no special technique for meditation. By giving meditation some special names, they are forgetting its real significance. For instance, if people do not listen with *dhyana* (one-pointed attention) to Swami's discourse, they will not remember what Swami said. Even listening calls for *dhyana*. It has no specific form. No *dhyana* is possible with a wandering mind.

See God in everything you do

Today, in the name of *dhyana*, several stunts are being practised. Instead of spending hours in so-called meditation with a mind restlessly hopping from one thought to another like a monkey, it would be better to concentrate on the performance of one's household, official and social duties with earnestness and dedication. Is that not meditation? Of what use is it to sit in "meditation" for an hour, when you cannot keep your mind still for a minute? Think about God while carrying on your regular duties. Regard all work as sacred offering to the Divine. See God in everything you do. Instead of following this simple and easy path, people are engaged in all forms of gymnastics and subjecting themselves to various hazards. Devote yourselves to your duties. Meditation is not confined to any one thing. It should permeate every action you do.

Some aspirants wish to seek *ekantham* (solitude). But being alone is not solitude. People go to Hrishikesh, Haridwar or Tapovanam in search of solitude. Only those who have not understood the real meaning of solitude will resort to such things. There is real solitude (alone-ness) only when the mind is completely stilled. If while sitting alone in a forest your mind is ruminating on affairs of the world, how can it be called solitude? Without curbing thoughts, loneliness cannot be found anywhere. Either thoughts have to be eliminated or all thoughts should be turned towards the Divine.

Many imagine that they are deriving happiness by enjoying the things of the world. They should examine who is 'enjoying' whom. In reality, far from their 'enjoying' the things they possess, it is their possessions which are enjoying them. The hatred, anger, envy and other evils bred by possessions lead only to disease and misery. Why should the body suffer from ills if really possessions were the source of happiness? Man is losing real happiness by attachment to things which cannot give him happiness.

Set your sight on the Supreme

Those who have faith in the *Gita* should note that it has clearly declared that this world is ephemeral and "a vale of tears", and enduring peace and bliss are not to be found by attachment to it. The source of lasting peace and happiness is within ourselves. That is the *Atma* (the Divine self). It is by realising it that peace and bliss have to be secured. One must constantly develop the consciousness that the *Atma* is everything--the doer, the deed and the outcome thereof. When the consciousness is broadened this way, in due course it leads to Self-realisation. If your vision is broad, your destination will also be of the same magnitude. A narrow outlook can lead only to a narrow alley. If you are immersed all the time in the petty trifles of mundane existence, when will you ever understand the Reality which is beyond the physical and the mental? Set your sight on the Supreme. The illumination will come in a flash.

Everyone should develop the consciousness that "I am *Atma*. I am *Brahman*". When one says, "I am *Brahman*" it is evident that there is "I" in *Brahman*. Who is that "I"? "*Brahman*" means pervasiveness. In declaring "I am *Brahman*", the consciousness of all-pervasiveness should be developed. *Brahman* is all-pervasive. It is equally present everywhere. You should regard yourselves as all-pervasive, omni-self. Whatever you do, whatever you see, whatever you speak, saturate it with Divinity so that you may be aware of your Reality.

You should find out what you really are

The world will exist for you as long as you have the feeling of duality. In the deep sleep state you enjoy the real bliss. You are not aware at that time of your body, your mind, your feelings, your qualities, or thoughts, but still you exist. That same pure "you" exists in the waking state, the dream state and the deep-sleep state. In the gross, the subtle and the causal states "you" exist. In all these states and stages, it is the Atmic principle which remains, without undergoing any change.

The physical body which performs *Japam* or *Dhyanam* or the various other spiritual practices is but a water-bubble. The mind which is based upon this physical body is but a mad monkey. With the help of this mad-monkey mind and this water-bubble body, how can you hope to achieve the permanent *Atma*? *Japa*, *Dhyana*, *Bhajans*, austerities, sacrifices---these are all methods for temporarily controlling the mind. But there is one practice that will have a permanent effect, and that is self-enquiry. You should go on enquiring "Who am I? Who am I?" until you reach the stage where you find out who you really are. The enquiry should go on thus, "Here is my body, here is my mind, my heart, my feelings, my intellect, my memory power. I am not any of these. Someone has praised me. Someone has censured me. But to whom does this pertain? Only to this physical body." In this way you have to develop a sense of detachment and a sacrificing nature. How can a physical body abuse another physical body? That is inert, and this is also inert. How can inert things criticize or admonish? They cannot. How can they even worship anything?. They cannot. But then, can *Atma* criticize another *Atma*? That is absurd.

One person who has seen God says, 'God exists.' Another person who has not seen God, says, 'God does not exist'. If a person has not seen God, then how can he assert that God does not exist? Here, for example, is Nanjundayya. The one who sees Nanjundayya declares that this is Nanjundayya. If you point out Chakravarti to one who knows Nanjundayya, saying, 'This is Nanjundayya', the answer will be, 'No, he is not Nanjundayya'. A person who has never seen Nanjundayya, cannot say whether Nanjundayya is here or not. Only one who has seen another person is able to declare whether that person is here or not. In the same way, only that person who has seen God and knows God has the authority-to declare that God exists. One may assert and the other may negate but the object itself remains all the same. For both God exists because all that is there is only this one *Atma*, this one *Brahman*. *Brahman* is *Atma* and beyond that nothing else exists.

Faith and God are one and the same

Many people aspire for grace, love, devotion and humility. All these are the forms of the *Atma* (Divine self). God is not different from faith. Faith and God are one and the same. Love is God, Devotion is God, they are not different entities. What is the meaning of devotion? Devotion is that which enables the unmanifested divine principle to manifest itself in the inner vision of the devotee. Then for that devotee nothing else will exist other than He. To reach that stage you must discharge your duties keeping the permanent entity constantly in mind. You can cross the vast,

deep ocean of worldly existence and enjoy the infinite Divinity that is its reality, with the help of a small boat. That boat is the Name of God. In the beginning of the spiritual journey the name is the basis for progress, but it should not become life-long support, depending entirely on it alone.

Whatever service you are rendering you should not feel that you are serving others, but that you are serving God Himself. While taking a bath or giving one to the children, consider that you are doing the purification ritual of washing God Himself. While serving food consider that you are offering it to God Himself. While giving food to a beggar, consider that God has come in this form and you are serving Him.

It seems that it is a beggar who is asking, but it is the Atma who is enjoying the food you give. When you are cutting some vegetables for cooking, consider that you are cutting away your desires and ego with the knife of wisdom. While sweeping the floor don't lament, 'O, it keeps getting dirty again and again.' Think rather that you are cleaning your own heart. If you are rolling *Chapathis* at home, consider what joy it is to roll and knead and expand your heart. In this way, you can consider every activity you undertake as being done for the sake of God. Then where is the need for separate meditation, separate penance or separate worship?

Love can accomplish everything in the world

Consider your heart as *Atma*. Soften it and make it full of compassion. That is the only spiritual exercise you need to perform. Narasimhan has told you that so many people are coming to Prasanthi Nilayam from different parts of the world. What brings them here? Are invitations sent? Does anyone ask them to come? It is only on account of love that is here and felt heart to heart. Through love you can accomplish anything in the world. Consider love as the *Atma* itself. However many scriptures you may read and however many spiritual exercises you may do, if you do not allow your heart to melt with compassion your life will be a sheer waste. All practices have to be directed towards softening your heart so that it will flow with kindness and love. Develop this feeling of compassion and allow it to flow fully and spread among all the peoples of the world.

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