

21. The Spirit of freedom and freedom of the Spirit

IT IS not easy for the common people to understand what is spirituality and what is meant by freedom of the individual. People should not think that Spirituality means being alone and living in solitude. The aim of Spirituality is to sow the seeds of love in all mankind and enable the buds of Peace to blossom in their minds. If we seek divinity in this exercise, there will be no room for either spirituality or freedom of the individual. ("*Spirituality and Freedom of the Individual*" was the theme of a debate which preceded Bhagavan's discourse). Participants in the debate did not recognise the role of the heart. They seemed to think that freedom consists in speaking out whatever they feel.

No one in the world has absolute freedom. Freedom came to be used as a political concept. It was believed that to liberate the country from foreign rule and establish Government by the natives of the country constituted freedom. This is neither individual nor Fundamental Freedom. What were done in the name of freedom were really manifestations of egoistic impulses. After the foreign rulers left, we thought the people had won freedom. In what respect did the people acquire freedom? There is no use merely mouthing the word Freedom.

Only when unity is achieved will freedom be meaningful. Without unity, to talk about freedom means only freedom in words and not in real life. Freedom should express itself from the heart. Heart here does not refer to the physical heart. "Heart" is not related to any particular place, time or individual or a country. *Hridayam* (heart) refers to that Divine principle which is equally present everywhere, at all times and in all people in every country. This heart has no form. What is regarded as heart in a human body is a transient thing. The freedom consists in the recognition of that Divinity by knowing which all else is known.

Knowledge of the Self is most essential

"As in the microcosm, so in the *macrocosm*" (*Brahmaanda*) is a scriptural saying. The microcosm is a part. The macrocosm is the universal. Man today seeks to know many things, but does not know his own true self. In the Upanishads, there is an episode relating to a great *pandit*, Uddalaka, and his son, Swethakethu. Uddalaka sent his son to another preceptor for studies. Swethakethu studied under the *Guru* for 12 years and learnt all the different subjects. Puffed up with pride about his vast learning, he came to his father and told him that he had learnt everything. The father asked him: "Dear Son! Did you study that by knowing which everything else is known?" The lad's conceit was deflated. Of all forms of conceit, the pride in one's scholarship is the silliest. Uddalaka impressed on Swethakethu that *Brahmajnana* (knowledge of the *Atma*) was most essential.

Try to understand the "I" which is the heart

When anybody asks you, "who are you?" and if you reply, "*I* don't know," you will be considered a crazy person. How are you better than that person if without finding out who you are, you embark on enquiring into the nature of other things? You have first of all to find out who you really are. If you give your name as Ramayya, you are disclosing the name given to your body. When you say, "I am Ramayya," there is an entity (the "I") which is different from Ramayya. You must try to understand that "I." That "I" is the heart. It is the *Atma*. It is *Brahmam*.

In the world, there are all kinds of differences, high and low, good and bad, merit and sin, joy and sorrow, truth and falsehood, and the like. But although these differences are apparent, no differences can be seen in the heart. That which did not exist in the beginning and which will not last for ever has only a brief illusory existence in the middle. For instance, this silver tumbler has a name and a form. But originally it was just silver and ultimately will remain as silver. The name and form as tumbler are only passing phases. All that is transient and changing is called *Mithya*.

"Ekam Sath" (The Real is only One). Only when there is a second entity can you speak about freedom or bondage. Freedom and bondage are creations of the mind. When you are not engaged in spiritual enquiry, the mind gets prominence and is the cause of involvement in matters like freedom and bondage, the worldly and the otherworldly, and other dualistic phenomena.

Limits to freedom in respect of three situations

In respect of three situations, man has no freedom: *karthavyam* (the discharge of duties), *nirbandham* (actions done under compulsion) and *sambandham* (obligatory actions arising out of certain relationships). If a poor man, unable to get food by begging, resorts to stealing, he cannot claim that he is exercising his freedom to appease his hunger. Even if, for his own selfish reasons, he may try to justify the stealing, his conscience will tell him that he is committing wrong. When he acts against his conscience, how can it be an act of freedom? True freedom can come only when one is free from the impulses of the mind. *Swechcha* (freedom) is made up of the words: *Swa* + *ichcha*. "*Swa*" refers to the *Atma*.

Only when the will of the *Atma* prevails can there be real freedom. Actions done by the promptings of the mind or the senses cannot be regarded as free actions. There are some actions which are done according to the laws of Nature. Even these are not free actions. Man is also subject to rules and regulations laid down by the appropriate authorities. Human life is carried on between these two types of restrictions. In view of this, no one can claim that he is free to act as he pleases. Only the Divine is free. But this cannot be described as freedom, because the Divine is One.

True meaning of surrender and *samadhi*

Some devotees declare that although they have surrendered themselves totally to Swami, their troubles and difficulties have not ceased. In My view this does not indicate *Saranaagathi* (real surrender). If it is true surrender, there is no place for speaking about the continuance of troubles and difficulties. Some others claim that they have experienced moments of *Samadhi* during meditation.

What is *samadhi*? In common parlance, in the eyes of worldly people and in the books written by worldly individuals, *Samadhi* may be described in various ways. One may be in a state of trance during meditation. But this cannot be called *Samadhi*. It may be an emotional or mystical experience or it may be the result of a fit. It may even be due to weakness. It is not *Samadhi*. *Samadhi* means merging the mind in the *Atma*. In that state, there are no two entities. *Samadhi* is a state of equal-mindedness. In that state there are no dualities like joy and sorrow, profit and loss, sin and merit, Nature and *Paramatma*. It is the state in which the oneness of everything is experienced. As long as differences and distinctions remain, there is no realisation of *Samadhi*.

As long as the mind is active, no one can be truly free. In the worldly sense, one may claim that "This is my money. I am giving it to him. He may think that he is acting freely. But this is not real freedom. It is an act of goodwill arising out of the *Satwic* aspect of the mind. The mind is a mixture of all the *gunas* (*Satwa, Rajas, Tamas*). At various times, different qualities are prominent. If you give a donation in response to the appeal of a man in need, it is a mental reaction to a particular situation and not an exercise of freedom.

A man swinging a stick on the top of his terrace may be free to do so. But he cannot do the same thing on the public road lest he should hit someone who has an equal right to the use of the road. If he swings the stick on the road, either he may be arrested by the police or taken to a mental hospital. What a man does in his own house is not freedom but indulging in satisfaction of his wishes. There is a real distinction between the exercise of freedom and the satisfaction of one's desires. The latter is based on self-interest. Freedom consists in the spontaneous expression of what comes from the heart in respect of any object or any individual, at any time. This is true freedom.

Everyone has the Divine potential in him

You should not think that men who have achieved eminence or the high intelligence displayed by some persons owe their accomplishments to some external power. The talents have emerged from within themselves. All powers are within you. You have no need to go to someone outside for achieving anything. All that is needed is the external manifestation of the powers within you. The main *sadhana* you have to do is to control the vagaries of the mind. Krishna told Arjuna that his mastery of archery was not conferred on him by his preceptor, but the preceptor only drew out the abilities that were already in him. No preceptor can enable a disciple to accomplish what is not potentially within him. When you dig a well and find water at a level of 100 feet, the water was already there. You merely found it by removing the earth above it. Likewise, men tend to forget the Divine potentialities in them because of identification with the body.

People talk glibly about Free Will. There is only one seat of Freedom and that is the heart (the spiritual heart). It is permanent and unchanging. As long as man is swayed by the mind, there will be differences and distinctions. These are due to the waywardness of the mind and are not indications of individual freedom.

A student seeking an answer for a certain problem has to adopt the proper procedure for approaching the teacher. He should not regard asking the question and obtaining the answer as an exercise in freedom. It is part of your duty as a student. A clear distinction should be made between what has to be done as one's duty and what is obligatory in other contexts.

Spirituality itself is freedom

Keeping the *Atmic* consciousness in the forefront, you may perform any act. You will be acting in freedom. There are no two different types of freedom--individual freedom and spiritual freedom. Spirituality itself is freedom. You convert milk into curds, get butter by churning the curds and get ghee from the butter. The milk has gone through many changes, but it is the same milk in different forms at different stages. In the same way, there are four stages in the realisation of the Divine! *Saalokyam* (to be in the realm of God),

Saaroopyam (having the vision of God), *Saameepyam* (proximity to God) and *Saayujyam* (mergence in God). These appear to be different from each other, but are all merely steps in the realisation of oneness with the Divine.

Any talk of freedom for man in this phenomenal world can only refer to an insane or egoistic freedom. It may also be used in respect of certain relationships like a man's attitude to his child or wife. But the exercise of freedom towards them in an authoritarian manner can be described only as a travesty of freedom. It is a sign of foolishness. It is unbecoming of anyone calling himself a human being to behave in such an egoistic manner. Man can raise himself to a higher level only if he gives up such egoistic behaviour. You must recognise that you must accord to others the same amount of freedom which you claim for yourself. Freedom is thus interdependent and cannot be absolute or unrestricted. Your freedom to use the public road is subject to traffic regulations, which you have to observe. If you violate them, you run the risk of action by the police or meeting with an accident.

Man is bound from the time of birth

In whatever way the question of freedom is considered, it will be clear that man is bound from the time of birth. A cow tethered to a post has freedom to move about limited by the length of the rope tied to its neck. A freedom limited in this manner cannot be called freedom. It is not even "limited freedom." It is really a form of restraint.

Today people do not use words in their proper sense. For instance, the term *Hridaya* (Heart) is used as relating to the physical heart. But this is not the right meaning. *Hridaya* refers to the spiritual heart, which is common to all. It is present everywhere. It has no form. Like sugar in a variety of sweets with different forms, it is present in all beings as one and the same Spirit. All differences are reflections of mental aberrations. The Divine makes no difference between one person and another. All differences of caste or community relate to worldly associations. Even to describe Rama as a Kshatriya, Krishna as a Yadava and Sai Baba as a Kshatriya is a sign of narrow-mindedness. The Divine transcends such distinctions.

We and God are one

In this vast cosmos, you must develop a universal outlook based on an understanding of the spiritual principle. You cannot aspire for the spiritual from a narrow point of view. All forms of worship and meditation, which are regarded as spiritual exercises, are in fact mental excursions intended to please the mind. God is described as father, mother, brother, friend and so on. But all these are unnecessary epithets if it is recognised that we and God are one. You are in God and God is in you. There is no room for the feeling of duality.

Students! Spirituality essentially means realising oneness with God. God and you are not separate. Once you acquire this conviction there is no need for any kind of spiritual *sadhana*. This oneness should not be a mere intellectual concept. It should be a living reality. Then you will experience true freedom--the freedom of the Spirit, divorced from any association with the body and the mind. When you experience your inherent divinity, you will be free from sorrows and difficulties.

Students! You may not be aware that the Divine is changeless and unaffected by sorrow. Whether you believe it or not, the truth is I do not know what is grief. Worry is totally alien to me. I am not aware of any difficulties, disparagements or pressures caused by others. You should remain

unaffected by what others say or do. When someone comes and tells me, "Swami! I am suffering greatly," I reply, "*chaala santhosham*" (very happy). I am always happy. When someone tells me about the death of a near relation, I say the same thing. I am equal in my response to everything. When people lament about their sufferings, I often wonder what suffering means. It does not approach me.

People come to Swami with every conceivable kind of problems and views. On one side are those who adore Swami. On the other side there may be those who deride Swami. The two may be like two hillocks with valleys below them. Both the hillocks and the valleys are the same to me. This is the proper spiritual attitude. Occasionally I appear to be displeased with the behaviour of the students. But the anger is only apparent externally. It does not come from inside. In some cases I do not speak to a person for months together. This is the remedy for his malady. This kind of medicine has to be used for curing the disease. What right has anyone to ask why Swami is not talking to him? That is my pleasure.

Remedies are according to maladies

This may be illustrated by an example. Four patients come to a doctor for treatment. Superficially they all appear to suffer from stomach ache. The doctor examines one patient and tells him: "There is nothing wrong with you. You will be all right if you give hot water fomentation for the stomach." To another patient, the doctor gives a mixture of soda bicarb and Magsulph and tells him that if he takes it, his gas trouble will go. To the third man, he says: "I shall give you a purgative. You will be all right after two motions."

After examining the fourth man, the doctor declares that he must undergo immediately an operation. Does the doctor bear any ill will towards him? Not at all. His ailment is different. He suffers from appendicitis, which calls for immediate operation.

Different treatment to different people

Likewise, judging from the thoughts and behaviour of different persons, I mete out different types of treatment appropriate for each of them. I do not look at some persons. I do not talk to some others. I turn away from some others. All these are different types of prescriptions. Why am I giving these medicines? I have a certain principle. I attach great value to my words, irrespective of how you regard them. When I notice that some do not respect my words and act properly I do not like to waste my words on them. Because I desire to maintain the value of what I say I refrain from talking to some persons.

People who complain that Swami does not talk to them, why don't they realise that they have not acted according to Swami's words? Once you realise that your behaviour is responsible for Swami's attitude, you will correct yourself and behave properly in the future. Devotees tend to complain against Swami, but do not recognise their own lapses. There is no need to appeal to Swami to speak to them. When you correct yourself, Swami will talk to you of His own accord. If you pray for rain, all other things like growing crops and reaping the harvest will follow naturally. Separate prayers are not needed for each of these operations. If you implicitly carry out Swami's injunctions, Swami's grace will be obtained immediately.

First of all, impart value to your own words. You are endowed with a pair of eyes, with two ears, but only one tongue. Truth is the life-breath of speech. The ways of the Divine are not easily comprehended. God will not succumb to abuse or feel elated by praise even if the whole world

joins in either blame or adoration. When you have the conviction that the Divine is pure and unsullied, you will have no need to worry about any other thing.

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You are living now, in the dark, in ignorance. The knowledge that you are the Divine Spark, encased in the sheaths of bliss, intelligence, feelings, sensations and organic substances---this knowledge is the Light. You must light your own lamp. You cannot walk in the light of another's lamp. You cannot exist on the money in the purse of another. Have your own money; then alone are you free. Earn knowledge, yourself. Even knowing it is not enough; you must experience it. The well has water; but, that is not enough. It must be brought up in the bucket and used to wash and to quench thirst.

BABA