

33. The next step

WHATEVER originates does degenerate. All things seen as objects lose their identity in the bottomless pool of time. Man, however, wanders about in the objective world presented before him as form and name, seeking to extract therefrom permanent peace and unalloyed bliss. He is engaged in fallow pursuits and nefarious tactics, which fail to provide him the key to the Absolute and the Eternal. Does the key exist in the outer world or in the inner? So long as man embroils himself in the 'Seen,' he cannot see the 'See-er.' So long as your attention is caught by the flowers in this garland, you cannot cognise the string that holds them together. Inquiry is essential to discover the base which upholds the garland. So too, inquiry alone can bring into human experience the *Aathmic* (divine) base which upholds the objective sensory world.

The world can confer, at best, only momentary joy. Happiness, prosperity and power are but flashes amidst the dark clouds of misery, poverty and defeat. Kith and kin of whom we are proud and in whom we lay our trust succumb to death and depart without a word of farewell. But, we do not learn the lesson; we cling to the belief that the outer world is the treasure-chest of peace and joy.

There are only two roads before man

In all temples where idols of Shiva are installed, we find *Nandhi* and in temples of Vishnu we find *Garuda* idols; they too appear intent on adoration only and awaiting, with unwinking eyes the orders of their Masters. Their vision is one-pointed; their goal is eternal bliss; their strength is also revered; the journey to Mammon is worthy of only rebuke.

There are only two roads before man: the road to God and the road to Mammon. Few are those who choose the first and reach the Goal that lies within, where the *Aathma* shines in supreme glow. The multitudes trudge along the wilderness to which it leads. There, the beast in man asserts itself and suppresses the excellences with which he is endowed.

Almost always, man is anxious to ignore the faults and failings of the objects that draw his attention. If he only recognises these, he is certain to evaluate them correctly and behave more intelligently. When man becomes aware that the cobra is a poisonous snake and that the leopard is a cruel beast, he avoids them with constant vigilance. Similarly, when we become aware of the transitoriness and triviality of worldly triumphs and possessions, we can easily detach ourselves from them and concentrate on inner wealth and inner vision. All things in the outer world of objects are subject to change. Impermanent objects can confer only impermanent joy. How can it ever be otherwise? Only the spring of bliss can confer bliss. A fitful spring, a drying, decaying spring, can give happiness only in fits and even that will, before long, decay and dry.

The Aathmic energy motivates every Being

Aathma alone is the ever-full and ever-fresh spring of bliss. The *Aathma* is the motivator of the physical machine known as the Body. It can be inferred only through the performance of the machine. The *Aathmic* energy motivates every Being in the Universe---man, animal, bird, worm, tree and grass. Once man contacts It, he is blessed with Universal vision, absolute delight and eternal wisdom. Every one has the thirst to realise It and be with It; but, only very few take steps to reach It. Thousands proclaim the glory of the *Aathma* but only a handful strive to attain it.

Sage Shukraachaarya who was the preceptor of Emperor Bali is described in the Bhaagavatha as a great exponent of the doctrine of charity. He could expatiate on the merit that can be acquired by gifts offered to pious persons and to the needy. But when Bali was offering a gift to God Himself (in the role of Vaamana, a young Braahmin student) he advised the Emperor to desist. His action belied his words. Profession is one eye and practice, the second. Therefore, according to the story, when Shukra attempted to prevent the gift, he became blind in one eye.

Those who hold forth ideals in profuse eloquence must demonstrate the value of those ideals in their daily lives. Otherwise, they become Shukras who can only speak; they have no honest faith in their own words. Since devotees stop halfway and start extolling the *Guru* and his teachings rather than experiencing their value and validity, the *Aathma* and the Infinite bliss It can confer, remain undiscovered by aspirants.

The *Aathma* cannot be grasped through metaphors and examples. No form can contain It; no name can denote It. How can the limited comprehend the Unlimited, the now measure the Ever, the wayward understand the Stable? The Kathopanishath described how God Yama parried the steady stream of questions, which the boy Nachiketas asked him in right earnest, about the *Aathma*. Yama tried His best to cool his ardour by promising to confer on him boons regarding wealth, power and long life. But Nachiketas spurned these trinkets. He replied, "All-powerful Yama! I know that the senses, which are eager to earn these gifts you offer, are polluted by them and are destroyed pretty soon by their contact. I am not seeking from you these evanescent joys. Tell me of the Eternal and the *True---the Aathma!*" On hearing this, Yama said, "Son! you yearn for Wisdom; you are not attached to Wealth. Well. I shall fulfil your request."

Learn to visualise the Motivator, the *Aathma*

Emperor Janaka, too, on one occasion told himself, "My great-grandfathers, grandfathers and father commanded vast wealth and spent their lives in unstinted luxury. But they have all become the dust out of which they had emerged. Man cannot escape this fate. Then why should he hanker after these petty pleasures? Let me use this life, this physical machine, for realising the ultimate goal, the basic Truth, the fundamental *Aathma*." Consequent on this firm resolution, Janaka was able to succeed in the arena of spiritual endeavour. The poet sings, "Janaka had God ever in his thoughts, even while engaged in discharging his daily duties as an Emperor. And, by this *Raaja Yoga* (Royal path of divine communion), he attained the supreme stage, liberation, from bondage to the individual self." The body is but an instrument to discover the indweller. Withdraw from the outer to the inner and learn to visualise the Motivator, the *Aathma*, that is the lesson which the seers and scriptures teach. To engage ourselves in the purificatory exercises, to pursue the inquiry into the reality of God, Nature and Man, and to experience the ecstatic delight of that discovery, the body is very necessary. It has got to be kept healthy and alert, free from passion and sloth, balanced and expectant of victory.

Each cell in the body is motivated by *Aathma*

Of course, the *Aathma* is everywhere, at all times. It is like milk and its colour. It is white, everywhere, at all times, under all conditions, as milk or as butter, cream or ghee. So too, the *Aathma*, persists unchanged, however many changes the thing motivated by It might undergo. The *Aathma* contacts the senses of perception and affects the mind; it awakens the intellect to discriminate and decide upon the lines of action.

The *Aathma* activates the instruments of thought, speech and action, of expression and communication. The eyes see; but, which is the force that prompts them? You may have ears but who endows them with the power of hearing? Words emanate from the mouth; but which is it that urges us and frames the manner and content of the speech? That force acts like the cells in a torch which provide the bulb with the current to illuminate it.

Doctors know that the body consists of cells, billions of them, alive and alert, busy and active. Each cell is motivated by the *Aathma*; it is immanent, all over. The *Aathma* is in each of them, as well as in every spot of space. When we realise it as such, it is experienced as effulgent, total splendrous light; endless, incomparable, unique light.

Do not degrade your lives in low pursuits

The ancient seers ignored the world as irrelevant; and immersed themselves in inner inquiry until they contacted the Universal *Aathma* and filled themselves with *Aanandha*. They had to limit desires, control their cravings and live in the conviction that the destiny of Man is to divest himself of the animal heritage and to sublimate his innate humanity into Divinity.

Consider for a while the fate of the rulers of all realms, the leaders of armies and nations, the Presidents and Prime Ministers, emerging-from oblivion and merging in the same---did any one of these carry with them when they passed away any portion of their wealth or possession. When one dies, another takes his place; when he dies, still another is ready to assume the role. And all are equally forgotten---except those who have heroically realised the *Aathma* and raised themselves to the Divine State. So, believe that the struggle for status, for power, of fame and for wealth is not commendable at all.

Having been blessed by this chance to live as human 'beings, have as the ideal, the Realisation of Reality. The *Upanishaths* exhort you to march on to this goal. They address you as "*Amrthasya Puthraah!*" ("Children of Immortality.") Try to deserve that honour, to achieve that height. Learn to use all your skills, all your intelligence, all your time for attaining that victory. You are Gods in human form, for only Gods can be immortal. You are embodiments of the Divine *Aathma*. Do not degrade your lives in low pursuits. Spend it in sacred thoughts, loving service, self-less acts and sweet words of solace.

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A thing must have form and substance, both, in order to be genuine; an apple made out of plastic, however realistic and enticing by its correctness of form, cannot be valued as genuine, for it has no substance.

The swaruupa (form) must be saturated with the swabhaava (its own quality) too. Fire is no genuine fire, if it does not burn; nor can water be called so, if it does not wet.

It is a misnomer to name a person as man, if he does not evince the qualities of humanity. Such persons are cheats, for, by their

appearance they induce others to believe that they are good, kind, honest and harmless; they draw others into their company and inflict untold injury, by their very nature.

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