

## 16. God, Nature and Man

THE Cosmos has one Source, one Support, one End. That is an eternal entity, self sufficient, totally luminous. The Chandogya Upanishad, while narrating the instruction given by Sanat Kumara to Narada, reveals that though we deal with different numbers as three, five, seven, nine, eleven, thirteen, fifteen, seventeen, nineteen and twenty-one, there is only One in reality, the *Brahman*.

Multiplicity is how the One appears when It assumes Name and Form. Then It becomes the *Jagath*, the Flux, the Cosmos, the Universe. God was alone before the Cosmos appeared. He projects, He protects, He dissolves and draws it into Himself This is the Truth.

Man has the rare good fortune of adoring Nature as the Body of God and offering grateful worship to God. But, is he conscious of God being the source and sustenance? Does he give God the first place in his thoughts which is His due? Or, is he engaged in the activities of life in total disregard of God? It is a pity that, instead of paying attention to God, Nature and Man, in that order, men today are concerned most with themselves, more with Nature and very much less with God. From birth to death, from dawn till night, man pursues fleeting pleasures by the exploitation, the despoiling, the desecration of Nature, ignoring the truth that it is the property of God the Creator, and any injury caused to it is a sacrilege which merits dire punishment.

### **Ravana's ego earned him eternal disgrace**

Ravana ignored God and coveted Nature, courting disaster. This story is the subject of the famous epic, Ramayana. He desired to own and master Sita (personified Nature; she was the child of Mother Earth, found in a furrow) and brought her away from Rama, the incarnation of God, who was her lord and master. His own brother reminded him of the inequity and advised him to seek refuge in Rama and restore Sita to her rightful Lord. Ravana was so proud of the success he had achieved in imprisoning Sita that the warning fell on deaf ears.

Hanuman, who discovered Sita and conveyed to her the message of hope and the assurance of hope, managed to enter the Audience Hall of Ravana. He revealed to him that Sita was the Mother of all the worlds and his own mother. He described the might and majesty of God in the Rama form and drew ominous pictures of the destruction that was in store for Ravana. He advised him to restore Sita and surrender to Rama. He said that eternal disgrace was the fate of every one who thrusts his ego forward and keeps God behind, beyond consideration.

All the twenty-four hours, all the days of life, men are active in worshipping their bodies and minds, catering to the senses, submitting to the clamour of carnal desires, earning the wherewithal to feed themselves. They have no time to spare for meditation on God. How can men secure peace of mind, when men have no contact with the Vast, the Timeless, the Almighty Providence? When God is last, life is lost.

### **A lesson to be learnt from Mahabharata**

The Mahabharata Epic teaches the same lesson. Arjuna was third among the five Pandavas. Duryodhana was the eldest of the hundred Kauravas, their cousins. The Kauravas developed such deep envy, greed and hatred against the Pandavas that a fratricidal war was rendered inevitable. Both sides started gathering allies and resources. The Pandavas adhered to righteous norms and were loyal to Sri Krishna, whom they revered as God. On their behalf, Arjuna hurried to Dwaraka to secure the most precious armament they knew, namely, Krishna's blessings. When

Duryodhana knew that Arjuna had left for Dwaraka, he wanted to forestall his enemy and journeyed to Dwaraka as fast as he could. The Divine Play-actor sensed the approach of the rival claimants for his favour. So, he quietly laid himself on the bed and pretended to be fast asleep.

Arjuna reached the place. Since he was not only a devotee but a companion and a kinsman, he tiptoed into the room and, drawing a three-legged stool from a corner, sat reverentially near the Lotus feet. Duryodhana barged in very pompously. He had the air of a ruling monarch. He was too proud to sit and wait like Arjuna. He found a high-backed chair near the head of the cot. He plumped on it with a sigh. When ego swells the head, man becomes unruly and wild. Duryodhana fretted and fumed at the delay.

### **Arrogance versus Faith**

Krishna was amused at the restlessness of the Kaurava supplicant, who dared to eject a few fake coughs in order to awaken him. Arjuna, however, was struggling to breathe softly and silently. At last, Krishna sat up and noticing Arjuna facing him with folded palms accosted him with his characteristic sweetness. "Oh! when did yogi arrive? How do you do? How is Draupadi? And your brothers?" Duryodhana was consumed by envy, anger and pride. Krishna stoked the fire. He enjoyed the scene, this picture and that. "An Emperor has honoured his home! Yet this bundle of conceit talks to that commoner so long and so fast, as if I am nonexistent," thought Duryodhana. "Is this the way of treating his guests?" he asked himself.

At that moment, Krishna turned to him, with the question, "When did you arrive? Are your parents doing well? How are your brothers faring?" Duryodhana replied, "The war, will soon be on. I seek your help." On hearing this, Krishna questioned Arjuna, "What are you seeking?" Arjuna replied, "I seek your blessings." Krishna designed a dilemma for both.

Krishna proposed to give his army of ten thousand warriors to one party and himself alone to the other. "I shall not wield any weapon. I will not fight. At least, I can serve as a charioteer. Now, announce your choice", said Krishna to Arjuna. Duryodhana was furious. "This is a calculated insult, allowing him to choose," he said to himself. "The ten thousand will be his and I will be burdened with a dark-skinned log," he feared.

### **Preferring Lord's grace ensures victory**

Krishna wanted Arjuna to decide which of the two he wanted. "I saw you first, so you choose first", Krishna prodded Arjuna. Duryodhana was on tenter-hooks. Arjuna placed his head on the Feet of Krishna and said, "You are all we need." He knew that Krishna was God, the embodiment of power, wisdom and Love. He pleaded, "Be the Charioteer of my vehicle and, I pray, for the journey of my Life as well." Duryodhana was relieved. He preferred Nature to Nature's Master. He led the ten thousand to his camp. Arjuna had God, installed before him in the chariot, guiding him to Victory. Duryodhana was punished with defeat, death and disgrace for preferring the world to God who is its life-breath.

During the battle, one day, when Krishna brought the chariot at sunset to the Pandava Camp, Arjuna was so intoxicated with pride at his exploits on the field that he appropriated for himself the first place, relegating Krishna to the second; he was the Master and Krishna was a charioteer holding a whip and the reins, he felt. So he insisted on the driver alighting and pulling the steps down for him to land. Krishna knew what he suffered from; he was determined to cure him. So, he commanded Arjuna sternly to get down. Arjuna could not disobey. He required Krishna's service for a few more days! When he had moved a few paces away, Krishna rose and jumped

down from his seat. The gems on the jewels he wore on the ears, shoulder and chest flashed in blinding brilliance when he leaped. The moment he stood on the ground, the chariot was enveloped in flames and turned into a heap of ash!

Krishna explained the reason to the astonished Arjuna. The enemies had shot many arrows of fire at the chariot that day in order to kill Arjuna but Krishna had held them in check. If he had left his seat on the chariot with Arjuna still in, he would have been caught in the conflagration. Luckily, Arjuna had yielded and was saved. He learnt the lesson that man should endeavour to please God first, the world next and his self last.

During worship at the domestic altar or in temples, you offer *God 'naivedya'* (eatable items) in the form of fruits and sweets. Sour or bitter things are not offered, for God is sweetness personified. Earn His Grace by avoiding sour temperament and bitter behaviour. Fill every thought, word and deed with the sweetness of Love. Then, you can enter the battlefield of the world, sure of Victory, since God has promised to serve as your charioteer.

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