

8. Samanvaya and Samarasa

THE mind of man, like the waxing moon which grows to fullness and shines brightly, has the capacity to grow and expand till he becomes one with the Divine. But this does not happen today because men's minds are filled with narrow ideas and petty differences which limit their sympathies and aspirations.

Inherently men are large-hearted and they should give no room for the sense of 'mine' and 'thine'. Everyone should cultivate pure, selfless love and largeness of heart. Interlopers should not be allowed to get entrenched in the mind and control it. It is like allowing a gang of thieves to enter your house and make themselves the masters. The mind should be the master and not the slave of the senses. If the senses are allowed to hold sway, man becomes their servant and not their master. The six enemies of man are lust, anger, pride, envy, delusion and greed. They should be kept in check and not allowed to dominate the mind.

Meditate on the Divine essence of everything

Man is subjected to three kinds of bondages in life: bondages derived from the past, those arising in the present and those created for the future. There is a story to illustrate the first kind of bondage. There was once a man who was keeping a cow to earn income for supporting his family. In course of time, all his kith and kin passed away and the cow also died. He began to think what for he had striven all these years and he went to a *guru* to seek his advice on his predicament. *The guru* asked him whether he had done any spiritual *sadhana* in his life. The man replied that he had done no *sadhana* and that whenever he sat for meditation the image of the cow, on which he had lavished great affection, appeared before him. The *guru* said that this was because of his intense attachment to the cow. The *guru* advised him to look upon the cow as a manifestation of the Divine and to regard it as an expression of "*Sat-Chit-Ananda*" (Being-Awareness-Bliss)--the triune nature of the Divine. He told the man that the three primal qualities--*Asti*, *Bhaati*, *Priyam* (existence, expression, and utility)--are qualities to all things, while names and forms are varied.

When names and forms are ignored, one can perceive the divine nature of everything. "Meditate on the divine essence of everything", advised the *guru*. Following his advice, the man meditated on "*Sat-Chit-Ananda*" and in due course merged in the Divine. There is no point in dwelling on the past and gloating or grieving over what is dead and gone. It is futile to think about past successes or failures, pleasures or pains. The past should not become an incubus on the present.

As regards the present, one should act on the principle that he should conduct himself towards others in the manner he would like them to behave towards him. If he desires that others should respect him or honour him, he should behave likewise towards others. You cannot expect courtesy or regard from others if you don't show courtesy or regard to others. There can be no one-way traffic in life.

Selfishness creates bondages

Persons with a narrow, self-centred outlook are prone to express doubts about the powers of the Divine. They may ask how Shiva, covered with ashes and living in the burial ground, can come to the rescue of the needy, and doubt how Vishnu reclining on the bed of a serpent on the ocean and remote from the world, can protect mankind in any way. It is such perverted notions that lead man astray in the present. To correct such tendencies one should listen to sacred sayings,

ruminate over them and lead a righteous and godly life. To be concerned only about one's own happiness or comfort and be indifferent to the happiness and needs of others is a form of selfishness which creates bondages in the present.

Bondages for the future are created by your actions in the present. When you entertain bad thoughts and indulge in wrong actions, they lead to bad consequences in the future. Peace of mind is lost and one is caught up in perpetual worry. The way out of this vicious circle is to turn the mind towards God and refrain from causing harm to others. Contemplation of God and leading a godly life will confer peace and bliss that is beyond measure.

Qualities to be cultivated as dietary regimen

When a person is ill, the physician prescribes not only medicine for the disease but also a dietary regimen to be observed strictly. Likewise, for the diseases arising from mundane attachments, in addition to the prescribed drugs--the *Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Yoga margas* (paths of selfless action, meta physical wisdom, devotion and inner communion)--qualities such as forbearance, calmness, fortitude, love and compassion have to be cultivated as dietary regimen. Without these qualities, the spiritual practices alone will be of little avail. When the two are combined, like the positive and negative ends in an electric cell, the disease gets cured.

One who is engaged in the battle of life, needs the armour of spirituality. With it, he can face any situation anywhere. If instead of wearing the spiritual armour, people are enveloped in ignorance, they will be haunted by fear and anxiety. As long as rice is covered by husk, it cannot be consumed. Likewise, man cannot experience bliss until he gets rid of the cloak of ignorance. He must welcome whatever happens as good for him. He must develop the quality of forbearance. Through forbearance *and sadhana* (spiritual efforts), gradually the shackles resulting from past actions must be broken.

The tendency to cavil at the ways of the Divine will gradually wither away. One will begin to appreciate the lessons to be learnt from every day-to-day experience. For instance, when a beggar comes to your house and says, "Please give me food," you should not turn him away as a mere beggar, but regard him as a messenger of God. When he is begging for food he is indirectly conveying a message: "I am today begging for food because in my previous birth I did not offer food to those who begged for it. Please see that by turning me away without food, a similar fate does not overtake you in your next life." You must go to the help of others to the extent of your means.

Harmony and Tolerance are essential for life

Today such a spirit of magnanimity is lacking. It is not realised that without largeness of heart and generosity of spirit, all scholarship and spiritual efforts are of no use. That is why the Upanishads declare: "Immortality can be attained only by renunciation and sacrifice and not by wealth, progeny or religious rites." The mere acquisition of book-lore will not lead to self-realisation. Along with studies, one must practise tolerance, equanimity and serenity. These qualities cannot be got through books or teachers. They can be got only through persistent enquiry and discrimination. It would be desirable if this quest is made part of a collective effort instead of being purely an individual pursuit. The lone individual does not constitute a community. If his aspirations are self-centred they will do no good to society. Hence one should develop those sacred qualities which will promote the well-being of the society.

"*Samanvaya*"(the spirit of harmony) and "*Samarasa*" (serenity or a sense of respect for all points of view) are essential for accomplishing anything good in life.

While man's physical body is composed of five basic elements (earth, water, fire, air and space), his subtle body has *pancha kosas* (five sheaths) one within the other. The first of them is the *Annamaya kosa* (the food or material sheath). Within it is the *Pranamaya kosa* (the sheath, of life or breath). Within it is the *Manomaya kosa* (the mental sheath). Within that is the *Prajnanamaya kosa* (the sheath of higher wisdom). The last sheath is the *Anandamaya kosa* (the sheath of bliss). Starting with food man must reach the destination of Bliss. The spiritual journey is from "I" to "We". Therein lies fulfillments---the realisation of the One in the many.

Madhava, God is beyond Maya

You need the inner vision of the Spirit to see God. The physical eye can see only the physical world. Through a process of enquiry, you have to realise the Omnipresence of the Creator who permeates and sustains the cosmos. Wrapped up in his own ego, man pursues the will-o-the-wisp of wealth, power, position, and strength. All these are transient. Man has overcome the eight categories of pride--pride of physical prowess, material wealth, scholarship, beauty, power and others. God's grace is needed to conquer these evil traits because they have such a powerful hold over man. When you wish to overcome a powerful enemy, you have to get help from someone more powerful than your enemy. Sugriva had to seek the friendship of Sri Rama to overcome Vali after convincing himself of the superior powers of Rama. Likewise, to overcome the power of *Maya* (the delusion that subjects man to the physical and the sensuous), man has to seek the grace of the Divine. Only the Divine (Madhava) is more powerful than *Maya*. By surrendering to the Divine and developing a heart filled with devotion and love, one can face all the challenges of life.

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You must realise, by constant contemplation, that the world is the body of God. And, you are the cell, in that Body. The prosperity of the world is your prosperity; feel so, act in that spirit; think in those terms. That is the real spirituality. The sadhak cannot cut himself away from the world and escape in solitude, for, the world will follow him into the deepest cave or the darkest forest. The sadhak can claim progress only when he has established in himself Faith in the One-ness of Humanity.

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