

## 18. Renunciation and Realisation

*The wise one recognises his own defects*

*And seeks not the faults in others.*

*He is most degraded among men*

*Who sees only the faults in others*

*Oblivious to his own defects*

*And unaware of his true Self.*

The worth of a human being is based on his *buddhi* (intellect). The more the intellect develops, the better one is, as a man. As the intellect declines, the human descends to the level of animal. A bamboo is valued in terms of its thickness and height. The sugar cane gets its value from its juice.

Man's worth has declined today because he does not recognise the importance of the intellect and of conduct based on intellectual discrimination. The form is human, but the thinking is at the animal level. Man has earned the appellation of "two-legged animal."

Having acquired the human form, man should conduct himself with intelligence. This is achieved through *thyaga* (renunciation) and *yoga* (spiritual discipline).

### **Real renunciation is giving up evil qualities**

*Thyaga* is a vital aspect of human life. Some day or the other either he will have to give up worldly goods or they will leave him. When he has no spirit of renunciation, the world may compel him to give up things. This cannot be avoided.

What is it that is to be renounced? Are the external objects, like houses and vehicles, what should be given up? Or is one to give up kith and kin or one's possessions? No. These things can be renounced easily. With some determination all these can be given up. But, this is not real sacrifice. It can be a *bhoga* (form of enjoyment) or a *roga* (a kind of disease). The real renunciation which one has to make is the giving up of the evil qualities of *Kama* (desire), *Krodha* (anger) and *Lobha* (greed).

*"Kaamam Kartha naasanam"* (Desire is the destroyer of action). *"Krodham Jnaana naasanam"* (Anger is the destroyer of wisdom). *"Lobham Bhakti naasanam"* (Greed is the destroyer of devotion).

*Kama* (desire) sullies actions at their very roots. Desire deprives one of the powers to discriminate between right and wrong action. One loses the capacity to judge the consequences of one's actions. Hence, the *Upanishads* declared: "First of all offer your obeisance to *Kartha* (personified as deity)." *"Thasmai namah Karmane"* (Salutations to that action). This means that before you do anything, offer your homage to that action. A prayer should be offered to *Kartha*: "Whatever I do, let it be helpful to others; let it not be harmful to anyone. Make my action sacred in this way."

But men today embark on actions in the expectation of what they can get from society and not what they can offer it. This is not the right attitude. Each one should ask himself: "What is it that society can receive from me? What good can it get from me?" Actions should be undertaken

with this high-minded attitude. Desire makes one incapable of entertaining such a large-hearted view. With the result that all our actions get tainted in one way or other. *Kama* thus turns men away from following a sacred path in his actions. Hence, the pronouncement: "*Kaamam Karma naasanam*" (Desire is destructive of right action).

### **Angry man cannot succeed in any endeavour**

Then comes *Krodha* (anger). Anger makes a man insane. It causes loss of wealth, undermines one's reputation, alienates one from his fellowmen and leads to the loss of everything. The angry man cannot succeed in any endeavour. He will encounter endless troubles. Doing sinful deeds, he is despised by the world. Anger deprives a man of his wisdom. He loses his worldly knowledge, his sense of discrimination, his powers of judgement and even the knowledge gained from past experience. Anger is fraught with such dangerous potential.

The third vice is *Lobha* (greed). Whatever he may earn, whatever he may achieve, the greedy man is incapable of renouncing anything. Such a one is ready to receive anything from anyone but is not willing to part with anything. Greed breeds the attitude in which one says: "What will you give me if I come to your house? What will you bring for me when you come to my house?" Greed promotes this kind of insatiable attitude for possessions. You have to give up an evil tendency of this kind.

### **Attachments should be properly restricted**

The practice of giving up is known as *Vairagya*. The literal meaning of the word is "that which is opposed to *raga* (attachment)." *Raga* signifies attachment to the body. There is nothing wrong in attachment. *Raga* includes love for family, kith and kin. This attachment is not wrong. You should love your parents and show regard for your brothers and sisters. You should keep your body fit and healthy. These are legitimate desires. What should be noted, however, is that there should be limits to such attachments.

You may have noted that in singing, the *raga* is important. But when the musician indulges in excessive elaboration of the *raga*, it tends to become *roga* (an affliction). The words of the song should not be lost in the elaboration of the *raga*. The fire in the oven should be just enough for the food to be cooked. The salt to be added should be limited to the quantity of dal to be prepared. Salt in excess will spoil the dal. Likewise, our attachments should be properly restricted.

Today we are witnessing attachments growing without limit. Attachment to the body, to relations, to education or to the acquisition of knowledge is exceeding all limits. Even with regard to desirable objects, it is essential to limit one's desires. "*Na shreyo niyamam vinaa*" (There can be no happiness without restraint of desire). When there is no restraint, excessive desire becomes an evil. It leads to misery. When we strive to control desire, in due course it develops into *vairagya--non-attachment* or renunciation. *Vairagya* means giving up association with objects, while recognising their inherent worth.

In a band of ten bad men, there may be one good man. Among ten good men there may be one who is a seeker of God. Among ten seekers, there may be one filled with love of God. Among ten lovers of God, there may be one at least who desires to experience the Divine. Among ten such devotees, there may be one at least who is ready to renounce all attachments. And only such

a man qualifies for earning the love of God. That is why it has been declared: "Only through renunciation can immortality (oneness with the Divine) be attained."

### **Role of consciousness**

How is this renunciation to be effected? The world is made up of objects. It is inert. In the waking sense, the senses cognise all these objects. But the senses are also inert. The eyes that see, the ears that hear, the tongue that speaks and the nose that smells---all of them *are jada* (inert). In fact, the entire body is inert. But all these inert objects are able to function because of the presence of *chaitanya* (consciousness) in the mind, the intellect, the *chittha* and the *ahamkara*. Thus we have to realise that the entire phenomenal universe is *jada* (inert). It is *sthoolam* (gross). This gross universe has to be treated as inert matter. The four subtle elements of *consciousness--manas* (the mind), *buddhi* (the intellect), *chittha* (the will) and *ahamkara* (the ego)--are *Maya*. What is *Maya*? *Maa* (not) *ya* (exist). That which does not exist but appears to exist is *Maya*. *Maya* makes the unreal appear as real and the real as unreal. The other name for *Maya* is *Ajnana* (ignorance). *Ajnana* is that which hides the real from you and makes you regard the non-existing as existing. It makes the false appear as true.

### **How Maya works**

One sees people dying before one's eyes and others afflicted with disease. But he believes he himself will not die. This is the mark of *Ajnana*. When so many are dying, how can anyone regard himself as not subject to death? *Maya* is the cause of thinking the impermanent as permanent and the permanent as perishable.

Even subtle experiences such as dreams are the result of *Maya*. We see and experience all sorts of things in dreams. All of them have a reality only in the dream state. They disappear in the waking state. We disregard them. What appeared to be true in the dream state becomes unreal in the waking state. What is dreaded in the dream state causes no fear when one is awake. This is the nature of *Maya*, its secret. Both, what is experienced in the physical phenomenal world and in the subtle subliminal state of dreams, are the result of *Maya*.

*Karana* (the causal state of deep sleep) comes next. It is only an image---a reflection. It has no consciousness. It has neither form nor name. It is not subject to happiness or sorrow. Of what use is such a state?

The waking state experiences the *jada* (inert). What is experienced in the dream state is *Maya*. And in the *Karana* (causal or deep sleep) state, there is only a reflection. All three are of little account. There is one thing which transcends all these that is the *Mahakaarana*. That is the *Para-tatwa* (Omni-self). The Atma that is in the *Para-tatwa* and that which is in the *jada* (the inert matter) is one and the same. *Vairagya* consists in recognising these oneness. It is not the giving up of things that constitutes *vairagya*. *Vairagya* consists in enjoying, without attachment, things which were previously enjoyed with attachment.

### **We are like puppets on the screen**

We might have learned a lot, acquired many things. We might have enjoyed many things. Where are they now? What has happened to them? Why did we part with them? What benefit did we derive from them? When we enquire into these matters, we will realise that the things we enjoyed, the individuals with whom we associated, and the experiences we had are like figures of puppets on a screen. They are like clouds that come and go.

We must seek to know the basic truth about the human condition. If you take a vessel with water and pour it into the ocean, you cannot recover that water again. If smoke goes up in the sky, it cannot be collected again. An apple that has been eaten and digested cannot be got back. But the stuff of the mind cannot be merged in an ocean, or sent up to the sky or consumed as food. The workings of the mind cannot be eliminated by these processes.

### **Mind should be kept under restraint**

Why, then, is there a call for *mano-nigraham* (control of the mind)? *Nigraham* (control) really means being indifferent to the vagaries of the mind. It is difficult to control the mind, as it is difficult to confine air in one's grasp. Likewise, how can anyone control the mind which is all-embracing in the vastness of its range and comprehension? When it is realised that the mind is made up of thoughts and doubts, the elimination of the thoughts is the means of restraining the mind. Thoughts are associated with desires. As long as desires remain, one cannot have *vairagya* (detachment). It is necessary to limit desires.

Take for instance, a car. If you press the accelerator, it picks up speed. In pressing the accelerator, however, you have to bear in mind the state of the road, the curves and bends and the ups and downs. Similarly the world we live in is replete with ups and downs, with joy and sorrow. Having regard to this fact, the mind must be kept under restraint as far as possible.

The car cannot move unless the accelerator is pressed. But this should be done with circumspection. In making the journey this caution should be observed. Likewise, we need the mind, but it has to be used in the proper way.

### **Power of the mind and role of the intellect**

Today men are subjecting themselves to all kinds of difficulties and problems because they are giving a free rein to the mind. This is where the vital role of *Buddhi* (intellect) comes in. The intellect enhances the power of man. It is the greatness of the intellect that distinguishes man. The intellect has the potency to comprehend the entire cosmos.

Consider the power of the mind. One goes round the world, sees many cities, looks at mountains and rivers and meets innumerable persons and has varied experiences. All these infinite variety of objects, persons, scenes and experiences are imprinted in the subtle form in the mind. How is it that such a small mind can contain all this vast panorama and countless objects and impressions? Is there room in the mind for containing a high mountain? You have to understand the boundless capacity of the mind. "*Manomoolam idam jagath*" (The Cosmos is based on the mind). The individual through his body is part of the cosmos. Think for a moment how pitifully small is this body in relation to this vast universe. Recognition of one's infinitesimally puny size should lead to humility. At the same time, there is infinite potentiality in man. That is why *Vedanta* declares that the Divine is subtler than the subtlest atom and vaster than the vastest object in creation.

You may have seen the huge banyan tree in the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras (now called Chennai). It is a very huge tree. But its seed is an extremely small one. That small seed has the potential to grow into a vast extensive tree. Likewise, the human mind is exceedingly small, but it can comprehend this vast universe. The mind appears as an insignificant speck in the universe, but the universe is immanent in this minuscule mind. It would appear as if the universe and the mind were telling each other: "I am that" and "That is me."

### **The secret of infinite capacity of the mind**

As long as you have the body-consciousness and attachment to the body, you cannot understand this secret of the infinite capacity of the mind. If you have only a superficial view of the world you cannot understand its vastness in the subtle domain of the mind. There is a big water reservoir. When you look at the water, your reflection is seen in it. You say, "That is myself." But when you discriminate, you realise, "I am not that." Try to distinguish between these two concepts. When you say, "That is myself," you are only thinking of your body. Suppose you say that is yourself and people come and beat the image in the water with sticks, will you feel anything? But if that reflection of yours is abused by anybody you get angry. When it is beaten you don't feel the pain but when anybody abuses it you feel the effect. When it is beaten you feel it is not yourself, when it is abused you feel that it is you. Therein lies the secret of *Vedanta*.

On the one hand you say "I am that," but when that "that" is being beaten you don't react; on the other hand, when that "that" is abused you react. When you realise that your inner *Atma* is the same in everybody, then any pain caused to anybody is your pain. But when you have body-consciousness and anybody says anything derogatory about anyone else you feel it is not directed towards you and it doesn't affect you. This essential truth is the heart of *Vedanta*. To understand this great secret of secrets you should participate in such assemblies as this. You must listen, think over what is said, put in into practice and make it yours.

*Vedanta* has emphasised these three things: *Sravana*, *Manana* and *Nididhyasana*. *Sravana* means hearing. Whatever you hear, you should revolve in your mind, that is *Manana*; then *Nididhyasana* is putting it into practice. For example, the mother says: "I have prepared a number of sweets." After knowing this, which is *Jnaatum*, you see all these sweets on a plate, that is *Drashtum*. Then, when you eat these delicious sweets, that is *Praveshtum*. Then you get happiness and strength. This unity of *Jnaatum*, *Drashtum* and *Praveshtum* (knowing, seeing and experiencing) is the unity in the diversity which is the real path to *Ananda*, eternal delight.

*Vairagya* does not mean that you should give up everything and go to a forest. *Vairagya* really means you should stay where you are, in whatever station of life you are in, and understand the subtle nature of things, while giving up desire based on the external aspect. It means that by using discrimination you should know what to expect and what to reject. You should strive to recognise the divinity in every object you see and enjoy it. That is real *vairagya*. That is the mark of a true human being.

*Discourse at the Prashanthi Mandir, 11 Jul 1988*

*A temple where God is adored as a living Entity is as the heart to an individual. It is said that you should not sleep in a village where there is no temple; for, the people there are sure to be so ungodly that your life is in danger amidst such unbelievers. God is the guardian, the corrector, the admonisher, the savior; so, people must get into the habit of calling on Him as a living Presence. The temple helps soften the hearts; it instills the virtues of compassion and charity. Greed and cruelty will spread in an atmosphere that has no devotion and adoration to God. Make yourselves into moving temples. Become aware of the God that resides in you. It is*

*He who protects you, provides for you, prevents you from falling a  
prey to pernicious propensities.*

*Sathya Sai Baba*