

### 31. The quest for God

IN HIS life-long quest for happiness man forgets that he can secure enduring bliss only by pursuing the spiritual path. Towards the end of his life, when all other sources have failed, he turns towards God. Man cannot secure real happiness by relying on worldly objects. Only by turning towards the Spirit can he secure bliss.

In the quest for bliss, the *Vedas* have pronounced a caveat. God is incomparable. He cannot be comprehended by logical proofs. All kinds of proofs are of no avail for recognising God. He is beyond the reach of mind and speech.

There are three types of proofs for arriving at the truth. One is *Pratyaksha Pramaanam* (direct perception). Today every man relies on this kind of proof. For everything he seeks evidence of direct perception or experience. He is not prepared to accept anything which is not amenable to the proof of direct perception. This is really a sign of ignorance. Direct perception is associated with many afflictions. For instance, when the eye is free from any disease it recognises the different colours in their true forms. This is the basis for the authority of direct perception. What happens when the eye is affected by jaundice? Everything appears yellowish. No other colour can be perceived. How, then, can one trust the evidence of his eyes? All evidence based on the perceptions of the sense organs is vitiated by this defect. When the sense organs themselves are subject to change, how can they be regarded as infallible indicators of absolute truth? Senses which are liable to change cannot be the means of arriving at the unchanging Reality.

#### ***Veda* is revealed Truth**

The second of type proof is based on *anumaanam* (inference). You infer the presence of fire on a hill when you see smoke going up from it. But you cannot be sure whether it is smoke from a fire or a cloud of water vapour. Without seeing the fire, to infer its existence from smoke is likely to be wrong. Conclusions based on inference cannot bear the stamp of certainty.

The third type of proof is *Sabda Pramaana* (the authority of the spoken word). This type of proof relates to what a person, who has had a direct experience of something, says about it. The authority of the *Veda* is based on this concept. *Veda* is revealed Truth. It; has to be accepted as such. *Sabda Pramaana* (or proof based on spoken word) is of two kinds: *Vaidika Pramaana* and *Loukika Pramaana*. *Loukika Pramaana* (mundane testimony) is not concerned with spiritual truth. It cannot explain God. Only *Vaidika Pramaana* (*Vedic Testimony*) seeks to describe God. The *Brahma Sutra* declares: "*Sastra yonitvaath*" (the Divine can be known only on the authority of the scriptures). What is the meaning of *Sastra* (scripture)? *Sastra* is that which conveys to the ear what is not audible otherwise. It brings back to the memory what has been forgotten.

#### **The different kinds of *Dharma***

Such scriptural authority is the basis for *Dharma* (the principles of right conduct). *Dharma* is of many kinds. *Jaathi Dharma* (the *code* of conduct for a species or race), *Desa Dharma* (national code), *Kula Dharma* (code of conduct for one's caste), *Gana Dharma* (the code for a *gana* or sect) and *Aapad Dharma* (the *code of* conduct during dangers). All these five kinds of codes of righteous conduct emphasise compassion towards all living beings. Kindness has been regarded as the highest virtue. To please every being is to please God. One who is lacking in love for fellow beings will not secure God's love. Without love for God, one will not have fear of sin. In the absence of both of these, a man will have no *sangha neethi* (social morality). *Neethi* means

right conduct. It implies right behaviour in harmony with the conditions of the particular time, place and society. You have to subordinate yourself to the mores of the community. You should not violate the norms of society. Hence the *Veda* enjoined observance of social disciplines.

*Discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, on 5-10-1989.*