

16. The *Buddhi* and the *Atma*

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! According to the *Upanishads*, the human body is comparable to a chariot, the sense organs to horses and the mind, to the reins. The body, the mind and the senses are by themselves of little use. However beautiful a chariot may be, however fine the horses and however efficient the reins, without a charioteer all of them are of no use.

In the journey of life, the *Buddhi* (intelligence) is most *important*--"*Nischayaatmaka Buddhi*." The intelligence is the determinant in life. In daily life, many difficulties and problems arise like waves, which man has to solve. What is the basic agency for resolving these difficulties. It is the *Buddhi*. Without the intervention of the *Buddhi* none of our problems can be solved. The man filled with doubts perishes "*Samsayaatma vinasayathi*." Because the *Buddhi* helpsto end doubts, it has been described as one beyond the sense *organs*--"*Buddhi graahyam athindriyam*."

The Bhagavad Gita has laid down two banks to channel its message. Without these banks the river of life will be subject to many hazards and difficulties. The two banks consist of two eight-syllable *mantras*. One is "*Sraddhaavaan labhathe Jnanam*" (The man of earnest faith acquires supreme wisdom). The other eight-syllable *mantra* is "*Samsayaatma Vinasayathi*" (The one filled with doubts perishes). When life flows between these two regulating principles, it will be blessed with peace and happiness. It is only when man is guarded on either side by *Sraddha* (earnest faith) and *Nissamsaya* (freedom from doubt) will he be able to reach the goal of life.

One should be guided by the inner voice

The *Buddhi* (intelligence) has some other names. One of them is *Antaryami* (the In-dweller). Man is guided by the voice of this Indweller in the conduct of his life. When problems arise, man waits for the directives of the Inner Voice. If this Inner Voice is not giving him satisfactory answers, he will be in a quandary. When he gets satisfactory guidance from the Inner Voice, he will be able to come to terms with the external world. Sometimes, one is found to remark: "*My conscience does not approve of this*." The Inner Voice is the voice of conscience.

When one is asked to "Follow the Master," the "Master" is one's conscience. When you follow the dictates of your conscience, you can reach the proper destination.

Another name attributed to *Buddhi* is *Vijnana* (confirmed knowledge). *Vijnana* helps to decide the truth relating to external objects. As it investigates internal processes also and comes to decisions on them, it is not entirely correct to describe it as *Vijnana*. *Vijnana* relates to the phenomenal objective world. *Buddhi* relates to the subtle realm of the internal. Hence the role of the *Buddhi* (intelligence) has to be correctly understood.

Role of the ego in comprehending *Atma*

Occasionally, however, *Ahamkara* (the Ego) tends to envelop the *Buddhi*. The senses are subtler than the body. The mind is even more subtle than the senses. The *Buddhi* is far more subtle than the mind. The *Atma* is the subtlest of them all.

If it is said that *Ahamkara* (the ego) is able to envelop the *Buddhi*, it must be deemed subtler than the *Buddhi*. The ego is extremely subtle. It is all-pervasive. It enters into all one's actions. This is the reason why man is unable to transcend the ego and comprehend the *Atma*.

Once, a king summoned an assembly of scholars in his court. He posed the following question before them: "Here you are scholars who have mastered the scriptures. Which of you is capable of attaining *Moksha* (Liberation)?" Not one of them, despite their scholarship, had the courage and confidence to stand up and give the answer. The whole assembly was stunned into silence. At that stage, one lay member of the public got up and said: "Maharaja, I may possibly attain *Moksha*" ("*Nenu pothe povachchunu*"). All the *pandits* felt outraged by this impudent claim from an unschooled person, who was totally ignorant of any of the scriptures and had done no spiritual exercise whatever. They wondered on what basis such a person could make such a claim.

The Maharaja asked the man: "On what grounds do you make your claim? It appears to be an insult to all the scholars present here." The man replied: "Maharaja! Please forgive me. When I said, *Nenu pothe, povachchunu,*' its meaning is: If the 'I' goes, liberation can be attained.' This is what I meant."

When the *Aham* ("I") acquires a form, it develops into the Ego. The lesson of this story is that only when man gets rid of the body-consciousness, he will be fit for achieving liberation.

It is the identification with the body that promotes the sense of *Ahamkara* (I-am-the doer). As long as one suffers from egoism, his intelligence will not shine.

Buddhi* is close to the *Atma

Hence, efforts must be made at the outset to throw off the cover imposed by the ego on the intelligence (*Buddhi*). The *Buddhi* is very close to the *Atma*, and is therefore well situated to receive the illumination from the *Atma*. The *Buddhi* is in a position to receive 90 percent of its energy from the *Atma*. The mind derives its power from the *Buddhi*. The mind in its turn activates the senses. The power of the senses is spread over the body.

If you want to illumine a dark room with the rays of the sun, it can be done by reflecting the sun's rays through a mirror on the dark room. Sunlight cannot reach the room directly. The light that is reflected through the mirror is not as powerful as the direct rays of the sun. In the same manner, the illumination emanating from the *Atma* when it passes through the *Buddhi* to the mind, from it to the senses and from the senses to the body, gets considerably dimmed by the time it reaches the body. If the *Buddhi* is kept totally pure and untainted, it will be possible to transmit to the body the full power of the *Atma*. Hence man has to strive to keep the *Buddhi* pure and holy.

***Buddhi* as compared to a bird**

In the *Taithiriya Upanishad*--one of the ten important *Upanishads*--the *Buddhi* is compared to a bird. *Sraddha* (earnest faith) is the head of the bird. The right wing of the bird is *Rita* (the cosmic order). The left wing is *Sathya* (Truth). The main body of the bird is *Mahat Tatwa*. The tail is *Yoga*. The *Buddhi* is thus composed of these five constituents. Hence, the *Buddhi* is an extraordinary power. It is only when all the five constituents are actively present that the *Buddhi* (intelligence) acquires its full form.

Once King Vikramaditya posed before an assembly of scholars the question whether *Sraddha* or *Medha* or *Buddhi* is most important. *Buddhi* is of no use if it does not have *Sraddha* (earnest faith) as its motivator. The assembled scholars gave varying answers to the King's query. Ultimately the consensus amongst them was that *Medha Sakti* (talent) was the most important. The King was disappointed with their conclusion. The King told the assembly: "Of what use is

Medha if there is no zeal and no determination?" There may be many who are highly talented. But if they have no *Sraddha* (earnestness) what can they accomplish with their talents? If they lack determination (firmness of purpose) what can they achieve? Only when they have *Sraddha* and *Sthiratva* (firmness) will they be able to develop the zeal for pursuing their objectives. Hence, *Aasakthi* (zeal) is the first requisite. The next is *Sthiratva* (firmness of purpose). These are the primary requisites for the *Buddhi* (intelligence) to function at its best.

It would be foolish on the part of man to depend only on his cleverness for leading a meaningful life. He has to develop a zeal for life and impart firmness to it. Then he will be able to accomplish any great undertaking. That is why the *Vedanta* has declared: "*Sradhaavaan labhathe Jnanam*" (Only the man of earnest faith can acquire the higher knowledge). Without *Sraddha*, nothing can be achieved. If you have a small piece of burning charcoal, you can fan it and create a big fire out of it. If a man lacks *Sraddha*, he will allow even a blazing fire to die out.

Man doubtless has *Sraddha*, but only for securing the fruit, but not for the labour required for getting it. He does not have the "spirit of work" in him. The advances in science and technology have made man a lover of comfort and ease with no interest in hard work. There is nothing wrong with science. It is the improper use of science that is leading man astray.

Food and the five sheaths

Today we are witnessing radical changes in almost every field--political, economic, social, scientific, etc. But there is no mental or spiritual transformation. This is because the nature of the mind is not properly understood. The state of the mind depends on the food that is consumed. After digestion the grossest part of the food is thrown out as excreta. A subtle part becomes blood and flesh and provides sustenance for the body. The subtlest part goes to the mind. Hence the tendencies of the mind are based on the food that is eaten. First the food becomes the *Annamaya Kosa* (the sustainer of life). Then it affects the *Manomaya Kosa* (the mental sheath). Only after that, the *Vijnanamaya Kosa* is reached. Beyond the *Vijnanamaya* is the *Anandamaya Kosa* (the sheath of Bliss). Of the liquids we consume, the grosser part goes out as urine. The subtle part sustains *Prana* (life). The subtle part of the food that goes into the mind and the subtle element in the fluids which gets into the *Prana* (life-force) together enter the *Vijnanamaya Kosa*.

Three qualities needed to maintain balance

The bird of *Buddhi* (in the Upanishad analogy), in addition to *Sraddha*, has *Sathya* and *Rita* as to two wings. Although *Rita* is equated with *Sathya* (Truth), it has a wider connotation than Truth. It represents the triple purity--of thought, word and deed--that transcends time and space. The bird's tail is *Yoga*. What is the purpose of this tail? It is through *Yoga* that balance is maintained between the two wings of *Sathya* and *Rita*. Man has to maintain this balance in daily life. An aeroplane has a tail in addition to two wings. Likewise in man, *Sathya*, *Rita* and *Yoga* are needed to maintain balance in the body and regulate the course of life both in the mundane and spiritual spheres.

The Buddhi can function properly only when it is governed by *Sathya*, *Rita* and *Yoga*. What is the *Yoga* that is envisaged here? It is not the physical exercises of various kinds. *Yoga* here means control of the senses "*Yogah Chittavrithi nirodah*."

Then there is the *Mahat-Tatwa* ? What is the *Mahat-Tatwa*? It is the recognition by the *Buddhi* of the true nature of the Self. The man of intelligence is one who has realised his own true Self.

The *Buddhi*, thus, is not to be regarded as an ordinary aspect of the mind. It could be described as an image of the *Atma*, a reaction and an echo of the *Atma*. Only after understanding the true nature of the *Buddhi* will the students be able to know whether they are guided by intelligence or by mental delusions.

Spiritual guidance from the *Avatars*

After Rama's return from Lanka, Kaikeyi, who felt penitent about all that she had done, sought *Upadesh* (spiritual guidance) from Rama to atone for her wrongs. Rama did not give her the advice directly, but indicated it indirectly. This is characteristic of all *Avatars* from ancient times. *Avatars* seldom give advice directly. What they wish to convey, they give indirectly. The reason is: there is divinity present in each human being and it is by making man realise it that he should be enabled to correct himself. If the correctives are applied directly, man will never try to realise his divinity. The indirect method is used to give to man the capacity to understand his divinity.

Every one should first seek to know the answer to the question: "*Who am I?*" Without knowing who you are, what is the meaning in trying to know all about others? At birth you cry out "*Koham?*" (Who am I?). You should not die with the same question on your lips. When you die, you should end your life with the assertion "*So-Ham*" (I am He).

To get rid of *Ahamkara*, there is only one path' it is to pursue the Godly way of life. When you are puffed up with the sense of ego, sit silently in a corner and observe what your breathing is telling you. It is declaring: "*So-Ham.*" ("*So*" while inhaling and "*Ham*" while exhaling. *Swami* demonstrated how the breath is conveying the message). *So-Ham* is made up of the two words' *Sah* (He, that is *Brahman*) and *Aham* ("I"). "*Aham Brahmaasmi*" (I am *Brahman*). If this is constantly meditated upon and this consciousness grows within, the *Aham* ("I") will cease to be a bother. *This Mantra* has been described as *Hamsa Gayatri* in *Vedantic* parlance.

"I am Brahman" is the message of inner voice

Students! You must note that this "*So-Ham*" *mantra* goes on in each of you 21,600 times a day. "*I am Brahman*" is the message of the inner voice all the time. Ignoring this, each one identifies himself with the temporary name given to the body. In this way there can be no God-realisation. You will remain what you were according to the name given to the body. "*So-Ham*" is the name with which you were born. That alone is permanent. That is your real self. When you realise it, you will experience *Sat-Chit-Ananda*.

Krishna is described as *Parthasarathi* (the Charioteer of Partha). *Partha* does not refer to Arjuna alone. It applies to all children of the *Prithvi* (Earth). So, make Krishna your charioteer. As the *Buddhi* is a reflection of the Divine, make use of it to realise the Divine. Recognise also that for every endeavour, *Prema* (Love) is essential. The Lord is the embodiment of Love. He is the Sun of Truth. He is the abode of Truth. Through Love, seek to know your true Self with the help of the *Buddhi* and purify your mind. This is what I expect from you.

Discourse at the Summer Course in the Brindavan Campus on 26-5-1990.