

19. Know thyself

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! "Aham Atma Gudaakesa sarvabhoothaasaya sthithah" (Oh Arjuna! I am the *Atma* that dwells in all living beings). "I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all things," declares Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita.

All that you see in the cosmos--the moving and stationary objects--is a manifestation of the *Atma*. In the spiritual realm, what you hear at every step is the *Atma*. What is seen is *Atma*. What is heard is *Atma*. What makes you forget is also *Atma*. That is why Krishna declared to Arjuna: "In this universe there is nothing that is not *Atma*."

What man needs today is to take the resolve to realise the *Atma*. This is tantamount to realising one's true Self. It is *Atma-jnana* (Knowledge of the Self). The first aim of human existence should be to experience *Atma-Ananda* (*Atmic* Bliss). Everyone should keep in mind the *Atmic* Principle. This *Atma* is called *Eruka* (Awareness). This Awareness produces in every being the sense of "I-ness." It is expressed in the term, *Aham* ("I"). When this "I" identifies itself with the body, it takes the form of *Ahamkara* (I-am-the-Doer, the Ego). This is what is called *Mithya* (delusion). It is not the real "I".

"I" is the first sound emanating from *Atma*

It is the mind that continually interposes itself against the *Atma*. Like the cloud, formed out of the water vapour produced by the sun, which hides the sun, the mind, which has arisen from the *Atma*, covers the *Atma*. As long as the mind exists, man cannot comprehend the nature of the *Atma* or realise *the Atma*. Only the person who is aware of the *Atma* in all the different states of consciousness can be said to have direct vision of the *Atma* (*Saakshaatkaara*).

The first sound emanating from the *Atma* which one hears is "I." It is only after the emergence of "I" that the whole process of creation began. If there is no "I," there is no creation. The terms, "I", *Atma* and *Brahmam* are all synonymous. The "I" not associated with the mind is *Atma*. *The* "I" associated with the mind is *mithyaatma* (pseudo-self). There is only one *Atma*. That is the real "I".

Man undertakes a variety of spiritual exercises to realise the One that subsumes the many. In fact, all the endeavours made in quest of the *Atma* are born of ignorance. The *Jnani* (Realised person) makes no such endeavours. All the efforts made by man to realise the One are only attempts to satisfy the mind. When what is required is the elimination of the mind for experiencing the One, it is futile to strengthen the mind for this purpose by so-called spiritual *sadhanas*. If you seek to embark on *sadhana*, you must first get rid of the *Anaatma bhaava* (identification with the body-mind complex). To experience *Atmic* bliss, you have to turn your vision towards the *Atma*. In reality, all efforts made for experiencing *Atmic* bliss are aberrations of the mind. Seeking liberation man adores a myriad deities. Of what avail is all this, when all the different religions have declared that there is only One God. These pursuits are products of a deluded mind.

As long as the mind exists, desires will persist. When desires are present, attachments and possessiveness cannot be got rid of. And these sustain the ego. While the ego lasts, the *Atma* cannot be experienced. *Atmic* knowledge, *Atmic* bliss and *Atmic* vision cannot be had till the Ego is eliminated.

From the *Brahmam* to the *Brahman*

The mind, the *Buddhi*, the *Chitta* and *Ahamkara* from where did they originate, how do they grow and where do they merge themselves? That is the *Brahmam*, that is the *Atma*. That being the case, how can you discover your source or your true Self by searching for it elsewhere (than within you)? Such a search is like that of a thief putting on the uniform of a policeman and searching for the thief. To know your own Self, why do you need any assistance? There is a story which illustrates the absurdity of such a situation.

Ten ignoramuses who were in a group attempted to cross a river. After crossing the river, they wanted to assure themselves whether all the ten had crossed the river. One man started counting and noted that only nine had crossed the river and started wailing that the tenth man must have been swept away by the river. Each of them counted the others in the same manner, leaving out himself, and found one man missing. A passerby noticed their plight and enquired them the cause of their distress. They all said that one of the ten in their group had been lost in the river. The intelligent traveller found that while counting, each one had left out himself and counted only the remaining nine. Lining them up in a row, he counted all the ten and revealed to them that earlier at each count, the man doing the counting had left himself out.

This indicates that the individual who is not aware of himself cannot understand anything aright. When you are yourself the *Atma*, if you pray to someone outside, how can you recognise the *Atma*?

Unity that underlies the apparent diversity

"The One willed to become the many." Hence, you must realise the unity that underlies the apparent diversity. All the myriad forms you see are reflections in a mirror of your own image. You are ignoring the primary form and are concerned about the images. This is the delusion you are afflicted with. *Brahmam* will elude the one caught up in *bhrama* (delusion).

All the *sadhanas* you do are of little use for realising the *Atma*. They may help to tranquilise the mind. But what you have to do is to eliminate the thought process of the mind altogether. Calming the mind is only a palliative. The mind will get agitated again. Only those *sadhanas* which aim at eliminating the mind will be of use in the *Atmic* quest.

Come out of egoistic delusions

It is the identification with the body that is causing the *Aham* (ego) to flourish and grow. The feeling, "I am the doer," "I am the enjoyer," "I am achieving success," is growing constantly in man. Students! You must realise that victory or defeat is not the result of your actions or *sadhanas*. Immersed in your egoistic delusion, you are imagining that you are the architects of your fortunes. You can see in the world numerous instances of failure in spite of heroic efforts. You can also see examples of successes achieved through very little effort. Instead of courting failure, relying on your own efforts, and getting dispirited, put your trust in God and offer all your actions to Him. You have to realise that little depends on your efforts alone. You can have proofs of this in your own body.

For instance, what efforts are you making to see that your heart beats regularly? How far are you responsible for the breathing process that goes on continually? What is your contribution to the digestive process that goes on within you? Are these the results of human efforts? No. Can you

continue to live merely by wishing that you should go on living? Are you able to end your life when you wish it? Are you responsible for your birth? Not at all.

When you enquire into this problem, you will realise that it is your sense of doership and enjoyership which is causing all difficulties. All actions done by man today are intended to satisfy the mind. But however much you may try to satisfy the mind, it can never feel contented.

What is this mind? It is *Maya* (delusion). It is desire. It is ignorance. It is *Prakriti* (the phenomenal world). It is *Bhraanti* (aberration). Immersed in this mental aberration, if you wish to realise the *Brahman*, how is it possible? You are afraid of your own shadow. Your thoughts frighten you. The truth is there is only the One. It is called by different names. It is the *Atma*. The *pandits* describe the Supreme as *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Being-Awareness-Bliss). This is not correct. He is *Sat*, He is *Chit* and He is *Ananda*. These are not three different qualities of the Divine. He is the embodiment of each of them.

Believing *mithya* you are giving up *sathya*

Some people resort to meditation in the belief that there is some power greater than themselves which they must experience. People also undertake arduous exercises to realise some secret, mysterious and marvellous power other than themselves. This is action born of ignorance. As long as you think that there is something higher than yourself, you are steeped in ignorance. There is nothing higher in the world than yourself. But belief in the existence of such a power is a creation of your mind. For example, in a dream you see all kinds of scenes and have various experiences. How far are these real? Only as long as you are in the dream state. When the dream ends, the scenes become unreal. Likewise, as long as you are in a state of mental delusion, the joys and sorrows, the gains and losses you experience are all real. When the delusion is removed, they all become unreal.

Hence, all the phenomenal experiences caused by delusion are *mithya* (real-unreal). Basing your life on this *mithya* you are giving up *Sathya*. Identifying yourself totally with the body you are encouraging the Ego to grow. If you grasp one simple truth, you will develop a wide vision. There is nothing in the world separate from you. All the diverse objects are images of the One. For all worldly things there is a *Kartha* (a creator), *Karma* (causal action) and *Kriya* (the end product). In the sphere of the spiritual, however, there is only the *Kartha* (Creator). There is no *Kriya*. He is the Doer. He is also the one who gets things done. He is the outcome of what is done. The *Atmic* principle, which represents the unity of all these three, is the One that pervades the entire Cosmos. It is the universal consciousness. It is impossible for it to be present in some and not in others.

The cosmic consciousness

It is this Cosmic Consciousness that has been presented to the common people as *Sat-Chit-Ananda* so that they can comprehend its nature. The *Vedantins* looked upon these three as reflections of each other. These three have also been called *Asthi*, *Bhaati* and *Priyam* in *Vedantic* parlance. In fact, all three are one and the same. When one says, "Here is a tumbler," the Is-ness is *Asthi*. This is *Sat*. We are seeing it. The quality of being perceivable is *Bhaati*. This is *Chit* (cognisability). "I am enjoying it." This is *Priyam* or *Ananda*. *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda* are one. It is one and the same thing which *is*, which *shines* and which gives *Ananda*. Though there is only One, because of our mental processes, we are seeing It in many forms and names.

Hence *Atma-tatwa* (the true nature of the *Atma*) is to be experienced by recognising the unity underlying the diversity. *The Atma* (Spirit) has no form. It is capable of assuming the form of the container which it fills. When air is filled in a balloon, it has the form of the balloon. When it fills a football, it has the form of the football. When it is present in a pneumatic pillow, it has the form of the pillow. Air, thus, has no form but it has one quality, that is *Chaitanya* (consciousness).

Conscience is a part of Consciousness

It is not easy to understand this quality of *Chaitanya* (consciousness). When you want to understand the nature of consciousness, you have to understand one part of it, namely, Conscience. Conscience is a Witness. It is also known as Awareness. A witness requires a basis for its functioning. That basis is that of which you are "conscious" in the waking state. There are these three levels of understanding. Being "conscious" (of the objective world), the Conscience and the Consciousness. The first state is related to the senses. Conscience is related to the mind. Consciousness is related to the *Atma* (the Spirit). These three divisions have been made for the purpose of understanding and grappling with the concerns of daily life. This process may be illustrated by an example.

For instance, a conference of doctors is held in a hall. There can be different specialists present in the hall. But all are described as doctors. Each one may have specialised in one part of the body-the heart, the ear, the brain or other limb. The body is one, but for the purpose of specialisation it is divided into many parts. Likewise, all are embodiments of the *Atma*. But for the purpose of earning a living, one may be labourer, or an official, or a trader, or a farmer. These differences are based on the occupations pursued by different persons. They are based on the occupations and have no permanent significance.

Similarly, although the *Atma* is one and the same in everybody, distinctions are made among different persons on the basis of their physical and other characteristics and their relationships. One's interest in these distinctions is based on one's attachment. For instance, if there is an accident to an aeroplane, one's interest in the fate of individual passengers is increased if one's kith and kin were travelling by that plane. Otherwise one is interested in the accident only out of curiosity. In the same manner, as long as the *Atma* is not considered as your own, your interest in the *Atma* is concerned with mere information. Once you know that the *Atma* is the Self that is present in everyone, the process of transformation takes place.

The Real is only One. But as long as the mind and body remain, it is difficult to experience this oneness. In spite, however, of the difficulty, everyone must strive to discover his true Self.

Understand the *Atma* first

We have seen how the body is comparable to a chariot, the senses to horses, the mind to the reins and the *Buddhi* to the charioteer. But besides these there is the master of the chariot, the *Atma* residing in the body. Hence, in addition to knowing how the body, the senses, the mind and the *Buddhi* function, you have to regard the understanding of the *Atma* as the primary goal.

Giving up the sense of "I" and "mine", you have to do your duty as a spiritual discipline. "*Karthavyam yogamuchyathe*" (The performance of one's duty is *yoga*). When you practise this *yoga*, you will experience the joy of *Atmic* bliss. It is the absence of this *yoga* which is making men *Rogi* (sickly). When you examine the activities of the mind, with a view to finding out

whether they are leading you to bondage or to liberation, you will find that they are only leading you to bondage.

The primary cause for the chaos of divisions, conflicts, disorder and violence in the world today is the absence of the sense of oneness among men. There is urgent need for cultivating the spirit of love which will serve to promote the feeling of oneness.

All education today is a process of proceeding from ignorance to ignorance. If you seek to know where is *the Atma*, it is the *Chaitanya* (Consciousness) between one state of consciousness and another. This is not easily understandable by all. There is a state which is between waking and sleep. Few know what this state is. We seem to be in the waking state and then we close the eyes and fall asleep. Only the *yogis* have observed this phenomenon. That which is conscious between the waking and sleeping states is the *Atmic* principle. The waking state represents the *Rajo guna*. Sleep represents the *Tamo guna*. In between is the *Satwa guna*--that is the *Atmic* Consciousness.

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