

13. Birth: Rebirth: Freedom

*Like the reflection that does not adhere to the mirror,
Like the water on the lotus leaf that is unattached to it,
Sins do not adhere to the man of devotion.
Birth and death revolve together
Like the two wheels of a cart;
If one goes, Creation itself will come to a stop;
This is the secret of Creation on earth.*

STUDENTS! Embodiments of Divine Love! "Ekoham Bahusyaam" (I am One; let me become manifold). By the divine will of *Prajapathi*, two pairs were created; the subtle and the gross, the inert and consciousness. By the union of the two, the entire cosmos, consisting of animate and inanimate objects, was created. After Kabandhi had heard from the sage Pippalada the secret about the origin of creation, he felt extremely happy and satisfied.

Then, Bhargava from Vidarbha approached the sage and asked him reverentially: "The cycle of birth and death seems to go on endlessly All the *sastras* declare that death is inevitable for everyone who is born, and birth is inevitable for everyone who dies If life is bound up with the round of birth and death, when will this process end? What is the basis for it?"

Pippalada replied: "Son! God is without a beginning or an end. The entire cosmos consisting of moving and unmoving objects is *mithya* (illusory). Although there is the Real in the illusory universe, all that is perceived in the phenomenal world is liable to pass away.

No rebirth after reaching solar region

"The sun is responsible for the phenomena of night and day, of days, months and years. These are fragments of Time. All phenomena relating to Time are associated with *Prajapathi*-(the cosmic progenitor). Time is a manifestation of *Prajapathi*. Time moves in two directions-- *Uttarayana* and *Dakshinayana*. 'Ayana' means journeying. When the apparent movement of the Sun is northwards, the period is termed *Uttarayana*. When the apparent movement is southward, it is called *Dakshinayana*. The period of *Uttarayana* is marked by brightness, peace, rejoicing, fearlessness, and purity. *Dakshinayana* is characterised by darkness, peacelessness, fear and disasters. Spiritual aspirants who perform *yagas* and *yajnas* during *Dakshinayana* reach the moon. The moon is inert and those who go to the moon realise only physical pleasures and material possessions. They cannot realise God. They stay on the moon according to the merit earned by them and when it is exhausted, they return to the earth, as declared in the *Gita*. "*Ksheene punye marthyalokam visanthi*" (When their merit is exhausted, they enter the land of mortals). This may be likened to the exit of an elected legislator from the legislature at the end of his five-year term. The man who has performed meritorious deeds spends the allotted time in the Land of the Moon and then is reborn on earth.

The one who performs spiritual actions during *Uttarayana*, with concentration on the *Brahmam* and devotion to the Absolute, goes to the land of the Sun (after death). The Land of the Sun is *Prana* (the Life-Principle). After reaching the Solar region, the person has no rebirth. "*Punarjanma na vidyathe*" (He does not return to the earth again).

Pippalada told Bhargava: "Life redeems itself only when it merges in *Prana*. As long as one's life is immersed in delusion, life itself remains a delusion. As long as delusion remains, the Absolute cannot be realised. The Absolute is realised by absorption in the *Brahmam* and then there is no rebirth".

The creative power of *Prajapathi*

The five basic elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth) are like five feet for the Sun. The twelve months correspond to twelve seasons for the Sun. The passage through the twelve "houses" endows the Sun with seven colours. Every month has two halves--the *Sukla Paksha* (Bright fortnight) and the *Krishna Paksha* (dark fortnight). During the bright fortnight, the moon shines effulgently because of the direct illumination received from the Sun. On Full-moon night, it shines with all its sixteen *Kalas* (aspects) illumined. On *Amavasya* (New Moon) night, the moon receives no light from the Sun and hence it is totally dark. The fortnight after the full moon, when the moon starts waning, is called *Krishna paksha*, the dark fortnight. The fortnight after *Amavasya* (New Moon) when the moon goes on waxing is called *Sukla paksha*, the bright fortnight. *Sukla paksha* is *Prana* (Life) and *Krishna paksha* is *Praani* (the living being). The entire cosmos is made up of the combination of *Prana* (the Life-breath) and *Praani* (the container of the Life-breath). All these are manifestations of the creative power of *Prajapathi*. "The One willed to become the many." This process can be recognised in the manner in which a seed planted in the earth grows into a huge tree which yields fruits in which there are thousands of seeds from which many more trees come into existence. The same process can be seen in the proliferation of living creatures.

Creation is an eternal process

Creation has, therefore, no predetermined limits. It is an eternal process whose beginning or end cannot be known. In the process of birth, growth and dissolution, besides the will of the Lord, the role of human effort can also be recognised to a certain extent. Man's destiny is determined by the nature of his actions, thoughts and desires. In this process, man forgets the Divine source from which he has come. Developing demonic tendencies and behaving like an animal, man wastes his human existence.

Pippalada told Bhargava: "Dear Son! Death exists as well as birth. But man has the capacity to free himself from rebirth. He is the architect of his ultimate goal. Take, for instance, the example of a green-gram seed. When it is sown, it sprouts into a plant and produces numerous pods with green-grams peas. It does not know the origin of its existence as a green-gram seed or the history of its ancestors. But when you put a seed in your mouth and munch it, its life comes to an end. Likewise, we do not know our origin, but we can determine our future. No one can tell how man came into existence and the circumstances of his origin. But his future is dependent on the *sadhanas* performed by him.

How to attain freedom from rebirth

When life is given up during the Northward journey of the Sun, with your thoughts centred on *Brahmam*, with love of *Brahmam* in your heart, and with an awareness of the *Brahmam*, you can become one with the Divine. Freedom from rebirth follows the complete shedding of all desires. It is like removing the husk from a paddy grain. Without the husk, the rice grain will not grow. But as long as the husk is there in the paddy seed, it can become a plant and continue the process of reproducing itself.

Man without desires has no *rebirth*---"*Punarjanma na vidyathe*. "As long as the mind is filled with desires, there can be no escape from the chain of birth and death. When the desires are replaced by the *Brahmic* consciousness and the mind is emptied of all other thoughts, there will be no rebirth. "Oh Bhargava! You think that rebirth and death are beginningless and endless. This is not so. There is a way out of this recurring chain", declared Pippalada.

Then, a third disciple, Asvalaayana, approached the sage reverentially and asked: "Swami! What kind of vital elements sustain, nourish and support living beings from inside? Who is the foremost among these living beings? Each living being has various limbs. There appears to be a coordinating power which integrates the different functions of these limbs. What is this power?"

The power that coordinates various limbs

Pippalada replied: "Son! From *Akaasa* (the ether), *Vaayu* (air), *Tejas* (effulgence or fire), water and earth emerged in succession. The faculties corresponding to these elements are speech, sight, hearing and thought (or mind). Controlling all of them is *Prana* (the Life-Force). The abode of this Life-Force is the body. The Life-Force operates using the body as its sanctum. It is timeless in its origin, but seeks an abode in a new body. In this body, the *Sahasraara Nadis* (nerves) enter all subsidiary organs and function throughout the body. In fact, there are 72 crores (720 millions) of nerves in this body. Everyone of these nerves is filled with the vital air called *Vyaana*. Without it, the nerves will not function at all. The vital air called *Udaana* is present in the upper vision. It keeps constant vigil over the good and bad actions of the individual and takes him to the appropriate places (in life).

Hence, one's status or condition in life is based upon one's actions. The scriptures, therefore, teach man not to succumb to difficulties or gloat over success but maintain equanimity in all situations. Neither difficulties nor successes are caused by others. Each one is responsible for his joy and sorrow. Out of mental weakness others may be blamed for one's condition, but in fact he alone is responsible for what he suffers or enjoys. One's own thoughts and actions are responsible for one's successes or failures, honour or ignominy, pleasure or pain. Whether one goes to heaven or hell or any other place, it is his own actions that are responsible. This is the function of the *Udaana*, vital air.

The secret of creation cannot be explained

There are five kinds of vital airs or *Pranas* (life-breaths): *Prana*, *Apaana*, *Samaana*, *Udaana* and *Vyaana*. These five life-breaths are not only present in the body, but are cognisable in all the *Panchabhuthas* (five basic elements). The *Prana* is in the Sun. *Apaana* issues from the earth. *Samaana* emanates from *Akaasa* (ether). *Udaana* issues from *Vaayu* (Air). *Vyaana* arises from *Agni* (Fire). In these five elements, the five life-breaths are immanent. Close to each one of these life-breaths, the reflections of man's actions are present.

No one can easily explain the secret of creation. There is a shadow which closely follows every object. Likewise the reactions of each action of man closely follow the *Prana*. When the *Prana* (life-breath) leaves one body and enters another, the results of one's actions follow the *Prana* to the other body. The *Prana* enters another appropriate body in accordance with the results of the actions in the previous body. Hence, one can reach a worthy state in life by doing good deeds and cherishing good feelings. "As you sow, so will you reap." You cannot get a mango fruit by planting a lemon seed.

Man may fancy that he is capable of achieving anything. But his achievements are solely related to the nature of his actions. The Creator sends each one at birth with a garland made of the results of his good and bad deeds in his previous birth. The scriptures exhort men to adhere to good thoughts and good deeds as the only way of realising a good life. The fruits of your actions will be reaped only by you and none else.

You alone are responsible for your joys and sorrows. God is in no way responsible. He is only a witness. But if you pray to Him with all your heart and soul, the effects of all *karmas* will disappear like mist. Devotion will free man from the consequences of his deeds. If man devotes a small fraction of the enormous time he devotes to his wealth, family and position, to thoughts of God, he need have no fear about the Lord of Death. If one does not think of God even for a moment, how can he hope for peace of mind?

Dedication transforms work into worship

Pippalada told the disciple: "The *Prana* (Life-Principle) is the most important factor. You have to merge yourselves in the mind. Merge the mind in the *Atma*. Whatever you do, do it in a spirit of dedication to the *Atma* (the Divine). You can carry on your respective avocations. When you practise it in a spirit of dedication, work will be transformed into worship. When life is led in such manner, there is no rebirth." The dedication to the Lord should not be merely verbal, but must emanate from the heart. When an offering is made in words, the response is also in words. When somebody tells me: "Swami! Why don't you come to our house?" I tell him: "Yes, I shall come to your house." For the invitation in mere words, the response also is in words only. When the invitation is whole-hearted, I come with all my heart. "*Yadbhaavam tadbhavati.*" (As is the thought, so is the result). Your thoughts are in tune with your desires. According to your thoughts, the results follow. Therefore, whatever you do, do it with all your heart. All the myriad nerves in man pervade the heart and the entire body. Hence, when the heart is filled with good thoughts, the entire body is filled with them. Everything stems from the heart. It is not the physical heart that is meant here. It is the spiritual heart. When your heart is filled with loving thoughts, you will realise freedom from rebirth.

Thoughts determine the vision of the world

All the conceivable doubts that could arise in any person were placed before sage Pippalada by the six young disciples and they got from him the right answers.

Kabandhi asked the sage: "What is the cause of dreams?" Some of the familiar answers to this question are that indigestion causes dreams, or that dreams are related to one's thoughts, or that they are based on physical ailments. But these are not the right answers. Pippalada said: "Sleep is the cause of dreams." Dreams appear only during sleep. For the man who is not asleep, there are no dreams.

Pippalada asked the disciples to control their thoughts as their thoughts determine their vision of the world.

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