

11. Realise the Atma Principle by Constant Practice

Embodiments of Love!

Everyone asks, “Swami, where is *Atma*?” They do not understand what *Atma* is. The *Upanishads* have dealt at length with the principle of *Atma*. Unfortunately, today people have not been able to interpret the teachings of the *Upanishads* properly. The teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Ramayana*, and *Bhagavatha* have their origin in the *Upanishads*. Our sages in the ancient times did intense penance (*tapas*) to understand the nature of *Atma* and finally declared that *Atma* was the fundamental basis of everything in the universe. When it assumes a physical body, even while the body undergoes constant change from birth to death, *Atma* remains as the eternal and changeless principle. The *Atma* is the source and sustenance for everything. It has no birth and death.

Brahman permeates the entire universe

People celebrate different festivals with great enthusiasm. For example, they celebrate the festival of Mahasivarathri. Does it mean Lord Siva was born on that day? No; the name *Siva* signifies auspiciousness. The Siva principle is omnipresent.

With hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth and ears pervading everything.

*Sarvatah Panipadam Tat Sarvatokshi Siromukham,
Sarvatah Srutimalloke Sarvamavrutya Tishtati*
(Sanskrit verse)

Whatever is seen by the eyes and heard by the ears, even the words that are spoken — everything is Brahman. There is nothing in the universe that is not Brahman. That is why it is described as:

Embodiment of sound, mobility and immobility, light,
speech, eternal bliss, perfection, delusion, and wealth.

*Sabda Brahmamayi, Characharamayi, Jyotirmayi, Vangmayi,
Nityanandamayi, Paratparamayi, Mayamayi, Sreemayi*
(Sanskrit verse)

Mind originated from Atma

No one can say, ‘this is Brahman and this is not.’ For example this handkerchief is also Brahman. From where did this handkerchief originate? It is made out of threads. The threads in turn originated from cotton. Since the threads are woven together, it has assumed the form of a cloth. The cloth thus woven out of cotton threads can be made into a *dhoti* or a sari or a shirt.

Some people say that the mind is the origin for the entire universe. This is not true. Even the mind has a source on which it depends. No doubt the mind is very strong and powerful, but even such a mind originated only from *Atma*. The mind directs all activities in the physical world. It is very unsteady and is changing continuously. That is why it is called “monkey mind”.

Atma is the source and sustenance for the body, mind, intellect, consciousness (*chitta*), discrimination (*vi-*

veka), higher wisdom (*vijnana*), and the science of consciousness (*sujnana*). All originated from only *Atma*. All these assume a particular form at a particular time, like an infant, a child, a boy, a young man, and an old person in the life of a human being. These different forms at different stages have no independent existence. It is a transition from one stage to the other. However, the *Atma* is the source and sustenance for all these entities. It is the fundamental principle.

Divinity has no name or form

In order to understand this fundamental principle, people ascribed different names to it. Some called it *Aum*, the primordial sound. Others called it “That Thou Art (*Thathwamasi*).” Yet others called it Brahman. Some others gave it names like Rama, Krishna, Allah, Easwara, Jesus, etc. These different names and forms are given only for the purpose of identification.

Divinity, however, has no name and form. The names and forms ascribed to God are based upon one’s liking for a particular name or form. Some people desire to worship God as Venkateswara and realise Him in that form. Who created that form? The human mind pictured God in that form — for example, painters like the famous Ravi Varma. He painted God in different forms — Rama, Krishna, etc. These are all man-made, but not original. You may worship God as Rama, Krishna, or Siva and realise Him in that form. But, fundamentally, God is one and only one. He is formless, nameless, and attributeless Brahman. This fundamental truth has been explained in the aphorism, “God is one without a second (*Ekameva Adviteeyam Brahma*).” Yet, different people at different times are deluded by names and forms. One can say it is all their imagination. In fact, that imagination itself is the root cause for all the troubles in the world. Though names and forms are different, God is only one.

The process of meditation

You think a man is bad, and he looks bad. On the other hand, if you think that he is a good person, he will really appear good. It is your feeling toward him that makes all the difference between good and bad. These are all born out of your thoughts, for which the mind is the source. Hence, you have to take things as they are.

You think you are meditating on a particular form or object. Really speaking, it is not meditation. The form or object on which you are supposed to be meditating may change after some time. Hence, it is not meditation in the real sense. It is not concentration either. It is just contemplation, for a particular time frame. When the object stabilises after regular practice, you can meditate. It is not possible for anyone to meditate the moment one sits for meditation. No one ever succeeded in such an attempt. People say they are meditating; but it is artificial. Artificial meditation is really bad.

There are three steps in the process: concentration, contemplation, and meditation. It is a gradual process achieved by systematic and regular practice (*abhyasa*). This *abhyasa yoga* and the consequent peace attained by a person has been beautifully explained in the *Bhagavad Gita* thus:

Better indeed is knowledge than practice.
Better than knowledge is meditation on God.
But better than meditation is renunciation of the desire for the fruits of actions.
For there, peace follows immediately
Sreyohi Jnanamabhyasat,

*Jnanaddhyanam Visishyate,
Dhyanat Karmaphala Tyaga,
Tyagat Santiranantaram.
(Sanskrit verse).*

Reason for depression

A newborn child does not become an adult immediately but gradually grows into an adult. It is a mistake to think that whatever you wish becomes fruitful. If it were so, there would be no human effort at all! There would be no meaning for human existence. Hence, first and foremost, concentrate upon the “I” principle. Constantly contemplate on the aphorism, “I am *Atma*.” You and *Atma* are one only, not two different entities.

Today, every action of a human being is leading to confusion, which in turn leads to depression. What is the reason for this sequence of events? Your own unsteady nature. In fact, the entire environment in the world is undergoing change. There is change in water, air, clouds, and even food. When everything around you is changing, naturally it will have its effect on you. Your mind is also undergoing change in tune with the changes around.

How to develop faith in the feeling of Oneness

There is only one changeless principle: constant integrated awareness (*Prajnanam*). The *Upanishads* declare, “Brahman is Supreme Consciousness (*Prajnanam Brahma*).” If you wish to attain that state, you must develop the feeling of Oneness (*Ekatmabhava*). Though the bodies are different, only one *Atma* dwells in all living beings. Human bodies are like the pots, and the mind therein is water. The one moon is reflected in all the pots. It is only reaction, reflection, and resound, everywhere.

Dear children!

You will not be able to understand the *Atma* Principle (*Atma Thathwa*). *Atma* is not merely a word comprising two letters. It connotes developing the feeling of oneness.

“All are one, be alike to everyone.” How can you develop faith in this maxim? A small example. You are doing a particular work. Your neighbour has undertaken a different job. Though you both undertook different jobs, the environment in which you are performing the jobs is the same. *Atma* is the consciousness that pervades everywhere. That all-pervading principle is Truth.

*Creation emerges from Truth and merges into Truth,
Is there a place in the cosmos where Truth does not exist?
Visualise this pure and unsullied Truth.
(Sanskrit verse)*

The entire universe is permeated by Truth. It is above, below, and on all sides. That Truth (*Sathya*) is *Atma*. It is eternal and changeless. The epic *Bhagavatha* enjoins on us to speak truth and to speak sweetly and softly. “Speak truth, speak pleasantly, and do not speak unpleasant truth (*Sathyam bruyat, priyam bruyat, na bruyat sathyamapriyam*).” Truth is the source and sustenance for everything in the universe. Where there is truth, there will be righteousness. Where truth and righteousness go together, peace is the result. Where there is peace, there cannot be anger, agitation, envy, jealousy, and conceit. Such peace devoid of these bad qualities transforms itself

into pure love.

Once, Hanuman entered the city of Lanka in search of Sita, who was abducted by Ravana and kept in confinement there. He searched for Sita in every street and every building but could not find her. However, he could find the demonic (*rakshasa*) ladies in awkward postures. He decided for himself that Sita was a noble lady and would not stoop down to such a level. Unable to find Sita anywhere, Hanuman lamented, “I have searched for her in every house and even in flower gardens. I am yearning to see her.” Then he went into the grove of asoka trees and found Sita sitting under a tree. He felt extremely happy to find her and, in that joyous mood, started pulling down fruit-bearing trees and deforming the beautiful garden. This act of impertinence of Hanuman infuriated the demons, and he was taken to Ravana’s court duly bound by ropes.

The law of karma is immutable and inescapable

In the royal court of the demon king, Ravana, Hanuman picked an argument with him over the propriety of his heinous act of abducting Sita. He addressed Ravana in a most humiliating manner. Ravana could not tolerate the impertinent and arrogant behaviour of Hanuman. He became very angry and warned Hanuman, “You monkey! No one, not even kings, dare to address me in such humiliating language. I will see that your mouth is shut right now.” Hanuman retorted, “You are a demon, whereas I am servant of an Emperor who rules the fourteen worlds (*lokas*). You cannot do anything to me.”

Ravana could not contain his anger any more and ordered Hanuman’s tail to be wrapped with clothes, soaked in oil, and set afire. Immediately, the demons brought some old clothes, wrapped them round his tail, poured oil on them, and set fire to the tail. Hanuman then jumped from one building to the other with the burning tail and set fire to all the buildings in Lanka. Very soon, the flames spread everywhere, and it looked as though the entire city was going up in flames. All the residents in the city came out into the streets in great panic. They were wondering and discussing among themselves: “Who is this monkey? Wherefrom has it come? Who sent it? Our entire city is burning. Where can we go now?”

Even Mandodari’s palace was not spared. The entire city including the buildings and personal belongings of the residents were reduced to ashes. Only one house in Lanka, that of Vibhishana, was safe. Thus, the residents of Lanka had to pay for their sins. The law of *karma* is immutable and inescapable. People have to suffer the consequences of their evil deeds. Whatever one does, whether good or bad, will come back to one.

How to keep away from indulging in bad deeds

When a man emerges from the womb of his mother, he does not find any garland around his neck.

There are no jewels made of pearls, nor are there glittering gold ornaments.

There are no necklaces studded with precious stones like emeralds and diamonds.

But there is one garland around his neck.

Brahma strings together the consequences of his past deeds into a heavy garland and puts it around his neck at the time of his birth.

(Sanskrit verse)

Thus, the results of our past actions (*karmas*) haunt us. Suppose you have eaten pakoda in your house; after

some time, you will get the belch of pakoda only. Similarly, you get the results of your past *karmas* only. Hence, your actions must always be good. In order that one always undertakes good actions, one must cultivate love for God, fear of sin, and morality in society. If one can cultivate these three, one will be able to keep away from indulging in bad deeds. Love for God, fear of sin, and morality in society are all interdependent. One follows the other.

Repetition of God's name (*namasmarana*) would help cultivate these noble qualities. That is why I repeatedly exhort you to do *namasmarana* incessantly. *Namasmarana* is the means by which one can cross the ocean of worldly life (*samsara*).

How to realise the Atma Principle

If one has to realise the *Atma* Principle (*Atma Thathwa*), one must seek refuge only in *Atma*. Once you realise the *Atma* Principle, you will yourself become *Atma*. You have to constantly contemplate upon the *Upanishadic* declaration, "I am Brahman (*Aham Brahmasmi*)." You have to remind yourself, "I am not a human, I am not a demon, I am *Atma*."

I wish that students should gradually give up loose talk and unnecessary activities. Your speech should be good; your vision should be good; your thoughts should also be good. Only when your thoughts, words, and deeds are good and in perfect harmony will you become a good person. The sacred texts like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharatha*, and the *Bhagavad Gita* teach the same. First and foremost, develop love for God. Love for God amounts to having everything.

Constant practice enables you to reach the goal

If you wish to attain the *Atma* Principle, you have to constantly contemplate upon *Atma*. Once you experience the *Atma* Principle, you will yourself become Brahman. In order to get that experience, there should be regular practice. One does a lot of practice even to attain simple things in daily life. Without practice, nothing can be achieved in life; you will commit mistakes.

First and foremost, learn to live like real human beings, constantly reminding yourself, "I am a human being, I am not an animal, I am not a cruel beast." From humanness, you have to rise to the level of Divinity. Do not degenerate to the level of an animal or beast. In fact, all *Avatars* come only to raise the level of consciousness of human beings to that of Divinity, only to transform humans into divine beings. When you follow God's instructions meticulously and undertake activities that would please Him, you will surely become God, verily. It is not a difficult task. Constant practice will enable you to reach your goal. On the other hand, if you follow bad people, you will also become bad. "Tell me your company, I shall tell you what you are", is the saying. As is your company, so you shall become.

Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam, 2009-07-20