

13. Sankara Jayanthi

In the word *Gita*, there are two parts, “*gi*” and “*ta*”. “*Gi*” indicates sacrifice, and “*ta*” indicates spirituality. Therefore, this book *Gita* teaches us both sacrifice and the real nature of the soul. If we understand the spirit of the *Gita*, we will know that it has taught us that the most important trait of a human being should be sacrifice. The *Gita* has also taught us what kind of sacrifice it is. It should be “*karma phala thyaga*”, or sacrifice of the fruits of the deeds we do. The *Gita* never taught us that we should give up action. It has taught us to do everything, undertake every action for the pleasure of God, and never desire for the fruits thereof.

India has been the land of great sacrifices. India is also a *yoga bhoomi*, the land of *yoga*. On the east, there is the Bay of Bengal and on the west there is the Arabian Sea. The union or confluence of these two seas is “The Hindu *Maha Samudram*” or the Indian Ocean. The confluence symbolises the real meaning of that word HINDU and teaches us the unity between the *jiva* and the *Brahman*. Those people who lived in India, leading an ideal life, must be considered as ideal *jyothis* or lights to all of us. While history is very important and not useless, we should realise that real history is not that which teaches us about kings and the periods when they ruled, but that which teaches us about the real spirit of India.

Adhyatmika jivitha, or spiritual life, does not mean leaving the homes and living in a solitary place. Spiritual life really means that everybody should think that all people are ONE and he, himself, is one with all. True spiritual life is that which teaches us Unity or oneness and makes us lead a life of selflessness and love. Instead of filling our minds with theories and subtleties of the *sastras* and our head with books and scriptures, it is better to fill our hearts with love and spiritual aspirations. When we are able to fill our hearts with real

love, then it will be possible for us to obtain tranquility of thought and peace of mind.

Today in the world, we see many associations, institutions and organisations. We must try to understand what an association really means. A mere group of people does not connote a *samaja* or association. The real meaning of *samaja* is equanimity and peace due to a feeling of oneness. We must try to improve society by equanimity and by spreading the concept that all are equal. It is not possible for us to visually see the *samaja* or the association. *Samaja* is not a special form of the basic elements. The individuals that form the society have got a form but not the society or the association. We can see the individuals that compose an association, but we cannot see the association. If there is no individual, there is no association. In the same way, we are able to see the world but we are not able to see the Lord of the world—*Jagadeswara*. If there is no Lord of the world, there will have been no world at all. As the individual is an important part and limb of society, so also God is an important and essential aspect of the world. He is the real basis of the Universe.

In the present context, people must try first to improve themselves and then the society and then their country. If the individual does not improve himself but tries to improve society, the attempt will be a failure. We must first try to set right our home. Then we must try to improve the village; afterward our district; next our province, and next the whole country. We must go step by step like this. But without knowing ourselves first, it will be meaningless attempting to improve society and the whole country. If we want to experience the “*Sath chith ananda*,” we will be able to do so only in society. It is madness to go to the forest and try to experience *Sath chith ananda* instead of improving our home and the society in which we are living. God is all-pervading; He is found in the hearts of all living beings. How can a heart that cannot love living fellow beings love God? People will be, on the one hand, praying to God and on the other, harming other people. This is not proper.

In India, many great people were born to teach us the spirit of this love, and also to teach us the oneness of all the beings in this world. Among the people who propagated such lofty ideals, Sankaracharya is one. We will not be showing real gratitude to Sankaracharya if we merely treat this day as a festive day without trying to understand what he said and what he taught. When we are able to function wholeheartedly according to his teachings, then only will we be celebrating his *Jayanthi* properly. If we do not try to know what he taught, and if we do not try to lead a pattern of life according to his teachings, if instead we content ourselves with sweets and feasting today, the day of *Sankara Jayanthi*, it will not be a proper celebration. All festival days of India are not meant for just *ahara* and *vihara*—food and enjoyment, but they are intended to turn one's mind to gaining knowledge of the Supreme Being. They have all a spiritual basis. On these festival days, we must try to know the full meaning of at least one saying said by such great men, and try to put it into practice. All the holidays that are generally given on such occasions, *Jayantis* and sacred days, should not merely be considered as holidays but as holy days. We must spend the time usefully and make our life meaningful.

We must try to imbibe the spirit of the country in which we are born. Is there a man who does not say, "This is my motherland! This is my mother tongue!" It is a great pity that sometimes Indians themselves do not have much faith in their precious culture! The land of India is like a beautiful garden. Just as the garden looks beautiful on account of many colourful flowers, so also India is beautiful in being full of great many religions. We see all the religions co-existing only in India. There is also a variety of races in India. In spite of all the variations in races, the people of India lead their lives with consciousness of the underlying unity, considering one another as brothers and sisters. It will not be possible for us to see such a unique country elsewhere. We must try to make our country prosperous. Prosperity does not come from the sky, it does not come from anywhere else. It comes only from our endeavour.

The age in which you are now is very propitious. At this age, you must have an ideal and have the determination to strive for its realisation. You must have one aim, a destination or goal and try for its attainment. Man has been born in this world to achieve something sacred but not to spend his time in *ahara*, *nidra*, and *bhaya* or eating, sleeping, and worrying with fear.

Sankara demonstrated the real nature and value of our Indian culture through his own life. Sankara tried hard to earn the grace of God as it is said, "*Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati*"—one who understands the supreme being will, himself, become the supreme being. Sankaracharya was one like that. Among all the animals, the life of a human being is the greatest, and it is also not easily obtainable. When Sankara was a little boy, his father had to go to a neighbouring village on some important errand. In the house of Sankara, there used to be daily worship and daily offering to God. His father used to worship like that and he also used to offer *naivedya* to God and later distribute the *prasad* to all the people who came there. On one day, as the father went to the neighbouring village and, since the mother was out of the house, the responsibility of worshipping God and offering *naivedya* fell on Sankara's shoulders. Sankara knew the real meaning of the *Vedic* words, "*Mathru Devo Bhava, Pithru Devo Bhava.*" When his father left the house, he told his son, "My dear son, I am daily worshipping God and distributing *naivedya* to all the people. Likewise, in my absence, and in the absence of your mother, you please try to do like that." Sankara promised to do so without fail. He poured some milk in a cup, put it before the idol of the Goddess and prayed to her; "Mother! Take this milk that I am offering." Though he prayed for a long time, the Mother did not take the milk, nor did She appear. He was very much disappointed. He said again, "Mother! Mother! you are daily taking the offerings that are given to you by my father. What sin have these hands of mine committed that you are not accepting the offering that I am giving to you?" He prayed to her earnestly from the innermost depths of his heart. He was prepared to sacrifice even his life and

told himself, “My father asked me to offer this milk to the Goddess, but I am not able to do so because the Goddess is not receiving the offering which I made. It is better that I die.” He went out and brought a big stone to kill himself. The Mother of the Universe is very compassionate, and she was very much moved and touched by Sankara’s sincerity and she at once appeared before him and drank the milk that he offered. She drank the whole milk and placed the empty cup before him.

The boy was very glad that the Mother of the Universe came and drank the milk, but there was nothing in the cup to distribute to others. He thought that his father would certainly ask for the *naivedya* of the God after his return. He feared that the father may think that he drank away all the milk and he may be angry with him. Therefore he prayed to the Goddess, “Goddess, give me at least a drop of milk so that I may be able to give it to my father.” But the Goddess did not come. He again sincerely continued to pray. The Goddess was moved and she again appeared. Because she was not able to give the milk that she drank, she gave her own milk and filled the cup. There is a belief that because Sankara tasted that Divine milk, he was able to attain the highest learning, knowledge and wisdom that is ever possible. So the essence of the Grace of the Goddess became the essence of the learning of Sankara. In order to please his father, he tried hard and was able to get the Goddess of the Universe to manifest Herself before him. From this story, we must learn to revere and obey the orders of our parents implicitly and sincerely.

Let us also remember his great love for his mother. He knew that if he did not please his mother, he would not be successful in his *sadhana*. So, even though he desired to take *sanyasa*, he was not prepared to take it without the prior permission of his mother. Because he was the only son, the mother also was not willing to permit him to take *sanyasa*. The *sanyasa* taken by Sankara is not like the monkship of today. By merely wearing a saffron-coloured robe, devotion and detachment do not descend on a person. You know the

crocodile incident and how Sankara got his mother's permission for taking *sanyasa*. After Sankara came to the shore of the river, he told his mother, "Mother, it is not a real crocodile that caught me in the waters, but it is the crocodile of *samsara* or family that caught me." Sankara used his skill and his intelligence, but never did he do a thing without the permission of his parents.

We do various actions now and then, but they are not sometimes appropriate to the time and situation. When the iron is red hot, if you beat it with a hammer, you can mould it as you want and it will yield to you. But when it becomes black and also cold even though a very strong man comes and beats it, it will not yield. Thus, our actions should be appropriate to the time and situation and always be for the right purpose and in the right direction. Now, your age is the right age for doing anything. You must know that you are being trained to become the future citizens of India and also the future soldiers in the moral and spiritual army of India. These summer classes have been started to protect India from all dangers and in all ways.

Now I shall describe to you a beautiful incident from the life of Sankaracharya. One day, when he was in Benares, he was returning from the river through a narrow lane, and a person who was considered to be an untouchable was coming opposite to him. Sankara asked him to move away and keep at a distance so that he, a Brahmin, could move on unpolluted. Then that untouchable asked Sankara, "Are you asking the body to keep at a distance? If that is so, one body, which is *jada* or inert, is asking another inert body, and it has no authority to do so. If you are asking the soul to keep away at a distance, the soul that is in me is the same as the soul or *Atma* that is in you. Therefore, the same *Atma* cannot ask itself to move away from itself and be aloof." Then Sankara thought, "This so-called untouchable is one who knows what is real *Atma* and what is real *anatma*, what is *kshetra* and what is *kshetrajna*, and I must respect him." So saying, he prostrated before the "untouchable". The untouchable was none other than Lord Viswanatha Himself. He then appeared in His true Form to Sankara. Let one be a Brahmin or be-

long to any caste, if he knows well the *Adwaita Thathwa*, then he has true spiritual enlightenment.

Different religions may look different and their paths may look different, but the goal is only one. The clothes that different people wear may be different, but the material with which the clothes are made is one. The ornaments may be different but the gold out of which they are made is only one. The colours of different cows may be different but the milk that they all give is only one. The *darshanas* or philosophies may be different, but the God about whom they speak is only one. The flowers may be different but the offering will be the same. People delude themselves into ignorance of the basic truth. They create for themselves an illusion of plurality, build up walls of difference among themselves and plunge into suffering and grief. One must try to get the source of knowledge and realise the basic unity of all creation. That will make our life sacred and meaningful.

We have a mistaken notion that some people belong to us and others do not. You first try to know yourself. The attempt to know yourself is called *sankhya jnana*. And *tarka jnana* is that by which we know what the “I” is and wherefrom this “I” has come. Living steadily in the state of “I”, if a person tries to know the truth, that state is called *amanaska*. So every individual should try to know and attain the state of complete *amanaska*.

Today, we are celebrating the *Jayanthi* of Sankaracharya, the *Jayanthi* of Ramanujacharya, the *Jayanthi* of Madhvacharya and the *Jayanthi* of several other great men as well. We are thinking that all these names are different. Today is not only Sankara’s *Jayanthi* but it is the *Jayanthi* of Ramanuja also. Instead of knowing the oneness and unity in all such philosophies, we think that they are different and thereby promote hatred. There is really no room for any differences on the subject of God.

If the Vaishnavites and Saivites do not like each other, it is only because of their ignorance of the underlying inner truth. The youth of today should try to know that unity. They should not give

room for differences or distinctions. I shall give you an example for this oneness or unity. We think that the God Siva has got the *damaruka* or the drum in one hand and *trisula* in the other hand and we visualise His Form in that way. Similarly, in one hand of Vishnu, there is the *chakra* and in the other hand, there is the *sankha* or conch. *Sankha* represents sound. *Chakra* represents time. Vishnu has taken the symbols of sound and time in both his hands. In the case of Siva, *damaruka*, or the drum, represents sound, and *trisula* is “*Tri-Kala* the symbol of time: past, present, and future. What Vishnu has in his hands is sound and time. Similarly what Siva has in his hands is also sound and time. Where, then, is the difference between them? The difference is in Form and Name only, but the energy or power is the same. Even in the Quoran and in the Bible, just as in the *Vedas*, the principle of *adwaitha* alone has been taught. In our *Upanishads*, it has been stated that Easwara is everywhere and that the world is pervaded by God in every place and in every atom. You read something similar in the Bible, wherein it has been stated that, “All world is one, my dear son, be good to everyone.” It is only on account of our pride and ego, we create differences among ourselves and we make our lives miserable and unhappy.

When we celebrate Sankara *Jayanthi*, we must know what Sankara taught us and try to put all he said into practice. Even though some things appear to be lifeless, when they come and combine with ourselves in life, they will also become most important and significant. For instance, we cook vegetables and eat them. We boil rice and eat it. By cooking, the life principle is removed from the vegetables and rice. When they are cooked, we think that they have become *jadas* or lifeless, but when they go into our body, they will turn into *chaitanya* and give us vitality and strength.

Today, you have been told that there are three truths: *prathibhasika sathya*, *vyavaharika sathya* and *paramarthika sathya*. Truth is only one and it is never threefold. We only think that it is of three kinds. I shall give you examples for these three kinds to make it clear that this classification is superficial. *Prathibhasika sathya*

has neither basis nor any existence. It is our illusion. When there is twilight, a little light and a little darkness, we come by a rope and mistake it to be a snake. Really speaking, there is no snake there. The snake is only in our mind and the thing that is really there is only the rope. This is *prathibhasika sathya*. If we stand before a mirror, we see our reflection in it. When we move away, the reflection vanishes. Therefore, the reflection is not true. When the original object is there, then only we will see the reflection. Here there is one basis, namely, the original thing. Without the original, there is no reflection. This is an illustration of *vyavaharika sathya*. On the other hand, *paramarthika sathya* is an Entity that is present everywhere and at all times. This is the true and eternal Reality.

Here is an example. There is a silver cup in our hand. We give this to a goldsmith and ask him to prepare a plate. After some time, we give this plate to the goldsmith and ask him to prepare a box. First it is in the shape of a cup, then it is in the shape of a plate, then it is in the shape of a box. Here the form and the name have changed but silver never changes. We are giving value to silver and not to the form and the name. We are giving only wages for preparing the objects. This is an illustration of the *paramarthika sathya*. All these multiple forms we notice in the world are just like various cups, plates and tumblers. The *Atma* of silver, the core in all the forms, is only one. It does not change.

There are many bulbs with many different voltages and different colours. But in all these bulbs with different voltages and different colours, there is only one current. Even though we see many forms, many names, many races, many creeds and many castes in this world, we must know that the God that is present in all of them, the inner being, is in reality only one. Our students should try to get such *sama drishti* and *samabhava*.

The youth of today, whether they are at home, or in the college or in society, should not give room for bad ideas in their hearts. They must try to lead a moral, spiritual, peaceful and happy life. Students go to the college on some vehicle, either on a bicycle or on a

car, these days. The parents will be very anxious until their children come back home safely. What is the reason? Is it due to the busy traffic? No. Because there is a tendency to see evil, there is a possibility of many accidents. When you are going on a bicycle, you must try to see the road, you should not see this side, or that side, look for cinema posters or something else. If you do that, accidents do happen. So when you are doing a certain thing, you should observe the discipline related to that. You should never turn your eyes to other things. Because you are very young, there are many things that you have to practise in your daily life. If you treat others unfairly or ridicule them, they will feel greatly pained. You must know that if others treat you in the same way, you will feel greatly pained. If you look at a sister of someone with a bad idea, the brother of that sister will certainly be pained in his heart. If somebody looks at your sister with a bad idea, you also feel very bad in your heart. If you think of these two things, you will know how you should behave towards others.

We do not see these days *paapa bheethi* or *daiva pree-thi*—fear of sin and love of God—anywhere. With fear of sin and love of God, we must try to lead our lives in a disciplined way. This will give us all happiness. We must try to respect our parents first. If you respect your parents now, your children will know and will certainly respect their parents, you and your wife. “*Mathru Devo Bhava, Pithru Devo Bhava, Acharya Devo Bhava, Athithi Devo Bhava,*” are injunctions given to us in our traditions. After the worship of these four, mother, father, teacher, and guest, comes the worship of God. You may ask me, “Why did they put God in the last place? Why did they not put Him in the first place?” God is the same to all; and every one has got the same claim toward God, but to an individual, his parents are the real authority. God is the creator of all, and for an individual his parents are the creators.

Lord Easwara and Goddess Parvathi are the creators of this world. Here is a beautiful story acclaiming the supremacy of mother and father over all else. The first son of Easwara and Parvathi is Ga-

napathi or Vighneswara. The second son is Subrahmanyeswara. They told them: "Sons, you must go round the world and whoever comes first will receive a special prize. As soon as Subrahmanyeswara heard this, he got up on his *vahana*, the peacock. The peacock is a big bird and it can fly in the air also. Subrahmanyeswara is a small child and so he could go round the world on his peacock very easily. Vighneswara is huge in size and his *vahana*, the mouse, is very small. It is very difficult for him to go round the world. So he was not prepared for this journey. He sat near his parents. The mother used to ask him why he was not going round the world. He used to say "I shall go, I shall go." Subrahmanyeswara went round the world and was returning. Ganapathi saw him at a distance and immediately went round his parents and said that he had gone round the world. The father said, "Subrahmanyeswara has gone round the world. You have gone only round us." Therefore, I think Subrahmanyeswara is greater than you." Then, Vighneswara said, "When I went round the parents, I had gone round the world, because it is the parents who have given me this body. On account of this body, I have been able to see this world. Therefore the parents are the world for me; and when I have gone round the parents, it means that I have gone round the world." The Lord was much pleased and gave him the name Ganesha, the Lord of Ganas. If children try to please their parents, then they will be pleasing God as well.

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