

19. Dwaitha, Adwaitha, and Visishtadwaitha

In the *Atma Thathwa*, all are eternal. In the world-sense, all are ephemeral. Though we know that this body and the sense of the workaday world are purely ephemeral, we make the mistake of treating them as permanent. *Atma Thathwa*, which is *jnana*, is permanent. Though we do not accept it, it still exists. It is above all experiences of losses and difficulties and nothing can shake it. This *Atma Thathwa* is the embodiment of truth. It is also the embodiment of delight or *Ananda Swarupa*.

Several passages in the *Gita* refer to the eternal existence of the soul. Krishna says, “There was never a time when you were not there. All the others, Bhishma, Drona, and others also have been ever there. The world is also there, always. I, who am the Easwara, you who are the *jiva* and this world which is *jagath*—all the three have always been existing.” These three, *jiva*, Easwara, and *prakruthi* have been in existence at all times —they were there even before the creation, and they will continue to be there. Though the physical bodies may be undergoing transformation, this *Atma Thathwa* remains eternal and changeless.

Three approaches or three schools of philosophy have been propounded to enable us to know this *Thathwa*. These three are *dwaitha*, *adwaitha*, and *visishtadwaitha*. Let us first try to understand what is *dwaitha* or duality. *Dwaitha* propounds that *jiva* and *prakruthi* always exist, are always there, and will never become one. The permanence of these two entities, though they are different, is accepted.

Visishtadwaitha postulates *chith* and *achith* in the phenomenal world and accepts the phenomena of appearance and illusion. It states that both are true and valid. *Visishtadwaitha* has also estab-

lished the oneness of *jagath*, which is *jada* or inert, and of *jiva*, which is full of consciousness. *Visishtadwaitha* also says that *jada* and *Chaithanya*, i.e. inertness and consciousness, are the manifestations of the same principle of Divinity and, therefore, are considered equally valid. Because these two entities cannot merge with each other, they have been postulated as different aspects of the same form and as part and parcel of the same principle.

Jagath, the world; *jiva*, the consciousness; and *Purusha*, the Supreme, are not three separate entities but are one and the same from the ultimate point of view. The greatness of *visishtadwaitha* lies in proclaiming their unity. Though the appearances may be different and there may be varieties of experience, it is asserted that in all these, there is one thing present, namely, the unifying spirit. Followers of *visishtadwaitha* use the analogy of gold. Though the ornaments may be of different shape, the gold is the same. They go even a step further. If God has not these subtle and gross bodies, the very nature of God will be incomplete. I will give an example. Let us take the kingdom and the people. Without the king, there cannot be the kingdom; without the people, there can be no kingdom, and without the people, there can be no king. They are all interdependent. Because all these three are in a way inextricably interconnected with one another, *visishtadwaitha* has propounded the unity of the three entities. When we take into consideration the nature of the king and the people, then we shall be able to grasp that there is also the principle of non-duality or *adwaitha* here. The king also is one among the people, and he is also a man. The king is the law-giver, and the people are those who are regulated and bound by the law. Though the ruler and the ruled may appear to be separate, as human beings they are one and the same.

Just as we are told about the oneness of *jada* and the *chaithanya*, we find *chaithanya*, or consciousness, in inertness, and we find the features of inertness in consciousness as well. Therefore, in a way they are inseparable. The inertness cannot exist without consciousness. Consciousness cannot exist without inertness. In the

workaday world, we may mistake and think that conscious force cannot enter into inert matter and vice-versa. But that is a mistaken idea. We all believe that this whole world is permeated by *sabda* or sound. But where there is movement or motion, there alone does *sabda* originate. We close our eyes many a time every minute. As our eyelids move, they do make a little noise, but the noise is so inaudible that we are unaware of it. Because it is inaudible, we cannot deny the presence of sound. Just as we are not able to recognise the sound that is inaudible, in the same way we are not able to recognise consciousness in *jada* and we are not able to recognise the element of *jada* in consciousness.

There are two aspects present in this illusion. One is *parinama*, or evolution. The other is *vivarta*. *Vivarta* is the property that makes us think that there is a change though the substance remains the same. It is made to appear to have a different shape and form. When we are walking alone, we may come across a rope but get deluded to imagine it as a serpent. The rope does not go and the serpent does not come. It is all an illusion. *Vivarta* is the quality that makes us forget the real thing and makes us impose upon that, some other thing which is not there. It is the effect of *maya*. *Parinama* is the property of evolution or change like milk turning into curd. If there is no milk, we cannot change it into curd. *Parinama* is that which changes what is there. *Maya* is present both in *parinama* and *vivarta*.

Today, we live under the influence of *vivarta*. Though we are *Atma Swarupa*, we forget the Supreme Reality and live with that *deha bhranthi*, or the body illusion. We mistake our ephemeral existence to be the real existence. We are not afraid of the rope, but we are terribly afraid of the serpent. We are not afraid of the *Atma* but we are afraid of life. Though we are *Atma Swarupas* and should be free from fear, unfortunately, we are lost in fear and illusion.

Upadhis or containers apart, there is only one Reality, just as there is only one sun shining in the sky. When we fill a thousand pots with water, the same sun is reflected in those thousand pots.

Because the thousand pots are there and they are filled with water, which has the quality of reflection, the one sun seems to be split up into a thousand suns. This is only a feeling and is not true. The truth is that there is only one sun shining in the sky. Likewise, this body may be compared to the pot that is filled with water and the same *Atma* is reflected in each pot, and appears to be separate.

Several persons put the question: “Swami, please tell us where the *Atma* goes after the death of the body?” When the pot breaks and the water spills on the ground, where does the sun, which has hitherto been reflected in the water, go? The sun has not come and has not gone. But it has appeared as a reflection because there is water in the pot. And when the pot is broken and the water has run out, the reflection has disappeared.

There is another question. If the same sun is reflected in all pots, would not all the reflections have the same value? The reflection has the same value but the pots are of different value. One pot may be an earthen pot, another may be one of copper, another of brass, another of silver, another of gold. Therefore, the value of the pot varies according to one’s wealth, one’s position, one’s education, but the *Atma Swarupa* has the same value. So all these differences are illusory. They are created by things relating to the body. The *Atma Thatwa* is one and indivisible.

On the bank of a river, once a group of children were tending their cows. It was monsoon time and all of a sudden a furious current of water developed. Because it was a fast current, one bear, which had slipped into the water, was drawn into the midstream and was being carried away. One of the boys looked at the floating mass, and from a distance, it appeared to him to be a bundle of blankets floating in the water. He said to his companions, “I shall jump into the water and get the bundle of blankets out,” so he jumped into the water. With the mistaken idea that it was a bundle of blankets, the boy embraced, with his hands, the bear. Then the bear also embraced him with its own hands. However much the boy tried to extricate himself, the bear did not leave him. It held him fast. The boys on the

shore shouted, “Oh, my dear companion, leave that bundle and come away.” The boy in the water, struggling to escape, cried out, “Though I want to escape from it, it does not allow me to escape.”

So, in the river of life, *maya* plays like the bear and we mistake it to be a bundle of blankets. Hoping that it would offer us solace, comfort and happiness, we jump into the river and try to catch it. At a later stage, when we want to extricate ourselves from it, we find it impossible to do so. This illusion is created by *maya* but the divine principle is always one. *Visishtadwaitha* has been teaching from time immemorial that though the forms are different, there is only one *Purusha*, which is the Unity in the diversity and multiplicity of forms.

Coming to *adwaitha*, we have to understand the word to mean non-duality. What is not two is *adwaitha*. What is that which is not two? *Brahman* alone is not two. In the *Gita*, Lord Krishna taught this principle to Arjuna at several places. He says for instance:

“*Vrishneenaam Vaasudevosi; Pandavanam Dhananjaya.*” “Among the Vrishnees, I am Vaasudeva. Because I am the son of Vasudeva, I am Vaasudeva. Among the Pandavas, I am Arjuna.” Though He is One, here He represents Himself as two. He further says, “I am Easwara, you are the *jiva*, and the heroes who are ranged against you constitute the *jagath*, the world. This *jagath* is all reflected as in a mirror. You are considering that you are separate and all these people are separate from you. You are thinking that you and they are different. *Jiva*, Easwara, and *prakruthi* — all three entities have been there from time immemorial.” Arjuna asked, “If these entities, *jiva*, Easwara, and *prakruthi*, have been ever in existence and *jiva* and Easwara are one, how do you know about *jagath* and why do I not know anything about it? When you and I are one, how is it that you know and I do not know? Please tell me the secret of this.” Krishna said, “Arjuna! You also can know, but you do not focus your mind upon the goal. Therefore, you do not know. But my mind is always steadily riveted on that Reality. Therefore, I know it. And that is the essential difference between us two.” Arjuna could not

grasp this. He said, "You are trying to hoodwink me, Oh, Krishna!" To this, Krishna said, "Arjuna! I shall never utter false or deceitful words. I am *Sathya Swarupa*. Therefore there is no place for falsehood or deceit in My words. It is because of the effect of *maya* that you have become subjected to illusion and you are attributing falsehood even to Me!"

Then He wanted to teach Arjuna by an example. He asked Arjuna, "How old are you?" Arjuna said, "I am eighty years old." Krishna asked, "Tell me, three years ago, on such and such a day, where were you?" Arjuna could not recollect and said: "Lord! I do not remember where I was on that day three years ago." Krishna said, "Then you do not remember where you were. You accept you were in a particular place years ago. If you were not there how could you be here today? You admit today that you do not know where you were three years ago." Krishna patted Arjuna on his back and continued, "Do not feel embarrassed. I shall put to you another question. Please tell me how old you were when King Drupada was bound and brought by you to your kingdom." Arjuna replied, "I was at that time sixteen years old, Oh Lord!" Krishna then asked, "Do you remember when you got married to Subhadra?" Arjuna said immediately, "I certainly remember, I was married in my twenty-second year." Then Krishna questioned: "An event such as the marriage, which took place fifty years ago, and the incident of bringing King Drupada bound to your capital, which happened long, long ago, are remembered by you, but you do not remember what happened just three years ago. Why is it? The secret is this. The nature of *maya* is that it makes you attach importance to some events such as birthdays and wedding days but not to others."

To experience joy and sorrow alike is the secret of *samadhi*. Rama has been able to demonstrate this *samadhi* quality, i.e. one who is not elated by joy and one who is not downcast or depressed by sorrow, how-ever enormous it may be. Not only Rama, but all *Avatars* have demonstrated this state of *samadhi*. Rama, who got ready for the coronation ceremony at 7 o'clock, at the same time and

in the same stride, took the decision and left for the forest. He was not elated at the prospect of becoming the future king and he did not get depressed or frustrated when he was asked to go to the forest. Krishna always used to be smiling whether it was *Rudrabhumi*, the sacrificial field, or *Yuddhabhumi*, the battlefield. Wherever He used to be, He remained an embodiment of *ananda*. That was why His words, which were uttered on the battlefield, have acquired the name of *Gita*. *Gita* means song. We sing when we are happy. Does one sing when one is unhappy or sorry? When Krishna could sing even in the midst of a battle, it means that He can always remain cheerful and happy.

The real nature of *Avatars* is that they are always overflowing with the spirit of delight and joy. Just as the ocean rises and surges up when there is a full moon in the sky, in the same way when I look at the devotees, My Heart overflows with limitless, boundless love for them. Everything is *Rasa Swarupa*. There can be no change in the attitude, in the affection and in the thoughts of God, but the ignorant attribute the changes they imagine, or differences they see, to God out of their petty-mindedness. When Divine power fulfils some of our desires, we praise God, but when the same power does not satisfy our desires, we straightaway condemn Him. Man commits sin and he has to undergo the punishment for the sin. But then he says, "Oh God! you have no mercy, you are subjecting me to this punishment." People cannot stand test and trial.

People remember those days to which they attach some special significance and they do not forget them. Because they do not attach importance to other days, they do not find a place in their memory. And there lies the difference between *jiva* and *Deva*. *Jiva* imagines some as necessary, and others as unnecessary and dwells on differences. As far as *Deva* is concerned, there is nothing that is necessary for Him and that is not necessary for Him. He remains a spectator of all. For a spectator, the past, the present and the future are all the same. He can visualise all the three periods of time. He remains as *Atma Swarupa* during all the three periods of time.

Though God is one, as a result of our love for him, we establish different kinds of relationship with God. Some may address him as Father, others as Mother, others as Christ, others as Siva, others as Hari and so on. It is only the difference that is born out of illusion, but there is only one God behind all these relationships.

Here is an example that is within the range of experience of all. Every day we take and enjoy ghee, butter, buttermilk, curd, etc. All these are ultimately derived from milk. Milk is *adwaita*. Butter is *visishtadwaita*. Buttermilk is *dwaita*. Both *dwaita* and *visishtadwaita* are derived from *adwaita*. Therefore, it is said that wisdom is *adwaita darshanam*. Wisdom reveals to us the *Brahma Thathwa*. It is described as “*Sathyam jnanam anantham Brahma.*” *Brahma* is that which is truth, that which is endless, and that which is all knowing. The word *Brahma* is derived from the root *Bruhi*. *Bruhi* means that which does not change. It is called *Brahma Thathwa* because it does not change and because it remains eternal. We must adopt the theory of *Raso Vai Saha* in order to attain this *Brahma Thathwa*. The entire world or universe is born out of *rasa*, God Himself, who is *Rasa Swarupa*. That which is born out of *rasa* cannot be *nirasa* or devoid of *rasa*.

Pundits classify *rasa* into nine categories. They are called *navarasas*. According to my view, there are no *navarasas* or nine *rasas*. There are only two *rasas*. The emotions of *daya*, *prema*, and *anugraha* merge in *karuna rasa*. The emotions of *kama*, *krodha*, and *lobha* merge in *rringara rasa*. *Sringara rasa* misleads us whereas *karuna rasa* leads us. Therefore, to recognise our duty, we must take recourse to *karuna rasa*. Only through *karuna rasa* can we enjoy the proximity of the Lord. That is the real ecstasy or bliss. *karuna rasa* offers to us pure, selfless love. Selfish love leads to an aspect of *sringara rasa* and that is *moha*. *Moha rasa* may be compared to the water that is stagnating in the pond. *Karuna rasa* may be compared to the water that flows through a river. Moving water ever remains pure. Still water gets contaminated and becomes stagnant. Stagnant water sometimes becomes poisonous because worms

breed in it. Flowing water always remains pure, and surely and finally reaches the ocean of *anugraha* or God's grace.

I will give now an example. There is a girl in one house. There is a young man in another house. Their houses are almost side by side. But the girl does not know anything about the young man, and the young man does not know anything about the girl living in the neighbouring house. One day, the girl fell seriously ill. That day all the people in the house were hectic and several doctors were called in. When the boy in the neighbouring house heard the noise, he thought it was a disturbance to his studies; and therefore, he closed his window and started reading. But in course of time, as a result of destiny, this boy got married to that girl in the neighbouring house. The marriage took place in the morning. In the afternoon, the girl developed a stomach-ache and the bridegroom felt very anxious for the girl and her stomach-ache. Where and when did he develop this attachment to the girl? Because he got married to her, even a little stomach-ache upset him. When the same girl fell dangerously ill some time ago, he did not feel even the slightest anxiety of her because, at that time, there was no attachment or relationship with that girl. So, *abhimana* and *mamakara*, affection and attachment, are responsible for all joys and sorrows. We must try to attain that serene state of mind, that equanimity which enables you not to be elated by joy or depressed by sorrow. When you are able to attain that equanimity of mind, then you can attain *samadhi*.

The word *samadhi* has been variously interpreted by our scholars. When someone falls unconscious during *sankirtan* or when someone becomes stiff during *yoga*, they think it is a state of *samadhi*. But this is not real *samadhi*. The very meaning of the word is conveyed by the two syllables that make the word *sama* and *dhi*—*sama* means equal and *dhi* means *buddhi*. So to be untouched by joy and sorrow, to take them in the same stride is *samadhi*.

Earlier, I was dealing with the four *Purusharthas* namely, *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*. These are comparable to the steps of a ladder. *Dharma* is firmly planted on the ground, and if we

ascend the ladder, step by step, we reach the highest rung, the goal of *moksha*. So we deem *prakruthi* as *dharma*. And our destination is *moksha* or *Purusha*. *Artha* and *kama* are the intermediary stages between *Purusha* on the one hand and *prakruthi* on the other.

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