

2. God Is Beyond Description Through Words

It is not possible for any one to say what Brahman is. One can at best say this is not Brahman, that is not Brahman, but no one can say what Brahman is. Truth, which is permanent, and wisdom, which is infinite, are in some ways related to Brahman. These or other words do not describe Brahman at all. In the same manner, it is impossible to describe what Divinity is, what God is.

The story of Rama is as sacred as it is surprising. Although *Vedas, Sastras, Ithihasas* and *Puranas* have tried to describe the qualities of Narayana, they have only succeeded in saying that this is not God, that is not God, and so on; but they have never been able to pinpoint and state what God is and describe His attributes and qualities by positive statements. However great the person concerned may be, it is not possible for him to say that God is like this or like that. God is beyond all description in terms of words we know and use.

Many poets and many speakers could talk about God, God's *leelas*, God's powers and God's manifestations in their writings; but it was not possible for most of them to experience the true greatness of God. Till now, no one could find either an individual or a text, which has described truly the great form of God. To some extent, limited by their own beliefs, based upon their own faith, they can say God is like this. They can only point a finger as we point at the moon, which we can see only

from a distance. Such a description is of limited validity, within the context of their own faith and their own belief.

The ancient poets and the ancient *rishis*, were all-knowing and so they were only talking about *Paramatma* in a very modest way and were describing parts of this glory. These great men had great powers, had great strength and were selfless people, and had divine qualities in them. Because of these qualities and because they were all-knowing they tried to picture God in the world, to some limited extent.

The poets of today also describe God in their writings and in their poems and thus try to picture Him to the rest of the world. But they should ask themselves the question whether a thousandth of what they say in their descriptions is based on their own belief and on their own faith in God. We read in such writings that Rama is the incarnation of Narayana, that Rama is God in human form and so on. But we are not able to get the faith and confidence in the human form of God. Truly, if the statements that are in such writings are put into practice, the world will be a very good one.

There is a great difference that we perceive between the poets of today and the poets of earlier days, the *rishis* of today and the *rishis* of the ancient lore. The *rishis* of those days were picturing God in the usual way in a human form, as a human being, in their speeches and writings. But in their minds and in their faith they were regarding the human form as an incarnation of God Himself. Here we should ponder over one aspect of the *Ramayana* with great care. Rama, along with Sita and Lakshmana, entered the forest of Dandakaranya. The *rishis* in the Danda-karanya knew very well that Rama was an incarnation of God, and so they came to Rama and placed their difficulties and troubles before Him. Not only this, many *rishis*

were killed by the demons. These incidents were brought to the notice of Rama, and he was moved and his heart melted. He could not bear this any longer; and so He took a vow at that very instant of time and gave His word to the *rishis* that from that time, He would undertake the task of exterminating the *rakshasas*.

In this vow of Rama's Sita noticed what is usually referred to as the vow of Bhishma. Sita came and cautioned Rama that He was taking a vow, which was very difficult to fulfil. Then Rama answered by saying that the Himalayas can give up the ice on them, that the moon can give up its brightness and the oceans may flow beyond their boundaries, but Rama will never give up His vow unfulfilled.

From that day onwards, Rama saw to it that the *rakshasas* in the Dandakaranya were removed from their positions of strength, and He has been protecting the *rishis* from the hands of those *rakshasas*. He spent ten years in the forest fulfilling His vow and the task He took upon Himself. He was tired. He wanted to take some rest and then wanted to move to the *ashram* of *Rishi* Agasthya. He wanted to see *Rishi* Agasthya and ask him where he could put up a hut, and live along with Sita and Lakshmana. In fact, he wanted to live in Agasthya's *ashram*. Agasthya thought for a while, and smilingly told Ramachandra that sixteen miles from his *ashram*, there was a beautiful place on the banks of the river Godavari. He suggested that Rama can have his hut at that beautiful place and live there.

It is not as if Agasthya did not know that Rama-chandra was an incarnation of Narayana Himself. We should recognise the inner meaning of the fact that while Agasthya knew very well that Narayana Him-self came in human form and asked

for a place in his *ashram*, he suggested that Rama take up a hut sixteen miles away from his *ashram*. The idea that was in the mind of Agasthya was that, if Rama stayed along with Sita and Lakshmana in his *ashram*, then Sita could not possibly (as was to happen later) be stolen. In that context, the killing of Ravana would become even more difficult and would not have taken place at all. Thus, the *rishis* had already made a master plan for the destruction of all the *rakshasas*.

It is at the time when Rama, along with Sita and Lakshmana, was having His sacred hut sixteen miles away from the *Rishi's ashram* that Surpanakha came there and was humiliated. Later, the entire drama unfolds itself.

Not only this, while Agasthya was wanting Ramachandra to stay sixteen miles away from his *ashram*, Agasthya took care to see that the bow and arrows which were given to him by Varuna were also handed over to Ramachandra as weapons. There is an important truth here. These *rishis* knew well when the destruction of the *Rakshasas* was coming. They kept these weapons with great care in order to hand them over to Ramachandra when time was ripe for such destruction.

The second thing we should notice here is that Vishwamithra took Rama for the sake of protecting his *yagna* in his *ashram*. After Taataki, the *rakshasi*, was killed in the *ashram*, there were two sons of Taataki who were still alive. They were Maricha and Subahu. While Subahu was killed, Maricha was allowed to go alive. There is some significance which we should recognise here. The reason for this is that Maricha had a future role to play in the destruction of Ravana. So that the task of destroying the *rakshasas* by Rama can be completed according to plan, Maricha was allowed to go alive.

After Surpanakha was disfigured, she went to Ravana and conveyed to him a description of Rama. Then Ravana went to Maricha and sought his help for killing Rama. Maricha knew the power and strength of Rama. So, he described the power and strength of Rama truly to Ravana. Maricha made it quite clear to Ravana that Rama is not an ordinary person and that Rama is God Himself; and with His power and strength, He can achieve anything. As a result of such a description, it is quite natural, however brave and however courageous an individual may be, that some kind of fear will naturally enter his mind. In that context, Ravana turned back and returned to Lanka. While Ravana was in that hesitant mood, Surpanakha went again to Ravana and told him that while he is brave and beautiful, while he had everything in his favour, that he is not able to get Sita for himself is something which is difficult to understand. Thus, she poisoned Ravana's mind.

When such words were heard by Ravana, he became rather weak, succumbed to temptation and went again to Maricha for advice. Maricha again told Ravana all that had to be told. But since Ravana was all the time recollecting what his sister Surpanakha had told him, he was not listening nor paying any attention to what Maricha was telling. In that conversation, Ravana became very angry and threatened to kill Maricha if he did not obey his orders. Maricha then thought that anyway he was going to die and decided that he would prefer to die in the hands of Ramachandra, rather than in the hands of Ravana. Accordingly, he accepted the orders of Ravana and took the form of a deer and went to the hermitage where Rama and Sita were living. We notice here that if Maricha was killed earlier when Rama killed Subahu, then Maricha would not have fulfilled this part of his in the drama.

Here we see that not only did the *rishis* realise the divinity of Rama, but also Rama knew that He was God Narayana in human form. In order that He may fulfil the task for which He had come, He spared Maricha earlier, so that Maricha could play his part in Rama's master plan.

These *rishis*, while projecting a picture of Rama to ordinary persons as an ideal human being, an example for all of them, knew that they were hiding to some extent the truth of Rama as an incarnation of God. This was the reason why Vishwamithra, when he took Rama for the protection of his own *yagna*, handed over all his weapons which were in his possession to Rama. God took the human form of Rama as a *leela* of His. The *rishis* took advantage of this human form of Rama and used Him for the purpose of the destruction of the *rakshasas*.

Vishwamithra took Rama for the protection of his *yagna* in the normal course. As soon as his *yagna* was over, it was Vishwamithra's duty to take Rama and Lakshmana back to Dasaratha. He did not do that. From his *yagna*, Vishwamithra took them to Mithilapura. There, the Bow of Shiva was broken and thereafter the marriage of Rama and Sita took place. Thus every step taken by Vishwamithra was indeed planned for the ultimate destruction of Ravana.

The *rishis* of those days worked in a selfless manner, for the prosperity of mankind. In fact, they were using their *thapas* and their strength for helping mankind. A human being, on the day when he can push away his selfishness, when he can push away his ego, will really acquire his entitlement for *thapas*. On one occasion, when Hanuman entered Lanka and looked at the beauty and brilliance of the city built by Ravana, he thought that there could be no one else anywhere in this

world who can equal Ravana in his strength, his brilliance and his ability. Simply because of some bad qualities in him, Ravana should have been subjected to these difficulties. Some amount of ego and selfishness in him should have degraded him to that position.

Man may be very wealthy, man may be very prosperous, but if man suffers from selfishness and ego, he is undoubtedly going to suffer difficulties and pain. In this context, we should realise that it is the duty of every human being to give up his selfishness and to be able to serve others in a selfless manner. In the story of Rama, especially in His younger days, the manner in which He used to respect the elders, the manner in which he used to show affection and obedience to his mothers, and the manner in which He treated others around Him must be taken as an important lesson and as an example to all of us. These are things which young students should know very well. In Rama, we see a great amount of humility. There were many *rishis* in the forest, and Rama used to go and pay respects to them, but the *rishis* were all the time proclaiming, apparently only as a facade for the world, that they were very wise people, and that Rama was only the son of a king. The truth is that behind this facade, in their minds, they had the greatest devotion and respect for the divinity in Rama.

When Parasurama was nearing his end, he recognised the divinity in Rama and he surrendered to Rama. It is not as if there was no good reason for these *rishis* to refrain from proclaiming the powers and the strength and the divinity of Rama.

The *rakshasas* of those days exceeded all limits of decent human behaviour. They were terrorising people; and the

rishis thought that if they proclaimed the divinity in Rama immediately, the destruction of the *rakshasas*, which was to take place at the hands of Rama, would not take place. It is in this context that throughout the story of the entire *Ramayana*, from the time of the birth of Rama till the time when Ravana was destroyed, Valmiki was describing Rama only as an ideal human form.

Rama was aware of all types of *dharma*. He had intelligence which could cover every aspect of life. He could demonstrate the need for humility, respect and devotion under the most trying conditions. He was a great individual who conducted Himself and His life consistent with the conditions prevailing around Him, at that time, in the country.

Looking at the body of Ravana after his death, Vibhishana expressed unwillingness to perform the last rites that are usually performed. Vibhishana thought that Ravana was a very great sinner, that he was thinking badly of Rama, the incarnation of the Lord, and that it was not right to perform the obsequies of such a person. Rama, who was an embodiment of *dharma*, called Vibhishana and said, "If there is any dislike for a person, that should not go beyond his death. Let it end with his death. All hatred should disappear with the death of the person." Rama asked Vibhishana, "Will you, as a brother, perform the obsequies or shall I perform the obsequies?" As soon as he heard these words from Rama, Vibhishana realised his mistake and was prepared to perform the last rites.

It is because Rama knew all the aspects of *dharma*, he is referred to by saying "*Ramo Vighnavan Dharmaha.*" (He is the very embodiment of *dharma*.) Thus, Narayana, the Lord, took the human form in Rama and by His conduct and by His

adherence to *dharma*, he demonstrated that *dharma* is part and parcel of the ordinary daily life of a human being. How should one conduct oneself in a family? How should one conduct oneself towards a friend? How should one conduct oneself towards the community? In this manner and in all aspects, Rama was translating every moment of his life to be an example for ideal behaviour.

By showing equal affection to all people, Rama used to attract all the people. In His childhood Rama spoke very little. He was conducting Himself in that manner in order to show the world the ideal that is contained in limited speech. Limited talking will always promote the divine strength in one and will also promote his memory. It creates respect for him in the community. If one talks too much, it will, to an extent, destroy one's memory. Not only this, if one talks too much, the strength in the nerves will diminish and the person will become somewhat feeble. It is in this context that all great saints were observing the path of silence, whenever possible. By observing silence, one can get strength. Because the youth of today talk too much, it so happens that their memory becomes weak; and when they go to the examination hall, they forget what they have read. Amongst the many ideals which Rama has given to the young people, the first one is to talk less. The second one is that when you meet elders, to show them respect. The third one is to happily obey the orders of one's parents.

Vishwamithra went and saw Dasaratha just before taking Rama and Lakshmana for the protection of his *yagna*. As soon as Vishwamithra asked for his two sons, Dasaratha was quite pleased and sent for his children. In that meeting were Vasishta, Vishwamitra, Kausalya and Dasaratha. When Rama and Lakshmana came in, they first touched the feet of the mother, then the feet of the father, then the feet of Vasishta

and Vishwamithra. According to our traditional concepts, one is asked to regard one's mother, father, *guru* and guest as Gods; and they set an example for this in acting thus.

Students:

It is not right for you to forget the traditional culture of our country and accept something strange and foreign to us. The first thing we should attempt to do is to respect the parents at our home and to accept willingly whatever orders they give.

When the rituals in the forest were completed, Rama and Lakshmana came to Vishwamithra and requested him to permit them to go back to Ayodhya as their work was over. Vishwamithra then told them that he had just received the news of celebrations that are taking place in Mithilapura and suggested that they all go and participate in the celebrations.

Lakshmana, who was very smart, reacted to this and said that their parents had sent them for the protection of the *yagna*, but not to go to Mithilapura. Rama then addressed Lakshmana and said that they were asked, by their parents, to do whatever Vishwa-mithra asked them to do. He, therefore, suggested that they should follow Vishwamithra and do whatever he asked them to do. Here, we should carefully see how much respect and attention Rama is giving to the words of Vishwamithra. Later, even at the time of Rama going to the forest, it was not Dasaratha who gave the orders. When Dasaratha saw Rama, he was simply steeped in sorrow. How could Dasaratha, in that sorrow, tell Rama to go to the forest? How could he speak at all when he was steeped in such sorrow? Recognising the situation, Kaikeyi gave expression to what she thought was in the mind of Dasaratha. Accepting the decision and the orders of Kaikeyi, Rama went to the forest. Here, we should recognise Rama as a person who implicitly

obeys the orders of the father, whether they came directly from the father or indirectly, through someone else. The sacredness that is contained in obeying the orders of the parents and the beneficial results that will flow by following the orders of one's parents is something which we should note very carefully. By looking at it in a worldly manner, one may ask the questions, why should I continually go on respecting my parents? I have grown older, I have become an important person and I am strong. Why should I still respect my parents?

Students:

For every action of yours, there is always a re-action, there is a resound and reflection. If, in future, you want to have a life of peace and of happiness, that will depend upon the kind of action which you take at the present time only. If you respect your parents today, your children will respect you in future. The kind of seed, which you plant today, will determine the kind of tree which will grow. So, if you want to be near God, see good, do good, be good; this is the way, the royal way for you to go near God. To be good, to do good and to see good is the primary duty of every human being.

Young people, the wealth which we may earn, the prosperity which we may acquire, the mansions which we may build are all transient and temporary. Our conduct is the most important thing in our life. Our conduct is the one which lays the foundation for our future life. It is only when we can shape our present conduct along a proper path, that our future can hopefully be peaceful and happy. In this context, we can take a small incident from the *Ramayana* as an example. Sita, who was wanting to be close to Rama, was willing to sacrifice all her ornaments, sacrifice all her wealth and every one of her possessions. Because of this supreme sacrifice, it was possible for her to go close to Rama. But in the forest at Panchavati, the

moment Sita developed an attraction to the golden deer, Rama became distant from her. If our worldly desires and worldly attachments become stronger, we move further away from God. If we cut out the worldly desires more and more, we get closer and closer to *Paramatma*.

We are now neither here nor there. We are in the middle. We are living in the *Bhu Loka* along with human beings. On one side there is the Divine world, and on the other side is the Netherland, the lower world. If we develop qualities like lust and anger, we will move closer and closer to the lower world and we will become more and more distant from the Divine world. But if we travel towards the Divine world, then we will become more and more distant from the lower world. To attach importance to the transient pleasures is the same as moving away from divinity.

Divya Atma Swarupas:

All life is so transient that it can disappear in one moment like a bubble. All that you see in this world is transient and not true. All we see during the daytime vanishes when we are asleep. All that we see in our dream during sleep vanishes when we are awake. What we see and experience during the day is like a day dream, and what we see and experience during the night is like a night dream. In the day dream, what we see in the night dream is not present. Similarly, in the night dream, what we see during the day is not present. You are present in the night dream, you are present in the day dream. You are present in both dreams, but the day dream is not present in the night dream, and the night dream is not present in the day dream. You alone are present in both places and you should recognise this.

Here is a garland, this is a bunch of flowers. I have put the garland on my hand and the garland is moving in this manner. This bunch of flowers is like the future and the opposite side of the garland is like the past. As the garland is moving on the hand, what was representing future has come to the position indicated as present. By the time it moves a little more, what is present becomes past. It is the bunch of flowers which is becoming past, present and future, but the hand is always remaining at the same position. The hand is omnipresent. What goes on and what changes with time, becomes future, present and past. Life in future, present and past is one, time is one and is present in all the three situations. Time is everything, do not waste time. It is in this context that time has been described as all-important. Time is everything and should be treated as such. It is by the change of time that good and bad come about. If time does not exist, there is neither good nor bad.

In the spiritual sphere, it has been said “*Ekam Eva Adviteeyam.*” What exists in reality is only one, there is no parallel second that exists. All other things that we see in this world are manifestations arising out of changing time. Man is one, but changes come in him because of changes in time. When he is ten years old, we call him a boy. When he is thirty years old, we call him a man; when he is seventy-five years old, we call him a grandfather. The different stages, described as child, boy, man and grandfather, have come about because of changes in time. At all times there is only one aspect of this individual which is common. So also, it is by the change in time that good and bad appear. There do not exist two separate things called good and bad. Good is simply the opposite of bad. Absence of good may appear as bad.

Students:

I will give an example which you commonly come across in your daily life. This evening we eat tasty food, some fresh fruit. When we look at the fruit, it is very good and attractive, we call it good fruit. That is true this evening; but by the next morning, the same fruit gets digested and it becomes matter which should be excreted and then we call it bad. We call a thing good this evening, we call the same thing bad tomorrow morning. It is only a difference in time. Good food or good sweets that we make today, become stale and poisonous in three days. Here we see that a good thing by the passage of time becomes bad. There is nothing which is intrinsically bad. Since for all these changes time is responsible, we should take the decision that we use time in a sacred manner.

Divya Atma Swarupas:

There is a reason for my talking to you on an example like this today. For our summer classes, today is the third day. For another twenty-seven days in these classes, we have to collect sufficient amount of pleasure and happiness. In your heart, in the vessel of your heart, you have to create sufficient space for gathering such good material during the next twenty-seven days. Today by my talking to you at some length, I can remove all that you may have used earlier for filling the vessel of your heart and make a place so that you can fill in it the good things that will come your way. If the head is empty, you can put whatever you want to in that empty head. But if the head is filled with all kinds of things, where is the place to put anything else into the head? If the head has no place in it, how is it possible to fill it at all? It won't be possible to establish what is good in our *dharma*. In order to establish and resuscitate our ancient *dharma*, the students must take a vow to bring about necessary changes in their conduct. If bad ideas have already filled your head, if you have got such ears which

wish to listen to bad things, if you use your eyes only to look at obscene and bad things, if you have a mind which is crooked, if you want to deceive others by your ideas and if you have a heart that can love only one person, how can good things thrive in your presence? Truth and justice must be established. Untruth and injustice must be pushed away.

When you are young, you will have physical strength, spiritual strength and the ability by which you can establish good things. If you waste this part of your life, you are not going to get once again this strength and time. If you let this opportunity slip away once, it will never come back again. The youth that has slipped away and the water that has flowed down the stream, can never retrace their path. This time of your life is a very sacred age for you. You must make a sincere attempt by which you can make this part of your life very sacred. Everything in *Ramayana*, every incident in *Ramayana*, relating to Rama and Lakshmana are such that they offer good ideals even to this day, to young people. Make an attempt to regard them as ideal examples and try to follow them. More than worshipping God, to regard God as an ideal example of a perfect human being is important. To worship God and cause pain to human beings cannot be called devotion. If you want to proclaim to the world that you are true devotees, then you must show that in your conduct and in your daily life.

In the world, there are so many people who are educated. But this education is not giving us the necessary happiness. True peace is present within your heart. To go out and search for true peace of mind is a waste of time. All that you wish to acquire is within you. You are God. That is why I often tell you that you are not one person, but you are three persons: the one you think you are, the one others think you are, the one you really are. That is why we say that in the

aspect of your body, in the aspect of your mind and in the aspect of your *Atma*, you have three different facets of your personality. In the aspect of your body, you do physical work. Take the decision to do good work. Rama was always devoted to work. It is in doing your work, that you derive happiness. In the aspect of your mind, promote good ideas and good thoughts. If in these two aspects of work and worship, we take the proper path, then comes the important role of your heart, which signifies wisdom. Wisdom is the third aspect.

Work is like a flower. If we can protect the bud of this flower, it will transform and change into a flower. The same flower, in course of time, will ripen and will become a fruit. Without a bud, we won't get the flower, and without the flower we won't get the fruit. This is the reason why we should not regard work, worship and wisdom as three things distinct from each other. They are inseparably connected with each other. Whatever work you do, do it in the name of God. Do it as a task of God, then work will become worship. So I am hoping that you will remove the bad ideas, the unsacred ideas that filled your heart in the past. Throw them away and fill your heart with good and sacred ideas. We are not getting education for the sake of earning money. The end of education is character, the end of knowledge is love. This is the reason why we should develop our character with the help of our education. Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows.

Young people, you now have an opportunity to understand the meaning of these sacred things. I am hoping that by understanding the meaning of these sacred things, you will be able to change your ideas, and develop good conduct and good ideas. Derive examples from Rama and Rama's life and thereby improve your life.