

14. “Thath Thwam Asi”: Thou Art That

Wherever there is smoke, there should be a source in the form of cinders and burning coal; so also for a running train there must be someone called a driver who is responsible for the running of that train. Even for the traffic lights, which come up automatically, there must be a source which makes those lights function. While this is so, should there not be one who is responsible for all the creation we see around us?

Pavitratma Swarupas:

“*Ayam Atma Brahma*” means that this very *Atma* is identical with *Brahman*. *Atma* is not some-thing which is distinct from us. This *Atma* is present in everyone, in all living beings and in all things. That *Atma* is identical with *Brahman* and has got a form which is indestructible; it is filled with *sabda* or sound. *Om* is the *ekaksharam Brahma*. The one single letter ‘*Om*’ is *Brahman*. This has, associated with it, four aspects. These four aspects are: the waking stage, the dreaming stage, the deep sleep stage, and the *turiya* stage.

The first aspect, in the waking stage, one is fully awake. The waking stage is usually accompanied by the gross phenomenon, by desires connected with the material aspects of the world. This waking stage has got a gross form and is connected intimately with our desires of the material world and is promoted by the five working organs and the five sense

organs which we have together with the five *pranas* and four other features like *chitta*, *Antha Karana* and so on. These are all present in the waking stage. This stage is also referred to as *Viswa*.

The dreaming stage has got a subtle form. This stage is called *taijasa*. Whatever one has experienced when he is awake, during the waking stage, attaches itself in some form with the mind and continues to appear in the dreaming stage. In this stage, all the nineteen aspects, which we have mentioned earlier, will still appear as subtle forms with a subtle phase.

Mind, in the *Manomaya Kosa* and intelligence in the *Pranamaya Kosa*, play an important role. Both the waking stage and the dreaming stage are some-what on the same footing and are equally important. The other two stages are quite different, the difference being one of essence. The third one is the deep sleep stage. This is also named as *pragna*. In this stage of deep sleep, there is no connection whatever either through the gross form or through the subtle form, with the material world. Here we can take the ex-ample of reflection of the sky in a pot. Once that pot is removed, the reflection disappears and the sky in the pot becomes identical with the original big sky. So also in this state of deep sleep, we lose all connection with the material world, the gross and the subtle forms; and we are independent of them. In this stage of deep sleep, the nineteen facets, which have been mentioned, are neither in the material form nor are they in the subtle form. The deep sleep state is quite distinct and separated from them. In this state, various organs of the body do not function at all. This is a very surpris-ing situation which causes us astonishment. This has also been referred to as *Purna Thathwa*.

The next stage is called the stage of *turiya*. The aspects of *turiya* are indescribable in ordinary words by any one. This state of *turiya*, in its totality, reflects the spirit of *Atma*. As we cannot see our own eyes, so also *Atma* cannot see itself. There is a small example here: if we take a doll made of salt and ask that doll to go and experience the taste of the ocean, how is that going to be possible? This salt doll will go into the ocean and will get lost by dissolution and merger. As in that analogy, if the *jiva* is looking for the *Atma*, he will completely merge into *Atma* when he gets close to it. Thereafter it will not be possible for the *jiva* to separate himself from the *Atma*. That aspect is described as omnipresence. This is also another feature of *Atma* and it is able to be present in all the living beings. This state has been described as *pragnanam Brahma*. It has also been described as “*Thath thwam asi*” or thou art that. It is also “*Ayam Atman Brahman*” or *Atma* is *Brahman*. This is the same as saying “*Aham Brahmasmi*” or I am *Brahman*. These are the four *mahavakyas* which constitute the spirit of the *Vedas*.

There is a small example for this. From a big hill, we pick out one rock and an artisan chisels out of this uncut rock a beautiful figure of Krishna. After some effort, he will produce out of this rock a very beautiful figure of Krishna. Choosing a proper and auspicious time, he will take this figure of Krishna and install it on a pedestal in the temple and will go on worshipping it. Here we notice that a part of the rock has been taken out and has been installed in the temple and is being worshipped by various people. The little remnants, the pieces of stone which are left in the rock after chiselling the figure of Krishna, are left in the same place as the rock. No one cares for those remnant pieces of rock. Nobody worships them and nobody thinks of those pieces as of any importance. Here, in our thought, this portion of the Krishna figure becomes one

which can be worshipped as God, whereas the rest of the rock from which it has come is looked upon as useless pieces. But these pieces of stones and their background is not like that. The remnant pieces of rock will keep on proclaiming, “*Thath thwam asi*” and seem to say, “That figure of Krishna which you are worshipping is me, I am that.” A portion of the rock appears to us as if we can worship it, and the other portion of the rock appears to us as valueless. What is being worshipped as deity is something which has been created by you. The true form from which it has been created is the original piece of rock. As in that analogy, what we see in this world as a form is something which has come out of the source rock. The form of Krishna in this case has been formed from a rock. But the essence, the basic substance in the form-less, is the same in the source rock as in the figure. Whether you take the formless rock, the source of the idol of Krishna, or the idol itself and beat it, the kind of sound that will come out is exactly the same in both cases. So *Atma*, which is the form of sound or *sabda*, and the sound, the *Om* *kar*, are both one and the same. Those who propound *Vedanta* have been explaining this truth by saying that the combination of “*Akara Ukara Makara*” is *AUM*, and is nothing but *Brahman*. Either in the gross form or in the subtle form, or in the supreme form of the *Turiya*, what is contained is the same and it is *Om* *kar*.

Vishwamithra recognised that this *Atma*, which is identical with divinity, is present in everyone. It takes the form of *pragna* in the created form in order to establish the identity between the *Jivatma* and *Paramatma*. When we look at the story of the *Ramayana*, we find that at a certain point, Vishwamithra comes to Dasaratha and requests him to send his sons for the specific purpose of protecting his *yagnas* in the forest. During the journey, he taught Rama and Lakshmana two *manthras*, *Bala* and *Atibala*. Not only did he teach these

manthras, but he also gave them all the weapons that were in his possession and taught them how to use those weapons. After giving them all this training, he took them to Mithilapura after the *yagna* was over. It is not as if these *manthras*, *Bala*, and *Atibala* have something special in them. By making appropriate changes in the *Gayatri Manthra*, we can get these *manthras*.

While taking them to Mithilapura, he also undertook the task of getting Rama to remove the curse on Ahalya. After reaching Mithilapura, he gets Rama-chandra to break Shiva's Bow and marry Sita. After the marriage of Sita, Vishwamithra disappeared that very night and was not to be seen thereafter. Thus we see that the story of Vishwamithra begins with taking Rama and Lakshmana with him and performing the marriage of Sita as the foundation for the ultimate destruction of Ravana. When he came to Dasaratha, he was in the first stage. When Vishwamithra taught the *manthras Bala* and *Atibala* to Rama and Lakshmana, he took the form of *Taijasa*. When he undertook to perform the marriage between Sita, the *Jivatma*, with Rama, the *Paramatma*, he took the form of *Pragna*.

When we look at these three stages of Vishwamithra, we understand that no one can live without being dependent, to some extent, on the material creation around him. At that time, he is in the first stage or the waking stage, which is described as *Viswa*. Later when we can acquire faith in the Divinity, then we transform into the next higher stage described as *Taijasa*. If we do not stop at this stage, and if we develop the next higher stage and identify ourselves with *Atma*, that can be described as *Pragna*. Because Vishwamithra reached this sacred stage of *Pragna*, he could realise that Rama was the incarnation of Narayana Himself, and in that context he was in contact with Rama. In this stage of *Pragna*, there will be a commendable

determination to fulfil a task. That determination is permanent and unwavering. In this stage Vishwamithra developed some kind of enmity with Vasishta because Vasishta was being described as a *Brahmarishi* while he himself was described only as a *Rajarishi*. He was determined to see that he was also addressed as a *Brahmarishi* by Vasishta himself. Withstanding all kinds of difficulty and never wavering from his determination, Vishwamithra went into a very severe penance. He could withstand all the tests to which he was subjected by God Himself. In the end he succeeded in being called a *Brahmarishi* by Vasishta himself. Because he took such a hard and difficult vow and succeeded, we call him *Brahman*. Thus, if we want to achieve anything, we should go into the state of an unwavering mind and a determination without swerving from the objective. Vishwamithra demonstrated such sacred truths.

Amongst the lessons which Vishwamithra gave to the world, *Gayatri manthra* is an important one. This *manthra* teaches that there is equal opportunity of spiritual achievement for all religions, for people of all countries and people of all communities and all places.

This *manthra* has something to do only with intelligence. It has nothing to do with religious activity. We say “*Dhiyo yonah prachodayath,*” and this portion of *Gayatri* means, “Blossom my intelligence, give importance to my intelligence, remove the dark-ness of ignorance and let the *Pragnana* in me blossom out.” It prays to the Lord who is present at all time, (past, present and future) and who is present at every place, to come and burn away the darkness of ignorance and give the brightness of knowledge. In man’s life, there is his childhood, his youth and his old age. These three stages of man are not distinct and differ-ent, but they are simply

changes of one and the same basic content. In the childhood there is youth, in the youth there is old age. This aspect of unity can be referred to as the aspect of *Pragnana*, and Vishwa-mithra was demonstrating this. With the help of this *Pragnana*, Vishwamithra could even create a new universe. That is referred to as *Trishanka*. Ability to create something totally new is an aspect of *Pragnana*.

Not fully understanding and knowing the significance of *Mahavakyas* from the *Vedas*—“*Aham Brahmasmi, Thath thwam asi, Ayam Atma Brahman, Pragnanam Brahma,*” we are misinterpreting them, and we are not able to derive the full benefit out of them. When we try and interpret them in as easy a manner as possible, we realise that they are only telling us what the nature of our own self is. *Pragnana* enables you to stand out only as a witness and experience everything around you. We say, this is my hand, this is my head, this is my tongue, and we begin to claim all this, but who is this claimant? For every one of these things, *Veda* has been telling us the answer by saying: That is you, thou art that, I am *Pragnana* and I am *Brahman*; in that way it makes you stand out as a witness and not become identical with your body or hand.

Students:

There are many such sacred statements in the *Vedas*, but we are not making an attempt to understand these sacred statements. *Prakruthi*, the material creation around us, is our friend. We can interpret this by saying that if we have faith, we can achieve any difficult task. For both these, our *prema* is the main cause. If there is *prema* between you and me and even if we come to blows with each other, then you will interpret that it has been for your own good; those blows have caused your blood to circulate more freely. If there is no *prema*, if there is no understanding between us, even if I throw a good rose

flower at you, it will be misunderstood and you will interpret it by saying that the rose has got a thorn and I have thrown the rose so that the thorn may hurt you. Here the good way in which you interpret it, or the bad way in which you interpret it, is determined mainly by the presence or absence of *prema*.

If you want to promote the aspects of faith and confidence, you must promote *prema* in the first instance. The duty of every human being is to develop faith and *prema*, and perform one's duty with care and responsibility. On the contrary, we are wasting our lives, filling ourselves with ignorance and not making an attempt to understand the purpose of life. In one's own childhood, one mixes up with a number of other children and spends time playing games. When he gets into his youth, he spends his time attracted by women. In adolescence he will spend his time trying to earn money. When he is in old age, he will begin to think of God. He keeps on saying that he has not achieved this or that, and he keeps on feeling sorry. In the end, without being able to give up these desires, without knowing what his true form is, he spends his life in a wasteful manner and ends it in sorrow.

Students:

To be born as a human being is not so unsacred as all that. Amongst all the things that are born, to get a human birth is very difficult. Not realising that and acquiring bad qualities will be making our life unsacred. No life is always and at all times filled with troubles and pains. Difficulties never come one after another. The interval between one sorrow and another can be described as pleasure. Thus pleasure is always an interval between two pains. On the contrary, we treat this period between pain and pain as a period of leisure and rest.

Truly three-fourths of our life is filled with happiness and only one-fourth is filled pain. But we do not take our life

in that manner. We think that three-fourths is filled with sorrow and one-fourth is filled with happiness, and we get vexed and disgusted with human life and say that this human life is full of sorrow. This simply reflects man's mind in a weak state. With a view to making such a weak mind strong enough, we have to accept the path of spirituality.

There is a small example; we eat rice. In that process, thousands of pieces of rice cooked as food are taken inside. We do not pay attention to the large number of pieces of rice that go inside. But even if there is one piece of stone, which comes into our mouth, we say that the rice is full of stones. This means that when there is pain, we give a lot of attention and spend a lot of time thinking about the pain.

We can take another example. Suppose ten years ago, one of the children got fever and as a result of that he died. After all that time, today another child gets fever. Looking at this child who has fever now, we recall to our mind the fact that one other child had fever ten years ago and died as a result of that fever. We feel sorry and add that sorrow to the present sorrow and we become more and more sorrowful. Why are we recollecting and recalling sorrow that we experienced ten years ago? Why do we not think of the happiness and the good that we experienced in the past? We always recall the pain and the sorrow that we had experienced. At this present time of trouble just as we remember the pain and sorrow of the past, if we can recall the pleasure and happiness of the past also, then, to some extent, we will be relieved of the pain at the present time. The true nature of *Atma* should be such that we recall the happiness and pleasure that has gone by and not sorrow and pain. The reason for this is that *Atma* has the form of *ananda*. *Atma* which is the embodiment of God is beauty and happiness.

Divya Atma Swarupas:

Beauty is not present in creation, beauty is present in us, in the nature of *Atma*. There is one example. Sita's mind was filled with sorrow when she was in the Asoka Vana and Ravana tried to show her many beautiful things and attract her. However, all that beauty caused no attraction to Sita. To make Sita forget her sorrow, he created several attractive things. But on the last day, looking at a monkey who was sitting on a tree and uttering the name of Rama, Sita found great beauty and attraction and she began to enjoy the beauty of the monkey. Is a monkey beautiful at any time? But the name of Rama which was enshrined in the mind of Sita, joined with the name of Rama uttered by Hanuman, and the two together created the attraction and beauty, and the beauty was not in the monkey. When there is *prema*, whatever we may look at, it will be beautiful and good. The young crow looks attractive to the old crow. We will be disgusted with the sight of a crow, but the mother crow will always be happy when looking at the young crow. It is only a contact with our own *prema* that will make us appreciate and be happy. Vishwamithra always proclaimed that these two aspects, beauty and happiness, really come out of our own mind.

In the story of the *Ramayana*, every character, including that of the *rakshasas* as well as of the monkey, has been proclaiming suitable ideals to the world. After killing the *rakshasas*, Tataki and Subahu, Maricha was allowed to go free, and we must examine the inner meaning of this situation. If Maricha was also killed and was not allowed to go free, there would not have been the possibility of Ravana taking away Sita. If Ravana did not take away Sita, there would not have been the killing of Ravana himself. Thus, there is always a master plan behind every act in the *Ramayana*.

Students:

In this context, you should realise that for every act of yours, you should take great care. “*Sraddha van labhate jnanam,*” one can get wisdom by paying sufficient attention. The letters contained in this statement should be understood carefully. To promote this kind of *sraddha*, we should also think of another eight-letter statement “*Samsayatma vinyate,*” you must remove all doubts from your mind. On the one side, “*Sraddha van labhate jnanam,*” and on the other side “*Samsayatma vinyate.*” If we have these two statements as the two limits between which our stream of life should flow, we will be happy. If one has sufficient care and sufficient faith even if he gets a tiny spark, out of that spark he can generate a huge fire. If one is not careful, even if you give him big burning logs, he will push them aside; there will be no fire. For a student who has *sraddha*, who has a desire to learn, even if you give one sacred sentence, it will be enough. We do not have to read many books. If we want to tell others, we have to read books. If you want to realise for yourself, even one sentence is enough. To kill others, you want swords, weapons and guns. If you want to kill yourself, even a needle is enough. So also if we want to realise the nature of ourselves, one sentence with *prema* and confidence is enough. For us to read many books, to listen to many statements made by others and enter into argumentative conversation with each other will mean a waste of time. When you enter into such argumentative talks, the *pragnana* in you will lose its vitality. Your steadiness also will disappear. Arguments and counter arguments will always weaken a man. To some extent, one will lose his reputation as well.

Students should quietly and silently debate within themselves and understand their own true nature.