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**Saranagati Thathwa**

*The quintessential teaching of all the Vedas and the scriptures is that man should feel his identity with the One Atma that is present in all beings.*

“**A**rjuna! The one who sees Me in all and all in Me is dear to Me, whatever be his way of life”, declared Krishna. “That person who worships Me through all creatures merges in Me!” The Gitacharya continued and said, “There is a limit for *dhyana*, but not for the benefits conferred by it, the *siddhi*. *Dhyana* endows man with *jnana* or supreme wisdom.”

*Jnana* is not mere intellectual gymnastics. It is not a flight of imagination. Neither is it a mental concoction. It is a continual experience of the reality of the *Atma*. “Only one in a million makes an attempt to realise the *Atma*. Even among them only one in a

thousand understands the process of realising the *Atma*. Among the thousands of such people only one reaches Me. Those who have achieved self-realisation and merged in Me are very few indeed,” said Krishna to Arjuna.

Success in *jnana yoga* depends upon an individual’s deservedness. In a running race, only one runner comes first. Similarly, there may be thousands of flowers on the branches of a tree, but very few become fruits. People are of different sorts. There are the theists, the atheists, the agnostics, the slothful people, the *yogis*, the hedonists, the stoics, the cynics, the saints and the sinners. Each individual occupies a particular position in the world in accordance with his *samskaras* or the psychical and spiritual characteristics acquired during previous lives.

*Prakruthi* consists of earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and ego. Beyond this *Prakruthi*, however, there is a higher realm known as *paraprakruthi*.

Every person must grasp the meanings of *Prakruthi* and *paraprakruthi*. It is through *paraprakruthi* that man becomes Divine. *Prakruthi* binds man to the world. *Paraprakruthi* divinizes him. *Prakruthi* is concrete, corporeal and tangible. *Paraprakruthi* is abstract, incorporeal and intangible. The Immanent *Atma* also is incorporeal and intangible. It is subsistent beyond mind, space and time. But it can be intuitively and mystically experienced by following the path of *Yoga*.

A vessel contains milk. You cannot see the butter separately in the milk. Does it mean that the milk does not contain butter? Boil the milk and then curdle it. Churn the curds and the butter in it will come to the surface. Thus, milk contains butter though it cannot be obtained without subjecting the milk to the process of boiling, fermenting and churning. Similarly, sugarcane contains sugar. But it has to be pressed and twisted in order to squeeze the juice out of it. So also, there is water in the deeper layers of the earth and oil in the mustard seed. To get the water you have to dig a well and to get the oil you have to press and crush the mustard seed.

*Prakruthi* is a vessel; *sadhana* is the churning-rod and *jnana* is the rope wound round the churning-rod of *sadhana*. Pull the rope of *jnana* and churn *Prakruthi* with the churning rod of *sadhana* and the Divinity that is latent in *Prakruthi* will show forth. Some people are too slothful to make an effort and go on arguing that God is non-existent. Every human heart contains the wish-fulfilling tree (*kalpatharu*) of divinity. It has also the wish-fulfilling sacred cow (*kama dhenu*).

Our *karmas* are solely responsible for all the bad that accrues to us and the merit we acquire. Sinful *karma* can be destroyed by meritorious *karma*. Sins are negative while merits are positive. A negative integer like “-5” can be nullified only by adding “5” or a bigger positive number. The negative effect of sinful activities

can be neutralised only by the positive effect of meritorious actions.

There are two methods of spiritual progress, namely, the *vidhwamsaka marga* or the destructive path and the *vidhayaka marga* or the constructive path. If you want to cultivate a field, you have to first pull out all the weeds and level the land. Then follow irrigation, ploughing and fertilising. This sort of work is destructive. Sowing which is constructive and creative comes next. Similarly, the human heart can yield the crop of *Ananda* or divine Bliss only when all the evil thoughts in it are first weeded out and it is filled with pure love. Undesirable qualities such as hatred, negative criticism, the habit of blaming others and finding fault with them have to be given up. A cynic cannot appreciate goodness and nobility. It is his misfortune. It is only when the heart is purged of all vices that it can overflow with love. The plant of *prema* can be nurtured only in the field of the pure, immaculate heart. These processes of destruction are indispensable for spiritual advancement. The purified *sadhaka* whose heart is full of love and compassion, can traverse the path of meditation for gaining the unitive knowledge of the Godhead with ease and felicity.

Wisdom lies in the practical application of theoretical knowledge to life and its problems. You may memorise all the seven hundred verses of the *Bhagavad Gita*, recite the *Vedas* or read the *Puranas*, but all these

will be of no avail unless you put into practice the sacred teachings contained in them. The assiduous study of the scriptures will be a futile exercise if the truths propounded in them are not translated into action.

People make obeisance to the book of the *Bhagavad Gita*. They place it to their eyes in reverential homage and worship it, carry it on their heads and speak about it with evangelistic fervour! They adore the material book and its pages but not its content. The book is idolised, but the subject matter is neglected. So, also, theoretical study is emphasised, whereas its practical application is ignored. These are inexcusable vices.

Divinity is embodied in all creatures and this fundamental truth should be exemplified in practice by man. He must extend the field of his love until it encompasses the entire creation. It is only then that he will deserve to be a worthy recipient of God's love.

For eighty-four years Krishna and Arjuna had been playmates and friends. They had lived, played and sung together ever since their childhood, yet Krishna had never expounded the *Bhakti Yoga*, the *Karma Yoga*, or the *Jnana Yoga* to Arjuna till the time of the battle of Kurukshetra. The essence of the *Bhagavad Gita* was expounded by Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield in the midst of the clash of arms and din created by the warring soldiers. What is the inner significance of Krishna choosing the battlefield as the venue for making

the grand spiritual annunciation of the *Bhagavad Gita*? Till the *Kurukshetra* battle was fought, Arjuna had been completely engrossed in the pursuit of worldly pleasures and was preoccupied with mundane matters. He had spent all his life in search of power, pelf and prestige, but, on the eve of the battle, he swooned and found himself thrown into a mood of despondency. To him, the world appeared to be a great vanity fair. He lost interest in everything and experienced a profound feeling of emptiness, futility and despair. He felt that it was a sin to fight against his kinsmen, friends, elders and teachers. He felt like beating a retreat and going away from the battlefield. He was filled with agony and anguish and doubt and despair. Waging a war against his own cousins seemed to him the deadliest sin. He did not want the homicidal glory of this fratricidal war. "To fight or not to fight"—that was his problem. Finding himself on the horns of this great dilemma, he said to Krishna, "I have lost my power of discrimination. I cannot distinguish good from evil. I am robbed of my reason and do not know what to do. I am facing a grave moral and spiritual crisis. I surrender everything unto you. Save me from this predicament." Arjuna thus became a *saranagata* (one who has surrendered) and prostrated before Krishna. In this situation of complete self-surrender, Arjuna attained one-pointedness. He qualified himself to receive Krishna's gospel of life. Krishna apparently waited for this right moment to expound the great Song Celestial.

Three qualifications are essential for listening to this exposition of the *Bhagavad Gita*: surrender (*saranagati*), one-pointedness (*ekagrata*), and the sacrifice of worldly desires (*vairagya*). *Saranagati* is total self-surrender wherein the devotee lays down his body, mind, heart and soul at the lotus feet of the Divine Master. *Ekagrata* is one-pointedness of the mind when the devotee gives his undivided attention to the Lord's annunciation. To be initiated into the esoteric spirit of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *saranagata* must also possess the qualities of selfless love and sacrifice.

The importance of *dhyana* should also be recognised. *Dhyana* is an infallible aid to spiritual progress. Freedom from the consequence of *karma* can be attained through *dhyana*. This freedom enables the *sadhaka* to acquire *santhi* or inner tranquillity. The sweetness of the experience of inner tranquillity is derived from the fruits of *dhyana*. The modern man seeks *santhi*, but he is treading the perilous path of violence and conceit. His mind is restless and his heart tumultuous. The reason for this can be traced to his *prarabdha karma* or the accumulated *karma* of his past lives. *Prarabdha karma* pursues man like the hound of hell. The accumulated dead-weight of *prarabdha karma* can be destroyed only by *satkarma* or good actions in the present life. To remove obnoxious odours, perfumes are used. However, the bad smell is not really removed. It is only mitigated by the fragrance of the perfume. In the same manner, the deleterious effects of past *karmas*

can be suppressed and neutralised by the wholesome effects of present *satkarmas*.

*Karma* can be wiped out by *karma* alone. It is only a diamond that can cut another diamond. A thorn can be pulled out only by using another thorn. The power of *dharana* (concentration and determination) enables the *sadhaka* to banish all evil from his heart and enthrone virtue in its place. *Dharana* leads to *dhyana*. In other words, concentration leads to contemplation and assimilation and these, in turn, lead to meditation.