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**The Sovereign Knowledge**

*Can we say, “This is good” and “That is bad” when both this and that are God’s creation?*

**Embodiments of the Divine Atma!**

**A**mong all the branches of knowledge, spiritual knowledge is unique. It is also the most esoteric of all secrets. Vyasa, who was a *trikala jnani* (one aware of the past, present, and future) was the first to codify spiritual knowledge and he was its foremost exponent. It was he who defined and delineated the discipline of spirituality.

Spiritual knowledge has been designated in the ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* as the *raja vidya* (sovereign knowledge). This *raja vidya* is the most invaluable treasure of our ancient heritage. It has been preserved and nurtured for millennia by our great *rishis*.

However, today, we are witness to a degradation of the moral and spiritual wealth of our country. In this land of spirituality, there is a poverty of spiritual thought and discrepancy in moral conduct. Like begging for cheap food outside when in the house itself there is an abundance of rich and tasty food, Indians, not realising the fund of spiritual wisdom available with them, are beseeching the materially advanced countries for new-fangled ideas and ideologies. We are seeking to acquire and promote secular knowledge at the expense of spiritual knowledge, just for the sake of eking out a livelihood.

*Sraddha* (perseverance) is an essential precondition to the acquisition of spiritual knowledge. Nothing can be accomplished without perseverance, patience and tenacity of purpose. Students of the present day forego food and sleep and cram guidebooks and notes for the mere passing of their examinations. This way, they do display a fair amount of *sraddha* in their secular studies. But alas, as regards their spiritual progress, they do not exhibit even an iota of *sraddha*.

Spiritual knowledge is the *elan vital* of man. It is indispensable for attaining inner tranquillity and a comprehensive world view. While the gaining of mastery over the sciences or the arts cannot determine our destiny, it is spiritual knowledge alone that can draw our fate line.

*Anasuya* or the absence of envy, jealousy, and malice is a prerequisite for gaining an intimate, immediate and personal experience of the omnipresent reality of Divinity. Every spiritual aspirant must necessarily cultivate the quality of *anasuya*. It is a divine characteristic which makes a man's personality pure and pellucid.

*Asuya* or chronic jealousy is the source of all mental and physical ailments in this world. In order to acquire mental equipoise and inner tranquillity, man should make his heart pure by purging his mind of this psychological mania called jealousy. Man must first humanise himself before attempting to divinize himself. To feel jealous of others, even in trivial matters, suppresses the humanitarian instincts of a person. Men, today, waste all their time and energy in blaming others without realising that to search for and find faults in others is the most grievous and ghastly sin. Arjuna was completely free from the deadly qualities of envy, jealousy, and malice. That is why he acquired the appellation of *Anasuya* and deserved the nectarine message of the *Bhagavad Gita* from Krishna.

The ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* is of paramount importance. It deals with the *raja vidya* (sovereign knowledge) and *raja guhya* (sovereign secret). It is concerned with occult experience and the esoteric mysteries of the human soul. This chapter is in the middle of the *Gita* text and is like a beautiful bouquet

that links the two halves of a gorgeous garland of fragrant flowers that the various other chapters in the *Bhagavad Gita* are. And in this central chapter is contained the supreme knowledge of the *Atma*.

*Bhutabhrit* means the bearer, supporter and sustainer of the myriad of living creatures. *Bhutasthah* implies that He dwells in all creatures. In other words, God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of all creatures and dwells in them all.

The *adheya* (supported) cannot exist without the *Aadhara* (supporter). All mundane pleasures constitute the *aadheya*. The essential substance of the *Atma* is the *aadhara*. That is to say, all experiences, both mundane and spiritual, are regulated by the *Atma*.

Laymen glibly talk about the mind without knowing what exactly the form and shape of mind is. People say that they are feeling happy. But what is the form of happiness? They also talk of *Ananda* or bliss. What is the perceptible evidence for bliss? Words like mind, happiness and bliss are abstractions which do not have existence in space and time. Nevertheless, they subsist in a special sense. Though they do not exist in form, none can deny the fact that they are real individual experiences. In a similar manner, all spiritual experiences are incommunicable, non-demonstrable and subjective.

We may read in the newspaper that a certain king has died in a foreign country. As such, we have no

personal knowledge of the king's death. Neither have we seen his dead body. The news of his death has been telegraphically transmitted to us. Nonetheless, we believe in the news. But, at the same time, we doubt and deny the personal testimony of great *rishis*, who gained the sublime experience of the Self through vigorous austerities and penance. A person with discrimination and an open mind should not deny or condemn the self-certifying validity of the profound and mystical experiences of the great *maharishis*.

Spiritual knowledge can be acquired by every individual. "Where there is a will, there is a way." The first step on the path of spirituality is the acquisition of *anasuya* or freedom from envy, jealousy, malice, and covetousness. *Asuya* or jealousy should be completely rooted out of the human heart and *sraddha* or perseverance should be cultivated instead. The *Atma* should be visualised through meditation. The sincere and persistent *sadhaka* will then certainly have spiritual experiences and mystical revelations.

We may want to prepare delicious "sambar". For this purpose, we may make use of fresh vegetables, good dal and clean tamarind. Like Nala or Bhima, the cook may be an expert. But if the brass vessel used for cooking is not properly silvered or coated with tin, all the "sambar" cooked in it, is bound to be spoiled. Similarly, though there are nine modes of worship, unless the devotee has a pure heart, none of them will be effective. Of what

use is all the counting and telling of beads if the heart is tainted with envy, jealousy and malice?

Egoism and divinity are incompatible. An egoist can never aspire for the life divine. Ego should be completely annihilated in order to progress along the path of spirituality. However, self-confidence, as different from ego, is of supreme importance in spiritual progress. A man who has no faith in himself cannot have faith in God. Self-confidence and faith in God are always found in juxtaposition. They complement each other.

Faith is a cardinal virtue and faith in God is a prop in life. Though God dwells in everybody, unless one has faith in God, he cannot become divine. Some people might say that they will believe only after they experience. But that is like putting the cart before the horse. In spirituality, faith always precedes experience.

“*Vidya* without *sraddha* is futile”, said Swami Vivekananda. *Sraddha* (perseverance coupled with the capacity to take pains) is absolutely indispensable for *adhyatma vidya* (the science of the Self). Young men and women of the present day do have an abundance of *sraddha*. But, unfortunately, all their *sraddha* is diverted to dramas, novels, cinemas, radio, television, cricket and horse racing. This misplaced *sraddha* has resulted in their physical debilitation and mental corruption, with the result that they have not only lost faith in God but in themselves too.

Spirituality is an activity. It is an activity of the Atma. Just as a man cannot say that he will jump into the water only after he has learned swimming, he cannot say that he will plunge himself into the depths of spiritual experience only after he has fully comprehended spirituality.

Consider the example of earth’s rotation about its own axis and its revolution around the sun. The sun, all of us know, is stationary and it is the earth that revolves round it. The so-called sunrise and sunset are effected by this revolution of the earth rather than by the movement of the sun. This is scientifically proved. Nevertheless, the scientists also do talk in the language of the layman in daily life and speak about sunrise and sunset concealing the truth which they know. Similarly, the language of words is gloriously inconsistent to express and explain the great truths of spirituality. The language of experience is the only means to comprehend spirituality.

The scientists have discovered that the earth has the power to attract things to itself and based on this have enunciated the “law of gravity”. However, this does not mean that the earth did not have the gravitational force of attraction before the scientists discovered it. Moreover, the force of gravity is imperceptible. We may see a flower dropping from the branch of a tree and falling to the ground, but we cannot perceive the force of gravity that has caused the flower to reach the earth

after disengaging itself from the tree. Similarly, empirical affirmation cannot grant evidential validity to spiritual experience. Neither can man perceive, with his five senses, the subtle forces of spirituality that divinize him.

If a magnet is to attract a piece of iron, the latter should be free from impurities and rust. If a rusted piece of iron is not attracted by a magnet, the magnet is not to be found fault with. Similarly, if the *Atma* is covered with the impurities of the mind, it will not be attracted to the *Paramatma*.

If you look at the world through coloured glasses, it will assume the colour of the glasses. The colour belongs to the glasses and not to the world. To a patient who is suffering from malaria even a sweet “laddu” tastes bitter. The fault lies with the patient and not with the “laddu”. Thus, a self-deluded individual cannot grasp the ultimate absolute and eternal Reality of the *Atma*.

There is electricity in matter. But it does not manifest itself everywhere. Its effect is seen when an electric bulb is connected in the circuit. So also, God is immanent and omnipresent. He is everywhere, but His presence is manifested only in a pure heart. The ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* emphasises the need for purity of heart for the realisation of God.

Divinity is permanent while human life is impermanent. We see around us many creatures that are born, grow up, live for some time and perish. This way,

we are aware of the sequence of birth, growth, decay and death. Nevertheless, we delude ourselves and live considering ourselves immoral beings. This is a sign of ignorance and spiritual bankruptcy.

One night, Janaka Maharaja had a dream in which he dreamt that he had lost his kingdom and become a beggar. He was going around the streets of his city and begging for alms. The pangs of hunger made him cry. Some kind-hearted person gave him a morsel of food, but to his great misfortune, even that morsel slipped down from his palm. Just then the horror-stricken king woke up from his dream. He found himself again in his royal palace. The king asked himself, “Which is real—dream world or the conscious world?” The queen who was observing him was also perplexed. They decided to consult the great sage, Vasishta. The sage said, “O King! Both are real in one sense. But there is also another point of view. You became a beggar in the dream world and you are king in the conscious world. You exist in both the worlds. While they are both unreal, you alone are real. You are the absolute reality of the dreaming state as well as the conscious state.”

*Ekam Sath*—the One is Real. Truth is one and its manifestations are many. This is the central doctrine of the *Bhagavad Gita*.