

## 18. Highest spiritual wisdom is Brahman

Many people argue that spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is one of the attributes of Brahman, that it is of the nature of Brahman, a characteristic of Brahman, etc. But such opinions arise only in the absence of actual experience, of actual attainment of spiritual wisdom. Arguments and discussions multiply when there is no first-hand experience, for the realisation of reality is individual, based on revelation to oneself.

I declare that experiential knowledge (*jnana*) is Brahman, not a mere characteristic or attribute or quality of Brahman. The *Vedas* and spiritual texts (*sastras*) announce that Brahman is Truth (*sathyam*), Knowledge (*Jnanam*), and Bliss (*Anandam*), not that Brahman has these and other attributes. When Brahman is known, the knower, the known, and the knowledge all become one.

Indeed, Brahman cannot be described as such and such; that is why it is referred to as just “It is”, or “Being (*Sat*)”. Spiritual wisdom is also just Being, no more no less. The sacred revelations (*sruthis*) use the word *Vijnanaghana* to indicate Brahman, right? That word means: the sum and substance of the highest Knowledge (*vijnana*), knowledge with a capital K. Only those who are unaware of the sacred revelations will assert that spiritual wisdom and Brahman are distinct. Spiritual wisdom is Brahman; distinction is impossible. It is a sign of ignorance to posit a difference.

All knowledge that is limited by the three qualities (*gunas*) is ignorance (*a-jnana*), not the spiritual wisdom of the transcendental, which is above and beyond the ignorant (*thamasic*), passionate (*rajasic*), and even the serene (*sathwic*) motives, impulses, and qualities. How can such limited knowledge be spiritual wisdom? Knowledge of the transcendental has to be transcendental too, in an equal measure and to the same degree.

It might be said that Brahman has form, while spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is formless, but both are formless in the real sense of the word. The apparent form of Brahman is the result of ignorance (*a-vidya*); form is attributed to Brahman only to serve the needs of the embodied soul during the period of the embodiment. The Absolute is reduced to the level of the conditioned, because the soul is also conditioned in the body. Not to know that this human interlude is but the conditioned state of the *Atma* is to be reduced to the dullness of the beast.

## 19. Take up the chief path to acquire spiritual wisdom: devotion

“Spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is the panacea for all ills, troubles, and travails.” This is how the *Vedas* describe it.

There are many paths to acquire this wisdom, and the chief among them is the path of devotion (*bhakthi*), which was adopted by Vasishta, Narada, Vyasa, Jayadeva, Gauranga, and other great people. As the oil is to the flame in the lamp, so is devotion to the flame of spiritual wisdom. The heavenly tree of joy of wisdom thrives on the refreshing waters of devotion. Understand this well.

It is for this reason that Krishna, who is the personification of divine love (*prema*) and who is saturated with the quality of mercy, declared in the *Gita*,

I am known by means of devotion.

*Bhakthya-maam abhijaanaathi.*

Why was this declaration made? Because there are no hurdles in the path of devotion. Young and old, high and low, man and woman—all are entitled to tread it. Who among people are in urgent need of medical treatment? Those who are badly ill, right? So too, those who are groping in ignorance (*a-jnana*) are first entitled to the teach-

ing and the training leading to the acquisition of spiritual wisdom. Why feed those who have no hunger? Why drug those who are not sick? Brahman or spiritual wisdom is the drug for the de-realisation of the falsely realised, the removal of the fog of misunderstanding (*a-jnana*). It will sweep away the dirt that hides the truth.