

Path of inquiry, discrimination, renunciation

Only Humanity has the capacity, the credentials for realizing the power of the Lord, for earning that power (*sakthi*). It is indeed tragic that, even after achieving human birth, people do not realize that eternal reality or even make an attempt to understand It. If this chance is missed, when can they attempt it?

Why, they do not concern themselves with the very purpose for which they have come! Did they come only for living like all other animals, birds, or insects, eating, wandering about, sleeping, and seeking pleasure? If the answer is “no”, then for what else? Can we say that a person is just another animal, like the rest? People have three things that animals don’t have: the power to reason, the power to renounce, and the power to decide on right and wrong. These are special powers; but of what use are they unless they are applied in actual practice? If they are used, the name “human” is apt, otherwise, the name “animal” has to be used.

The three powers mentioned above should be applied by people not only in worldly matters but even in the investigation of the ultimate truth. Really speaking, if inquiry, discrimination, and renunciation are carried out while passing through the joys and sorrows of life, the conviction is bound to dawn in a moment that all this is unreal, that all this has no basis in truth. When such knowledge dawns, one is certain to tread the path of religion and spiritual discipline and take up the inquiry that will lead to the truth. This is the task in which people must be engaged.

Well! If only everyone would ask the questions “Who are we? Whence did we come? Where have we come to? How long will we be here?”, the truth could be easily grasped. That questioning is the sign of discrimination (*viveka*). When, by means of this discrimination, the idea that the world is impermanent gets deeply rooted in the mind, all attachments cease automatically. That is the stage of renunciation or detachment (*vairagya*).

One asks, is it worthwhile to be caught up in this unreal world? This is false and misleading, one tells oneself. One then turns one’s efforts to the realm of the Lord, the realm of truth. That is the wise decision.

It is through discrimination (*viveka*) and detachment or renunciation (*vairagya*) that one understands who one really is. Without them, it is impossible to know it. The Lord has blessed only humanity with these two. He has endowed people so that they might use them for that purpose. Hence, people are truly fortunate. But alas, people have forgotten the task for which they have come, ignored the question whence they came, closed their eyes to where they are, diverted their intelligence toward amusement and creature comfort, and wasted all their powers. What a tragedy! If in this most propitious human birth itself the Godhead is not sought, when else is a person to succeed?

If today is squandered so,
Will tomorrow help you?

If one’s real nature is first understood, the rest can all be easily grasped. One will thereafter know who one is, whence one came, where one has come to, and how long one exists.

These four issues are dependent, one on the other. If one is solved, all the rest can be known; but not one of these can be ignored. For example, suppose you write a letter to somebody. Whatever the contents of the letter, if it is put into an envelope and posted, whom will it reach? No one. Well, will it come back at least to the person who wrote it? No. In the end, it will be neither here nor there. Instead, if on the cover the address of the person whom it should reach and the address of the person who wrote it are both written, one can even predict when the letter

will reach its destination, is it not? So too, what do you do with your letter, your life? To whom do you address it? Where do you write it? When can it reach? Whom should it reach? Ignoring all these, not caring even for the time, if you simply worry yourself, how can you ever hope to know the reality?

First, you must know your own full address. Who are you? The *Atma*. Whence did you come? From the *Atma*. Where are you going? To the *Atma* itself. How long can you be here? Until you merge with the *Atma*.

Where are you now? In the unreal, the ever-changing. What are you engaged in? In evanescent tasks. In what form? As non-Self (*an-Atma*). Therefore, what should you do? Give up these three and try the other three: try to enter the eternal, to engage in never-changing tasks, and to enjoy the bliss of the *Atma*. This must be the chief effort of the individual soul (*jivi*), its perpetual aim, the greatest adventure in this world. All other tasks are humdrum and silly; they glitter a moment and vanish. You will realize this truth if only you turn your back on them and watch, wisely.