

Canalize the thoughts, reform the character

Many, many ideas take shape in the human heart; they wander to the very ends of the eight directions. Some of these are mutually supporting; some are mutually destructive. But without leaving them free, they must all be canalized and disciplined to subserve some high purpose. Only then can you be established in peace. You must have the cleverness needed for this canalization. It is not merely cleverness in the use of external things; it lies more in the control and subjugation of the mental faculties; this is essential for the blossoming of the *Atma*. For understanding the faculties of your own mind, you must move with elders experienced in that line or in the sublimation of the vagaries of the mind.

Until you intelligently fix upon a certain direction for all your thoughts and activities, you will only be building shadowy castles in the air and roaming about in them. Even your senses will be pursuing contradictory paths and distracting your attention to such an extent that you cannot easily come to a decision regarding the ideal. They make you feel that their paths are the best. But you should always strive to change the course of the senses and the imagination to subjects and desires that are conducive to the ideal, whatever the difficulty and however serious the crisis. That is the sign of real intelligence; that is the road to real peace.

Everyone has, by virtue of human nature itself, the discrimination needed to strive for the ideal. You should not allow the slightest idea of neglect to hinder you or stand in your way. Peace based on spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) can arise only out of actual experience; the end and the consequence of each and every act is and must be wisdom. The progress of the individual consists in activity done with discrimination.

Take one small example: Even a person who has all the means of comfortable travel through the grace of the Lord, namely, cars, planes, or other conveniences, has perforce to walk, in spite of everything, for the sake of health! So too, whoever one is, whatever the spiritual discipline engaged in, one has perforce to experience activity and learn the consequence themselves for the sake of their mental health! Otherwise, mental weakness cannot be cured.

In order to achieve this, one must move with experienced people and people who are basic supports of good life. One must grasp the Reality with their help and experience the Reality oneself. Only then can peace be established in the personality.

In this created world, wisdom (*jnana*) is enveloped in ignorance (*a-jnana*). This is inevitable at all times. As long as the lamp is burning, there will be a shadow beneath it; so too, when the flame of illusion is burning, the shadow of ignorance is inevitable. If the ignorance surrounding the *Atma* is destroyed by wisdom, then everything will be illumined as at sunrise, and peace will be the result.

If the above result is to be obtained, some effort has to be made to provide the necessary conditions. The mind is conditioned into good or bad by the environment. Hence, people have to create the needed environment themselves. The reformers of today do not strive to transform people's qualities. They try to bring about equality in economic matters, in outer life. But these can be lasting only when the qualities of character are built on the basis of equality. If the quality of equality is not developed, even if everything is divided and shared equally, that state of equality cannot last. So, there is need to reform the character by means of the knowledge of the *Atma*. This reform alone will bear fruit, the fruit of peace.

Therefore, culture must be directed toward the reform of character. Along with that reform and to the extent it is gained, the outward standard of economic life can also be adjusted. First, one must be trained in the technique

of peace and happiness (*santhosha*). These do not depend on the outer, the external, the visible objective world. So there is no profit in worrying about or debating these matters. You must take refuge in the *Atma* and the contemplation of the nature of the *Atma*, that is to say, in the real I. All this objective world shines only through the glory of the *Atma*.

The body does not deserve to be identified with the immortal; it is inert matter, and nothing better. You are not the thing connoted by the word “I”. You are the One, without a second. The body is subject to change, it is evanescent, liable to decline. How can it be the *Atma*? No, *Atma* is One and Only. It cannot coexist with another entity. It is only when every spiritual aspirant, everyone, is aware of this that equality, equanimity, and exhilaration can be established on earth.

Therefore, contemplate on the reality (*Thathwa*). Leaving aside the seen, concentrate on the seer. That will illumine the truth.