

Chapter IV. Awareness and its Lower Form

Swami: Oh, You have come! I was watching for a long time whether you had come. I knew you are a person who comes punctually. Glad to see you.

Devotee: Whatever else I might disregard, would I disregard Your command, Swami? In fact, I'm eagerly looking forward to the sixteenth of every month to meet you. What greater happiness can I get? What better food can I take?

Swami: Very good! Such faith (*sraddha*) and devotion (*bhakti*) are great helps on one's true path. Better than losing sleep and rejecting food in the fruitless pursuit of evanescent worldly pursuits, how much more joyful it is to attain the true, the meaningful, and holy goal! Leave that aside now. What do you want? Speak, let me see.

Devotee: Swami, last month You said something about awareness (*chit*), and You were pleased to say that You would explain more about it this month. Since then, I have been counting the passing days in order that I may know about it from You. The day has come at last. Please tell me about it.

Swami: Have you understood what has been told so far? Understanding does not mean mere mugging up! By practice and experience, have you realised in thought, word, and deed, and with full equanimity, the true nature of the world, that the world is unreal?

Devotee: It is only by understanding that, isn't it, Swami, that one can be ever immersed in thoughts of Sai, the Lord, giving up all other activities and duties? Had I not understood that much, I would have wasted this precious time.

Swami: Good, my dear boy! How sad the farmer would be if the seeds he planted didn't sprout and yield a harvest! So too, if the seeds of true wisdom that I sow do not come up as good saplings and give good harvest, I am affected. On the other hand, if they grow well and fructify into a harvest of bliss (*ananda*), how happy I am! That is My food. This is the selfless service (*seva*) you should do to me. There is nothing higher than this. Without flinging away the good and true words, spoken for your sake, if you practise them and derive joy from them, the essence of that joy is my food. If you thus act according to My words and put them into practice, I will gladly tell you more, whatever may be the number of things you ask. When what is said is allowed to deteriorate without being put into use, if people come and ask me to speak and speak again, what is to be said? If all start practising, as you are doing, the world will not have any troubles; untruth will not manifest itself.

Devotee: Swami! The Lord's grace is the basic need in order to practise the divine words, just as for everything else. Without that, nothing can happen. It is ever present, as You said. Just as the Sun is hidden by fog, grace can be obstructed by the darkness of "I" and "mine". But these can be overcome by practice and discipline. That is why, if we understand well the meaning of what we hear and follow, it is so easy. This is my experience; I don't know of others.

Swami: True. True. What you say is correct. You have understood it well. Without grasping the meaning, if various interpretations are given, that distorts Reality. And if a wrong sense is imputed, it falsifies Reality. But if it is clearly understood, practice becomes easy. Now consider this. Are all born at the same time? Do all die at the same time? Similarly, the highest wisdom will dawn at different times in this person or that. If you go on singing song after song, you learn music. So also, if I speak and continue speaking, all will understand the Reality. It

is not my mission to keep silent because people are not understanding. To such, it must be communicated once, twice, and more times if necessary.

Devotee: Swami, we are like lumps of iron; the Lord is like the magnet. Both are related to each other. But if that lump of iron has to be changed into an article of use in God's hands, it has to be heated in the fire of anxiety and beaten by the hammer of pain, so that it may obey and respond. So, in order to shape lumps of iron like us into instruments, You have to take much trouble. You have said that this is Your mission. Now, please tell me about awareness (*chit*), which you mentioned last month.

Swami: Yes. Awareness has another name: pure consciousness (*suddha sathwa*). It is as opposed to the impure consciousness as knowledge (*vidya*) is to ignorance (*a-vidya*). Impure consciousness is inherent in the pure as much as darkness is inherent in light.

Since many words are spoken, don't get confused my dear boy! Knowledge-ignorance, wisdom-stupidity (*jnana-ajnana*), pure-impure consciousness—all indicate the same idea, not different ones. I shall ask you another question. Have you heard the word that is the opposite of "nature (*prakriti*)"?

Devotee: I heard it, Swami. When I studied grammar, I learned that the opposite of *prakriti* is *vikriti*.

Swami: What does *vikriti* mean?

Devotee: *Vikriti* means changed, transformed, derived (*vikara*). *Agni* (fire) is the original; *aggi*, the derived word. So, too, *jama* is derived from *yama* (control of the inner senses), *janna* from *yajna* (ritual), and so on.

Swami: So also, the Lord's nature (*prakriti*) is known as knowledge (*vidya*), and its derived or lower form (*vikriti*) is known as ignorance (*a-vidya*). For knowledge or pure consciousness (*suddha-sathwa*), ignorance (*a-vidya*) or impure consciousness is the lower form.

Devotee: How is that, Swami? Knowledge (*vidya*) is effulgent in the Lord and ignorance (*a-vidya*) is apparent only because of knowledge. That is to say, the universal cosmic principle is in the Lord, and this principle itself appears as different from individual to individual—the appearance of individuals is caused by the external characteristics of name and form. This power of ignorance (*a-vidya-sakthi*) also manifests as an inseparable entity. For the Lord is the only existence. Therefore, that one existence is the basis or foundation for the universal and the particular, the totality as well as the apparent parts. This is Your meaning, isn't it, Swami?

Swami: That is why the Lord is referred to as truth (*sathya*) and *Brahman*. This truth is indivisible (*akhanda*). It is non-dual (*a-dwaita*). It is without end. In the *Upanishads*, this truth, which is associated with the unmanifested power of illusion (*maya-sakthi*), is called the Full (*Purna*), "That (*Adah*)". The truth associated with the manifested power of illusion is called the Full, "This (*Idam*)". This is the secret of the *Upanishadic mantra* "*Purnamadah Purnamida ...*".

Devotee: Oh, what fine teaching! Just like giving unto the hand a fruit peeled and ready to eat! This manifested total cosmos (*purna*) arose out of the Fullness (*Purna*) of unmanifested indivisible Reality—this is what you spoke of, isn't it?

Swami: It is on account of this that we say *Vasudevas-sarvamidam*, *Sarvamkhalvidam Brahma*, etc. The words *Vasudeva* and *Brahma* are different, but there is no difference in meaning at all. Did you understand?

Devotee: It is all like nectar, Swami. But so far, you haven't told me who I am.

Swami: This is enough for now. Next month, I'll solve your doubts with illustrative examples. Grasp well what

has been told. Practise; don't forget and lay aside. Meditate on it. Well, you can take leave now.