

## Chapter XV. Levels and Stages

The Hindu religion authorizes the worship of a variety of Gods; this has resulted in sectarian feuds and factions, which fill the land with fear and unrest. The unthinking verdict of many observers is that the insights and agitations in the country can be traced to this one basic defect. But this judgment is not correct. It is a flimsy flight of fancy, indulged in by people devoid of the faculty of reason.

### **Sectarian conflicts within a religion**

In the West, the inhabitants of all lands are, more or less, adherents of the Christian religion. Though all of them adore one God, they have been slaughtering each other by methods far more horrible than wild animals resort to. Don't they wage wars in which peoples remote from the scene of conflict are wiped off the earth by merciless fire power, including innocent women, children, and the aged? Is their religion the basic cause for such heartless, disgraceful, stupid, and demonic devastation and fratricide? Of course, they belong to one religion and they adore one God, but there must be some poisonous trait lurking behind the facade of adoration, polluting the entire personality. Religion cannot be the cause, even to the slightest extent, for factions, fights, and wars.

Germany had no place for caste groups and sectarian conflicts. It had achieved extraordinary progress in science and technology. It shone in the forefront of nations by means of its strength, courage, and heroism. Such a nation was cut up into four bits by the four victorious powers, each bit being ruled by a separate nation! Japan, which has no problems of religious differences and sectarian conflicts, had to suffer the vengeance of the nations for some years! What was the reason? For the downfall of nations, religion alone cannot be the cause.

### **Differences are due to innate characteristics**

No one can even imagine a world in which differences do not exist. Differences are born from the inner springs of intelligence based on the cumulative effect of impacts. The life of every being is the external expression of this intelligence and its effect. Inert as well non-inert entities are but manifestations on different levels of this intuitive intelligence. The parrot casts its eyes in a distinct way; the crow does the same, quite differently. The jackal reasons out situations differently from the dog. The nature of animals is of one type; the nature of human beings is of another.

Between person and person, there are differences in the knowledge gained. Even in physical characteristics and personal charm there are countless variations. Their likes and dislikes, their thoughts and feelings are shaped in diverse ways by the knowledge they have and the professions in which they are engaged. We have no need to go so far. Even twins growing together in the same womb are not often identical; they manifest different natures. What is the reason for this? The reason lies in differences in the development of the intelligence.

Therefore, at no time can mankind be free from differences; universal equality is an impossible aspiration; the desire to have it established on earth is a fantasy; it is a search for flowers in the sky.

The animal lives with the awareness that it is an animal, the bird has the consciousness that it is a bird. A woman engages herself in the activities of the world, conscious that she is a woman; so also does man.

## **As you think, so you become**

The consciousness one has, until sleep overwhelms, continues without change after waking from sleep. The living being continues activities as before sleep; so too, one continues in this life the activities broken off by death, from where they were ended.

One gives up the body at the end, remembering the feelings that moved one ever so strongly (*Yam yam vaapi smaran bhaavam, thyajathyanthe kalebaram*).

And in the *Gita*,

One attains that status itself to which the feelings were all the while directed  
(*Tham thamaivethi Kauntheya, sadaa thadbhaava bhavithah*).

The nature of the next life is in accordance with feelings that occupy the mind when one casts off the corpse. For those feelings will be in accordance only with the feelings that motivated the living days. On deeper thought, it will be evident that the basic truth is just this: everything depends on the progress attained in the sublimation of intelligence.

## **Outer forms express inner differences**

Though in outer form a certain uniformity may appear, there exist vast and varied differences in inner nature. A genus or species is decided mainly on outer characteristics, which are really the manifested expressions of the inner intelligence. An individual is primarily a form. Person, tree, hill, sparrow, fox, dog, cow, snake, scorpion—these “sounds” denote members of the species with these forms. The individuals may undergo destruction, but the species will continue. Many people die, but mankind persists. Trees may fall and be reduced to ash or dust, but the genus cannot ever suffer destruction. The living genus is eternal; total destruction can never happen.

If we analyze and inquire into even the small things that we experience in our daily lives, these truths will be clearly evident before us. We say that everyone in the human species has human characteristics, but when we evaluate one person, we pay special attention to their virtues and habits, present status, and future prospects.

Cows—all of them—belong to one species, but when we want to purchase a cow, we try to find out its parentage. We look for auspicious marks on its body. It must give us plenty of milk; it must be a pretty little quiet animal. We purchase only cows with these desirable qualities. We are not attracted by the fact that it is a cow like the rest of the species. We do not purchase a barren cow or a wild unruly cow. Therefore, though all people are more or less uniform, each is to be evaluated only on the basis of their own qualities.

## **Innate qualities designed by divine will**

When an inquiry in depth is made into another topic, it will be clear that feelings of difference between high and low are natural reactions. Though urine and feces are uniformly unclean, the urine of the cow is treated as holy. Sanctity is not attributed to the urine or feces of other animals; these are definitely unholy. Take the instance of fire (*agni*). Fire is fire, whatever the form. We light lamps at home; we have fire in our hearths. We have the sacrificial fire, rising up in flames. This fire is revered and worshiped; people prostrate before it. But the fire in the lamp and the hearth are not evaluated so highly. The flame of a fire used to burn a corpse on the cremation ground is not considered pure enough for any other use. No one will bake “rotis” over it; no one will revere it or offer prostrations before it. It is treated as low, unholy, polluted.

Similarly, though people have the same physical form, because of the peculiarities of each body and of the other sheaths in which each is encased, as well as the nature of their qualities and activities, distinctions among them have necessarily to be made. Some must be treated as “high”, some as “low”. Electric bulbs don’t all emit the same quality of light; some are bright, some dull. There is the same current in every bulb, though some express it in full strength and others are not able to do so.

We have to accept that for the world to evolve, levels of awareness, stages of excellence, distinctions like high and low, holy and unholy, religious and irreligious are essential requisites; they are inevitable. They are designed by divine will.