

Chapter 9. Purity of Thought, Word, Deed

The benefit we can derive from anything is proportional to the faith we place in it. From adoration of gods, pilgrimages to holy places, uttering *mantras*, or resorting to doctors, we derive benefits only according to the measure of our faith. When someone gives a discourse, the more faith we have in them as a scholar and an exponent, the more clearly and directly we can draw the subject into our hearts and understand the discourse deeper and deeper.

For the growth of faith and for the fostering of understanding, an essential requirement is purity of the heart, of the very base of thought (the *kshetra*), of the levels of consciousness (*chittha*). Without this purity, the sudden effort of self-inquiry or investigation into the self-existent *Atma*, while in the midst of diverse worldly and material entanglements, will be rendered fruitless, since it will not stem from an eager will.

The consciousness (*chittha*) must first be withdrawn from the objective world (*prapancha*) and turned inward toward the awareness of the *Atma*. Seeds can sprout fast only when planted in a well-ploughed land. So too, the seed of *Atmic* wisdom can sprout in the heart-field (*hridaya-kshetra*) only when it has undergone the necessary refining process.

Don't just listen, practise and experience

Do not rest content with mere listening to advice. What you have listened to must later be reflected upon, and what has thus been imprinted on the mind has later to be experienced and expressed in thought, word, and deed. Only thus can the truth be a treasure in the heart; only then can it flow through the veins and manifest in full splendour through you.

These days, listening to lectures and discourses has become just an itch, a disease, a craze. After hearing them once, people imagine they have known all. But the real purpose of the search for truth is to liberate oneself. The yearning must be deep and persistent. The longing to know and experience the truth will then become a *yoga*, a process of union.

Faith is important

The union in *yoga* is between *dharma* and divinity. The more such evils as lust and anger breed in a person, the greater the diminution of the divinity. That is to say, faith in the *Atma* will decline fast, as the evils develop.

Faith is all important, faith in one's reality being the *Atma*—that is the real spiritual knowledge (*vidya*). When lust, anger, etc., diminish and disappear, faith in the *Atma* and in the rightness of spiritual inquiry will grow and get confirmed. Non-attachment is the very foundation for attaining awareness of Brahman (*Brahma-jnana*), the Universal Absolute. Even for a small structure, the foundation has to be stable and strong, or else it will pretty soon fall as a heap. When a garland has to be made, we want a string, a needle, and flowers, don't we? So too, when spiritual wisdom has to be won, devotion (the string), non-attachment (the needle), and steady single-pointedness (flowers) are essential.

Take refuge in God and gain victory

Everyone in the world desires victory; no one desires defeat. All crave wealth; no one craves poverty. But,

how can victory or wealth be acquired? This has to be thought about and discovered. And we need not search long for the solution. Sanjaya, according to the *Mahabharatha*, revealed the secret to King Dhritharashtra, “Where there are both Krishna, the Lord of *yoga*, and Arjuna, the wielder of the bow, there victory is assured and wealth is won.” Why do we need more than this as advice? There is no need to undergo the three-fold struggle—physical, mental, intellectual—to achieve victory. Nor need one get perturbed or anxious. There is no need to pine for wealth and prosperity. Take refuge in God and wield the bow of courage, that is, hold the heart pure. That is enough. Victory and wealth are yours.

But when you pursue victory and wealth, remind yourself that they are shadows, not substantial things. You cannot attain your shadow with the sun behind you even if you pursue it for millions of years, for it flees faster and is always beyond reach. Instead, turn toward the sun and proceed. Then, watch what happens. The shadow falls behind and follows you, instead of leading you. It walks on your footsteps like a slave.

Consider the shadow as the symbol of worldly illusion (*maya*.) As long as you follow worldly illusion, Madhava is being ignored and is out of sight. You cannot win His vision. You will be caught up in the coils of birth and death and be ever in bondage. From this atmosphere of dependence, one must endeavour to release oneself. Or else, if all one’s efforts are directed to the acquisition of sensual pleasures, it is a sure sign of rank ignorance.

People are prisoners of the senses

Those who are in bondage must first use all their skill and energy to free themselves. This is crucial for achieving everything else; all the rest are subsidiary. But, people are now immersed in subsidiary pursuits, forgetting the most basic. Every moment they must remind themselves that they are *Atma* and not contraptions put together as bodies.

A king had a parrot as a pet in his palace. It lived in a golden cage. It had sweet fruits to feed upon and nectarine drinks to quench its thirst. Every day, it was richly fed, lovingly petted, fondled, and spoken to by the queen herself. But did the parrot enjoy its life? Not at all. It was always sad. Why? It was not mindful of the golden cage, or of the sweet fruits and drinks; it had no pride in being nursed and nourished by the queen. It paid no attention to any of these. It was yearning for the day when it could sit on the branch of a green tree in the silent forest. Its body was having an excellent time in the palace cage, but its mind was in the thick of the forest from which it had been trapped and brought. It was born in the jungle and it lived on a tree. The parrot felt that it was far better to be free in its native habitat as an insignificant bird than to be in a cage, coddled and admired, feasted and flattered by kings and queens.

If only one had this awareness, one would assuredly long for home, which is the Supreme Self (*Paramatma*), and turn away from the objective world in which one is an alien.

For political or other reasons, some people are arrested and kept in detention in order to preserve law and order. They are confined in big bungalows, given special treatment as befits their status, and provided with meals, etc., commensurate with their grades in social and political life. They are also given articles of luxury. But around the bungalow and garden, policemen are always on guard. Whatever the standard of life and the regard showered on them, they are prisoners. They are not free. So too, people confined in the world and life therein shouldn’t feel elated when able to consume valuable, variegated dishes and have other rare luxuries. They should not exult over the sensual comforts that are enjoyed. They must not feel proud of friends and kinsmen. They must recognise and

keep in mind the truth that they are in prison.