

Chapter 11. Pathway to Peace

One has to achieve many objects during life. The highest and the most valuable of these is winning the mercy of God, the love of God. The love of God will give the great wisdom one needs to attain unshakeable inner peace (*santhi*). Everyone should endeavour to have an understanding of the true nature of Godhead.

Of course, one cannot, at the very beginning, grasp the unmanifest absolute phenomenon. At first, one has to impose a form and some attributes to bring it within reach. Then, step by step, one must try to enshrine it in oneself, as the descent of divine energy (*sakthi-path*). One engaged in the pursuit of success in this effort is not a mere individual seeker entitled to pursue the goal. One has to cultivate also the spirit of service and be engaged in good deeds that earn people's gratitude. Only thus can one accomplish the task of cleansing the levels of consciousness (*chittha*) and become a fit candidate for spiritual victory.

The duty of the renunciant

Monkhood (*sanyasa*) does not mean the mere acceptance of the fourth stage of life and its rights and obligations, retirement into the forest after breaking off contacts with the world, and leading the austere life of an ascetic. Instead, the renunciant (*sanyasin*) must move among people, become aware of their sorrows and joys, and impart the instruction and inspiration they direly need. Monks should fulfil this duty.

The renunciant can be likened to a species of fish. The fish moves around in the depth of the lake; it is not stationary at one spot. And, while moving around, the fish eats up worms and the eggs of pests, thus cleansing the water. So, too, the renunciant should always be on the move, journeying to the far corners of the land. The renunciant's duty is to cleanse society of evil by example and precept. The renunciant's teachings must transform it into a society free from vice and wickedness.

Promoting devotion and dedication

The tree can spread its branches wide. But the branches can put forth blossoms that yield fruit only when the roots are fed with water. Instead, if the water is poured on the branches, fruits, and flowers, how can the tree grow and spread? Society has the qualities of devotion and dedication as its roots of prosperity and peace. Hence, the educational system must pay attention to the promotion and strengthening of these qualities among the people. People who occupy positions of authority are named officials (*adikaris*). That word can also mean the worst enemy (*adhika-ari*)! True officials should carefully avoid that course and use their positions to serve people under their care.

In olden times, when people of any region were sunk in fear or anxiety, or when the sources of joy and contentment ran dry, they traced the cause of the calamity to some fault or failure in the worship offered to God in the temples of that area. They sought to identify the mistakes and correct them, so they could have inner peace. They believed that the crisis could be controlled through these means. Such acts are now bundled together and labeled "superstitions", to be cast aside. But this is not superstition! Modern scientists are in such a pathetically poor state of understanding that they don't recognise these important problems. This is the preliminary stage of confusion caused by the progress of modern types of education.

The ancients grasped the supreme truth only after personally experiencing its validity. The moderns, however, dismiss their discoveries. This is the reason for the growth of barbarism in the so-called civilised countries. Many have not recognised this fact.

Three kinds of happiness

Every living being craves happiness; it doesn't long for misery. Some desire riches, some believe that gold can make them happy, some amass articles of luxury, some collect vehicles. But everyone is set upon obtaining the things believed to give them joy. Those who know wherefrom one can get happiness are very few in number.

Happiness is of three kinds. One type is of the nature of poison in the beginning but turns into nectar later. This is pure (*sathwic*) happiness, which is secured through the awareness of the *Atma*. That is to say, the preliminary discipline (*sadhana*) of equanimity, control of inner and outer senses, etc., which has to be gone through, appears hard and unpleasant and involves struggle and effort. So, the reaction may be bitter.

In the *Yoga-vasishta*, Sage Vasishta says, "O! Rama! The boundless ocean can be drunk dry with great ease. The enormous Sumeru mountain can be plucked from the face of the earth with great ease. The flames of a huge conflagration can be swallowed with great ease. Controlling the mind is far more difficult than these." Therefore, when one succeeds in overwhelming the mind, one achieves the awareness of the *Atma*. This success can result only when one undergoes many ordeals and denials. The bliss that one earns afterward is the highest kind of happiness. As the fruition of all spiritual discipline (*sadhana*), one is established in the perfect equanimity of unruffled consciousness (*nirvikalpa-samadhi*) and the bliss (*ananda*) that fills one is indescribable. It is ambrosial, equal to the nectar of immortality.

Undifferentiated (*nir-vikalpa*) means the state of consciousness in which one is devoid of thought. This state can be reached through appropriate discipline. It is of two natures: Non-dual in full experience and the state of non-duality when dual thought ends. The first takes one beyond the triune of knower, the known, and knowledge; and one is aware only of the cosmic intelligence of Brahman. This is the non-dual state (*adwaita-bhavana*). The second stage is reached when all the attributes ascribed to God and humanity merge in the ONE that embraces the cosmos and all its contents. (This second stage is *adwaita-sthaya* or *adwaita-avastha*.)

There is a second type of happiness: On account of the impact of external objects on the senses of perception, pleasure mistaken as nectarine is aroused. But, in time, the pleasure turns into bitter and unpleasant poison. This is passionate (*rajasic*) happiness. When one welcomes this passionate sensory pleasure, one's strength, awareness, intelligence, and enthusiasm to reach the four goals of human endeavour —*dharma*, wealth (*artha*), righteous desire (*kama*), and liberation (*moksha*)— become weak, because one's interest declines.

The third type of happiness arises from ignorance (*thamas*). It dulls the intellect from beginning to the end. It finds satisfaction in sleep, slothfulness, and faults, and it derives happiness therefrom. The dull (*thamasic*) person ignores the path that leads to the awareness of the *Atma* and pays no attention to it throughout life.

True education directs and counsels the mind and intellect toward earning pure (*sathwic*) happiness. Of course, it can be secured only by untiring effort. The scriptures declare, "Happiness cannot be acquired through happiness (*Na sukhaath labhyathe sukham*)." Only by undergoing unhappiness can happiness be won. This truth has to be instilled through spiritual education (*vidya*). When one knows of the bliss (*ananda*) that pure happiness can confer, spiritual education will be found easy and palatable.

Acquire education for immortality

Having been born as humans, all efforts must be directed to acquiring this education for immortality along with earth-bound material-centred education, for it is only education for immortality that can reveal the *Atma* and enable people to experience the immortal *Atmic* bliss (*Atma-ananda*).