

Chapter 13. Unity in Diversity

Students! The Ageless Person, beyond delusion and darkness, has to be cognised by every person through their own effort. You have taken birth as inheritors of this estate of eternal bliss. You are the dearly loved children of the Lord. You are as pure and as sacred as air. Don't condemn yourselves as sinners. You are lion cubs, not sheep. You are wavelets of immortality, not bodies compounded from matter. Material objects are there to serve you and do your bidding; you should not serve them and do their bidding.

Don't think that the *Vedas* lay down a bundle of frightening rules and regulations and laws. Every one of them has been laid down by the Lord, as law-giver. All elements in the cosmos, every particle everywhere, are acting every moment as ordered by Him. This is what the *Vedas* inform us. No worship can be higher and more beneficial than serving such a Lord. One has to offer love to Him, more love than one bears to anything else in this world and the next. He must be loved as the One and Only. He has to be remembered adoringly with such love. Real education must result in this fruit.

The lotus leaf is born under water; it floats on water; but it does not get wet. You must be in the world likewise—in it, by it, for it, but not of it. The special feature of higher education is to prepare you for this role.

That is to say, you must live thus on earth with your heart immersed in the Divine and your hands busy in work. Love should not degenerate into an article of commerce. Love fulfils itself in love.

The Vedic religion

The *Vedic* religion doesn't attempt to establish, through conflict and controversy, any one doctrine or theory. It seeks to evaluate all theories and doctrines by the touchstone of experience.

The tree is judged by its fruits. Codes of behaviour, spiritual practices, and manifestation of love all have enormous virtues, which promote the progress of humanity.

According to the point of view of great people and of the spiritual teachers of India, one advances not from falsehood to truth but from the partly true to the fully true. Each individual *Atma* can be called a *garuda* bird, which soars higher and higher and, gathering supranatural strength, at last reaches the solar orb with unlimited splendour and majesty.

The basic truth of creation is unity in multiplicity. This was understood by Indians. All other religions have accepted certain fixed doctrines and built systems on them. They are content with the establishment of such credal groups. They devised methods of worship, prayer, and adoration in accordance with the feelings and emotions they laid down as valid and valuable.

The service that every religion offers to mankind is to expand the consciousness of people beyond the material sphere and light the spark of divinity already in them. The Indian (*Bharathiya*) mode of worship is based on the awareness that the One manifests through many discrete forms and many discrete attributes, when confronted by many discrete situations and conditions. So, among all peoples of the world, Indians have the intellectual tolerance to proclaim to all four quarters that God exists and can be found in every religion. This is their unique good fortune.

Faith has guided Indians

One of the basic rules of living is not to be ashamed of your forefathers. As you read more and more the history of the past and visualise more and more the human condition in those ages, your pride is bound to increase. Let faith in the supreme achievements of your forefathers flow in and energise the blood in your veins. Let the strength of that faith render your body, mind, and spirit equally strong. The fruit of genuine spiritual learning (*vidya*) is the recognition that every community of people and every religion has, along with a basic unity, something special of its own to offer.

In fact, no country in history has been the target of such dire calamities and has suffered under alien rule for as long as India. Despite this, Indians are ready to encounter boldly any new calamitous storm, for their lives are still more or less firmly based on the ancient ideals. This has been the stable foundation for their way of life. Faith in God is faith in *Atma*. They believe, without any hesitation, that this faith has guided and guarded them.

These guiding principles of Indian (*Bharathiya*) life were not restricted by the geographical boundaries of the country. Whether the people of this land desire it or not, the principles are spreading to other lands. They are transmuting their literatures by instilling their values into their thoughts and feelings.

The natural sciences can provide us only with food, clothing, and the like. Only spiritual science can add strength and steadfastness to the self. Students should pay special attention to this fact. What use are food, clothing, and the like, even in plenty, when one has no strength or steadfastness in oneself?

Again, when you want to promote the prosperity of the nation, you must, of necessity, gather into yourself all the spiritual resources that you can. In the past, the need was known, and efforts were made to fulfil the need; in the future too, this need must be felt and fulfilled. That is to say, all the spiritual inclinations, beliefs, and urges that are now feeble and dissipated have to be united and reinforced, one with the others.

Tolerance for all religions

The unique features of the *Vedic Bharathiya* (Indian) religion form its solid base. They are as wide as the sky and as eternal as nature. As part of the religion, creeds and cults may exist as branches of a tree. One need not condemn them as wrong. But no branch should fight against another or compete with another. When that happens, the tree will be destroyed and all will end in ruin. When creeds indulge in competitive rivalry, religion is ruined and the world is destroyed.

Only One exists; the wise describe it in many ways.

Ekam sath; vipraah bahudhaa vadhanthi.

Each of us may have different ideas on the nature and characteristics, the form and attributes of God. One person may believe that God has the qualities and form of humans. Another may believe in a God devoid of human form and signs, but yet manifesting in embodiments. Another may believe in God as altogether formless. Every one of these can find declarations supporting their stands in the *Vedas*. For, all have faith in God, that is to say, in a mysterious power (*sakthi*) that is the source, support, and sustenance of all, a power that subsumes all. This is the truth proclaimed and elaborated in the *Vedas*.