

44. Which is real? This or that?

The Beacon of the Spirit is the Light-house for the storm-tossed ships carrying humanity across the furious waves of the ocean of life. Instead of earning that light and saving himself from wretch, man is getting lost in travails, torrents of trouble, worry and agony and vain voyages in search of attaining the absent treasure. Unless that light is present ever with man, unless efforts are made to have it shining clear in the heart, all the activities of life are shrouded in the darkness of ignorance. Man is wasting the great chance he has been awarded. One wonders whether he has to appreciate or discard the charms of Nature and the external world, whether to laugh or weep at their illusory attractions. Man prides himself on his capacity to know everything, but, he has failed to know this truth about Nature. Blind to the real characteristics of this world, man has become a pendulum between birth and death.

Of course, every one desires and devotes all his energies for securing *shaanthy* and *santhosha* (peace and joy). But, they elude his grasp. He spins like a top, he is immersed in incessant effort; but what does he win? Nothing. For, what has to be sought after first, is "spiritual progress". Through that alone can peace and joy and happiness be won. Attached to the imperfect instrument called Reason, man fails to earn these ends. He forgets the special mission of man, the mission for which he has been specially endowed, and rotates in fruitless adventure.

Devoid of the principle of Godhead, no activity can be worth while. *Brahmam*, the Universal Absolute, is all this; It is the source, the substance, the sense; it is as cotton in the cloth, mud in the pot, wood in the chair, the basic substance. One must be established in the awareness of this fundamental Unity, not simply be carried away by the apparent multiplicity of Name and Form. The multiplicity is unreal. It is temporary, evanescent.

Detachment will liberate man from illusions

Is man a bundle of the senses? Is he just the physical frame? Is he the mind? Or is he consciousness, with all its levels? Where did all these come from? Where are they journeying to? How far can one decide the shape of one's journey? These are the questions to seek answers for. Now you run about asking every one you meet, "Who are you?" but, you seldom stop to ask yourself, "Who am I?" You are drawn by the news of the world, not by news of your own inner world. Of what avail is all the knowledge you gather, if the knowledge about yourself is absent?

The truth is: man has emanated from the *Aathma thathwa*, the *Brahmam*; he has to rejoin I. As the waters of the sea evaporate and form clouds to fall as rain and flow as streams and rivers to rejoin the sea, so, man too must reach the source, after all this peregrination! Now, man is unaware of the "From address" and of the "To address"! He knows only the address where he is. One can know the two addresses only by contact with the good and the godly. Attach yourself to the good and earn detachment; detachment will liberate you from illusions; that will make you steady in the faith, in the Principle; that faith will liberate you. So, certain disciplines have to be followed to realise the truth about oneself.

Religion does not preach difference

This is emphasised in *Sanaathana Dharma*. But, due to political and cultural forces, *Sanaathana Dharma* (Eternal Religion) itself is being neglected. The goal of life should be the earning of *Aathmic* faith. That alone confers great joy, that alone is true religion. People glibly say that religion too is a convention of man, fashioned for the moment. No, religion is much more useful

than that, much more established. It is rooted in intelligence, individual discrimination. It insists on unity of all this in one basic principle, *Brahmam*. It does not advocate or preach difference and manifoldness.

Godhead is described in the *Vedhas* as *Shahasra Sheersshah*, thousand-headed. It does not mean that God has a thousand heads. There are thousands present here before Me; the heads are thousands in number but the heart-beat is the same in all. So too, God is activating all the heads, as the same electric current activates the fan, the stove, the bulb, the mike, the machine, the tube, etc. The instrument is different, but, the power is the same. The individual is different but the indwelling force is the same.

The question may arise, why then all this distinction, this superiority and inferiority, when all are activated by the same *Brahmam*: That is a question dealing with the outer, the exterior aspects of man. In the basic substance, there is no high or low; the difference is caused by difference of the instrument, the *upaadhi* (the container). The current is the same, but the wattage of the bulb differs and causes the difference in light.

People say that the body is real, that it is permanent, that the senses give correct information, that the emotions are real. The mind has to be fixed on any object so that it can be seen or heard or become the target for any sense. The eye for example is the bulb in the torch (body); the switch' is concentration; if the mind does not concentrate, the eye cannot see. No object has any particular taste; the malarial tongue feels all sweet things bitter. The *ajnaana*---afflicted mind will feel objects to be pleasurable and permanent. The *ajnaana* has to be overcome by means of spiritual discipline. *Sanaathana Dharma* teaches us the method; but, we have started ridiculing our own culture and extolling other systems and faiths.

He who conquers his senses is an Emperor

Really speaking, there is no other system or faith. All religions, all faiths are but phases or facets of the same Universal Faith and Discipline. It is like the seven blind men who examined the elephant and described it to others. The man who held the tail in his hand saw it as a snake; the man who felt the leg said it was a pillar; the man who examined only the ear swore that the elephant was like a winnowing basket. This story has a deep inner meaning. The *Aathma* is one, but, each one sees a fraction and judges it differently. It is the integrated sum of each of these facets of reality.

India is the home of many facets of the Truth, the lovely garden which has many languages and many philosophies and faiths, all depicting the One *Brahmam*, in many a brilliant colour. This garden was preserved safe, by the sea on three sides and the rampart of the Himaalayas on the fourth. If such a safely-guarded land is being eaten into, the fault lies in us only. We are invading each other in unarmed campaigns and pointing the finger of scorn at others. We have to desist from the attacks we lead against others, moved by envy, anger, pride and similar passions. The internal struggles we wage against each other in the name of our own home, village, district and state have to be stopped, with strong will and determination. When we are engaged with so many internal foes like greed, anger and pride, how can we stand up against others? He who conquers a country can be called a *Raaja* (king); but, he who conquers his senses is truly a *Chakravarthi* (Emperor).

Janaka's dream and its lesson for the *saadhaka*

We must strive for this victory. People boast that they know much, but, of what use is all that knowledge if they do not put into practice and win peace and contentment? Fundamentally, the inquiry that makes living worth while is, "Where-from have I arrived? Whither am I going?" King Janaka used to gather many *rishis* in his palace and take delight in discussing with them about spiritual problems; he was a great adept at *saadhana* and he attained the highest stage of *samaadhi* through *Raaja yoga*. One day, while in the midst of the court, with the Queen and the maids, even while he was conversing with them, he fell asleep. He had a dream, during that sleep. He dreamt that he was deprived of his kingdom, that he was roaming half-mad, hungry and deserted in the jungle, begging for food from whoever he met, that he came upon some men washing dishes and vessels after a feast which they had shared, that he ran towards them seeking some crumbs, that they gave him some little quantity of rice scraped from the vessels, that he was about to put it into his mouth when a big bird flew in and swooped it out of his grasp; so, he yelled in pain and grief, and the Queen heard it and she woke him up.

Of course, when he woke, he knew he was the King. He remembered that a second previously, he was a beggar. "which is real? This or that?" he wondered. He questioned within himself, which is real, this or that? To every one who inquired what the matter was, he put the same question. "Am I a king or a beggar?" He wanted each one to tell him which was real. The queen and others were frightened at this behaviour; they sent for the ministers and with them *came*, *Ashtaavakra*, the preceptor. He discovered the situation as soon as he saw the King; so, to the question that the King put him, he answered, "*Raaja!* This is unreal; that is unreal; you, who experienced this as well as that, you alone are real."

Both waking and sleeping stages are unreal

You too have spent this day in various activities and now you are listening to My words and feeling happy. How long is this real? Only until you go home, spread your beds and sleep. The waking stage is real until the sleeping stage; the sleeping stage is real, until the waking stage. But, both are unreal, because one cancels the other. So, why take life so seriously, so frantically? All efforts, all talk, all pleasures end with the graveyard. Every step takes man nearer to that, not farther. Then, why revel while living, believing this to be real and lasting?

You must have heard elders say some warning words. Practise two, give up two. The two things to be given up are: all remembrance of (1) the evil that others do to you, and (2) of the good that you do to others. The two things to be practised are: (1) belief that death is certain and inevitable, and (2) that God exists and yields to prayer and purity. But, usually, men do not forget the evil that others do or the good that is done by them; they forget the fact of death and the fact of the existence of God. If you seek for profit in every act, of what use is it? Bank deposits, buildings, degrees, titles and riches have all to be left behind. As soon as the last breath is drawn, the body becomes a thing of bad omen; it is moved out of the house one has built and loved.

Treat life as a two-hour play

Who, after all, is this I, which you love so much? Are you the body? You say, my stomach, my head, my foot; who then are you? You are the breath, the *shwaasam*. So long as there is breath, you are *Shivam*; when that leaves, you become *shavam* (a corpse). So, treat the world as a two-day fair, treat life as a two-hour play, treat the body as a two-second bubble. Develop love and devotion to the highest ideal, God.

That path is beset with hardships. They help, they do not hinder your forward steps. They serve as the shears that trim a growing bush. No one can escape these ups and downs while on the journey. Fix attention on the goal, that is the means to be happy and peaceful. Whatever the obstacle, God's Grace can transform it into a help for you. Educate your mind to view hardships as helps. The mind it is that binds or liberates. What is the mind ultimately? It is a web of desires and wishes; this handkerchief here is, if you ask Me, only apparently, a handkerchief. Really speaking, it is just yarn; remove the yarn, all the yarns in the warp and woof, and what remains? Why multiply desires and get bound, by the mind? Use it for liberation, instead.

Devotion implies faith in God. Without that faith, man lowers himself to the level of birds and beasts; he does not live up to the faculties that he is endowed with. A tiny bird that perches on a bough is not scared when the bough sways in the gale. Why? Because it relies not on the bough, but, on its wings. You on the other hand rely on the grip you have on the branch of *samsaara*, or the world and its ramifications; you do not rely on the *Aathma* or the God within, who buoys you up. That is the reason why any little shake in the bough frightens you. Have faith in your Divinity, in Divinity as such, and nothing can harm you. That is the crucial skill you must develop.

Learn to swim across the sea of life

A man was crossing the Ganges in a boat; he asked the boatman if he had no watch and when he laughed at it, the man said, "No; need or no need, whether you know how to consult a watch or not, unless you own a watch, a quarter of your life is as good as having gone into the Ganges." Sometime later, he asked the boatman whether he had a radio receiver and when he learnt that he did not possess one, he said that another quarter of his life can as well be considered sunk in the Ganges. "You are not up-to-date at all; every one worth anything has a barber's box contrivance called transistor hanging round his neck at the end of a strap." A few minutes later, he asked, whether he read any newspaper and when the boatman apologised for his illiteracy and his lack of interest in news, the man squarely said that another quarter of his life can be pronounced to be liquidated in the waters of the Ganges! Just then, the overcast sky became dark and furious and forks of lightning threatened a thunder-storm and a heavy downpour of rain; it was now the turn of the boatman to ask a question. He said, "Do you know swimming?" and when the man pleaded that he did not have the skill, the boatman replied, "In that case, your whole life is as good as liquidated."

Learn the art of swimming across the sea of life, with its waves of success and failure. That is the real skill to acquire.