

16. The ascent of man

Possessing physical prowess

And intellectual strength,

If one lacks Divine help

He is powerless and weak.

Forget not the fate of one

Like the valiant Kama,

Who died ingloriously,

And learn the lesson.

Everyone knows the world of God

But of what avail is it?

They profess to worship God

But have no understanding of God's message.

WITHOUT getting rid of ignorance, awareness of the Supreme cannot be experienced. *Jnana* (the higher knowledge) is the embodiment of the *Paramatma* (the Oversoul). It is self-effulgent. It is only when man is conscious that he is that Knowledge and that Light that he can have the *Advaitic* (oneness with the Divine) experience.

What is light? It is the means by which we are able to see various objects. During the day we see things by the light of the sun and at night by the light of the moon and stars and of lamps. What is it that enables us to know that we are seeing things by sunlight or other sources? It is through the eyes. In the dream state we see many objects although our eyes are closed. Who is the seer in that state and who is the experiencer of the dream? It is the *Buddhi* (the intelligence) that is able to see things by its own *Tejas* (luminosity).

The three aspects of *Advaita* principle

In the *Sushupti* (deep sleep) state even the *Buddhi* is not present, but a blissful feeling is experienced. Who is the experiencer of this bliss? That is the *Atma* (the Indwelling Spirit). "I am the *Atma* and the *Atma* is I" is the truth that has to be recognised by everyone. It is the *Atma* that activates the *Buddhi*, which enables the eyes to perceive objects. The *Atma* is the Truth and you are the *Atma*. It is when this truth is experienced, then alone can man realise the transcendental unity that subsumes everything. For this purpose, an enquiry has to be made into "*Advaita trayam*" (three aspects of nondualism). These three are: *Bhaava-Advaitam*, *Kriya-Advaitam* and *Padhaartha-Advaitam*.

Bhaava-Advaitam is the enquiry which leads to recognition of the common basis of different objects like cloth and thread, namely, cotton. To recognise the One that underlies the Many is *Bhaava-Advaitam*. This involves recognition of the one indwelling Spirit which is common to all beings.

Kriyaa-Advaitam relates to the performance of actions, with purity of mind, speech and body, in a spirit of dedication to God.

Padhaartha-Advaitam calls for recognition of the elements that are common to all objects and all living things. The *Pancha Pranas* (five vital airs) and the *Pancha Bhootas* (five basic elements---earth, water, fire, and ether) are to be found in all beings.

There is only One Divine in all things

The understanding of these three aspects of oneness will lead to a realisation of the basic unity of the cosmos. Failing to see this divine unity, men are caught up in differences. There is only One Divine in all things. It is shining effulgently in everyone. But like the ashes that cover the fire in a burning charcoal, this light is covered by man's own ignorance of the light within. To see the fire in the charcoal, the ash covering it has to be blown off. Likewise, the light of the *Atma* in the individual is covered by the sense of separateness and multiplicity. When through *sadhana*, this feeling of manifoldness goes, the real nature of the Self is recognised.

There are five types of human beings. One is the *Maanava-daivatvam* (human-divine) type; second, the *Maanava-maanavatvam* (human-human); third, the *Maanava-daanavatvam* (human-demonic); fourth, the *Maanava-pashutvam* (human-animal); fifth, the *Maanava-heenatvam* (debased human).

The human-divine type consists of persons who are aware of the divinity in them. They recognise that the *Atma* is the real Self and regard the body as an instrument for realising the Divine. They strive to lead pure and sacred lives, always entertain pure thoughts and engage themselves in acts of charity and righteousness. They concentrate their minds on the Divine and fill their lives with the love of God.

The term *Maanava* has two meanings

The human-human type are those who discharge their prescribed duties in life according to the various *stages--Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vaanaprastha* and *Sanyasa* (student, householder, forest-dweller and mendicant)--and lead a pure and sanctified life. Such persons strive to adhere to the basic human values of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love and thereby live up to their true human nature.

The term *maanava* (human) has two meanings. One is *maa* (not) *nava* (new)--one who is not new. This means that man has a long history behind him. The other meaning is: *maa-na-va--one* who is free from ignorance (*maa-ignorance, na-without, va-living*). True humanness consists of turning away from evil courses and pursuing right paths in life.

Maanava-daanavatvam (human-demonic) type: This type of human beings follow evil practices not only in matters relating to food and recreation, but engage themselves in acts of cruelty and violence. They lead lives bereft of morality and justice. They are intensely selfish and have no thought of being helpful to anyone. The demonic quality is identified with selfishness and cruelty. If righteousness is the mark of a truly human person, wickedness is the mark of the demonic being.

The *Maanava-pashutvam* (human-animal) type: This type of person is concerned only with eating, sleeping and sensuous pleasures. These animal qualities are described in Hindi as "*Khaana, Sonaa, Mamaa*" (eating, sleeping and dying). These persons have no higher aims in life. Hence, they lead an animal existence.

There is only one thing which is worse than this human-animal existence. That is the debased human being, who will go to the extent of subjecting himself to suffering for the purpose of

doing harm to others. He will be prepared to lose both his eyes to see that the other man loses one. He will do harm to those who have done him good. This is the most degraded type of human being.

The greatness of a human being does not consist in returning good for good. It consists of doing good to one who has done him harm. It is enough if men try to be at least truly human, if they cannot rise to the level of the human-divine. Men should seek to live as true human beings. Thereby they may go towards the divine. Whatever studies you may pursue, whatever degrees you may acquire, never fail to live up to your true human estate. Without developing the true human qualities, all learning is like the howling of jackals in a cemetery. Getting by rote all kinds of knowledge without making any effort to put even a fraction of it into practice is simply an infliction on the memory.

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