

17. The One in the many

WHATEVER man seeks to achieve, he has to rely on Nature. Nature is not anyone's private property. It belongs to God. Without the grace of the Lord no one can enjoy the benefits of Nature. Not realising this truth, some people embark on the exploitation of Nature, out of arrogance and self-conceit. This is highly misconceived.

Without the sanction of the Lord, man cannot achieve anything in the world. The Divine is the basis for everything. Man, however, is filled with the conceit that he is the one who is doing everything. This pride is the cause of his ruin. It is the cause of his frustration and disappointment. Man today is basing his life on reliance on Nature, forgetting God. This is a grievous mistake. You must place your faith in God, who is the prime supporter of Nature, and enjoy what Nature provides. Faith in God is the primary requisite for man.

But how should devotion to God express itself?. Not in ostentatious external forms like smearing *vibhuti*, wearing a special dress or flaunting a *japamala*. Devotees make a distinction between personal duties and service to the Divine. They look upon worship, meditation and the like as Divine service and what they do for their families and friends as personal duties. This kind of division amounts to practising a deception on God. God is omnipresent and subsumes all things. Hence there is no meaning in making a distinction between one kind of work and another.

Consider all acts as an offering to God

A policeman on duty wears his uniform and when he is off duty he is in his own plain clothes. He makes a distinction between his official dress and his "own" clothes. This is all right from the worldly point of view. But devotees should not make such a distinction. Whatever work they do, whether in their office or elsewhere, they should consider it as an offering to God. In any business in which you engage yourself, treat it also as God's work. This is known as *Bhaava-Advaita* (*Advaitic* attitude or attitude of oneness).

Next, you have the instance of people in different bodies, with different forms and names. But, irrespective of these differences, they are basically made up of the same five elements--earth, water, fire, air and ether. These elements are aspects of the *Paramatma* (the OverSoul). Why, then, should any distinctions be made in our activities between different persons constituted by the same common elements? Hence, together with *Bhaava-Advaita*, you should have *Kriya-Advaita* (the unitary attitude to work). This means that whatever work you do should be dedicated to God. All such actions become thereby sanctified and divinised, they acquire the unifying quality of holiness.

The next one is *Padaartha-Advaita* (non-dualism relating to objects). When you begin to enquire into the fundamental basis of all objects, you find that it is only one. For instance, a cloth is made up of threads, which are made from cotton. The common factor is cotton. Distinctions are made when the underlying basic unitary substance is forgotten. When *Bhaava-Advaita*, *Kriya-Advaita* and *Padaartha-Advaita* are properly understood, we can have a vision of the basic Reality. Then the omnipresence of the Divine can be experienced.

Yearn for the love of the Lord

Look at the modern attempts to understand God by concentrating on exploring the secrets of Nature. This is a wrong approach. The effort should be to realise that Nature has come from God. Only then God can be experienced. You have to turn your mind from the mundane to the Divine,

from Nature to Nature's God. By getting immersed in evanescent and impermanent worldly concerns, people are polluting their lives. Admittedly the phenomenal world presented by Nature is true. The Spirit is also truth. Man's journey is not from untruth to Truth but from a lesser truth to a higher Truth. Truth is only one. That truth is God.

God can be realised only through love. Your devotion must be such that God seeks you. Like a child crying ceaselessly till the mother rushes to pacify it, like a calf calling for its mother-cow, like a forlorn wife praying for the return of her husband, the devotee should feel the yearning for His coming. Udhhdhava declared that only such yearning was true devotion.

Students! *Bhajans and japas* do not constitute *Bhakti* (devotion). You must yearn for the love of the Lord. Along with your studies, cultivate devotion and spiritual discipline. Spirituality is the summum bonum of education.

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God is omnipresent. So do not act differently when you are away from my presence. Be always and everywhere conscious of the Presence. Be vigilant, even while engaged in little tasks. Maintain silence, in the recesses of the heart, as well as outside. The Gita says, God's hands and feet are everywhere. You can hear His foot-fall only when no other sound hinders. Develop the awareness of God, see Him and serve Him in every living being.

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