

18. Trigunas and Panchabhutas

STUDENTS! Embodiments of Divine Love! Everything in the cosmos is Brahman.

"The Divine shines in the rays of the sun. It is the Divine that reveals to man through his eyes the vastness and glory of the world. The whiteness and coolness of the moon which confer peace on men are derived from the Divine. The universe, which is based on the triple nature of time and which is sustained by the Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara), is permeated by the Divine in the form of the three gunas--Satwa, Rajas, Tamas." (This was the meaning of the Sanskrit sloka with which Bhagavan began His discourse).

Nature presents a marvellous picture. No one can fully comprehend it. Whether it is blessing or bereavement, joy or sorrow, gain or loss, it comes from *Prakriti* (Nature). Nature presides over the destinies of all creatures. This Nature comprises the three *gunas*. The Trinity represent the three *gunas*. The three qualities account also for the processes of creation, sustenance and dissolution--*Srishti, Stithi, and Laya*. All the varied experiences in the world arise from the three *gunas*.

Man should aspire not for a *deergha* (long) life, but for a *Divya* (Divine) life. In the cosmos, which is permeated by the Divine, man should seek primarily to divinise his life.

Seek the nature of the Creator

The secret of creation is known only to the Creator. Others cannot hope to understand it. Scientists are engaged in exploring the secrets of creation. But none can plumb the depths of Nature's mystery. In scientific investigations, today's discovery is overtaken by tomorrow's findings. That again gets outdated in its turn. Continual change is in the very nature of creation. It is not permanent or immutable. The Creator is the only eternal unchanging Entity. The spiritual path aims at seeking the nature of the Creator and thereby understanding the nature of creation.

The entire Cosmos, consisting of living and inanimate objects, is based upon the three *gunas*. Man should strive to understand the principle that transcends the three *gunas*.

God is *Atma* (Spirit) incarnate. When terms like *Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantam, Brahma, Atma* or "God" are used, they all refer only to one Entity.

At the beginning, the *Pancha Bhutas* (the five elements--space, air, fire, water and earth) emerged from the *Atma*. The five elements contain five characteristics. From the five elements began the *Pancheekritam* (process of fusion). Out of this fusion, came the three *gunas*. The Cosmos is the visible form of the three *gunas*.

The elements and the gunas

The Cosmos is permeated by the three *gunas* : *Satwa, Rajas and Tamas*. The nature of the *Satwa guna* has to be properly understood. The *Antahkarana* (the Inner Instrument) in man represents the *Satwic* quality found in the five elements. *Akasa* (Space or ether) has pre-eminence among the elements in representing the *Satwic* quality. From *Akasa* emerged what is known as *Suddha Satwa* (Pure *Satwa*). This accounts for the human form. *Akasa* accounts also for the emergence of the organ of hearing--the ear.

The second element is Air. The skin is the product of the principle represented by *Vayu* (Air). The eye is the organ representing the principle of the *Agni* (Fire element). The individualised aspect of the fourth element, Water, is the tongue. The nose represents the individualised aspect of the fifth element, the *Prithvi* (earth). These five elements account for the five faculties of *Sabda* (sound), *Sparsa* (touch), *Roopa* (sight), *Rasa* (taste) and *Gandha* (smell). As each of these faculties has emanated from one particular element, the five faculties are distinct in every individual.

Akasa (Space) is represented by sound and the corresponding sense organ is the ear. The ear can only hear and not perform any other function. Likewise the skin can only experience the sense of *Sparsa* (touch) associated with *Vayu* (Air). The eye (which is the organ associated with *Agni*), can only see and do nothing else. The tongue (representing the element, water) can only taste. The nose can only smell, but cannot taste.

Role of *Antahkarana*

While each of the sense organs is limited functionally to its specific role, the *Antahkarana* (Inner Instrument) combines the functions of all the five organs. This alone has the capacity to experience all the perceptions of the five *Jnanendriyas* (five senses). Are these sense organs functioning externally or internally? The answer is that they perform a dual role (both internal and external). If the physical organ, the ear, is present, but if the faculty of hearing is absent, the ear serves no purpose. If the faculty of the hearing (*jnanendriya*) is present, but there is no ear (to receive sounds from the outside world), the faculty is of no use. The combined operation of the *Jnanendriyas* (the sense organs concerned with the inner faculties of the senses) and the *karmendriyas* (the organs of action) accounts for the human personality. Here you have a loudspeaker. Without a mike, the loudspeaker is of no use. Without a loudspeaker, the mike serves no purpose. It is the presence of both which enables what is spoken inside to be broadcast outside.

The five faculties of the senses (sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell) are the *Satwic* expressions of the five elements. The five elements in their *Rajo guna* give rise to *Prana* (the life force). While the combined operation of the five elements in their *Satwik* quality is seen in the *Antahkarana* (the Inner Instrument in man), the collective functioning of the five elements in their *Rajas* quality expresses itself as the *Prana* (life-force). Among the five elements, in their individual expression of their *Rajasic* quality, *Akasa* (space) is represented by *Vaak* (the faculty of speech). *Vayu* (air) finds expression in the hand. *Agni* (fire) finds expression in its individualised *Rajoguna* as the foot. The fourth and fifth elements (water and earth) find *Rajasic* expression in the excretal organs in the body.

You must take note of some significant facts in this posture of the elements. In its *Satwic* aspect, *Akasa* (space) expresses itself as ear. But the same *Akasa*, in its *Rajasic* aspect, appears as the *Vaak*. It may be inferred from this that *Akasa* has two children; the ear representing *Satwa* and the *Vaak* representing *Rajas*. The ear, which is *Akasa's* first child, receives the sounds coming from outside. The second child, the *Vaak* responds from inside through the spoken word.

Receive the *Satwic* and reject the *Rajasic*

The skin is the first child of *Vayu* (air) in its *Satwic* aspect. The second child, in its *Rajasic* aspect, is the hand. The skin recognises an ant crawling on the body. Immediately the hand tries to remove it.

It will be seen from these examples that the *Satwic* quality consists in receiving impressions from outside. *The Rajasic* quality consists in casting them out.

In the world today what is happening is the exact opposite. What is *Rajasic* is being taken in and what is *Satwic* is being rejected. In the natural scheme of creation, what should be received is that which is *Satwic* and what should be rejected is all that is *Rajasic*.

The primary quality of *Prakriti* (Nature) is *Satwa*. *Prakriti* is called "*Stri*", made up of the three syllables *Sa, Ta and Ra*. The significance of this term is: First of all, "*Sa*" implies that you have to take in what is *Satwa*. Secondly, "*ta*" implies developing some *Tamoguna* qualities, like submission, humility and modesty. "*Ra*", representing the *Rajoguna*, implies that there are occasions in life when some harsh firm resolutions will have to be taken. The *Rajasic* quality comes last and it means that *Rajasic* actions have to be done as a last resort when they are unavoidable.

In the cosmic process, it is the *Satwic* quality (the "*Sa*" *kara*) that comes first. Hence it is the duty of every man to develop the *Satwic* quality in every respect in thoughts, actions and attitudes.

***Panchikaranam* of the elements**

The Tamoguna brings about a mixture of the five elements. In this mixture, the five elements are not present in their full strength. The five are fused together (*panchikritam*) in a manner which may be illustrated by the following example for purposes of easy understanding of a highly complex process' Suppose the five elements come together as five individuals each having one rupee worth of change. *Akasa* retains half a rupee and distributes among the other four elements one-eighth of a rupee each. The second element *Vayu* (air) also does likewise retaining half a rupee for itself, *Agni* (fire), water and *Prithvi* (the earth) follow the same procedure. In the result, each has one rupee, but its composition is affected by the exchanges among the elements of parts of their respective natures. Originally each element was whole by itself. The process of mixing has resulted in the presence of all the five elements in every "rupee." In relation to the human being, the process of *panchikrita* makes man a mixture of the five elements and produces diversity in qualities. These have been described in spiritual parlance as *shodasa kalas* (the sixteen aspects). What are these sixteen aspects? They are the *five jnanendriyas* (organs of perception), the *five karmendriyas* (organs of action), the five elements, and the mind. Every individual has these sixteen constituents, although the sixteen *kalas* are attributed only to the Divine. Man has to realise his divinity.

The devotee and the Goddess Lakshmi

The ways of the Divine are not easily comprehended. Wishing the welfare of everyone in the universe, the Divine uses a myriad methods. It may be illustrated by the story of a devotee, aspiring for riches, who performed a severe penance for getting a boon from the Goddess of Wealth, Lakshmi. Man is prepared to undergo any ordeal for achieving material wealth, but will not take any trouble to realise the Divine. Lakshmi appeared before the devotee and asked him what he wanted. He replied that he wanted Lakshmi Herself.

She agreed and said that adorning Herself with all ornaments, She would follow him, and asked him to go ahead. She said She would come to his house and hand over all Her ornaments to him. She imposed, however, one stipulation, "You must go ahead and never look back. If you look

back, I will stay at that spot." Filled with joy, the devotee strode ahead towards his home. The Goddess's jewels were making all kinds of sounds as She walked behind. Unable to restrain his curiosity to find out what all jewels She was wearing, he turned back to have a look at Her. He could not restrain his curiosity till he reached his home. The moment he looked back, Lakshmi stopped there and did not follow him.

This is what happens when one cannot restrain one's desire. Even though he got the grace of the Divine, the devotee could not benefit from it. This means that even if you are blessed with an abundance of Divine grace, you must acquire the capacity to benefit from it. To get this capacity, you have to obey implicitly the injunctions of the Divine. If the devotee in the story had adhered to Lakshmi's conditions, he would have benefitted from Her favours. Failing to abide by Her conditions, he forfeited what he had been offered.

Visible proof of the existence of God

The situation in the world is something similar to this. The world is permeated by the potency of the three *gunas*--*Satwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. Even our vision of the world is influenced by the three *gunas*. Examine your eye. The outer rim of the eye is red, representing the *Rajo guna*. After that, you have the white area, representing *Satwa*. At the centre is the black circle, representing the *Tamoguna*. So, even our vision is tainted by the three colours, red, white and black.

When you pose the question, "Where is God?" the answer is given by Nature itself. The revolution of the earth around itself at the speed of 1000 miles an hour accounts for the phenomenon of night and day. The earth's revolution round the sun at a speed of 66,000 miles an hour accounts for the various seasons, for rainfall and the cultivation of food crops. Thus the divinely ordained motions of the earth enable living beings to get their food. This is a visible proof of the existence of God. The *Veda* declares that the foolish person, even while seeing the acts of God, declares he has not seen God. He does not realise that Nature is the vesture of God.

What is the lesson to be learnt from the observance of Nature? It is *Kriyaaseelata*, excellence in the performance of duty. It is because Nature ceaselessly performs its duty that the world is able to derive so many sacred benefits.

The secret and mystery of creation lies in the due performance of one's duty with earnestness and sincerity. In the pursuit of the mirage of sensual happiness, men are going on the wrong path. This can be seen in the life-style of people going to work or carrying on business. After what they imagine is a day of hard work, they go to clubs, where they become slaves of drink and ultimately ruin themselves.

Real happiness can be got only by rendering service to the public. Go to the help of the poor and the forlorn. You will derive strength as well as peace from such service. Your conscience also will feel satisfied. It is a pity that neither the rich nor the administrators are inclined to do such service.

Pure love can achieve anything

It is all the more essential that students should have some ideals before them and look forward to serving society selflessly. You should realise that you are a part of society and that your welfare is bound up with the good of society as a whole.

Students! Whatever *sadhana* you may do, your primary concern must be to develop the love of God. When you develop that pure love, you can achieve anything.

In this context, the advice which Hanuman gave to Vibhishana, when the latter lamented that though he had been chanting the name of Rama he had not had the benefit of a vision of Rama, is relevant. Hanuman told Vibhishana that it was not enough to chant the Name. One should engage himself in the service of the Divine. Hanuman declared that while meditating on the name of Rama, he was also engaged in constant service to the Lord. That was how he had earned Rama's grace and had become near and dear to Him. "I am ignorant of the scriptures, but I have dedicated my life to the service of Rama," declared Hanuman.

Discourse at the Summer Course in Brindavan, on 28-5-1990.

If man is valued at his true worth, and treated as a Divine Spark enclosed in the body, then, he will rise to new heights of achievement and produce all the necessities of life in profusion. He will not grab or cheat; he will be a good worker, a pure person and a sincere Sadhaka. He will cultivate the inner vision and realise that he is not the body or senses or mind or even intellect. He will be full of Prema and self-confidence.

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