

15. The sixteen potencies

Peace has vanished; Truth has become scarce;

The arms race has become a dreadful threat;

Selfishness is the cause of these evils

This is the pronouncement of the Truth.

EMBODIMENTS of the Divine Atma! Sathyam (Truth), Jnanam (Knowledge of the Absolute), Anantham (the Infinite), Aksharam (the Imperishable), Paramatma (the Omni-Self), Paratattvam (the Supreme Truth), Brahma (the Absolute), Kshetrajna (the Knower of the Field)--all these terms are synonyms for Atma (the Spirit). These terms came into vogue depending on the time, the place and the circumstances.

In the world, every living being aspires for happiness and seeks to banish grief. Although man hankers after pleasure, peace and bliss, what is the inner meaning of the fact that he is haunted by worry and sorrow? Sorrow, peacelessness and fear are the reflected images of happiness, peace and security. If there is no grief, there is no value for happiness. If peace is not absent, no one will seek peace. Therefore, these opposites are associated with each other and constantly follow each other.

Yesterday, I explained that *Bhuloka*, *Bhuvarka* and *Swargaloka* are expressions of the three sounds A, U, M in the *Pranava mantra*, *Om*. The three *Vedas Rig, Yajur and Sama Veda--in* their different rhymes pay homage to the three letters of the *Pranava*. To experience the truth underlying the *Pranava*, whose triune aspects are manifested in the three *Vedas* and other triple entities, there are three paths. The first is *Nama-chintana* (meditation on the Divine Name). The second is *Bhava* (inner ecstasy). The third is *Sadhana* (spiritual discipline).

How man reaches lunar and solar regions

By meditating on the Name of the Lord, worldly pleasures can be enjoyed. These are transient, unreal and momentary. Such ephemeral pleasures are got in the mundane world by reciting the name of the Lord.

Bhavam relates to the consciousness arising from a realisation that there is supreme power that governs the whole of creation--the moving and unmoving objects in the cosmos. When that consciousness is made the basis of one's entire life, by dwelling in that consciousness, a man reaches the *Chandra-loka* (the region of the Moon-god). To realise that at the base of the gross phenomenal world, there is a subtle power is itself a great progress in *Bhavam* (consciousness). Achieving this consciousness, man enjoys the sovereignty of the mind in *Chandra-loka*.

By chanting the name of the Lord, worldly pleasures are enjoyed on the earth and by the *Bhava* Consciousness, man enjoys the bliss of reigning over the empire of the Mind. From these experiences, man progresses, through *Sadhana* (spiritual exercises), and reaches *Suvarloka* (the region of the Sun). The Solar region, made up of *Vijnana and Prajnana* (physical and spiritual knowledge) is Cosmic Consciousness itself. It is the realm of *Divya-drishti* (Divine Vision). The man who attains this region enjoys supreme peace from the unified cosmic consciousness.

The status of the three Lokas

The Bhuloka (the physical world) and *Bhuvarloka* (the Lunar region) are said to be *Aparabrahma* (regions not related to the Supreme Self--*Parabrahma*). *Suvarloka* relates to the *Parabrahma* (the Supreme Self). Hence, the *Bhuloka* and *Bhuvarloka* are related only to the impermanent and unreal phenomenal world.

Bhuloka is *sthoola* (gross), *Bhuvarloka* is *sukshma* (subtle). The body is gross. The mind is subtle. The *Bhuloka* and *Bhuvarloka* are related to the body and the mind. The *Suvarloka*, however, is related to the *Atmic* state. Through *Nama chintana*, *Bhavam* and *Sadhana*, man can attain the three worlds. When man combines all three practices, he can achieve in addition *Paramasanthi* (Supreme Peace). Man's primary goal should be to realise such a state of peace and bliss.

When Pippalada was explaining all this to Sibi, Sathyakama got up and asked the sage: "Swami! All the scriptures have declared that there is a *Purushothama* (the Highest of all beings) who possesses all the sixteen *kalas* (potencies). Who is this *Purushothama*? What are these sixteen *kalas*? Where are they present? Please confer peace on us by your answers to these queries."

The sixteen potencies exist in human beings

Pippalada smilingly replied: "Dear Sathyakama! *This Purushothama* embodying the sixteen potencies does not dwell in any particular spot. In every human being, He is experiencing bliss in the form of consciousness. He is *Sat* (Being) *Chit* (Awareness) and *Ananda* (Bliss). *Sat* means that He remains as an unchanging entity. *Chit* refers to the one who indicates *Paripurnatwam* (total Awareness). The one who experiences these two states is the Blissful one. The unity of *Sat* and *Chit* is *Ananda*. Though *Sat* and *Chit* have different appellations, their outlook is one and the same. The two are like the right and left eye in a being. They are apparently separate and apart from each other. But the two eyes have no double vision. They see only one object. *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda* are present in every human being."

As regards the sixteen *kalas*, the *sastras*, *puranas* and epics have caused confusion in men's minds by varying and misleading interpretations. These sixteen *kalas* do not exist in a separate place wherefrom they can be obtained. There is *Akasa* (space or ether). From the *sabda* (vibrations) in space, *Vayu* (air) is produced. From air, *Tejas* (fire) emerges. From *Tejas* water is produced. The solidified form of water is the *Prithvi* (earth). These are the *Panchabhutas* (five basic elements). There are the *Panchapranas* (five vital breaths): *Prana*, *Apaana*, *Samaana*, *Udaana* and *Vyaana*. The five elements and the five vital breaths together make ten. The five *Jnanendriyas* (organs of perception) are the eyes, the ears, the nose, the mouth and the skin (seeing, hearing, smelling, speaking and touching are the faculties of these organs). With these five, the total goes upto fifteen. There is the mind. With it, we have the sixteen *kalas*. These sixteen *kalas* are present in every human being, performing their respective functions ecstatically.

Who is a Purusha and a Purushothama?

Only those who enjoy these *kalas* in all their fullness and purity, make use of them properly and experience the bliss of that fullness, have been described as *Purusha* or *Purushothama*.

Who is a *Purusha*? Not the one donning a bush-coat and trousers. The body is called *Pura* (a city). The divine consciousness which pervades the entire body from head to foot is called

Purusha. The individual who experiences this consciousness and manifests his individuality is also called *Purusha*. The divine power which pervades the entire cosmos equally, shines equally in everything and proclaims His omnipresence is called *Purushothama*. Thus, in the individual this power is known as *Purusha* and in the cosmic manifestation, it is described as *Purushothama*.

What are the duties this *Purusha* should perform to sanctify his life? Men should develop the awareness that the five elements--Ether, Air, Fire, Water and Earth--are divine entities and should be utilised appropriately in that spirit. The divine has equipped man with five *Jnanendriyas* (organs of perception) to make use of these elements.

Making proper use of sense organs

"Seeing" (the power of sight) is based on *Tejas*. Hence, the power of *Tejas* should be put to proper use. It should never be misused. See what is good. Only then, *Tejas* is utilised as a divine potency.

Next comes *Sabda* (hearing). The ears have to be used only for listening to sacred words and thereby seek the Divine. The faculty of hearing should not be used for unworthy purposes.

Next, there is the faculty of smell. When fragrant smells are taken in, not only does the health improve, but one derives pleasure. Foul smells cause illness and distemper. Fragrance in the air is a Divine manifestation.

Then, there is the skin. Care of the skin means that contact with all and sundry should be avoided. The faculty of *Sparsa* (touch) is sacred power. To avoid contamination by contact with impure persons, the sages' and *sadhakas* in ancient times left villages and towns and dwelt in remote forests in solitude.

There is a divine power in the human body called *Chit-sakti* (the energy consciousness). It is like an electric current. When one body touches another, there is an exchange of energy. In this process, there is a likelihood of one's good qualities going out and an inflow of bad qualities from another. The practice of touching the sacred feet of pious and good men was commended to enable people to get rid of their bad qualities and acquire virtues. While sitting in meditation, there should be no physical contact between devotees. Each one should sit apart and try to experience the presence of the Indwelling Spirit. The consciousness of one's divine nature gets weakened as a result of polluting contacts with all kinds of undesirable persons.

The sages of yore could rise to divine heights by making use of their sense organs for sacred purposes.

The five vital life-breaths

Coming to the *Pancha Pranas* (five life-breaths), there are 12 crores of nerves in the human body (as stated in an earlier discourse). The life-breath *Vyaana* pervades the entire nervous system. It is because of the pervading presence of this divine vital air in all the nerves that the health of the body is maintained. It also contributes to the experience of happiness. The presence of the vital air *Vyaana* in the *Sahasraara* (the thousand-petalled Head of the *Kundalini* seated in the brain) accounts for the intelligence in man. When the *Kundalini-sakthi* rises from the *Mooladhara* (at the bottom of the spinal column) to the *Sahasraara* (at the top of the brain), there is a blossoming of the powers in man. The *Kundalini-sakthi* shines effulgently. Because

man has lost this power (of the *Kundalini*), he is subject to numerous troubles. The ancient sages were able to harness the power of the *Kundalini* for great purposes.

Hence, it is essential to make proper use of the *Pancha pranas* (five vital airs) also. Only then, man will become a *Purusha*.

Although man has all the sixteen potencies, he is failing to make proper use of them. He is unable to comprehend their divine power. Failing to make use of this divine potential, man behaves like a person who does not know he has the *Kamadhenu* (wish-fulfilling cow) in his house, and wants to buy an ordinary cow. By his failure to recognise the vast divine potentialities in him, man has become a prey to sorrow and worry. Instead of rising to the level of the Divine, man is going to the level of the demon and the animal. Even if men are not able to live up to the injunctions of the scriptures, there is no reason why men should not observe morality and integrity in daily life. Everyone knows that he should speak the truth, avoid harshness in speech, should not hurt anyone by his words, should speak softly and pleasantly, but he does not behave in this manner. What is the reason? Selfishness and selfishness alone. Despite his knowledge of what is right, man misuses his sixteen potencies for achieving his selfish ends.

Man is indeed endowed with the sixteen potencies. The one who sanctifies these potencies by proper use becomes *Purushothama* (the Supreme Person). The one who taints them by his misdeeds is damned.

All Avatars are Purushothamas

The answer to Sathyakama's question regarding *Purushothama* is that there is no separate dwelling place for the Supreme. God resides in every being. Sin is not something foreign. It adheres to the evil deeds one does. It is through one's actions that one becomes a *Purusha* or a *Purushadhama*--a Divine or a despised being. It is one's actions which carry a man to great heights or hurl him down to the depths.

The scriptures have declared that the one who possesses in full all the sixteen potencies is *Purushothama* (the Supreme Person). The term is applied to the *Avatars* (Divine incarnations) who utilise the sixteen potencies for the benefit of others. Whatever they say or do is totally free from the taint of self-interest. No *Avatar*, whether in Bharat or elsewhere, has ever used the five elements, the five senses, the five vital airs or the mind for any selfish purpose. Even when they go about in daily life like other ordinary beings, in every one of their actions they demonstrate its purity and unchanging truth. The common people do not recognise this truth. Hence, they fail to understand the true nature of humanness.

Recognise the unity of Kshara and Akshara

After this explanation, Pippalada went on to point out to Sathyakama the basic oneness of the Eternal and the impermanent. He said that the gross substance is *Kshara* (perishable or destructible). *Akshara* (the Imperishable) is subtle and *Kshara* is physical. *Akshara* is related to the *Atma* (Spirit). That which is related to life is *Kshara*. *Akshara* is related to God.

Pippalada asked Sathyakama to recognise the unity of these--*Kshara and Akshara*. "It is only when you recognise their unity will you be able to make proper use of the sixteen *kalas*," he said.

The entire cosmos, consisting of moving and unmoving objects, emanated from *Akshara* (the Imperishable Supreme). All that has come from *Akshara* has the attributes of *Akshara*. Issuing from *Akshara* and sustained by *Akshara*, ultimately everything merges in *Akshara*. *Akshara* is

the unified expression of the Cosmos. It is the unity of the Everlasting and the ephemeral. If you wish to make sacred use of the sixteen potencies, direct your vision towards the *Atma*, not relying on the eyes. Have the conviction that it is because of the Spirit within, that you are able to see with your eyes and hear with your ears. Your organs of perception are able to function because of the existence of *Prajna* (Inner Consciousness). All that is perceived in the external world is the cosmic manifestation called *Viswam*. All that is experienced within the dream state and in sleep is due to *Prajna* (Divine Consciousness). You have to divinise everything that you see or do by spirituality. Then everything acquires a wholeness and unity.

For instance, there are many rivers with different names and forms. But when they merge in the ocean, their names and forms disappear. They become one with the ocean. Likewise, the five vital airs and the five organs of perception are all different streams. The mind is a mighty river. When the waters flowing in all these sixteen merge in the *Atma*, they lose their separate names and forms and achieve the *prajna-principle* of the *Atma*. Thereby, they become pure, unsullied, unchanging and eternal. Man becomes *Purusha and Purushothama* when he sanctifies the sixteen potencies in him by engaging himself in good deeds and good thoughts.

Brahma Vidya is a spiritual knowledge

"What is it by knowing which all else can be known?" This was the question which Saunaka put to the Sage Angirasa. He asked the sage: "What is it by seeing which all else can be seen? What is it by experiencing which everything else can be experienced? Please reveal to me the nature of this Divine eternal principle." Angirasa replied: "Only through *Brahmavidya* (Knowledge of the Supreme) can this be obtained." All knowledge today is associated with the mundane whether it relates to the arts like music and painting or the sciences like botany, physics and chemistry. In essence all this knowledge is concerned with earning a livelihood. That true education is for the purpose of acquiring supreme wisdom should be recognised. That is the means to acquire *Brahmavidya* (Knowledge of the Divine).

Brahmavidya must be distinguished from worldly knowledge. The latter is concerned with knowledge of what is observed externally. *Brahmavidya* is beyond the power of the eyes, the ears and the mind. It is concerned with revealing the Spirit. You must seek this spiritual knowledge. You will obtain it when you reach the stage of utilising fully your sixteen potencies.

The inner meaning of "Angirasa"

God is described as *Sathyam* (Truth), *Jnanam* (Wisdom), *Anantham* (Infinite), *Brahma* (the Absolute). *Sathyam* means that which is unchanging, unaffected by the variations in time. *Jnanam* means perceiving the One without a second--"*Advaita darsanam jnanam.*" *Anantham* means Infinite, omnipresent, pervading the entire cosmos. *Brahmam* means that which permeates everything.

This was what Angirasa taught to the sage Saunaka. This episode should not be regarded as an Upanishadic story. The inner meaning of the name Angirasa is he is the one who represents the sixteen potencies flowing as a sweet liquid in every limb of the human body and sustaining it. The *Prajnana-principle* in every person is the form of Angirasa. This *Prajnana* pervades the mind, the intellect, the will, the *Antahkarana* and every part of the body. Hence, it has been declared: "*Prajnanam is Brahmam.*" All the essential truths man seeks to learn are found within himself. He has no need to go to the scriptures or any external authorities for this purpose. Forgetting the source within himself of what he is seeking, man pursues external objects and

experiences frustration. Searching within himself man will find the *prajnana* (the wisdom) that he seeks.

The Divine and Cosmos are inseparable

The terms *Akshara* encompasses everything. *Akshara* contains two terms: *A* + *Kshara*. "*A*" stands for that which is *Anantha* (Infinite), and *Aprameya* (Immeasurable), *Anandamaya* (filled with bliss). That is the *Atma*, the Eternal Self. *Kshara* represents that which is impermanent, illusory, and perishable. *Akshara* is the combination of the eternal and the evanescent, the imperishable and the perishable. *Akshara* has a twofold meaning. It indicates the presence of the impermanent cosmos within the eternal Omni-Self.

The cosmos cannot exist apart from the Divine. The Divine cannot divorce the cosmos. The devotee creates (his own image of) God. God creates the devotees. The common belief is that all beings including devotees are created by God. But this is not the whole truth. The devotee also by his spiritual *sadhana* creates God. That is the meaning of the term *Sakshatkara* (Direct-experience of the Divine form).

Wherefrom does this Divine form come? It comes from the devotee's intense feeling for a direct vision of God. It is folly for anyone to go in search of God. When God is omnipresent, what is the need for a search? It is a delusion to imagine that man is in quest of God. It is God who is searching for a true devotee.

Man must recognise that God is one, though He may be worshipped with many names. There is a practical illustration for this. A devotee keeps the idol of Krishna before him and performs *Sahasranama Archana*, reciting the thousand names of the Lord. The names are many but the God that is worshipped is one.

Triune knowledge of this world

Sathyakama approached Pippalada again and asked the sage: "Swami! There are three kinds of knowledge in this world. One is the ordinary kind. The second is called *Sujnana* (right knowledge). The third is called *Vijnana* (higher knowledge). What is the difference among these three?"

Pippalada: "There is considerable difference between *Jnana* (ordinary knowledge) and *Su jnana* and *Vijnana*. *Jnana* is knowledge got through the body. *Su jnana* is what is got through the mind. *Vijnana* is the knowledge got from the heart. You see various objects like a table, a tumbler, etc. The knowledge got by perceiving objects is ordinary knowledge. It relates to the physical and is useful in daily life. *Su jnana* relates to the mind. In doing any action, when one considers whether what he is doing is helpful to others, the knowledge on which such action is based is *Su jnana*.

Based on both these types of knowledge, actions which are in accord with the dictates of one's conscience and which are performed to propitiate God constitute actions based on *Vijnana* (the highest knowledge). If God is pleased with one's actions, the whole world will be pleased. No effort is needed to please others separately.

Divine Grace earns the goodwill of the world

The one who has earned the grace of the Divine will be able to gain the goodwill of the world. But one who has forfeited the grace of God will be unworthy of the goodwill of others. Once one

comprehends God, everything in the universe can be comprehended. Unfortunately men's vision today is turned only towards the *Prakriti* (phenomenal world), ignoring the divine. It is only when they understand and experience the Divine, will they be able to comprehend fully everything.

The mysterious ways of the Divine cannot be grasped easily. Wrong impressions are formed out of what is stated in the books about Krishna or Rama. People must try to get at the inner truths about their actions.

Men have to aspire for peace--peace of the body, the mind and the heart. To achieve peace of the body, it is essential to chant the name of the Lord. For achieving peace of the mind you have to cultivate the *Brahma-Bhava* (the meditation on the Supreme). Peace in the heart calls for *sadhana* (*spiritual* discipline). You have to progress from the body to the mind and from the mind to the *Atma*.

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