

2. Vedic Truths Belong to the Whole World

Although born in the human race, and enveloped by human environment, alas, men have forgotten the essential qualities of the human race. Amongst all the animals and amongst all the living things that are born, the birth of a human being is a very unique one. To be able to earn the gift of being born as a man is an extraordinarily difficult thing. Having attained that gift from the hands of God and having succeeded in being born as a man, if you do not make full use of such a gift, you will be committing a great sin. We must realise that being born as a man in this birth is the result of having attained and acquired the *punya*, or the fruit of many good deeds that we had done in several previous births.

This body is like a boat. Our life is like a river and we have to cross that river and reach our destination. Our destination is the destination of Divinity. Our life, the present one, is one of living in the contemporary world. In this process of our trying to cross the river of life and reach the destination of Divinity, the boat that we have to use, namely, our body, has to be safe-guarded and taken great care of. This boat should not develop leaks *en route*. We should believe that all these students who assembled here today are really good, strong and new boats that do not have any chance of developing leaks. If we do not make an attempt to use the boats as they are right now, good as they are and without leakages, or, in the alternative, we postpone and try to use these same boats after they have become older and developed leaks, then our lives are sure to be subjected to some kind of difficulties and harm. This body has got the name *Deha*, which it has acquired because the name signifies that the body has been essentially made of elements resulting in its ulti-

mately going to be destroyed. The temporariness or the transient nature of this body is contained in the very name that has been given to it.

Further, the indestructible, Divine strength which has come into this destructible body has been called man's soul or the human spirit. Because the body contains this indestructible Divine spirit, the live body has also been called "man." In the very word *Manava*, which stands for man, we are able to see the Divinity that is present in man. *Manava*, the word that stands for man, has got three syllables. The first one 'Ma' stands for *ajnana* or ignorance, absence of knowledge. The second one 'Na' stands for the desire that ignorance and absence of knowledge should disappear. The third one 'Va' conveys the injunction that one should conduct oneself in a manner so as to remove ignorance. Our ignorance is equivalent to or synonymous with death. Thus there is no meaning in our attributing ignorance to man. Today, we do this forgetting the immortal soul in man and attaching importance to what is temporary and transient around us and not giving the necessary attention to what is Divine in us. This is bringing some kind of shame and disrepute on human qualities themselves. That which proclaims the natural form of man, that which makes evident to others the true nature of man, is called *Vedantha*.

Today, in the morning, some ideas about Indian culture and Indian traditions were given to you in the very first lecture. You were also told the meaning of spirituality. You learnt about the essence of all the religions of the world. Two aspects of this essence were indicated to you. One is philosophy, the other is our having to go through the spiritual path. From what was said about these two aspects, namely, philosophy and the spiritual path; I have got the impression that you have understood that philosophy, because it represents the qualities of the head, and spirituality, because it represents the qualities of the heart, are somewhat antagonistic and unrelated to each other. It is not possible that either of these things can dissociate itself from or ignore the other. If there is no heart, there is no use

having the head. Even if one has the head, there is no use for it if there is no heart. Therefore, if in our lives we do not have either of these two, namely, the head or the heart, life will become completely useless. It is the first essential requirement that through our head we should make all the necessary enquiries relating to philosophy. After we have made the necessary enquiries with the head, we should attempt to reach the heart. That is our spiritual path. The first one concerns itself with the information and the second one with the transformation. If we do not gather the information, it is not possible to achieve transformation.

Some people, belonging to some regions of the world, have been making attempts to gather the essence that is contained in all the religions of the world. They are not only attempting to gather the essence of all the religions but also the essence that is contained in all the cultures of the different countries of the world. They are then attempting to reconcile them. When we make the necessary enquiries about the religions of other countries, it becomes evident to us that all those religions have been established by wise people, as a result of their own experience. The fact is that those religions have been established by human beings, however wise and saintly they may have been. But the religion of this country is not something that has been established by man. It has been established by God. The one religion or the essence of all religions of this country is not related to anything that has come out of the experience of man. It has not come as a result of any effort on the part of man. In essence, it has come out of God Himself; and that is why it is called the religion of *Vedas*. He who established man's religion in this country, He who gave the guidelines for man's religion in this country, is not man; but He is the man of all men, that is, God, Himself. *Vedas* are very old, have no describable origin and are timeless. *Vedas* do not need support from any quarter as they support themselves. In fact *Vedas* are God's breath and the *Vedic* religion, which has been established in India, originated in God's breath. Thus it is that God's religion is the religion of India. Of all the religions of the entire world, it ap-

pears to us that the Indian religion, the religion that has been at the back of the Indian mind, is the life-breath and is the stream that is flowing through all the religions of this world. The religions of other countries are certainly as sacred and sanctified but for only a certain limited time. On the other hand, the religion of this country is something which has had no beginning and will have no end.

Although some religions of the rest of the world show us a slightly different path and differ from each other in the matter of detail and sometimes seem to differ somewhat, only apparently, in the matter of their destination, we have to accept and believe that the essential content of all these religions is one and the same and that relates to the Divine *Atma*. Although the human body is made of many different organs, we do realise that the heart is the essential basis and support for all these organs. It supplies the life blood to all other organs. In the same manner, we certainly see many different religions all round the world; but we have to accept that the Indian viewpoint is like the heart which supplies the life blood to all other religions in the world. You may have some doubts when I describe the situation in this manner. The doubts are somewhat of this nature: Why is it that great saints, great men of religion were born only in India, and the *Vedas* themselves were born in India? Why is it that these *Vedas* and people who expounded them were not born in other countries? God is present everywhere. God is omnipresent. Therefore, *Vedas*, which simply constitute the breath of God, are also omnipresent and should therefore be everywhere. The sounds of *Vedas*, the essence of *Vedas*, the fragrance of *Vedas* are indeed to be found all over the world. Here is a small example. When did we find out that the earth has got the power to attract? When a Western scientist by name Newton through his experiment, through his intelligence and through his work, discovered that there is an attracting power called gravitation, natural to the earth. From that day, we started believing that earth has the power to attract. But did not the earth have the power to attract before Newton? The phenomenon of gravitation surely could not have had a separate beginning. In fact, ever since

earth came into existence, it should have had the power to attract. In the same manner, as one single Western individual, by name Newton, after his efforts and after his research, has uncovered the existing fact that earth has the power to attract, so also the fact that the *Vedas* are the life-breath which were given to us by God was something which had been uncovered and found out by the efforts of Indian saints. Just as there is an amount of truth in the statement that Newton, by his effort and by his research, has discovered that earth has the power to attract, exactly the same amount of truth is also contained in the statement that Indian saints and citizens of India, by their efforts and by their research, have discovered that the *Vedas* and sounds of the *Vedas* and the inner meanings that are contained in the *Vedas* are God-given. In the same manner, intelligent people, belonging to one particular country discovering something relating to Nature and people belonging to another country discovering again something else relating to the external world, are on the same footing as intelligent people in this country discovering something spiritual. This practice of citizens of each country discovering something new and presenting their discoveries to the rest of the world has been a time-honoured phenomenon all the world over. We should really not utilise this situation to regard either the philosophy of a particular country or the spiritual path adopted by that country as being distinctive and the monopoly of that country. Such truths really belong to the whole world.

The difference that man creates in the notions that we develop about philosophy and spiritual paths are only creations of his mind. They are, therefore causing difficulties at times. Spirituality and philosophy are two things which are closely related to each other and which follow each other. This is something that we should accept and believe in. We should not look for differences between these two and regard one of them as the head and the other as the heart.

Here is a small example: On one tree, we see a large number of different fruits. Those fruits are not reaching out to us as soon as

we see them. When we see them, our mind persuades us and prompts us to go near the fruits. As soon as we go near the fruits, there is a temptation to have those fruits. We then bend down and our hands pick up a stone. As soon as we take the stone in the hand, our shoulder will make us throw the stone at the fruits. Then the fruit falls to the ground and the hand takes the fruit and hands it over to the mouth. This fruit gradually reaches the stomach. We now ask, what is responsible for this act of the fruit having reached your digestive organs? Can we decide whether it is the hand or it is the shoulder that is responsible or is it the stone or is it the mind that is responsible or, ultimately, is it the fruit itself that is responsible? It is the combination and the combined effort of all these various individual items that has resulted in the one final act of the fruit reaching your digestive organs.

Thus it is only when we are able to coordinate the essence of all the religions, the goals of all the religions and also the contents of the various philosophies of different people and look at them as one containing the Divine spirit, that we can get rid of our doubts and satisfy our hunger for peace by grasping the one Divine truth. If one takes all these religions, whether it is Hinduism, or the Parsi religion or Buddhism or Christian religion or Islam and, if one takes parts of them and experiences those parts, there is no doubt that he derives a certain amount of joy. But that does not mean that we have to give up any one of them or take any one only. You have to recognise that in all of them there is a common factor that relates to the oneness of Divinity, the *Atma* and that recognition alone will be the complete realisation and utilisation of these different religions.

Our ability to comprehend and acquire complete knowledge is defective and has in many cases disappeared. That is the reason why when we look at a religion, we do not comprehend the whole of it, but we take a bit of it and form an opinion. Many of you may have heard the story of a number of blind men reaching an elephant and touching it. One blind man who happens to touch the trunk of the elephant gets the feeling that it is like a big root of a big tree; and

therefore, he thinks that the elephant is like the root of a tree. Another blind man just happens to touch one of the legs and he feels that it is like a pillar and concludes that an elephant is like a pillar. Another blind man happens to touch the ear of the elephant and he thinks that it is like a big fan and so concludes that the elephant is in the shape of a big fan. Another blind man touches the stomach or the tummy of the elephant and thinks that it is a huge wall and concludes that an elephant looks like a big wall. Thus each one of these people, having touched only a part of the elephant, comes to the conclusion based on the impression which that part has created, that the elephant looks like that particular part. They amongst themselves are not able to realise that it is the combination of all these individual parts that really constitutes the elephant. Thus, when people of different countries look at any world religion, they see only parts of it; and like what the blind people have thought of the elephant, each one who looks only at a part of a world religion thinks that that religion is only that part. Each one for himself is not able to get a comprehensive picture. We have to realise that the real religion is a combination of all the individual components, which each one of them is getting at. We have to believe that this religion is in essence like sacred *prema* or love. Yesterday I told you that there is only one religion and that is the religion of LOVE.

In one of the talks this morning, the words, knowledge and wisdom, were mentioned. It was said that there is a great difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is something which is related only to the head. It is possible that by conducting some enquiries and by working with some special types of machines, one can reach an important position in the matter of acquiring knowledge. One has to say that to some extent, this is simply book knowledge. Just by such an acquisition, our capacity to comprehend truth is not going to improve. What we call knowledge is the essence of all sciences. Wisdom, on the other hand, is something which we acquire as a result of practice. Knowledge acquired from books differs very much from knowledge acquired from experience. Wisdom is

acquired by experience. This tells us something about the very sweet nature of our life. But knowledge that we have acquired from books enables you only to experience and understand the phraseology, the grouping of the words, the subtle way in which ideas are being conveyed by keeping words in different places. But it cannot take you beyond that.

In order that you may clearly understand these things, let us take the case of a very large ocean. If we take water from that ocean and put it in our mouth, we will get the taste of its being very salty. If the same salt water is converted into water vapour by the heat of the sun, constituted into clouds and then comes back as rain on the earth, that water will be very sweet. Whether it is the water that is flowing in the river after the rain or the water that is taken directly from the ocean, it is the same water. But we should ask where the change has taken place as a result of which this sweetness has come. This is *samskara* or purification. This can be compared to wisdom born out of experience. It is only when we take the matter that is contained in the ocean of books or scriptures and use our *buddhi*, the intelligence, which can be compared to the sun's heat and convert it into clouds, which can be compared to *prema* or love, then only, like the water that results after the rain, our knowledge will be sweet and this will be called wisdom. In every effort and in every thing that we do, cleansing or purification is very essential. From time immemorial, our Indian traditions have been attaching great importance to this practice of purification.

In no human endeavour can we bypass this process of purification. I wish to cite another small example. Every student has a watch on his hand. When you take this watch and put it in fire, you will find that the whole of it is reduced to metal or metallic ash. All of it will fetch in the market only a few naya paise. But as long as it remains as a watch, it will fetch you anything like a few hundred rupees. Are we paying this few hundred rupees for the metal that is contained in the watch? Or are we paying that amount for the purification and the transformation that have been given to the metal be-

fore giving it the shape of a watch? The payment of a few hundred rupees is obviously towards the transformation that has been given to the metal from which the bolts, nuts, wheels, the springs and all the components of the watch have been made. It is not being paid for the metal or the steel that has gone into making these bolts and nuts. It is therefore not possible to assign any high value to the many different individuals and different shapes that you see in human beings. If you really want to assess human beings and assign values, you have to see and assess how these different persons are behaving, what their character is, what changes have come about in them after birth and what are the paths which they are following.

If, therefore, one wishes to change himself to being really a man, in other words, if he wishes to be like a human being, there is a need to take great care about the way in which one behaves. The respect that Indians are going to get for themselves as groups and as a Nation is not going to come either through the wealth or the property that they possess or through the positions of authority that they may be occupying. Such respect will come only through the character that they develop and the behaviour they exhibit.

Take the case of Ravana. We know from our mythology that at the time when Ravana lived, there was no other individual who had access to property and wealth any more than Ravana had. Ravana had all the position which one could command. He had all the authority that one could have. In spite of that, the fact that Ravana was subjected to great difficulties towards the end and that he lost his life in battle is noteworthy. We should compare this with what happened to Rama. Rama intentionally and willingly gave up all his property; he gave up his kingdom, and he went into the forest for several years. Ultimately, he was given the honour of having maintained *dharma* in this country. From this difference between Ravana, who had all the property, position and authority and Rama who willingly gave up all the property, position and authority, we should conclude that we cannot attach any importance to either property, position or authority. We can only attach importance to character and to the pur-

suit of right conduct. Thus we conclude that money comes and goes whereas morality comes and grows. It is only in this context that we often say, “*Dharmo rakshathi rakshitaha.*” This simply means that those of us who safeguard *dharma* will be safeguarded in turn by *dharma*. This is the essence of Indian culture. But how to know what is right? How to know what is righteous conduct? This is something that you all will know later as days go by.

The issues relating to the statements that God is omnipresent and that God is omniscient, will have to be gone into in some detail. In this context, we should know that for human life, support essentially comes from the five senses. These five senses are called *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha*. We have also the five material elements. They are the earth, water, fire, air and sky. We have to enquire and ask where these five elements are and what is it that comes out of the combination of these five elements. We have further to ask how these material elements are connected with *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa*, *rasa*, *gandha*. We have to note that those five sensations, or senses of perception, are present in their totality only in the earth. They are not present as all five in water, or in fire or in the air or in the sky. Because all these five sense perceptions are contained in the earth, that becomes rather heavy and that is the reason why the earth is able to stay as a massive body in one place.

The second element is water. In water, you will find that one of these senses has disappeared and that is the smell. We do not smell water but we have the *sabda*, *sparsa*, *rupa* and *rasa* in it. Because out of the five qualities, one, namely the smell has disappeared; we have the other four, that is the sound, the touch, the shape and the taste. These four are contained in water. So, water is not so heavy and hard as the earth. It is able to move out a little more freely than the earth can.

The third element is fire. In this, one more quality has disappeared. Neither *rasa* nor *gandha* can be attributed to fire. We have only the sound, the touch and the shape exhibited by fire. Therefore,

it has become lighter than either the earth or the water and it is able to go higher and higher, and more freely.

The fourth one is air. In air, there are only two qualities left, and those are *sabda* and *sparsa*, the sound and the touch. The shape, taste and smell have all disappeared and they are no longer qualities of air. So it has become very light. Air is able to move more freely and go wherever it wants to go.

The fifth element is the sky. The only quality that the sky has is *sabda* or sound. All the other four qualities have disappeared and this is the reason why we find that the sky is present everywhere. God is beyond and above all these five senses of perception. He has none of the five qualities or attributes of matter. Therefore, He is lighter than all these five elements and He is present everywhere. It does not matter whether you look at this description from a spiritual angle or from a scientific angle; the truth of the statement that has now been made will have to be accepted by everyone. That is why God is described as, “*Anoraniyaan, Mahato Mahiyaan.*” This statement means that God is like an infinitesimal being amongst the infinitely small ones. God is like an infinite being amongst the infinitely large ones.

Gopikas, who have had considerable experience of Divinity, had at one time been singing the praise of the Lord describing His qualities and His greatness in the following terms, “How can we find You, You are present in all the 84 lakhs of different kinds of living things and You are like an infinitesimally small one when we think of infinitesimally small things. You are like an infinitely large one when we think of infinitely large things. You are Infinite and You have endowed us with minds which cannot know and even get an estimate of Yourself who is present everywhere, in small things as well as in big things. Thus You have given us this ignorance and we would like to call You a thief, a person who has done something which has put us in difficulty.”

He has also been described as one who has stolen their own *chitta* or their heart. This is a matter that is of extraordinary interest

in that the *Gopikas*, who had not any spiritual practice, who had not read any *Sastras*, who had not undergone any sacrifice or experience of a Divine nature had been able to bind down the Divine one to themselves. The one single effort involved related to *prema* or love and that is all. To know the Lord of the Universe, to understand Him and to be able to get closer to Him, there is no need to read all the text books. The one thing that you should practice and that you should have in your heart is *prema*. But because the ancient *rishis* who lived in this country had handed over to us the sacred texts which are full of meaning, it is our responsibility, it is the responsibility of all Indians, to read them, to try and understand them. We should also put into practice what is contained in them and hand over all the essence and the good things to the rest of the world.

There is a story about Sankara that after having read and understood all the *Sastras*, the *Upanishads* and the *Vedas*, while he was going to Benares he found that in an out of the way place, a poor man in a poor hut was reciting *Vyakarana* or grammar. One young student of Sankara went to the hut and tried to peep through a hole in the wall and wanted to convey or teach something to this person who was reciting grammar. He addressed this grammarian by calling him *moodhamathe* or an ignoramus and said, "You must realise that you should now perform *bhajan*, or the name of the Lord should be repeated by you. Your time for that is right now. Do not wait till the end of your life." It is necessary for us to understand that it is very much more sacred and sanctifying to fill our hearts with *prema* than to fill our heads with all kinds of books on spiritual matters. Today, India's culture is becoming weaker and weaker. For that reason, the students from various parts of this country, who are going to be our future citizens, are brought here into these classes, which we have organised. Through the experienced teachers and their lecturers, we are giving you the contents of not simply one text, but all the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and all our scriptures. So far as you are concerned, it is essential that you should develop the feeling of *prema*, which is the highest experience proclaimed by the *Vedas*

and the other texts that the teachers are giving you. I bless you, after having this experience, to go back and to grow into good citizens of India and re-establish the glory and the shining ancient path of this country.

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