

3. Nature of the Human Mind

Just as one who wants to live in this world should first become human, one who wants to learn *Brahma Vidya*, should first become a spiritualist. The human body is composed of all the five elements, and the soul in it has no binding of any particular kind. If you introspect on this matter, you will find that the soul inside the body is the real essence of it. In common parlance, when we live in the rented house, we say that we pay a rent. We may query if we pay the rent to the house or to the owner of the house. The answer is obvious. But in regard to spiritual matters, we do not seem to bother about such questions. The human body is like a rented house. An individual is living in that rented house. The individual has really to pay the rent to the owner of the house, namely God. He should not pay the rent to the body. In truth, God is the owner of the house in which we live, as He owns the body.

This house of man should be regarded as something through which we should acquire knowledge and wisdom. Spiritual knowledge tells us that the Divine dwells in this body, although we regard the body itself as a destructible thing. We also call it a *kshetra*, a place where something is living. These notions arise on account of the fact that something permanent is inside the destructible human body. This morning, two ideas have been dealt with, namely, the destructibility and the indestructibility. We should know the connection that exists between those two concepts. All that you see in this world is destructible. In fact, all living beings that you see around you are destructible. The only indestructible thing is *jiva*, or the soul that is contained in the living beings that you see. If you want to understand this with ease, then you have to accept and believe that every thing that undergoes a change, every thing that transforms from time to time is a destructible thing. The human body is associated with the stages of transformation. These six are birth, growth, change, evolu-

tion, death and destruction. Because the body is passing through all these phases and because the body is not a permanent one, we are attributing to it the quality of destruction or destructibility.

The difference between destructibility and indestructibility is something which is very fine, which is very small. If there is no destruction, then we will not be able to comprehend what it is that is permanent or indestructible. On the other hand, if there is no permanency or indestructibility, then we will not understand what it is that gets destroyed. Sometimes these aspects will convey to you a lesson that they are related to each other; in fact, related to each other so closely that one cannot be separated from the other. This is what is contained in the 13th chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* where the *kshetra* and *kshetrajna*, that is the place and the one who lives in the place, have been dealt with. In very clear language, the relationship between the abode and the one who lives in the abode has been explained. We have to make an enquiry and ask if the realisation of the self or the soul is the final achievement. That is not the end of the enquiry. Of course, by such an enquiry, we understand what is the destructible part of man and what is the indestructible part of him. But there is something that is neither the body nor the soul. This something is what may be called the *Purushothama*, and it transcends both these things. We can take it that we have reached the goal of our practice only when we have been able to realise this *Purushothama*.

There is a small example for this. A servant, in order to find his master in a dark room, enters the house and goes into the dark room. In the dark room, with his hand he tries to touch and feel everything that is contained therein. As he moves about in the dark room and as he tries to feel and touch various objects, maybe on one occasion he would touch a chair and then he would say, no this is not my master. Then he may touch a bench and he would say, no this is not my master. He may then touch some kind of a box, then he would say, no this is not my master. This kind of enquiry will lead him through various situations by which he would say, this is

not my master, this is not my master and he would exhaust all that he can feel inside the room. In this manner and while making such a search, he will go and touch a cot. After he has touched the cot, he will touch the feet and then he will say, now I have found my master. It is not right that he should feel happy, satisfied and contented as soon as he touches the feet and as soon as he thinks he has found his master. His objective will be fully achieved only after he goes further, goes nearer the master and is able to recognise and take himself closer to the master.

In this body, which can be compared to a house, all the desires, which come through the various organs that are parts of the body, may be compared to the darkness in the house. In this dark house, that aspect which we may call the individual is going round like the servant in a dark room searching for the soul or the Lord. The first thing that this individual does is to touch and feel the organs of the body. After that he feels the presence of the mind. After that he feels the presence of intelligence. Through this intelligence, which can be compared to the cot that the servant touched as a first step to finding his master, he is able to find the feet of his master. In this analogy and in this spiritual path, what we have to find is the existence of these four aspects, the soul, the intelligence, the mind and the sense organs.

The soul, the intelligence, the mind and the sense organs have been mentioned this morning, but it has been made out that, for the organs, the mind is the master; for the mind, intelligence is the master; and for the intelligence, soul is the master. Thus, if we want to reach the soul through the process of climbing from the organs to intelligence, then to the mind and then to the soul, it is going to be a very difficult task. If we make a deeper examination and go into the matter with some care, we will find that all that is related to these four different aspects is just one and that one aspect is the *Atma*, or the soul.

I may cite another example, which is slightly of a different kind. Let us take the case of milk. At first we are looking at milk.

After that, in order to satisfy our taste, we are changing milk into curds. After that, we are going to churn these curds and take some butter out of it. When we take the butter out of the curds, what is remaining is what we call buttermilk. So what is left after all these changes, which looks somewhat trivial is the buttermilk. That should be compared to our sense organs. What is left is apparently useless as all the essence has been removed by way of butter and so on and that may be compared to the sensory organs. Mind can be compared to the curds. That which we call butter can be compared to intelligence. Because curds, butter and buttermilk have all come from the first source, the milk, we would compare milk to our soul. Now, we should enquire into how important these sense organs, or the buttermilk, are and how far through these senses, can we go in realising the original source, that is, the soul or the milk. The mind and the intelligence are associated with various organs. We have to consider in detail what distorted picture we are getting of the source, namely the soul, as a result of such an association.

There is one other example. We fill a cup with some very good fruit juice. The cup is only serving the function of containing the fruit juice but does not know the taste of the fruit juice. Then we put a straw inside the cup and suck the fruit juice. The fruit juice is flowing freely through the straw. Even the straw does not get a taste of the fruit juice. When the fruit juice reaches the tongue, the tongue is able to realise its sweetness. But the tongue also is not experiencing the taste of the fruit juice. The tongue, without experiencing the taste of the fruit juice, is handing it on to your digestive organs. In the same manner we are putting the fruit juice of the Divine feeling in the body, which can be compared to the cup. Our senses are to be compared to the straws. Neither the body, which is the cup, is enjoying the taste of Divinity nor are the straws, the senses, enjoying the taste of Divinity. But the intelligence, which can be compared to the tongue, is able to make some kind of an enquiry and decide that this is like this and so on. But like the tongue, which did not experience the taste of the fruit juice, the intelligence also serves only to

discriminate and know the taste but it does not experience the taste. As the tongue has handed on the juice to the digestive organs, so also the intelligence hands on this feeling to the soul. It is in this context that we refer to intelligence as something that cannot solve our problem any more than the sense organs can. That which cannot be understood, which cannot be realised either with the sense organs or with the intelligence, is the *Atma Thathwa* or the nature of the soul.

It is only when we are able to turn our sense organs, our mind and our intelligence along the right path will we be able to go somewhat closer to realising what this soul is and what the permanence inside the body is. However, in order completely to realise that, we have to go only through something that is similar to *Atma*. *Atma* is something which is beyond or which is above the sense perceptions. It follows that sense perceptions, because they are below *Atma* in status, can never reach or realise *Atma*.

In that context, we talk of two different disciplines, one is physics and the other is philosophy. That is also the reason why where physics ends and is not able to move any further, philosophy starts. In order that you may understand and you may realise this aspect of *Atma*, you have to do some exercises and you have to go through some practices. If you want to do that through your sense perceptions, through your mind and through your intelligence or, in the analogy, if you want to convert milk into curds, curds into butter, butter into buttermilk, naturally you have to adopt some accepted and standard procedures and you have to apply them in the proper manner. If you do not know the procedures of converting them or if you do not apply those procedures properly, you cannot convert milk into curd or curds into butter or butter into buttermilk. In every act of ours, we should not forget the goal or what our destination is. In this analogy, the original source is milk and everything else—curds, butter and buttermilk—are only things that have come out of the source, namely the milk, by some kind of change that has been introduced.

There is a saying that mind is the mirror of one's inner being. So what comes from within ourselves, what emanates from the inner being, is the mind itself when it is reflected properly. That is also the intelligence and that also represents the aspect of actions that we do. There cannot be anything either by way of mind or by way of intelligence or by way of our actions which comes from outside. All these come from within our body.

To those of you who are new and who have come here for the first time, it is necessary to convey in a full manner what the significance of all this is; and, therefore, I am going to give you another somewhat familiar example, which some of you may have heard earlier. This thing I have in my hand is a piece of cloth. All of you accept that it is a piece of cloth. But in my view, this is not a piece of cloth. This is a bundle of threads. If you look at it from another point of view, this is not even a bundle of threads but it is just some cotton. Cotton, thread and cloth, all these three are basically the same. So, in a similar manner, the sense organs, the mind and the intelligence are all going to unite into one; and we will have a situation when we have to refer to just one and the same thing. Just as curd, butter and buttermilk have all come from one and the same source, what you have in your mind as the basis, the foundation or as the source is simply the original from which all the transformations have come. If we now decide to do something by which we want to make this cloth disappear, some of you may wish to set fire to it and the cloth will disappear. But that process is not the right one.

On the other hand, if we can pull out all the threads one by one, one thread after another, then the cloth will disappear. So if we make a proper and detailed enquiry and ask ourselves what is like the cloth and what are like the threads, we get the answer that the mind is like the cloth, desires are like the threads. By the desires, like the threads, coming together, we constitute the mind, which you may call the cloth. If you want to make the mind or the cloth disappear then you have to pull out, as you had pulled out the threads one by one, all the desires, one desire after another. So, because we are fill-

ing the mind, in fact, we are constituting the mind by putting together a large number of desires, a variety of desires; that mind made up of so many desires is giving us a lot of trouble. On the other hand, if we do not harbour these desires, we do not constitute the mind. That is not going to trouble us at all.

Many of you have travelled in the railways and have seen in the railway compartments the saying that, “less luggage makes travel more comfortable.” In one sense, our life is a long journey. This long journey, because we are accumulating a lot of luggage in the form of many desires, becomes somewhat troublesome. When we can diminish this luggage, consisting of desires, then to some extent our journey of life is going to be less troublesome.

This process of diminishing the luggage or shedding your desires as you go up in the journey of life is referred to in the language of *Vedantha* as *vairagya*. *Vairagya* does not mean abandoning the house, leaving your surroundings, leaving your wife, leaving your children and living in a forest. That is not *vairagya*. When we stay in the house, stay in the midst of our duties and perform our duties which we have to perform, having our minds free from desires and attachments to those duties, regarding all that we do as our actions for God’s pleasure, that would be called proper *vairagya*. This is what is referred to as performing all the duties that you have to perform as being performed for God’s pleasure. These are not being performed for your pleasure. The realisation that whatever you do is in the name of God and for God’s pleasure, will eliminate all losses, difficulties and troubles to you during your life.

By definition, your *Vedas* give you knowledge about everything. This word has come from the root ‘*Vith*’ which means knowledge. Many persons, even amongst those belonging to this country, ask questions and have doubts about who has written these *Vedas*, what the significance of *Vedas* is and what they teach and what they contain. It is a pity that these doubts arise in the minds of many Indians as well. To get at the origin of these *Vedas*, it has to be said that sacred *rishis*, the seers of this country, when they performed

penance and when they made enquiries about God's nature, perceived them through various sounds that reached them. These *Vedas* are the products solely of hearing by the seers of the various Divine sounds. They are not the result of either study or of reading or writing books. Because these have been received through the act of hearing sounds, these are also called *Sruthi*. For such a thing, which is known by hearing, there is no other *Pramana*. You cannot quote something else as an authority to prove the authenticity of *Vedas* as they have been just heard through sounds. This is like the breath, the inhalation and the exhalation of the breath of God, Himself. To regard such a sacred gift secured by the grace of God, as some kind of text that dictates to us procedures and conduct, is not correct.

Today, if a scholar can write ten lines, then he would go all out to show his own name as the writer of those ten lines. He would use all kinds of devices, like the copyright law and so on, to be able to establish that he has been the author of those ten lines. But in the case of the *Vedas*, which are endless and which have no limitation of time, their author, God, has never exhibited himself anywhere in the *Vedas* as the author thereof. A total personality and a complete individual, who could hand over what the *Vedas* contain and also give to us the enormous amount of bliss that they have been able to give, has neither a name nor a shape. What is the strength of one who has neither a name nor a shape and yet could give us such bliss as is contained in the *Vedas*? God has given us, in His grace, these *Vedas* in order to enable us to understand the significance of the world, to understand the significance of human life and also to understand the Spirit of the Divine.

At the time when they first came out, there was an endless number of *Vedas*, but after centuries and at the present time, we are finding only four different *Vedas*. Of these four, the first one is *Rig Veda*. Because small stanzas or small *mantras* have been put together, they constitute *Rig Veda*. That is how it got its name. This *Veda*, in addition to giving us these small stanzas and important statements like "*Sathyam Vada*"—speak the Truth—"*Dharmam*

Chara—act in a righteous manner—also contains various rituals and procedures which ultimately go to keep the society in-tact.

The second one is *Yajur Veda*, which has been helping us to maintain our duties. It tells us how we have to conduct ourselves in addition to looking after the integrity of the society.

The third one, the *Sama Veda*, is something that is more important than any other one. In *Sama Veda*, the main theme is music. In addition, in some places in *Sama Veda*, the essence of *Rig Veda* and *Yajur Veda* has also been mentioned.

The fourth and the last one is the *Atharvana Veda*. The *Atharvana Veda* has not only taken into account the three *Vedas* which have been mentioned earlier but has concentrated on telling us how man, in his daily life, should take care of the various things which he has to do: how he has to take care of his children, his family, his elders and how he can make them survive and be happy. In addition, this has also taught us some special disciplines like *Gokarna* and *Gajakarna*.

Such sacred texts and sacred scriptures, which are intended to turn man's life and man's outlook toward God, are being neglected by some of us in this country. We are giving up the rituals that have been enjoined on us in the *Vedas*. Moreover, we are also questioning the authenticity of those *Vedas*. We are asking, who is the author of these things? And we are regarding them as useless and with no specific purpose for us. Even if we feel that we do not know who is the author of these *Vedas*, we should not give up our duties. Here is a small example. You may ask a question, looking at this electric current as to who is its author or who found this electric current and from whom it has come. The answer to such questions is not something everyone will be able to give. Just because we do not know the author of this current are we going to deny the usage of the current to ourselves? So also, although all of us do not know the authorship of the *Vedas*, it would be proper for us to follow the paths and the duties that have been prescribed in these *Vedas*. It is by such a process that we will derive happiness.

The people who teach and who convey the ideals and ideologies that are contained in the *Vedas* are referred to as the *Maharishis*. It is only when we are able to understand and accept the ideals that have been put forward by the *Maharishis* and incorporate them into our lives, that we can really see who these *Maharishis* are and what their thinking is and what their views are. These experienced *Maharishis* are like the people who are controlling and who own the electric current. If we can follow them, if we can accept what they have taught us, and if we can take to the paths that have been indicated by them; verily, as we get light out of the electric current, we will also get bliss and happiness from our conduct. Therefore, you young people, young students, boys and girls, should understand what Indian culture is, what is contained in our sacred texts like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharatha* and all the *Puranas*.

Not only should you understand, but also strive hard to put those things into practice and act up to them. It is only when you do that, will you realise the sacredness of human life and then you will derive the necessary happiness and pleasure. I am also hoping that you should prepare yourselves in future to understand the contents of these *Vedas*, what they convey and what the detailed principles involved in each one of them are. These will be taught to you in the classes that will come ahead by very many experienced scholars. When they teach you these contents, I am hoping that you will listen to them with the necessary care and the necessary devotion. Young students who spend their lives in a carefree manner and who try to satisfy various desires of theirs will find it somewhat difficult to understand and follow *Vedanta*.

This afternoon there were some classes on *Vedanta*; and in the report that was presented by one of the girls, it was stated that what was taught was somewhat above your heads. But because you feel that there is something that has gone above your heads which you have not been able to understand, you should not lose hope, you should not feel disheartened. You should make an attempt and with all humility, you should again approach the teacher when he teaches

you *Vedanta* and try to understand, with care and devotion, what has been said.

When you begin your education, you start with learning the alphabets “A, B, C, D.” Naturally, at that time there will be some difficulty and you feel that you are not able to understand more words. But just for that reason, are you giving up education? So by effort, by care and by working hard, we must bring ourselves to a position from where we can understand. That part of the education that enables you to understand yourself and to realise yourself is good education. That which is mere learning for just making a living or getting a salary for the sake of your living is not good education. If I have to tell you briefly what *Vedanta* is, I should say that it is that which tells you about yourself. So make an attempt to understand yourself and make an attempt to see who you are. Do not make an attempt to find out who the others are, or what they are. Do not also make an attempt, before knowing yourself, to find out what the world is. There is no use your trying to understand others or what the world is without first knowing yourself.

In daily life, we are always saying, this is my body, this is my mind, this is my intelligence and these are my organs. All the time you are saying so, have you ever, at any time, made an attempt to find out who you are, before saying this is mine and that is mine? Is it not after you have found out who you are, that you get the capacity or the right to say that this body belongs to you? So long as you feel that all these things are yours, you are implying that you are something separate from the body, mind and so on. If I call this my towel, I imply that if the occasion arises I can throw the towel away and stay myself separately and apart from the towel. So if you say this is your body, then you arrogate to yourself the power to throw away the body and remain separately and apart from the body. You are not the body. When you say that it is your mind, you are not the mind. So what is it in you that is neither the body nor the mind nor the intelligence nor the sense organs belonging to you? That which ex-

poses and expounds the true shape of yourself and furnishes an answer to this question is *Vedanta*.

It is to find the true nature of self that a young boy Nachiketa went to *Yama* and asked him many questions. He was not deterred at all by the temptations that *Yama* put before him by granting him several boons. He was firm and asked questions to find out what this real self is. In those days, this young boy, Nachiketa, with the intention of finding out the nature of his true self, put himself to several difficulties and was not content until he got what he wanted. As against that, today we have forgotten what the nature of that true self is, and we are occupying ourselves in fulfilling various desires. We are involving ourselves in undesirable situations and bringing shame and disrepute on our country, which had such glorious traditions. No, it shall not be like that.

You young students who have come here and who are participating in this summer school must make up your minds to establish *Sanathana Dharma*, to follow the paths that have been shown by our texts and *Vedas*, to be disciplined and to proclaim by your actions to the rest of the world the greatness of your country and your own determination. You should demonstrate to the world that you are the soldiers and the torchbearers of bliss and of peace of which we have been proud. You should behave in such a manner that you will become the leaders in the areas into which you go. You should never allow these ideas to go out of your minds or out of your hearts. I hope and I bless you that you will be able to do all this.

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