

4. What the Upanishads Teach Us

The juice that is contained in the fruit is not enjoyed by the tree which bears the fruit. The honey that is contained in the flowers is not enjoyed by the creepers which bear the flowers. Those beautiful sayings which are contained in the textbooks and scriptures are not enjoyed by the books themselves. The beauty that is contained in nature is not enjoyed by Nature herself. How can the writer who deals with the material world enjoy the spiritual bliss that is contained therein?

In our society and in our civilisation, Indians have always described the Lord with great affection, love and delight by the name *Madhava*. The word *Madhava* contains three syllables in it. These are *Ma*, *Dha* and *Va*. *Ma* can be interpreted to mean *Maya* or illusion. *Ma* can also be interpreted to mean *Prakruthi* or nature. *Ma* can also stand for Lakshmi or the Goddess of Wealth. *Dhava* means husband. One who is the husband or the owner of *Maya* or *Prakruthi* or Lakshmi, is *Madhava*. He is also the *Paramatma*. Such *Paramatma* is full of bliss. The *Jivatma* or the *jiva*, who is subordinate to nature, cannot become one with bliss. *Paramatma* is independent. He is free, whereas *jiva* is dependent and depends on something else. Thus, if we want to enjoy supreme bliss, this can be done only when we look at and identify ourselves with and understand the supreme attitude. We should subordinate ourselves and identify ourselves with *Madhava* or the husband of Lakshmi. Otherwise, to imagine that we are having supreme bliss is only an illusion. It is a *bhranthi*. So long as we are connected with nature, we cannot have supreme bliss. We should not really become despondent and give up hope but have to make enquiries as to what are the paths, what are the methods, what is it that we have to do, in order to understand and reach this sacred and Divine *Purusha* or the Divine *Atma*.

The answers to the questions, “where can we find the supreme *Atma*? How can we get to the supreme *Atma*? How can we understand the same?” are contained in the *Bhagavad Gita* and in all other texts of that kind. Once, Arjuna while talking in affectionate terms and in a friendly manner to Lord Krishna, asked where the Lord was staying those days. He said, “I do wish to find you. I would like to get from you the permanent address where you stay, the address of your headquarters. I do not require the address of your branch offices, as it is possible that you will not stay in the branches all the time.” The answer to this has been: “Yes, my permanent address is: care of all the living things.”

There is another example, which Droupadi has nicely handed to us. Droupadi, after she had gone through all her troubles and tribulations, was sitting and talking to Krishna on one occasion in a pleasant mood. She addressed Krishna as her dear brother and asked: “What is the matter? I remember having been in great difficulties and having called you with the fullness of my heart and begged you to come and save me. But you came late. You never came in time. Can you now explain to me what stood in the way of your coming in proper time?” Krishna then asked Droupadi: “You say you addressed me and called me. May I know in what manner you called me and how you addressed me?” Then she replied, “Yes, I said, hai Krishna, hai Dwarakavasa.” The Lord replied, “You addressed me as *Dwarakavasa*. Where is Dwaraka and where is Hastinapura, to which place I had to come? That was a long distance. If only you had addressed me as *Hridayavasi* or as one who is living in your own heart, I would have appeared immediately. Because of the manner of your addressing I had to travel all the way from Dwaraka to Hastinapura and how could I have come in time from such a long distance?”

In this way, all the utterances of God only demonstrate to us His closeness to us. The *Upanishads* also demonstrate exactly this closeness of God to us. What does it mean? Close to whom? It implies our going close to God or *Paramatma*. What is the conse-

quence of our going close to *Paramatma*? I will give you a small example and thereafter go into the *Upanishads*. We have an air-conditioner inside the house. When we are close to the air-conditioner, naturally it will exhilarate us to some extent. The external heat is at a distance from you, and the airconditioner gives you some happiness and pleasure. In the same manner, in winter, we go and sit near a fire. Then the heat of the fire will remove the cold that is troubling you and will give you some amount of comfort and ease. So what the air conditioner is doing is to remove the heat that is in us and give us comfort. Similarly, what the fire is doing is to remove the troublesome cold that is near you and give you some comfort by giving the heat. In the same manner, when we go closer to God, what He is doing is to remove all the material desires which are in us, make them go farther away from us and give us the comfort of getting rid of those material desires. The *jiva*, which is surrounded and encompassed by the five elements, is being retrieved from the bondage that is caused by the five elements. This can be referred to as *Kaivalya*. That which establishes such a *Kaivalya*, that which gives you the *Kaivalya* and shows the path by which you can reach *Kaivalya*, is simply equivalent to getting relief from bondage to the five elements. This is what the *Upanishads* do.

When an individual, whom we do not know, comes close to us and wants to get acquainted with us, the first questions that we generally ask of such a new individual are: Where are you coming from and who are you? What is the business you have with me? In the same way, those of you students who have come here for the first time and who are not acquainted with *Upanishads* have to ask of the *Upanishads* the questions, who are you and where do you come from and what good can you do for us? What good can we do for you? If we ask such questions, the *Upanishads* will reply to us that they are such as have been repeated many times by the *maharishis* and seers of this country and also that they are the essence of what God's breath has given to us in the form of the *Vedas*.

In our *Vedas* there are three parts; *Upasana Khanda*, *Jnana Khanda* and *Karma Khanda*. The same three parts are also contained in the *Upanishads*. These *Upanishads* have been telling man, what it is that he should do, what it is that he should not do; what paths, if adopted, will lead to good, what paths if adopted will lead him to bad, and so on. When we go deeply into the contents of the *Upanishads* and when we understand their inner meaning, then our own life will look to us like a happy dream. It will lead you to a situation when you will not again want to be attached to this life.

The *Upanishads* have come out of the *Vedas*. For example, out of the *Yajur Veda* has come the *Easavasya Upanishad*. This relates to the path that has been termed as the *Jnana Khanda*. In this there are 18 *mantras*. Out of these 18 *mantras*, the first two are concerned with *moksha*. The other sixteen *mantras* teach us about various other matters into which it would be possible for us to go a little later.

The next *Upanishad* is the *Keno Upanishad* and it has arisen from *Sama Veda*. There is an alternative name for the *Keno Upanishad* and that is *Thalavakaro Upanishad*. These *Upanishads* have got names which signify their meanings and those names are generally such that they commence with the first word of the *Upanishad* itself. All the *Upanishads* have come to us with the sole purpose of leading man to God. They have not come with the purpose of binding him with any specific rules or giving trouble to him in his life. It is only when every Indian is able to see the inner meaning and contents of the texts that they can give him real happiness.

This morning the nature of the *Bhagavad Gita* was explained to you in a very lucid manner. However, just by reading and repeating the text of the *Bhagavad Gita* you are not going to get any help. On the other hand, it is by assimilating the essence and enjoying it that you will be able to derive the much-needed benefit. It is only when we are able to picture in our minds how Arjuna and Krishna were seated when the *Bhagavad Gita* was being preached by the latter, when we are able to picture other details such as, what kind of

clothes they were wearing, what were the horses that were tied to the chariot and how was the chariot made and so on; and when we are able to picture the details of the entire situation will we be able to get the essence of the *Bhagavad Gita*. In this situation, there is a chariot, there is one who is charioting it or the charioteer, there is one who is sitting in the chariot and is being led, then there are the horses that are leading the chariot and then there are the reins, which are controlling the horses. All these things together constitute one full picture of the chariot. But where was this chariot taken? It was taken right into the midst of two fighting armies. When we make proper enquiry as to what this chariot is, where it has gone, what the two armies are, who the charioteer is, who the horses are and what each detail is in this whole situation, it is only then that we will be able to understand the fullness of this picture, which is only a picture of life and all the significance of everything that is contained in life.

This is what the *Gita* teaches us in a simple and easy way. The chariot is the body. The *jiva* is Arjuna. The *Atma* is Krishna. The reins are the mind. Our sense organs are the horses. The whole picture has to be interpreted by saying that Krishna, who represents the *Atma*, is leading the chariot which represents the body, into the middle of two armies, the horses being our sense organs and the reins which control the sense organs simply standing for the mind. The body is being led into the midst of two armies by *Atma*, which is Krishna. The two fighting armies can be looked at as *Iha* and *Para*, that is this world and the other world or good and bad, or *Atma* and *Anatma*, or what is temporary and what is indestructible, and so on. The body is being led to face these antagonistic situations, which represent the two armies.

We should forget that the battle of *Mahabharatha* was fought in Kurukshetra. That may be an historical fact, but we should regard the battle of *Mahabharatha* as something that has been fought between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Kauravas represent the bad qualities. Pandavas represent the good qualities. The fight that is said to have gone on in Kurukshetra is actually going on

every day in our hearts. The fight is between the bad qualities in us with the good qualities in us.

The citizens of Bharath should not simply regard themselves as belonging to a country that was once ruled by Bharatha. The word Bharatha simply means one who takes his pleasure in Divinity. That means all citizens of this country should have their pleasure and happiness fixed in God. Thus, it is no use our simply reading and taking into our own heads the various good statements and the good rules that are contained in the *Upanishads* or in the *Vedas*. It is essential that, after reading those good principles, we relate and apply them to our own life.

The first stanza in the *Bhagavad Gita* begins by saying “*Dharma Kshetra Kurukshetre.*” Normally, and in common parlance, we are interpreting these words as referring to the place Kurukshetra which was the seat of the rulers, Kauravas. Kauravas got that name because they had descended from King Kuru. We are also regarding it as the *Dharma Kshetra* where the Kauravas and Pandavas fought with each other for establishing *Dharma*.

If we examine carefully and take the proper meaning of the word *kuru*, it is not what has been said a little while ago. It simply means food. But we have also a meaning by which we can equate food to *Brahma*. What lives by food is the human body. The life in the human body depends upon food. There is another meaning here, which becomes evident if we note that the life in the body depends upon food and that it should be utilised for the purpose of establishing and following *dharma* or right conduct. Because we are using food merely to give growth to the body and in that process neglecting the one that lives in the body, we are doing something quite wrong.

We have been given this body by God for the sole purpose of utilising it to recognise what is contained in this body, namely, the soul. The body has not been given to us to let it grow and grow enormously on the food that is fed to it and all the time neglect and forget the soul. Today ninety-nine out of a hundred people are only

looking after the body and its happiness, looking after the growth of the body. All the time, they are considering what position this body can get in the surrounding environment. They are not devoting any part of their time to make some enquiry and understand and take care of the soul that resides inside this body. Like a tree which does not bear fruit, like a fruit which has no juice in it, like an animal which has no intelligence, like a cow which does not yield milk, what is the use of your being born if you do not understand the purpose for which you are born? What is the purpose of effort that does not result in your knowing what you are and in recognising the common element that is contained in the eighty-four lakhs of living species.

In this effort, some crooked qualities that are contained in man's behaviour sometimes lead to strange results. If you forget God and if you do any work unmindful of Him, it is not going to give you happiness nor is it going to give any prosperity to the country. It is in this context and against this background that you have been told this morning that the many distortions and the many crooked ways that have entered into the otherwise pure pursuit of science have brought about undesirable results. We will have to make some effort by which we can check and we can balance the way in which we are going along such crooked paths.

When this study of nature and acquisition of knowledge, which we call science, originally started, it did start with the belief in God. With such belief in God, all the efforts that they had made at that time, in order to acquire knowledge about the world, were useful. They did in fact help in imparting stability to the social structure, in giving some amount of prosperity to the world and in giving happiness to the people. However, for some years in the past, these people, who have been following such distorted paths, began to develop individual aspirations in their own minds, were ambitious and wanted to get a name for themselves or for the country to which they belonged. Thus, they forgot the real goal, the goal of acquiring knowledge. Such a personal ambition on their part, amounting to ego and

greed, resulted in their forgetting the presence of God and the ultimate purpose of their enquiries. They have fallen into evil paths.

Science today has given up treading the paths that are likely to yield results useful to people. On the other hand, scientists are taking to paths which will be harmful to people. They have also been taking to paths that create some difficulties and conflicts in the people. Because they have abandoned useful paths and have taken to harmful and dangerous paths, it has also resulted in their forgetting the presence of God. In whatever field it may be, if an individual is working so that ego gets hold of him, then it will not only land him into a dangerous position but will also create considerable difficulties for him. Ego works on the stature of a man as the rays of the morning sun work on his shadow. In the morning, on account of the rays of the sun, our shadow will be a very long one. As the sun goes higher in the sky, the length of the shadow caused by the sun's rays will become smaller and smaller. In the same way, the stature of an egoist is something that has to go down and down as time goes on.

Humility, on the other hand, works on your stature in a manner that can be compared to the effect of the midday sun's rays on your shadow. The shadow in the afternoon will be small. As the sun goes down and down, as the evening comes on, the shadow that was quite small in the beginning, becomes larger and larger. Therefore, humility is good and indicates the path that is good for one's life. Humility and obedience, although they look as if they are tiny things that do not confer on you any large powers, will really give you enriched and increased pleasure and happiness as time goes on. Young people should learn to be obedient to elders. You should also learn to have faith in good things. You should also learn to have humility. I wish you all to acquire these three qualities, obedience, faith and humility.

As students who have come here to learn and acquire sacred knowledge, you should adopt the right paths and the right methods. In addition to what these experienced persons are going to tell you about the contents of the *Upanishads*, you will learn as days go on,

what the proper relationship that should obtain between a teacher and the taught is. Moreover, you must also realise that you, as students, should accept the position that there is much that you do not know and you are sitting at the feet of a *Guru*. What the *Guru* knows has to be communicated to the student who does not know. The communication that is the process of education, should be followed and gone through along the appropriate and accepted paths with great care, with great confidence in, and respect for, the teacher.

In the olden days, when *Vedas* were being taught to the students by the teachers, after they had completed their studies and the students were about to be sent to their homes, the teachers used to bless them. They never blessed them in terms such as, “you live long, you have plenty of wealth, you have plenty of prosperity,” and so on. That was not the kind of blessing the *Guru* gave when the student was sent home after completing the study of *Vedas*. The blessing they gave consisted of only two injunctions: one was *Sathyam Vada* —speak the truth— the second was *Dharmam Chara* —conduct yourself according to the righteous principles. But today, teachers, after completing imparting education to their students, bless them by calling upon them not to forget to send them presents and so on.

For you students, it is a very important matter that you should introspect and ask yourselves from what high and noble pedestal and status our ancient education in this country has descended and at what low level and in what shameful situation it is today. Our education used to cover the most sacred paths, namely, knowing *Atma* and what was related to everything that is Divine. That was intended to fill your hearts with something that is sweet and take you to immortality. Today, as a result of the new education which we are getting, we seem to think that there is no God; we do not seem to develop any respect for our parents; we do not seem to develop any respect for our teachers. Not only do we have no fear of God, we seem to be simply reducing our lives to the lives of animals, moving far away from the lives of human beings.

Today we are all considering that what we see with our own eyes, *prathyaksha*, is the only thing we can accept as True. Anything that we do not directly see, we are not willing to accept as authentic. In the development of such a belief and in insisting on wanting to see everything before we can accept it, there are several pitfalls. Accepting as evidence only the things that you can see or hear or taste or you can generally experience through your senses of perception is a very dangerous thing. The fact that you will not be able to reach unhesitatingly the truth in this manner has been established and has been explained to you in a very nice manner when the Charvaka philosophy was expounded to you. The Charvakas have taken *prathyaksha* as the sole authority. This cannot be proper evidence. This is because a situation will come when our five sense perceptions will not be so healthy as they are at the moment. They can acquire ill health. A situation can come by which these sense organs can change. How can we, under such circumstances, say that whatever experiences you get through these sense organs, which will change and which can be unhealthy, are sure to be true? To give a sweet to a person who is suffering from malaria, and ask him to put it into his mouth, furnishes a small example. He thinks that it is bitter because of his malaria fever, and he will proclaim that the sweet that you have given him is bitter. Is this true? However much he may argue and quote the *prathyaksha* as his authority, it cannot be the truth. He will go on saying, I have tasted it, it is bitter. He can go on arguing, but simply the basis for the illusion is in him. It is the fever that is in him. The fault is not in the sweet. It is only when you are able to remove all the fault in him, which in this case is the fever in him, the sweet will taste as sweet, as really it is.

Let us take another example. You take a healthy student who has got good vision and you ask him what are all the colours he sees around him. He will at once describe that he is seeing several colours and distinguish them. On the other hand, if you choose a student who is suffering from jaundice, and if you ask him what are all the colours he sees around him, his reply will be, I see only yellow col-

our all over. He will further argue that he is seeing only yellow colour. This is something that is a direct experience of eyes and therefore must be true because he is relying on an authority which we call *prathyaksha*. But we have also to enquire if these situations are going to last permanently or if there will be some changes in them. We find these are only diseases. They are not natural and will not last all the time.

So also in the Charvaka philosophy, the saying, “There is no God,” is a view caused by a temporary disease. Even in this, you will see that what he is saying at first is “There is.” “No God” comes later on. However much you may try to deny, truth will always come out. In fact, the divine strength in man’s heart will always be pushing him to proclaim the truth. This is inevitable, irrespective of who the person is. As time goes on, he will have to recognise the divine truth and in time, he will develop faith in God.

A disbeliever will say there is no God. Another man who has gone a step further in his disbelief, will say more emphatically “God is no where.” In this assertion, “God is no where,” there are four words. By a small transposition of the letter “w” from the beginning of the word “where” to the end of the word “no,” you will change this into “God is now here.” In this illustration, a little movement of the position of one letter to the left means “God is now here.” A movement of the same letter to the right means “God is no where.” This is the result of a small change in the position of one letter. No new words have come. Words that were there have not gone. It is because of our distorted ideas, helped by the bad environment and helped by our own ignorance, that we are denying the truth. We are disbelieving in God, and we are bringing disrepute on our own sacred lives. Science does not take on itself the establishment of the *pramana* or say that what we see alone is truth. It does not ask you not to believe in anything you do not see. Scientists, on account of some selfish aspirations and with a view to acquire certain advantages for themselves, have introduced into their methodology a disbelief in God. You should not accept such rules and say that

nothing can be truth unless you are able to have *prathyaksha* as your authority.

In what you may regard as *prathyaksha* or what you want to see in all those things, it is only an illusion to think that you actually and directly see the reality and truth. Here is a small example for this. A son, whose age is 25 years, has been spending some time and living with his mother who attained the age of sixty years. For 25 years of his life, the son has been looking at his mother, has been addressing her as dear mother and has been enjoying the presence of an affectionate mother. But after sixty years of her age, her time was over. She abandoned her body and life had fled. The son has the body of the mother near him. Sitting next to the body, he was suffering agony and was saying, "Mother, have you gone away," "Mother, have you left me alone," "Mother who is going to give me the guidance here-after." There is something here that we have to look into with great care. He says, "Mother, you have left me and gone away." Who is it that has left him and gone away? For 25 years he has been addressing that body as "mother" and speaking to her as "mother." If that body is the mother and if this man is saying, "Mother, you have left me and gone away," then there is an inconsistency. The body is still there. So what has gone away is his real mother. The body that is still there is not his real mother. Thus the true mother is the life that has left and gone away. So long as the true mother that was the life was residing in that temporary and non-permanent body, he was calling the body as his mother. But the moment the permanent life has left, he without any hesitation will cremate that body, which was till then being regarded by him as his mother.

As long as life is present, we are to some extent enjoying and appreciating the bodily relationship of either a mother or a father or a brother or a sister or a wife and so on. But once life has fled, then we will realise that all the relationship that we were enjoying was only a bodily relationship and has no value. That anything that has been permanent is true only in respect of the Divine soul that is contained

in the body, and not the body itself, becomes very clear. Therefore, the one who is a true relation to us, the one who is a true friend to us, the one who is a true guide to us, can only be God and none others. All other relationships are like passing clouds, which come and go. The permanent and eternal truth of God should be your ultimate aim.

Other things that look like truths are not permanent truths. They are not eternal truths. You should give them up. You should fill your hearts with *prema*. That is the only way in which you can reach the eternal truth of God. You should work with a determination to fill your hearts with *prema* and reach this goal. Through the one month of courses that you will have here you should acquire the capacity to recognise the permanent truth. I hope and bless you that you go back to your places and infuse this determination into others and thereby influence a larger number of people to appreciate Indian culture and bring glory to Indian beliefs.

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