

7. Karma And Dharma Lead To Realisation Of Brahman

Amongst all the qualities, the quality of truth is the greatest. This quality of truth will be shining as the most prominent one in the whole world. One who has such a quality in his daily life can be termed as a *punyaatma* or a person who has done good.

Pavitratma Swarupas, Students!

The *Vedas* are referred to by several names. Of these, *adhyayana* and *swadhyaya* are two names which we should understand well. *Adhyayana* also means practice. When we use this word, we have also to understand what it is that we practise. What we practise is *Brahma Yagna*. It has been said that *adhyayana* begins with *Brahma Yajna*. In the context of our attempting to know

the inner meaning of the word *adhyayana*, we come to the conclusion that *Veda* and Brahman are one and the same because we utter them together. When we want to understand the meaning of the word *swadhyaya*, many people regard this as representing one's own branch. Taking the meaning of this word as *Swasakha* or one's own chosen special branch, they are misinterpreting the *Veda*. If we regard *swadhyaya* as *swasakha* or a special branch of the *Vedas*, then we imply that the *Vedas* do not deal with other aspects. The word *Swadhyaya* has been given the meaning *swasakha*, implying that the *Veda* has the form of *swasakha*. If one wants to feel that one belongs to a particular branch or sect, *Veda* does not accept such an interpretation.

Other scholars like Jaimini and Badarayana have interpreted this word by calling it *Dharma jijnasa* and *Brahma jijnasa*; that is the desire to learn the meaning of dharma and of Brahma. Even if we want to go along with the meaning of *Swasakha* as one particular branch, it is the interpretation of these two *Rishis* that after reading of *swasakha*, or one particular branch, one has also to follow *dharma* and Brahman. When we say that the knowledge of *Vedas* or of *dharma* and Brahma relates to all branches of knowledge, there is no

meaning in regarding *Veda* as referring to one particular sect. Many people have argued on this point as well and said that this cannot be referred to as one branch or *swasakhadhyaya*.

We must understand the inner meaning of this word “*swa*” which has been given in *Amnaya* which tells us about the word *swa* and its intimate relationship with Atma. In our daily life we are using the words *swa* and *bhava* combined as one word *swabhava*. In common parlance, we interpret the word *swabhava* as the natural condition of man. This is not correct, and the word *swa* relates to Atma. All ideas emanating from one's own mind cannot be described as *swabhava*.

There is another word *swa-ichha* (or *swechha*) in which this *swa* comes. This word does not mean that we can move about in an uncontrolled manner. *Swechha* can be described as the desire which comes from the depths of one's heart, or the seat of Atma. Today we neither recognise the correct meaning of *swabhava* nor do we recognise the correct meaning of the word *swechha*. We also do not conduct ourselves on right lines. In these two words *swa* has to be taken to imply something which relates to the Atma or Brahman. In all aspects of *Veda*, this should be the correct interpretation.

Several *Rishis* have described how we should understand the meaning of the word *swa* in the two places—*Swasakha* and *Swechha*. They have enquired into and provided an answer as to which people can read the *Vedas* with reference to *Swasakha* and *Swadhyaya*. When we are on the *swadhyaya*, we must understand the *Vedas* with special reference to *mimamsa*. We will take the first injunction, “*Adhato Dharma jijnasa.*” We have to first understand the details of the methodology and duties which go with the word *dharma*. It becomes clear that the aspect which envelops everything or that which we see all around us is *dharma*. Before *dharma jijnasa* and *Brahma jijnasa*, we must recognise the need for *karma jijnasa*. Only when we understand *karma jijnasa*, or the knowledge relating to *karma*, can we understand *dharma jijnasa*. Only after that can we understand *Brahma jijnasa*, or knowledge of Brahman.

The relationship between *Karma*, *Dharma*, and Brahman can be best explained by using an example with which we are familiar in our daily life. When we do a particular type of cooking and then undertake to eat the food, we should remember that bringing together the things that we need—namely various ingredients like the fire, the vessel, etc.—constitutes the primary process.

The fire that is necessary for the cooking and the vessel and the various ingredients form part and parcel of the work of the *karma*. Once we have brought all these together, we undertake to do the cooking. The act of cooking is the *karma* or work. After having made all the preparations, eating the cooked food is like *dharma jijnasa*. If we then try to find the merits and demerits, such as shortage of salt, sugar, pepper, etc. in the cooked food, that is *Brahma jijnasa*.

If we want to compare these with different stages in another analogy, our being born is itself *karma jijnasa*. After being born, realising the details of life and doing the duties that are appropriate to the time and circumstances is *dharma jijnasa*. After fulfilling such duties, the realisation of the fact that merely fulfilling such duties gives no *Ananda* or the realisation that there is no *Ananda* in *dharma jijnasa* alone is *Brahma jijnasa*. If one is not born at all there is no possibility of performing one’s duty, and unless you perform the duties, there is no possibility of realising that there is no *Ananda* in performing these duties. In other words, from the *karma* of birth follows the doing of *dharma*, and from doing *dharma* follows the realisation of lack of *Ananda* and therefrom follows *Brahma jijnasa*. The connection

between birth or *karma*, *dharma* and Brahma is very close and one must follow the other.

If we take another analogy, *karma* occupies the very first step of a pollinated flower. Slowly, and as time goes on, the petals drop out and what is left is the bud of the fruit. When these petals drop out and we do what we have to do to the bud, it develops into a fruit. When we taste the unripe fruit, we realise that there is no sweetness in such a fruit and we keep doing what has to be done until the unripe fruit becomes ripe and sweet. Thus, gradually sweetness replaces the sourness. In this whole process, the flower, the unripe fruit, and the fruit are all transformations of one and the same and they are not essentially different. In the same manner *Karma*, *Dharma*, and Brahma are simply three different aspects of the same Brahman. In the two early stages of *karma* and *dharma*, there may be some difficulty, but in the third stage of Brahman there is no difficulty and one is full of *Ananda* or bliss. But whatever path one follows, the goal which one reaches is the same.

There are four *purusharthas* (Goals of life) namely, *Dharma*, *Artha* (wealth, prosperity), *Kama* (desire) and *Moksha* (liberation). For *Kama* and *Artha*, we have

Dharma and *Moksha* on either side. We should try to regroup the four into two groups. If we take these four and treat them as four separate entities, we will not get any benefit out of our actions. If we can combine *dharma* with *artha* and *kama* with *moksha*, then we realise that we will have to acquire wealth for the sake of *dharma* and we must turn all our desires to acquire *moksha*. Wealth is not permanent and *kama* is something which wavers. Wealth and lust are things which are impermanent and keep on changing. It is not possible that man can become happy by the possession of these two things. The reason for this is that they are unsteady and impermanent and such things cannot give happiness to man. When these impermanent things, wealth and lust, are combined with permanent things like *dharma* and *moksha*, they also acquire such sanctity and become somewhat true and permanent. If wealth is combined with a permanent truth like *dharma* and similarly, lust, which is a wavering type, is combined with permanent *moksha*, then we will be able to acquire *Ananda* in the aspect of Brahman. Our purpose should be to combine the impermanent things with the permanent things of life. We should strive to move on from the minutest aspect to one of infinity.

When we have a drop of water in our hand, it will appear to us only like a small drop. When we take this drop of water and merge it with the infinite ocean, the drop also takes the form of the infinite ocean. *Moksha* is an endless and infinite thing and *dharma* is equally limitless. Our purpose should be to take all our temporary desires which have several limitations and merge them with more permanent things like *dharma* and *moksha*.

The word *moksha* does not represent something which is exhaustible and which you can purchase from a shop. *Moksha* is regarded as a limitless entity. So long as there is attachment in you, the world will appear permanent. On the lotus of your heart, this attachment always moves like mercury. This kind of mercurial lust which is continually moving from place to place should be removed, and this process of *mohakshaya* (attrition of attachment) is *moksha*. Once this attachment goes, what remains is simply *Ananda*. To convert our lives, to some extent, in this manner is the path of Brahman. Once we make a proper enquiry and understand this aspect of Brahman, we realise that Brahman is latent in *Karma*. *Karma*, or work, is latent in *Dharma*, and *Dharma* is latent in Brahman as well. One's own self is the aspect

of Brahman, and to recognise this aspect of Brahman in everyone is the state of bliss which we should seek.

One who is in the path of *karma* will be thinking, "I am in the light." One who is following the path of *dharma* will be thinking, "The light is in me." One who has moved on to the aspect of Brahman and learnt to experience Brahman in everything will say, "I am the light." Thus, "I am the light" is the aspect of Brahman while "I am in the light" is the aspect of *karma* and "the light is in me" is the aspect of *dharma*.

So long as you say, "I am in the light," you are not an independent person; but you are dependent. To say that you are in the light is to imply that you are dependent on the light. If we state that "this cloth is in my hand," we imply that the hand is in control of the cloth. The cloth is not an independent entity. When you say that the light is in you, you control the light. This implies that there is something which is being controlled and someone who controls and, therefore, a dual aspect is introduced by implication. Here we have two things—one is the nature and the other one is following the injunction laid down by nature. That is why we say, "*Adhato Dharma Jijnasa*." It is only when there is

Prakruthi or world around you, that you require a code of *dharma* to follow.

In this context, if you came to the conclusion that those who are in the family, living as a part thereof, do not have the right to follow the path of Brahman, it is not the right idea. There is a good example for this in the *Ramayana*. The family life is like a chariot. Husband and wife are the horses. *Dharma* is the charioteer. Family, or the bundle of worldly desires, is the path and *moksha* is the goal. Thus the horses, namely the husband and wife, can lead the chariot of life to *moksha* if they follow the path of *dharma*. It is not right and it is a weakness to think that only *yogis*, *jnanis*, and *rishis* are entitled to *moksha*. The destination is available for everyone. Whether one is a *brahmachari* or a *vanaprastha* or a *sanyasi*, the destination is the same for all of them. From one point of view what we see in our daily life the four states—*Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vanaprasatha*, *Sanyasi*—may be different but in the aspect of Brahman, they are one and the same. The four have taken the paths *arthi*, *artharthi*, *jijnasu*, and *jnani*, and by journeying on these four different paths, they all reach the same goal. When one aspires to reach the right destination, God is always ready to respond to everyone

with the same attitude. He is even prepared to lead them to the destination. God does not have different thoughts or opinions about different people. Such differences arise only from the different ideas which we have. It is wrong to attribute differences to God.

There is a small story for this. One rich businessman was conducting his business. He had four wives. The first one was continuously ill and suffering from some disease or other. The second wife was given to worldly pleasures. The third wife was always pursuing a spiritual path and was wanting to meet learned persons and learn about religious aspects. The fourth wife was very healthy but was not given to worldly pleasures and had no desires of any kind. She had only one thought and that was to become one with the Divine. The businessman went to a foreign land and wrote to the four wives just before coming back, asked them what they wanted to be brought. The first wife replied that she wanted a special kind of medicine for her illness. The second wife asked for special gifts like saris, jewels, etc. The third wife asked for religious books of the foreign land. She also asked him to search for information given by learned scholars concerning the aspect of Brahman. The fourth wife had nothing to ask

except the safe return of her husband. As soon as he gave all the things which he had brought with him from the foreign land to the respective wives, he himself went to the house of the fourth wife. The other wives grew jealous and asked him why he was spending all the time with the fourth wife especially after being absent from the house for such a long time. He replied that he had given each wife what she had asked for and as the fourth wife asked for him, he had gone to her house.

In the same manner Brahman is the master of *arthi*, *artharthi*, *jnani* and *jijnasu*, and gives each one what he asks for. Brahman will give bodily comforts to one who is an *arthi*. For one who is a *jnani*, Brahman will tell him about the paths of journey to the state of bliss or wisdom. For the *jijnasu*, He gives Himself as that is what he desires. Difference may exist in the method of our asking and what we ask for, but there is no difference in the aspect of Brahman. Changes that come about in your prayer and in the manner of your prayer have their origins in you. Those changes do not belong to Brahman. It is in this context that we come across the statement, “*Yadbhavam tad bhavati*” (The thoughts will determine the action). Therefore, if your thoughts are pure and sacred, whatever experience results from this will also

be pure and sacred. Out of such pure and sacred experience will result *jnana*.

Many people do not see faults in them as their own and try to hide them. By way of excuses for their failings, they blame God. Such defects or faults are not present in God. In fact, God is like fire and whatever goes near the fire is burnt up and so also all bad qualities are burnt up in the presence of God. This is the reason why Brahman is often compared with fire by saying *Agni* Brahman. There is a significant meaning here in recognising Brahman as the fire of wisdom. To associate an impurity with such sacred and effulgent wisdom is a sign of our own impurity. Therefore, we must purify our thoughts and ideas. We can then recognise the aspect of Brahman.

The *Vedas* demonstrate and establish the all-knowing aspect of Brahman and that everyone has the right to study *Vedas*. There is some amount of lack of knowledge and misconception in thinking that only some class of people can study the *Vedas*. We were told that the Pandavas had studied the *Vedas* and that they had full acquaintance with the *Vedas*. This is told to us in the *Mahabharatha*. In the *Ramayana*, while Dasaratha was performing *Aswamedha yaga* (Horse sacrifice) he was

advised by Vashishta to invite King Janaka who was fully conversant with the *Vedas*. In the *Bhagavatha* also we know that Krishna himself was well versed in the *Vedas*. Further, when Valmiki completed composing his *Ramayana* and was looking for people to whom he could communicate this, Lava and Kusa (Rama's sons) came running to him to learn this and Valmiki taught them all the *Vedas*. If we examine to what sect or class these individuals Lava, Kusa, the Pandavas, Rama, Krishna, etc. belonged, we come to the conclusion that everyone has the right to study and imbibe all that is contained in the *Vedas*. Because everyone has the right to study and put into practice the *Vedas*, the first thing that you have to do is to recognise the existence of such a right. Then you should be in a position to read and also communicate their contents to others. This is what I am hoping you will be able to achieve.