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“Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan”

Smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest, the All-pervasive Brahman remains the Eternal Witness of all. Brahman is Atma. Atma is Brahman.

Embodiments of Love!

The universe is without beginning and in it dwell an infinitude of *jivas* (living beings). Among these *jivas*, man is the most exalted being. From times immemorial, men have been striving to know God. Some have maintained that God exists, while others have denied His existence. But neither the theists nor the atheists have been able to adduce proof for their rival contentions.

Several Indians say that God is Siva—the One astride Nandi (Bull) or that He is Vishnu—the One with Garuda (Eagle) as His *vahana* or vehicle. Others declare

that these are false statements, and swearing by the Bible, proclaim that God is light and that He resides in Heaven.

Depending on the place, the time and the experience of the individual concerned, there have developed various conceptions of the Godhead. Out of concern for and seeing this predicament of man, Krishna has given in the *Bhagavad Gita* a very apt description of God: “*Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan*,” that is to say, God exists everywhere and manifests Himself as both the infinitesimal and the Infinite.

Would it be possible for man to see God, who is smaller than even the smallest particle of an atom, or perceive the Transcendental Divinity that envelopes the entire cosmos and extends even beyond? The answer cannot but be in the negative, for when man is unable to see even the air that surrounds him, he has no means to perceive Divinity that is even more subtle. Neither can man gauge the infinitude of the all-pervasive *Brahman* that transcends the vast cosmic expanse with its myriad stars, each bigger than the sun and at great distances from the others.

To teach man the truths relating to these two aspects of Divinity—“*Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan*”—which lie beyond the ken of his normal intellect, God appears on earth as an *Avatar*. In the *Krishna Avatar*, keeping Arjuna as the representative of all mankind, Krishna taught these eternal truths through the *Bhagavad Gita*. “Beyond the Universe,”

Krishna said, “lies total darkness and beyond this darkness exists Truth.” This darkness consists of the *rajasic* and the *thamasic* realms. Beyond the darkness lies the domain of *sathwa guna*—the domain of Truth and Light.

“Truth is God” it is said; but to realise this truth we must transcend the *rajasic* and the *thamasic* realms. Meditation is the means for attaining such transcendence.

For meditation, Krishna lays down two important injunctions; a moderate diet and a regulated conduct of life. “*Yuktahara viharasya*”, said Krishna. Here, *yuktahara* does not denote complete abstinence from food, as this would lead to physical emaciation and mental fatigue. The Buddha’s experience illustrates this very well. While doing penance, the Buddha had, in the beginning, given up food for several days. This resulted in a dissipation of his physical and mental energies. Realising that a healthy body and a sound mind are necessary prerequisites for effective penance, he went to a nearby village and partook of curds and appeased his hunger. From that day, he continued taking food in small quantities every day. He was thereby able to meditate with great ease and realise the Truth.

Thus, food in the right quantities and of the proper type is necessary if an individual is to meditate effectively. Excessive eating that leads to drowsiness, should, however, be avoided. The correct thing would

be to divide the stomach into four equal parts and fill two parts with solid food and one part with liquid food leaving the fourth part empty. Filling the stomach with solid food completely promotes *thamo guna*, which is positively an impediment to meditation.

Sleeplessness is also detrimental to meditation. Lack of sleep promotes *rajo guna* and fills one with unhealthy thoughts and emotions.

The food man partakes of these days is essentially *rajasic* and *thamasic*. This is the reason why there is cruelty and unrest in the minds of men. Their physical health, too, is poor. Today, a boy of sixteen would have passed through all the physical experiences that a man of sixty would have gone through. Such is the deplorable condition of our youth. How then can they experience the bliss of *dhyana* (meditation)?

It is imperative, therefore, for everyone to introspect and find out how much of his time is being spent in the mad race for fleeting material pleasures and how much is devoted to the thought of God. The hedonistic man of the present day can spare no time for the contemplation of Divinity. The gates of Heaven shall be open for him only if he can think of God now and then. However, everyone seems to be totally preoccupied with the thoughts of one's children, friends, relations, money and material possessions. Man is thus denying himself the bliss of spiritual experience, engaged as he is in the pursuit of the transient pleasures

of the world. Man must, therefore, divert his vision from the world of temporal joys to the Bliss of the *Atma* within.

In the eight fold path of *yoga* suggested by Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras*, the last three stages are *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*. *Dharana* thus precedes *dhyana*. It denotes the fixation of the mind on the goal of *dhyana* and involves the preliminary preparations necessary for *dhyana*.

One should adopt a comfortable posture for *dhyana*. The common practice is to sit, with the hands in *chinmudra* and with the legs crossed, on a wooden plank covered with a soft skin or cloth. These are all, however, part of *dharana*. *Dhyana* begins with the process of gradual identification with the Lord and leads to *Samadhi*.

Samadhi is the state in which *dhyana* attains fulfilment. In this state, the individual rises beyond the objective world of relative reality, the subjective identity of himself and even the very activity that he is engaged in (*dhyana*). *Samadhi* is not a state of unconsciousness; neither does it mean frisking about in emotional excitement. The word *samadhi* itself is indicative of its significance. *Sama* is equipoise; *dhi* is intelligence. *Samadhi* is that state of intellectual equipoise where the individual transcends the world of duality and experiences the bliss of divine communion.

The Lord incarnates as man to help man

comprehend that which apparently cannot be understood and to enable him to attain that which is seemingly unattainable. By this, however, the Lord who is Infinite, Immutable and Immanent, does not suffer any diminution. Neither is He, though embodied in a human frame, influenced by the taints and blemishes that normally affect a human being.

The sea is vast and unfathomable. However, to know the taste of sea water, one need not drink the entire ocean. It is enough if he has a few drops. Similarly, the one who understands, assimilates and experiences the Lord in Human Form has understood, assimilated and experienced the Immutable, the Imperishable and the Formless *Brahman* as well.

To grasp the significance of the Divine Incarnation, it is imperative that we rise above the *rajasic* and *thamasic gunas*. *Sathwa guna* alone can lead us through the path of true devotion to the Lotus Feet of the Divine. To remove *rajas* and *thamas* and to promote *sathwic* nature, a favourable environment and *sathsanga* or the company of good men are essential.

The mental makeup of a person can be judged from the way in which he maintains his immediate surroundings. For example, a person whose room is full of pictures of his relations, friends and political leaders can at once be understood to be one dominated by *rajo guna*. He is one who attaches undue importance to human relationships and adores worldly power and pelf,

ignoring God. Similarly, if the room is full of ugly and obscene pictures, the individual is essentially *thamasic* in nature. Both these categories of men are unfit to follow the sacred path of meditation. A third category of men who have pictures of God and holy men adorning the walls of their rooms converting their rooms into shrines, as it were, are the *sathwic* people, the people who are rightfully qualified to undertake meditation.

Pictures and people do leave indelible impressions and exercise considerable influence on the minds of men. Once Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi went along with his mother to witness a play on the life of Harischandra. The portrayal of Harischandra as the peerless practitioner of truth so influenced the young Mohandas Karamchand that even as he was returning home, he had resolved to stand by truth all his life. This ideal stood as the beacon for him throughout the rest of his life and by his steadfast adherence to truth, he came to be acknowledged as a *mahatma*.

Ramana Maharshi also conditioned his mind by objective experience. Every night he used to look at a particular star with one-pointed attention for several long hours. This strengthened his *dharana* and equipped him to undertake *dhyana*.

Just as mental purity is a necessary precondition for meditation, mental tranquillity is also equally essential. A restless mind impedes the processes of both *dharana* and *dhyana*. The mind needs to be given rest

through sleep. Sankaracharya compared sleep to *samadhi*, though *samadhi* confers much greater joy and inner harmony. Sufficient sleep is needed by an individual to keep his mind alert and poised for meditation.

There are three direct roads to Godhead. The first consists in the performance of all actions in a spirit of dedication to God for His pleasure. The second, in the renunciation of the desire for the fruits of action. The third, in the identification of oneself with God through the process of *dhyana*. Dedication of all actions to God confers wisdom on the doer. Renunciation of the desire for the fruits of action bestows mental tranquillity. *dhyana* too ensures inner peace.

Dhyana can be practised by all—the old, the young, the ignorant, the wise, the healthy and the weak. For those who do not possess the necessary physical and mental abilities to do *dhyana*, the cultivation of universal love would be as efficacious as *dhyana*. All these three paths, however, lead to the same goal.