

Chapter XIII

Faulty vision; delusion; four types of devotee and the kinds of train they are on; the wise person experiences “Vasudeva is all this”.

This universe itself is a superstructure, the basis being the Godhead; this is apparent, the other is the real. People ignore the basis and crave for the “based”. They do not stop to inquire how the “based” can exist without a base! This too is an example of faulty vision. When this faulty vision is set right, the author of this universe can be cognized.

This subject was raised by Arjuna before Krishna. He asked, “What exactly is faulty vision? Please tell me in detail, Krishna.” He also sought to know how the fault originates and develops. Now, Arjuna was not just an ordinary individual. He was not one to nod his head, whatever was told him. He was bold enough to stop Krishna in the middle of a sentence if he felt a doubt rising in his mind. He had the courage and the steadfastness needed. He persisted until he got from Krishna an answer that was verifiable by experience, that was in accordance with the wisdom enshrined in the scriptures. So the Lord also provided the answers immediately with a smile!

For this question on faulty vision, Krishna had the answer. He said, “Listen, Arjuna! Between Me and this universe there moves delusion (*maya*). It is indeed a hard task for one to see beyond delusion, for delusion is also Mine. It is of the same substance; you cannot deem it separate from Me. It is My creation and under My control. It will turn even the mightiest among people head over heels in a trice! You might wonder why it is so difficult to overcome. Of course, it is by no means easy. Only those who are wholeheartedly attached to Me can conquer this, My delusion. Arjuna, do not take delusion to mean some ugly thing that has descended from somewhere else; it is an attribute of the mind; it makes you ignore the true and the eternal highest *Atma* and value instead the attributeful, created, manifold multiplicity of name and form. It causes the error of believing the body as the Self, instead of the embodied. Delusion is not something that was and will disappear; nor is it something that was not but later came in and is. It never was, or is, or will be.

“Delusion (*maya*) is a name for a non-existent phenomenon. But this non-existent thing comes within view! It is like the mirage in the desert, a sheet of water that never was or is. He who knows the truth does not see it; only those ignorant in the ways of the desert are drawn by it. They run toward it and suffer grief, exhaustion, and despair. Like darkness arising in the room, hiding the room itself; like moss growing on the water, hiding the water itself; like cataracts growing in the eye, hiding the vision; delusion attaches itself to whoever helps it to grow. It overpowers the three qualities (*gunas*) and the three gods. That is to say, all who identify themselves with the limited, the named, the formed, the individualized, are affected by it. Identification with soul brings it about; identification with the That-this entity (*Thathwa-branthi*) removes it. It hides the That-this entity; it does not hold sway over those who have once known that ‘you are that That (*Thath twam asi*)’.

“Arjuna, you might ask Me whether this delusion that pervades and injures the very place where it originates has not tarnished Me, in whom it has taken birth. It is natural that such a doubt should arise. But that is a baseless doubt. Delusion is the cause of all this objective world, but it is not the cause of God. I am the Authority that wields delusion. This world, which is the product of delusion, moves and behaves according to My will. So whoever is attached to Me and acts according to My will cannot be harmed by delusion. Delusion acknowledges their authority also. The only method to overcome delusion is to acquire the wisdom of the universal and rediscover

your own universal nature. You attribute the limit of life to that which is eternal, and this is what causes delusion. Hunger and thirst are characteristics of life. Joy and grief, impulse and imagination, birth and death are all characteristics of the body. They are all un-*Atmic*. They are not characteristics of the universal, the *Atma*.

“To believe that the Universal that is you is limited and subject to all these un-*Atmic* characteristics, that is delusion. But remember, delusion dares not approach anyone who has taken refuge in Me. For those who fix their attention on delusion, it operates as a vast oceanic obstacle. But for those who fix their attention on God, delusion will present itself as Madhava (God)! The hurdle of delusion can be crossed by developing either the attitude of oneness with the infinite God or the attitude of complete surrender to the Lord. The first is called the *yoga* of wisdom; the second, of devotion.

“Not all people get the inner prompting to conquer delusion by surrendering their all to the Lord. It depends on the merit or demerit accumulated during many births. Those who have only demerit as their earnings will pursue the fleeting pleasures of the senses. Like the birds and the beasts, they revel in food and frolic; they take these as the purpose of life; they do not entertain any thoughts of God; they dislike the company of the virtuous and the good; they stray away from good acts; they become outlaws from the realm of God.

“On the other hand, those who have earned merit strive to grow in virtue, in uplifting thoughts, in contemplation of the divine Presence, and they yearn for the Lord. Seekers such as these may be drawn to the Lord through suffering, want, thirst for knowledge, or keenness to acquire wisdom. But the fact that they turn toward the Lord for relief shows that they have grown into the higher path through many births.”

The *Gita* does not approve acts done with intention to benefit therefrom or with the result as the prime motive. Only acts done without being concerned with the benefit that may accrue will free you from delusion.

Now, a doubt may arise about the one who turns to the Lord to relieve their own suffering. The question may be raised whether such a person can be called a devotee. No single person on earth is free from some want or other. Each depends on someone or other to fulfil their wants, is it not? Now, to have such wants, wants relating to objects, is itself wrong; and to lean on a person like oneself to fulfil them is an even greater wrong. The one who turns to the Lord to relieve suffering turns not to people but to the Lord, who is trusted and revered: that one implores Him only to fulfil them. Although it is wrong to cultivate wants, such a person avoids the greater wrong of putting trust on inferior instruments. Such a person is superior, right? The superiority of this attitude can be seen when you know that it is not what you want that is important but whom you ask for its fulfilment. The goal is the Lord; He is the Giver. His grace alone can confer boons —when this faith is fixed, you can be certain that the one who turns to God to relieve their suffering is really worthy.

The first three types of devotees mentioned in the *Gita* —the suffering (*artha*), the seekers of material possessions (*artha-arthi*), and the seeker of wisdom (*jijnasu*)— all adore the Lord in an implicit form, as the Unseen (*Paroksha*). They seek the Lord as a means for realizing their desires or goals. Of course, they will always be in a prayerful and worshipful mood and will remember the Lord at all times.

The spiritually wise one (*jnani*), the fourth type of devotee mentioned in the *Gita*, has one-pointed devotion, while the others have devotion to multiple objects or states; the others are attached to the objects or the states they desire and for their sake are attached to the Lord also. They are devoted not merely to the Lord, but also to the objective world. Wise people will not raise the eyes toward anything other than the Lord. Even if they do, they see the Lord wherever their eyes are cast. That is why the Lord has declared that the wise are dearest to Him. Of

course, all are the same for the Lord; but among those who have reached His presence and are present there, love is explicit, direct, immediate, directly cognizable and experienceable. Therefore, it can be inferred that the wise one is nearest to the Lord and thus is the dearest.

Of course, it is the nature of fire to warm you when you shiver from cold. But how can it help you keep warm if you do not approach it but keep away at a distance? Similarly, those who are earnest to remove the chill of worldly ills have to seek the fire of wisdom, which is won by the grace of God, and be in the immediacy of God.

Spiritual aspirants in the midst of their efforts sometimes imagine God to be less glorious than He really is! They feel that the Lord differentiates between sinners and saints, good and bad, wise and ignorant. These are unsound inferences. The Lord doesn't separate people thus. If He really did so, no sinner could survive His anger on earth for even a minute. All are living on the earth, since the Lord has no such distinction. This truth is known only to the spiritually wise one. Others are unaware of this. They suffer under the false belief that the Lord is somewhere far far away from them.

The spiritually wise one is free from delusion and is unaffected by the qualities of passion, dullness, or even purity (the *gunas rajas, thamas, sathwa*). The seeker of knowledge, however, is different. He uses time for unbroken contemplation of the Divine, in pious deeds and holy thoughts. And the other two, the seeker of wealth (*artha-arthi*) and the sufferer (*artha*), gather elevating experience, ruminate over the real and unreal, and transform themselves into seekers of knowledge. Later, they become spiritually wise people and are saved. The goal is thus reached stage by stage. You cannot attain the goal in one leap.

This can be better understood by an example. Spiritual wisdom is like the “through train”. That is to say, the passenger need not detrain and enter another train to reach the destination. The seeker of spiritual knowledge has entered the “through carriage”; also, the seeker need not detrain and board another train, but the carriage will be detained and attached to other trains en route before finally reaching the desired place. The sufferer (*artha*) boards the ordinary train. Since the carriage is neither “through” nor in a through train, the sufferer has to alight at a number of places en route and wait until another train comes by, so the goal is reached by stages. It is a long and arduous journey. But, in spite of these difficulties, the distressed supplicant can accomplish it through persistence.

The goal is attained by all; only the process and the pace are different. No wonder the Lord has declared more than once that all these four types of devotion are “My own”. Why has He so declared? Because they all seek the same high goal.

“Therefore, yearn always for the vast, the immeasurable. Do not limit your desires to the little. Those who crave for little things are misers. Those who yearn for the Lord are generous, large-hearted,” said Krishna.

The devotion of the spiritually wise one is termed natural or direct devotion. The devotion of the others can be called indirect or derived devotion. The wise one cognizes the Lord as their own *Atma*; devotion is deep attachment to or affection for God. “Love of the Supreme is devotion,” said Krishna.

The wise one becomes so as the result of merit accumulated through many lives. The stage is not attainable on the spur of the moment, nor is it available ready-made in shops for a price. It is not a marketable commodity. It is the culmination of spiritual endeavour practised in many lives.

It is desired that many good doctors be produced for ministering to the people. But years of study and experience alone can supply them; if those unequipped are appointed as doctors in the hospitals and start prescribing

and operating, they are bound to kill where they should cure. So too, if a person became a wise person today, you can imagine the years and years of spiritual discipline that won that height. The inheritance of spiritual impulses from previous births also helps in this endeavour.

All kinds of people now call themselves wise. They don't know, perhaps, that a spiritually wise one is marked by certain characteristics. The mark that proves them genuine is, of course, the declaration based on their own experience that "Vaasudeva is all this." The steady assimilation of that experience is the true sign of the wise one. By Vaasudeva is meant here not the son of Vasudeva, but He who has made all beings His home.

Only a person who perceives the Lord in all beings deserves to be called a wise one. Others who call themselves wise people are so in name only. They have no genuine experience of wisdom. What exactly is spiritual wisdom? It is the possession of the knowledge that enables one to have knowledge of all, so it enables one to dispense with the knowledge of all else.

This is the height that the wise one reaches. On the other hand, no one can claim to be wise who has simply learned a few verses by heart, or skipped through a few books or ascended platforms with ten others and lectured for hours in the full pride of scholarship, reeling off ponderous sentences (like a magician with a ball of thread), pouring out what has earlier been swallowed. We have large numbers of such self-styled wise people going about now. Their dress is ochre, but their hearts are ogre. Well, how can stones shine as gems? All stones are not precious stones. Who will assess a stone as equal to a gem? Only fools will be so misled, for they know neither the one nor the other.

In the *Gita*, Krishna declared "Vaasudeva is all this (*Vaasudevah sarvam*)" to be the king of mantras, just to counteract such pseudo-wise-people, whose emergence He anticipated. That one mantra is sufficient to save all mankind. That is His indirect gift—consider it as such and concentrate on it and its meaning. That is the highest good, the highest goal. These six (Sanskrit) letters can alone make human lives worthwhile.

Without the inner ever-present experience of those words, there are many who have named themselves great soul, preceptor of the world, *bhagavan*, realized sage, wise one, free from attachment to the sensory world, bliss-filled (*ananda*), etc. and who, alas, though counterfeit, receive currency among people as genuine. No one conferred these titles on them; they were selected and assumed by their present owners and worn as plumage to catch the people's eye. They are not genuine, so the glamour wears out soon enough. The exterior is renunciation (*sanyasa*), but the interior is too full of desires. Outwardly, the form is *yoga*, but inwardly they suffer from disease. Their names all speak of bliss but they roam around in the alleys. Their words are honey; their acts are spoony and often zany. A householder who is immersed in the daily duties of that stage of life is far better spiritually than these dressed-up specimens of renunciation and *yoga*.

The chief reason for the decline of the culture of India, of its ancient way of life and its moral rectitude, is the evil perpetrated by such fakes. Faith in God has declined for the same reason. People advise renunciation and aspire for the senses; they glorify morality and operate through hatred. This behaviour cuts at the very root of renunciation, and they inevitably rush toward doom. Where words and deeds are not coordinated, there is no trace of truth.

Well, householders do hold on to truth, more or less tenaciously. There are among them many who are devoid of hate, who are of pure unsullied hearts, and who tread the path of morality and virtue. But we find that the renunciants and *yogis* who parade as such are full of all possible types of hatred and all manifestations of desire.

They fall into the pit that these manifestations dig to trap them. Egotism, envy, exhibitionism —these bring to an end all the efforts of the spiritual aspirant. Therefore, seekers and devotees must be ever vigilant and keep away from all these undesirable traits. They must try to grow in the contemplation of the glory of the Lord and in the practice of morality, eagerly striving to experience the real bliss of attainment. This bliss has then to be shared with the world. That will inaugurate world peace and world prosperity.

Krishna was referring to such real wise people when He said that the world will shine in splendour through the wise people. A person without wisdom is like a home without light.