

CHAPTER XII

THE SASTRAS AND SANYASA

- Q. Swami, you say that one has to do some things; that one should not do certain other things. How are we to know which is which? What is the authority?
- A. The Sastras are the authority. The Manu Smrithi itself declares, for example, that Varnas and Asramas are only for physical purification and that they do not affect the gaining or losing of the Highest.
- Q. If that is so, why all this bother of Varna and Asrama, and the rules and regulations binding them?
- A. Ah, they are required until you become free from attachment or Raga. Until then and for the sake of that, the regulations, limits and rules have to be obeyed to the very letter. The medicine has to be taken, so long as the illness persists. Each type of illness has a special medicine for its cure

and a different course of diet and a special regimen. After one has got rid of the illness, one can partake of a feast with the rest. Without accepting this, if the well and the ill both demand the same feast, it will lead to calamitous consequences. The Varnas and the Asramas are as medicine prescribed for those who suffer from this Bhavaroga, the ills of worldliness and worldly attachment. Raga (attachment) is the roga (illness) and roga can disappear only by regimen, strictly observed. Unless you get well, you cannot be liberated. This is the true meaning of Vedantha. He who knows this, whatever his Asrama, attains Mukthi.

- Q. Swami! Have any great souls achieved Moksha or Liberation while in the Grihastha asrama, the Householder Stage?
- A. Janaka, Aswapathi, Dileepa—these are examples of persons who gained Moksha as Grihasthas.
- Q. Swami, is it not necessary to follow strictly the injunction of the Sruthi which enjoins on man the duty of completing the Brahmacharya stage and then, after passing through the next stage of the Grihastha, to enter Vanaprastha and observe all the limitations and regulations of that stage, before ultimately taking on Sanyasa, the life of full renunciation? Or can one take Sanyasa even without going through the other steps?
- A. Yes, whenever one gets detachment from objects, one can take Sanyasa. Unless such a chance is seized,

man is bound to fall. Whatever may be the stage or Asrama you are in, when you get full renunciation, you can enter upon the Sanyasa stage from that very moment. There is no iron rule that you must live through the three earlier Asramas or stages. This too is the injunction of the Sruthi. The reason is: such a pure soul has undergone the training available in the other stages—the purification—in the crucible of life in previous births. His destructive tendencies have been rooted out and the progressive ones, the uplifting ones, have been developed in past births themselves.

- Q. How are we to know that such transformation has already been earned in the past births? Are there any signs by which we can discover that such and such an Asrama or stage can be skipped? If there are, please tell me.
- A. The fact that a person has no inclination for the three Asramas, that he has no attachment or attraction towards them is a clear sign. If detachment has developed in the past birth, the inclination will be absent. Since the awareness that the Atman alone is real has dawned, the person is unattached to the three earlier stages of life. When renunciation has appeared, one can give up worldly life, even though the series have to be overstepped. This is approved by Sruthi. But the person who confers Sanyasa must examine fully and convince himself that the person on whom he is conferring it is devoid of sensual impulses and

attachments. Sanyasa should be given only to one who has no agitation in the mind, or *Vrittis* as they are called. Only such can be said to be unattached. The candidate too should examine himself and see whether his inner consciousness is free from the Gunas, dull, active or even progressive. If it is not so free, he will not only break the vows of Sanyasa and be outcast, but he may even break down under the burden and meet a calamitous end.

- Q. Is Sanyasa of one kind or are there different kinds? Please tell me.
- A. There are three types of Sanyasa. They are *Deha Sanyasa*, *Mano Sanyasa* and *Atma Sanyasa*.
- Q. What does Deha Sanyasa mean?
- A. Sanyasa in appearance, so far as the outer body is concerned. He wears the ochre robe, assumes the name, appears in the form, but, he has no awareness of the Atma. He wanders amidst all the objective desires clinging to external things. He is like ordinary men, for all intents and purposes.
- Q. And Mano Sanyasa?
- A. In Mano Sanyasa, he gives up all decisions and desires, He has the mind under strict control. He is not guided by impulses or agitations. He is ever calm and collected.

- Q. You mentioned Atma Sanyasa as the third.
- A. Here, he breaks through all thoughts about things that are unrelated to the Atma, for he is ever immersed in the contemplation of the true reality, "*Aham Brahmasmi*." He is steady in the consciousness of his being Atma. His Ananda is continuous, *Akhanda*. This is called *Amritha Sanyasa*. The thickest darkness can be destroyed only by the light that emanates from the splendid solar orb; similarly, without the splendour of Atma Sanyasa, ignorance cannot be dispersed—the encasements that hide the heart cannot be shattered and the Atma cannot shine in its own glory.
- Q. How are these types attained? What are the signs that they have been attained?
- A. Deha Sanyasa is attained by discrimination between the eternal and the temporary, the evanescent and the everlasting. Mano Sanyasa is reached by conquering the waywardness of speech, of the senses and of the mind. Atma Sanyasa is won by filling oneself with the principles of Vedanthic thought. When these educative influences become strong and you are well established in these virtues and attitudes, then you can get liberated as a result of the combined effect of these stages.
- Q. Who among these are really fortunate, their lives being spent in a worthwhile way?

- A. Well, he who like the bee sucks in silence and in great bliss the honey in the flower, who is intent on uninterruptedly tasting the nectar of Atmic bliss; who ignores this world as but a “scene,” a *Drsya*; he indeed is the most fortunate. His life is the most worthwhile.
- Q. Then, Swami, what is it that is spoken of by the elders as attaining Sathya, Nithya, *Nirmala* and Santhi? How are these—Truth, Indestructibility, Purity and Equanimity—to be attained?
- A. As I said already, he who does not attach himself to the “scene” but who is engrossed in his own Atmic bliss; it is he who attains Sathya, Nithya, *Nirmala* and Santhi. Or even if he attains one of them, it is enough. For one includes all.