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BHAKTHA: Swami, I have a few doubts concerning the subject of Dhyana which You are now writing about: can I ask You?

Swami: Of course, you can ask and have your doubts removed. It is good for you and it gives Me joy.

Bhaktha: Some people practise Dhyana, but they are unable to know whether the Dhyana has progressed or not. What do You say about that?

Swami: Progress in Dhyana means the attainment of *Ekagratha*, Concentration. Each one can judge for himself without doubt, how far he has been able to succeed in Concentration, can't he?

Bhaktha: Some say that they see all sorts of things during Dhyana; some hear all types of sounds. Do these indicate progress?

Swami: They are delusions. They handicap progress. They implant conceit and disperse Concentration. The distraction of sights and sounds is no sign of Dhyanam.

Bhaktha: Then what is to be done when such are seen?

Swami: Don't allow the mind to wander onto them. Never lose sight of the Divine Form which you have pictured for yourself. Be convinced that these are but obstacles designed to scatter your attention from the Divine Form. If you permit these sights and sounds to creep in, the Original Form will be dimmed, your Ahamkaara will increase and you will lose your way.

Bhaktha: But, Swami, some people do say that these things are signs of progress in Dhyana!

Swami: That only means that they themselves are not practising Dhyana properly! Besides, not knowing what Dhyana is, they delude their disciples also by talking like this, to please them. That is the only profit earned.

Bhaktha: Well, does it mean then that, by means of Dhyana, we cannot see the Lord?

Swami: Why not? Certainly, it is possible. If you fix your attention on the sublimely beautiful Form of the Lord and concentrate on That alone, you will receive His Grace in that Form Itself in various ways. While doing so, many a disturbance might intervene. You should not be deluded; be on your guard, never forget the

auspicious Form. Picture to yourself that all Creation is immersed in it.

Bhaktha: But really, can we not know at anytime what stage we have reached in Dhyana?

Swami: You can identify the progress or decline of Dhyana only when you know this is stage number so and so, this stage is such and such, etc., isn't it? The *Dhyaanaroopam* (form for meditation) is Beginningless and Endless and so its Fruition also cannot be declared, complete and finished.

Bhaktha: Then, do You say that Dhyana is endless?

Swami: What is generally called the End is the end of the I and the merging of all in the One Form. Dhyana has no end.

Bhaktha: How are we to understand its stages?

Swami: You can have an idea of the stage if you examine daily how you are able to concentrate, how far you have subdued the wandering nature of the mind, and how deeply you taste the Divine Form; that is all. The stage reached cannot be cognised. What you receive and at what time, depends on His Grace. The Sadhaka's mission is to practise Dhyana, without deviating from the path. The rest is all His Grace. It does not depend upon the number of days or the length of time. Some may require many births. Others may

realise the goal in a few days even. It depends on each one's Sraddha, Bhakthi and Sadhana. It cannot be calculated and reasoned out.

Bhaktha: That means, we should not worry about our Sadhana, its progress, its stage, possible decline, etc.

Swami: Exactly. Worry about the discipline needed for the Sadhana, but not about its fruition. The reality, the realisation of the reality, these have no steps or limits. Do not yield to all sorts of delusions or desires for this stage and that. Stick to the goal and the journey. Never give up the discipline of the Sadhana. Do not change the time of Dhyana. With one aim and unchanging attitude, strive to attain it. That will vouchsafe the Fruit. That will bless you with the Bliss. Do not be led away by what others speak about their imaginary experiences. For you, nothing can be as genuine as your own experience. Therefore, first attempt to gain undeviating Concentration, Ekagratha; let that be your one aim.

Bhaktha: Dhyanam means vision of the Form of the Lord, isn't it, Swami? When such a Form is actually seen, they say it is not real and genuine! What do they mean by this?

Swami: Seeing the Form of the Lord is the goal of Dhyanam. To achieve that, is the aim. But before that goal is reached, there are some obstacles in the way. These are to be guarded against.

Bhaktha: What kind of obstacles are they? How are we to guard ourselves?

Swami: You have boarded a train to reach a village. You have heard that the particular village has a station. Many a station of the same type come during the journey and the train halts at each of them. But just because the train halts, you do not get down at any of them with your luggage, do you? If you get down, you will not be reaching the place where you have to go, is it not? It is no good, alighting at intermediate stations; for you miss your goal and suffer many hardships, not to speak of delay. The wiser course is to note even before starting on the journey, the names of the intermediate stations, etc., by approaching some persons who have travelled on the same route before.

Bhaktha: Everyone appears as if he is a seasoned traveller on the route! How are we to distinguish between those who pretend and those who know?

Swami: Of course, this has to be pondered over. Each one might have travelled by a route of his own. Some might tell you the details of the route, the stations, etc., with the aid of maps only. If that is so, you should not follow their directions on that basis. Consider wherefrom they started and wherefrom you are starting. Consider the route they traversed and the route you have to take. Moreover, it is impossible to consult those who have travelled as far as the goal, for they will not

come back; they won't be available for consultation, at the stage where you are. Therefore, you need not take the trouble to search and secure persons who can tell you their own experience of the route. It is best to take the help and the advice given by the veterans, in the Gita, the Sastras, the Vedas and the Upanishads. Rely on the words of the Lord and follow the Upadesa of the Avathara Purushas. Besides, there are countless great men who can guide you, as far as they themselves have travelled, and not beyond. For, how can they tell you things they have themselves not experienced?

Bhaktha: Well then, how can we get the opportunity to reach that path and attain that goal?

Swami: If they are destined for it, it won't be difficult at all. The chance will come seeking them. You must have heard the saying, "The man who went in search of a creeper, tripped over it on the way." You need not doubt, this will happen.

Bhaktha: Swami, some people say that if we do not get some visions and sounds and lights during Dhyanam, we can take it that our Dhyanam has not progressed! Do You say that they are wrong?

Swami: It is the image of their own idea. Perhaps they do Dhyanam in order to get such sights and sounds! Therefore, they experience them. They are things by which each one of them is deluded; they do not analyse

the truth underlying the visions! Really speaking, they should not seek these impermanent delusions.

Bhaktha: Then what are we to seek, Swami?

Swami: Seek and desire the Principle of everything: that which, if known, everything is known; that which, if seen all is seen and understood; do not seek for the drops, in your attempt to know the flood. When you have attained the Ocean (the basis of all the drops), you will not have the delusion of the drop.

Bhaktha: Some Sadhakas picture to themselves during Dhyanam, the Guru; is that correct?

Swami: The Guru shows the path. He teaches what is beneficial. So he has to be shown respect and gratitude, of course. But the Guru should not be taken to be all-powerful and all-inclusive. Of course, the Lord is in everyone, as the Atma; give each one the status that is his due and not more.

Bhaktha: But some great men declare that the Guru is both father and mother; that he is Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara, all in one.

Swami: Based on the Atma, that is correct. But such Gurus are rare. You can speak of him as father, mother, God, etc., on account of love and regard, that is all. How can he be so in fact? As loving as the mother, as protective as the father, you can say. But then, what

do you say of those who gave you this body and brought you up, even before you got the Guru? First and most important, be grateful to the mother and the father; serve them; make them happy; respect them. Respect the Guru as the person who shows you the path, who looks after your progress and is interested in your welfare. Worship the Lord as the witness of everything everywhere, as the master of Creation, Preservation and Dissolution, and as the All-Powerful One. Remember, you can consider only the Lord as the Universal Form and as the Universal Friend and Protector. All others have to be treated for just their individual status: the mother as mother, the father as father, the Guru as Guru. In truth, these cannot be one. Ponder over this. If you seek *Atmasaakshaatkaara* (the vision of the Atma), you have to install in your Dhyanam the Form of the Lord (the Universal Atma) which you like most, and not the picture of your Guru. It is not proper. The Lord is of a status higher than the Guru, is it not? Of course, have his words as the foundation and try to attain the Origin of all things. That will give the fruition of all efforts.

You are asked to treat the pebble as a gem, the gem as a pebble! Of course, through compulsion and bound by order, people may obey and accept but can that feeling be genuine? It is no sign of Dhyanam to have one idea outside and another inside. Unless this conflict is resolved and there is the same idea outside as well

as inside, there will not be any stability in Dhyanam; nor will there be any success.

Bhaktha: Very good, Swami. Without knowing matters fully, many a Sadhaka is wasting years in what he calls Dhyanam. They observe no law or limit. For all such, Your advice shows the Reality. It will establish them in the Eternal. Today I am indeed blessed, Swami.

separate incomplete Jiva and...suffering from that error. That delusion is the cause of all your sufferings.

Bhaktha: How, then, did this delusion come about?

Swami: You slept and so you dreamed. You slept the sleep of Ajnana and Moha and so you dreamed this Samsara. Awake, and you will have no more dreams. When the dream is gone, the delusion also goes.

Bhaktha: Swami, what is this ignorance? What are its characteristics? How does it operate?

Swami: That which is attached to the body and feels as “I” is the Jiva. The Jiva is outward-faced. It believes all this mutable Jagath and Samsara. It is immersed in both. When the Jiva ignores its *Adwaitaswarupa*, and forgets it we call it Ajnana. Is that clear?

Bhaktha: But Swami, The Sastras, all of them, say that Samsara is caused by Maya. You are now saying it is due to Ajnana. What is the distinction between the two?

Swami: Ajnana itself is known variously as Maya, *Pradhana* (primordial matter), Prakriti, *Avyaktha* (unmanifest), Avidya, Thamas, etc. Hence understand this well, Samsara is the consequence of Ajnana.

Bhaktha: How can Ajnana produce this Samsara, I want to know, Gurudeva, from you.

XVII

BHAKTHA: I have been anxious for a long time to ask You some things and to learn the answers from You. Today, I have the chance. This Manas and its Principle are unknown categories. Their meanings do not get fixed and clear without actual experience. But Swami, this delusion of Samsara, it overpowers us, thick and strong, like the darkness of clouds in the rainy season. What is this mighty force that drags us along? This is what has been bothering me. I feel persons like me should understand these things clearly in the very beginning. Will you kindly enlighten me?

Swami: Well, my boy. What am I to say? You are suffering from fright, imagining a tree stump seen in the park to be a man. That is, you are mistaking the non-dual, the full, the Adwaita, the Purna, which is Brahmam as a

Swami: Know that Ajnana has two powers: *Aavaranasakthi* and *Vikshepasakthi*, the veiling power and the projecting power. It veils the reality and projects upon it the unreal. The Aavaranasakthi also acts in two different ways: *Asathaavarana* and *Abhan-aavarana*. When a Jnani and an Ajnani meet, though the Jnani teaches that the Atma is One and Non-dual, the Ajnani denies it. He cannot grasp the reality so easily. Even when he hears the truth, he has not got the faith and the steadfastness to imbibe it and he will dismiss it with a shrug of indifference. This is the Asath-aavarana. Now about the Abhan-aavarana. Even when the person believes by his study of the Sastras and by the grace of Providence that there is Non-dual Atma, he dismisses it as non-existent, carried away by cursory and superficial arguments. Though he has Chith or the Consciousness which is aware of that very thing which he denies, the Moha makes him declare that it is non-existent. This is the sinister role of Abhan-aavarana.

Bhaktha: You spoke of the Vikshepasakthi also. What is meant by that?

Swami: Though you are Formless, Changeless and your nature is Ananda or Bliss, you are deluded into believing, feeling and acting as if you are the body, which has form, which changes and which is the seat of pain and grief. You refer to your self as the doer and enjoyer; you speak of I, you, they, this, that, etc., deluded into

believing variety and multiplicity, where there is only One. This illusion projecting many on the one is called Vikshepasakthi or *Adhyarupa*, superimposition.

Bhaktha: What is that?

Swami: When you superimpose the object “silver” on mother-of-pearl, when you see not the stump but the human form, you have superimposed on it, or when instead of the stretch of desert you see a lake, you have superimposed the unreal on the real. This is *Adhyarupa*.

Bhaktha: Well, Baba. What is the real, what is the unreal? Please explain that too.

Swami: The One and Only, Non-dual, Sath-chith-ananda Parabrahma is the Real. Just as the Name and the Rupa of the snake are superimposed on a rope, this Jagath (inclusive of everything from Brahma to a blade of grass, all creatures, all inert objects like the earth) is superimposed on that *Parabrahmavastu*. The Jagath is the *Avastu*, the Unreal, that is the superimposed thing.

Bhaktha: This superimposition of the Nama Rupa Jagath on the *Adwaitavastu*, how is it caused?

Swami: By Maya.

Bhaktha: Maya means....

Swami: The Ajnanasakthi of the above-said Parabrahmam...

Bhaktha: Ajnanasakthi means....

Swami: I told you, did I not? The incapacity to understand Brahman...though you are fundamentally Brahman....That is Ajnana.

Bhaktha: Well how does that Ajnana produce all this Jagath?

Swami: The Ajnanasakthi does not allow you to see the rope, instead it imposes the snake upon it. It makes you see the Jagath, where there is only Brahman.

Bhaktha: Swami, when there is only the Adwaita Non-dual One, how did the creation of all these worlds happen?

Swami: You have come back again to where we started from! Even if I tell you now, it is very hard to grasp. Still, since you have asked, I shall tell you. Listen. The Ajnanasakthi exists in the latent form in the rope itself. That is to say, it is latent, unmanifested in the Brahman. This is also called Avidya. It has as its base, Brahman which is Chith and Ananda. Of the two powers that Maya has, the Aavarana and the Vikshepa, the Aavarana veils the Brahman and the Vikshepa makes it manifest as Manas. The manas creates all this panorama of name and form through the exuberance of Vasanas.

Bhaktha: Wonderful, Swami. How wonderful is this Prakriti! What is the distinction between the waking stage and the dream stage?

Swami: Both are of the nature of illusion; in both, we have the Vasanas operating. The Jagath is the stable illusion; the dream is the unstable illusion. This is the distinction, there is no other.

Bhaktha: Swami, how can it be said that this Jagath is unreal, when it is concrete and capable of being experienced in a variety of ways?

Swami: It is a delusion that hides the reality from the understanding, the Jagath is as much a superimposition on Brahman, as a series of pictures on the wall.

Bhaktha: Avidya is said to be *Anaadi* (beginningless), isn't it? Why then is it blamed so much?

Swami: The beginningless Avidya is ended when Vidya dawns. This is only logical. Darkness is destroyed by Light. Every object has five parts: Origin, nature, function, period, result. But in the case of the Paramatma these cannot be enunciated, though everything that has evolved as if from Him, has them. Maya alone has no explicable origin. It is its own proof. It is there in Brahman, with Brahman: it is An-adi. No cause can be given to explain how it manifested itself, so luxuriously. As a bubble rises through the force of its own nature, up from the water, a force which takes the form of Namarupa emerges from the Limitless, the Full, the Paramatma. That is all. It is only the ignorant who will speak ill of Avidya: really there is no well or ill.

Bhaktha: How can it be said the Maya has no origin or *hethu*? Just as the potter's handiwork is the hethu for the clay to take the form of the pot, the sankalpa of Iswara is essential for the force latent in Brahman to become patent.

Swami: In the final dissolution, or *Mahapralaya*, Iswara too will become non-existent. Brahman alone will exist, isn't it? Then, how can the Sankalpa of Iswara be the hethu? It cannot be. While considering this subject, you should not take Brahma, Vishnu and Iswara as three separate entities. These three are forms shaped by the three Gunas. All three are One Paramatma. But since it is difficult to understand the working of the world, it is explained and grasped as three: three forms engaged in three types of actions, bearing three names. At the time of Creation, dissolution is absent. Both can coexist only beyond time. Man who exists in Time, Action, and Cause can never hope to grasp it. When you transcend the three Gunas, you too can attain that, but not till then. So, without spending time in such ununderstandable problems, engage yourself in the things you urgently need, traversing the path which will lead you to the Goal.