

# Chapter I. The Supreme Reality

The process of living has the attainment of the Supreme as its purpose and meaning. By the Supreme is meant the *Atma*. All those who have grown up in the *Bharathiya* (Indian) culture know that the *Atma* is everywhere. But when asked how they have come to know of this, some assert that the *Vedas* (most ancient spiritual revelations) have taught them so, others quote spiritual texts (*sastras*), and others rely on the experiential testimony of the great sages. Each of them bases their conclusion and proves its correctness according to the sharpness of their intellect.

Many great people have directed their intelligence toward the discovery of the omnipresent *Atma* and succeeded in visualizing that Divine Principle. In this country, Bharath (India), those who have tried earnestly to pursue these goals have had evidence of their successful realization placed before them by preachers, pundits or scholars, aspirants, and ascetics. However, among millions of people, we can count only a few who have been able to visualize the Universal *Atma* or the Self in All.

No living being, except the human, has been endowed with intelligence and discriminative faculty, heightened to this degree, in order to enable it to visualize *Atma*. This is why humanity is acclaimed as the crown of creation and why the scriptures (*sastras*) proclaim that the chance of being born as a person is a very rare piece of good fortune. People have the qualifications needed to seek the cause of creation; they have in them the urge and the capacity. They are utilizing the created universe for promoting their peace, prosperity, and safety; they are using the forces and things in nature for promoting this happiness and pleasure. This is approved by the *Vedas*.

## Vedas reveal the Supreme

The *Vedas* are the authority for the faith of millions. They are the very words of God. The Hindus believe that the *Vedas* had no beginning and will have no end. In the *Vedas*, God speaks to humanity. They are not books written by authors. They are revelations, conferred by God on many inquirers, of the ways of earning the Supreme Goal. They existed before they were revealed as valid paths and will continue to be valid even if people forget the paths. They did not originate at any period of time, nor can they be effaced at some other time. The *dharma* (supreme law of conduct) that the *Vedas* allow us to glimpse is also without beginning or end, for it refers to the Supreme Goal.

Of course, a few may argue that, though it may be conceded that the *dharma* relating to the Supreme Goal has no ending, surely it must have had a beginning. The *Vedas* declare that the cycle of creation-dissolution has no point where it begins and no point where it ends. It is a continuous wheel, and there is no change in the quantum of cosmic energy—either increase or decrease; it is ever the same, ever established in Itself. The Created and the Creator are two parallel lines, with their beginnings unknown and their ends incomprehensible. They are moving at equal distances from each other, forever and ever. Though God is ever active, His will and the power behind it are not clear to the human intellect.

The Supreme, according to the inheritors of Indian (*Bharathiya*) culture, is Vastness Itself. It rises to the high skies and roams free in that expanse. It was declared in clear terms long prior to the historical period. The study of the concept of the Supreme and the propagation of this concept suffered serious setbacks in the course of history, but it has confronted each of these setbacks with success and is today asserting itself, alive and alert. This is proof

of the innate strength of this revelation.

The conceptions of the Supreme Goal as laid down in Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism endeavoured to subsume into their categories the Indian (*Bharathiya*) concept and transfuse it as part of themselves. But the Indian concept did not accept an alien status in its own “birth place”; on the other hand, it clarified for those religions themselves their own concept of the Ultimate, emphasized the unity of all viewpoints, and established cordiality on the basis of the absence of difference. While the stream of knowledge regarding the Supreme Goal discovered by the Indian saints flowed on, the concepts of the other faiths remained as pools beside it.

In India itself, many sects were born like mushrooms from out of the main faith. They tried to pluck by the roots or to cause mortal damage to the basic concept of Hinduism regarding the Reality, the Supreme. But, as in a terrific quake of land the waters of the sea recede only to return with thousand-fold fury, roaring back upon the shore it had seemed to quit, this stream of Indian (*Bharathiya*) wisdom was restored to its pristine glory when it rose above the confusions and conflicts of history. When the agitations subsided, it attracted the varied sects that distracted the mind of people and merged them into its expansive form. The *Atma* principle of the Indians is all embracing, all-revealing, all-explaining, and all-powerful.

### **The Atmic principle of Love**

Developing faith in the *Atma* principle and loving it earnestly —this is the real worship. The *Atma* is the one and only Loved One for humanity. Feel that it is more lovable than any object here or hereafter —that is the true adoration one can offer to God. This is what the *Vedas* teach. The *Vedas* do not teach acceptance of a bundle of frightfully hard rules and restrictions; they do not hold before one a prison house where one is shut in by the bars of cause and effect. They teach us that there is One who is the sovereign behind all those rules and restrictions, One who is the core of each object, each unit of energy, each particle or atom, One under whose orders alone the five elements —ether, air, fire, water, earth— do operate. Love Him, adore Him, worship Him, say the *Vedas*. This is the grand philosophy of love as elaborated in the *Vedas*.

The supreme secret is: people must live in the world where they are born like the lotus leaf, which, though born in water, floats upon it without being affected or wetted by it. Of course, it is good to love and adore God with a view to gain some valuable fruit either here or hereafter, but since there is no fruit or object more valuable than God or more worthwhile than God, the *Vedas* advise us to love God with no touch of desire in our minds. Love, since you must love for love’s sake; love God, since whatever He can give is less than He Himself; love Him alone, with no other wish or demand. This is the supreme teaching of the Indians (*Bharathiyas*).

### **Divine Love**

Dharmaja, the eldest of the Pandava brothers, as depicted in the *Mahabharatha*, is the ideal of this type of lover. When he lost his vast empire, which included all India, to his enemies and had perforce to live in caves among the Himalayan ranges with his consort Droupadi, she asked him one day, “Lord! You are undoubtedly the topmost amongst those who follow the path of *dharma* unwaveringly; how did such a terrible calamity happen to you?” She was stricken with sorrow.

Dharmaja replied, “Droupadi! Do not grieve. Look at this Himalayan range. How magnificent! How glorious! How beautiful! How sublime! It is so splendid a phenomenon that I love it without limit. It will not grant me

anything, but it is my nature to love the beautiful, the sublime. So here, too, I reside with love. The embodiment of this sublime beauty is God. This is the meaning and significance of the love for God.

“God is the only entity that is worth loving. This is the lesson that the age-long search of our Indians (*Bharathiyas*) has revealed. This is why I am loving Him. I will not wish for any favour from Him. I will not pray for any boon. Let Him keep me where He loves to keep me. The highest reward for my love is His love, Droupadi! My love is not an article in the market.” Dharmaja understood that love is a divine quality and has to be treated so. He taught Droupadi that love is the spontaneous nature of those who are ever in the awareness of the *Atma*.

The love that has *Atma* as its basis is pure and sublime. But, since people are bound by various pseudo-forms of love, they believe themselves to be just individual souls (*jiva*), isolated and individualised, and deprive themselves of the fullness and vastness of divine love. So, people have to win the grace of God. When a person secures it, the individual soul will be released from identification with the body and can identify itself with the *Atma*. This consummation is referred to in the *Vedas* as “liberation from bonds (*bandha-vicchedana*)”, or “release (*moksha*)”.

### **Divinity within each one**

To battle against the tendency of body identification and win the grace of God as the only means of victory, spiritual exercises have been laid down, such as philosophical inquiry, as well as sense control (*dama*) and other disciplines of the six-fold spiritual discipline. Their practice will ensure the purification of the consciousness; it will then become like a clean mirror that can reflect the object, and the *Atma* will stand revealed clearly. For the attainment of the highest wisdom (*jnana-siddhi*), the cleansing of the consciousness (*chittha-suddhi*) is the royal path. For the pure in heart, this is easy to achieve. This is the central truth of the Indian search for the ultimate reality. This is the very vital breath of the teaching.

The Indian (*Bharathiya*) approach is not to waste time in discussions and assertions of faith in dogmas. The Indians do not delight in the sight of empty oyster shells thrown upon the beach. They seek to gain the pearls that lie in the depths of the sea; they would gladly dive into those depths and courageously seek the pearls. The *Vedas* show them the ideal to follow and the road that leads to the realization. The ideal is the awareness of the supreme truth, which lies beyond the knowledge gained by the senses. The *Vedas* remind one that the nonphysical *Atma* is in the physical “them” and that embodiment of truth is the supreme *Atma* (*Paramatma*). That alone is real and permanent; the rest are all transitory, evanescent.

The *Vedas* took form only to demonstrate and emphasize the existence of God. The Indians who attained the highest goal of spiritual exercise have all traveled along the *Vedic* path and carried on their investigations according to *Vedic* teachings. The scriptures (*sastras*) contain authentic versions of their experiences and the bliss they won. In the scriptures, and in the *Upanishads*, they assert, “We had the awareness of the *Atma*.”

Indians (*Bharathiyas*) do not aim at confronting a dogma or theory and scoring a victory over it; they aim at testing that dogma or theory in actual practice. Their goal is not mere empty faith; it is the stage reached (*sthithi*), the wisdom won (*siddhi*). The life-aim of the Indians is to reach, through constant spiritual exercise, the fulfilment that comes from the awareness of one’s divinity. Mergence with the Divine is the attainment of fullness. This is the supreme victory for the Indian.