

## 6. Religion Is Experience

**T**his wave-like movement of proceeding and receding, of merging and emerging, has been happening since Time; it will happen till Time ends; it is eternal in its feature—this is the belief of Bharathiyas. Man is not just this gross body; in it, there is a subtle component called mind; inside it, as its prompter and spring, there is an even more subtle principle called the Jivatma (individualised Soul). This Jivatma has neither beginning nor end, it knows no death, it has no birth. This is the basis of the Bharathiya faith.

One other article of faith: This is a unique feature of Bharathiya mental equipment. Until the individualised soul gets liberated from the individualisation and merges in the Universal, thus attaining Moksha or liberation, it has to encase itself in one body after another, and go through the process called living. This idea is held by no other people. This is

the *Samsara* idea, which the ancient texts or Sastras of India reveal and propagate. Samsara means “the movement into one form after another.” All the different schools and sects among the Bharathiyas accept this fact that the Atmas (apparently individualised) are eternal and incapable of being affected by change. They may differ in describing or denoting the relationship between the Atma and Easwara or God. One school of thinkers may posit that the two are ever separate. Another may declare that the Jivatma is a spark in the universal flame of fire that Easwara is. A third may assert that the two are undifferentiated. But the truth remains that the Atma is beginningless and endless; since it is not born, it has no death. Its individualised image has to evolve through a series of bodies, until it attains fulfilment in the human. All schools are one in upholding this faith, in spite of the variety of their other interpretations.

We shall now come to the foremost among the glorious Truths, the most astounding of the basic Truths that the human intellect has attained in the spiritual field: the Atma is by its very nature, Purity, Fullness and Bliss (*Parisuddha* [absolute purity], *Paripoorna* [absolute fullness] and Ananda). This is the belief that animates all schools of thought, whether they are the worshippers of Sakthi, or Shiva, or Vishnu, or whether they are Buddhists or Jains. Every Hindu acknowledges it. The *Dwraithins* (dualists) believe that the fundamental, genuine nature of the Atma is Ananda; this is diminished and desiccated by the consequences of human actions, in life after life and

therefore, has to be restored and revitalised by the Grace of God. The Adwaitins (the Monists) believe that there can be no diminution or desiccation. They assert that the Atma is fully splendid; only, through the influence of the deluding effect of ignorance (Maya) which superimposes false impressions on what is really true, it appears as if it has diminished. Whatever may be the differences in interpretation, when we take our stand on the central core of the Truth on which all agree, between the “East” and the “West,” there will be discerned a vast deep passage, where both do journey to the goal. The people of the Eastern countries seek in the inner regions of their selves the realisation of this gloriously beneficent consummation. While worshipping, we close the eyes and endeavour to visualise God inside ourselves. People of the West lift up their faces and visualise God in outer space, in the beyond. They believe that their scriptures have been recorded by Persons under the direction of God. Bharathiyas believe that the Vedas—their sacred scriptures—were the very breath of God conveying meanings to the sages who had installed Him in their hearts.

There is another point which we have to understand: We have to hold fast to it always. Unless a belief is held unshaken throughout night and day, it cannot be used to achieve victory. No success is possible otherwise. When a person asserts that he is low and mean and that he knows but little, he becomes low and mean and his knowledge shrinks. We become what we believe we are. We are the

children of Almighty God, endowed with supreme Power, Glory and Wisdom. We are Children of Immortality. When we dwell in this thought, how can we ever be low and ignorant? Bharathiya spiritual culture enjoins on everyone to believe that the real nature of man is supreme and that he should ever be conscious of this truth.

The Bharathiyas of past ages had faith in their great Reality. They achieved victory in their endeavours as a result of this faith and rose to lofty heights. They reached the peak of progress. We have slid down into the present decline, mainly because we have lost faith in the Atma in us. This was the beginning of our fall. For, loss of confidence in the Atma or Self involves loss of faith in God Himself. That Omnipresence, that Inner Motivator of all, who is the warp and woof of our body and mind, our emotions and intellect—strengthening faith in Him is the only means of realising the highest goal of man. This is the lesson that Bharathiya spiritual history longs to teach.

Children of Bharath! Teach your children this life-preserving, glorious and heart-expanding Truth from the early days of life. The sanctifying vision that Bharathiyas secured is this: the Atma is full and free. It is a wonderful discovery, a thrilling thought! The Atma is by its very nature full; fullness need not be attained or accomplished and added to It. If fullness is added to it, it can also be subtracted by the passage of time, what is built up must disintegrate. If man is impure by nature, even though he may succeed in achieving

purity for five minutes, he has to wallow later in impurity, for the purity that comes in the middle will be easily swept away by circumstances. So all Bharathiya spiritual thinkers declare that Purity is our very nature and that Fullness is our genuine reality. They said that we are never really “wanting.” This was the lesson that Bharathiyas taught the world. This is the stream of spiritual strength that flowed from India and fertilised the world.

At the end of life, one should bring to the consciousness the great thoughts one has attained in life, the high feelings one entertained. This was the directive of the sages of India. They did not demand that one should bring to memory the faults and errors one committed in life. These are inevitable and universal. But the sages declare that one should be aware always of one’s Reality and one should be engaged ever in contemplating its grandeur and glory. That, they said, is the greatest step to progress.

There is another fact that we have to pay attention to, more than all else. For Bharathiyas, religion means “experience” and nothing less. It is indeed pitiable that we very often forget this important fact. This secret must be imprinted on the heart of everyone. Only then can one be safe and secure. Not only this. It is not the way of thought of a Bharathiya to say that all things can be attained by self-exertion. The Bharathiya knows that Divine Will is the basis of everything. Religious principles have to be practised and their validity experienced. Listening to their exposition is of

no use; learning some one set of arguments and conclusions and repeating them parrot-like are not enough. If they appeal to one’s intellect and are approved by it as correct, that will not help at all. It must transform us. The reason why Bharathiyas posit God and declare that God is Being and Becoming is their experience, which is the highest proof. The declaration does not originate from the head, from the faculty of reason, the *yukti* (cleverness). The forefathers asserted that there is the entity, Atma, in each and that the Atma is but a spark of the Universal Atma, for they had become aware of it, deeply and without doubt. There were, in the past, thousands who had sought the experience and won it. Even today, such persons are not absent. In future too, they will be present. It is a thirst that affects man. Unless he contemplates God and confronts Him in bliss, unless he wins the awareness of the Atma that is his reality, man will be tormented by the thirst, the agony that he is “lacking completeness.”

Man must first grasp the Truth. All religious factions and fights will vanish, as fast as man grasps the Reality. For, the name “follower of theistic code of morals,” can be allotted only to one who has experienced God and realised His Glory. Only those who have realised Him in their hearts can have the bonds, that chain their hearts to the wheel of birth-death, broken. Mere platform orations do not indicate awareness of the Truth that has to be attained through religion.

Theistic faith is based on genuine experience. Once we accept this, self-examination starts and one is able to

measure how far he has journeyed towards the goal or away from it. He will then realise that He is groping in the dark and dragging others into darkness to grope with him. Only then will men give up factional hatreds in the name of religious war on those professing different faiths. Those who revel in religious wars should be asked, “Have you seen God? Have you become aware of the Divine Atma? Or else, what authority have you to decry or deny this name of God? Are you, struggling in the darkness, attempting to draw me too into that darkness? Can a blind man lead another blind man along the road? That is an impossible task. Therefore, understand your Truth before you defame or deny mine.”

