

## Chapter VII. Be Yourself

One who has visualized the *Atma* principle that animates all can never condemn the religion of anyone. That one will never enter any religious squabble or conflict, never talk lightly or demeaningly of another's faith, and never disturb or despise the faith of another. Only the ignorant with no spiritual experience, only those who do not know the depths of truth will embark upon the condemnation of the faith of others. It is very unbecoming to indulge in or encourage religious conflicts, to ridicule the rites and ceremonies through which others adore God, and to label the religious practices of other people as superstitions. Each one has accepted the practice and holds on to it because of the bliss it confers!

By those who know, the ONE is spoken of as MANY. The same thing is seen and experienced in different ways, by different people, according to the angle of vision and the level of intelligence and awareness. Different people describe the same thing or experience differently. How can anyone declare that they should not do so? Or that what they describe is wrong? No one has the right to disparage or deny.

### Unity in diversity

Only those who strive to transcend the here and now and become aware of the transcendent principle of Godhead deserve the name Hindu. Those who revel in hurting others do not justify the name.

The inner core of Indian (*Bharathiya*) culture is this realization of the unity-of-*Atma* principle, which fills each heart with universal love. Those who are aware of this unity and are well established in it are kith and kin of Indians, whichever country they may live in, whatever language is native to their tongues.

Many human communities have, as the basis of their beliefs, the theory that a person is a bundle of matter and that this matter is subject to the laws of physics and chemistry. In the Western languages, death is denoted as “the act of giving up life (*jiva*)”, whereas in the language of India, it is “giving up the body (*deha*)”. This is due to the Westerner's faith of being the body and the faith of the Indian not being the body. The Indians assert and know that they have *Atma* as their reality, that the *Atma* is enclosed in a body. The two views are widely disparate.

A civilization that is built on the shifting sand of worldly pleasure can last only for a little while. It will disappear from the surface of the earth. On the other hand, the civilization of India (*Bharath*) and of the countries that value and follow the civilization of India have survived for centuries and are vital even today. They show new and refreshing signs of more creative life. This fact has to be kept in mind by the Indians who have dedicated their lives to the imitation of other civilizations and cultures.

### Self-exertion, not imitation

Imitation cannot build a stable culture. It can never become “civilization”. It is a sign of cowardice, not a quality that can ensure progress. It is the royal road to downfall. How can one draw inspiration for uplifting oneself if one is engaged in hating oneself and devaluing one's achievement?

Indians (*Bharathiya*) should feel no sense of shame in bringing back to memory their forefathers, elders, and teachers of the past who built the culture that nurtured them. Instead, they ought to feel proud of their forefathers and elders and teachers who shone among them. They must be proud that such people are their ancestors, that their

nation is of such holiness, and that their country is endowed with such sacred characteristics. The children of India have to fill themselves with the proud consciousness that, in their native land, wise people were born who attained the heights of self-realization, as well as many others who rose to the peak of perfection.

Manifest the power that lies in self-exertion! Do not resort to the weak stratagem of imitating others. Instead, absorb the good qualities that others may possess. We plant a seed in the soil. Then, we supply it with the ingredients it needs —water, air, manure. The seed sprouts, grows into a sapling, and becomes at last a huge tree. You will notice that it does not become soil, manure, air, or water. It makes use of these, but it sticks to its own nature and grows into a tree. May you live like that tree.

Of course, we have much to learn from others. There is no need to doubt this fact. Those who refuse to learn thus declare themselves fools. Whatever can promote your spiritual advance, you can learn from others. Imbibe them to the full, according to the lines laid down for your own progress in your own moral path (*dharma*).

You must live as you, not as someone else. Do not allow anyone to divert you away from your innate nature. Be immersed in your God, in your own imaginings and feelings, in the bliss that springs from your own heart, and in the delight derived from your spiritual exercises (*sadhana*). When others try to prevent you from doing this, whatever plans they weave and whatever contrivances they employ, resist them at the cost of your own lives. Do not deny yourself that divine awareness, that divine ecstasy. This exhortation echoes through the stream of spiritual values of the Indians (*Bharathiyas*). Pull down the barriers that stand in the way and obstruct the free flow of the culture of this land, which confers such sweetness and strength. Clear the channels through which it flows and cleanse them. Then it can follow its course, unimpeded.

### **Sai's resolve and the message of God's love**

Sai has willed that this country, India (Bharath), has this spiritual discipline (*sadhana*). For too long a time the theistic *dharma* of this land has stopped moving. For too long a time its characteristic has been static. Now, it has to be made dynamic. It must vitalize the daily life of every human being. It must enter and fructify the palatial king's dwelling and the lowly huts of the poorest in the land.

The theistic *dharma* is the treasure of everyone; everyone has the right to inherit it and benefit by it; having been born as a human, one has a valid claim to share it. For this reason, Indians have to take it before every door and welcome everyone in every home to share it. Just as the air that we breathe in God's creation is available to all, the *dharma* of the awareness of God and His power and mercy has to be available to all. Indians must hold on to this wide outlook and the universality and unity of this message. The conflicts between disparate faiths and beliefs will disappear of themselves and peace and love will be restored on earth.

Imagine a house full of darkness for centuries. You may enter the house and pray to the darkness to leave the premises, or shower abuse on it for days, or frighten it by threatening force. The darkness will stay; it cannot be diminished at all. It will not yield to your tactics. It cannot be scared out. But light a lamp, and it will flee that instant. The lamp of wisdom can save a person from age-long darkness. One must recognize this truth and, once it is recognized, shape life accordingly.

People have an immensity in them; this is the core of Indian (*Bharathiya*) thought. It is really a mystery how anyone came to regard themselves as condemned to fall! A person might strike us as demonic or divine; in both, the *Atma* is the reality to the same extent. You can't say the *Atma* is less in one and more in the other. When faults are

found in someone, you have to conclude that there are deficiencies in behaviour, that is all. Don't conclude that there is no divine *Atma* in that person. As a result of the company one keeps or the inefficiency of the society in which one grew, faults have grown. They are not native to one's nature, which is *Atmic*. You have to provide the person with good company and beneficial surroundings and persuade them to enter them. On no account should you condemn the person as a born incorrigible and keep them apart.

### **Gross and subtle bodies**

The body is composed of cells, which are made up of atoms. The atoms are also physical phenomena. They are fundamentally inert matter (*jada*), composite and unfeeling. The *Vedantins* speak of a subtle body, separate from this gross body. That too is physical. It is the centre of subtle skills and force. It is in this body that all the subtle mental feelings and agitations take place. Each force can work only through some medium or other, which is physical. The same power that operates the gross body works through the subtle processes of thought. They are not two different entities. One is the subtle form of the other, that is all.

What is the source of these powers? If we delve deep, we will find that there are two things in nature: space (*akasa*) and the life force (*prana*). Space is the source of all the gross and subtle material one encounters; when the life force contacts it, due to the impact the space principle transforms itself into either gross or subtle, in varying proportions.

The life force is omnipresent, like space. It can also penetrate everywhere and everything. Like the blocks of ice that water becomes and that float and move about on water, the life force acts on space and bodies appear. The life force is the force that moulds the space into various forms. The gross body is the vehicle of the life force that it has shaped out of space. The subtle body is of the form of thought, feeling, etc.

When the subtle body is transcended, the awareness of the Reality becomes manifest. Just as fingernails persist as part of our gross body, however often we pare them, so too the subtle body is an integral part of one's makeup.