

8. Bondage

A person can discard as many gross bodies in which he takes temporary residence, as the number of times he pares his nails. But the subtle body cannot be changed. It lasts and persists. This is the most secret doctrine of Bharathiya spiritual thought. Going further along this line of discovery, it can be revealed that man means: a complex of the gross body, the subtle body and the Jivi (the individual). The Vedantic philosophy would declare that the Jivi shares the quality of Eternal unchanging Everlastingness (*Nithya*). *Prakriti* or the objective world is also eternal, but with a difference. It undergoes perpetual change. It is never the same, but it persists forever. The basis for the objective world, namely, Prana (the life-force) and Akasa (space or ether) are eternal, but they act and interact without rest and manifest variously and manifoldly.

The Individual Atma (the Jivatma) did not have its origin in either Akasa or Prana. It is not material in nature. So it is eternal, without any change. It did not happen through the impact of Prana on Akasa, or Akasa on Prana. Things brought together will disintegrate. But things that are “themselves” ab initio cannot so come apart. For disintegration means “resuming the original nature,” “becoming what it originally was,” “reducing itself to its native substance.” The gross body is the result of the combination of Prana and Akasa, and so it dissolves itself into its components. The subtle body too dissolves, but only after a long, long time. The Jivi is not brought together, so it cannot fall apart. It has no birth. It cannot be born. A unitive partless being can have no moment of origin.

The objective world or *Prakriti*, consisting of billions and billions of varied things, forces and events, is governed by the Will of God. God is All-knowing, All-penetrating, All-pervading. He is activating *Prakriti* and acting through *Prakriti*, all the time. *Prakriti* is ever in His care. His sovereignty is beginningless and endless. This is the doctrine of the dualists, the *Dwaitins*.

This gives room for one question. When the world is ruled by God, how does He permit it to be so wicked and vile? The answer given is that God is not responsible for the grief and the pain. The sins we commit are the progenitors of the grief we suffer. Joy and sorrow are the consequences of the good and the evil that man perpetrates. God is the

Witness. He does not punish, nor does He cause grief. The Jivi is beginningless, that is to say, he has no birth; but he involves himself in incessant activity and so he has to go through the inevitable consequences of that activity. This is the experience of everyone, the characteristic of everyone's mind. This is the unbreakable law of the objective world or Prakriti. Grief or joy is the image of the activity one engages in. It is the resound, the reflection, the reaction. The Jivi *can* be the witness without concerning himself with the good and the bad of the activity. When involvement happens, good will have to be experienced when good is done, and evil will have to be experienced when evil is done.

The Vedantha asserts that the Jivi is by its very nature, pure and unblemished. This is the accepted doctrine according to Bharathiya thought. But this truth has been befogged by ignorance and neglect. So, maya pollutes the experience and the shade of ignorance breeds evil. But when *sathkarma* or beneficial activity is engaged in, the clouds of maya are scattered and the Reality of the Self is realised. All beings, all jivis are, by their very nature, pure. Good acts can remove the taints of evil deeds and preserve its essential purity. Then, the Jivi is led into the God-ward path, the *Devayana*. The Godward urge will transform the words, the thoughts and the deeds of the individual.

We cannot think without words. Words are the essential material for thought. When the individual drops the body, the words enter the mind; the mind enters the prana or life-

force and the prana merges in the Atma. The Atma (individualised in the body) when it liberates itself rushes to the *Surya Loka*, the Region of the Solar Principle, the Surya. From thence, it reaches the region of Brahma, the *Brahma Loka*. Having reached that region, the individualised Atma or Jivatma has no more concern with Prakriti. It will exist there till and end of Time. It will experience boundless Delight. It will have all powers except the powers of Creation.

The authority to rule over the Cosmos is exclusive to God. God is free from desires of all varieties. Man's duty is but to offer Him Love and worship Him through Love. This raises man to the highest status among beings. Those who are unaware of this status or incapable of discharging its responsibilities belong to other categories. They too offer and worship, they too engage themselves in beneficial activity. But they crave for the fruits they hope to gain. They perform acts motivated by a desire to benefit from the results that emerge therefrom. "We have helped the helpless; so, our path will be smooth and safe. We have uplifted the downtrodden; so, we can avoid troubles on our road. We have busied ourselves in singing the Lord's Glory in chorus (Bhajan); so, we are sure of Heaven"—these are the calculations of people of this nature who engage themselves in "good acts." When such people give up their bodies, that is to say, when such people die, their words will merge in their minds, their minds will merge in their Prana, and the Prana, thereafter will merge in the Jivi, and the Jivatma will travel to the Region of the Moon Principle (the *Chandra*

Loka), that is to say, the *Loka* of the Presiding Deity of the Mind...suggesting that they have to enter again the realm of the mind with all its agitations and turmoils of wants and wishes. In the Chandra *Loka*, such *Jivis* will experience some satisfaction and delight, as long as the consequence of the good acts lasts. That is why it is said in the scriptures: *Ksheene Punye, marthya-lokam visanthi*. (When the acquired merit is spent, they enter again the world of mortal men). The *Jivatma* encases itself in a body equipped with sense organs, etc. appropriate to the earned consequences of the deeds of the previous body, and starts another life-career. The residence of the soul in the Chandra *Loka* is what the Hindus refer to as the time spent as a *Deva* in Heaven or as an Angel according to Christian and Islamic religions. The name *Devendra* given to the Lord of these *Devas* is an indication of a position of authority. Thousands have risen to that position.

According to the Vedas, when the highest good is observed, that person is elevated to the position of *Devendrahood*. The soul raised previously to that position will descend to the earth and resume its career in human form. Just as on earth monarchs change, in heaven too rulers cannot escape rise and fall. The residents of Heaven too are subject to the law of ups and downs. It is only the *Brahma Loka* that is free from birth and death, rise and fall, ups and downs. This is the basic doctrine of Bharathiya thought, its eternal nectar, administered to humanity.

When the *Jivatma* is as a *Deva* in the Chandra *Loka*, it cannot manifest any *Karma*. Only man can express himself through *Karma* which binds him by its consequence. *Karma* means activity undertaken with desire, with an eye on the result. When the soul is in Chandra *Loka* as a *Deva*, it is content and satisfied and so, it will not crave for activity for earning pleasure or achieving some success. The residence in that *Loka* is the reward it has secured for the good deeds done by it in the past, or it may be the prize won for such goodness. When the delight emanating from the good deeds is experienced and spent away, the balance of the consequence accumulated has to be suffered, and so the soul has to come as man on earth. Then, attaining the highest good and engaging himself in acts of highest potency for merit, he can cleanse his heart and reach *Brahma Loka* from whence there is no coming back.

The word *Naraka* (Hell) can nowhere be found in the Vedas. The conception of Hell is foreign to the spiritual thought of Bharathiyas. The idea of Hell and the various descriptions of Hell are all later additions in the Sastras and Puranas. The authors of these texts believed that religion will be incomplete if it does not posit Hell. They laid down diverse tortures as part of Hell, but they laid down one limit to the pain Hell inflicts. They declared that there can be no death in Hell. The purpose for which Hell was created was only to incite fear among the people in order to make them desist from sin.

But *Adwaita* does not posit Heaven or Hell. It is concerned only with Bondage and Liberation, Ignorance and Illumination. It is known as Vedantha. There is no faith higher than what Vedantha stands for.

