

## 20. The Primal Purpose

**T**he very first step to ensure peace and harmony to mankind is for each one observing the Dharma or code of conduct laid down for him in his own religion. If one holds his own faith and its essential principles mandatory, one can serve himself best and also serve others well. Dharma in this context means action in accordance with the traditions of the culture of the land. In every facet of the Dharma of this country, the ideal of world peace and world prosperity is immanent.

“*Athaatho Karma Jijnaasa.*” “Now, for the inquiry into Activity”—thus begins the intellectual probe into the mystery of Karma, which in our scriptures extends over vast fields. For example, to give away in charity and as gift is a very proper type of Karma. But one must be aware that egoism can pollute it and make it improper. It is laid down that plentiful charity now will ensure happiness in a future

life, so that consideration of this advantage for oneself might well lead men to good karma. Even if many have no eye on the future, it can be asserted that most charity flows from egoistic motives. This is an all-too-evident fact.

People feel proud that they have helped others. They are eager to be praised as beneficent and munificent. This attitude reveals their ignorance, *Ajnana*. It springs from non-awareness of actuality, *Maya*. In the Vedas and Sastras, the Rishis while elaborating on do's and don'ts, stress non-violence, compassion, service to the world, charity, etc. as virtues to be acquired. Saint Vidyananda named these as the very essence of Indian Wisdom.

Wisdom is the precious ambrosia gathered from all sources of knowledge and all the arts of earning it. It is the sweet, sustaining butter churned and collected from the Sastras. Wisdom is not to be defined as the capacity to discriminate and declare, “this is flat” or “this is round,” or “this is a hill,” “this is a house,” or “this is a thorn.” That is the common belief. This is only knowledge. Next, we have what may be called good knowledge (*Sujnana*); when man is able to distinguish between right and wrong or good and bad, when he can discover, “This activity is for my betterment and the betterment of others.” Both *Jnana* and *Sujnana* are confined to the intellect of man. There is a higher stage called *Vijnana*, when the heart is transformed by loyalty to Truth, non-violence, and compassion. Such a person can understand himself, his kinship with the Cosmos, and

with the Creator of the Cosmos. He lives in accordance with that understanding, without doubt or disharmony. Ajnana or ignorance breeds sorrow. Vijnana confers joy. If one hesitates to call any experience Vijnana, let him examine whether it is material or spiritual, on the touchstone, “Does it give me unalloyed joy?” and then classify it as such. The yardstick for Vijnana is Dharma. The more Dharma is put into practice, the more one gets rooted in Vijnana.

Action through Vijnana is evidenced by the peace and prosperity of the nation. The decline of Dharma reveals the disappearance of Vijnana. Eras are differentiated on the basis of adherence or aversion to Dharma. When Dharma, justice and harmony prevail fully and fearlessly, it is said to walk securely over the land on four legs. The times when it is so observed are also referred to as Kritha Yuga, the Kritha Era. When justice and harmony prevail less and less, people feel that Dharma has to limp its way on three legs! The times suffering from this handicap are referred to as the Thretha Era, the Thretha Yuga. When justice and harmony prevail only a quarter as much as in the Kritha Yuga, Dharma has to struggle on two legs. That is the Dwapara Yuga. When they have no respect paid to them and when they are largely non-existent, Dharma stands on one leg, as it were. This is the Kali Yuga, we are told by the scriptures.

The wisdom of the Bharathiyas is nourished by Dharma. Though Indian thought asserts that “the objective world” is basically untrue and though it teaches us that our

involvement with life and its problems is an illusive adventure that cannot affect our Reality, the Sastras, which are the roots of that thought, do not advise us to discard Dharma. For, to grasp the Highest and the Ultimate Truth, Dharma is indispensable. The four traditional goals of human endeavour (the *Purusharthas*: Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha) are laid down to cater to those who live in the belief that the objective world is “True.”

It can be seen that even among the four goals, Dharma has been placed first and foremost. The state to be earned by the first three achievements is Moksha, which is mentioned last. The person who seeks riches and the fulfilment of his desires along the path laid down by Dharma can alone win victory. That way lies liberation which gives man the highest bliss.

Nevertheless, since the Jivi or the individualised, limited self is caught in the net of desire or Kama, the goals of Dharma and Moksha do not enter its vision or arouse any interest. It takes delight in sinking and floating on the waves of material pleasures (Artha and Kama). This is nothing strange in persons of that nature.

The search for food, the avoidance of fear and the enjoyment of sloth and sleep—in these, man and animal are equally eager and equally involved. The search for Moksha and the observance of Dharma—these promote man to a level of existence higher than the animal level. If that yearning is absent, man cannot claim to be human.

India is acclaimed by her own people as well as by people of other countries for holding forth the ideal of Vijnana, the highest wisdom. Here, there is faith that God exists in all lands. Here there is constant effort to discriminate between Dharma and what is not Dharma. Value is attached to justice and virtue. Compassion towards living beings and non-violence are also held high as guides to conduct. Efforts are made to distinguish truth and untruth. Temples still flourish and are still replete with spiritual vibrations. We have in other countries many Houses of God constructed by man such as churches and mosques but they are not so ancient and charged so long and so deep with Divinity.

All religions are One, declares this land of Bharath. There may be difference in the number and nature of the limbs; the message each conveys is the same as all the rest. This is the discovery of India, and her announcement to mankind.

For directing their prayers to God, one person has, as his symbol, a stone; another has a piece of metal; a third uses wood. But all attach great importance to prayer and believe in its beneficent effects. One person turns to the East, while praying. Another regards the West as really sacred. The prayer of both concerns the same wants and inadequacies. This is the conclusion arrived at by Bharathiya sages and thinkers. Each faith has its own Scriptures and doctrines. But one must pay attention to the special features too. For example, God is so intimately felt as one's own

that prayers are often addressed to God in singular: "Can you not do this?" or "Are you incapable of protecting me?" or "Have you become weak of hearing?" This is a peculiar trait among Bharathiyas.

However a person feels or thinks, he transforms himself into the embodiment of those feelings and thoughts. If he is immersed in the truth that he is God, he can become Divine. However, if he is immersed in the falsehood that he is the King of the Land, he will be deemed mad or traitorous. He might even be beheaded for treason. God will not treat you as insane or insubordinate. Every being is Divine. This is the final judgement of the wisdom of Bharath.

Logic and intellectual investigation can give only partial accounts of the Truth. Everything in creation has many phases and many angles. Reason can observe only from one angle; it can see only one phase. The intellect that has been purified and clarified through the activities (Karma) laid down in the Vedas can succeed in observing both phases. Without undergoing the process of purification and clarification, Reason can work only within the bounds of the materialist world. So, the conclusions that it presents before us can only be partially true. But the intellect subjected to the processes of cleansing and sharpening in the Vedic way can serve us by presenting a picture of the full Truth of the objective world. Most of the other Faiths rely on principles reached by reason, not subjected to these disciplines taught by the Vedas. Bharathiyas have the Sastras

which illumine far beyond the bounds and limits of the temporary and the temporal.

The Universe is the Macrocosmos. The Individual Being is the Microcosmos. The first is the *Brahmanda*, the second is the *Pindanda* (Physical Universe). But the basic Truth of both is One, the same. That One is independent and unrelated to any other fact or thing. When That is realised in this manner, it can be called Brahman. When it enters the awareness as the Universe, it is referred to as Parabrahman. The basic truth of the Universe is Atma. The basic Truth of the Individual is also Atma. All that appear as different from Atma are of the region of “delusion” or Mithya. Mithya or delusion implies a condition which until inquiry appears real but on inquiry is known to be unreal. It is only an appearance, this universe and its supposed basis—an appearance caused by Ignorance or Maya. The power that deludes us into believing that the created cosmos is true and real is also an emanation from the Atma. When this power operates and the Atma is clothed with it, it is referred to as Paramatma.

Atma is the *Satchitananda* or *Sath-Chith-Ananda*, treated as one inseparable composite. Maya too is a composite of the three gunas or natural modes or qualities—Thamasic, Rajasic and Sathwic. They express themselves in *Ichha Sakthi* (Desire), *Kriya Sakthi* (Deed) and *Jnana Sakthi* (Wisdom). The quality called Thamas creates the appearance of diversity, hiding the basic ONE and Only. The quality named Rajas explores the Truth and the pleasures

of wisdom. The quality named Sathwa is a clear mirror, it gives a correct picture of things and events that happen before it. It reflects Parabrahman and reveals Easwara or God. God thus manifested becomes the Universe or Jagat created by His Will. The reflected Easwara does not have the capacity of Maya or Delusion. As the clear water of a lake has froth and bubbles on the surface, the Atma’s essential nature seems to be tarnished by the deluding appearance of Maya and its product—the Jagath or Universe, with varied Names and Forms. When the three modes of Maya are in balance and in a state of unruffled equipoise, the Universe is termed unmanifest, *Avyaktha*. This is termed the “seed-state” since all subsequent variations are subsumed and latent in it. When Thamas and Rajas have their impact, Creation is caused and the Cosmos comes about. They agitate living beings into activity. The deluding force is conditioned by the three modes, as and when each expresses itself and asserts its influence over the rest. When Sathwa predominates, it is named as *Atmamaya*; when Rajas is ascendant, it becomes *Avidya* or Non-knowledge and when Thamas holds sway, it becomes *Thaamasi* or dullness. When the Atma is reflected in the Sathwic mode, the image becomes Easwara; when reflected in Rajas, it becomes Jiva or individual Being; and when reflected in Thamas, it becomes Matter. It is the mould, the upadhi, that causes the distinction between Easwara (God), Jiva (the living being) and *Dravya* (matter); when there is no upadhi or mould or case, all these are Atma. Since the Universe is God, Jiva and Matter, it can be truly described as the composite of

the three modes. The Universe has manifested, in order to serve the highest interests of living beings and of man, the most intelligent of them all. While affirming that the Atma is reflected in the Sathwic, Rajasic and Thamasic modes, producing impressions of Easwara, the Individual and Matter, one point has to be emphasised. The mirror that conditions the image has only limited capacity. It can reflect only objects that are opposite to it. But when the mirror is either convex or concave in surface or when its plain surface is soiled with dirt, the image will suffer contortion or fail in clarity. This, however, does not affect the object; only the image is distorted or defaced. But the object itself is usually condemned on the basis of its reflection or image.

Brahmam too appears distorted on account of Maya and Ajnana (ignorance) and this distortion which is a superimposed characteristic is supposed wrongly to adhere to Brahmam itself! The image of Parameswara (the Supreme Godhead) is also a reflection in the Maya mirror. As milk turns into curds, Brahmam has turned into Jagath or Universe. This transformation is the handiwork of Maya. Brahmam is the Master of Maya and not its subordinate. It releases the Maya Power and directs it. So, the personalised Brahmam or Parameswara is known as Omnipotent and Omniscient. The Jiva, the Easwara and the *Bhootha* (elements or matter)—these three contribute to the progress of the individual, each in its own way.

The Easwara or Lord is the fulfilment of all desires. All objects of enjoyment in the Universe emanate from His

Will, and so He has no desire at all. He has manifested the Universe not for the realisation of any desire of His or filling any vacuity He suffered from, but for the benefit entirely of living beings. “*Na me, Partha asthi Karthavyam, Thrishu Lokeshu Kinchana*—there is no duty binding on me, Partha, in the three worlds,” says Krishna. Creation, manifestation, or emanation is His very nature. Hence, the description (*Leela Vinodi*) “Revelling in play,” is often ascribed to Him. It is His Willpower that is filling all living beings with consciousness and helping them to be alert and active. He grants to each the consequence of thought, word and deed and is therefore described as the Giver-of-the-fruit-of-Activity (*Karma phala-pradaatha*). Without the intercession of the Lord, activity cannot result in consequence; nor can certainty arise that a particular act will result in an identifiable manner. Besides, the sages declare that Karma (activity) is momentary. The thought arises and the act is done. The act is followed by the fruit. It is not possible to predict when the fruit will be available or what its nature will be. Hence, we have to admit that it all depends on the Lord’s Command. What cannot be interpreted by our limited intellect has to be ascribed to His Command.

However long the interval, however many lives elapse, one cannot escape the obligation of suffering from the consequences of one’s actions. There can be no place for inquiry into the origins of the act or when it happened, for, one has to trace from the beginning of Time itself. One cannot discover the beginnings of the Lord, the Universe,

the Living Being, Activity and Ignorance; they are all beyond the Beginning. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna declares, “*Gahanaa Karmano Gathih*” (the way of action is elusively subtle and difficult to discover). The consequence might confront the person, even after the passage of many lives. The Lord is the eternal Witness, the Power that presides over every act. Looked at from this point of view, one has to realise and declare that the Lord and the Individual are bound inextricably together. In the absence of living beings, there can be no Lord. When there are no children, how can the word “father” be meaningful? So the Lord, it can be said, manifested the Universe, in order to provide living beings with fields of activity and in order to grant them the consequences of those actions. The five elements serve the same purpose. They also help constitute the physical vehicles of life, in accordance with the quality and quantity of those consequences. There are also regions called *Lokas* where beings which have accumulated great merit or gathered terrible sins have to be in the hereafter. These have no relation to the regions or bodies that are visible to us.

Life-principle and Individual-principle do both mean the same. Both indicate that they have emerged from absence of the awareness of the Truth, or Avidya. This again is due to bondage to the Gunas or tendencies. The individual is marked by the presence of *Rajo Guna* or the active work-prone passionate mode, though it has the seeds of the other two modes also in its makeup. The Jagath or creation itself has its origin when the Truth veiled itself in Avidya or

delusion. The modes manifested at that same moment and individuals differentiated according to the predominance of one or the other of the three chief modes, caused by the total effect of the Karmas gone through in life after life. When he is endowed more with the Sathwic mode, he becomes a Bhagavatha, inspired by devotion to God and engaged mostly in adoring and praising Divine Glory. Preponderance of Rajasic traits renders him a strong intelligent man, content to be a man with no higher aspirations toward Divinity. If he is ruled by the *Thamasic Guna*, he becomes as bound to the body and its needs as birds and beasts.

The Jivi (living being) on account of an intellect caught in the coils of delusion imagines that it is an “effect” and so bound to some “cause.” This non-awareness of Truth has to be conquered by Atma Vidya which urges towards this adventure and ensures success. It will destroy the distinction, now believed in, between Jiva and Jagath (the subject and the object, man and the Cosmos). To help man in this heroic duel, and to make him aware of the Truth, the Vedas prescribe Karmas or desirable activities in what is referred to as *Karma Kanda*. So long as one is caught in avidya, man and cosmos, the upper and lower worlds, dharma and adharma, karma, bhakthi and jnana—these concepts have to be respected and one’s life shaped accordingly. So long as one is established in the validity of the “diversity” apparent in the Universe, one acts according to the limits imposed by the personalised God, the Easwara.

The Universe is for each Jivi its own mental picture and nothing else, fundamentally. So, unless one unravels the mind and its processes, the Brahma principle is difficult to understand. Those who have not understood the real nature of the sky will mistake it as a dome of smoke and dust. So too, the Atma is mistaken, through non-awareness of reality, to be enclosed in and embodied as intellect or Buddhi, to be involved in activity and enjoyment of the results of activity, to be caught up in the twin bonds of joy and sorrow, and to be embroiled in happiness and misery and also in bondage and liberation. From the angle of change (*Vyavahara*), the higher Truth will naturally appear as different, though they are inextricably interrelated. Space is one. But as a result of the diversity of vessels, it seems to be enclosed in the home, the pot, the building and the canvas. There is no truth in this sectionalised existence; it is the One space that exists in all these “containers”—houses, lakes, hills, etc.—which are shapes and forms, with distinct names attached to them and different modes of behaviour and use. So too, individual beings (Jivas) have different names and forms, peculiarities and specialities of use and behaviour. But like the string that holds the beads, passing in and through each and holding them together, the Superconsciousness in all individuals is ONE.

That is the Atma, which is mistaken as I, through ignorance. As long as this truth is not won, man cannot release himself from the hold of multiplicity and change. The scriptures communicate to us this Reality and exhort

us to realise it. What is it that, if known, everything else can be known? When the Atma is known, declare the scriptures (Sruthi), everything can be known. The Jagath (the Cosmos) is only relatively real. It is partly false. Knowing it is unprofitable and unnecessary. It is not a legitimate purpose of Life. Life is best spent and human effort best directed when awareness of the Atma principle is sought to be attained. The Sruthi warns man against other vain pursuits. The Sruthi texts and allied sacred literature like Smrithis, Ithihasas and Puranas do not teach us anywhere how the Cosmos was created or advise us to study and understand the origins and the process. They do not declare the absence of that knowledge as calamitous. They even assert that the task is impossible.

“Why worry how the Cosmos was born or when it will die? Worry rather about yourself.” That is the lesson emphasised by the scriptures. “Know Thyself.” Once you know yourself, everything else will be automatically clear. You are a *Pindanda* (Physical universe composed of elements) in the Brahmanda, a microcosm in the macrocosm. Just as the knowledge of one single claypot is enough to know all about clay pots, when you know your self, all else can be known.

In order to persuade a child to stop weeping and regain joy, the *Ayah* (nurse) relates a fairy tale which pleases it. The *Ayah*'s sole purpose is to calm the child. The fairy tale is only a means modelled on its intellectual level. In the

same manner, the Jivi, fascinated by the beginningless attraction of maya and bound by tendencies cultivated during many lives in the past, cannot avoid inquiring into the origins of the Universe which he encounters. The Sruthi answers such inquiry in words that give temporary relief. For, the question, how was the Universe created, is on a par with the question, how is a dream created? The dream originates from sleep or *Nidra*; the Universe originates through illusion or Maya. Just as the dream has no order or law, the Universe also is too full of mystery and Maya. There is only ONE, not two as often happens in a dream. This is the doctrine of Adwaitha. Very much like the question of the origin of creation, another problem that generally worries man is, how did this ignorance happen? The solution has been provided by the sage-preceptor, Vasishta, to Sri Ramachandra. "Rama!" he said, "Rather than entangling yourselves in the inquiry regarding how Ignorance entered Man, I would exhort you to be engaged in efforts to get rid of it." This lesson is directed not only to Rama but to all mankind. It helps all who do not possess the realisation of the Truth behind the objective world. Ajnana or ignorance is the name given to ignoring what is one's own inner experience—that the universe is an ever-changing phenomenon.

Why then are we troubled by this question? Be convinced that you have this ignorance, give up the struggle to get rid of attachment to this changing world with its concomitant birth-death cycle. It is only another evidence of this ignorance to argue whether this Ajnana adheres to

Brahmam or emanates from the Jivi. Surely it is much more essential to concentrate on the methods by which the ignorance can be discarded. For it will certainly yield to wisdom or Jnana. Jnana is Light. Ignorance is darkness. Darkness can persist Only until Light shines.