

Chapter 4. Freedom and Karma

Q. They also speak of blissful ascetics. Who are these? What are their qualifications?

A. Like the forest dwellers (*vanaprasthas*) and renunciates (*sanyasis*), ascetics have to be free from all attachment and hatred; they don't take any interest in their surroundings, be it a forest or town. They aren't worried in the least. They have no relation with others. They pay no heed to past, present, or future. They move about on thorn and stone, silent, smiling to themselves, ever joyous, ever alert, seeking no comfort and no shelter, seeking no place to sleep or eat. Spiritual bliss (*ananda*) is their food.

Even today, there are blissful ascetics in the Himalayas, in silent caves, immersed in their own inner *Atmic* bliss (*Atma-ananda*). Not all can see them. Only good luck can bring you to their presence.

But many pretend to be ascetics and go about with that name. The genuine ones would not seek people or appear in public. Even if they miss their way and come among people, they just slip away silently, lest they draw attention to themselves. When you find a blissful renunciate freely moving in company and mixing with human affairs, take him to be a monster!

Q. How long is one bound by the obligations and duties (*dharma*) related to the body?

A. As long as the individual *Atma* (*jivatma*) is not cognised. When that is discovered and known, there is no more need.

Q. How long is one aware of this individualized *Atma*?

A. Until the stream joins the sea. Till the stream of individual soul (*jivi*) reaches the source from which it came, the Sea of the Highest *Atma* (*Paramatma*).

Q. What is freedom (*moksha*)?

A. Freedom is liberation from all that binds. That is to say, the attainment of the ever-existing, ever-stable, ever-pure *Atmic* principle (*Atma-thathwa*); getting rid of the ever-changing, ever-unreal, impure body principle.

Q. That attainment is not for all, is it, Swami?

A. Why do you say that? Everyone who equips himself can attain it; those who make the effort are attaining it. Everyone who is ill is entitled to medicine; you cannot say that only some are. Yet, if the drug is costly, only those who can afford it can benefit by it. The Lord's grace is hard to get; you have to pay a heavy price. Pay the price, that is to say, earn it by spiritual discipline, and the grace of the Lord will save you from this disease of worldliness (*bhava-roga*).

Q. Who needs this spiritual discipline the most?

A. All who yearn to be saved from the flood of "birth-death", which is now sweeping them along.

Q. Baba! What is the cause of a person getting born?

A. The impact of actions (*karma*).

Q. How many varieties of actions are there?

A. Three! Bad, good, and mixed. Some add a fourth, the actions of the spiritually wise one (*jnani*), which are neither good nor bad.

Q. What is bad action?

A. Bad action are all acts done without the fear of God or of falling into sin; all acts done while under the influence of the six enemies —desire, anger, greed, delusion, pride, and envy (*kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *madha*, *maatsarya*). Also, all acts that reveal the beast in people, that do not indicate that they have discrimination, keen intellect, and detachment; that are devoid of compassion, truth (*sathya*), *dharma*, peace (*santhi*), and love (*prema*) —these are negative acts.

Q. And the good acts?

A. All acts done in fear of God and sin; all acts done with truth, *dharma*, peace, and love —these are good acts.

Q. What are the mixed acts?

A. They are an interesting lot. Though the acts are good, though apparently they are prompted by fear of God and sin, still, they reveal impulses that are quite the opposite. People start rest houses and water-distribution centres, for example, but they don't pay the servants regularly and well. Their aim is just to win some fame. They give to the poor only useless clothes and worn coins as alms. Whatever they do, their purpose is to get publicity.

Q. You also spoke of wise acts, Swami.

A. Yes; “wise act” is the name used for an act done to learn from sacred scriptures, elders, or teachers the way to escape from bondage to duality and the falsity of the world and to develop faith in the values of truth, *dharma*, peace, and love —all acts that lead to the merging of the individual in the Universal Absolute.