

## Chapter 6. Obstacles to Freedom

Q. Even those who proceed along the path of spiritual progress toward the goal of freedom (*moksha*) seem to have big obstacles, Swami.

A. Yes, the past, the present, and the future obstacles.

Q. What are they? What is the obstacle from the past?

A. Recollecting and remembering the past and getting affected by it.

Q. And the obstacle from the present?

A. That itself operates in four ways! Attending more to the peculiarities of textual criticism than the sense of the teaching, dullness of the intellect, which prevents one from grasping the words of the elders and the wise, crooked reasoning, and justifying one's own statement as correct, through an exaggerated conceit.

Q. What is the nature of obstacles from the future?

A. The future creates obstacles because you anticipate troubles and worry about them even before they come.

Q. I have heard people speak of four types of beings, but I'm not quite clear what they are.

A. Egg-born, sweat-born, earth-born, and mammals, Birds are good examples of the first group; lice, etc. of the second; ants, plants, and trees of the third; and people, cattle, etc. of the fourth.

Q. Well, Swami! Among these who are theists and who adore God, are there special types?

A. Of course! There are four types among them too.

Q. Their names?

A. Twice-born, ascetics, dull-witted, and knowers of the *Atma* (*dwijas*, sages, *alpa-buddhis*, and *vidithatmas*).

Q. Why are they called so? What is the special feature of each type?

A. The twice-born recognise God as in the fire they revere, and they worship Him with that conviction.

Q. The sages?

A. They recognise God in their hearts.

Q. What about the dull-witted?

A. They require images, pictures, or some other visible representation of His beauty and glory. They worship such.

Q. And the knowers of the *Atma*?

A. They recognise God as immanent in the universe and see only Him wherever they turn.

Q. May I ask who among these are the greatest?

A. Each is great in the stage they may have reached, but naturally, those who can experience the Lord everywhere at all times are the greatest.

Q. Swami! What traits of character do we have to avoid? That is to say, what are the obstacles in the path of one who seeks liberation from the cycle of birth and death?

A. Avoid the six enemies of people: desire, anger, greed, delusion, pride, and envy (*kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *mada*, and *maatsarya*).

Q. What exactly is desire?

A. Desire for riches, property, honour, status, fame, children —why list the lot? Attachment to all things of this sensory world, this false, temporary, impure world.

Q. Anger?

A. Yearning to harm others and causing ruin to them.

Q. And greed?

A. Determination that no one else should partake of even a small fraction of what one has earned or what one has; also, that even in times of distress, one's possessions should not be diminished by use.

Q. What is the meaning of delusion (*moha*)?

A. The delusion that some people are nearer to one than others and the desire to please them more than others, leading to exertions for earning and accumulating for their sake.

Q. Pride?

A. Pride means the swagger that develops when one feels that one has more scholarship or strength or riches or fame than others. Even when people don't have these, pride makes people move about without reverence for elders and consideration for others' feelings and craving only their own comfort and security. Pride is extreme egotism.

Q. The last that you mentioned is envy. What does that mean, Swami?

A. When others are as happy as yourself, envy makes you miserable; you cannot tolerate it.

Q. There are also certain other traits too, like hypocrisy and conceit. What do they indicate?

A. Hypocrisy prompts people to do ceremonies and rituals and to give away vast sums in charity in order to win the applause of the world. Conceit is the pride that haunts a rich and happy person.

Q. What is the meaning of envy?

A. The desire that others should get the grief, the misery, and the worry from which one is suffering.

Q. So it is different from jealousy?

A. Yes. Jealousy means thinking always of doing evil to others, the preparedness to put up with any trouble in order to satisfy this desire to harm others.

All these are called inner foes. As long as one is caught in this net of delusion, which is spread by these foes, the yearning for liberation will not dawn in the mind.