



Lectures on Vedanta and

- (i) Philosophy for 21st century;*
 - (ii) The Art of Living;*
 - (iii) Modern Society*
- (Volume - 1)

by

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ॐ

दुर्जनः सज्जनो भूयात् ,
सज्जनश्शान्तिमाप्नुयात् ।
शान्तो मुच्येत बन्धेभ्यो,
मुक्तश्चान्यान् विमोचयेत् ॥

*May the wicked become gentle,
May the gentle attain peace.
May the peaceful get rid of the bondages,
May the liberated liberate others.*

Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti Pīṭha

An Introduction

Sanandana, Sanaka, Sanātana and Sanat-kumāra—the four kumāras, were the first creations of Brahmā. From birth they were imbued with high spiritual qualities of discrimination and dispassion and had no mind for anything but the vision of the ultimate Truth. So renouncing their father and his creation they sought the guidance of Lord Shiva Who, they were told, had imparted knowledge to their father also when he found himself overwhelmed by the stupendous task of creation. Lord Shiva perceiving the intense spiritual mood and keen intellect of the Kumāras decided that the ordinary modes of teaching would not do. The naked Truth must be revealed instantly and in its pure light. So He assumed a very youthful benign form and sat under a spreading banyan tree facing the south. When the Kumāras accompanied by a throng of rishis approached Him and offered due worship seeking His discipleship, the Lord without uttering a word showed them the *Cinmudrā*, seeing which the disciples were enlightened at once.

From that moment the path of renunciation knowledge (निवृत्तिमार्ग) was thrown open to the world and a tradition was ushered in, which through apostolical *spiritual*

succession (गुरुशिष्यपरंपरा) has come down to this day. Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti (or Dakṣiṇābhimukha) so called because He faces the southern direction, is thus the first and foremost Guru, imparter of Supreme Knowledge and the chosen-deity (इष्टदेवता) of all Shri Paramahansa Saṁnyāsins who belong to this tradition and renounce everything for the sake of this God-Knowledge (ब्रह्मज्ञान).

The concept of Guru has a very deep Philosophical significance and as the World-Teacher (लोक गुरु) Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti also assumes a new and striking form. Speaking of it the Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda says :

शेमुषी दक्षिणा प्रोक्ता सा यस्याभीक्षणे मुखम् ।

दक्षिणाभिमुखः प्रोक्तः शिवोऽसौ ब्रह्मवादिभिः ॥

“The mental state in *samādhi* is called *dakṣiṇa*, the skilful (because it accomplishes what nothing else can). That which is seen through the *mukha* (portal) of *dakṣiṇa* is the Dakṣiṇābhimukha i.e. Dakṣiṇāmūrti and that is Shiva; so have the Preachers of Brahman declared.” That is to say, Dakṣiṇāmūrti is that Supreme Truth which is directly perceived through the mind that has become one with the *svarūpa* of Brahman while dwelling on it in *samādhi* (ब्रह्माकारवृत्ति). The Vedas speak of that Brahman as *svayamjyoti*, the self-effulgent light of consciousness which makes the sun and moon to shine. Who can reveal that Supreme light? It shines by itself by giving light to all. In this respect Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti is not only the foremost but the only Guru. Wherever truth is perceived it

is Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti alone that is revealing Himself through the human-medium.

In this light Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti comes very close to us and assumes as precious role in life with a message for all. This message is the essence of the Upanishads and is being given to us through His gracious *Cinmudrā*. The significance of the *mudrā* should therefore be clearly grasped.

Cinmudrā is formed drawing the right forefinger away from its neighboring three upright fingers and joining its tip with that of the thumb. The three fingers held upright represent the three states of being—waking, dream and deep-sleep (जाग्रत, स्वप्न, सुषुप्ति), each of them composed of the three principles of the enjoyed, enjoyer and enjoyment (भोग्य, भोक्ता, भोग). The forefinger symbolises the *jīva* or individual self. When it is one with the group of the above three, that is the world of experience, it is separated from the thumb which stands for the immovable, unchanging and untouched principle of Truth, *Paramātmān*, Supreme-self. When through discrimination the *jīva* knows that he is totally different from the experiential world of the three states and identifies himself with the *Paramātmān* through the awareness “I am the eternal witness of all that is”, then all ignorance and the sorrows of transmigration (संसार) that flows from it cease; the *jīva* attains liberation (मोक्ष). This awareness indicated by the *Cinmudrā* is clearly described in the Kaivalya Upanishad of Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda thus :

त्रिषु धामसु यद्भोग्यं भोक्ता भोगश्च यद् भवेत् ।
तेभ्यो विलक्षणः साक्षी चिन्मात्रोऽहं सदाशिवः ॥

Because it gives the knowledge of the “*Cinmātra*”, it is called “*Cinmudrā*”. This knowledge cannot be conveyed directly by words, since it is absolutely subjective, a pure awareness of the self without medium or relation to anything. To impart this awareness to the eager aspirants filled with devotion and dispassion, the Lord out of His unlimited grace has contrived this ingenious mystic device palpable to the visual perception as the *Praṇava* (ॐ) is to the auditory.

There are five different Vedic descriptions of Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti’s form varying in the symbols of the four hands. But *cinmudrā* is common to all and is the chief characteristic of this particular manifestation of the Lord. The *mudrās* or postures of the other hands too are symbolic of the qualities that enhances or pave the path to Supreme knowledge. For instance one standard meditation-verse (ध्यानश्लोक) describes the Lord displaying the *cinmudrā* in lower right hand and an axe in the upper, holding the hind legs of a leaping deer in the upper left hand and resting the other left palm on the knee of left leg folded in *padmāsana*. The axe represents dispassion, for it cuts down the tree of worldliness as told in the Gītā: असङ्गश्चेन हृदेन छित्त्वा. The leaping deer is symbolic of the restless mind. This has to be held firm through the practice of restraint (शम) and other auxiliary disciplines like दम, उपरति, तितिक्षा etc. The resting palm suggests perfect poise and ease, the natural and free state of liberation (सहजावस्था)

resulting from the *Cinmudrā* knowledge. Sometimes a flower is mentioned as being held in the resting fingers, to denote the beauty and bliss that blossom in that state.

The *Vīṇā-Dakṣiṇāmūrti* displays apart from the *Cinmudrā* a *vīṇā* (stringed musical instrument), rosary and the Vedas. *Vīṇā* has very deep significance pertaining to yoga-practice, the awakening of kundalini as well as the *Nāda-upāsanā*. Rosary conveys the power of meditating or reflecting on the mantra (मनन-शक्ति).

In the *Medhā-Dakṣiṇāmūrti* the *vīṇā* is replaced by a pot of nectar (अमृत) which stands for *moksha*, the supreme fulfillment and perfection of life untouched by death or decay. A variation of the same has two pots along with *cinmudrā* and Vedas. The second pot stands for the nectar in *sahasrāra*, thus emphasising the *Kundalini-yoga*.

Another form depicts the Lord as holding a flame, a snake and the Vedas. Flame obviously refers to Saguṇa Brahman and the serpent, like the *vīṇā*, is a standard symbol of yogic power, the kundalini shakti.

The limpid cool stream of Ganga gushing from the matted locks and the ambrosial rain of light from the crescent moon on the crest are of course inevitable items of all images of Shiva they breathe an air of abundant bliss and purity putting out the conflagration of worldly afflictions. They also emphasise the message of pouring out peace and harmonious progress by one who has drunk deep within.

All this has been enumerated here to show clearly that Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti is the giver of the highest knowledge and Bliss and is Himself the sweetest fulfillment of life.

In the course of ages when *dharma*, the path to perfection, gets lost in the wild overgrowth of human passions, delusions and evil deeds, then the Lone Path-maker comes to clear the way and re-establish pilgrims in the right direction. For, that is His promise and the nature of His mercy. Drawn by that Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti also had to incarnate in the age of Kali when the *dharma* of Vedas was nearly extinct. This time seeing the degradation of people's intellectual and spiritual standards the Lord could no more sit under the tree in silence enlighten disciples through signs and symbols. He now came as Shri Śaṅkara Bhagavat Pāda, the great Ācārya, resplendent with wisdom and renunciation, roaming the country from end to end, spreading his message like flames in all directions and consuming every opponent to the Vedic tradition. To consolidate the work and leave a lasting legacy, the Lord laid down the ancient knowledge in the form of copious commentaries on the scriptures, small treatises and beautiful hymns blending deep philosophical thought with high emotional quality. Also, with great insight into the times that were to come, the Ācārya created *Maṭhas* and *Pīṭhas* all over the country to serve as institutions devoted to study and preaching of this knowledge respectively.

Since study requires stability and application at one place in a particular environment, *maṭhas* were fixed and few while the *Pīṭhas* were mobile bodies formed by a

number of illustrious monks and scholars led by an ācārya. Each *pīṭha* in due course developed its own following, field and characteristic pattern of work. Some, especially in North India, were lost in the onslaught of foreign invasion and persecution, both physical and cultural. A few managed to survive and even to flourish.

One such blessed *Pīṭha* that has preserved to this day the traditions of the Ācārya, is the Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti Pīṭha, a tradition that is at once vital and significant in its very name. True to it, this *Pīṭha* has jealously guarded the intellectual purity of its Philosophy as given to us in the works of Ācārya and his successor Bhagavān Sureśvara and Padmapāda and has stuck to the worship of Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti as an almost solitary exception entire expanse of the North.

When roaming about in large numbers became difficult, cumbersome and even at times dangerous, the ācāryas of this tradition started spending a major part of their time in a garden in the vicinity of Lord Shri Viśvanātha at Kashi. There, under a banyan tree, the Lord used to be worshipped unostentatiously in a Shiva-liṅga. Later on a small marble image of *Medhā* Dakṣiṇāmūrti was installed. In recent years an enlarged shrine as built with a new marble image about three feet high, sculptured and installed according to scriptural injunctions and thus endowed with divine beauty.

The ācāryas of this *Pīṭha* set an example of a high spiritual life of utter renunciation and humility coupled

with deep scholarship and devotion to the Lord, Guru and scriptures. Kashi being the centre of the Sanskrit learning and culture the *Pīṭha* soon got converted into a regular *maṭha* or establishment for monks and students. Three generation back as many as seven free-kitchens (*anna-Kṣetra*) were run by the *pīṭha* in Kashi, feeding all who came there.

Then came the tremendous flux in world affairs, the introduction of technology and the aftermath of war. The country too went through dramatic changes. The ancient city of Indraprastha [Delhi] once more became the capital of a free Indian Government. At this stage the illustrious ācārya of this *pīṭha*, Ananta Shri Swami Nrsimha Giriḥi Maharaj, Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara also the Ācārya of Shri Niranjani Akhada, happened to be invited by devotees at Delhi for *satsanga*. His inimitable lectures and loving, saintly bearing exercised the minds of the citizens so profoundly that the Swami had to yield to their requests every year and spend many months at a stretch in the capital. As the result of his contact for twelve years a permanent centre for preaching was established there in 1951 under the name of Shri Vishwanatha Sanyas Ashram.

Situated on the sands of sacred Yamuna, with a spacious lecture hall, stately marble temples of Shri Viśvanātha and Shri Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa, monks-quarters, library and free-ayurvedic dispensary, Shri Sanyas Ashram continues to be the source of religious fervour that has since then permeated the entire city. The importance and scope of the institution have been greatly

enlarged by the establishment of a Sanskrit College known as Shri Vishwanatha Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, providing free hostel facilities and education up to “Ācārya” (equivalent to M.A. degree) of the Banaras Sanskrit University, with which it is affiliated.

Even before the starting of this college, the maṭha at Kashi had set the example and reputation of a well-established college by converting its hostel into Shri Dakshinamurti Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya with free hostel facilities for forty monks and a student rolls running to double the number.

Thus the *pīṭha* came to function in full swing through it centres of preaching (सत्संग, स्वाध्याय). But a centre for training (साधना) of the monks was still lacking. This was felt greatly by the then Ācārya of the Pīṭha Ananta Shri Swami Maheshanand Giriḥi Maharaj.

Once during his travels His Holiness happened to visit Mount Abu and was very much impressed by its spiritual atmosphere and many other qualities ideally suited for a training centre of monks. As the wish of the Swami grew stronger it enlarged in size also and at last, through the will of the Lord, assumed the proportion of an organisation which will spread the message of Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the western part of the country. As a result of this Shri Dakshinamurti-Pitha-Mahamandal was formed in 1962 with its head-quarters at Mount Abu. The training of monks forms an essential part of its manifold aims which are just beginning to materialise in effective shape.

In this age when, more than ever, the tide of materialism is gaining ground and gathering momentum and threatens to sweep away humanity off its spiritual moorings, there still is a hope that at least the few sincerely thoughtful will see and understand the outlines of truth if presented in the proper light. Truth is eternally one and the same. But though in itself unchanging, its presentation can be varied according to the capacities of people. This is the era of intellectualism and the world needs must know the Truth, approach God, by first satisfying the reasoning power. In such a state we can confidently say that the Dakṣiṇāmūrti tradition holds the key in its hand; no other presentation of Philosophy can rival its intellectual purity, penetration and completeness. It does not, however, deny emotion but provides for it a fully developed and unique system of *upāsanā* (worship) and takes the yearning soul past all sentiment and speculation to the direct experience of Truth beyond both. It fulfills exactly the upanishadic command “शरवत्तन्मयो भवेत्—Like the arrow, be one with it” – for, the Dakṣiṇāmūrti-Discipline is verily a clean and straight flight of the unerring arrow that cleaves the target and remains there. Such directness and oneness alone can give real and lasting peace and freedom which every one hankers after.

The Vedas never tire of exhorting us to seek the Supreme Knowledge here and now. The religion or path that promises something in an after-life is meant for infants. “If you do not attain it here, great is the loss” says the Sāma Veda. For this then we have to go to the source

of knowledge, the very form of it (ज्ञान विग्रह), the Divinity displaying the *cinmudrā*; and, sitting at its feet we have to pray in the words of the Rishi of Yajur Veda: “अजात इत्येवं कश्चिद् भीरुः प्रतिपद्यते रूद्र यत्ते दक्षिणं मुखं तेन मां पाहि नित्यम्” “O, Lord, destroyer of darkness, knowing thee alone to be the unborn, those filled with the fear of death do take shelter in thee. Do thou protect me with the benign grace of thine *Dakṣiṇāmukha!*”

— and the tradition is nothing but the Path to this alter; the great Ācāryas have mercifully pointed out that path to us and are still keeping it clear for us to discover it and move in it onward step by step, developing and perfecting ourselves till the goal is reached. “स्वस्ति वः पाराय तमसः परस्तात् ।” Some important qualities to be developed by any aspirant are discussed below:

Purity or Śauca

Hinduism has emphasised the conception of Purity of the body, the senses, the mind and morality as no other religion has done. It is the firm belief of a Hindu that without purity it is impossible to be Godly.

The word for purity in *Sanātana Dharma* is *Śauca*, which really means shining or brilliant. Hence the basic conception of purity is to make one brilliant, as even gods, the devas, are brilliant. Once the brilliance is attained and one shines like a god, it is easy for the supreme Godhead to shine through one, for He is the God of gods, *Mahādeva*.

The dirt which has accumulated over the self is what prevents its shining. Śaiva Āgamas call it *mala*. This dirt goes on increasing if it is not brushed away, and also if not prevented from falling over the self. These two modes of getting away from *mala* is what constitutes purity.

The body-mind-dichotomy is a fundamental tenet of Christianity, Islam and the reform movements of the Middle Ages in India. But *Sanātana Dharma* strongly holds to the unity of the two. Body and mind are so interpenetrative that it is practically impossible to leave one undisturbed, while cogitating the other. Hence the purity of the body is as essential as the purity of the mind. The Upanishad declares that the food consumed is converted into flesh and blood, as well as mind. The mind is as much a transformation of food as the body. Modern psychosomatic diseases and drugs definitely confirm this Upanishadic view. Hence the emphasis on the type of food to be consumed by a spiritual aspirant. No doubt it can be overdone, and Śaṅkara warns that the consumption of senses is as much of a food as the grains as far as the mind is concerned, nevertheless, it should not be underemphasised either, as is often done in the modern times.

Disease is a sign that some form of impurity has been committed, for the laws of God include the scientific laws including the biological ones. It is necessary to learn these laws to practice purity. Continuous medical research must be a part of social and individual life to know the will of God as expressed in nature. Thus this search is part of the Purity-programme.

The body is not only composed of the particles of food, liquid and air that are taken in, but also of those particles that are bombarded from the living and non-living beings that come in contact with it. *Śaiva* nomenclature of these particles is *spanda* or vibrations, but as all energy is manifested through matter, hence *smṛiti* literature uses the word particle, though the idea is the same. Our body, in turn, sends out particles that enter other living and non-living beings. In a very clear way we see human excreta consumed by dogs, cows, flies, ants, etc. We also know that milk etc., is consumed by us, and is controlled by the food-intake that cows, flies, etc. consume. The subtler exchange is not so clearly observable, but nonetheless it is equally important. Thus, purity is a very scientific conception which should not be brushed aside in the name of humanism, equality, etc. as is being done in modern times. We do not for a moment recommend all the inhumanities that are imposed by the vested interest or caste system, much less support them, but we must not throw away the baby with the bathtub. Our emphasis is on the continuous sieving of the essential from the non-essential by a scientific attitude of enquiry. But the principle must be understood. Thus both prevention and cure, that is, avoidance of new *mala* and removal of the old *mala* should go hand in hand.

First to be discussed is necessarily the *mala* associated with the body. The food that we take in must not only be as pure as possible but also nourishing. Perhaps with the exception of Judaism, no other world religion has given

much attention to the quality of food. There are bound to be many prohibitions in this regard once we emphasise it, and Jews face the problem squarely. Fortunately *Sanātana Dharma* is more scientific and accommodating. We have divided all being including the spiritual aspirants in three categories conscientious (*sāttvic*), active (*rājasic*) and inert (*tāmasic*), all have place in its fold. Each of these are further divided as theo-centric (*nivṛtta*) or homo-centric (*pravṛtta*), depending on the aim that they want to attain, namely liberation from the fetters of ignorance or progress within the field of ignorance. Thus, food prescribed for each of them is bound to be different. Blanket prohibition for any food is thus avoided. Due to this reason many people have often misunderstood or misconstrued the scriptures. Just because certain texts have permitted flesh as food, it is wrong to presume that meat is allowed or was allowed to all. It is equally wrong to condemn such texts as spurious or interpolated by interested groups. The fact in most cases is that they are meant for a particular type of aspirant. Meat was absolutely prohibited for theo-centric (*nivṛtta*) aspirants, but not for all homo-centric (*pravṛtta*) ones. The *Sāttvic* group among them was again prohibited from animal food. Thus we have to be careful not to impose one blanket prohibition on all the people. It is interesting to note that the *Bhagavad Gītā* does not mention anything about flesh in its dealing of the food section. To a student of the scriptures it is clear that he is dealing with both types of aspirants and thus cannot possibly mention it. But to conclude from this that the

Gītā does not recommend giving up of animal food even to a theo-centric aspirant will be equally preposterous. Thus a close study of Manu and Yājñavalkya will yield an ocean of information on the subject, specially because the western or Christian oriented modern science has done practically no work along these lines.

The contact of food with the type of vessels is also considered important. Certain substances are allergic to certain metals so to say. Thus contact of copper and milk destroys the *sāttvic* element of milk, whereas the contact of copper and water enhances the *sāttvic* nature of water. Similarly, salt added to milk makes it *rājasic* food and ginger mixed with lemon juice becomes *tāmasic*. All these are experimentally discovered and verifiable truths which can be taken advantage of.

Similarly, the type of individual that touches the food also influences its quality. An angry person will give off particles of anger, as much as a man of peace gives off particles of peace. The west has discovered a type of bracelet which changes colour according to the mood or temper of its wearer. Russian scientists have discovered the so-called Killock's camera to photograph the various light particles that are emitted by people in different moods. Difference between α -particles and β -particles coming out of brain during sleep indicating the absence or presence of dream is now well-known, and is being utilised to determine the depth of concentration or *samādhi* in an individual. All these indicate the effect of particles on food. Thus the cooking and serving of food by one's own

self or people closely knit ideologically and in the pattern of life has been given importance in the spiritual life. The present-day don't touchism of caste system is a mean caricature of the Vedic concept. In the beginning when people of the same caste followed the same profession and pattern of life based on an identical ideal it was as close to the scientific fact as possible. But now in the changed circumstances, we have to base it on more fundamental grounds. Moreover, it must be clearly understood that all this is important to a spiritual aspirant, and is meaningless for a social group dedicated to mere worldly enjoyments.

The cleanliness of the body by bath externally, and regular excreting of faeces, urine, sweat and other secretions is also very important. Only a light body is useful for meditation. Special prayers give off thought vibrations that help to remove the particles accumulated in the system or on the body. From this analysis one will get an idea how the mind and the senses are also to be cleaned by keeping away from the objects that excite the senses in a *rājasic* or *tāmasic* way, and also the thought processes of such nature. Observance of all these contribute शौच

ज्ञानं तपोऽग्नि आहारो मृन् मनो वार्य उपांजनम् ।

वायुः कर्माऽर्क कालौ च शुद्धेः कर्तृणि देहिनाम् ॥ (मनुस्मृ. ५.१०५)

Knowledge, penance, fire (sacrifice), food, clay, mind (meditation), water (pilgrimage), plaster (dwelling), air

(*prāṇāyāma*), action, sun (*sandhyā*), time (*proper*) purify a person.

अद्धिर्गात्राणि शुध्यन्ति मनः सत्येन शुध्यति ।

विद्यातपोभ्याम्भूतात्मा बुद्धिर्ज्ञानेन शुध्यति ॥ (मनुस्मृ. ५.१०९)

Water purifies body, truth purifies mind, worship and penance purify the soul and knowledge purifies the intellect.

Ethics

The final culmination of all the Vedic teachings is the assertion of the unity of God, soul and the universe or the experienced objects, experiencer and the experience and its controller. Hence, the Vedic ethics is just working out the implication of this in life. This is what places *Sanātana Dharma* beyond the ethics of do's and don'ts (ordinations and prohibitions) of all other world religions. All that leads to this unity is virtue and all that disturbs this unity is vice. Basically, it implies that ethics is not an end in itself, but is only a road to be traversed. Since the goal is fixed it is natural that the road traversed becomes redundant to the one who has gone beyond it, while retaining the usefulness for those who have yet to traverse it. Thus *Sanātana Dharma* construes ethics as a relative science rather than an absolute one.

During the last hundred and fifty years, the development of anthropology, sociology, archeology, psychology and related sciences have made ethics a big problem. Western

science imbued with Christianity could be conscious of either an absolute ethics or its complete negation. The sciences give a lie to the absolute value of ethics and so the religion there has been opposed to the basic assumption of these sciences. On the other hand the scientists also, as human beings, cannot deny the value of ethics in any homogeneous social group, both because they realise the complete disintegration of human society in its absence, and also as scientists they find that there is no human social group discovered till date which does not have a sense and a code of ethics, no matter how different it is from each other. In the beginning, societies were rated on the basis of Christian ethics, mostly of the puritan protestant variety. Any society holding these ethical values was by definition the most developed one, and one the most far-removed from it was the most backward one. Slowly, it dawned on the scientists that on some ethical points a particular social group is identical with the Christian ethics and yet far-removed on some other points. Thus, they were in search of some other criteria to grade the social groups. Harmony, vitality, creativity, resistive pliability for change, and power of absorption for other social groups, were slowly developed as the criteria. But slowly it was realised that every society was complete in itself. Each lack was compensated by another quality. Thus, the realisation that there can be many models, each complete in itself. This is more or less the present view of ethics, and since this is true of most of the sciences, it has gained universal acceptance. Just as the nineteenth century

was obsessed with the idea of value-gradation due to the theory of evolution, the present age is obsessed with relativism due to the theory of relativity.

But ethics is a religious problem as much as a scientific one. We mean to say that it is as much a subjective issue as an objective one. Hence, one wants to know *what is really right and wrong*. Even if one is convinced of the model system, one wants to know which is the best model for oneself. The ancient solution of the Kalpa-Sutras of *Sanātana Dharma* was that whichever branch of Veda (शाखा) one is born-in is the best for him, it was already irrelevant when Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Shakta āgamas within the orthodox system and Bauddha, Jaina, etc. outside it were developed in Hinduism. Each claimed a universal following of all people of all climes and times to themselves. But since the foundation of Hindu society was basically laid on toleration and understanding, society *somehow* survived. But ‘somehow’ is important because the fissures developed continued to grow, and at times created a social havoc. In the process of survival the new fabric woven was that of a federal structure, which survived until the fourteenth century of Christian era more or less intact. The federalism was based on social norms more than the religious ones. Hence the *Smārta nibandhas* deal more with social matters than the religious ones. Even when they do concern themselves with certain religious matters they do not try to decide, but just content themselves with giving alternatives. Thus *ekādashi* of Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas remain different, and the nibandhas

merely give a number of views without coming to any conclusion. Slowly social behaviour remained the main structure with the religion left to the individual or group concerned rather than the concern of the whole society. Thus *Varṇa-āśrama dharma* was the word used rather than *Vaidika dharma* in the later period, for Vedas became only a distant scriptures of little concern. Vedas, except for the *mīmāṃsakas* and *Vedāntins* ceased to be everyday religious scriptures. Only the mantras connected with social rituals remain the living part of the Vedas. We have digressed from our main theme to indicate how the desire to save the social fabric generally leads to the disintegration of the basic ethical and religious values. The same problems are facing the modern world on a still larger scale. The communication has made the whole earth but a big city, and the whole human race a tribe. Migrations of people are at a scale that could not have been even dreamt of. All this necessitates an integration but generally what is taking place is imitation. To take India again as an example, the social fabric as the basic fundamental of Hindu federation faced its major challenge from Mohammedan and later Christian societies. From the fourteenth century onwards the *varṇa āśrama* system was challenged first from external forces and later from internal forces too. Most of the reformists were great saints of Hinduism and wanted to discard the social fabric which had lost its religious favour. This was true enough, but the great saints could not possibly see that discarding it would be a total blow to Hinduism in the sense that nothing had

remained to re-integrate it into an internally defined organism. Perhaps it is only *Shiva's* grace that has kept Hindu society even now as a unit, though nothing to call it an organism. Perhaps it is the crucible in which *Shiva* is melting all values to organise the whole human race into a unit. And since only Hinduism is capable of performing this miracle, if we take the challenge, perhaps ours will be the greatest contribution to the new age. This is possible because of the *Vedāntic* view of evolving ethics based on the great dictum of unity between God, world and the soul as indicated in the beginning of this discussion.

Vedānta holds that any act is to be judged not by itself, but by the attitude of the actor. If he is guided by the unity principle the act is virtuous, otherwise not. Thus, if an individual performs a more unifying act than he performed previously, it is virtuous, but if it is more discriminative than the earlier one, it is vicious, though the same act performed by another actor who had performed a more discriminative one earlier, it may be virtuous for that actor. Thus a complete list is impossible and yet a directive ethics can be laid down.

As a matter of fact Hinduism developed this ethics in a practical way in absorbing different groups and tribes, particularly during the great integration performed by Śaṅkara who is the founder of the present Hinduism. It was during this period that the foundations were laid which later developed into caste and group society in place of just the four varṇas of the earlier period. Buddhism had absorbed a great men of differential social

strata from all over the then known world. Each social group was considered a model complete in itself, but based on the *moral* or ethos of this unity-ideal. No model was left unguided by this principle. Groups were not considered competitive but cooperative; and so were individuals. Competition was to move towards the goal of Self-Realisation in terms of Self-God identity. The intrinsic understanding was that no model will try to supersede the others.

Science consists of systematically arranged related facts on definite principles, hypothetical or theoretical. Ethics or the science of ethics will thus imply the arrangement of conduct, both socio-religious and individual arranged on the same ethos. It cannot merely consist in enumeration of virtues and vice. *Vedāntic* ethics means arranging them on the ethos of unity of God, soul and universe consisting of both the living and non-living. Undoubtedly, the nearest must be taken into account first. Thus, human beings and the nation form the nearest living and non-living unit. Dharma śāstra is such a definitive and systematically arranged series of behavioural facts or conduct and explanation of the underlying principle in each case.

Vedānta is religiously monism. Only one Parameśvara who is really formless but full of Divine Love is omnipotent and omniscient. Out of love (काम) the universe comes into being so that the souls who are as good as non-existing in the state of dissolution can unfold themselves and attain their complete unfoldment of the

inherent nature leading to its fullest realisation of Infinite Bliss or *Bhumā* & *Ānanda*. Thus, the world though born out of the inscrutable power (माया) of God is not either purposeless or maleficent. It is not to cause misery to the souls, but to give joy, relative joy during the process and absolute joy at its fulfillment. Thus, universal joy is the principle underlying creation or the unfoldment of God's power.

Pleasant is not always joyful. A thing or conduct may be painful in the beginning, but if leads to greater joy of oneself and those associated with one, and does not bring consciously misery to others is really joyful. And, of course that which leads to the universal Bliss namely, the attainment of unity of one's self with the universal self (जीव ब्रह्मैक्य) is the supreme ethical act. Just as a bitter pill that removes a disease and brings health back to the individual is not really 'bitter', and a sweet pill that brings about a long-lasting disease and takes away the health is not really 'sweet', so also a conduct that leads to unhappiness is not really virtuous. Smritis give detailed analysis of such acts. The Gītā further stresses that any conduct that becomes natural due to long practice becomes joyful. Since we have been practicing vice, it has become joyful. But practicing virtue, it will become equally joyful. Every first smoker finds that the cigarette causes nausea, but becomes joyful by continuous indulgence. Similarly, by continuously practicing virtue it becomes natural. Since the body is the first to be tackled with, ethical acts per force must precede the emotional and intellectual

realisation of one-ness. Often we do just the reverse. We understand intellectually the one-ness, but find we cannot mentally and bodily act accordingly. This pains us deeply and causes continuous misery to our conscience. It makes our life schizophrenic. But if we have practiced out the virtues to a point where they have become our natural life, and loved Shiva to a point where that emotion has become natural, this misery is totally avoided. But we do realise that this age is the age of reason. And it will not be generally possible to avoid it. But at least its realisation will mean that we will not wait for the complete intellectual realisation prior to virtuous life and devotion to Shiva. We will try to practice as much as reason has shown us the way. This will avoid the rupture of understanding and living to be so large that it becomes unbearable. Understanding must become living.

Right and wrong are basic to human existence. This sense separates humanity from the animal world, even the most evolved species. This is called *Buddhi* in Hinduism and conscience in Christianity. The use of the two words is significant in as much as one emphasises the basic principle and the other mode of its attainment. This is again divided according to bringing out *pravṛtti* or merging in *nivṛtti*. Growing by experience, developing the body-mind-complex by absorbing the God's creation into one's individuality is the first and realisation that it was only the Divine play, and merging into Shiva by dedicating the individuality thus developed to the Divine Actor Shiva, is the second one. In the first the unity of

individual consciousness is developed and in the second the unity of 'I' and 'Shiva' is attained. First is attaining and second is distributing. The total is called evolution in Hinduism. The first is called evolution in modern science, but the second part is not yet known there as a scientific concept, though the dispersion of energy and entropy may be similar concept. First progress is due to Shakti and second due to Shiva. The ideal is the Unity or the central point of the two. One who has attained that as the central core of his being has attained the state that transcends do's and don'ts and is a completely free person. Just because such a one is placed beyond ethics, many Western theologians and thinkers like Albert Schweitzer, Christopher Isherwood, have concluded that Hinduism is non-ethical. But since everyone else on the scale either of unfolding or folding is under the rules of ethics, their conclusion is ill-founded if not malafide. Actually, since ethics is an evolutionary science in time, there has to be someone beyond it to guide the rest of humanity to follow or discard a particular model at a particular period of history. He is not a dictator to lay down arbitrarily, for he must show that the ethos needs the particular change. But since many models may be present as an alternative, someone must specify the particular model for that age and for that tribe. If he is not able to rise beyond the given ethical mode his vision can never transcend it. Thus it is not a license, much less a concession, but a necessity for the community. This makes continuous evolution possible. In a fast changing

age like ours this need is felt by all religions, and they try to sit together and take a decision on certain changes in the modes of living and even faith and doctrines. But there is no certainty that such changes are divine inspired, and mostly they are guided by expansionistic or survival values. It is just not possible for an ordinary follower to lead, since the two have to be guided by contrary values. The guiding factor for the leader is to decrease the separation and increase unity, whereas a follower must develop his individuality which has to be separate from the mass-level that is necessarily lower than what he is aiming at. Thus such conferences always lead to a lowering of the standard of morality, and almost never pitch it higher. In Hindu conferences which are an imitation of the western society one can clearly see that the voice of the Right is always suppressed by the majority. Weak individuals have to go through individualisation of unity within themselves prior to unity with the cosmos. It is like distribution prior to earning leading to loans. Bhīṣma declared long back that morality is subtle and needs wisdom that transcends the codes to be laid down. The Vedas must be interpreted by the light of the wisdom that dawns on the realisation of the Truth, which is possible only when one transcends the dual consisting of attraction and repulsion including virtue and vice. Unless this is interpreted by one in every generation scriptural truth may fail grievously. Ethics is not a mere theory but has to be practical and is a living truth. Ethics that is doubted is worse than its absence.

Ethics that has no reference to the circumstances will always lead to error. *Samnyāsin* having none as his dependent can always forgive, but a king cannot overlook the slightest wrong done to his meanest subject. He may no doubt forgive a harm done to him personally. These differences are important. *Smritis* lay down that the ethics of Satyayuga is not that of Kaliyuga. The whole scheme of *varṇa āśramas* is in view of the social and personal circumstances.

Hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, passion, anger, cruelty, miserliness and ignorance etc. are the vices to be avoided by all. Fearlessness, cleanliness, wisdom, charity, truth, humility, compassion, and sportsmanship etc. are the virtues to be developed. Mutual service is a concept much emphasised in Hindu ethics. Every human being is indebted to other human beings specially the parents, teachers, ancestors as well as to gods and domestic and other animals. This debt must be paid off. The Hindu was nurtured for centuries on the concept that indebtedness was a grievous sin. The present economic structure has hurt this sense seriously. Debts at present are encouraged, and often there are schemes to help one disown his debts. The present Government regards charity an expense, but writing off of debts as a legal concession. This has brought about a change in the psyche of the modern generation, and has effected the very structure of ethics of Hinduism. It may be that the rulers are ignorant of the damage they are causing, or it may be that non-Hindus are purposely causing this harm, but the harm at any rate is being caused.

Discharge of duty in Hindu idiom is paying off of a debt. This 'ought' to be paid if one wants to avoid sin. A virtuous man recognises it and a vicious man disowns it.

Truth is one of the fundamentals of ethics. Actually all the virtues are considered by some as merely corollaries of this. Natural laws, ethical laws, religious laws, spiritual realisations are but the truths of those respective branches. All laws are thus expressed truths. To speak an untruth is only the grossest aspect. Even a truth spoken to hurt others or in a way that hurts others is considered an untruth. Śaṅkara has emphasised this virtue beyond all others.

Śīla or character is another important virtue. It is the complete personality which is considered here. It encompasses physical acts, mental attitudes, a developed sense of duty, wisdom, faithfulness, devotion to Shiva and the general attitude towards one's fellow-beings and the world. The control of the senses and fairness are integral parts of it. Forbearance, forgiveness, overlooking others faults and weaknesses etc. are the armours of *Śīla*. One ought never to gloat over one's strength and other's weaknesses of character. Patience, charity, compassion and humility are its external expression. Dejection, delusion, cynicism, greed, envy, jealousy, irritation, worry, scorn, fear etc. destroy *Śīla*.

Virtue brings harmony. Since a man is most intimately connected with his five sheaths, namely body, vitality, mental, intellectual and causal, unless he is in harmony with these, it is impossible for him to be in harmony with

others. This can only be attained by constant vigilance and by being guided by a higher principle than mere pleasure. Basically this is the foundation on which morality rests, since a person given to self-indulgence can hardly practice any virtue. All active virtues are expressed through body and speech along with vitality and are grounded in mind and intellect. Mind here includes emotion. The mind is guided by past impressions of pain and pleasure, and is controlled by the sense of possessiveness of pleasurable objects. Emotions are continuously goading us to move towards relationships that are bound to cause merely pain. But the uncontrolled individual is a slave and knowingly moves towards them, hoping against hope, to use a trite. Mind and emotions cloud our thinking, reasoning and rationality. Intellect thus is forced into rationalising what these two dictate. Even Guru and Veda are utilised more to justify our own emotions rather than sought-after to seek real guidance from them. Unless this slavery is abandoned no spiritual progress is possible. In its worst form it obstructs even the social development. But enlightened self-interest only projects pleasure in future, rather than turn one away from it. Heaven and its description was the old method, and futurism or utopia, the modern version of it. But real spirituality makes us transcend these limitations, rather than merely postpone it. Spirituality is a basic transformation of personality. Once the individual becomes the master of his five sheaths, the self-control is natural. The process involves thinking about the untold

miseries that its absence means, and contemplation on the identity of soul and God or at least the qualities of God that are to be lived by him in the world. Control of speech is a very important part. By words we increase our emotions. By speech control, not only the expressed speech (वैखरी) is meant but also the unexpressed namely, that goes on in the mind. It is interesting that silence is called *mauna* in Sanskrit which is related to mind rather than words. The great Ācārya Śaṅkara specifically points out that contemplation of Brahman as beyond words, and the world as inexpressible is the real silence. Thus we are warned against the popular concept that silence of tongue is a discipline even though unaccompanied by silence of mental processes. It may be a help to start with but may soon degenerate into hypocrisy if not properly utilised. The control of the body is also necessary, for it is this abode which we must carry along with us every where. One aspect of it is practice of proper exercise or Yoga's third limb namely *āsana*. It is only then that we can utilise it properly. Health is a virtue, for disease is sin. Disease is always a result of transgressing some law or other of the organic or inorganic world. Only a healthy person is capable of withstanding the strain of ethical life in a world which is unethical. It is again a healthy body that can go through spiritual ladders. Often scriptures warn us again excessive austerity leading to disease. Celibacy is an important element. It does not necessarily mean complete abstinence. Observing the rule of monogamy and prohibitions within it is also celibacy. Modern generation

reared in Freudian psychology often confuses the mere physical aspect with the emotional one. Emotional degeneration follows the physical *laissez-faire*, and it is this which has to be avoided. Most of our acts, physical and mental, are born out of mere habit. Thus developing proper habits avoids a great deal of viciousness. Desire for material objects and their means and power of control of other human beings is insatiable. It is their control which builds character and not their gratification. Desire for objects and their bare necessity have to be discriminated. Similarly, possessiveness and possession are to be discriminated. Self-restraint is not self-abnegation. Material joys are not to be totally shunned. But they must not take control. Ethical and ordained means must be adhered to. Unethical and prohibited means and possessions must be abhorred. What we gain by pure means must satisfy us.

The love that prompts us to sacrifice our interests for others is called unselfish love. It makes us restrain ourselves for the common good. Such love leads towards unity. In making a sacrifice for the beloved we feel happy, and thus learn that greater happiness is in giving and not in receiving. Love may be directed to one's superior, equal or junior. Love of God is the highest in the first category, closely followed by that of one's motherland, parents, preceptors, learned and the aged. Conjugal love is the love of equals. Here is the complete mergence of two into a greater identity than either one of them. Protection, shelter, tender feelings, yielding, and devotion to each other are the natural instincts.

Such is also between two brothers, or brother and sister or sisters, or class-fellows or partners in business. The bond here is often so close and dear that one finds difficulty in even playing without the other. Wise counselling, loving sympathy, regarding their joys and sorrows identical are some of the virtues associated with this relationship. In the third category comes, hospitality. Sharing with an unknown human being what one at times needs most is greatly eulogised in *Sanātana Dharma*. In some of the works this is extended even to the animal world. Shibi's story is well-known where he gives the flesh of his body to please a vulture in order to protect a pigeon. Even the villains in epics behave with exemplary politeness towards guests, friends and foes. Disparaging others by look, word or actions is a sign of degeneration. A person may be junior in rank, less educated or deficient in experience or wealth, but he needs tenderness, gentleness, kindness, compassion from his superiors, not arrogance. If one has the strength or the means to protect the weak, but does not do so, the sin accrued is equal to the one who is persecuting them. Thus the conception that by action alone violence is committed is belied in the scriptures. The negative approach is more emphasised in Jaina stories. And this approach has vitiated the attitude of the common man to the extent that the society has become selfish and irresponsible. Humility in giving or protecting the weak is important virtue. The feeling must be of thankfulness to the Lord that He in his Diving Mercy has made us his fit instrument, and also to the weak for giving us a chance to help him, rather than that of pride.

Thus the practical corollary of the final realisation has been worked out in detail by the great authors of previous ages, and must be worked out for our own times.

प्रभवार्थाय भूतानां धर्मप्रवचनं कृतम् ।

यः स्यात् प्रभवसंयुक्तः स धर्म इति निश्चयः ॥

(महाभारत शान्तिपर्व राजधर्म)

For the good of all ethics is enunciated. That which causes good is ethics. This is the fundamental principle of ethics.

सर्वेषां यः सुहृन्नित्यं सर्वेषां च हिते रतः ।

कर्मणा मनसा वाचा स धर्म वेद जाजले ॥

(महाभारत शान्तिपर्व मोक्षधर्म)

He who is always acting in a loving and helpful manner towards all in order to do good to them by acts, speech and mind is practicing ethics.

धर्मञ्चार्थञ्च कामञ्च यथावद्वदतां वर ।

विभज्य काले कालज्ञः सर्वान् सेवेत पण्डितः ॥ (महाभारत वनपर्व ३४.४१)

A wise person knowing proper time for worship, economic pursuit and pleasure, attends to all of them properly without neglect.

अन्ये कृतयुगे धर्मास्त्रेतायान्द्वापरेऽपरे ।

अन्ये कलियुगे नृणां युगहासानुरूपतः ॥ (शान्तिपर्व २३१.२७)

Ethics in its detail is different in golden age, silver age, copper age and iron age in descending order.

अतो यदात्मनोऽपथ्यम्परेषान्न तदाचरेत् ॥ (याज्ञवल्क्य स्मृति ३.६५)

One must not behave with another in a way that he considers harmful for himself.

सत्यं धर्मस्तपो योगस्सत्यम्ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।
सत्यं यज्ञः परः प्रोक्तः सर्वं सत्ये प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

(महाभारत अनुशासनपर्व)

Truth is ethics, austerity, eternal Veda, supreme sacrifice, because everything is founded on and upheld by it.

आत्मन्यपि न विश्वासः तथा भवति सत्सु यः ।
तस्मात्सत्सु विशेषेण सर्वः प्रणयमिच्छति ॥ (वनपर्व)

The faith in good people is more than what one has in himself. Hence all want the love of such people.

पितृभिः भ्रातृभिश्चैताः पतिभिः देवरैस्तथा ।
पूज्या भूषयितव्याश्च बहुकल्याणमीप्सुभिः ॥ (शान्तिपर्व)

Those who are desirous of much happiness should honour and adore their daughter, sister, wife and sister-in-law.

तृणानि भूमिरुदकं वाक् चतुर्थी च सूनृता ।
एतान्यपि सतां गेहे नोच्छिद्यन्ते कदाचन ॥ (मनु० ६.४५)

Room seat, drink and kind words are always available to a guest, in a gentleman's house.

नास्तिक्यं वेद निन्दां च देवतानां च कुत्सनम् ।
द्वेषं दम्भं च मानं च क्रोधं तैक्ष्ण्यं च वर्जयेत् ॥ (मनु० ४.१६३)

One ought to avoid atheism, attributing motives to the Veda, slighting gods, hatred, obstinacy, pride, anger and harshness.

नहीदृशं संवननन्त्रिषु लोकेषु विद्यते ।
दया मैत्री च भूतेषु दानं च मधुरा च वाक् ॥
तस्मात्सान्त्वं सदा वाच्यन्न वाच्यं परुषं क्वचित् ।
पूज्यान् संपूजयेद्दद्यान्न च याचेत् कदाचन ॥ (महाभारत आदिपर्व)

Compassion, friendliness, charity and a sweet tongue to all beings is the highest wealth. Hence one ought to always speak gently, never harshly, one ought to honour one's superiors in status, position, knowledge, age etc. One ought to give and never beg.

यस्तु क्रोधं समुत्पन्नम्प्रज्ञया प्रतिबाधते ।

तेजस्विनन्तं विद्वांसो मन्यन्ते तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥ (वनपर्व)

One who sublimates manifest anger with wise thought is called a man of light by the wise ones.

चक्रिणो दशमीस्थस्य रोगिणो भारिणः स्त्रियाः ।

स्नातकस्य च राज्ञश्च पन्था देयो वरस्यच ॥ (मनु० २.१३८)

The right of way belongs to the weak, very old, sick, loaded, women, graduated, ruler and bridegroom.

Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti or the Silent Speaker

There are two traditions in Vedic Dharma, that of silence and that of truth. One is that of attainment, and the other of abandonment. Generally one of them is emphasised. Bṛhadāraṇyaka emphasises silent tradition whereas Manu says *maunāt satyam viśiṣyate* that is truth is superior to silence. Though both are interactive but generally are in contrast to each other. In *Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti* the two are merged by what is known as silent speech. He does not give any verbal teaching and so represents the ideal of silence, and yet through his *bhadramudrā* He conveys the supreme truth and so equally represents the ideal of truth. The great Śaṅkara in his own inimitable way represents

the same tradition by asserting that the word (*mahāvākya*) cannot by itself convey the truth, and yet by implication (*lakṣaṇā*) the truth is conveyed. Implication can be construed only by one who is capable of implying because of long association with the preceptor. Thus Vidyāraṇya says that the silent one became vocal in the Kaliyuga to get people out of the mire. Actually this is the secret of conventional truth (*Vyāvahārika Satya*) and Absolute truth (*Pāramārthika Satya*). The fortieth chapter of Yajurveda, asserts that the face of truth is covered by a golden bowl, thus asserting the two truths, one which conceals and one which is concealed or one which is revealed by senses including words, and one which remains unrevealed by them. To an ordinary observer it is direct and indirect view but to an initiate it is subtler than that because it represents revealability and its absence in a direct way. Even the Buddhist thinker Chandrakīrti asserts that the truth of suffering, its source and the path to eradicate it is revealable or conventional truth, while the cessation is unrevealable or the absolute truth. Upanishad is more poetic in asserting that one is concealing the other. This passage gives the clue to great Śaṅkara to proclaim his now famous super imposition-theory. Wrongly viewed snake is super-imposition in the true rope. Rope is concealed by the snake. The concealer has no locus standi of its own, but is quite important as a concealer of the absolute truth. No matter how one tackles the snake, one deals only with the concealment, and no matter how thoroughly we know and are wise about the snake, we can

never find out its reality, that is rope. It is by drawing our attention away from snake that there is a possibility to view the hidden truth. This concealer acts on him who is called by a well deserved name Satyadharma i.e. who regards truth as duty. Duty deals with the world which is conventionally real. No matter how we practice it, it can never reveal the real. Thus Karma kāṇḍa and Jñāna kāṇḍa stand opposed to each other. One deals with the truth, and the other with silence. Turning truth to silence is as much the tradition of Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti as turning silence to the truth. By offering the Karma to Shiva one turns the wheel.

Rigveda X 136 says that the munis girdled with the wind, wear garments of soiled brownish colour and go swiftly like the wind where the devas have gone earlier. Muni is one who observed mauna. It is interesting to note the observation of Manfred Mayrhofer that muni is cognate with mute. This *Ṛg* gives in a nutshell the life of a paramahansa. *Sāmaveda* further says that mauna is brahmacharya for by observing it one is able to think about the absolute truth. Here mauna is apparently related to contemplation of the Divine Absolute. Actually one must first learn to avoid sin, then one must analyse the one who avoids sin, and finally identify the analyser with Shiva, *Śaṅkara* affirms that *manana on mauna* by contemplation on the highest Absolute Truth one becomes silent. Thus it is silence of the wise and not the one of the fools. Dakṣiṇāmūrti Saṁhitā lays down that the silence is complete when body senses, vital air, speech, mind intellect and emotions are all silent. Following the

mystical tradition the Saṁhitā talks of मांस चक्षु, दिव्य चक्षु and प्रज्ञा चक्षु or the physical vision, mental vision and divine vision. The first sees the form, the second perceives the personality, and the third sees Shiva. First is developed by Śīla (morality), the second by mediation and the third by insight. The last sees non-discursive knowledge in the sense of Absolute Truth. The experience is that one is omniscient, neither sin can taint him, nor religious acts add anything to him, there is no duty for him and neither is there fear of any kind. The wisdom is so complete that nothing more can be added to it. The highest gods are mere slaves. But he is not a yogi to demonstrate his power. He is absolutely in harmony with himself and the world. Thus he alone can teach the absolute truth. Munis are generally associated with Śaiva tradition in Hinduism. In this tradition knowledge alone is capable of liberating, thus it totally rejects the relative or conventional truth leading to Absolute Truth without a change over. *Śaṅkara* was opposed by the school of spoken truth viz. Karmakāṇḍis as a heretic, mainly because of his refusal to bind himself to the truth and exclude the silence tradition. Later Vedāntins followed the Vaiṣṇava tradition in accepting liberation as an aspect of conventional truth, though of a very highly purified type, but conventional all the same. Thus Vaishnavism and Shaivism are not merely two names of the followers of the two forms of the same God, but have entirely different school of philosophy. One represents the truth and the other silent traditions. But we must remember that Śaṅkara belonged

to Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti tradition, and hence emphasised the silence of different types, rather than merely do away with the truth tradition. There is one what is called a selective silence viz silence born out of the conviction that ultimates cannot be revealed to an uninitiate or one bereft of prajñā cakṣu. Then there is the ascetic silence meaning thereby that inner vision cannot possibly be revealed through mere words. And then there is withholding silence which means the truth in its complete form is withheld, though revealing its essence. Mauna vyākhyā is a deep philosophy. The illumined teacher often helps his beloved disciple by a blessing of spiritual support whether with a look, a touch or sometime a mental wave. All this comes under silent lecture of Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti. Thus we find that Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Śaṅkara represent a harmony of the two traditions of silence and truth or absolute and conventional truth though their goal is silence and method truth.

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखं ।

तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥ (ईशावास्य)

Reveal O Lord' the face of truth which is covered by a golden vessel for I follow the truth as my duty.

बाल्यं च पाण्डित्यं च निर्विद्याथ मुनिर्भवति । (बृ० ३.५.१)

Being satiated with unattachment and wisdom he becomes a Muni.

Śraddhā

The conception of Śraddhā is not mere belief, but something that gives momentum to living. The word itself Śrat = heart and dhā = to place. Thus it implies placing of one's heart on something and thus it is that which has relevance to a living being. Basically it is a longing of the heart or it is yearning for some end. It is implied that one is convinced that the end is realisable and that too by some means. End we know always means a desire, and means implies confidence in its capacity to bring about the end. We cannot identify it with only one of them. End may either be observable or *pratyakṣa*, or it may be verbal, (scriptural) or imperceptible. The first is incapable of integrating the whole life, whereas the latter always keeps it as a goal. This implies affirmative faith in integration which relates to absolute truth. Śraddhā only in *pratyakṣa* is basically an āsura tendency. Thus, it necessarily is involved in a sacred text whether eternal like the *Veda* or temporal like *Gītā*. The human being's predicament is his self-centeredness. Śraddhā guides a person to transcend it by attaining the realisation of the unity of God, soul and world in loving communion. But Śraddhā is also directly involved in the person's realisation of his own capabilities to attain the end. Unless one is confident of his own capacities the motion towards the goal does not even start. Thus, all that weakens self-confidence also negates Śraddhā. Psychologically many make a mistake by asserting the difficulty of the path. Though mostly this is

indulged to indicate the superiority of the end, but too much of it is self-defeating.

The aspiration for Unified consciousness or Advaita-realisation is mainly an emotion or inner compulsion. Thus, the word *vividiṣā* or *jijñāsā* is often used to denote this aspect. The later Bhakti literature calls it Love. But love is Desire directed towards a conscious being, and since Advaita always implies a conscious goal *vividiṣā* and love are identical emotion. The later schools perhaps want to emphasise that a personal consciousness alone is fit for a loved goal. But they forget that love is equally directed towards a universal or an individual consciousness. Thus, devotion is not a monopoly of dualism. Rather, true love always dissolves duality. Hence, true duality and love cannot co-exist. Illusory duality or unreal duality or conventional duality is not negated by *Advaita Vedānta*, and that is all that is needed for love. Thus only *Advaita Vedānta* can be truly helpful to Love. Śaṅkara expresses it by saying that love is the most important cause of liberation. Since advaita of *one's* own self with the infinite bliss is understood, end that is aspired after becomes an object of Śraddhā, since it is impossible not to be emotionally aroused by it. Since it is the ignorance that hides the fact, its removal can definitely be attained only by knowledge. Thus Śraddhā about means is evident, and one's capability to attain is equally evident, for it is already present. The only thing that one needs to have Śraddhā about is the scripture and the preceptor who can enlighten us. Hence all the great

Advaitins have emphasised that complete faith in the words of Guru and *Vedānta* is Śraddhā, since the other two are evident. *Sādhya* and *Sādhana* are evident, only the *Śāstra* and Guru changes in different schools of Vedānta. Since these are due to intellectual detailed knowledge, one finds rationality slowly becoming logicity in Vedānta tradition, giving rise to the illusion that logic is the most important means, if not the only one, in Advaita. Śaṅkara again and again hammers into us that logic is not a gateway to knowledge, and perhaps some of his devastating words are reserved for it. The Śraddhā is the final instrument in the form of emotional attachment to the preceptor and Vedānta. In traditional Vedānta, the Guru is the object of adoration and worship as a symbol of Supreme Godhead. In the commentary on the third aphorism of *Bādarāyaṇa's* Brahmasutra, the great Śaṅkara points out two modes of this faith by explaining the sutra in two ways. Veda is the only scripture that reveals God or God is the only revealer of the Veda. A person may approach God by the fact that he has faith in the scriptures and thus is convinced that what the scriptures lay down is beyond doubt. Such a one will be emotionally moved by love towards the scriptures. Hence once he is convinced that the scriptures proclaim the identity of individual and universal consciousness he will be emotionally moved to attain it. About half of the works of Śaṅkara is aimed to bring this emotion about. Or one may be devoted to Īśvara and emotionally moved only when he is convinced that the Vedānta is revealed by him.

If the identity of Īśvara and Guru is emotionally operative, the mode of Śraddhā is the easiest path. Is it because of this emotion that Śaṅkara, though regarded supreme manifestation or incarnation of the Supreme deity Shiva, still is reverentially called Ācārya. The same Advaita emotion calls Kṛṣṇa as Jagadguru. Śaṅkara himself asserts that Guru is the image of Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti. In his well-known Bhaja Govindam liturgy he remembers his Guru Govinda Bhagavadpāda as God Himself. In his Manīshā Pañcaka he goes to the extent of saying that one who illumines may be even in a pariah body but since he has touched the core of the Absolute he is definitely his guru. Thus in Advaita the identity of Guru and God is based on the firm foundation that one, who reveals the ultimate truth of the identity of individual self with the universal self is the revealer of the scripture and hence he is God Himself. Since most of those who belong outside the tradition do not perceive this identity they feel it is Gurudom and try to belittle it by calling it human adoration. Just as the image of stone is not God as stone, but definitely God as the *Arcā Avatāra*. Guru is not God as a human being, but definitely God as the revealer of the import of the scriptures. Furthermore since this is the highest, if not the only manifestation of God that interests the spiritual aspirant Śraddhā in Guru as God is the main emotive force. In other forms he may have created or preserved the worlds, but those functions do not interest or are emotionally irrelevant to the aspirations of the seeker. Thus we find Śraddhā, in some predominantly

intellectual and hence impersonal, and in others predominantly devotional and hence personal. The difference is due to the fact the immediate attention is given to the end or the means. Thus Karmakāṇḍa and Bhaktikāṇḍa both are the pathways to Śivajñāna Yoga of Patanjali is basically associated with means more than the ends, hence it is really a branch of bhaktikāṇḍa. Since the operative emotion is towards an impersonal God, it is considered different from Bhakti, for the word after Rāmānuja was appropriated by those whose operative emotion is towards a personal God and that too generally towards Vishnu and his manifestation. But it is not based on any fundamental analysis.

Karma kāṇḍa is the theory that holds the view that if means are perfect the end automatically follows. Thus meticulous performance of sacrifice with fastidious concern to details is important. The attitude towards the one who bestows the end is lost sight of to the extent that even the bestower's existence is denied. Bhakti was a rebellion against this, though later on Bhakti also degenerates into ritualistic details of worship becoming more important, than the devotional attitude to the worshipped. With bhakti slowly becoming directed towards many sub-gods along with the main one the whole of Karma kāṇḍa was repeated all over again in the *Purāṇas* and *Āgamas*. Śraddhā here is oriented ritualistically towards the means. Knowing this human tendency Śaṅkara warns us again and again that the important thing is dawning of knowledge, which is the

end, and not any particular means to it which may differ in individuals. The means to knowledge in some may be just hearing, in some others associated with rational analysis, in some others it may be further or independently associated with contemplation, in some others concentration or worship of deity his grace or repetitions or an inner living or dispassion or the grace of the preceptor or his service etc. The thing to have śraddhā for is the end, namely identity of jiva and Shiva, and not the means. It is important that Vedānta-Sutras start with not enquiry into means of Brahman, but enquiry of Brahman, the end. Undoubtedly self-control, meditation, solitude, celibacy, dispassion, austerity, service of Guru and listening to him etc. are emphasised but mystical union does not follow automatically but is the result of the grace of God in the form of Guru. Śraddhā may be abstract to begin with, but though intellectual is never impersonal. It is interesting to note that some subschools have tried to make it impersonal by asserting that if the śravaṇa, manana etc. are perfect the unitary consciousness is bound to follow, thus falling in line with the Karma kāṇḍa. They forget that faith in Guru and God is essential to take this path of knowledge. The case of Ramana Maharishi in modern times is an important one for he did not have a human Guru and still insisted on having a human Guru for others. Once questioned point blank how he attained the supreme truth without the aid of a guru he pointed out the image of Shiva in the form *Aruṇācaleśvara* as his guru and indicating that just as Guru is God, God is

Guru for those who due to excessive devotion can associate continually with the chosen form of God. Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa of course had many gurus but each one was expressly told to be considered as such by the Bhadrakālī image of Dakshineshwar Mahadeva temple. The Upanishads clearly assert, and the *Gītā* echoes that the grace of God is the essential element in the dawning of knowledge. God here means form of personal Guru in most cases is a matter of detail. This emphasis on the end tends to have emotional overtones. Eventually it degenerates into the lazy attitude of leaving one self to the mercy of a loving God. This is possible when absent form of personal God is the substitute for personal God. Personal should mean the one with whom we are personally associated and not the one with whom we are not personally associated. Impersonal should mean where personal association is absent. Thus Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna, Uddhava, Bhīṣma, Gopīs etc. was a person, and thus could become a personal God to them. But to us he will always be impersonal, no matter how attached we are to him, for it is only an imagined Kṛṣṇa that we can contact. Kṛṣṇa can be a substitute name for impersonal God, but he remains impersonal all the same. Thus Arjuna may be forced to fight by the personal Kṛṣṇa, but the impersonal Kṛṣṇa will give the guidance that most suits our mental lethargy. Guru is personal, hence he can never be impersonal. Thus Advaita emphasising this personal aspect, keeps the danger of falling into the sloth away. The *Gītā* emphasises the personal aspect of Kṛṣṇa in as

much as Kṛṣṇa is the personal guru of Arjuna. But missing the context Kṛṣṇa is made saviour in an impersonal way. Thus “my grace” “my order” “I shall save” etc. which are intimate personal revelations become mere substitute for self assurance, for Kṛṣṇa is not giving these assurances directly to that individual. But if these assurances come directly from Guru the assurances are also associated with his direct commands and thus both go hand in hand. Thus Vedānta harmonises personal love directed towards God as Guru and impersonal love directed towards God as revealed in the Vedic teachings. It is again a harmony of love between end which is the purest form of one’s own being, and means which is love towards one’s Guru and enquiry into one’s own being. Since one is always an object of love for oneself bhakti or love is always present. Thus it is entirely different from ritualistic, magical, formal and morally corrupt Śraddhā of the Karmakāṇḍa . If Guru is not a priest of knowledge, one must acquire it by his own effort. Guru’s grace is only to light the lamp in your heart. The spiritual goal of self transcendence should never be confused with self transformation. Intuitive mystical unity of the Being as universal consciousness is the object or end of Śraddhā. Means of this is a teacher who has realised this unity through profound wisdom and is fit as well as ready to impart it. Sacrifice is substituted by self-sacrifice and ritual is internal, mystical and psyche transcendence rather than any external ceremonial one. Guru is a living

being, thus not an object of ritualistic devotion, but a loving personal attendance.

A transcendental concern involving the whole of life, an attitude of love towards a positive goal of transcendence and affirmation to its truth by a guide is the body of Śraddhā. A higher being is sought by transcending a lower one. It is this that makes Hinduism a living religion.

श्रद्धा आविवेश (कठ १.२)

Faith Enters.

श्रद्धां प्रातर्हवामहे श्रद्धां मध्यन्दिनं परि ।

We pray for faith all the time.

तस्मै श्री गुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्री दक्षिणामूर्तये ।

The form of Guru is the Shiva himself as the revealer of mystic unity.

चाण्डालोऽस्तु स तु द्विजोस्तु गुरुरित्येषा मनीषा मम ।

My conviction is that wise one who reveals the mystic universal consciousness can be found in a pariah body as much in a caste-body.

श्रद्धा धनादन्यत्र कथं तद्ब्रह्मोपलभ्यते ?

How can Supreme Identity be realised without the wealth called faith?

श्रद्धया संवत्सरं संवत्स्यथ (प्रश्न १.२)

Stay with me for a year with faith.

द्रव्ययज्ञादात्मयज्ञो श्रेयः ।

External sacrifice is far inferior to the internal self-sacrifice.

Satyameva Jayate

The famous quotation from Upanishad has often been *misused* as a slogan at times, by religious fanatics and at other times even by political fanatics. Since Satyagraha (fanaticism of Truth) was the chief ammunition used in India's war for political freedom it was natural that the Upanishadic saying was adopted as our motto. It is a different matter that like all slogans its meaning has become mystical, hence unrelated to life. We see that in life a man practicing untruth is the victorious one, and truthful man is the loser. Since the State of India is a secular one motto can not possibly refer to an afterlife victory. Hence it is like any incantation, a mystery.

We will try to see the meaning of Jayate, Mallinātha has given the meaning of Jayate, in a different context as “existing by surpassing everything else by one's own excellence or Utkarṣa. The general meaning of ‘wins’ or ‘is victorious’ has a shade of fight with an external enemy. Since the word is often used where no such fight is evident, the meaning generally is changed to “as if victorious”. Even the Gods and saints are often mentioned as *Vijayatetarām* where the meaning is often in the sense that Muslims use the name of Prophet, followed by “peace be upon him”. But this meaning of Mallinātha is equally applicable in peace and war. It is the surpassing excellence

as a quality that is verbalised. The derivative meaning of Utkarṣa (the best or that which surpasses) is Ut or that comes up by Karṣa or churning. Just as butter comes up by churning, the curd or yogurt the real personality shines forth on churning the apparent personality which is a mixture of the real and unreal. Since Satyam is really Brahma, the meaning is that by continuous churning of the apparent personality or Jiva, one finds that Brahma is the only reality that exists by surpassing (निरतिशय) everything else (including time, space, condition, substance etc.) by its own excellence (स्वे महिम्नि). The word Ut is specially mentioned in Chāndogya Upanishad of Sāma Veda's Kauthumi recension as a name of Brahman. Thus the whole passage means that Brahman alone has the surpassing excellence, not necessarily manifest always. Thus in the process of creation, he is the most excellent of the manifest and unmanifest, being both the material as well as the efficient cause of everything. In the manifest world he is the most pervasive, being the material cause of space and time, and again being the Jiva, he is the most excellent of the manifest world. Thus the sentence really means that Brahman is the best or the essence of all that exists. Because he is the best, he is to be worshipped and followed. This is his Saṅga aspect. He is Shiva, the good and bliss. Because he is the essence, he is to be identical with or known as one's reality. This is his *Nirguṇa* aspect. He is Ātman, the very being of our being.

Shiva sustains and supports, in spite of conflicts and changes inherent in the world process due to his power of

manifestation. Ātman cannot be destroyed by any process, for process can change only the superfluous or the superimposition and not the essence. Gold can never be changed by any amount of ornamenting. Only the particular ornament can be transformed. It holds all in complete accord and harmony in the midst of change, whether of quality or state. All life naturally is oriented towards its preservation and growth. Thus, the life's dharma is that which helps it. But the essence needs revelation of its own nature. This is Shiva's Dharma and all that helps it is Śivātmā Dharma. One may either take to life's dharma or Śivātmā Dharma. Of course, the two need not always be in conflict. Mostly they may be harmonious. But there are moments or situations where one must decide, and it is this decision or preference that decides the victory of Satya or its manifestation viz life.

There is another famous saying that wherever there is dharma there is victory. This is really textology. On the other hand, Truth has its own character that supports it. Similarly we must admit false too has its own character that support falsehood. But the fundamental thing about Truth is that it is never contradicted (बाध). Its essence is such that when it seems to be contradicted, it is on the verge of being reconciled in a greater harmony with a larger universal entity. On the other hand, the essence of false is to create appearances in a way that prevents contradiction being cognised at the time of its appearance. Thus the contradiction inherent in a rod, water pipe, snake, crack etc. are not cognised in themselves, and of course,

not at all of their contradiction with the rope, the reality. The universe, though full of contradictions, is never perceived as such. Even when the contradiction is apparent, it is smoothened over. A physicist knows the inherent contradiction in a solid metal perceived by mere senses, and its absolute hollowness as moving positive and negative electric current. But in his normal behaviour the contradiction is smoothened over. It is this that makes liberation in life possible. A knower of Brahman is conscious of the contradiction yet at the moment of perception it is glossed over. Vedānta asserts that the falsity of the world is supported by Brahman and Brahman again is the object of world's perception. Since snake is supported by the rope, and also rope is the object of snake's perception, rope is called real, similarly Brahman is called real. This opens up a whole new vista of the wisdom of Brahman's reality.

The state and social groups are controlled by certain rules. No society can exist without them. But mostly they are mere conventions. They are not the essence. But due to long association, they seem to be the essence of that society. But since they are not really so, the society will not disintegrate if they are changed according to temporal situations. But in the normal course, transgressing these conventional truths or laws brings about punishment. But any clever person finds out the means where transgressions will go unpunished. There is no way to deal with such people. Thus one feels that nature will inflict punishment, less realising that most of these transgressions

are not based on the essence, thus cannot possibly concern nature. The external world is not amenable to man-made moral laws or beliefs. Anyhow, all religious retribution originates from such a belief. But essence is support in reality. This concept makes defeat of immorality inherent. If we transgress our essence which supports it, we lose our support, and are bound to be disintegrated. There is no way to avoid this. And if the degeneration does not set in, the essence was fictitious, and no harm can come from a fictitious law being transgressed. Since Brahman is the real essence, and since we are generally concerned with conventions, we have disintegrated from freedom to bondage. A Samnyāsin leaves all conventional truths for the sake of this essence, hence though he seems to transgress all social conventions, he does not lose, but wins back his freedom.

This is the real victory (जय). But there is also a conventional dimension to it. Individuals depend on a group for practical purposes and are guided by reward and punishment, loss and gain that follows it. This is a lower ladder of victory. To suit it, we have a conventional concept of truth also. It stands for our faith in rituals, customs, feelings etc. that are helpful in giving support to the social life and the individual belonging to it. Virtue, Vice, etc. as means, Heaven-Hell as ends, belong to this truth. Fear is the guiding divinity here. This truth is basically authoritative, for whether God commands them or scriptures reveal them, we can do nothing but accept it verbatim. Fear here is basically biological since the

description of hell or heaven (including such highest as Vaikuṇṭha) refer only to biological pleasure or pain in the form of sensuous perception, Karma and re-birth are also in the same pattern, though much more refined in their higher mode of expressions, where pleasures and pain are regarded in a general sense. But populists approach in most of the Purāṇas convey the theory of eye for an eye. A playboy is shown as getting a hot iron damsel to embrace and so on. Vedavyāsa in his Mahābhārata goes a step further by saying that the essence of virtue and vice are always veiled and the only way for ordinary people is to follow what the wise ones do in a particular situation. Thus the great sage clearly enunciates the interpretation of the truth with conventional truth as the one guiding and the other guided. Wise are never blind followers of the letters of the scriptures. Having sought out the truth of the inner essence, both of the man and universe, they are guided solely by it, and stick to this essence of scriptures, rather than their forms. Thus truth should become the director of the stage of conventional truth. Gauḍapāda, the grand preceptor of 'Shri Śaṅkara' clearly mentions that a wise person should interpret the Vedas as he feels appropriate, and assign the sections to higher, lower, spiritual, temporal as he sees them.

Thus we find that excelling is becoming victorious and not just a stage in conflict or war. Excelling does not depend on others. Hence it is not relative. In the practical world, excelling does mean coming on top of others, and hence we expect to win in that sense by following the path

of truth. But we soon learn that the practical excelling needs practical truths, and not the Truth. It is wrong to expect a highly developed instrument to successfully weigh a kilo of vegetables. Similarly, the path of absolute should not be expected to win victories which are based on wrong premises. Worldly success implies stepping on other's toes, no matter in howsoever a small measure. On the other hand, the ideal to be excelled presented here, where to be stepped upon is superior than stepping upon. The passage makes it clear by asserting that the path of truth here was trodden by the supreme gods, and it is this path that is opened up. Negatively, it asserts that truth does not conquer untruth, but is excellent in itself and that untruth can never excel the truth, for by its very nature, it is of a lower order. Truth of rope sublimates the snake, not destroy it, for they both belong to different category of existence. Conquering is possible where two or more substances are of similar existence. Thus, excellence of truth is not relative to untruth, but is independent of it, and sublimates or absorbs it into itself and transcends it. This conception of truth is what makes Advaita absorb every shade of religion. Hinduism has survived through millenniums not by conquering, but by excelling. It never believed in conversion of others, but in sublimating them in a higher reality. Rāma conquers Rāvaṇa not to put Lakṣmaṇa on the throne, but to bestow it on Vibhīṣaṇa, his brother. Similarly Jarāsandha's son, Narakāśura's son etc. are put on the throne by Kṛṣṇa, The idea is not to destroy but to harmonise.

The leaves grow all over the tree more or less simultaneously in the spring. But none of the leaves interfere in each other's growth. It makes way for others without in any way being interfered by the others. There is vivacious harmony. In a single lotus, bud, the petals are all intertwined. It is impossible to separate them without destroying them. But in a natural way they blossom and each one is complete and in harmony with distinction painted large on each one of them. This is the harmony that truth brings about. Each soul is in full harmony with others. The whole concept of modern western culture is analogical, thus destructive. It follows the Christian conversion principles. And the 'truth is victorious' is read in the light of this methodology to put truth against untruth. Naturally both are considered as belonging to the same category of existence. The experience does not uphold it and the saying becomes a trite. But seen in the light of excellence, as done here, one can see that the saying is as true as ever. Unity is not destruction but dissolution. The harmony of all of us, together being in the harmony of Shiva, is what excels. Shiva unites us all, is both imminent and transcendent. Every particle is in harmony with all that exists. This is the rhythm of life, the symphony of all distinct and separate notes. To transgress is to lose, to be defeated, to die. Disharmony is divisive, separateness and is false. Advaita, is harmony, oneness, creative and is reality. Life is really an experience of blossoming through different manifestations. People, often, in trying to identify

experience with outer objects, are unable to see the true essence of experience itself. Real excellence does not depend on whatever we have, the external objects and achievements. They are always coming and going. External thing can never be completely ours. They, no doubt, excite us, induce some motion in us, but it is in the harmony of these with our inner experience, that life is really built up. Newer modes of thoughts, reflections and reactions to the external stimuli that brings about stability within our ownself, is never destroyed or lost. Experience of Shiva is not like an experience of an object. It is the attainment of one's finest and subtlest existence. One transcends impermanence and attains permanence. It is the direct perception that one permeates all that exists. After the experience, all finite gifts become the infinite grace in and through those gifts. Finite (परिच्छिन्न) has to have its ultimate root in the infinite (अपरिच्छिन्न). This infinite is the Truth and all finite is untruth. Infinite alone shines in its excellence is what the Upanishad proclaims.

Shiva is infinite. Hence we cannot search Shiva in a particular space, time or causal chain. Hence worship of Shiva can only be in the form of knowing our non-existence without Him, or feeling our existence entirely due to Him. Removal of all obstructions which stand in the way of our union with Him is becoming excellent. Extension of our consciousness of HIM by devoted feeling and service by expressing goodness in love is really excelling. In all our emotions, deeds and thoughts, there must be an ever flowing current which keeps us in

continuous contact with this infinite Being. The physical pleasures are mean, narrow and limited, and it is only the emotions, deeds or thoughts of possessing these pleasures, and the objects associated with them that make us lose this infinite. Infinity, though at hand but out of its love, becomes unattainable. Once Shiva is present as continuous expansion, we live and have our being in Him. Each step emerges with His steps. We are but HIM or we feel like a mirror-image of him, but not in reverse. Once hunger is appeased nothing is left. But in emotive and intellectual pursuits the scope is infinite. There is equal pleasure in getting a solution and not getting it. Whether love is responded or not, the same experience is manifested. The beloved is not exhausted by getting Him in love, for what we get, infinitely more remains to be yearned as we come closer to Him. Someone has said that the eyes are still hungry when one has gazed upon the beauty of the beloved's face from eternity. In the closest embrace of eternity, the heart remains as unsatisfied as at the beginning. Similarly, a philosopher is as unsatisfied of his philosophical results after building the whole structure of philosophy from the scratch, as he was at the beginning. The solution creates as many problems as it solves. This is the main difference between our vital pleasures and emotive intellectual ones. We are ever in search of our beloved Shiva, who is our own realised self, in and through our own self, the self of others and the manifest universe. The yearning increases in geometrical progression as the vision increases in arithmetic progression. This is because

the goal of the search, the beloved of our yearning, is the infinite Shiva, but the means is the finite manifestations. But the renunciation of finite is infinite. This renunciation is the deepest reality of the human soul. Hence Shiva can be attained only through renunciation. But outgrowing possessions and the possessive instinct we move towards the eternal through the path which is a series of progressively increasing field of renunciation. Thus the truth is the renunciation that excels in a total experience (सर्व कर्म सन्यास).

The impossibility of possessing the infinite is not a mere logical proposition, but a direct intuitive experience. In flying through the space, the boundlessness of it is intuitively experienced, and in this experience lies the joy of flying. The famous passages of Bible assert that one cannot live by bread alone. The human situation does not allow shutting itself within the bounds of mere necessities, for one feels oneself is infinitely much more than what is merely necessary. Infinite, Shiva gazes in the heart of Jiva. He feels within himself the incompleteness as if he is yet to be. There seems to be no end of his becoming. The hunger for the infinite has to be appeased. The biological self is roped in by necessities that are limited, but the intuitive self wants to break through the bondage. Freedom and bliss is what is at stake. The truth is not gaining material possessions, nor is it to be used to gain material purposes, but it is for realising our excellence which is Shiva in our own self, for Shiva is ever present within ourselves as our own being. Our coming into

human situation is meaningless, if we cannot excel by realising Shiva as our real being. Being is Shiva and becoming is Jiva. Their relation is an eternal play of love and is the deepest mystery. This mystery is the source of all truth and beauty, which manifests as the eternal creation. To use the Upanishad's language, water as the river is the eternal lover, and again water as the ocean is the eternal beloved. The river, in its flow, waters all land, but has no real relation with them. Its relation is only with the ocean into whose bosom it must merge forever. This is the spirit of renunciation of the Truth. While flowing river remains an individual though it is even then nothing but water, similarly Jiva is fully conscious of its individuality, though intuitively it is nothing but Brahman. The sense of overcoming obstacles and impediments, sorrows and sufferings, can be transcended when the merger is complete with the Beloved. In a poem in epic, painting or a drama, the central idea or the theme holds every sentence, rhyme, sonorous effect, lines of colour, light, shade, etc. in harmonious blending. This is attained through every part, but is not contained in any of them, but transcends them. If we detach any part from the central idea, we see multitude of words or colour, but not the final result, which is a poem or a painting. Similarly by knowing the parts of the universe, we can never understand Shiva, who is infinite. Yet He is not beyond knowledge. Mere intellectual knowledge is partial for intellect is only the means of knowing Him. Just as a flower cannot be known merely by eye or nose. All the senses, when combined,

give us the true knowledge of the flower. Similarly, we can contact Shiva only through our whole being, which is manifested in action, emotion, volition and intelligence. Some call it wisdom, others prefer to call it love. The first emphasises the intellectual aspect, the other emotive aspect. But actually it is exhausted by neither. Experience, perhaps is a more comprehensive word. Thus excellently resting in experience is the fruit of truth, love or wisdom or experience in the process of its manifestation is bound to be accompanied with pain. Through pain only, the inherent joy of love can be attained. The truth is shining in excellence even throughout the process, yet manifests through the process in time. To use an oft-quoted Upanishadic passage, “Shiva has chosen the Jiva and the revelation is complete.” The one, who is in union in eternity, is being pursued in time and space, in joys and sorrows. Once the soul understands it is blissful and at rest. This excellent state is the Truth.

सत्यमेव जयते नानृतं सत्येन पन्था विततो देवयानः । मुंडकोपनिषद् ३.१.६

Truth excels not the false. By the truth, the way to Divine becomes a continuous current towards it. It is by renouncing all that is unreal that the one who is truthful excels in his own glory.

स्वयमेव जगद्भूत्वा प्राविशज्जीवरूपतः । पञ्चदशी १०.१

Shiva transformed Himself into the Universe and then entered it in the form of soul, as the controller.

आश्रयत्व विषयत्व भागिनी निर्विभाग चित्तिरेव केवला । सर्वज्ञात्म

Absolute pure experience is the simultaneous subject and object in the realm of nescience.

यथा नद्यः स्यन्दमानाः समुद्रे अस्तं गच्छन्ति नामरूपे विहाय ।
तथा विद्वान्नामरूपाद्विमुक्तः परात्परं पुरुषम् उपैति दिव्यम् ॥

(मुंडकोपनिषद् ३.२.८)

Just as rivers of various forms having various names merge into the ocean devoid of their individual forms and names and can then be considered only as identical with ocean, the seer merges into the Supreme Godhead, losing the individual form and name and is then nothing else but the Supreme Godhead.

अनुभववावसानत्वाद्भूतवस्तुविषयत्वाच्च ब्रह्मज्ञानस्य हि ब्रह्मविद्या ।

(ब्र.सू.भा १.१.२)

The Supreme knowledge of Shiva is considered to have been reached finally when it shines as an experience without the contamination of the thought or emotive process.

एवं यो वेद तत्त्वेन कल्पयेत् सोऽविशंकितः । (माण्डूक्यकारिका २.३०)

One who has realised through the sacred teachings and rationality that the Supreme Being is the only reality which is falsely conceived as different deities etc. is the one who is authorised to give proper interpretation to the sacred lore to what it refers. One who does not know the Supreme Being can never comprehend the true meaning of the various passages in the Vedas.

तस्योदिति नाम स एष सर्वेभ्यः पाप्मभ्य उदित

उदेति ह वै सर्वेभ्यः पाप्मभ्यो य एवं वेद ॥ (छान्दोग्योपनिषद् १.६.७)

Ut is the name of the Supreme Being for it denotes his quality. He is ever transcendent to all that is sinful and its results. *Ut* means transcendent. One who contemplates Him as such also goes, beyond the sin and its results.

कस्मिन् प्रतिष्ठित इति ? स्वे महिम्नि यदि वा न महिम्नीति ।

(छान्दोग्योपनिषत् ७.२४.१)

The transcendental Being is established in his own greatness or it may equally be said to be established in none else than Himself. He is never dependent or needs no other foundation for He is the ultimate existence or foundation of all that exists.

यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः । (महाभारत)

Wherever the virtue resides, there only the excellence resides.

Vedānta

The scriptures on which the whole of Hinduism and its philosophy is based is called Veda. Since it is a very large volume, the essential part dealing with reality or God, as compared to rituals, is collected separately and called Vedānta meaning the culmination of the Vedic lore. Vedavyāsa or Bādarāyaṇa codified it and systematically developed its metaphysics, eschatology, ethics, epistemology, etc. into his magnum opus Brahma sutra. There were undoubtedly earlier attempts to do so, and the views of those earlier authors are referred into the Sutras. But the present work surpassed them in its

comprehensive and logical consistency so that they were gradually lost. Since *Pāṇini* refers to it, the date of the present work has to be 1500 B.C. or earlier. Thus for the last three or four thousand years, the Vedānta text has been Brahmasutra. The various commentators during the centuries interpreted it variously. But the most ancient commentary available at present is the one by the pen of the great Master Śaṅkara. He does refer to certain earlier commentaries, sometimes agreeing with him, at times differing with him, but we cannot come to any definite conclusion about their views in absence of any work of those schools. Thus Sutra and Śaṅkara Bhāṣya are the only ancient works of Vedānta available to us. Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha, Nimbārka, Baladeva etc. have unsuccessfully tried to interpret Sutra in the light of Vaiṣṇava tantras called Pāñcarātra and *Vaikhānasa*. As Śaṅkara repeatedly points out the Sutra is not an independent philosophical work, but merely interpretative and categorical one. As such the topic (अधिकरण) must directly refer to some inconsistency apparent in the particular passage in the Upanishads and its resolution in times of the Upanishad. The Vaiṣṇava picture becomes clear in the commentary of one Vaiṣṇava writer called Śuka who refers to the topics as belonging to the *Bhāgavata* text. Thus though he does not call it so, he wants to change *Brahma* sutra into Bhāgavata Sutra. Since many moderners are obsessed with numerical strength, and since the number of Vaiṣṇava interpreters is larger, they feel that there must

have been a tradition considering Brahma Sutra as an independent philosophical work, rather than the codifier of the wisdom of the Vedas. One must remember that soon after Śaṅkara, Bhāskara followed and integrated Sutra in terms of a qualified non-dualism of a particular variety. Īśvara to him was identical with Brahman. He was at least true to the traditions of Upanishads no matter how wrong in interpreting its philosophy. He is not obsessed with Vaiṣṇava sectarian works. Thus though there might have been a stream which insisted on realistic interpretation of the Veda and personality of God, there seems to be no justification to hold that it was in any way associated with Vaiṣṇava sectarianism. But even a cursory glance at the Upanishad convinces one that their purport seems to be the mystic wisdom of the unity of God, soul and the world. *Thibaut* though holding sutra to be dualistic does categorically state that Upanishads are non-dualistic. It is very difficult to agree that Vedavyāsa misunderstood Veda. Schopenhauer, *Deussen* etc. have all understood by Vedānta, the school of Śaṅkara. The Persian translation of Dara Shikoh, the son of Muslim emperor Shah Jahan also interprets them in this light. All the other schools of thought including Buddhists and Jains while referring to Vedānta always refer to nonsectarian non-dualistic view of it, and never Vaiṣṇava view. Thus there is no proof whatsoever that Vedānta's Vaiṣṇava interpretation pre-dates Rāmānuja. Moreover, in their religious life, they emphasise the works of devotion by Alvars rather than the

major Upanishad. This also is an important clue to find the authenticity of their interpretation. In the tradition of Śaṅkara it is the Upanishads that form the major religious liturgy.

Thus upto date an unbroken traditions of Vedānta, not contaminated by the thoughts of any other tradition exists in the order of Śaṅkara, coming as it does directly from Shri Dakṣiṇāmūrti at the beginning of the creation.

According to Śaṅkara ignorance of one's own reality is the cause of the universe and the feeling of bondage in the soul. The knowledge of unity is the sole cause of liberation from it. In one of his famous pithy verse he states the essence of Vedānta as the identity of soul and God as the liberating truth, and bondage to be unreal. Appaya Dikshita in his Siddhānta-lesha has summarised different ways to obtain this mystic vision of union. Madhusudana has given rational approach to the different methodologies. Vidyāraṇya has summarised no less than fifteen approaches. Thus Vedānta while asserting the truth as one, and its mystic vision as the only means, accords recognition to multiple approaches to this vision. This liberal attitude has often confused both, the metaphysician and the theologian. At times Vedāntins argue against each other so vehemently as regards to their own approach to be the best that a novice will assume them to be belonging to different schools or religions altogether. But on the other hand, this broad mindedness has kept it as the only ancient living religion and philosophy. Each generation

has felt free to interpret the basic truth in the language and cultural moves of his own generation, without feeling fettered by the earlier interpretation, though strictly adhering and following the original texts, and with unbound faith and devotion to all the earlier writers. Thus Vedānta is the science of Reality, rather than a dogma, religious or philosophical. The unbroken bond or thread through the infinite approaches is the faith that Shiva alone is the ultimate truth and the seeker himself is the Shiva.

The greatest contribution of Śaṅkara to the Vedānta is epistemological. There were many schools which held to the absoluteness of Shiva, but in order to explain the relative, they felt some sort of reality has to be imparted to it. Following the unbroken tradition from Rigveda onwards Śaṅkara gave the most logical explanations based on the concept of superimposition. Metaphysically Absolute may be pre-existent and self-revealing, but temporally and factually or experientially the relative soul is the self-revealing and pre-existing entity. Thus instead of asserting the Absolute, Śaṅkara points out that the self in us is to be searched into, and the method of search is as simple as to find out what is really the self-bereft of all, adjuncts. To put it clearly one can say that to try to find out what is really 'I' apart from all that can be experienced as not 'I' is the key to the final wisdom. One of the clearest way is to see the three states of consciousness, waking, dreaming and sleeping as the states that 'I' passes through

remaining untouched by any of them. This takes away the false reality that one has assigned to the body-mind-complex as the real 'I'. But to get to the truth one must meditate the truths, as prescribed by Vedānta without the cumbrances of everyday activity that imposes its own compulsions. Faith in Shiva, preceptor and scriptures is a must for the dawning of the wisdom. Control of mind and sense, makes the enquiry possible. But all these are accessories. The real issue that sprouts is the enquiry of the cause of the universe including the self.

Prior to enquiry, devotion to the Supreme Lord and dedicating of all actions as his worship is to be followed. One can either select a form or a name to keep continuity of feeling Him according to one's temperament. Guru, Father, Mother, Spouse, Son, Friend, Deities or any other form that suits because of intense affections, will serve the purpose. But one must stick to one symbol only. Aum is the most efficacious name because it easily lends itself to be divided into three corresponding to three states consciousness. Thus in the spiritual discipline of Advaita Aum takes precedence over all the other sound symbols. Similarly Śivaliṅga precedence over all other form symbols, for it lends itself easily to the universal interpretation. Liṅga is the space in motion. All natural motions are conical and when we gaze into the infinite sky we see the universe as liṅga. Moreover it is three dimensional Aum as written in the Sanskrit language of Devanagari script. The normal (ओम्) or (ॐ) is not used as

a symbol of the highest but (ॐ) in the Sanskrit language of Devanagari script. But as pointed out earlier, any symbol that one is attached to will serve the purpose.

The ethical life is an integral part of Vedānta aspirant. One must be bold enough to renounce all if necessary for the goal. Ethical life implies giving up the gains that accrue out of immorality. Passion, Anger and miserliness are the basic sins that one must avoid. Truth and love are the virtues one must practice thoroughly. Social responsibilities come next in the hierarchy of values. One's duty to the family, parents, community and country in this particular order must be fulfilled to the best of one's capacities until an intense passion to wisdom dawns. It is the time when the experience of Shiva directly becomes the only thing that matters, that one has transcended the path of action. From this time onwards, all activities indulged must necessarily be in harmony with the goal of unifying the consciousness that if divided (individualised) into Jiva and Shiva. If for any reason whatsoever, one is not able to take the plunge into this harmony, the wisdom will elude him. But the seed will remain through reincarnations and will definitely sprout at the appropriate time. Hence one of the most important spiritual disciplines in Vedānta is to learn the Upanishads and its associated literature from the teachers who have themselves not only mastered them literally but also have lived accordingly. Often this is painted by the uninitiate as mere scholarship, and is often derided. But what worship of the image is to a devotee, Japa to a nāḍī,

dhyāna to a yogi, awakening of *kundalini* to a *kaula*, capturing the spirit of Veda is to an Advaitin. He does not study to learn but to remove the dirt of ignorance from his apparent self. Since Buddhi (Rational comprehension) is the highest instrument of wisdom that human beings possess, Vedānta perfects it and his Sādhana is basically to use this instrument. But his approach is to reveal the mystery that is hidden in the scriptures as well as the mystery hidden in his own soul. Scriptures reveal that which is in the soul. Thus just as light reveals the pot which is existing on the ground, Vedic texts reveal the truth that is already within the soul. Soul is directed by our own self. Hence revelation needs no other accessory Sādhana but to rationally comprehend it. Since no other theology accepts that God is already at hand, they all work out a rich mysterious methodology to attain it. Knowing well that whatever is attained is bound to be lost, Vedānta lays down the easiest and the only efficacious method of wisdom. It is to understand and live the unity of Being that already exists. Thus learning the purport of Upanishads, through a preceptor is the first step in gaining wisdom. Having learnt it, one must reason it out and harmonise it with all other experiences and build up a rational logical base of this harmony. Preceptor may guide the aspirant in this, but basically it is a lonely path, for everyone's experiences are his own, and others can only faintly *cognise* it. Once these two steps are over, the main hurdle in wisdom is overcome. Now it is the time and continual living that brings out the flash of wisdom

that dispels ignorance in its entirety and the difference is entirely lost. Man has attained the stage of a Muni, rishi, Brahman. One of the most important contribution of Vedānta, following the whole tradition of Veda, Smṛiti, Purāṇa, Itihāsa and Āgama is that the world is to be transformed into Brahman, and the methodology is to view it properly. Misconstruing we see Brahman as the world and knowingly, we see nothing but Brahman. This is not pantheism for in that view of name and forms as such are *Theos* whereas in Vedānta the substance is Brahman and name and form are merely transfixed on it, through ignorance. Thus just as we clearly understand that in a painting Rāma and Sītā are not really existent, but only the paper is really existent, but due to the colours the paper remaining a paper appears like a tree, road, lake, Rāma, Sītā etc. the man of wisdom knows that Brahman alone is really existent and the soul, space, time, earth, etc. are apparent due to the power of Shiva known as Shakti, which is basically nescience. But just as the knowledge does not reduce the joy of viewing the painting, or appreciating it, the wise enjoy and appreciate the universe. But the sense of reality is entirely lost. Just as the viewer is basically a witness the wise is also merely a witness of the cosmic manifestation which includes his own body-mind complex. Since a sympathetic critic alone is the best guide to understand a piece of art, wise one who is sympathetic, being the alter-ego of the cosmic creator, and a critic being unattached to it is the best guide to understand the cosmic play. He is the one who

has attained the highest point of the Vedānta in his life. Vedānta has started living in him and through him. The society is to be judged by the number of such individuals living in its midst. Vedānta's contribution to the world is the production of such lives.

अन्तरान्तर्बहिश्चैव देहिनां देहपूरणी ।

स्वसंवेद्यस्वरूपा सा दृश्या देशिकदर्शितैः ॥ (प्रपंचसार १.२४)

Filling the body of the living beings present inside and outside, known by those who are shown by the preceptor as the one who is of the nature of self-enlightenment.

सकारं च हकारं च लोपयित्वा प्रयोजयेत् ।

संधिं वै पूर्वरूपाख्यं ततोऽसौ प्रणवो भवेत् ॥ (प्रपंचसार ४.२१)

Aum is the amalgamation form of Shiva and Jiva represented by SA & Ha.

अर्चा कार्या नित्यशः शैवपीठे स्यादप्यङ्गैर्लोकपालैस्तदस्त्रैः ।

सम्यक्पूजावस्तुभिर्मन्त्रजापैः प्रोक्तं ह्येतन्मृत्युभेत्तुर्विधानम् ॥ (प्रपंचसार)

Offering of worship with proper mantras and all accessories daily leads one to attain the state beyond death.

रम्यमप्युज्ज्वलमपि मनसोऽपि समीप्सितम् ।

लोकविद्वेषणं वेषं न गृहीयात्कदाचन ॥ (प्रपंचसार ३३.५९)

One must externally behave or wear a cloak which is not appreciated by people around even though one may like such a behaviour and even though it may be really good and beneficial.

लोकोद्वेगकरी या च या च कर्मनिकृन्तनी ।

स्थित्युच्छेदकरी या च तां गिरं नैव भाषयेत् ॥ (प्रपंचसार ३३.५८)

The language that creates repulsion in the mind of the people around and directs them away from the good acts suitable to their stage of evolution or that which disturbs the social and other equilibrium must not be indulged in.

शिवप्रसादेन विना न सिद्धिः शिवप्रसादेन विना न बुद्धिः ।

शिवप्रसादेन विना न युक्तिः शिवप्रसादेन विना न मुक्तिः ॥

(सर्ववेदान्तसिद्धान्तसारसङ्ग्रहः)

Without the grace of Shiva neither purity of mind, nor wisdom, nor meditation, nor liberation can be attained.

अज्ञानसर्पदष्टस्य ब्रह्मज्ञानौषधं विना ।

किमु वेदैश्च शास्त्रैश्च किमु मन्त्रैः किमौषधैः ॥ (विवेकचूडामणि ६३)

One bitten by poisonous snake of ignorance cannot be treated without the knowledge of Brahman. The repetition of Veda, study of philosophy, practicing liturgy or taking medicine is of no help.

शान्ता महान्तो निवसन्ति सन्तो वसन्तवल्लोकहितं चरन्तः ।

तीर्णाः स्वयं भीमभवार्षवं जनानहेतुनान्यानपि तारयन्तः ॥

(विवेकचूडामणि ३९)

The great wise ones live in peace with themselves and the cosmos, moving about doing good to people without any return like the spring having crossed the dangerous oceans of the world, they out of mere compassion continuously strive to liberate others from the same.





Vedanta Philosophy
for
21st Century



Preface

The twentieth century has turned the globe into a town. It has created problems in physical and psychological environment. Religion understood as a belief in certain historical incident and a closed chapter cannot inspire humanity anymore. Science as the faith in a closed mechanical system stands exposed. A higher reality has to descend on human consciousness if it has to survive. It must be logical enough to stand rational scientific scrutiny and deep enough to inspire awe and wonder which is the essence of religion. It is our contention that Advaita Vedānta as expounded by the followers of Vasiṣṭha, Yājñavalkya, Vyāsa, Śaṅkara, Sureśvara, Vidyāranya, Madhusūdana etc. is the vehicle through which this descent will take place. Vedānta is not to be read from a text but must be received from the tradition of unbroken succession of teachers, for Vedānta is a living science. Each generation must live it all over again. In this living the tradition is the inherent strength of Vedānta. Thus when called upon to lecture on the 21st century in its relations to Vedānta we did not have to plan an unknown destination or pathway. It was continuation of the road that we were driving on and destination was the same. Vedānta is the eternal path, Sanātana Dharma with eternity Sanātana as its destination. Naturally modern science,

specially physics had to supply the project dimensions, and Vedānta the purposiveness of those dimensions. The subject was vast and time at our disposal was short, yet we feel a clear picture comes through. The lectures have been published practically without any editing so that those who heard them can munch at them leisurely.

Bharatiya Sanskriti Samaj has taken upon themselves the task of printing and publishing these lectures. They are arranging for another series of lectures, and plan to do so in future to provide Delhi public with Vedāntic thought. We bless the enterprise success in their undertaking. May Shiva bring the Vedānta to fruition in their life.

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—**Maheshananda Giri**



Lecture One

The topic we have taken up is “Vedānta in its relation to the Twenty-First Century”.

The text that we will take up is one of the most important text in the Vedic literature where Yājñavalkya, the great sage, imparts the knowledge of the highest truth to his dear wife. We must first define our coordinates. When we talk of Vedānta for twenty-first century, let us be clear that there are certain presuppositions on which we will base our thinking.

First, we presume that we are not going to have any nuclear holocaust in the near future. As one of my disciples questioned me: “Are we sure that there is going to be a twenty-first century?” I answered him “Vedānta is always optimistic”. Human beings are not here just by accident. There is a definite pattern. There is a definite aim, a definite purpose for which humanity has come on this earth. Sometimes, we are surprised how different things combine together and produce results which we never expected.

Perhaps many of you may remember 16th July, 1945, because it was on that day at 5.30 in the morning that the first nuclear fission took place in a relatively unknown place, in the United States, Alamogordo, which is just an

air base. It was there that the first trial of the atomic bomb took place. That was the first nuclear device which came into being. Oppenheimer who was the main coordinator of the whole project, the so called Manhattan Project, knew Sanskrit and he records that what was seen there was very similar to what had happened to Arjuna 5,000 years ago on the field of Kurukshetra. There was a massive nuclear explosion and as Oppenheimer says it was identical with what Arjuna saw in the *Viśvarūpa*. Arjuna himself records.¹: If thousands of Suns come into being suddenly in the sky, that light will perhaps give some idea of the light which he was seeing. Oppenheimer says that this was more or less what he experienced in that nuclear explosion.

But, what was the explosion? Why are the two experiences more or less similar? The answer is that when we exploded the first atom, we did not merely explode an atom. We exploded the whole theory of materialism, which was prevalent for the last 2500 years or more. The atom which was the foundation stone of matter, had exploded and with that the very possibility of any materialism staying on became impossible. It is true that in the last part of the nineteenth century, already Galileo's and Newton's laws which were based on the mechanistic principles—where the world was a machine—were being bent to the breaking point. New facts were knocking and a completely new transformation of the model of the universe had become a necessity. All we had to do was to discover certain fundamental principles which explained

the new fact. The body was considered the centre until then, because of its being the material substance, the mind was thus merely an epiphenomenon of matter. Just when we were about to complete the picture of this mechanistic universe, the atom exploded and with that the whole model of materialistic-mechanistic universe. We entered a new generation of thinking, a new generation of philosophy and a whole new vista of science.

Was it not the same thing which Arjuna saw? Here also was an individual—because an atom, after all, was an individual material particle—Arjuna was an individual conscious particle no doubt, but still a particle, still only an atomic structure. That individuality was exploded because the Lord conveyed to Arjuna that he will not be able to see Him as He is until He gives him (Arjuna), that particular eye which will enable him to see² the Viśvarūpa. In that vision Arjuna saw that the individual was no more separate from the cosmic. He saw the whole battle not as something happening in the future but as existing in the present.

There is yet another interesting similarity. The nuclear explosion brought about destruction. When Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa, “Who are you in this form which is practically burning away my being?” the Lord answered³, “I am here to destroy the whole universe”. It is the individual conscious being, who exploded inside Arjuna, while the material individual, the atom, exploded in the Bomb. It is in this light that we can see that there is a tremendous similarity between what happens in the microcosm, that is

in our own body, and in the macrocosm, that is something which is outside. The explosion always means two things coming against each other and striking. That is how an explosion takes place.

Now in the case of Yājñavalkya, the same thing is happening.

The text says⁴ Yājñavalkya has lived a full life, a very peculiar life. His life is very similar to that of the people of the twentieth century. He was a very keen student. He was studying from Vaiśampāyana, the great teacher. At one time the teacher committed a sin. So he called all his students and told them: “I have committed this sin but I do not want to suffer its results. I will distribute this sin amongst you and each one of you will suffer only a part because it will be divided unto you, accept it.” Yājñavalkya, as mentioned before, was a keen student. He got up and said: “Sir, why should all these people suffer? I am ready to suffer the result of the complete sin. I am ready to go through hell. Why make the other co-students suffer too.” Having committed the sin, Vaiśampāyana was in no mood to listen to any objection and he said: “You are an extremely haughty egotist. You feel what I, your teacher, cannot suffer you will be able to suffer alone. I do not want you to possess the knowledge given by me. You vomit out the knowledge which I have given to you.”

The passage is an interesting one because in our literature we *drink* the nectar of words. When Parīkṣit says to Śuka, “I have been listening to you continuously

for seven days but I am not hungry nor thirsty because I am drinking the words which are coming out of your lotus mouth.” So when we absorb knowledge, it is drinking. That is why when we give out knowledge it is vomiting.

Of course, we all know that knowledge is not something which can either be drunk as such or vomited out, as such. It only means to dissociate yourself with that knowledge or associate yourself with that knowledge and make it a part of your life. Why do we use the word “drink” because when we take a drink it becomes a part and parcel of our existence. Similarly, knowledge to us is not something which is only intellectually comprehended but it is something which changes our life pattern, our whole body structure so to say, because both mind and body, according to our traditions, spring forth from the food that we eat. That is why the importance of the body-mind complex as a unit is emphasised. So Vaiśampāyana was saying: “you need not build your life on the foundations which I have laid in you.” Yājñavalkya accepted the challenge, and said, “Well, if you want your knowledge back, I am not going to utilise your knowledge anymore.”

The same problem is faced by the twentieth century person. From childhood, we are taught outdated conceptions, in the ethical, psychological, philosophical, political, economic, scientific and other fields based on certain mechanistic principles. A mechanistic principle is basically a theory, a metaphysical outlook which says that things are determined by their causes. The effect comes into being due to a cause, and if you can control the cause,

you will be able to control the effect. But, we have entered an era where this does not hold true anymore of the physical universe. The whole theory of quantum mechanics clearly enunciates that we can only talk about probabilities not of certainties. Out of one million protons or electrons, we can say 90% will behave in this particular way but there is no way of finding out which 90%. So, we drink in all this knowledge but when we reach at the higher university level we find that we have to vomit out all that knowledge because what we had learnt cannot become the guide of our life.

Yājñavalkya, then and there, decided that he was not going to gain any knowledge from any human personality anymore. He had enough of it. So, he went to Lord Sūrya, the Sun god, and said, “I want to learn the highest knowledge from you.” Now, the same problem faces the man of the twentieth century. Old things and concepts have been given away, but new concepts are not going to be handed down to us by someone else. We have to search within, find our own coordinates and come to conclusions. The objectivity of the universe has become less important and the subjectivity of the experiencer has become more important with the present scientific discoveries. So Yājñavalkya went directly to the one who taught knowledge to humanity at its very beginning. That means our own search for knowledge within is going to pave the way.

Having obtained the highest knowledge, Yājñavalkya immediately wanted to renounce the world. But Lord

Sūrya told him, “You have attained the highest wisdom; this wisdom must be imparted to humanity, and before that you cannot renounce.”

As we go deep in our realisation of the Absolute, we will find that the Absolute is not contentless Absolute, but it is conscious bliss. Sugar by itself tastes sweetest but sugar added to any other article will not taste as sweet. Similarly, what we gain in the highest state of consciousness is not at all to be felt when we are dealing with the world, as such. We will discuss this later, but at the same time, what we have gained in contemplation, in the state of Samādhi, must be shared with all.

When we enter the twenty first century, this is going to be a very important thing; though I must add, that this division of centuries, is basically purposeless. It is not that one day you will get up and you will be in the twenty-first century. Just as for the sake of convenience we talk about nations even though the earth is one—arbitrarily, we say, India ends here and the territory of Pakistan begins. Similarly, time has a continuous flow and we cannot say that at any given moment the twenty-first century starts. It only means that as we progress towards that century, the value judgments that we derive from our contemplative life must be distributed, must be shared, for it is by sharing that they are ripened. So Yājñavalkya was told that first he should go and establish an institution for imparting wisdom and teach this knowledge to everyone.

He therefore founded a university in accordance with the instructions of the Sun God. A university in ancient times meant an entirely different conception. The Chancellor of the university was defined as a person who could feed 10,000 students and give them free education. No doubt, the money would come from the kings and the richer classes, but it would be his responsibility not only to teach but also to provide free boarding and lodging. That very concept is extremely important today. Our whole educational system, all over the world, is either in the hands of certain rich sections of society or in the hands of the government. Complete control of the educational system in the hands of scholars does not exist anywhere. But that was our conception. Moreover they all shared the same standard of living. As we enter the twenty-first century, we have to be conscious of these things. As the saying goes, whoever pays, calls the tune. So if the government pays, then the government calls the tune. If a particular section of society pays the bills, it is they who determine what is going to be taught. That has been the bane of our educational system. It is going to remain so as long as it is in their hands. In the case of Yājñavalkya, he would treat every student identically. The student's capabilities alone would matter and not the particular strata of society that the student may belong to.

Yājñavalkya ran the university for a very long time and there are numerous incidents how he goes and asks the kings to contribute for his university. Having accomplished all that, now he has become old. So he

decides, it is time for him to retire. That is another message of Yājñavalkya. We have forgotten how to retire undoubtedly, there is a government law which states that you must retire at 58. This is an arbitrary year, some states say let it be 56, other states say let it be 55, and yet others say let it be 60. Anyhow, what is it that you are seeking before retirement? What are you seeking? Some other job. Some people may be studying law to practice it; others may be thinking of some business, while the rest may be thinking of some other employment because they don't want to retire. A retired man feels as if he is out of society, as if he is good for nothing.

The body-mind complex gets old. The soul never gets old. Bhartṛhari says at one place, "Though my face is full of wrinkles, my hair have grown white but my desires are getting younger every day." Yājñavalkya was retiring at a time when he was successfully managing everything. The time for retirement is not when you are invalid. The time for retirement is much earlier when you can do something for the sake of society.

Now comes a very crucial moment. He had two wives. Kātyāyanī was older. The very word Kātyāyanī means "*Kātyāyanī Ardha Vṛddhā*". The Sanskrit dictionary says that the older is called "Kātyāyanī". The younger was Maitreyī. She was very intelligent and because of her intelligence, Yājñavalkya calls her and says: "I want to get out of this world, I want to renounce the world, but before I go I want to divide the money between you and Kātyāyanī so that in future there are no quarrels."

Here comes an important thing. The Vedic tradition is⁵ that once a person has entered the householder's life, that is, once he has married, he and his wife become one and as such neither of them has a right to do anything apart from the other person. Therefore, even if a person wants to renounce, he must get the permission of his wife, otherwise he is not entitled to renounce. There have been other traditions where a person leaves his newly born child and wife without even informing them where he is going. Some people believe that this is the height of renunciation. But the Vedic tradition says that once you have accepted a responsibility, under no circumstances, you can get away from it. Social responsibility has to be fulfilled without which it is just not possible to have any spiritual enlightenment.

So, Yājñavalkya seeks the permission of his wife and clearly mentions, "I want to divide the wealth so that you will not have any difference of opinion." But the word he uses is a very interesting one. He does not use the word "*pravrajyā*", that is, to leave. He uses the word "*Udyāsyān*". I want to go up. '*Ut*' means up. '*Yāsyān*' means desirous of going up. So he says, "I am desirous of going up." That means renunciation is not just leaving a thing but going to a higher state of consciousness. As long as you are in your house, even though you may be the Chancellor, feeding 10,000 students, yet you are tied down to that particular institution. "*Udyāsyān*" means that one wants to associate with that higher principle and disassociate with any limitations which are existing.

The students can easily be sent to other universities but Yājñavalkya's responsibility towards his two wives was an individual responsibility that must be fulfilled. When we enter the twenty-first century, and as I said, it is as true today, we have to be conscious of this fact that we have a tremendous responsibility towards those who are dependent on us. Dependency does not merely mean your immediate family. We have a tremendous problem of what is known as brain drain. You all know it. A person having got all the knowledge from a particular society feels no pangs of conscience when he decides to help others because he feels he will have a better future elsewhere. The idea of social responsibility is missing. Similarly, sometimes, in our own country one state will not give electricity to the other state even if it has surplus power or will not even let the other states use its water. The rivers flow every year. In ten years we are ready to lose trillions of gallons of water into the ocean but we are not ready to share with the other states. All these conceptions are there because social responsibility is taken only in the sense that I am responsible to my family. My responsibility towards the nation, towards the whole humanity has to be taken very seriously.

The most important message which Yājñavalkya is going to give is that nothing exists apart from you—“*Idaṁ sarvaṁ yadayamātmā*”. We will discuss that later, but Yājñavalkya is conscious of his responsibility even at this moment. He says he wants to go up. That means he wants

to break-down all limitations. That is his main purpose. It is not leaving, but it is becoming full, becoming whole.

Maitreyī was very intelligent. She said:, “Well if you want to go away, that is very good, and you want to distribute your wealth amongst us, that is also very good; nothing wrong with it. But tell me one thing, should one share what one considers worthier or what one considers useless? What should be shared?” Generally, we share that which is useless to us, that is what we call charity. Yājñavalkya understood the deeper import of Maitreyī’s statement. Maitreyī was openly challenging him: “You are going for a higher purpose, that means you have a higher knowledge, but you do not want to share it with me. You want to take that away with yourself and to me you only want to give that which is of no consequence to you. Now that you are leaving the university, you will not need money anymore. So you are distributing only that. But, what about the wealth that you are taking away with you?” That is another important point in Vedānta.

Many times people think that Vedānta was something thought, discussed, even realised at a particular time of history. When we talk about our eternal religion “*Sanātana Dharma*”, people think that a particular time of history came and knowledge was handed down to us. Vedānta is not an acquired body of knowledge. It is not certain propositions that you cram. Many times when we read the works of the ancients, we find that a person writes a commentary, another person writes a commentary on that commentary, and those who do not read the text come to

conclusions that they have nothing new to add. But once you have read those comments you will find that deep insights are being given which were not there in the original. This is a way of writing because it makes it clear how much you have received and how much you have added. If an independent treatise is written, it is not possible for you to reach a definite conclusion about what this man has seen, intuited more than the earlier writers, but when you read a commentary you can be very clear, you know what is being told by the previous writer and what is being told by the later one.

So, the knowledge of Vedānta is not something which can be handed over to the disciple. I am saying this because some of you may feel that Vedānta is there in the texts, we can read it and we can find out what is there, that is all that Vedānta constitutes of. It is not a passive reception. It is an abiding metaphysical framework under which you live your life. The eternal religion is not eternal because it is eternal in form but it is eternal in spirit. The particular metaphysical framework which has been handed down, has to be lived in every age, and each age will have different solutions to the practical problems that arise. So Maitreyī is referring to that knowledge. It does not mean that Maitreyī had not studied, otherwise her very questioning would be impossible. She had studied but, she wanted to know, what was it that Yājñavalkya had discovered, for which, he is feeling that he must leave this particular limited bondage and go into a higher state of consciousness.

Yājñavalkya was very pleased. He said, “Maitreyī, I always loved you but today you are dearer to me than what you were previously.” Now, that answer is important. Because it is this which is the foundation of husband and wife relationship, as seen by Vedānta. Yājñavalkya has become old, he is going to retire and he is saying that you are more beloved to me now, by asking this particular question.

Those of you who might have gone through both the ceremonies of marriage and initiation may be aware that when initiation or *Upanayana Samskāra* takes place, the Guru repeats the very same mantras to the disciple: “May your mind and my mind become one, may my way of life and your way of life become one, may what I have followed be followed by you.” And the same thing the husband tells his wife. The idea is that actually the husband has to husband not only the children, but also the knowledge as well. That is the main thing which is to be given.

Now Kātyāyanī was a simple girl. She was the elder of the two. She did not utter anything. She was more interested in her homely life and not in the other side of life, that is, the higher nature. This is also important for our century. The man of the twentieth century is also wedded to two wives. Pre-1945, as I said, people had more or less a mechanistic model before them. They always felt that they were just instruments in the hands of someone else. The natural laws are unchanging and so our body-mind complex is also controlled by those natural laws. We

can do nothing about it. Freud discussed the problem of the mind, brought about the whole science of psychology, carried out experiments to determine factors which control a person and concluded they are neither his free will, nor his independence. That is why he says, at the end of his book “Beyond Good and Evil”, that man is destined to suffer because if he gives free reins to what his mind asks for, society punishes him, and if he does not, his superego or Id punishes him. Therefore, man is bound to suffer and he can do nothing about it. He is predestined to suffer, predetermined to suffer.

But with the new physical sciences, particularly physics, we know that the element of independence exists even in the behaviour of electrical particles what to speak of individual human beings. So in other words, we are wedded to two wives. Throughout a major part of our lives, we are still controlled by that particular older interpretation which was prevalent 2500 years or more. If I do a thing, I feel I am doing it voluntarily but the moment I make a mistake, I want to give the reason in terms of something—either my upbringing was not good or my particular society was not good or the particular company or the particular education—there is something else which is responsible when I do an evil act. I do not want to hold myself responsible for any mistake that takes place.

There is an interesting anecdote in the Purāṇas. There was a brahmin. Once a cow entered his fields and he became wild. He beat up the cow and the cow died. Now

that was supposed to be a great sin. So all the village headmen got together and decided to socially ostracise this brahmin because he had committed this sin. But he was very intelligent. He said: “See, I did not kill the cow. It was my hand which did this evil act. Hand is controlled by Indra—the divinity. So Indra guided the hand. The cow had to die and my hand was made the instrument. I have nothing to do with it. So I am not responsible.” The other people in the village were simpletons. They thought that what the brahmin said must be true and so whenever the question arose they said that Indra was very bad because he killed cows. Now the sage Nārada passed through that village and heard about this incident. So he went and told Indra that he was getting a bad name for having killed the cow. At this Indra became very curious. Nārada narrated the whole story. Indra then, assumed the form of a brahmin and went to the Brahmin’s field in the village. The brahmin was watering the field. Indra asked him as to who planted the trees. The Brahmin answered that it was he who planted them. “Who waters them?” “It is I who water them.” “Who takes out the weeds?” “Well, I work very-very hard.” Then Indra said, “Everything is being done by you only, for killing the cow, how come I guided you?”

That is more or less the attitude that we develop. The moment the responsibility for an evil act arises, we try to assign it to some one else. The children will say that our parents did not give us proper training. Why did they not give proper training? Perhaps, his grandparents did not impart the proper knowledge to his father and so on and

so forth. So eventually God is responsible because he created the first man. If he had made him all right everything would have been all right. This feeling of predetermination is one of the wives; this is the older wife Kātyāyanī—she does not go into the details of metaphysical analysis.

But, the word “Maitreyī” means the one who looks upon everyone as a friend. So it is only when we develop the attitude of friendliness towards everyone that we are able to enter the portals of Vedāntic metaphysics, because, it is then that we can conceive the unity of the experiences of the total humanity. There are other metaphysical systems; they cover only one aspect of life. Particularly most of the western philosophers accept the waking state as the only thing which they are going to analyse. Until we come to Freud, the dream was of no consequence whatsoever, but there again, it is more of a psychological study rather than a metaphysical one. Vedānta deals not only with the waking state, not only with the dream state, but also with the state of deep sleep. It takes into consideration the experiences of all people, all rishis, and is open to any new thought coming from any land, any group of people, because the total human experience must be made the foundation stone of real metaphysics. It is then that we can live the Truth.

So until we develop the attitude of Maitreyī—that is, friendship towards the whole humanity: friendship towards every being who reports an experience to you; because, experience is the foundation stone—we will

neither comprehend Vedānta nor live Vedānta. I may explain your experience but I have no right to deny that you experienced such and such a thing. The whole experiential basis of mysticism is not taken into account ordinarily in the Western philosophical literature. Many times people feel that Vedānta deals with the ancient texts. It deals with the ancient texts because the sages recorded their experiences faithfully; but it equally deals with the experiences of every human being. It is willing to grasp and analyse any experience and explain it, and if it cannot be explained, Vedānta is ready to accept that the explanation is not available.

Maitreyī was of that nature and that is why Yājñavalkya imparts that knowledge to her.

Now what was that knowledge, we will discuss later.



Lecture Two

We were discussing the dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī, when the former was about to renounce his worldly state of life. Yājñavalkya thought it proper, that is what the scriptures enunciate, to divide his worldly possessions between both his wives. One of them was a simpleton. She just agreed to whatever Yājñavalkya said, but the younger one, Maitreyī, was very intelligent. She raised a fundamental question: “You are giving us the worldly wealth but no one renounces anything until one has a glimpse of the higher good”. This basically is what distinguishes the Indian schools of thought from the Western schools.

Psychologically speaking, we are convinced that there can be no one who would not like to have happiness, joy, bliss. Everyone is in search of joy and because joy cannot be had without getting rid of the pain, everyone is in search of a painless joyful state. There have been schools of thought which have asserted that it is enough not to have pain, but human beings are never satisfied with merely lack of pain. As long as you are hungry, it is natural for you to feel that, if you get any kind of food, that will be sufficient; but as soon as you are able to get two square meals a day, you want a variety of dishes and sweets

because they lead to not just a painless state but a joyful state as well. So all human beings and, as a matter of fact, all living beings, like to be in a joyful state and a state in which there will be no pain. Ācārya Śaṅkara points out that as far as the search of joy and getting away from pain is concerned, everyone including the animals are committed to it. He gives an apt illustration—if you take green grass towards a cow, it will come towards you but if you try to beat it with a stick it will run away from you. So whether it is an animal or a human being, all conscious beings are continuously in search of a joyful state.

But then, we make a distinction between the joyful state which is proper and the joyful state which is not. In Sanskrit there are two words “*preyas*” and “*śreyas*” that which is pleasing and that which is good. At times, the same thing can be both good and pleasing, but often it is not. All Indian thinkers whether they belonged to the Vedic, Āgamic, Buddhist, and Jaina tradition and even the so called atheists, that is, the Cārvākas, agreed on this point that everyone is in search of joy. But most of us stay at a level where our joys are instinctive, that is, the unreflective state. We become conscious of a thing. We think it is desirable. We desire it. We work to possess it. We possess it. It gives us joy. The unreflective mind is satisfied, But the reflective mind goes a step further: I got the object, that is very true; it gave me joy, that is also true, but is joy in the nature of the object or is it the nature of the subject? Now that is where the analysis starts, on the states of “*preyas*” and “*śreyas*,” pleasing and good.

Good is that which is going to give us joy for ever and ever. Pleasant is only momentary. So a reflective mind feels that the same object which gives me joy does not give joy to others and it does not necessarily give me joy all the time. For example, as long as I am hungry, I feel I want to have a good meal but when I am no longer hungry, if I am compelled to eat the same food, it will be the cause of pain. As most of us know, whenever we go to a party, after we had a good fill, the host or someone from his family will insist that you eat something served by him. Now, you do not want to refuse him. You eat it but at the same time, you are not happy about it. You are not liking it. You are doing it to please him, not to please yourself. So the same object does not give joy even to the same person and definitely not to different people.

There are people who like to eat bitter things. In Bengal, there are certain dishes which are bitter in taste. They are called 'sūkta'. I enjoy them though they are bitter. Generally, I tell the people who are with me not to taste these dishes. But they feel they should try them. They think that if I enjoy it so much, it must be tasty. So when they eat it they find it bitter, they wonder how I like it or how do the Bengalese like it. If you go to Gujarat, they will add sugar in everything—in your pulses, in your vegetables. So, no matter what you eat, you are bound to taste sweetness. You do not like it. Similarly, perhaps in the northern provinces, we take a lot of chillies which a Gujarati will not be able to relish. Different people have different tastes and those particular things which give

them joy, need not necessarily give joy to everyone. The same person, as I pointed out earlier, under different conditions may enjoy a thing or may not.

So, the reflective mind analyses whether joy exists in the object like colour existing in paper. Paper is white. Colour is existing there. So it will be white to every one whosoever has eyes and can see it. Taste exists similarly in an object, hence it will be the same to everyone who tastes it. Sugar tastes sweet to everyone. Bitter taste will taste bitter to all of us. But we may or may not like it. Hence we may or may not enjoy it. That is the difference. Thus the joy is not like the colour of the paper or taste of sugar, which is perceived by all in the same way but depends on the perceiver who enjoys what he likes.

What is this liking? How does it come about? Well, psychologists have analysed and found that from our childhood we are conditioned to certain types of food. Generally whatever my family considers as tasty food, conditions me. Of course, there are even the social pressures working on what is pleasant and what is not. But it is always something external to us which is imposed upon us and under its influence we are able to see as something which is giving us joy and something which is not. But what is the common factor? The objects change in different experiences of joy, but I remain the same. So, the enjoyment cannot be in the object, it has to be in the subject. Everything when it is connected with me is able to give me pleasure or pain depending on what I value and what I do not.

It is true that most of us are conditioned but still that conditioning has come into being because we have exposed ourselves to those conditionings willingly. And where we do not will it, we are not conditioned. I know many families who at least for ten generations or more, have never tasted liquor; they have never tasted meat. The parents even today do not think of eating or drinking these things and if under certain circumstances they feel that they have consumed either liquor or meat by mistake, they will vomit it out automatically even without willing it. But the children of the same people are quite at home with both—they can eat any kind of meat, I need not mention the names; they can drink themselves to the full. Why? If it was merely conditioning, this thing would not have happened. So, the individual freedom remains. What he wants to will, he wills. Conditioning does make a difference, we are not denying that, but the freedom of will is supreme. So whatever I say is good to me, appears good to me, is what I have valued. I have given the value to that particular object and therefore, it is pleasing to me. The technical words which we use in Sanskrit “*śobhana adhyāsa*”. “*Adhyāsa*” means superimposition. We superimpose that such and such a thing is good for me or such and such a thing is not good for me. That value judgment is given to the object. The unreflective thought also does it but without thinking—we are basically conditioned by our conscious and unconscious mind. Though we also have the free will, we do not exercise it.

Often enough even when things are quite painful to our body we go for them because they are in fashion. Very tight clothes in a warm country cannot be of any joy as far as the body is concerned. Why do we wear them? Because everyone else does. Most people are not freely superimposing the idea of pleasing or non-pleasing but they do so according to the social circumstances in which they find themselves.

The reflective mind analyses that if things are pleasing or non-pleasing depending upon my will I must exercise it in a particular way. Why should I be a slave to my conditioning or to my social norms? Why should I not question and discover what is really good for me? The reflective mind says that even though a thing is pleasing, if it harms anyone else or harms me at a different period, at a different time, then I must renounce it.

Now that is where the will comes in. The doctor says not to take sugar but we cannot stay without sugar. The doctor says not to take salt but we cannot stay without salt. Why? Because our power of will is weak. So why not exercise my free will as I like it? That is the reflective mind. But, when should I exercise my free will? The scriptures are very clear. They enunciate a simple thumb rule. You do a thing which you feel should be done by everyone else. For example, very often people complain that servants make money when they go to buy vegetables or sweets. They take a commission or whatever it is. I ask them, “Do you fill your full tax returns”? They say no. “Are you not cheating the Government?” “Yes”, they

answer. If you are cheating the government, the servant has a right to cheat you. You should be happy about it. Even a thief is not happy when theft takes place in his own house. He goes to report to the police station. Now that is a strange phenomenon. The person who talks ill of the government, ill of the police department, ill of everyone connected with such things will be the first one to report. That means, he makes a distinction between what is pleasing to him and what he feels should be. I am pointing this out because generally a question arises in modern times: How are we going to know what is right and what is wrong?

When we study different cultures, nations, religions, we find that what 'ought to be done' differs in them. It is not the same. In a particular society, a particular act is regarded as good. In another society, that very act is regarded as something bad. Now, how are we going to find out what is good and bad? One conclusion is that there is nothing which is good or bad. But the question remains because you have the sense of oughtness. Every human being is endowed with a sense of oughtness. There are certain things which when done makes you feel you have done the correct thing. Other things you do because you may not be able to resist the temptation but you know that they are wrong. There may be difference of opinion about what is right and what is wrong but the sense of oughtness, the sense of rightness and wrongness is present in all human beings: The scriptures say that under any given circumstances *'Ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni*

pareṣāṁ na samācaret' whatever you think would have been undesirable for you; you must not do to others. The scriptures are very clear about usage of words. They do not say that do unto others what you would do to yourself. Because when it is a question of what suits me, things may vary because there are occasions when we try make rules and regulations which may fit a person and which may not.

There is a famous incident in Buddha's life. He found that his disciples were collecting a lot of things and they had horses and donkeys to carry all their bags and possessions. So, Buddha decided that he must control their desires. One day he called all his disciples and told them: "From now on no one is going to carry anything which he cannot carry on his own head or back. Your personal luggage should not be more than what you can personally carry." After a few years he found that the amount of luggage was still increasing, and along with it the power, the capabilities of those people carrying their bags was also increasing. He was a great experimenter. It was mid-winter; he slept outside the building, under no shade. He used one blanket. Around 12 o'clock in the night, he felt cold. He used two blankets. At about 2 o'clock he felt still cold and he used a third blanket and then it was time to wake up. So he called all his disciples and told them that from then on no one will carry more than three blankets. That should suffice. Well, this is also a way of doing things. But for some even three may be too little. So, no matter how you are going to say what is good

or bad, eventually you cannot say that three blankets are good for everyone. You can say what is not desirable for yourself. But you cannot say what is desirable for another human being. In other words, all you can say is possessions which are not desirable for yourself are also not desirable for others. So we have to distinguish between two things. One is the sense of oughtness which all of us possess. The other is the predicate of that oughtness. They differ. They need a reflective mind to be discriminative about.

The third stage comes when after reflection a person has found out that actually it is he who is attaching value to objects. So in the third stage he discriminates. He tries to find out how he can control his will, to what extent he can control his will and whether he will be free to attain happiness without any objects whatsoever. This is the third stage in which Maitreyī was. Maitreyī said, ⁶ “You are giving me wealth, this is meager wealth; but suppose you could give me the whole earth full of wealth ‘*sarvā pr̥thivī vittena pūrṇā*’, will I be able to attain immortality and bliss which will never end?”

Yājñavalkya could no better than answer that that is not possible⁷. Even if you get the wealth of the whole universe, even if you become the king of the whole earth, it is not going to give you that bliss which will be everlasting. That is not possible. It will only help you to lead a life of a person who possesses things which he can utilise every day. There is absolutely no possibility of attaining the immortal bliss through wealth. Maitreyī said:

“I have lived a full life as much as you have. You are going in search of that bliss and you are giving me only these possessions. Generally a person who is good wants to give the best that he has to the other and you are giving me this⁸ which will not give me bliss. I do not desire these. I also have lived a full life. I have no more desires than you have. So what am I going to do with this wealth? The knowledge which you have it is that which I want”. Yājñavalkya was surprised.

This is an interesting episode. As most of you know, in all our Vedas, for every action there are certain people who are authorised to perform it, others are not authorised to do it. As far as external activity is concerned, we have to have certain prerequisites. Everyone cannot do everything. A person who has been trained to become a teacher cannot be appointed a police officer. One person came to me the other day. He had joined the police department and within a week he left the job. He was still under training. When he came, I asked him why. He said that the kind of things they were teaching and the kind of language they expected him to use was impossible for him. He was willing to accept any other job. He left the police force and he joined our Sanskrit school as a teacher. Now, there are other people who are teachers but perhaps they would make better policemen. The moment they see a student making a mistake they believe in the tradition of spare-the-rod and spoil-the-child; they just are in search of a chance to punish the student. So there are teachers and there are policemen

but everyone is not fit for every job. Some people have the fitness for one job and some for the others.

Now what is the fitness which is necessary here? As far as wealth is concerned, Yājñavalkya is renouncing it and Maitreyī has also said that she does not want it. So worldly possessions are no prerequisites. When a person becomes a monk, as Yājñavalkya is going to be, he renounces even the symbol of a Hindu, i.e., having a *Śikhā*. He renounces his *yajñopavīta*. *Yajñopavīta* indicates that one is a twice-born. He renounces all this. In this stage the teacher cannot have extra external possessions. He has nothing special either from the worldly standpoint or from the standpoint of scriptures.

People usually say that women are generally looked down upon by others because they do not have the right to perform certain actions, certain rituals. But, here the disciple is Maitreyī, a woman. Here there is absolutely no discrimination on any ground. That is why the teaching which is being expounded here is not meant exclusively for any particular nationality, sex, caste or religion. Anyone can follow it. He may be born in any nation, under any circumstances; he may be the richest person or he may be the poorest. That is the universal message of Vedānta.

So, as soon as Yājñavalkya found that Maitreyī wanted this knowledge, he readily agreed to give it. This desire is the only prerequisite for teaching it and makes a person fit to attain this knowledge—the desire to know what is really

good. And when are you ready? You are ready when, after discrimination, you attain dispassion. When we are absolutely unconditioned, unwound, that is the stage when we have absolutely no passion and we have complete dispassion.

There is no doubt that everyone is in search of joy. Everyone wants to avoid pain. But, the first stage in this process is the stage of not being able to reflect. In this stage whatever you have learnt, whatever has conditioned you, controls your search. You go in search of joy without any thinking. The second stage is the reflective stage where you have the sense of oughtness. The third stage is when you know that it is the power of will which makes a thing joyful or painful. Therefore, you develop the power of will in a way that you can exercise it irrespective of what conditionings you already have. Many people reach this stage.

But, the fourth stage of dispassion is very difficult to attain. That is because we have never tried to taste the inner joy which we have. We change by our power of will the objects of enjoyment. For example, a person feels that he is absolutely addicted to taste. So there are people who practice control of this addiction. They take their food, go into the Ganges, wash the food, so that all the taste will be removed, and then eat it. Now that is very good as a practice, but what happens? After they have done it for a few years they are incapable of eating even a bit of salt. They cannot tolerate it, they cannot bear. So the passion has changed, the conditioning has changed, the object has

changed, but the will has not yet become supreme. This is possible only after we attain a stage of dispassion, which as I said is the most difficult thing. But it has to be cultivated. It cannot be cultivated as a practice; to cultivate it, you have to delve deep and find out what is the real nature of our own self.

Why is it that will and desire are continuously in search of joy? You go out in search of a thing, when you know about it, when there is a direct or indirect knowledge about it. You never go in search of a thing about which you have no knowledge. That is why so many advertisements come into being; because through advertisements a desire is created in the person's mind. He has not tasted it but he has known it in a general way; in an indirect way. This is a very interesting question often discussed in the Vedānta texts to begin with.

Why will anybody go in search of God? Either he knows about God or he does not know about God. If he knows about God then he has already found it because to know God is to become one with Him⁹. And if you do not know it at all, then even the spirit of inquiry will be absent in you. The answer is that you know a thing indirectly and want to know it directly. So through advertisement you have come to know a thing indirectly and then when you get the thing, you enjoy it, you know it directly. Find out why is it that we are continuously in search of this joy, this bliss.

Why is it that we want to avoid pain? We find that actually our soul, our Self; our *ātmā* is of the very nature of joy. Generally we feel that joy will come when we get

a thing. But it is not necessarily so. There are experiences where there is no object and still there is joy. One of the easiest illustration which everyone of us experiences is the state of deep sleep. When we are in the state of deep sleep we are enjoying it.

Generally, people ask the question: How do we know that we are enjoying it? Well, the reason is very simple. Memory presupposes an experience. A memory implies experience. Just as, if I see a person gaining weight every day and his wife reports to me that he does not eat anything the whole day, I know that he must be having a good fill at night, because without taking food he cannot gain weight. It is just physically impossible. So though I have never seen him taking food at night but because his wife reports that he does not eat in the day time, the implication is that he must have eaten at night because his body weight is increasing.

Similarly, when we get up from our sleep, we are refreshed. Everyone of us is refreshed. Why? From where has that refreshment come? We get refreshed after an entertainment; so there must have been some experience of entertainment in deep sleep which has refreshed us. Not only that but also the fact that memory says that we slept happily, that means we must have been sleeping with happiness. We must have been experiencing happiness there. That is why we are remembering that we slept happily. And, if a person does not get sleep for a few days, he cannot enjoy anything whatsoever. He becomes nervous, he is angry all the time, he is irritated all the

time. He will take some tranquiliser so that he can go off to sleep. Even ordinarily, I may be enjoying something but once sleep overpowers me, I put away all things and want to go to sleep. Unless there was joy in that condition, why should I eagerly pursue it?

There was a king in Bikaner. He used to visit a particular mahātmā. The saint used to question him whenever he came, as was his habit with everyone else: “Did you have a good sleep?” The king replied in the affirmative. This continued for a few days. Every day the same question was asked and the king began to wonder. So at the next opportunity the king was the first to ask the question: “Swamiji, did you sleep Well?” Now that was a way of greeting as far as the saint was concerned. Upon hearing the king, he thought that he must give a proper reply. He said. “To some extent I slept like you, and to some extent I slept better than you.”

Now, the king could not swallow this because he used to lie down on the best velvet beds with all the comforts and luxuries while the saint slept on a piece of blanket, on a hard wooden bed without a pillow. So he wondered how the saint could sleep like him and even better than him. He said: “I am not able to understand what you are trying to imply.” The saint replied: “Very simple. When I went to lie down, I was thinking of the divine being who is residing in me and therefore I was joyful, but, when you lay down on the bed you were thinking of all the worries of the government—government files, the ministers who are not working properly, the report that another nation

may be attacking his state and so on and so forth. So, at that time, I was blissful because I was thinking of the divine bliss but, you were not. Eventually I had a deep sleep and you also went off to deep sleep. In deep sleep neither was I conscious of anything nor were you conscious of anything. At that time we were absolutely similar. Neither were you conscious of your velvet bed nor of the fanning damsels. You were conscious of nothing and I was also not conscious of anything. That was the time when we both slept equally well. As soon as I got up, I again started thinking of the divine being which was joyful. As soon as you got up, you again started worrying. So, I said that I slept better than you and also like you.” In deep sleep all beings enjoy the same joy and there is absolutely no object there which is being enjoyed. So a discriminative mind goes deep into it and finds out that objects are not necessary for getting joy.

Now, mind you the subject is absolutely necessary to get joy; objects are not necessary. Even at the unreflective stage, as I had pointed out earlier, different objects give joy to different people; the same object does not give joy to all the people. The joy, thus, is not objective. The next stage found that joy should be of such nature that it does not create pain anywhere else. That was the second stage. In the third stage, it was found out that it was in the power of will that the joy existed. But in the state of dispassion we realise that actually the will (the self) is searching itself. In deep sleep there is absolutely no object but there is complete joy. The memory implies that we remember that we slept happily. This particular memory indicates

that happiness was present there. Also the fact that we get up refreshed implies that there was absolutely no pain there, otherwise we would not have been refreshed. Now this is our nature. The nature of our own Self is of the form of joy. The question may be raised: How is it then that we see the joy in external objects? How do we feel so? Why do we feel it? The answer is very simple.

We are at rest with ourselves. Due to conditioning the mind desires an object. That desire veils the joy which we already have. Desires always veil our own joys. Now I work to fulfill that desire. I gain that object and I enjoy it. What has happened is, as soon as I have got that particular object the desire has subsided because once you get a thing, it is no longer desirable. That is a very peculiar phenomenon. A businessman knows this very well. He feels if he has Rs. 10 million, it should be sufficient. But once he has Rs. 10 million he is not quite satisfied with it. He feels that is not enough. Similarly, in every field of life when we attain a thing, we feel it is not giving as much joy as we thought it will give. And so we go in search of something else—the desires increase.

As soon as the desire arises, it veils the joyful nature of the Self. As soon as that desire has gone away, positively or negatively, we feel joy. For example a person is carrying a burden. Now suddenly you tell him to unload as he has reached his destination. As soon as he unloads, he feels happy. He has not gained anything but he feels joyful. So whether it is positively or negatively, to get rasagullā in one

case or a desire to get rid of the burden in another case, but definitely, it is the desire which veils. The joy is within.

Desire impels the mind through the senses outside. When I want to see a thing, the desire is in the mind. It impels the eyes. It impels the feet. I walk the distance; go there; see that particular object. Now that which was driving me, was desire. As soon as I have seen that thing, the driving force has gone away. So, just as the spring goes back as soon as the pressure is released, the mind goes inwards because it is no more being pushed outside. As soon as it turns to go inside, because inside is our Self which is full of joy, of the very nature of joy, mind experiences the joy. But immediately another desire comes into being and the joy is again veiled. That is why we are not able to enjoy anything completely and wholly.

Thus we find that when we are trying to see a joy even in the objective world the joy is not there, the joy is within ourselves and because the mind turns back and, therefore, sees the soul within which is full of joy, it experiences the joy. Thus, even the worldly joys which we feel, are really the joy of the Self. Once we realise it, our whole attitude towards the world changes.

We know how to control our will because we know that will is always for a pleasurable experience, for a joyful experience, for a blissful experience. If I am able to divert it within, if I am able to see within myself, that particular blissful state, then, no matter what I do in the external world, it is not going to matter and that is where comes the crux of the problem. The world does not give us joy; the

objects do not give us joy. On that issue most of the Indian thinkers are agreed.

Most of the Indian thinkers will say let us get away from the objects. It is only Vedānta which says that objects give you neither joy nor pain. Therefore, renunciation is not of the things. Renunciation is an act of physical avoidance, a physical withdrawal, a realisation that objects have no joy within them. Just as a mask may frighten a child, but it does not frighten us because we know that there is nothing frightening about it. A person wears a mask, the child sees it and cries. We do not cry. We only laugh at it because we know that the dragon does not exist, the devil does not exist.

Similarly, as long as we feel that objects can give us joy, we will also feel that the objects can give us pain. Once we know that they are incapable of giving us either pain or pleasure, they become just masks of which I am not afraid, and this is what is called, technically, the metaphysical cancellation. You do not get away from anything; you metaphysically cancel it. The particular word which we often use in the Vedānta terminology is “*Bādhā*”. You do not have to get away from things; you just have to take away reality from them; their capacity to cause happiness or unhappiness to you. Once you have attained that stage, you are able to master your Self. That is the *Amṛtatva* that is, the immortality which Maitreyī was asking for.

Now, how to attain this immortality, we will discuss later.



Lecture Three

Friends! We were discussing the dialogue between Yājñavalkya, the great sage of Yajurveda, and his beloved wife Maitreyī. He was about to renounce the world as we saw and he wanted to divide his wealth between his two wives. Maitreyī questioned whether material wealth was the only wealth which he possessed? Yājñavalkya had to admit that wealth can only be utilised for the affairs of this world, but it cannot lead to any higher goal. Now this is an important point because twentieth century has been completely under the siege of economic thinking. All our values, all our scientific technology is geared only to one value and that is economics. Things must be produced cheaply. The economic values are taken as axiomatic truths. But why are we creating more and more computers to discover the most efficient way of doing a thing? Why must we do things efficiently? The only answer is because it is economically profitable.

Yājñavalkya points out that¹⁰ wealth has a purpose but while searching for it, we should not forget that its purpose is to give joy to the individual. In the seventies a grumbling was heard about ecology—more and more industries, have resulted in more and more health hazards. We are producing more and more grains and that is leading to an

increasingly diseased society. We are killing more and more things with our pesticides and we know already what happened a few months back at Bhopal. What in the seventies was only a grumbling, will soon become a rumbling and by the twenty-first century we hope that it will be a roar—roar against efficiency which does not help human beings. The instrument is becoming the master. It is not for the first time that living beings are facing these problems. We know that one of the reasons why dinosaurs died out was that they had specialised in a particular way of life and, therefore, they were not able to adjust when the circumstances changed.

But human beings have a much better future because they can reflect, as we pointed out earlier. They may be attached to a particular value judgment. Sureśvara says: “The human being has a capacity which no other animal possesses. He may be completely attached to a thing but the moment he discovers that it is not desirable he is able to give it up. He is able to do away with it.” So when Maitreyī refuses wealth, she is refusing a particular value system, a particular value judgment. I do not mean to say that technology, science, and progress will cease, but pure economics will not be the only value, the changed value system will now have the joy of the individual as its primary concern.

When Maitreyī made herself clear, Yājñavalkya was extremely satisfied. He tells her that she was dear to him but that day her statement made her more lovable. ‘*Mokṣaṁ yāntaṁ naraṁ sarve muñcanti sahaajā api*’,

Sureśvara raises a question here. Why did Yājñavalkya say so? The answer lies in the simple fact that generally when a person renounces the mundane life of the world and wants to achieve a higher state even those who are most intimately connected with him, related to him, do not want him to take the final step. Change of value judgment comes only in a few individuals. These individuals are deeply dispassionate. Most of those, who have been connected or related with such an individual, are bound to have passions. Thus they always fail to understand the inner revolution leading to the reconstruction of the value system. Maitreyī showed mature understanding and she therefore went up in Yājñavalkya's estimation. This problem we will have to face when we enter the twenty-first century.

The greater part of humanity, we may even say that most of humanity, will still cling to the economic ideals. Even today, there are movements for an ecological understanding of problems, but such attempts are regarded as something on the borderline of fantasy, if not lunacy. The very statement of fact that diesel fumes cause cancer and, therefore, we must prohibit all diesel cars, buses, and trains leads to a specific type of reaction amongst most of us: well it is impractical, it is very easy to say, "Ban all diesel vehicles," but impossible to execute.

Yājñavalkya did not expect that his wife would be able to go along with him for that highest ideal. So¹¹ Yājñavalkya tells his wife now to come near '*ehi*' and '*āssva*' be seated: "I will explain to you the knowledge

which I possess and it is to attain perfection in that knowledge that I am leaving this world.”

Now there are two important things to be noted here. Generally, people feel that leaving the world indicates that a person is not pleased, is not happy with his environment. That is the general understanding. This is a very wrong attitude towards the concept of dispassion. It is not because this world is bad that one wishes to leave it, but it is in search of a better world, a better value system. Therefore, one does not have any feeling of antagonism towards near and dear ones. Yājñavalkya does not say, “I want to get rid of you people, I am leaving; I do not love you anymore.” He says that he loved them and is loving them now much more than what he did earlier. He was leaving them because he was in search of a higher value system and they were clinging to the old values. So that is one important point. Renunciation is not renunciation of relationships but it is going to a higher sphere to see things from a broader perspective.

Then, he asked her to come near ‘*ehi*’. They were already talking. He could have continued to talk that way. There was no reason to say, “Come near”. Then why did he say it? Deeper knowledge cannot be absorbed merely through words. Most of you must have felt that when your mother touches your back, strokes your back or just puts her hand on your head, you feel a great relief which you would not have felt merely if she had said something verbally. We are constituted in such a way that unless we are able to handle a thing with all our sense perceptions,

we are never satisfied that we have really known the thing completely. That is why if you see a thing from a distance, you may recognise it but it does not give you the same satisfaction as when you go near it, when you actually handle it. There is a reason behind it. Biologically speaking, we know that all our senses have grown out of the sense of touch. Evolutionary development tells us that the sense of touch was the first sensation in the amoeba and lower organisms. Slowly, we developed different senses but the power of touch, the power of the skin is always present. It is the contact which gives us the most intimate satisfaction, which leads to certainty.

Recently, there have been many experiments both in the United States as well as in the Soviet Union. They have developed a definite type of camera called the KILLOCKS Rays, Killocks camera which enables them to take photographs of certain radiations coming out of the body. If a man is angry, we can find that out by the type of emanations that come out of the body. These inventions are being utilised even for diagnosing certain diseases. Even before diagnosing liver cirrhosis by other methods, the emanations from the body tell us that the liver is affected. Our body is giving out emanations through our skin. The ancient rishis had done a lot of research in this area. In the *Mahābhārata* we find that a person who is having a particular mode of life, a particular mode of thought pattern will have a particular type of emanation. The Āgamas also deal with this aspect in great details. So it means with all senses, one must be able to

comprehend what is being said because it is the subtlest subject that can be imagined.

The second point is ‘*āssva*’, “Be seated”. It is to suggest to her to just relax, because that is one of the most important things. Unless we are relaxed we cannot absorb ideas completely and thoroughly. Most of the time we are not able to absorb the ideas of other people because we are tense and when we are tense, absorption does not take place. The reaction mechanism of the body is present. The scriptures lay down, as even here it will be laid down, that first you must absorb what the teacher says. You must be absolutely relaxed. Having absorbed, comes the time when you should react with it with your whole being, what Yājñavalkya will call ‘*manana*’. The first stage is hearing, or listening, and then later you think about it, you react to it but not in the beginning, otherwise the absorption will not take place.

Yājñavalkya says “While I am talking, pay complete attention to what I am saying.” He enunciates a doctrine which is very often misunderstood, it is a long passage.¹²

Yājñavalkya says that actually the most valuable thing is your *ātmā*, your own Self, your consciousness. If one does not analyse what is being said by Yājñavalkya, very easily one can feel that he should do everything for his own Self, without realising that Yājñavalkya is trying to tell Maitreyī what is her own Self. The purpose here is to direct the attention inwards.

The word ‘Self’ is used often enough but it has to be analysed carefully. There are three ways that we use the word ‘self’ or even the word ‘I’ which means the same thing. One is what we may say, in Sanskrit ‘*gaunātmā*’, that is, the self which you know is not the Self and yet you assume it to be your own Self. So we may call it the assumed self. The other is the apparent self, which in Sanskrit we call the ‘*mithyātmā*’ and then there is the real Self, the ‘*mukhyātmā*’.

Let us first define what we mean by these concepts. I definitely know that the house is not ‘I’. This is a knowledge which we all possess. The house is not the Self. But supposing there is a big fire and my mansion is consumed by it. What does a man say? “Well, I have been destroyed.” But what has been destroyed is the building, the mansion. Nothing has happened to him. He is not sick. He is not dead. He is not destroyed. Then why does he say that he has been destroyed? He assumes that the property which belongs to him is part and parcel of his own self. Here there is no mistake. He assumes it to be so. So that is what we call the assumed self where one pretends it to be one’s own Self. I do not mean pretending to anyone else as if that is part and parcel of one self but at the same time one does know that it is not one’s real Self, so one begins to build another mansion again. For example, at the time of partition, many people lost everything in Lahore. They came to India and started their life again. So here when we use the word ‘I’ or the ‘self’ we mean the assumed self. So, the impression ‘I have been destroyed’ here means

that the pain caused is intense. I am not at all denying that there is no pain when your house is burnt. But you do know that the pain is because of your possessiveness, because you possessed that house and not because you are that house.

The second is the apparent self which you consider your own Self, which you consider 'I'. For example, you have fever and you say you have fever. You are not assuming that your body is different from you. Yet you know that you are identical with your body. You may have heard people saying that gross body has in it a subtle body. The subtle body leaves this body like a piece of cloth and enters another body. All these things you might have heard and you may even repeat. But just think of your own experience. Do you or do you not feel that body is really you? Any harm done to your body is really a harm done to you. So the apparent self is one which, unless you gain the highest mystic vision, will be with you and that is the self we are dealing with all the time. On analysis, after the mystic vision of the Supreme Reality, the Self that you realise is the real Self. When we use the word 'Self', we must consciously analyse and find out in any given particular context which self we are referring to. Often enough we confuse the two. While we are talking about the apparent self suddenly we will start talking about the mystic Self. But at any rate, we love whatever in any given condition is regarded as 'self'. For example, the house is my assumed self. Very true. When I protect my house from being destroyed by other people, why am I

trying to protect it? Because at the moment it is my assumed self. That very house if I sell away, it is no longer mine. I do not assume it to be myself. I am no longer bothered about it. Here is one of the fundamental differences between most of the other views of life and what the Upanishads represent. Others start with an idea that there is God which you must assume to be true and the whole thinking starts from there, whereas the Upanishads try to emphasise that God is not an object of our experience. So it will always be a presumption, we can never love God completely and wholly if he is different from us.

In all our actions, we are guided by joy to ourselves, whichever self we happen to consider our own self at a given moment. Once this is realised our attention is diverted from the external world to what is our own Self. The Upanishads say that when we discover our own Self, we find that it is all pervasive. Here we are going from a known substance to an unknown state of that particular substance, whereas in the other theories we start from an unknown thing and try to feel an identity with it. So Yājñavalkya points out, taking all these three into consideration, that at any given moment a person is always giving the highest value to his own self, whatever he considers his own self to be.

First, he gives the illustration of the husband. The long passage that follows is only different illustrations of this point. Since Maitreyī loved him most, he tells her that her love for him, that is, her love for her husband, is not for

the sake of the husband. She is loving because that love gives her happiness. Similarly, he says that the love for wife is not love for the wife but because the love of wife gives one happiness. Similar is the case with children, with wealth and with caste. A person strictly adheres to the rules of a particular caste. Why? Not because it is going to benefit the caste but because he is going to be regarded as a good Brahmin or a good Kshatriya.

Yājñavalkya goes further and says that people are after a heavenly state or even *samādhi* because they stand to benefit by it. *Loka* in the passage can mean both these things. The question is why do they want *samādhi*? Why do they want to go to heaven? The answer is that they are convinced that by going to heaven or by entering *samādhi* they will be happy. He goes still a step further. Why do people worship God? Why do people love God? Because they know that happiness will come from Him. He says that eventually in this universe whatever exists unless it can give joy to a person, the person can never value it as such.

A question may arise. There are people who sacrifice themselves for a great cause for their nation or their religion. The straight forward answer is that they do so because they are convinced that it will give them joy. There are times when a person under a great passionate feeling commits suicide. Very often people have a doubt: they believe that at the time of committing suicide he is not loving his own self, but the fact is that even at the time of taking his life, he is loving his own self. It is he

who wants to get out of that situation of pain. He cannot bear the pangs of separation from whomever he considers himself to be in passion with. And so even when he is committing suicide, he is really trying to get out of the painful situation, to be happy.

So Yājñavalkya points out that things change—husband, wife, children and wealth. The things which give us happiness change, but the thing which continues is your own Self and nothing will give you happiness unless it is associated with your own Self. A person takes a very beautiful diamond ring and puts it in a velvet case. Have you ever wondered that diamond is the hardest thing, why does it need a velvet case? It can be kept anywhere. But it pleases you to feel that I have kept this costly diamond in a velvet case. Basically unless your own Self is involved in it, the joy will not exist. You will not value anything which is not connected with your own self. Once we realise it, the object of our search will change. At present we are trying to search for joy outside and then we will realise that unless we are able to know what is the real Self, we will never be able to experience the joy which we should. And so Yājñavalkya enunciates¹³ his famous dictum.

He says that, therefore, one must try to find out what is the nature of this *Ātmā*? What is the nature of this Self? How is it to be known? How is to be realised? The first thing, he says, is to try to find out all that has been thought about the ‘Self’ by the earlier thinkers. For that you need an extremely sensitive mind, both to your

external environment and to your internal environment. Unless you are absolutely sensitive you will never be able to understand, never be able to go deep into it. This sensitivity has to be developed slowly, by constantly doing things which will make our mind purer and purer.

What is it that makes our mind pure? Love or pleasure can be experienced only when the mind is in what they call the purified state—the *sāttvic* state. Even the worldly joys can be experienced only when the mind is neither agitated nor slumbering; *tamoguṇa* takes us to slumbering, whereas *rajoguṇa* takes us to agitation. An agitated mind under no circumstances can enjoy anything. Nor does a mind which at any given moment is inert.

The scriptures have laid down how to overcome agitation. Agitation has to be removed, but how? Agitation is always caused by the preconceived notion of how things should be. This is the greatest problem. When we marry we have an image of an idealised husband or wife in our mind. After marriage we do not find that ideal and, therefore, we are unhappy about it. About a particular station of life, or post, or business we have certain conceptions. We idealise it. When we enter it, we find that things are not as we thought they will be. We are disappointed and agitation results. The secret of tranquility is not to have any expectations. That is the first step. We must be aware of ‘what is’ instead of thinking ‘what should be.’ You see, it is a peculiar situation, as far as we are concerned, we say, “I am what I am, I know I should be like this, but I am not”. But when it comes to any other

person, we say that he should be what he should be and not what he is. So I want everyone to accept me as I am, not as I should be and I expect everyone to mould himself to what he should be. I am not ready to accept him as he is. Until we change this the agitation will never cease. And that means a lot of effort. Those who seek to understand and are ready to make the maximum effort for this particular search about the Absolute will be able to see Him. And this is where the importance of awareness comes in.

You must become aware, sensitively aware. We are not saying that one should become insensitive. This is not a part of desensitization programme of some others who may say ‘do not feel the pain’. We say that you feel the pain. Perhaps you will feel it more intensely than an ordinary person, but you will not react to it because you know that if the other person has given you pain, you are merely aware of the fact that he has given you pain and that is where the matter ends. That is how things are. It is not that he has to change. One has to increase one’s power of suffering—which is known as *titikṣā*. Slowly, as this power increases, one’s mind will cease to be agitated.

This agitation must subside, then only you will be able to see it, because mental analysis cannot be done by you unless you are able to see the mind as something different from you, something different from your Self. Just as in any scientific experiment you take an object and analyse it. You are without any feeling or thought about any particular result that the experiment will yield. Otherwise

it will no longer be an experimentation. You are just aware of what is happening in the experiment. You may even like to see a particular result but you are not going to manipulate the experiment to bring about that result. You are just aware of it. Here you have to make your own mind, the laboratory for the experiment.

You have to watch your mind and if you attach values then you will not be able to watch your mind because your mind will be giving you that particular type of report which you want from it. A person who was Vice-Chancellor of Roorkee University says that when he was a first year student at Roorkee University, he made certain observations but he did not obtain the right result. He wrote down the results he obtained. His teacher called him and told him: “you are an intelligent student. Everyone else has got the right answer. Don’t you know the right answer?” This student replied: “Yes, I know the right answer but as far as the experiment is concerned, this is the result.” The professor said “No. Go and try again.” He said that “I have tried several times. Will you come yourself and see what the results are”? So the professor was quite angry and he went and personally conducted the experiment but the wrong results were seen. He repeated the experiment several times but every time there was a wrong result. He said, “there is something wrong with the machine.” The person replied, “That is what I am saying”. When the teacher asked how other students had obtained the right result, the student said that as they knew the answer, they just cooked the results.

Most of us are like that. We may feel tremendous attachment for a thing but we know to be attached to such and such a thing is wrong. So when we talk about it we will talk as if it is a bad thing. A gentleman once told me that there is no doubt that speaking the truth is the best thing in the world, but it is not practical. I told him that if truth speaking is not practical then it cannot be the best thing. An impractical thing is as good as not being there. We have learnt by rote that truth speaking is good not because it is a part of our life nor because it is a part of our living.

When we conduct this experiment using our mind we must have profound confidence in ourselves. We must have profound confidence in the power of reasoning, in the power of analysing our own emotions, our own thought patterns.

We have wound ourselves to what we call the past impressions, the *saṁskāras*, not only in this life but from many lives. We have to unwind ourselves. Unwinding has to take place slowly, because it has been wound, it can be unwound, we have to be confident of this and that can be done only through rational analysis. But then, along with profound confidence in the power of rationality, we must have vivid consciousness of its limitations too. Reason is able to analyse. But reason is never able to synthesise. Reason can tell you what is wrong but it can never tell you what is right. If I see a thing and it contradicts my other experiences I know it to be a false appearance but what its appearance truly is, I cannot say.

Supposing I see in a slightly darkened room a little piece of rope. I may feel it is a living snake. So I take a stick and beat it. When it does not move, I realise it is not a living snake. It is not a living animal that much I know but whether it is a garland, a piece of rope, or something else I cannot be sure of. So we must know the limitations. True knowledge will not come out of reasoning. Reasoning will be able to unwind all that we have collected and once we have unwound it, we will be ready to receive that which is true, and Truth will unfold itself.

The word used here by Yājñavalkya is '*darśanena*', by seeing. It is not that we are going to see it with our eyes. It is not a vision of the eyes. It is a vision of the soul. But it is a perception. Why he uses the word *darśana* is because it is not a conception. God is not a conception, He is a perception. It is something which you feel with your whole being, you realise it and you know it as a living entity. Thus he uses the word *darśana*. The way of search is to analyse the assumed self and slowly discard it, that is what we mean by unwinding. The assumed self is, of course, easier to get rid of because all the time we are conscious that it is not our own real Self. But the apparent self is not so easy. But by slow analysis we are able to do that too and attain the state of pure Self. In short we have to surrender ourselves not to any external God but surrender to our own real Self.

As Ācārya Śaṅkara points out, you should unwind yourself as much as you can unwind. Once you have unwound, once you have removed all the debris that has

collected, it will shine forth by itself. We do not have to worry about as to how it is going to reveal itself. But one element which Yājñavalkya points out is its being of the nature of bliss, its nature is joy, its nature is happiness and since joy is always a known factor, you cannot have a joy which you do not know. Similarly, you cannot have a joy if you are not existing. That is why the word used in literature is *sat* existence, *cit* knowledge, and *ānanda* the bliss, the joy. But mere joy itself comprehends all the three as I pointed out and it is this which gives us the momentum to move towards it. Many philosophers have suggested that the absolute state is painless as well as pleasureless. Well, if they mean that it is pleasureless in the sense that there are no sensuous perceptions there, we agree. But if it was without any bliss, without any joy, then it will not be a desirable state.

As Padmapādācārya has pointed out, people know that while eating fish, its bones get stuck in their gums. There are incidences when people have even died due to this. One of our own officers died in Japan a few years back because of the fish-bone tragedy, but nobody gave up eating fish, because they want to experience the joy of it. Similarly, if the final state will be a state which is joyless there will be no bliss there, then people will say that the present state is better, for at least once in a while we experience a little joy. This is far better even if we have to go through the pain, but we do not desire that state where there will be absolutely no joy. Yājñavalkya points out clearly by showing that everything becomes lovable when

it is touched by your own self. It is you who give value to it and because you want that thing for your own self, it gives you joy. So what you want for yourself, gives you joy. That means the desire for it has taken your joy away and therefore you are of the very nature of joy.

Having said that Yājñavalkya enunciates that anything which is bereft of the Self is always going to give you trouble.¹⁴ If you see any particular thing no matter how great it is but if it is not connected with you, it is not going to give you joy. It is a very simple thing. A brahmin is happy that he is a brahmin but a person who does not identify himself with the brahmin immediately feels a pang why am I not a brahmin; an intellectual person is happy that he is an intellectual, that he has the intelligence but the other person does not feel happy because he does not have the intelligence. A person in power—a *kshatriya*, a king, a minister, he is happy being the king, he is happy being the powerful minister, but a person who is not is not happy with it. So, nothing in this world can give you joy if it is not associated with you. It rejects you.

We are accepting a particular role on ourselves, which does not belong to us and thereby unhappiness ensues. Just as in our body, every organ is there to do a particular job. Now if a particular organ feels, “why am I not an eye?” you are not going to get happiness out of it. Similarly, is the case here. I may not have the wealth but the very fact that I do not have the wealth gives me certain joys which the other people do not have, those who have the money.

Once I was going in a car in Calcutta, right in front of me there was a bullock cart. On that bullock cart there were a lot of gunny bags and there was a man lying down, half his body was above the bags and the other half of the body was below them, and he was snoring away. There was a traffic jam. Now, the person who was with me said, “How happy he is”. I said, “Are you sure he is very happy that he is sleeping so happily”? “I never get sleep in the night”. I said “It is very easy. I can get the places changed immediately. If I ask that person to take your job he will immediately take it”, He was shocked.

So you see there are joys which are present in every person’s life. If a person is able to enjoy where he is, the particular things which he is associated with can give him joy, then he will be always joyful in all his behavior. So if I take upon myself that I should be an intellectual whereas I do not possess intellect then I am going to be sorry and unhappy about it. So whatever is not connected with the Self, whatever is not connected even with my own apparent self or even my assumed self, because wealth, etc. are all assumed selves, are the things that cause pain. Yājñavalkya says that this is true of everything—of all the things which were enunciated earlier. I need not repeat all the illustrations which have already been cited.

Yājñavalkya goes on to say that even the associations with the gods belong to this state of things. We get confused about that most of the time. You go to the astrologer, he will ask you to do some incantation for a

particular planet. You go to a worshipper of Hanumān, he will ask you to visit Hanumān temple. You go to the worshipper of somebody else, he will ask you to do such and such a thing and eventually you are stuck, you do not know what to do. Because every time you are feeling something which you are assuming on yourself. So whether it is assuming or whether it is apparent under all circumstances we should be able to see things as they are. We must accept ourselves as we are.

These are the three different categories of the self and we must utilise each of them to attain a higher state and for attaining that higher state it is important to first know what is the nature of these selves, that is, *śravaṇa*. Then the next stage is that we must think about it. We must completely absorb ourselves into that thought and try to make it experientially true. Mere listening does not lead us anywhere, unless we are able to change our life pattern.

The very same problem we face in India regarding the sciences. Once I was in a *Kumbha Melā*. The doctor incharge, the Health Officer, was a known person. I found him having ‘चाट’ right there in the melā grounds. I was very surprised. I asked him, “What is it?” He said, “This चाट is very nice, I am enjoying it.” I said, “But everywhere you have put up notices that it is dangerous to eat चाट for the sake of your health.” He said, “Well that is my professional job.” We do learn the sciences, we do teach sciences but they do not become part and parcel of our lives. Similarly, as far as this inner science is concerned

many of us just try to learn it and even tell others what it is but do not make it a part of our practical life.

Yājñavalkya says whenever you act, first try to find out whether you are acting with your assumed self, whether you are acting with your apparent self, and then try to be aware whether you are giving values which are really not related to you. You must not try to be everyone everywhere. You must try to find out what is your station of life, what are your powers that you are going to deal with. This should be continued through thorough mental analysis until the realisation comes “*idaṁ sarvaṁ yadāyam Ātmā*”. Whatever there is, is its own Self. It is its own Self in the sense that the other person also has the same type of self as you have. A step further and it is the same Self which is expressing itself in all the different names and forms.

How it expresses itself in different names and forms, we will discuss later.



Lecture Four

Friends, we were discussing yesterday the message which Yājñavalkya, through Maitreyī, is imparting to us. No doubt, the message is an ancient one but the problems that it attempts to solve are as valid today as they were in his own times. The last statement which he made is elaborated clearly by giving certain illustrations. *Idaṁ sarvaṁ yadayam ātmā*—whatever we perceive, whatever there is to be perceived is basically the Self. The illustrations he gives are extremely interesting. He gives three illustrations¹⁵.

These three illustrations pertain to musical instruments. The first one is the *duṇḍubhi*, that is, drum, the second is the conch shell, which is a wind instrument, and the third is the *vīṇā*, a kind of guitar, which is a string instrument. Basically, it covers the entire range of instruments because all musical instruments either produce sound through beating as in the case of a drum or even a cymbal, or through the wind, a bagpipe or anything like that, and through string like in the guitar or *vīṇā* or even a harp. So he takes a peculiar illustration, so to say, to let us know how the Atman acts.

Generally speaking, whenever we try to say how things are produced we start with a material object rather than

something of this nature. Perhaps in the last century it would have been thought very peculiar why these things are used as illustrations, because people were convinced that matter existed. It is a peculiar theory initiated by Kaṇāda and later on taken up by Aristotle and it ruled practically for three millennia, three thousand years.

It is a peculiar theory because matter is something which is never perceived. We perceive sensations. We perceive qualities. I see a flower. I see it is white. I smell it, I get its fragrance. There is no doubt about these sensory perceptions. Senses perceive qualities. But, what is this matter, which we are supposed to believe the flower really is? A supposition was made that qualities and activities cannot exist unless there is a substratum. This is basically the theory of matter. Matter is a mystic phenomenon because matter can never be perceived; we can only perceive its qualities. Qualities reside in matter—that is the presumption. But matter itself is always unperceivable. When we really try to analyse why it is that this idea of matter has become so important in our mind, it is merely because it has been hammered into us for centuries. When we were children, unable to comprehend anything, we were told that matter exists. It was repeated by great scholars as well as by illiterate people and by continuously using it, matter has become more or less a superstitious belief or, at least it had become, until modern physics came into it. No proof for it has ever been produced because, by definition, we cannot know matter. We can only know its qualities, we can only know its activities.

Now, it is true that no quality, no activity can exist without a substratum but if we analyse we find that sense data is perceived by consciousness. Now that is the peculiar situation. The substratum where sense data exist is consciousness, and that is why it is the consciousness, that understands— “under” is that which supports. So sense data is supported by the consciousness which understands it. Actually, if that is our experience, and it is undoubtedly our experience, that sense data is perceived and understood by consciousness, the proper postulate would have been that there is a consciousness which is emanating these sense data. It must be existing in consciousness. But unfortunately a mistake was made. Of course, there is a reason why the mistake was made.

Whenever we deal with sense data, we feel that we are not able to freely control it. We feel the absence of freedom. Consciousness is free. Therefore, we feel as though there is some matter which is continuously obstructing our free will. That gives us psychological satisfaction. But actually, if we analyse metaphysically, consciousness is basically knowledge and knowledge can always be opposed, obstructed by ignorance and not matter. So the *Upanishads* laid down that it was not matter which sent the sensations but it was the consciousness, and the freedom was obstructed not again by matter but by our ignorance. That is why, the illustration given here is not related to objects but sounds. We can take it either as a quality because the senses perceive sounds, the ear perceives the sound, or we can even take it as a vibrating

activity, for we do know that sound is really a vibration, a moving wave.

Yājñavalkya is trying to point this out. As far as sense data is concerned, we are very certain about them that they are existing there. I touch a thing. It is either resistant or it is yielding. It is either coarse or it is soft. It is either hot or it is cold. Similarly, I see different colours. The different shades of a colour. I see certain lines meeting at a point. All these things which I experience are really real. But I do not need to presuppose matter in which these things are existing. It is consciousness which is sending these things to us. Actually, the universe, when we analyse is like a book. Just as the alphabets of a book have no existence apart from the person who has written them. They are symbols. He has put down the symbols. The words have been written there. The alphabets symbolise those particular words. Words, in turn symbolise certain thoughts. I read the book, I get the message of the author. The book does not exist apart from either the content that has been put into it by the writer or the content which has been absorbed by the person who is reading the book.

Similarly, the cosmic consciousness is continuously sending us messages. Those messages are being received by us. We are able to decipher those messages. It is that which causes happiness/sorrow in the mental world, introduces sight, sound, taste in the sensory world; but they are messages all the same. We can say that our minds and our senses are more or less like radio or even television receiver sets. A message, a wave is being sent

by All India Radio. Now you are sitting in your own house. Your radio receiver set receives it. Similarly, you are able to transmit your own waves. You want to convey to the other conscious being that you are angry with the other person. So you use certain types of sounds produced by your tongue, by your mouth, by your larynx and so on. The other person gets the message. So what we call matter actually does not exist. There are only sensory perceptions.

There are mental perceptions which Yājñavalkya is going to make still clear in the next mantra. We are continuously receiving and also sending messages but in all this matter does not form a part of the picture. To emphasise this Yājñavalkya takes the illustration of the three musical instruments. Now, it is very significant why he took the illustration from a musical phenomenon. Yājñavalkya has written a text on music and in his great *Yājñavalkya Smṛiti* he says that musicians will enter the abode of Shiva, the highest Lord. Yājñavalkya not only had a fine taste for music but also regarded it as the highest to be offered to the Lord. So, he takes the illustrations from the musical world but it could have been any other sensory world. It would not have mattered. Whatever cannot be perceived without another is basically its form. This is what Śaṅkara points out in his commentary in this particular context.

For example, if I see cloth I necessarily see the threads. Without seeing the threads I cannot see the cloth. So cloth cannot exist without the thread. Similarly, the sensation created by any of these instruments producing music

cannot exist without the ear. We say sound has been produced. But that particular sound is only a wavelength. It can become a sound only when it touches my ears, when I perceive it through my sense of hearing. Actually, what I call sound is an interaction between my own power of knowing through the ear and the particular wave.

Similar is the case with taste. Sugar is not sweet in itself. Sugar has certain chemical substances. Now those chemical substances react with my taste buds to produce a particular sensation which is called sweet. This becomes clear by the following experiments. If you take a small dose of saccharin and just directly put it on to your tongue, you will feel that it is terribly bitter. Then you take the same quantity and put it into a cup of coffee or tea. Your coffee or tea becomes sweet. So, sweetness is the result of an interaction. Your taste buds react with that particular substance and thereby you have the sensation of taste.

The same thing is true of sight. You see objects having different colours. There are people who are colour blind. Their retina does not react in the same way as the normal retina. They see only the shades of black and white. They do not see colour as we see it. So we find that everywhere there is an interaction between what is being conveyed by the cosmic consciousness and individual consciousness.

This reaction takes place at the level of the sense or the mind. Thereby, we know that actually all perceptions are really interactions and, therefore, perceptions cannot exist apart from the power of observation which we may call

senses at present. Actually, senses do not exist apart from the knower, from the consciousness who knows. It is only his own power expressed no doubt, through certain physical bodily reactions, but without consciousness that will not come to exist. So just as without the thread, we cannot perceive cloth, similarly without our senses, the external objects will not exist. By senses here I include mind, intellect and all that through which I perceive. Without external perception matter is meaningless. Without the senses the perception itself, the sensation, is meaningless.

When a drum is sounded or a conch is blown what happens? Sounds are produced. There are two things there. One is the specific sound of that drum, another is the general sound as such. If you have never heard a drum, you will still hear the sound. It is something like this. You are listening to the lecture. You know English, so, for you it is a language. You know where a word begins and ends, and a sentence begins and ends. But another person who is sitting here does not know the language. He will still hear the sound. That is the common sound. Similarly, a person who does not know that it is a drum being beaten, will not be able to say that it is the drum sound but he knows that it is a sound.

So, there are two aspects in it. One is the general sound, another is the special sound. The sound of the drum may be different in different types of drums all being beaten together. They all have different types of notes. A person who is well trained in music will be able to decipher the

difference between them, but another person will be able to decipher only that it is a drum sound, but will not be able to distinguish between the different notes of that particular drum sound, or the conch sound or the *vīṇā* sound or whatever it is. These minor differences of different drums cannot be perceived without knowledge of the drum sound. First, there is a sound which can be heard by anyone having ears. Second is the particular or special sound. Unless one has previous knowledge of the drum sound, it cannot be distinguished as such. Again the different notes in the drum sound cannot be deciphered by a person who does not have a thorough knowledge of music.

Actually, knowledge precedes observation. This is one of the important facts of life. Generally, we feel that we are fed from outside, we receive knowledge from outside. That is more or less the belief of the whole educational system today. We feel the more we teach the students, the more they will learn. In Sanskrit there is a verse which says that a person who learns little by little becomes a scholar. A person who reads more and more remains a fool. We are giving our children today, to use an Indian idiom, a donkey's load of books to carry and what happens. According to the Sanskrit verse children only know the burden that they are carrying without knowing what it contains.

Learning is not by just collecting information. Knowledge is within the person. The individual must be taught to use his knowledge, once he learns that, then only

the interactions will take place and he will be able to properly utilise the external information that comes to him. Often enough that does not happen, because the information is so much and all the time we feel that more the information we acquire the greater will be our learning. As we are bound by that particular ignorance, we are not able to digest all that information. We are not even able to analyse what we are learning. We just reproduce whatever we have learnt. It is learning by rote and nothing more than that. Vedānta philosophy has tried to give a different epistemological view of the world than what is generally taken for granted. I will briefly discuss that particular philosophical outlook. According to the traditional viewpoints, light is falling on a book and is being reflected from the book before it strikes the retina in our eye. In the retina certain electrical conductions take place. It reaches the optic centre in the brain through the optic nerve and then a mysterious thing takes place. The knowledge of the book comes into being. This is the generally accepted view of perception while according to the Vedānta philosophy, it is just the other way round.

First, I must decide that I want to see. The external things do not come and strike the senses but it is the consciousness which wants to utilise its powers. So, it is the consciousness which decides I want to observe a thing through my power of seeing, that is, the eye, and, therefore, it is the consciousness which first activates the eye through the optic nerve. The process may be the same but it is just the other way round. It is the consciousness

which decides. Then I perceive the light falling on the book and because the light is covering that particular book, so the observation of the book takes place. It will depend on what I decide to observe. So, though the book is there, a person may see a particular line.

Many times people go to a bookshop—there are people who buy books, there are people who buy bindings, and there are other people who buy paper; some people will say this is a very nice book, for Rs. 20 one is getting a 100 page book, by all means, one should buy it. He is interested in buying the paper. Another person says what a beautiful binding, let me buy this book. The third person perhaps buys a book of twenty pages for Rs. 200. Somebody will say well this a very highly priced book but the other person knows that the thoughts contained in it are worth the price. Though all the three are buying books but in their very process of buying they are making a selection. It is not the book which is throwing itself upon them but it is they who are making the selection. It is they who choose.

So, the whole concept is that, instead of external things impinging on you, it is you who want to gain that particular thing. You utilise your power, and you go towards it. The messages are really being sent by the consciousness, the cosmic consciousness. You have done certain acts, and according to those acts it is the consciousness which decides whether you are going to have a pleasurable sensation or a painful sensation. Whatever good or bad we do does not lead to a heaven or hell but it is the cosmic consciousness which leads to the proper reaction at the

proper time. Thus the whole attitude of the universe changes from something material to something spiritual. It is this point which Yājñavalkya is trying to make clear through these illustrations. From general we move to the special and from the special we proceed to still more special and so on and so forth as our knowledge increases, as we try to see things more and more clearly and rationally.

The topic is a difficult one. I will give another illustration because many of you may not be musically inclined. A person goes through the forest. He sees many trees. He comes back and says it was a very beautiful forest. Well, what did he see? “I do not know” he answers, “but they were very beautiful trees”. This man did not know because he was not interested in finding out the particular genre, the particular species of trees there. Another man goes to the forest, he can distinguish between a mango trees, an Ashoka tree, and a fig tree. Again there are different varieties of mango trees—there is the *lāṃgadā* and there is the *dasehri*. If one asks him further what type of mango trees were there, he says “I do not know, but, anyhow, they were all mango trees”. So from general we move to the special.

Often it is said against the philosophers that our observations are special and it is the philosopher who makes them general, whereas the experience is just the reverse. Our observations are general. First, I observe a thing, then I observe something more about it if I am interested. Then I observe something still more about it. So it is from the general perception that we go to the

special perception and not the other way around. What particular special mode that an individual wants to know about an object will vary from person to person. Even in the case of a tree, a person may be interested only in the leaves, different types of leaves, another in the flower, another in the fruits, another in the particular benefits that can be had from that particular tree and so on and so forth.

That selection is being made continuously. As mentioned elsewhere from general we move to the special. Without observing the general we cannot observe the special. As I said, in the case of sound or in the case of forest, from general we go to the special. Without observing the tree I cannot observe the mango tree. Without observing the mango tree I cannot observe the *laṃgadā* mango tree. And, as already mentioned, whatever cannot be perceived without the other is actually rooted in it. Just as without observing the thread one cannot observe the cloth, so, the cloth is actually contained and cannot be distinguished and cannot be taken away from the thread.

We can go a step further and say that the thread is the cause. This is only a way of saying, but, we can say the thread is the cause because it precedes the cloth. Cause and effect relationship is again a very peculiar phenomenon. We will not go into it. But in a broad sense we can say whatever precedes is the cause and whatever follows is the effect. The thread precedes and the cloth follows. In short, we can say that the thread is the cause and the cloth is the effect. In the illustration of the trees I perceive the tree and then only I can perceive the mango

tree. So genus will be the cause and species will be the effect, not the other way around.

Let us analyse the world and try to find out what is it that precedes all perceptions. We will find that knowledge is one thing which precedes all perceptions. First, 'I know', then only I know a tree. So knowledge precedes all perceptions and that knowledge invariably is included in the statement 'I know it'. There is no knowledge where you are not conscious of the fact that 'I know'. First I know the subject, and then only I can enunciate the predicate. So subjective knowledge will always precede and predicative knowledge will always follow. This shows that this knowledge is the real cause and it is always existing in the consciousness in the form of 'I know'.

Now we can go a step further. The threads can remain without the cloth but the cloth cannot remain without the thread. Similarly, the sound can exist without it being the drum sound but the drum sound cannot exist without being the sound. Similarly, here 'I know' can exist even without a predicate. Take for example, a simple feeling 'I am hungry'. You feel 'I am hungry'. Now here the predicate is 'hungry' but hunger is you yourself. So here you are not knowing anything different from your own self. But you are knowing yourself. Or, you are at ease. You have done a lot of work. You go and lie down for a short while. Someone asks you what are you doing. You say, "I am doing nothing"—actually you are doing nothing. You are not predicating anything to yourself but you know that you are there. So the knowledge, the subjective

knowledge, always precedes and can remain without the predicative knowledge, without the objective knowledge, but objective knowledge cannot exist without the subject, without the subjective knowledge. Therefore, we can say that the subject is the cause of all objects and not the other way around.

As we enter the twenty-first century, this change has already taken place in the field of modern physics. In modern physics we know that without mentioning the subject we cannot say anything about the object. Because the moment an observer observes a field, in the very process of observing it he disturbs the equilibrium. So until you know who is observing, from where and how, you can never say what he is going to observe. The change of subject changes the object. Not only that, there is a peculiar situation when we go to the microcosmic world—the electrons are running at a very fast speed, if you want to determine where they are, that is, their position, you cannot know their velocity. If you want to measure their velocity you cannot find out their station—where. You cannot find out both things simultaneously because if you measure the velocity then the station changes, and if you make the station the object of your observation then the velocity is bound to change. So, both things cannot be found out. It is the subject who decides which particular observation is going to be made and that observation will only come into being.

Though modern physics had laid open these ideas yet it will take perhaps another fifty years for these ideas,

these physical conceptions to dive deep within us. It is something akin to the fact that it took hundred years after we knew that the earth was not a flat surface. It took another century to be conscious that the earth is rotating and not the sun. These things were discussed. These things were proved in citadels of philosophy, and i.e. the universities, but they did not become part of our everyday thinking. Similarly, this importance of the subjective conception which has been proved scientifically has not still dived deep within us because we are still referring ourselves to the material world. We feel as though matter exists outside, doing something to us, reacting with us, though we know nothing about that matter and, as I pointed out earlier, we know that there is no reason to believe that matter exists there apart from consciousness.

So, it is a complete interaction between consciousnesses. That is what Yājñavalkya wants to point out. He says that the universe is knowledge which emanates from that cosmic consciousness¹⁶. He gives a very apt illustration. He says that if a wet firewood is lighted, it produces smoke and sparks; similarly out of that consciousness comes out all the objects as well as knowing subjects. The different sciences and different philosophies which existed at that time are enumerated—the four Vedas, history, mythology, philosophies and so on and so forth.

The idea is that all knowledge is coming out of Him. The word used is wet firewood. The wetness of the piece of wood indicates the Lord's love for us. That love brings out all this knowledge. Knowledge is something which

the Lord brings out because he is full of love towards us. This universe has not been created for us to suffer. It is actually a place where the Lord wants to show us his complete love. He wants to make us happy with all this knowledge. If that was not the case then we would not have any hope that this world can ever become a place of blissful existence. The world would have always remained a place where one has to suffer and one has to get away from it, so to say, and since there can be nothing apart from consciousness one can never get away from consciousness. In other words, one would experience only certain periods of painless existence. Yājñavalkya makes it clear that actually the Lord has given all this out of his love but the question is how has He given it out. Yājñavalkya gives another illustration to clarify this point.¹⁷

He gives the example of water. Just as all water actually continuously flows towards the ocean—the ocean is the one thing which contains nothing but water—because water has come out of it, so, water is continuously flowing towards it. Similarly, as we have, so to say, due to our ignorance, come out of the cosmic consciousness, the Cosmic Being is continuously attracting us towards Him. He is sending all these messages. In this particular mantra all the different sensory perceptions have been described. The illustration is the same: just as all water is contained in the ocean so all contactual sensations are contained in the actual sense. Similarly, all fragrance, all smells are contained in the nose and so on and so forth, I

need not describe everything in detail. The idea is that it is He who is continuously contacting us in those particular senses because we have come out of Him so that we may be able to contact Him back and break this particular bondage that we are in.

But this can be done only when we are aware of ourselves as conscious beings. Unfortunately, most of the time we are conscious of our body-mind complex or we are conscious of something which is outside us. We never try to see or feel what is our own reality, the awareness which is the cause of everything. Very rarely we try to be aware of anything. We observe things, but as soon as we observe a thing we attach certain values to it. We either like it or dislike it. We want to get away from it, or we want to go near it. We never try to be in a state where we are just aware of the thing without attaching any value to it either good or bad. Just be awake and aware.

As a spiritual practice it is a very simple thing. In the morning when you get up just be aware. That is perhaps one of the best times to practice it because you are coming out of deep sleep. At that time all your attachments and repulsion—*rāga* and *dveṣa*—are minimal because you are not engaging in any activity outside. You are just lying down on your bed, in the process of getting up. The first consciousness is that I am awake. Generally, we get up so late that this consciousness is immediately covered by the consciousness that I am late for the office and so I start running. I am not able to experience the joy which comes out of knowing that I am awake. Now that is a spiritual

practice which we can do. As soon as you get up, do not try to feel anything. Just try to feel the joy that you are awake, that you are aware—aware of nothing, aware of your own self, aware of the fact that you are aware.

It is something like a person who has a paralytic stroke. The doctor tests him every time by asking how does he feel? Does he feel anything? And every time he replies that he does not feel anything. But one of the days when the doctor strikes a hammer he immediately says, “Yes, yes, today I am feeling a little”. Now that “feeling a little” in that particular part of the body gives him a great joy. Actually, no good sensation or no pleasurable sensation has taken place, but the very fact that he can be aware of that particular sensation in his feet gives him tremendous joy. Now just think your whole being including your mind and your body is aware because you are aware. If you were not there, aware of yourself, you would be aware of nothing also. That very sensation, that very feeling of awareness gives you great joy and that is why we must come back to it again and again.

Once you have practised it in the morning then slowly start practising it at other times during the day. You may be moving in the street, suddenly be aware of the fact that it is you who are moving. It is you who are observing. We have become so accustomed to observe everything else but our own self that it seems very peculiar that in every knowledge I am present. I know, I smell, I touch, I move, I walk, every action is being done by me but in spite of that, it is I who am never conscious of my own self.

So this awareness has to come into being slowly. We must develop this awareness rather than be aware of objective forms. We have to bring into our conscious mind the ever shining light of consciousness and as it manifests more and more, we will find that our power of observation increases, our power of bliss increases. Things start losing their value which were earlier attached to them, because awareness, consciousness, never becomes an object.

As I said, objects are the symbols through which the cosmic mind is trying to contact you. That is what perception means. But the message is a symbol of conscious thought through out and is not changed into an unconscious object. Even though at this stage we may feel that He is sending a symbol but actually He is sending a conscious symbol. Due to our own ignorance, we are not able to see it as knowledge. We see it as a sensuous perception, as a knowledge stemming from our senses but what He is sending is knowledge. It is not a transformation of knowledge into object. The symbol which God is sending is not similar to milk becoming curd. It is not a change of that type. It is what they call transmutation. That is to say, it is not a real change but it seems to be like that.

There are two types of changes where a thing really transforms itself—just like milk becoming curd. But there are other instances when I see the rope as a snake. The rope does not become a snake. No change takes place in the rope. It is merely due to my own ignorance that I perceive the rope as snake. Similarly, what I am observing

is really knowledge, but because I am not able to see that knowledge as a totality, I see it only through one sense or through one mind. Therefore, I see that knowledge in part and because I am seeing that knowledge in part I feel that it is a sensation, but actually, it is total knowledge. That is, precisely, why three things were used as an illustration by Yājñavalkya and not just one sound symbol. There is a reason behind this.

In Indian tradition drums are beaten/sounded whenever there is a great war and especially the particular instrument mentioned here is *duṇḍubhi*; it is sounded whenever there is a war. It shows the particular type of heroic activity which one is supposed to do on hearing it. The other is the conch shell that is blown whenever there is an auspicious occasion—the advent of a guest, a puja, a worship, a marriage. So the conch shell and its sound reflects the idea of auspiciousness, the *vīṇā* refers to that particular type of pleasurable passion which is called *Śṛṅgāra*. Three different modes are taken as illustration. All the sounds give the same message. But in their own specific manifestation they give us different types of messages. They are all energy movements, no doubt, but there is a different value judgment attached to them. All the three are taken to show that the totality of sound as it exists contains all the different aspects, all the different feelings, all the different modes that we can think of. These three, as pointed out earlier, are quite contradictory to each other—the feeling of passion is entirely different

from an auspicious occasion and heroism is again completely different.

So, by giving these three illustrations Yājñavalkya points out that what the Lord is trying to give us total knowledge. But, because we are observing it through our limited senses or through just one mind, we are not able to see it completely and wholly and the resultant feeling is that we are receiving only partial knowledge. Partial knowledge is a perception, a sensation. The totality of knowledge is what we mean by God consciousness.

How to attain God consciousness after being established in this awareness will be discussed later.



Lecture Five

First, I must congratulate you for having come today after I subjected you yesterday to a thoroughly technological language as well as ideas. But I did not have much of a choice, because when the topic was suggested, “Vedānta in the twenty first century”, I was slightly hesitant to even take it up as it did not specify any particular period. So it obviously meant somewhere near the middle of the century, that is, 2050 and I know I was going to address a crowd which does not exist. As a practising Vedāntist I have always believed in the present moment. To think very far into the future or to blow up certain past things, are of little consequence in life.

But then again I was happy that I will be away from our everyday mundane events in life. The complete ethical failures, cultural break-downs which we have to face everyday can be just forgotten if we are going to plan our series for A.D. 2050 or around that time. Of course, by that time computers would have taken over a lot of our thinking. Concepts such as black-hole, antimatter, 3-K Radio velocities and so on would have become an everyday affair just as today we talk about gravity. Yesterday, I was trying to bring out that even in such computerised and complicated physical theories consciousness will remain

as the ultimate source. And hence I had to subject you to a great inconvenience because those concepts today are not our normal ways of thinking.

But any how, the fact that you have come today shows that Vedānta has a definite future even when we enter the middle of the twenty-first century because consciousness is a thing which is an eternal reality. After stating that matter does not exist, Yājñavalkya goes on to say, with the help of an illustration, what happened then¹⁸.

Yājñavalkya says that just as you take a cube of ice, and immerse it in water; it becomes part and parcel of water because it was of the nature of water. Now if you want to separate that particular cube of ice from water, it will not just be possible to do so because it has merged into it, completely and thoroughly. Similarly this whole universe, which is absolutely limitless, is of the form of consciousness, no matter where we touch it. Just as in the case of water wherever you touch you will find nothing but water, similarly here wherever you see, whatever you perceive, you will perceive nothing but consciousness itself, the awareness itself and out of this awareness emerges all that exists. The way it emerges is very peculiar and perhaps we cannot even imagine how it emerges. Generally, we say it comes out of ignorance. For the simple reason that unity has to be ignored before diversity comes into being.

Today we have the Big Bang theory of creation. We know exactly what happened after the big bang had taken

place and the moment when the expansion reduced the density to less than that of a Planck mass black hole. To give you just the idea, the amount of time it took was one second divided by 10 multiplied by itself 43 times (10^{-43}) ten to the power minus 43 if you can imagine it. That is the time it took for the big bang in which a lot of matter and antimatter were created. They reacted with each other, cancelling a lot and what we have is the residual. What happened in that particular period of time no one knows and there is no way of knowing either. That is what we mean by ignorance. It is just not possible to observe what happened at that moment. We have no means of knowing. It took place, that is all we can say.

It has been put very nicely in our Purāṇas. After creation took place, Brahmā and Viṣṇu both were claiming that each of them had created it. Well, while they were having an argument, a pillar of light was seen. They were wonderstruck. This was not what they had created. So they decided whoever can find it out, fathom it, will be the person who will be regarded as the real creator. So one went up, one went down, but though they went all the way through out eternity, they could not fathom it either way. Well, is it not something which has been happening in physics? If a ray of light is there on the tip of the black hole which is rotating, it will move with immense speed without either coming out or going in. It will have no beginning and no end and there is no way of finding it out. But Ācārya Śaṅkara points out a very interesting thing in this context. He asks the Lord that though it was not

found out by even Brahmā and Viṣṇu yet, when he meditates on Shiva as the supreme being¹⁹, he is able to feel Him as that which existed before this creation. Is it not the melting love which is pouring out as awareness into us?

Awareness is like that cube of ice which is dissolved into this whole creation. Just because we feel that we are different from this creation, we are trying to take ourselves away from it, therefore, we become conscious of the absence of awareness. It is awareness which is present everywhere but in the process of observation we separate ourselves from awareness as such. We forget that our very nature is Shiva. Once this ego is merged, says Yājñavalkya, everything is merged because the ego itself is merged in Shiva. Then awareness exists but knowledge as we know it cannot exist.

Now, Yājñavalkya makes two statements here. One was that everything is awareness, and the other was that once the observer is lost, the ego consciousness is lost then there is no awareness. So it was natural for Maitreyī to get confused²⁰. Maitreyī says: “You are saying two contradictory things. You are saying that it is the very nature of awareness and yet you say there will be awareness of nothing. How can both be simultaneously true?”. Yājñavalkya says: “You have misunderstood me. I am not saying anything to confuse you. What I have said is very clear. It is you who are getting confused because you are confusing two states of awareness. In one state you are identifying yourself with the body-mind

complex and so the idea of possession of the knowledge is present. In the other, you are not possessing knowledge but you are just awareness itself. So what is known as being aware of something, in the normal course, is not present there, but it is being aware of everything within himself". Yājñavalkya makes it plain by the following mantra²¹.

Yājñavalkya says that where there is duality the seer and the seen are different and the words he used are very significant. He does not even want to say where duality exists, but says *where it appears to exist*. That is, even when we are perceiving duality, it is not real duality, it is an 'as if'. Just as in a game you draw a line and say that this is your field and this is my field. The field belongs neither to you nor to me. Or when you play cards in a club, you say that your hand is good, my hand is bad but the cards belong to none. Just for the sake of the game you have divided them. So Yājñavalkya says that something is being observed and something has become the observer but actually both are equally of the very same nature. So where it is like duality, it is really 'as if there is duality', there someone smells something else, someone sees something else, someone hears something else etc., but when the awareness has pervaded everything, then who is to see whom, who is to know whom. The One who is of the very nature of awareness can never be known as separate from one's own Self. This complete identity with the whole universe, is the state of Supreme Awareness.

Modern physics tells us that everything else which has expended today as the universe was just one point

before the big bang. It was just one mathematical point. The explosion took place and we are in the process of expansion. Similar is the attitude of Yājñavalkya towards universal consciousness. It is just one point Shiva consciousness. In that moment of ignorance, the expansion takes place. In that point where there is no difference, bliss exists.

Bliss is actually the language of realisation. Bliss is something which is homogenous, unbroken, undiversified joy. It is not joy which you get out of something. It is all pervasive and in its pervasiveness it touches everyone. Every life is enriched by it to the extent that it appropriates this delight of being. This delight of being is the truth which all of us experience.

Unfortunately, we make too much of our sorrows. Sorrow is not the truth of life. It is the delight in living which is the true fact of life. Sorrow, pain, misery is only an aberration, a negation of the true form of life. A person is sitting joyfully. You go and ask him, "Why are you sitting happily?". He can only reply, "Well, why is it bothering you. Can't you stand my happiness?". But supposing a person is in sorrow and you go and ask him, "Why are you unhappy? Why do you look sorrowful?" He will give you a reason, which clearly means that sorrow is not the true nature but is always an effect having a cause. Pain always comes from some other source, from something which is different from us. It may be expectations from others, because we have certain hopes from others or because they have disappointed us

or bereavement has taken place, but something has happened, then only sorrow, misery or pain emerges.

Bliss is self-located. When there is no reason to be sorrowful, we are blissful in our very nature. This natural surge of joy is the nature of the soul. That is the real reason why we do not like sorrow. It is not our natural reality. But this natural surge can wash out the duality only when we are able to be expansive enough, to welcome the entire world within ourselves and take delight in taking the whole world within ourselves as it is. Then there is no question of sorrow. Everything, every experience, every awareness becomes our very nature. It is this infinity which gives us bliss. That is why Yājñavalkya uses the word *ananta* with *vijñāna*. He has not used the word *ānanda* that is joy; he has used the word infinity.

Wherever there is infiniteness there is joy, wherever there is finiteness, limitations, bliss will be obstructed. Vedānta philosophers have tried to find out what is it that reveals God and what is it that veils Him. The very nature of God is existence and consciousness. He has to be existing and he has to be a conscious being. Well, we can touch these two things very easily in our own everyday life. I am, I exist and I know myself to be existing. So in this, I am contacting God. But what is it that is stopping me from becoming one with Him? Bliss is veiled; Infinity is veiled, that is why the Upanishads repeat again and again that you are not a limited being²². You are the all pervasive being. It is the all pervasiveness, the infinity which expresses the bliss. Wherever there is limitation,

that is going to cause pain or suffering because that is going to create the otherness. Now when we are aware of our own awareness, we are feeling the touch of that bliss. Even to start feeling this bliss, your own awareness, as I said yesterday, you feel limited. Do not worry about it but just be aware of your own limitations. When you are feeling the limitation you cannot just wish away the limitation or its feeling but you can be aware of it and because you are aware of limitation, at least you are not limited in your awareness of the limitation.

You may feel limitation in knowing or doing a thing, but there is no limitation in being aware of your own limitations. You will slowly find that limitations will stop, will drop away, because there is actually no second to you to limit you. This awareness is all pervasive. The moment your awareness touches the limitations, they start melting away. So you must consciously will to be just aware. This 'being aware' is the value which can bring that unlimited bliss for which we are continuously striving. The moment we value this bliss, this infinity, Shiva Himself opens up as infinity to us.

God always reciprocates the way we react with Him. If we identify Him with matter, the whole universe becomes His symbol. If, on the contrary we regard the universe as matter, something which is inert, feelingless, the universe will also react with us in the same way. Because, as we saw yesterday, behind all sensations and perceptions, the conscious Shiva is present. If we see Him as a ruler, punishing us, then He punishes and rewards us.

In whatever way we approach Him, He reciprocates. The moment we try to dissolve our own self in front of Him He reveals.

There is an interesting story of Kālahastīśvara near Tirupati. There was a hunter who was absolutely uneducated. Once he saw a pandita doing puja in a particular temple. He was attracted by the way the pandita performed the puja and he decided he was also going to do the same. He observed that the pandita poured water, cleaned the image, offered something as food and then went away. So he decided to worship the Lord in the same manner. But he was only a tribal hunter having no possessions whatsoever. He went down to bring the water. He took a few leaves as he had no vessel. In the leaves he took water but he had to climb a great height. So, he could not carry the water in the leaves. He tried several times but he could not do it. He was wondering how he can do the puja when there was no vessel to carry the water. Suddenly an idea struck him. He thought: "I have my mouth. I can fill my mouth with water and I can pour it on the Lord." So he filled his mouth with water for offering to the Lord. As he was a hunter, he took the best raw meat that he could hunt. He tasted it to see whether it was soft or not, because to him raw meat was still the only food as he did not know how to cook meat. So he went there and he was very happy that now he could conduct his worship properly.

Ācārya Śaṅkara, describes this peculiar worship²³. He poured water filled in his mouth, which will be regarded

as a great defilement from our standpoint; but the Lord knows he was not defiling. As he was doing the best that he can, He accepted it as worship. The hunter had no cloth with which to wipe the image; also in one hand he had an arrow and in the other he had the meat. So how to wipe the Lord? He decided that his feet were good enough to do the job. So, though his feet were completely covered with sand, dust etc., he wiped the Lord with his feet. Ācārya Śaṅkara says that the Lord did not regard this as desecration. On the contrary, He regarded this as if the softest of towels was being used to wipe him. In short, God always reciprocates the way we behave towards Him. Having done that he offered the meat which he had brought and he was very happy that he had conducted his worship.

Well, the next day in the morning the Pandita came and naturally he was aghast at the defilement that had taken place. So the poor pūjārī cleaned the whole temple, performed certain rites to ensure that the temple was purified, did his worship and went away. When he had gone away, this particular hunter started his worship because that was his way of worshipping. He knew that the pandita must do the worship first because he had been doing it earlier. He had that much sense. The following day, the pandita came back and saw the same defilement. He was hurt by what he saw, he went back after having purified the temple.

When he went back to the village, he told the village headman that they must do something about it. Somebody is defiling the temple every day. So four or five people

came the next day. After they performed their puja, they hid themselves. Suddenly they saw this wild hunter coming, and they saw the way he did his worship. But as he was looking so ferocious, they did not have the guts to confront him; they were only planning that they must go to the king and bring a few soldiers.

Well, the Lord knew what was on their mind. So He wanted to show them how He reacts. Not the way we take things but as He takes things. So suddenly from the Lord's eyes blood started oozing out. On seeing this the priests, were completely aghast and did not know how blood could ooze out of any image. That hunter was also aghast. He did not know what to do but being a tribal, suddenly it struck him that if he can offer the particular part which is suffering—his own part—then that particular type of totem worship may help. So he took an arrow and removed one of his eyes and placed it over the Lord's bleeding eye and was very happy to see that the Lord's eye became all right; it had stopped bleeding.

He started dancing with joy that he was able to do something for the Lord. The Pūjārīs who were hiding there were wondering what type of man he was who had taken out his eye without feeling any sorrow, any pain and was so joyous. Suddenly, the other eye of the Lord started bleeding. He saw it; but was not so perturbed, as he knew that he had the right solution—his other eye. But he was wondering how, after he had taken out the other eye, would he know where to put. So he took the toe of his feet and put it right near the affected eye as a mark and started

taking out his serviceable eye. Immediately, the Lord appeared and called him that you are my eye. So the only name we know about him is Kannapar, that is, the eye giver and he was immediately taken to the heavenly abode. The priests were aghast by seeing all this and they realised that they were facing not just an ordinary human being but some person who had touched the divinity within.

So it is not just how and what we do towards the Lord but what our feeling is, what our real attitude towards Him is, which is going to decide the value of worship. God always reciprocates us. Whatever we do He will reciprocate. If we take Him to be as inert matter, then He will reciprocate as inert matter. If we take him to be an inert being, then he reciprocates as an inert being. If we take Him to be a ruler, one who punishes and rewards, then he also reciprocates in the same way, but if we are able to melt ourselves in love with him, then He also will melt in love with us and then the whole being changes.

So Yājñavalkya is trying to say that whenever there is duality then only all that we see as dual exists. Once that duality dissolves none can say that only a particular form will manifest. It can take any form whatsoever. The important thing is that we must melt our individuality entirely and completely in it.

The illustration of salt water is also given in this context. If you take a beaker of water and put a crystal of salt into it and you leave that salt for the whole night, next morning you will not see it any more. But if you taste this

water it will be salty. You had put a crystal of salt appearing visually. After it dissolves you are not able 'to see' any salt particle there, but you can only taste it. Whether you taste it from above, from below, from sideways, wherever you taste, you will taste only the saltiness. So though you are not able to perceive the crystal (visual) aspect of the salt, you are able to perceive its taste.

Similarly, we are not able to see God as a dual being; as something separate from us, but as part and parcel of us as our very being, we are able to see Him very clearly, we are able to perceive Him manifested in every fiber, in every pore of our being. Then the whole life changes. This should be the change as we enter the twenty first century.

Now I started with saying that none of us will be there in the twenty-first century. But then there is another point of view. Wherever we are today, there is the twentieth century. If we leave our present state of being, we enter the twenty-first century. So it is not such a different thing. Within a matter of few seconds you can leave the stage where you are. You can leave particular associations, notions, and limitations behind you and enter the twenty-first century and materialise this. The body-mind complex then acts as the symbol. This bliss which we attain as soon as we leave the twentieth century, that is the present state of our body-mind complex, we behave as symbols of bliss and we will spread nothing but joy expressed as love.

In every act nothing but bliss will ooze out of you, and bliss can be manifested only as love. So you will have

nothing particular to love, for everything, everyone around you will become the object of your love. You will find nothing whatsoever that you cannot love in the past, present and future. You will have nothing against anyone. A person may have harmed you but all that harm exists as long as you are associating with your body-mind complex. The moment you step out of it all that harm comes to nothing. It loses its value.

So let this not be a mere intellectual exercise. We have talked many things. If you feel that they have appealed to you, you must try to feel the presence of Shiva, the presence of bliss in the awareness, every moment of your awareness. It is not easy to practice it immediately, in every moment, but at least you may try to practice it, as I said yesterday, every morning. Then slowly you can increase it. Be aware of what is happening to your body-mind complex. Be aware, not as if you are different from it; because, the moment you bring difference in it, you will try to get away from it. The moment you try to get away from it there will be otherness. And the moment there is otherness, there is going to be pain; that particular method will only force you to renounce things physically but what Vedānta preaches is not renunciation physically, as I told you that very first day, but metaphysical cancellation.

Certain conceptions of your life have slowly become part and parcel of your very being. As I pointed out yesterday, we did not come to believe in matter just in a day but it took us hundreds of years to absorb the idea of

matter. In a similar way, you will slowly get the realisation that this duality is not of value to us. The real value is that of unity and not that of duality. So try to feel this present, this awareness of bliss. Let it be the ultimate desire, because that is very important. Once it has become ingrained into us, we find it difficult to get rid of it. We can take another illustration from our own social structure. You go to other societies but you do not find the division of caste. It is no problem to them, but for us, to shake away the very conception of caste, may take even hundreds of years. It is not so easy to get away from a particular conception that you have lived with from your childhood. Similar is the case here.

We have been living with the idea of duality, with the idea that something is different from me, something is other than me, for a very long time. And so, as soon as we say that this is something which is not desirable we try to get away physically from it but that is not the correct thing. It is metaphysical cancellation that is the goal, called '*Bādhā*', in Sanskrit i.e., you see it, you perceive it, but at the same time, you know it is not true.

It is something like the seeing of the image. You see your face in the mirror. You know you are not in the mirror even while you are looking at the mirror. A small child sees himself in the mirror. But he does not realise it. He wants to play with his own reflection thinking it to be someone else. He calls the image to come near and when it does not, he starts crying. He even complains to his father, why the image is not coming nearer to him. Well,

the father says that it is only an image, and it cannot come near. Well, the child cannot understand it.

So is the case with us. We are seeing others. Actually who are the others? They have their body-mind complexes. In them the very same Shiva is being reflected as is being reflected in us, i.e. in our own ego-consciousness, our own body-mind complex. They are not different from us. If there are ten mirrors, I see ten faces in those mirrors. I still remain the same. It is true that another person can say that there are eleven there. These ten mirrors are reflecting my face and my own face is the eleventh one. But to me there are only ten images. After all the mirrors are broken and the reflections are destroyed, I remain as I am. That is what Yājñavalkya is trying to point out. While there was duality, you saw things as if they were different from you. Now when the duality does not exist, how will you be able to know even yourself. What I am trying to say is that because you see yourself everywhere, it can be said that you see none who is different from you.

Now as we practice this more and more we find that it is something peculiar. Shiva is that which has centres everywhere but circumference nowhere. In every body-mind complex he is existing completely and wholly. Often enough we make a mistake. When we say that God is all pervasive, we think in terms of divided pervasiveness. And, therefore, naturally, we feel as if God is the combination of all beings. It is to remove this feeling that again and again the Upanishads teach the sublime truth

by starting with the creation. They first mention in the beginning there was nothing but God.

As I had pointed out the big bang theory makes it clear that it all started from one point. It was that point from where the explosion took place. It was just a point. In the same way in the black hole when things go in, they never come out. Even light itself does not come out. You may put the whole nebula, the whole galaxies into it but nothing will come out. Everything will be absorbed. That is what we mean by black hole. It goes to a point but the mass there is infinite; nothing comes out and everything ends there.

Similar is the case with the conscious being. Our Rishis had this realisation from their own inner self. We feel while living on the earth as if we are at the centre of creation but no matter where you go, which ever planet you go, you will be able to see that you are in the centre. That is the peculiar thing in the universe you cannot pinpoint that this is the Centre. Everywhere it is the centre. But there is absolutely no limit to it. The circumference is not present because it all started from one point. But it was not a dead point, it started from one conscious point and that is why everywhere there is conscious centre. Every human being, every living being, every point, every atom so to say is pulsating with the same life, with the same consciousness, with the same awareness. It may express itself in different ways, no doubt, but though the expression changes, it remains the same.

So when I perceive ten mirrors, each mirror has the reflection of my face fully. It is not that the ten mirrors are reflecting part of my face. It is not so. Every mirror is reflecting the whole of my face. Similarly, every conscious being, every living being, every mind, every ‘antahkaraṇa’, the internal organ, is completely reflecting the infinite Shiva. That is why when we enter there, we touch infinity. If it were not so, it would be the addition of all beings, which would bring bliss.

Most of the time we feel so, for it is the addition of all the different trees which leads to a forest. We are accustomed to think in terms of parts where addition makes up a whole. Well, here it is not so. It is just as the illustration of the mirror. Each mirror is able to give you complete knowledge about your face. Similarly, in each of our minds we are able to contact the infinite Shiva completely and wholly. But the other faces are also complete and equal reflections. Therefore, any change in the face is going to bring equal change in all the mirrors and that is where the identity exists. Though each of them is complete yet they are all identical with the face. They have no existence apart from the particular face that is reflected though they are complete in themselves; and yet completely dependent on the face. And because they are all identical with the face we can say, that in that sense, they are identical with each other too.

Similarly, every being is not only identical with Shiva but it is absolutely identical with each other and, therefore, when you explore your personality with that you are able

to release the energy of bliss which is going to touch every being, every where. It is not something which is an end in itself but it leads to that particular bliss which is part of every being. That is why Ācārya Śaṅkara says that a person who realises this, does not do anything and yet causes happiness and blissful existence to everyone. He gives the illustration of spring. Just as spring does not consciously do anything but on its advent trees blossom of their own accord. Similarly when this ego is broken, the whole universe blossoms with bliss and every conscious being feels the difference in the quality of life in the presence of the ego-less consciousness.

When we started this lecture series, I pointed out the first day how Openheimer equated the first atomic explosion with the experience of Arjuna. There it was the ego which was being exploded, here it was the atom which was being exploded; the experience was identical, as if thousands of suns have come into being. Similarly now, to end, I want to point out that once this ego breaks up, it will not be more destruction as in the case of that material explosion but the realisation of intense bliss. There it was the destructive force which was released, here, it will be the blissful force of creativity which will be released. We are continuously talking about anti-matter. Matter and anti-matter when they collide, actually cancel out each other completely.

Similarly, if we are to enter the twenty-first century, if we are to face the challenge of nuclear holocaust, the only way is by breaking the particularised ego. Once we

break it, bliss will completely annihilate the very feeling of annihilation which exists in the minds of those who are thinking in terms of nuclear war.

How are we going to remove that idea from their minds? Not by fighting; not by merely telling them something but by exploding this love. Once this love comes into being their hate will be completely dissolved, just as matter dissolves anti-matter and only reality remains. Similarly, blissfulness will remain. So if we have to take up this challenge in our lifetime we must not merely perceive it as an intellectual exercise, but must melt in love, just as matter completely melts when it comes into contact with anti-matter and, as I said, it has to express itself.

After our ego is broken, Shiva will manifest of its own accord. But until then, compassion and love have to be manifested in everything that we do, that we know. So being aware, making our ego unlimited, expansive, taking the whole universe within it, thereby helping it to explode, and in our action, being completely compassionate and loving—this is the challenge, this is the message of Vedānta for those who want to enter the twenty-first century. And as I said to start with, twenty-first century may be even at this moment if you leave this particular century of hatred and enter the next century of love and bliss.

I am very happy that all of you came. I thank you all and also the Bharatiya Sanskriti Samaj which took a lot of trouble and pain in making this a success and most of all

of course, all of you who come, because, without you, neither their effort nor my talking would have had any meaning. I only hope, wish and pray to the Lord that you may be able to touch these divine heights in your own life and attain that bliss which is of help to you as well as to the whole humanity.

*Om Pūrṇam Adaḥ Pūrṇam Idam
Pūrṇāt Pūrṇam Udacyate
Pūrṇasya Pūrṇam Ādāya
Pūrṇam Evāvaśiṣyate.*



Appendix

1. B.Gītā 11-12

दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेद् युगपद् उत्थिता ।
यदि भाः सदृशी सा स्याद् भासस् तस्य महात्मनः ॥

2. B.Gītā 11-8

न तु मां शक्यसे द्रष्टुम् अनेनैव स्वचक्षुषा ।
दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः पश्य मे योगम् ऐश्वरम् ॥

3. B.Gītā 11-32

कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत् प्रवृद्धो
लोकान् समाहर्तुम् इह प्रवृत्तः ।
ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे
येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः ॥

4. Br.Up. 2.4.1

‘मैत्रेयी’ति होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यः, ‘उद्यास्यन्वा अरेऽहमस्मात्स्थानाद् अस्मि ।
हन्त तेऽनया कात्यायन्यान्तं करवाणी’ति ॥

5. Br.Up Vārtika 2.4.39

भार्याघनुज्ञापूवो हि संन्यासो विहितः श्रुतौ ।

6. Br.Up. 2.4.2

सा होवाच मैत्रेयी । यन्नु म इयं भगोः सर्वा पृथिवी वित्तेन पूर्णा स्यात्कथं
तेनामृता स्यामिति ।

7. Br.Up. 2.4.2

नेति होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यो यथैवोपकरणवतां जीवितं तथैव ते जीवितं
स्यादमृतत्वस्य तु नाशास्ति वित्तेनेति

8. Br.Up. 2.4.3

सा होवाच मैत्रेयी, 'येनाहं नामृता स्यां किमहं तेन कुर्याम् । यदेव भगवान्वेद तदेव मे ब्रूही'ति ॥ Muṇḍakopaniṣad 3.2.9

9. ब्रह्मविद् ब्रह्मैव भवति ॥ Br. Vārtikasāra 2.4.5

10. वित्तस्य कर्महेतुत्वात्तत्त्यागो ज्ञानसाधनम् ॥

11. Br.Up. 2.4.4

स होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यः, 'प्रिया बतारे नः सती प्रियं भाषस, एहि, आस्स्व, व्याख्यास्यामि ते । व्याचक्षाणस्य तु मे निदिध्यासस्वे'ति ॥

12. Br.Up. 2.4.5

स होवाच न वा अरे पत्युः कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति । न वा अरे जायायै कामाय जाया प्रिया भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति । न वा अरे पुत्राणां कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्त्यात्मनस्तु कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्ति । न वा अरे वित्तस्य कामाय वित्तं प्रियं भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय वित्तं प्रियं भवति । न वा अरे ब्रह्मणः कामाय ब्रह्म प्रियं भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय ब्रह्म प्रियं भवति । न वा अरे क्षत्रस्य कामाय क्षत्रं प्रियं भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय क्षत्रं प्रियं भवति । न वा अरे लोकानां कामाय लोकाः प्रिया भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय लोकाः प्रिया भवन्ति । न वा अरे देवानां कामाय देवाः प्रिया भवन्त्यात्मनस्तु कामाय देवाः प्रिया भवन्ति । न वा अरे भूतानां कामाय भूतानि प्रियाणि भवन्त्यात्मनस्तु कामाय भूतानि प्रियाणि भवन्ति । न वा अरे सर्वस्य कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति ।

13. Br.Up. 2.4.5

आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यो मैत्रेयी, आत्मनो वा अरे दर्शनेन श्रवणेन मत्या विज्ञानेनेदं सर्वं विदितम् ॥

14. Br.Up. 2.4.6

ब्रह्म तं परादाद्योऽन्यत्रात्मनो ब्रह्म वेद ।
क्षत्रं तं परादाद्योऽन्यत्रात्मनः क्षत्रं वेद ।

लोकास्तं परादुर्योऽन्यत्रात्मनो लोकान्वेद ।
 देवास्तं परादुर्योऽन्यत्रात्मनो देवान्वेद ।
 भूतानि तं परादुर्योऽन्यत्रात्मनो भूतानि वेद ।
 सर्वं तं परादाद्योऽन्यत्रात्मनः सर्वं वेद ।
 इदं ब्रह्म, इदं क्षत्तं, इमेलोकाः, इमे देवाः, इमानि भूतानि, इदं सर्वं
 यदयमात्मा ॥

15. Br.Up. 2.4.7,8,9

स यथा दुन्दुभेर्हन्यमानस्य न बाह्याञ्शब्दाञ्शक्रुयाद् ग्रहणाय दुन्दुभेस्तु
 ग्रहणेन दुन्दुभ्याघातस्य वा शब्दो गृहीतः ॥
 स यथा शङ्खस्य ध्मायमानस्य न बाह्याञ्शब्दाञ्शक्रुयाद्ग्रहणाय शङ्खस्य तु
 ग्रहणेन शङ्खध्मस्य वा शब्दो गृहीतः ।
 स यथा वीणायै वाद्यमानायै न बाह्याञ्शब्दाञ्शक्रुयाद्ग्रहणाय वीणायै तु
 ग्रहणेन वीणावादस्य वा शब्दो गृहीतः ।

16. Br.Up. 2.4.10.

स यथाद्रैधाग्रेरभ्याहितात्पृथग्धूमा विनिश्चरन्ति एवं वा अरेऽस्य महतो भूतस्य
 निश्चसितमेतद्यद्वेदो यजुर्वेदः सामवेदोऽथर्वाङ्गिरस इतिहासः पुराणं विद्या
 उपनिषदः श्लोकाः सूत्राण्यनुव्याख्यानानि व्याख्यानानि अस्यैवैतानि
 निश्चसितानि ॥

17. Br.Up. 2.4.11.

स यथा सर्वासामपां समुद्र एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां स्पर्शानां त्वगेकायनम्, एवं
 सर्वेषां गन्धानां नासिके एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां रसानां जिह्वेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां
 रूपाणां चक्षुरेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां शब्दानां श्रोत्रमेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां
 सङ्कल्पानां मन एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां विद्यानां हृदयमेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां
 कर्माणां हस्तावेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषामानन्दानामुपस्थ एकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां
 विसर्गाणां पायुरेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषामध्वनां पादावेकायनम्, एवं सर्वेषां वेदानां
 वागेकायनम् ॥

18. Br.Up. 2.4.12

स यथा सैन्धवखिल्य उदके प्रास्त उदकमेवानुविलीयेत, न हास्योद् ग्रहणायेव

स्यात् । यतो यतस्त्वाददीत लवणमेव, एवं वा अर इदं महद् भूतमनन्तमपारं, विज्ञानघन एव । एतेभ्यो भूतेभ्यः समुत्थाय तान्येवानु विनश्यति न प्रेत्य संज्ञास्तीत्यरे ब्रवीमीति होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यः ॥

19. Ācārya Śaṅkara—Śivānandalaharī-99

कथं शम्भो स्वामिन् कथय मम वेद्योसि पुरतः ॥

20. Br.Up. 2.4.13.

सा होवाच मैत्रेयी, 'अत्रैव मा भगवान् अमृमुहन्न प्रेत्य संज्ञास्ती'ति । स होवाच 'न वा अरेऽहं मोहं ब्रवीमि । अलं वा अर इदं विज्ञानाय ॥

21. Br.Up. 2.4.14

यत्र हि द्वैतमिव भवति तदितर इतरं जिघ्रति, तदितर इतरं पश्यति, तदितर इतरं शृणोति, तदितर इतरम् अभिवदति तदितर इतरं मनुते, तदितर इतरं विजानाति । यत्र वा अस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत्तत्केन कं जिघ्रेत्, तत्केन कं पश्येत्, तत्केन कं शृणुयात्, तत्केन कमभिवदेत्, तत्केन कं मन्वीत्, तत्केन कं विजानीयात् । येनेदं सर्वं विजानाति तं केन विजानीयाद् । विज्ञातारमरे केन विजानीयादिति ॥

22. Chāndogya Up.

तत्त्वमसि ।

23. Ācārya Śaṅkara—Śivānandalaharī-63

मार्गावर्तितपादुका पशुपतेरङ्गस्य कूर्चायते
गण्डूषाम्बुनिषेचनं पुररिपोर्दिव्याभिषेकायते ।





Vedanta
and
the Art of Living



Preface

*“The One remains, the many change and pass,
Heaven’s light for ever shines, Earth’s shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of Eternity
Until Death tramples it into fragments.”*

— Shelley in *Adonais*

DARŚANA, the word denoting philosophy, in Sanskrit means vision as well as the instrument of vision. So as to live purposefully we need to have a clear vision of both the ecology and the psychology of our being. We must, at the same time, be sure of the path that leads to this vision, the negligence of which is at our own cost. A refugee from Pakistan once told me that on his arrival in India, he was in search of an architect to plan a new house for him. Everyone, including his family, ridiculed him for his audacity. But he was clear in his mind that without a clear vision of a goal, he would be lost in self-pity. Now that he has built the house after a hard struggle for a quarter of a century, he is at peace with himself. Similarly, most of us are lost in self-pity or frivolity, in the absence of a clear vision of our goal in life. Vedānta emphasises both the vision and its path. It is neither merely a philosophy nor a religion. It is a religion based on philosophy and

philosophy expressed in religion. Philosophy gives us the vision, and religion the means to attain it. In the present series the means are emphasised. We have to live whether we want to or not, or whether we do it artistically or crudely. But if we develop the art of living, we will become a source of happiness to all those who come in contact with us and we ourselves will be full of infinite joy.

The present series is based upon the *Madhu Brāhmaṇa* of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* a part of the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* of the Śukla Yajurveda. The Upanishads constitute the foundations of Advaita Vedānta, which in its turn stands in a harmonious relation with the totality of Hindu ethics and culture. Advaita is the centre where all the radii of doctrines converge. It is certainly true of all the sects of Hinduism, but we claim that even non-Hindu religions can be proved to be converging to the same goal. Thus, Advaita Vedānta represents universal religion which branches out into different sects. Hence the art of living which we are positing is not for any particular group, but for the whole of humanity.

The art consists in developing absolute purity of motive, speech and actions based on the ideal of realising the hidden potentiality of Self. It manifests itself in acts of self-denial and sacrifice of all our sinful arid regions. Fragrant flowers of devotion in the field of social love must blossom out. It implies the immortal life lived here and now with vitality.

शान्तं शिवम् अद्वैतम्—peace, bliss and non-duality constitutes the Perfection, according to the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad*. It can be realised only when the intellect is transfigured into radiance pouring out inspired action, practical spirituality and metaphysical devotion. At present we cling to external possessions and the ego-associated apparatus. Then we will manifest infinite love, compassion and tenderness. The path will be guided by Shiva who will continually set our faltering feet on the right path making our lonely and cheerless journey a joyous and harmonious quest of a blissful consummation.

Bharatiya Sanskriti Samaj from its inception is dedicated to present Advaita Vedānta suited to the present times and climes. May Shri Śaṅkara bless the workers of the Samaj with intense love for the Beatitude.

Mount Abu
Guru Pūrṇimā,
2042 samvat

Swami Maheshanand Giri
Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara



Lecture One

Friends, last time we had discussed something about the future—twenty-first century means the future. This time the topic we are going to discuss is eternity. The art of living is an eternal problem and, therefore, it has to find an eternal solution here and now. It is a question which is confronting us at this moment. What is this art of living?

In the beginning, there was just all-pervasive silence, the infinite silence. There was no vibration. Even space did not exist. In the womb of the silence existed all that has been manifested and will be manifested in future. This infinite variety presenting itself through infinite time remains inexhaustible. It was all present in the womb of primordial silence. Out of its own fullness it had to spill out. For instance, when a thing is full, it just cannot be contained within itself, it spills over. Similarly, creation is spilling over of the unmanifest infinite. It has to be manifested. This process of spilling over has a natural sequence which is the only aspect studied by science. It is thought, discovered and analysed by a different process which can be called the scientific process.

There is a fundamental difference between science and art. According to Ācārya Śaṅkara, ‘vidyā’—knowledge, science—is dependent on ‘what is’.¹ There is absolutely

nothing that one can do about it. One just knows what it is. The objective reality is the important element here. Art is just the opposite of this, it is something which one does. The subject becomes the most important element in art. I am not saying that in science the subject is absent, just as I am not saying that art has no objective element in it. What I am trying to emphasise is that the two approaches are entirely different. In science, one wants to know the object as it is, whereas in art one wants to change it to create something new.

Art is basically a creation. An artist paints. He depends on the colours and on the canvas. He also depends on certain experiences of nature which he has had. On the basis of this he paints, and what he paints is his own creation. The artist is the one who is important here. He has utilised the available material but he has created something out of it. In all activities of art, the subject becomes important. In science, it is just the reverse—one wants to know what the object is. In the process of knowing one may disturb the thing that one is observing. As modern physics is discovering, the very process of observation creates some change in what one is observing. No doubt, this is true, but the whole approach is to find out what is the objective that is minimising the subjective as far as possible. In art, one sees, it is not so.

What we will now discuss is the art of living and not the science of living; and what we can make out of this life which lies before us.

In the last series I had concluded by saying that the twenty-first century can be ushered in even now, if we work towards this end. Changing from one century to another depends on how we live. The question is. In what way can we bring this change? What is the method? To answer these questions, we will now discuss the methodology. As I pointed out earlier, this method is important, because if we ignore it we are likely to head for a catastrophe, not merely a nuclear catastrophe, as is evident from the fact that most societies of the world are slowly heading towards destruction caused by their own style of living.

Slowly, we are forgetting the art of living. We have been emphasising solely the scientific aspect while all along we have been ignoring the existence of this art of living. Manu has repeatedly emphasised that it is the man who is supreme. The Mahābhārata says that it is the king who is a conscious being and it is he who moulds society, the state and the environment and not the other way round. We witnessed a scientific revolution; the result was that we began to attach more importance to 'what is' than to what we can 'make' out of it. As a consequence, we have practically lost this art of living.

Some of the significant contributions made by contemporary thinkers have been in the fields of economics, sociology and psychology. Underlying all these discoveries was the assumption that the 'subject' cannot do anything; we have only to find out about the 'object' in the world. Freud did this in the field of

psychology—we are prisoners of what we have experienced in our childhood and, later, in our adolescence which controls our reactions. Man was, therefore, more or less a puppet in the hand of Mother Nature. Marx did the same thing in terms of society—it is economics which controls both man and society, and not the individual. Darwin, in his own way, tried to put forth the same idea that the survival of the fittest is by natural selection. However, the uniqueness of man was not emphasised, only his similarities with other forms of life were emphasised. I am not trying to suggest even for a moment that we are not limited by our psychological experiences to some extent, or that we are not controlled by social and economic compulsions to some extent. This is true. But even more true is the fact that man can mould, within limits, the external as well as the internal world. Once we have lost this art, science can no longer guide us. The question is: What do we want to make out of what is available to us? The answer is that only art can show us the way and give the necessary impetus.

For the last three centuries, science has been emphasising the objective reality. Slowly, as in the Middle Ages, the objective reality was lost sight of, and humankind mainly depends on the subjective element. Even in India, there was a period when there were no scientific discoveries. Following Brahmagupta during the eighth and ninth centuries, there was a period of intellectual inactivity in sciences in Indian history. In European history, as we all know, the Middle Ages were

described as the dark ages. The same is true of Arabian and Chinese history. This lack of intellectual growth was followed by a gradual awakening and science took the lead as it should have done. Today things have entirely changed. Science still reigns supreme but we are gradually losing the art of living. This disharmony has to be removed. The present predicament that humanity is going through has to be taken care of and science must bear the responsibility for the crises.

Life will always go on. It has been there and it will always be there whether we develop the art of living or not. It cannot be said that if there is no art, life will not go on. Even though the animal world and the plant world go on living, only man has the power to control of living and develop it into an art. In the absence of this art, the process of living is like a forest. There is, scientifically speaking, very little difference between a well-kept garden and a forest. The process of growth is identical. For example, the mango tree or the ashoka tree or the peepal tree in a forest grow in the same manner as those planted in a garden. There is no difference as far as the scientific aspect is concerned. But the mere knowledge of science, botany, and agriculture will not give us the power to create a garden. We must possess the potential of the art of gardening within ourselves. In the absence of this art, we can grow any number of trees but it will still not be a garden. We are living more or less like a forest. There is no planned living. We are living because we have to. Most

of us do not even know the purpose of living, why we are living. This is where the human effort come in.

There is an element of social unconscious which psychologists have termed the 'participation mystique'. There are many actions which one will not do as an individual, but when one is in a group, there is a mystical power of the group and one becomes part and parcel of that group. One loses one's individual power of thinking, of discrimination, and one merely participates in the group. This is why this phenomenon is called the 'participation mystique'. Lewis Bruel was probably the first person to use this concept in the West to explain several phenomena. Through this the individual remains identified with the group and that prevents him from creating art out of life. Our aim should be to make life artistic. Art, as I said, is a creation, to create a purposeful life. I am not talking about creating children, creating life is cultivating it. In ancient India, we tried to build a society in which we could utilise this concept.

Primates, as we know, lived in groups. Primates did not live by themselves, they always lived in groups. There was a sense of belonging to the group and anyone outside the group was considered to be hostile. We have seen that in villages or even in towns, each colony has its own dogs. If any dog from another locality enters the colony, the dogs of that colony bark at him in an attempt to drive him away. Similarly, we have noticed that even snakes have their own locality. If a snake not belonging to the locality intrudes, all the snakes of that locality fight with it. This

tribal attitude, this primal attitude is present in all of us and the moment we associate ourselves with a group without thinking, the unconscious takes the lead and our conscious thinking stops. That is why we try to form groups, but groups which do not come into conflict with other groups. In India, division of society into *varṇas* was basically an art of living. The question arises: Why should a particular person perform only a particular task even though he may be capable of doing many other things? The idea was to make use of the basic urge in man to belong to a group without coming into conflict with other groups. In other words, we utilise the ‘participation mystique’ but with a difference—harmony must not be lost as far as the rest of society was concerned. This important difference was emphasised.

In the last series, we had discussed the *Maitreyī Brāhmaṇa*, in which the universal self was postulated in detail. The *Maitreyī Brāhmaṇa*, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* is followed by what we will now discuss, the *Madhu Brāhmaṇa* so called because it deals with the concept of madhu. Madhu means honey. Out of this experience of the all-pervasive self must come out honey. Our life and our society, as I said earlier, should become as sweet as honey. According to this *Upanishad* this earth is a product, not of any individual, but all beings. Though the nectar is collected by a number of bees from numerous flowers, yet it is made into one honey. This is why for this product, instead of using any other word, as artistic word ‘Madhu’ or honey is used. We know that all beings are

produced from the earth. The earth is produced by all of us and, in turn, we are produced by the same earth. If we remember this mutual dependence on each other, life will become as sweet as honey.²

As long as we depend on the unconscious level, what I was referring to as the ‘participation mystique’, we remain unconscious of ourselves. When we are in a group, we forget who we are, but when we are unconscious of ourselves as conscious beings, we stop being creative. Often, I tell people why is it that in India our basic dress was a loose cloth—a dhoti (*aṅgavastram*), an upper cloth (*uttarīya*), a saree—it is not that we did not know stitching. The reason was that in the very process of tying the cloth one has to be artistic. By observing how an individual had tied his dhoti one could get to know the personality of the individual as he had created something. On the other hand, when one wears trousers or other stitched clothes, all one gets to know is how much money has been spent. If a person has more money, he is better dressed; if he has less money, he cannot afford expensive clothes and he is not so well dressed. His clothes do not express his personality. It has been a custom in India that when a person visits a temple, or when he worships, he should not wear any stitched clothes. The underlying rationale was that when a person visits God he is not going to show God how much money he has. He has to show God what he is. This emphasis on individual consciousness is very important.

We find that among the primitive tribes there is very little consciousness of their own individuality apart from

the group. They completely identify with the group consciousness. They can never completely be identified as individuals, as human beings. For all practical purposes, it is the group which takes the lead and the member of the group perceives himself only as an instrument of the group rather than as having an individuality of his own. Vedānta Philosophy emphasises this individual consciousness. First, we must become conscious of ourselves because unless we are conscious of ourselves, we will not be able to do anything; We will not be able to create anything. To know ourselves as conscious beings, it is necessary to analyse who we really are. At present we identify ourselves with things which belong to us but which are not our very self, our very nature. This can be seen by the following illustration. We identify ourselves with our body most of the time. A person feels: 'I am the body'. If we were to analyse a little, we find that from childhood our body has undergone a number of changes, but 'I' have remained the same. Those who are older will agree that our bodies fail to fulfil many of our desires, but our desires have remained the same. We have not changed; we have the same desires. It is the body which is incapable of obeying us, of doing what we would like it to do. We must consciously make ourselves aware of this fact only then we will be able to act as creative individuals, but not if we perceive ourselves to be slaves of our body.

Our body has several limitations. In order to overcome these limitations, we must know who we are. The method of introspection is very important to know who we really

are. It is through introspection alone that we can attain self-realisation, and once we have attained self-realisation, the *Upanishad* tell us that this self is not at all different from the Cosmic self. But the stage is far away. At the moment, we have to first become conscious beings rather than controlled by the unconscious elements. This *Upanishad* says that this body-mind complex is a product of the unmanifest—the *avyakta*—nature of *prakṛti*; It is created by that because that is its material cause.

The more we identify ourselves with nature, which is born of the unconscious material, the more unconscious we become. Of the store of this participation mystique, of the store of this immense unconscious energy can be channelised only by a human being, a part of it, a very small fragment of it over which we can exert some control. Most of the time, we are controlled by our unconscious, controlled by matter. With tremendous effort we can succeed in bringing about a small fragment of it under control. Most people do not want to exercise this control because the mechanism of convention operates to keep people away from seeking self-realisation, as it is less of a burden to follow the conventional path. We follow particular custom as a ritual without bothering to exercise a conscious choice. Most of the things in our lives are controlled by certain customs, certain practices prevalent in society, in the nation, in the group that we belong to, and we automatically do it, without ever trying to analyse it with the result that the power of conscious choice is diminished.

The *Upanishads* says that one has to prepare this channel over which one can have control. The unconscious must be won over. But that means that we have to give up our lethargy. Most of the time, rituals, customs and the force of convention keep us away from the necessity of making up our minds. In other words, laziness does not allow us to make up our minds. We want someone else to make up our minds for us. As we all know, most of our thinking will now be done by machines. Slowly, computers are coming, robots will follow in no time. More and more thinking will be done by them in a mechanical way. We are quite happy about the prospects. I am not against either computers or robots but the question is—What are we saving in thinking and what are we going to do with it? This can be illustrated as follows. The automobile was manufactured so that we could save time in travelling. But what has happened? We built big cities and again we are spending three-fourths of a day travelling in our cars. The time that we saved is not being utilised for anything else, instead we are still spending our time travelling. So, if the introduction of computers merely means that we are going to make still better computers and infinitum, then what is the use of having those computers. If computers free our mind and we are able to utilise the time saved to develop the art of living, for making life happier, then computers are of some use. Otherwise, we will become increasingly lazy just as children today have not learnt any significant scientific facts in lieu of mathematics. They use calculators for doing calculations which were earlier done by the

method of rote, using multiplication tables, etc., but it does not mean that they have utilised the time saved to acquire other knowledge. Instead perhaps they go and watch television and video. If the time saved had been utilised for a better purpose, then such saving of time would have been understandable.

This art of living is very important in yet another way. Because we have lost the art of living our generation gap is increasingly widening. What is this generation gap? We enunciate certain moral principles. It is very easy to enunciate moral principles, to define them, to explain them by illustrations from the lives of Dhruva, Sītā or any other great personality in the world. Having enunciated certain values, the next generation tries to see what we are doing with those values. They find that there is a tremendous contradiction between what we believe to be correct and what we actually practise with the result that they begin to rebel against those values. They feel that either the values are false or they are impractical and cannot be lived up to. Either way they are redundant. They raise a fundamental question—if they are false, then why should we learn about them, what is their utility? Alternately, if they are impractical even then they are useless. This is the fundamental point which produces the generation gap.

The art of living will tell us that every value, every moral value that we emphasise must have a practical bearing on life, something to be lived up to. We may make a mistake as human beings are not perfect. Making a

mistake is one thing, but doing something wrong deliberately is another. We violate moral values not unintentionally, but deliberately in a planned manner. This means that we are not accepting those values either as true values or as practical values. We must realise that moral values are not something imposed from outside, it is not that if we do certain actions then God in heaven will be pleased or if we do certain other actions then God will be displeased. Moral living is aesthetic living. We create something out of this situation, what we want to create is our moral values and that means the rational approach. In every situation we have to analyse rationally and examine what is wrong with our values, why are we unable to practice them. We must ask the question: Are the values real? If they are real, they must be practical as well. If they cannot be lived, then there is something basically wrong with those particular values.

Once we have developed this art of living, we will be able to live up to the moral values that we preach and talk about and the result is bound to bring about a change in the next generation. The younger generation will not rebel merely because a value is being proposed, on the other hand it will find that there is harmony between preaching and living. To achieve this, we have to be first conscious of our own self. As long as we are concerned about what Georges and Devadutts in the next building are doing, which has been discussed earlier, i.e., the participation mystique, we are not conscious of ourselves as individuals. We spend all the time worrying that if the neighbour has a

television set then we must have one as well. This effort to keep up with the Joneses is clearly implied in the participation mystique. Unless we become conscious of our own individual self—that is, each one is an individual self and will not be controlled by what the neighbour does, though one has nothing against the neighbour yet one will analyse and only if one finds that what the neighbour does is worthwhile will one do the same—the conscious self will elude us.

Often people feel that the rebellion of youth can be crushed. We must remember that evil can never be eradicated by opposing it. An eminent psychologist, Carl Jung says that one becomes what one fights. If we read some of our *Purāṇas* we find that when a particular *deity* kills a demon, the demon is absorbed in the deity. The light, the conscious light of the demon passes and enters the feet of the Lord. This is how most of the stories end. What are they trying to say? In the very process of fighting with the divine, with the deity, he has become the deity. What one fights, that one becomes. Similarly, when we try to crush the young without giving them anything positive, we end up imbibing their misguided personalities. The result is that what we were not doing thirty years ago, we have started doing it ourselves today. All along we have been repeatedly telling our children not to do it, and one day we find ourselves doing the same thing. Why? The reason is that we have ignored the art of living. We felt that this disharmony could be maintained.

When we analyse moral values, we must keep one thing in mind. In the university of wisdom, no last word on a subject can be accepted. There is eternal growth. We have to grow, we cannot remain static in any field and that is why we are talking about the art of living because it is eternal creation. Artists have been painting for thousands of years, yet each artist paints for the first and the last time and that it cannot be painted again. Another artist will paint the same rising sun in a different way because that is his creation.

God himself is a creator. That is why if we observe the sunrise even for a very long period of time, not even once will we find the same view of the sunrise repeated, each day it is different. God is the greatest artist. This is clearly reflected by the fact that over the last two hundred years fingerprints have been studied for identifying individuals and not once have we come across two individuals having the same fingerprints. It is ordained that each individual would have different fingerprints. This is the art in God's creation. It is the eternal creation. It is for precisely this reason why our dharma is called *Sanātana Dharma*. It is eternal, eternally created, and eternally creative.

We do not believe that the last word about the final things of universe was spoken at a particular time in history. All we have to do is to find it and live it, this will mean that the final word has been said. We say it is *Sanātana*. Each generation has to discover and establish its own value judgements. No doubt we will benefit from all that has occurred in the past, just as an artist sees

different things, observes different natural phenomena but having observed, he creates something new which may contain elements of many earlier creations. Similarly, all that has gone before us will enlighten us. We will get to know how others have created a particular thing in a particular way. Though this knowledge will enlighten us yet we must remember that the solution to a problem can never be identical with what it was at that particular point in time. We cannot live second hand.

The American President, Taylor, was formerly the Vice President of the United States of America. When the incumbent President died, Taylor took over as the President. He wanted a new presidential carriage. At that time there were no motor cars. A rich gentleman who was leaving the town for good was selling his carriage. A trading agent who was looking for a carriage for the President, informed the President about this carriage. The President remarked, "Well, the carriage looks very nice. But, is it all right for the President of the United States to travel in a second hand cart?" The agent replied, "It is all right because you are also a second hand President". But it cannot be lived second hand. One can be a second-hand President, one may have a second hand cart, or book, but one's life cannot be second hand. It is always original, therefore, one has to create one's own art of living. One incorporates in it all that is best. In earlier times, we had absorbed things from Buddhism, Yoga and other traditions. Today we have different problems, diverse views have

come into being. We have to analyse these views and we have to create our own art of living from these views.

The analysis of the illustration of the bee given here will help to clarify this point further. What does the bee do? The bee collects nectar from many flowers. Similarly, we have to collect many ideas from all parts of the world. But honey is not merely a collection of nectars from different flowers. The bee has created something entirely new from the collection of nectars. Similarly, we learn different things from others, but we create something new from that knowledge, that is, we have to make our own honey. As I said earlier, it is not just one individual who makes the honey but the entire group, the collection of individuals. This is not the *collective individual* like the participation mystique but a *collection of individuals*, each individual retaining his independence and yet working towards a common goal.

This conception of the art of living has been defined by Cāṇakya who uses the word *Ānvīkṣikī*. He defines it as *Prajñā, vākya, kriyā, vaiśāradya*. According to Cāṇakya, the art of living means *Prajñā* —wisdom and insight. A gardener must not only know the science of agriculture and botany but should also know the art of gardening which he should use with wisdom and insight which grows out of experience. Similarly, we must know all that there is in the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology and biology. But that is not enough. *Prajñā*, i.e., wisdom and insight, constitute the very first principle of the art of living.

Second, is *vākya*—the linguistic clarity. The art of living can never be practised by a person who has no clarity of language because muddled language means muddled thinking, muddled thought. Many times people say, “Though I said such and such a thing but I did not mean it.” That clarity, the linguistic clarity is important to make our mind observe things as they are, analyse things as they are—that is the art of living. Speech is something which only human being possess. Animals produce certain sounds but these are definite sound for definite results. When an animal approaches, the birds cry in a particular way. During the mating season they cry in a different way, but it is a definite sound. Language, on the other hand, is not something which is just a sound. Linguistic clarity is an important element in the art of living.

Finally, there is the behavioural competence. To be able to behave in a given situation one must be capable of responding to it. One must have the competence. Often one knows what is right. One can even talk about it linguistically but, in practice, one is not able to do the thing. In short, the art of living is the development of these three elements—wisdom and insight, linguistic clarity and behavioural competence.



Lecture Two

We had begun discussing the teachings of the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upanishad* as enunciated in the *Madhu Vidyā*. “The earth is a product of all beings and all beings are the product of the earth”, said the *Upanishad*. Now the *Upanishad* goes a step further. This earth is not merely the physical earth but there is also a consciousness pervading this earth. It is that consciousness which makes this earth really the earth. This can be made clear by the following illustration. Someone has said that when a lover kisses his beloved, what is it that is meeting? Is it merely the earth portion of the two individuals, is it the earth which is kissing? Is it the inert matter which is kissing, or is it really life, the conscious feeling behind it which is kissing and which is being kissed? Though lips are made of a lifeless substance—clay—the joy that is experienced as a result of this act is not that of clay but of consciousness. God, by very nature is blissful. Creation, as I said earlier, is spilling over of His fullness. In this very process of creation, not only inert matter was created but consciousness was also present in and through matter. Consciousness appeared in matter in the form of bliss which is experienced by the human psyché while kissing. In other words, it is not merely the matter we are dealing with but with the consciousness present in it. The joys that

we experience in the world are not merely materials joys as many people would like us to believe, this joy is really the bliss that was dissolved in matter or, that bliss which was created simultaneously with matter or, that which was associated with matter. In any case it is the bliss of the Lord that we are experiencing.

According to the *Śruti*, “In this earth that supreme consciousness, that which is of the very form of Amrita, the nectar, that is present.” It is because of the consciousness that we are able to make this life honey-like. According to the *Upanishad* the same consciousness which is present in the earth is also present in the earthly body of ours. Having discussed this aspect of the earth, the *Upanishad* ascribes this characteristic to all the material things.³ That which has been said about the earth is equally true of water. It is true of every element—fire, air, etc. In the human body, He is present as the life force, as the speech, etc. It is only by remembering this consciousness, thinking about it that we will be able to make our lives as well as the whole society as sweet as honey.

As I said earlier, as long as we concentrate not on that conscious element but only on the unconscious element, we are unable to enjoy the bliss in it. That is why the Maitreyī Brāhmaṇa, which we discussed earlier, is immediately by the Madhu Brāhmaṇa. Similarly now after the previous series then we are dealing with issues like how to make life honey-like, how to make society honey-like, we are following in the sure footsteps of the Upanishads.

Though we have progressed scientifically, we have regressed artistically. We have progressed in our knowledge of material things but regressed as far as the knowledge of our own self is concerned. It is a strange paradox. The only thing with which we have to live every moment of our lives is our own self. We do not even make an attempt to find out what it is. We have to develop this habit. If we want to make our life sweet, if we want to make society sweet, it is necessary to develop this habit of reflecting on our own life. First, we must find out what is our own reality and we will be surprised to know things about ourselves, the laws about ourselves. This knowledge will help us in every moment of our activity, in every moment of our lives. At present we want to know about the laws of everything besides our own self. We need to develop the habit of introspection, intro-version, I have intentionally broken the word—intro means inside, going inside, trying to found out what is our inner being—because in modern terminology, the word introversion is considered more or less an attitude of life; but it is not being used in that connotation here. It is an intense activity of searching within, going within, finding out the truth about our own self. At times we may find the truth to be different from what we thought was the truth about our own self. It may even contradict the views that we had firmly held till now. Many of our experiences may not be coordinated with what we experience in that state. In spite of this, we must face what we really are. This is much more important than what we feel we ought to be. Unless

we know what we are we will not be able to even change ourselves. It is for precisely this reason that it has been emphasised that one must know the truth about one's own self.

This process of introspection should not be entirely restricted to our life, to our thought processes, emotions and actions, it should be accompanied by a sensitivity to the happenings around us in society. Society is our own extension. It is a part of our own self. We have to be equally conscious of it, we flow in society, we flow with society most of the time. But without consciously realising at every step what is the nature of society, and the laws guiding that particular society in which we find ourselves, we cannot make the right choice. We are not able to exert ourselves and find out the true perspective which is needed for a rational choice. Some of us should go a step further. Our micro society is part of a larger, macro society, the human society. We must be aware of the laws working there. The conscious laws, mind you, not merely the unconscious laws, that is, the field of science, but consciously how we are changing, what we are doing with volition. Thus, this process involves first, introspection of our own self, of the workings of our own thoughts, actions and emotions, and then going a step further, trying to understand sensitively the society which is around us.

Only through this process will it be possible to make life sweet and the world sweet; because we are part of this world. Yesterday, I had said that we make a mistake when we identify ourselves unconsciously with the world. We

have to exert our will consciously to break that identification. The self has to become manifest in us. This is clearly illustrated by an example from another *Upanishad*. Just as we take out the thread from a reel, very cautiously, patiently, without breaking it, similarly, we have to exert ourselves to find out what is our true self. Having discovered our true self, we have to extend this probe to discover the societal laws. Only then the search would be complete.

In order to make our life introspective, we need a living philosophy. I had earlier mentioned *Prajñā* as defined by Cāṇakya. Each of us must develop a philosophy of life, only then can we bring about a change in ourselves as well as in society. Philosophy is not what one reads in a book, it is something which is living within each one. We have to see our life rationally, artistically, illuminating the contents of our conscious being. It is a strange phenomenon that the more we go within, the more we find that the pieces begin to fall into their place. Until we do introspection, until we go deep within ourselves, we will not be able to find out the contradictions in our thinking, in our emotions; and we will not be able to harmonise our thinking. Once we go deep within ourselves and find out the laws about our own self, all the pieces begin to fall into place and we are able to see the whole picture clearly.

Starting with our own self, we can examine the philosophies and experiences of others, but we have to study them carefully. As the ninth century writer, Abhinava Gupta says that from the heritage of past

cultures something valuable, something fruitful can be gleaned. But he places a condition—this is possible only if, instead of refuting, we try to clarify these observations. In this process of clarification, we are able to see the times, climes, modes, social norms and physical conditions of those people. We are then able to see the spirit behind that philosophy rather than merely a solution that has been offered. Problems can be posed, but solutions have to found. The technique of finding the solutions can be learnt. Each individual must find his own solution to problems because each individual is an individual in his own right and can never be identical with anyone else. Often we want to live as our fathers lived or as our grandfathers lived, but we have to live our own life. We cannot live either our fathers' life or our grandfathers' life. Times have changed, situations have changed. History can never repeat itself identically. What we can learn from our parents and grandparents is the way in which they arrived at those solutions and the technique they adopted. It is very easy to refute and say that old people held such and such views which have been proved wrong. We have refuted it, it is an easy task but we have not tried to analyse it and we have not got any insight from their experience because we have not tried to clarify it.

The last chapter ends on a very important note, a point which the Vedas repeat again and again, i.e., the whole universe is a manifestation of just one consciousness. This knowledge is enough to make life sweet. As long as we do

not see this unity, as long as we do not experience this revelation, there will always be duality, and duality will continuously produce conflict. Conflicts can be resolved only if we are able to see the same spirit everywhere. It has been said in the *Madhu Vidyā* that everything is an effect, now this is a very interesting statement. As mentioned earlier, the earth is the cause of our body, water is the cause of our body, fire is the cause of our body because all these elements are in the body, but the earth, water, fire, sun, moon that we experience have come into being because of our own actions, our own “*karma*.” Ācārya Śaṅkara points out that this is the base on which the unity of the universe is being explained here.⁴ This base is mutual help. The earth has helped us come into being and we have helped the earth come into being. An awareness of this mutual help and dependence would bring about a radical change in our attitude to life. Generally, society, family or any other group is basically divided. Someone is providing and someone else is being provided with. To put in modern jargon, it is the “haves and have-nots.” We are continuously dividing society in this way. The important point is that each one of us is a provider and each one is also one who is being provided. For example, if one is able to attend office in time, it is because someone has prepared the breakfast in time. If one’s wife is able to prepare breakfast in time it is because one has provided her with all the essentials. When we analyse in this way we find that the whole universe is not in conflict with each other but is in mutual harmony.

Kleśas, difficulties arise when we do not see this feeling of mutual helpfulness. We should not only ask the question: What will we get from others but also ask what will we give to others. We must take help from others and we must also give help to others. This approach to life is what makes life sweet. The other person is giving because he is a conscious being, he is giving out of his free will. Similarly, we are giving him because we are free and independent. In other words, we are giving out of our love and we are receiving what he has to give out of his love.

The material substances remain unmanifest until consciousness is associated with it. A thing cannot be an ‘object’ unless there is a subject who has seen it. Though it may lie in front of a person, it is not an object unless it is perceived. Similarly, everything is unmanifest—*avyakta* and cannot be perceived even if it is there unless there is a conscious element which perceives it. This consciousness, as we know, has existence, bliss, knowledge and order. The universe is orderly only when a conscious mind perceives it. In the very process of observing we are not mere spectators but we become participants. The moment we know a thing we have categorised it as an object. It has become an object. We have made it desirable or undesirable for that matter. We have brought about a change in the very process and this process is continuous. But we are not doing this consciously or willfully.

Ācārya Śaṅkara says that the art of living is like living in a tent.⁵ Of course, as we all know, Ācārya Śaṅkara was a *saṁnyāsin*, a monk. He was continuously moving from

one place to another, giving his life message to people all over the world, the then know world. As he was always moving from one place to another, he knew what it was to live in a tent. He compares the art of living to living in a tent. But what is the nature of this tent? He says that I have made my mind into a tent, *paṭakuṭī*. The meaning of this word is obvious. *Kuṭī* means tent, and *paṭa* means cloth. That is what a tent is. He says that my mind is like a tent which is shining. My mind is not merely an unconscious active substance. I have made it into an efficient observing instrument. I have made it broad and liberal. The art of living is to be practised by making the mind more and more liberal. What do we mean by liberality? This concept implies that one should not only accept the other person's freedom but also help it in every way and enjoy in the way it grows. That is what liberality means. Today, liberalism itself is becoming a non-liberal movement. Anything that contradicts the values held by a particular group is perceived as a non-liberal attitude. The moment one calls someone else non-liberal one stops being a liberal because then the respect for another person's individuality is absent. Ācārya Śaṅkara says, "I have made my mind a free, liberal and reflecting one. Every action that I do, every thought that I think, every emotion that I feel, I see it consciously, I reflect over it and attempt to get the complete essence of that experience, the joy of that experience."

There are many people who read a lot. There is a Sanskrit saying—"A person who reads very little becomes

a scholar, a person who reads a lot remains a fool.” This can be seen in everyday life. Small children are seen carrying a heavy load of books, a load which even we would find difficult to carry. But if we were to ascertain the level of individual growth of these children, we are in for a surprise! They read books but they do not reflect over what they read because they are not taught how to reflect.

The art of living is to make the mind liberal and reflective. It is only through practice that we can develop it, for instance, if one has fever one may suffer from a headache and body ache. One should ask oneself this question: Am I able to experience that particular period of time between the two throbbing of the head during which there is no throbbing? One should try this experiment and one will find that the headache will begin to recede. The same is true of any pain. It is not possible for our nervous system to continuously experience any sensation for a long period of time. A sensation is experienced for a short duration only and one will be surprised that the amount of time pain is experienced within an hour is about the same as the amount of time the pain is absent in the experience, that is, if for half an hour one has experienced pain then for half an hour one will not have experienced any pain. This can be easily explained—a wave is transmitted to the nervous system, and it is followed by the next one, between these two transmissions there is period of inactivity for a fraction of a second. Therefore, the pain is not continuous. Not having practised this, we feel that we have been

suffering for more than an hour, whereas in reality we have suffered only for half an hour.

This is how the mind becomes reflective. Slowly, we have to develop this habit. Ācārya Śaṅkara says that in a tent one needs a central pole. What is this central pole? Patience is the supporting central pole. One can never develop this art of living until one realises the value of patience. In the twentieth century we are accustomed to doing everything fast. In every way life is becoming faster and faster. Fifty years ago, if we travelled from Calcutta to Delhi the journey took thirty hours and we were very happy. Today the same distance is covered in seventeen hours yet we are not happy. We feel that there should be faster trains. We want to do the same thing with our minds, this is not possible. Mind has its own speed and by increasing the speed with which we take the body from one place to another, we strain our mind unnecessarily because the mind is not something which can be changed so easily. Hence, even in spiritual discipline, we do not have patience, we want quick results. We want to attain the highest state within a matter of, should I say, years; some people want it within minutes. The mind cannot be trained in that way. Patience is essential. When a person trains his mind and he finds that it is not being trained properly, he may feel that he is not making any progress. This can be compared to an increase in weight. When a person gains weight, he is not able to perceive this increase in weight but others around him can see that he is gaining weight. If someone sees him after six months, he may be

aghast at the amount of weight he has gained. The person who has put on weight does not feel it because he did not gain this weight in one day. Body weight increases by grams. At no stage does the person feel that he is gaining weight, unless he checks his weight with the help of a weighing scale. On the other hand, other people are able to perceive this increase in weight. Similarly, when we try to observe our own mind and try to determine how it has grown, the level of maturity it has attained, we feel that we have not attained any maturity. It is here that patience plays a role because the patience in us makes us exert more and more. It is for others to observe and decide that there is a change in us, we are unable to see this change ourselves. Only if we have patience with ourselves, with our own mind can we have patience with our children. Children, as we know, grow very slowly but we do not have the patience with them. We want to bring about a change in them immediately. We are not patient with our servants. We may appoint a servant today and expect him to discharge all his duties perfectly within a week. If he is unable to do this, we feel that he is not working properly. The attitude for patience plays a very important role in the art of living. According to Ācārya Śaṅkara, patience is the supporting central pole, without this art of living cannot be developed.

If one has seen a writer, a poet, a sculptor, a painter or any other artist, one finds that there will be days when he may work eighteen to twenty hours a day like a mad man. There will be times, for day together, when he may not do

any work. A person who is not an artist will wonder why is he not doing any work. Art is not an activity like digging a well. It is not an act of that type because it involves working with the mind, it requires patience. A poet has to get the right idea, a writer has to get the right conception, a painter needs the right approach. It is not merely a physical activity. The art of living is a delicate art. We need to be patient with ourselves and once we have patience with ourselves, we will have patience with others as well. Here, we may ask the question: With which rope will the tent be tied? The tent is fastened with strong ropes of virtue. The mind must cultivate virtue. It must always be remembered that virtue is a delicate act of volition. For example, when there is a choice and we choose the better thing, we have not done a virtuous act. An unconscious decision, even if it is correct, is not a virtue. An act will be virtuous only when we exercise our volition, when we do it out of our free will, when there is a possibility of not doing it. A virtuous act has to be a free choice. Unless this rope (virtue) is strong, the strong winds of unconscious will blow away the virtuous acts, and instead of exercising volition we will act, as I have mentioned earlier, according to the participation mystique, we will lose our free will at that moment. Even though we may do a correct thing, yet it will not be a virtue because we have not done it out of our free will. Will-power can be increased slowly by exerting it. Only when a person has a strong will can he be virtuous.

Will is a peculiar thing. When we study primitive societies, we find that they do not possess much of a will. Carl Jung has given an example. While he was in Africa, a letter had to be sent to the railway station which was 120 kilometers away. He asked the headman of the tribe to make arrangements to send the letter. The headman selected a person to do the work. Jung says that he told the man, "Well, this is the letter. This has to be taken to the railway station and given to the station master". The man was aghast at the idea of walking 120 kilometers. It is, indeed, a long distance to walk, it is not a daily routine. The man looked stunned. Jung thought that perhaps the man had not understood him. So, he repeated the instructions. In the meantime, the headman came along. Jung told the headman that perhaps the man had not been able to follow the instructions. The headman replied, "Sir, you are not doing it the right way. You have to excite him to do it." The headman then proceeded to talk about the many runners who were active. The amount of work they had done. Then he talked about the man's father and grandfather and their accomplishments, he added that it was not possible that the man could not run 120 kilometers and thereby bring disgrace to his family and tribe. After hearing this, the man was ready. He took the letter and ran as fast as he could, delivered the letter and came back. The primitive mind does not have the will-power, the volition. The primitive tribal has to be excited into doing something, he has to be talked into it. The self will is not present. It is only when we mature mentally that we do not need

something to excite us. We experience our volition to do something. It has to be done and, therefore, we are doing it. Most of us have not matured, we have remained at that primitive level, that growth has not taken place.

There is a beautiful verse which describes how we can discard rituals slowly.⁶ When we start we need an elaborate ritual. We need an image. We need a process to worship which is a definitive process. If anything is missing in this process we feel that something terrible has happened. But as we grow, we reach a stage where all these external activities become redundant, meaningless, purposeless. The word 'japa' means repetition of a particular *mantra*, a particular *stotra*, a repetition of a number of verses. Here, it is the words which assume importance. It is enough to pray, enough to sing particular hymns. We need only that much of ritual but then even this is ritual. Eventually, the words become unimportant. After all, what are words? They bring to our mind certain ideas. If those ideas are already present in our mind, where is the necessity of pronouncing those particular words. At this stage even the words become redundant. We do not have to pray or even repeat a name. We just need to think of Him, who is within us. But even this is a ritual, as we still need a thought. When we attain the highest state, we do not even need to know our own mind, because we know that we are not different from Shiva Himself. Even the mental thought becomes unnecessary here. Thus, virtue has to be developed slowly and steadily and, as I said, it has to be volitional. It has to be out of our own free will and not

imposed by anything external or by our own unconscious. That is what gives it strength. No matter how much others try to influence us we will not change from the course of action which we have decided to follow. We will stick to our decisions because we know them to be correct. This does not mean that we will not listen to others. We will listen to others, we will pay attention, we will analyse and accept if we think that what has been suggested is proper. The supreme decision will be our own. It is only then that virtue will become strong.

Ācārya Śaṅkara says that the tent should not be pitched in one place for long duration of time. It should always be on the move. The art of living is what makes or takes away the monotony of life. Many of us at an early age in life, some psychologists believe 36 years whereas others believe 40 years, do move, we are forward looking at that age. Slowly, what is known as the settling down process sets in. The moment we stop moving forward, we settle down, i.e., we go downward. To have this attitude of continuous movement is what makes life artistic and beautiful and removes the monotony of life. What do we mean when we say that the mind is ever on the move. Does it mean that we go on thinking different thoughts? This is actually a creative absorption of all the experiences that we go through, and having absorbed them, to discard the ones which are invalid. We must absorb the valid thoughts and discard the invalid ones, both these processes are important. The art of life, the art of living refers to this act of discarding. If we are unable to discard the customs,

the rituals which seem to be irrational or unintelligible, or we know we are inadequate here and now, or even inefficacious, then we have not attained maturity. Often this happens in life. We know that a thing is irrational but still finally adhere to our superstition. For example, a person sneezes. There is absolutely no connection between this act of sneezing and our going out, it immediately prevents us from going out. Even though we cannot find any logic behind it, we follow it and we are unable to discard it. In the same way there are innumerable experiences, customs and rituals which are unintelligible yet we continue to follow them.

Every individual faces problems and finds a solution to those problems. He finds a solution that is adequate, one that will fructify and bring the desired result. Ideas which have lost relevance in terms of the living world are only dead memories. For example, dead history can be recorded but it is not valid in vital life. According to Ācārya Śaṅkara, “This tent is on the move, i.e., my mind is continuously on the move.” One is continuously absorbing, discarding, analysing and synthesising. One is continuously on the move, one is not what one was yesterday, one is not what one was an hour earlier. This tent, he says, is variegated, i.e., my mind is not monotonous. Unfortunately, in this age of specialisation, everyone has specialised in something and, therefore, life has become monotonous. Very often I feel that there should be some way of educating the people about the final results of all the different sciences, arts, history,

geography, etc. A human being must know where humanity has reached, what it has attained. Everyone cannot go through the whole process of how a particular result was reached but everyone must know the result because everyone is a human being and it is a human achievement. The *Purāṇas* contain all the possible knowledge at different periods so that people could have access to this knowledge. That makes life variegated, it is not a monotonous existence because we have varied interest.

Ācārya Śaṅkara says, “I have painted this tent with a number of lotuses.” In the human body, according to the Yoga tradition, there are a number of lotuses. This meaning is also being implied here. In those different lotuses there are different consciousnesses, and different experiences take place there. The peculiarity of the lotus is that even though it sprouts from mud it is absolutely unconnected with both mud and water. Similarly, our mind should be completely involved in the world but still be unconnected, unattached to it. Only then will it be free. The mud symbolises the unconscious from which the conscious mind springs forth but the conscious mind must remain above the unconscious, only then will it be able to control it.

Ācārya Śaṅkara concludes by saying, “With this tent I am continuously moving towards the truth.” We must live the truth as we know it. We must never be afraid that it may turn out to be an error. The way to truth lies through error, only by living it will we find out whether or not it is

an error. We may make a mistake. We should not be afraid of making mistakes, but we must have truth as our goal. The moment we realise a thing to be wrong, we must possess the strength to discard it. It is not wrong to make a mistake, it does not take away the art of living. On the other hand, if we persistently stick to a mistake we can never be an artist of living. Ācārya Śaṅkara says, “Oh Shiva! You enter into this mind, because once you enter then only it (the tent) will attain what it wanted to attain.”

These are some of the fundamental concepts that we must develop—patience, volitional virtues continuous absorption and discarding of values, unattachment to the unconscious from which we spring. When we move along the path described above, we are bound to attain that spirit which will make us artist of living.



Lecture Three

While discussing the topic of the art of living we emphasised that liberality must form one of the major foundations of our life, as was highlighted by the illustration of the tent. This has been one of the fundamental contributions of Hindu thought. It did not begin at any given period in history. Since Vedic times it has been emphasised that it is the individual who has to decide his religious, his philosophical art of living because it is he who has to live, therefore, the individual is the most important element.

Manu has laid down a number of rules but he does not say that one must necessarily follow them. He ends by saying, “I have said what I have known. Follow the path which suits you best, which you consider best for yourself, which you choose to follow.”⁷ Thus, when we talk about ‘Manu’ we are not referring to an individual but to our inner rational consciousness. The inner rational consciousness is what we mean by Manu. The word Manu is derived from man which means to think rationally. The same tradition is followed in the Gītā. After Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa had enunciated all that he knows, he does not tell Arjuna “You must obey what I have asked you to do.” He says, “I have described in detail all that I

know, but now it is for you to make the decision. It is your volition. You must exercise your will to make the choice because if the choice is not made by you, then the act will not be virtuous.”⁸

The foundation on which this rational thinking is based is one's conscience. Consciousness is bliss and peace. Our peace is distributed not by our own consciousness but by something which is imposed on it. In the state of deep sleep the mind is not present, therefore, it does not disturb us. The senses are not present and, therefore, they do not disturb us. In that state we are at peace because there is nothing to disturb us. But our consciousness is always present. If consciousness were not of the nature of peace, then we could not be at peace in deep sleep. Therefore, deep sleep in its entirety is a blissful state. There is always joy in it. This joy does not emanate from something else as no object is present in deep sleep. This is a joyful state because when we remember, when we recall, we recall it as a joyful experience and we say that we slept very well. These two states, bliss and peace, are of the nature of consciousness and they must help us decide how we ought to live. We should develop the art of living in a way that peace and bliss are produced within us and in the society around us. These two states—peace and bliss—should form the basis of morality. A serious concern of modern education is how to introduce moral concepts in our educational system.

Most thinkers have merely enunciated certain rules. Only the *Upanishad* have clearly outlined the foundations on which these rules have to be based. We know the foundations, and we have enumerated certain rules and regulations but we never emphasise that they should be followed blindly. Hinduism does not impose uniformity. Uni means one hence uni-form means one form. We have not emphasised formal unity but have upheld intrinsic mental harmony, a unity of purpose and intention. The intention, the purpose, is to expand and to be at peace with ourselves. This is the unity of purpose, we have emphasised the unity of intention but not the unity of form. This difference is very important. Man needs a purpose to live for. Many diseases, particularly mental diseases, after the age of forty are the result of a lack of purpose in life. It has been observed time and again that as long as we have a purpose, as long as we have an intention our mind remains balanced. The moment we lost our purpose the harmony is disturbed. Bare necessities of life are not enough to live for. We must have a goal, something to achieve. This is made clear by the following example. Supposing there is a beautiful, well furnished house with well kept lawns. All comforts are available in that house. One is asked to stay there as long as one likes. After being handed over the keys of the house, one is told that the foundations of this house are very weak and it is the region of earthquakes. But one is invited to stay as long as one likes. After hearing this, will one be able to enjoy the house, no matter how

beautiful it is? The same thing is seen in our lives. All the necessities are provided, we are continuously talking about the standard of living, but what are the foundations? On what is one going to build one's life?

The *Upanishad* places this goal before us.⁹ Everything enters into this consciousness, this Ātman which is in us, like the spokes which enter into the centre of the wheel. All beings, whether they are divine beings, human beings, all that exists, all that is living, are all centred in the unity of consciousness. Everything is moving towards that consciousness and that consciousness is the controller of everything. It is the only independent thing. According to Ācārya Śaṅkara, "It is independence which is being implied here by the word *adhipati* because both words are used here—*rājā* and *adhipati*"¹⁰ The king is usually the outside controller. The words are mentioned separately to indicate that he is not merely an external ruler but is also a controller from within. Consciousness controls us from within, because it is our very self. When consciousness controls we do not feel that we are being controlled. We feel that we are controlling our own lives. Human beings continually face two experiences in life. There are times when we feel that we are independent in doing a thing and we feel that it is our free will which is active. At other times we feel that we are absolutely bound. Our actions are not independent. From time immemorial, there has been a struggle between these two theories. One theory proposes that the human being is absolutely independent, while the other proposes that

he has no freedom of action. Modern science, as I said earlier, has contributed and supported the latter viewpoint. Man is controlled either by biological forces or psychological forces, or by the impressions that he has had; in other words, outside forces are controlling him. On the contrary, there have been other thinkers who have emphasised the total independence of the human will. We will not go into a discussion of the metaphysics of the problem for the time being. We will stick to our own experience. We experience both independence and dependence.

Once a mahātmā was asked by someone: “How do you reconcile the independence and dependence of consciousness?” The mahātmā replied, “Well, stand up and raise one foot.” The man did as he was told. He said, “Now raise the other foot.” The man said that he could not do it. The mahātmā said, “You are able to raise any one foot at a time but you cannot raise both of them at the same time.” Our independence is thus limited; once we have exercised our independence our options are limited. If one raises the right foot then one cannot raise the left foot and vice versa. The moment one exercises one’s choice, one’s independence, one limits oneself to certain other actions which inevitably will follow. These limitations are imposed by our body-mind complex, something which is not of the nature of consciousness. We are continuously experiencing or knowing something; we are willing to do something and are acting in a particular way. Knowledge, volition and action are

imbedded in our very nature. We will always be performing an action, knowing a thing; or willing something. As far as willing is concerned, we are absolutely free. It represents the freedom of the consciousness. We can will anything we like, whereas if we want to know something or we want to act we are dependent. The supreme power, the eternal First Being is the only one who is omnipotent and omniscient. He is the only one who knows everything and can do anything He likes. We, human being, with limited consciousness do not enjoy that independence. At this point, one may ask the question: What is the use of this willing? One can will to do a thing but if one cannot do it then willing becomes a sheer waste of effort. Once we begin to exercise our will in one particular direction, the power of action, the power of knowledge in that particular direction increases. We are not able to develop these powers because we do not use our will-power unidirectionally. When we will aimlessly, our will-power becomes fragmented. Sometimes we will in one direction and sometimes in the other. But the Lord is merciful. He lavishes His grace on us because we are his reflections, His creation. We are, so to say, His children. Though we continuously use our will in a fragmented way, yet we find that we are able to attain what we like in spite of the fact that our will is fragmented, that is, until we cognise this will within us. The omnipotent, the omniscient, and the omnipresent Shiva is there so that He can shower his grace on us. Otherwise, His omnipotence would have no

meaning. He is all powerful, but if He does not help us—those who are His creatures—then that omnipotence would be meaningless and purposeless. Power should be exercised properly. We cannot talk about the omnipotence of God but still feel that His powers are limited. He has unlimited powers. Similarly, He has infinite Knowledge. That infinite knowledge shines in us as we increasingly move towards Him. He shows His grace because of His love for us, and not because of any reason or logic. One of the things that He has bestowed on us is the knowledge of the supernatural. How is it that we have come to possess the *Vedas* the *Āgamas*, and all the different arts? However, it is strange that some people think that it is only through permutation and combination and by trial and error that we have attained all that we possess, it is all a human creation. If one were to calculate statistically, one would find that the number of years that man has been on this earth are not enough even to develop the most primitive society. We, therefore, come to the conclusion that all knowledge has been bestowed on us by Him. As our intellect becomes increasingly clear, and as our heart becomes increasingly pure, His knowledge, His power of action shines in us more and more. The important point is to utilise our will-power, to increase the clarity of our intellect. Very often we are unable to think clearly because we are always attached to a particular solution. For example, a student may know the answer to a problem. Therefore, he does not pay much attention while conducting the experiment in the

laboratory. Similarly, we desire a thing, having desired, we want it as a solution to the problem of life and, therefore, we are unable to understand that thing as it actually is. It is itself a problem and not its solution. This is what we call *rāga*, i.e., attachment to a particular thing which hinders our intellectual development. A scientist generally develops this clear intellectual perception. He does not keep the answer before him while conducting an experiment. He wants to find out for himself. We have to practice this with our own self. Only then will the light of wisdom shine in our hearts.

We must also strive to make our hearts pure. Purity of heart means spontaneous love for all beings without expecting anything in return for that love. The moment we desire something in return love ceases to be. On the other hand, when the roots of selfishness are destroyed, it makes our heart pure. It is this aspect of consciousness, this omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence of the Lord which provides the foundations on which we can build our life-structure. Our lives should only be based on this and not on anything else.

Ācārya Puṣpadanta says, “When we have done an action, the action ceases.”¹¹ Most actions, and I am referring to the virtuous actions, the element of virtue in these actions and not to the physical action itself, do not produce results or benefits immediately. On the contrary, there are times when we experience that virtue not only produces no results but it even harms us. That is why we lose confidence in the very efficacy of virtuous actions.

We find that the act has been completed and nothing has remained. We should remember that the will that was exercised was the real virtue. It is actually a sacrifice. *Kratu* means determination, will-power and also implies sacrifice. What is it that we sacrifice when we perform a virtuous act? We sacrifice our selfishness. By sacrificing our selfishness, we are able to perform *kratu*, a virtuous act. Every time we do even an ordinary thing selflessly we are being virtuous. As we continue to exercise our free will in virtuous acts, we may feel that Shiva is asleep, but he is not asleep. Shiva is always there in our hearts and He alone will bring the results which is not merely going to heaven or elsewhere. By repetition, virtue becomes our second nature, it becomes a habit. Initially, we may feel that we are sacrificing something—our selfishness—but as we become accustomed to sacrificing our selfishness, we realise that joy of being virtuous. Since consciousness, Shiva, is present there we know that the action has not been lost and we do not lose faith in virtuous action. On the firm ground of faith that the Lord is omnipotent, omniscient and the goal is worthy towards which we move, we are able to exercise our volition properly.

He is present everywhere, just as in all languages the alphabet begins with the letter ‘a’, whether it is ‘a’ ‘अ’, ‘aleph’ they all represent the same sound. It is the primary life letter particularly in the Indian script in which ‘a’ is taken for granted as part of any consonant. Most of us have learnt one or the other Indian script. If we have to

indicate that 'a' is missing, we have to use some sign. In some script this is indicated by a dot above, in other scripts by a small line below. The presence of 'a' is taken for granted, when we read consonants we do not see that letter 'a' and yet it is present. In the same way the Lord is present in everything. If we try to see the Lord in an object, we will fail to see Him and we will feel that it is only an object. But when we see Him as all-pervasive like a thread in a necklace, then we are able to see that it is the Lord who is all-pervasive, He is everywhere. This can be clarified by the following illustration. We examine a piece of wood from every side and we do not find any fire in it. But if we were to rub the piece of wood properly fire would appear. Similarly, the match stick is neither warm nor is there anything hot in it. No fire is visible yet the moment we strike it fire is produced. In other words, fire was present but it could not be perceived. Similarly Shiva is present in every conscious experience but we are unable to perceive Him. To be able to perceive Him we have to go through certain disciplines of life, we have to develop and train our mind, intellect, emotions, heart and other functions and this is the real purpose of creation. The purpose of creation is that the Lord should bestow His infinite knowledge, His infinite power on us.

Very often people compare this world to a snare, something in which we have been trapped. We feel the stranglehold of attachment, of objects, of life itself. The purpose of creation is not to trap us. But it is the other way round—through the compassion of the Lord we are

able to attain the highest state. In this process even misery is necessary. For example, when we walk on the floor a certain amount of resistance of the floor is necessary. We often read in newspapers that when a rocket is sent up in space there is no friction because there is no gravitational force and, therefore, force of gravity has to be created. A certain amount of opposition is necessary for any growth to take place. Similarly the misery that we have to endure is a necessary part of our growth. It is not there to harm us, it is an expression of His compassion, His grace. A certain amount of obscuring of knowledge is also necessary. We have often heard people complain that they have lost their memory and they do not remember things. What they fail to realise is that forgetting is more important than remembering. If they were to remember all the experiences they have had since childhood life would become very miserable. Therefore, this process of forgetting is a blessing. For instance, a young man dies. The mother finds it unbearable but after a year or so she is normal. Why does this happen? The reason is that she has forgotten that loss, that pain. She may be reminded of the pain but it is not continuous any more. After a few years, she may not even recall the intensity of the loss that she had felt initially. Though loss of memory is considered to be a loss, it is not really a loss. This is an expression of His grace.

There are innumerable different lotuses. When the sun shines each lotus may blossom in a different way. One

lotus may bloom and it may open up fully whereas another lotus may remain a bud even though the sun's rays are shining equally on it. It does not bloom. Another lotus may wither away, i.e., it is on the verge of ending life. The sun's rays are shining equally on all the three and it is helping the growth of all the flowers. The withering flower may feel that the sun is gracious on the blossoming one whereas the bud may feel that that sun has not given enough light for it to blossom. In reality, the sun is equally gracious and it is helping all of them. Even the process of withering is important because only then the cycle can go on. Similarly, there are people who feel that the Lord has been very kind to them. Whereas some people feel that the Lord has not been so kind to them as He has been to the fortunate few. They feel this way because they try to compare and one cannot be compared with the other because all individuals grow in their own way. What we consider withering away may be just the beginning of a new life. This acceptance of the sun's rays by all the three flowers is done consciously. The Lord continuously showering his grace on us but we are unable to accept it because of this inability to accept we feel that we are not on firm ground. He expresses Himself in our hearts and guides us.

According to the scriptures, the command is in four stages. It is expressed verbally, within us in the fourth stage. There is the *parā vāk*, the *paśyamtī vāk*, the *madhyamā vāk* and the *vaikharī vāk*. First, there is just an impulse. It is still unconscious. We are not even aware

but He is guiding us. We do not know what thought is coming but it is being guided by Shiva himself to be raised in our hearts, in our minds, but we are still not aware of this. This is where the Lord directs. Gradually, this impulse becomes an idea. Though it is still not verbal yet it has been expressed. Therefore, it is called *paśyamtī*. It is something that we can feel, perceive, something which we are able to see clearly but are unable to express verbally. It is, in short, an idea. The idea is expressed by way of language. The mind formulates what the idea was. After this process of formulation takes place, we are able to express it through words. This is called the *vaikharī*. The guidance of Shiva as the *parā vāk* is continuously rising in our hearts. It urges us to become what we really are. This is an important thing. We must become what we are and not what we are not. This urge is invincible. To be oneself is a command which must always be obeyed.

Often we are not interested in our own fate. It is strange indeed. Though people may go to an astrologer yet they are not interested in their own fate. They want to find about their business, their children, their family and about their health and even about their mind. They are interested in the fate of everything else except their own self. Shiva, on the other hand, is always interested in the fate of His children. He is constantly sending messages through the *parā vāk*. It is for precisely this reason that when we try to be something other than our own real self a conflict arises. The more civilised we become the more

we suffer. It is because we become deaf to Shiva's command and are unable to hear his order. When we are unable to live our own life we lost the art of living. When we are not interested in our own life, in our own living, what we want to make ourselves into, nothing but conflict arises. The desire to know our true fate must become our nature. Once this conflict arises, the unconscious takes over and instead of doing what we ought to do, we tend to do what someone else is doing or wants us to do. This leads to conflict and we lost the art of living because we are not ready to face the reality within our own self. One of the ways we can develop this habit is to feel Shiva when we go to sleep. When we go to sleep we totally abandon ourselves in the sure foundation of the faith in the Lord. There is nothing we can do for ourselves when we are asleep. This can be illustrated by the example of a man who always kept a revolver under his pillow at night because he was afraid. One night, an enemy entered the house but he was unarmed. He removed the revolver from under the pillow and shot its owner with it. The man was killed by his own revolver because he could not do anything for himself while he was asleep. Even a lion survives in spite of the fact that the whole forest is its enemy. Though a lion kills other animals yet it goes to sleep without being harmed. We should ask ourselves why can we not go to sleep without being harmed? When we go to sleep, we must abandon ourselves to Shiva's grace. We must feel His grace descending upon us and

protecting us in every way. We must pray to Him to send us the message in the form of dreams.

Today psychology has attached tremendous significance to dreams; our scriptures and the *Upanishads* have discussed dreams in great detail. Dreams are symbols through which we are able to contact the unconscious. Modern psychologists agree with this explanation of dreams. What is the unconscious which we contact through dreams? That unconscious is the message of the Lord. Symbols may change but they are always sent to us. In the beginning we may not even understand what the symbol signifies. But that is not important, because in the *parā vāk* it is what is guiding us, taking us towards the goal that is important. One can pray to the Lord, “Oh Shiva, I do not know what message you are giving me. I think that it is this. It seems to me to be correct. Correct me if I have misunderstood you, if I am committing an error in understanding you. Forgive me and correct me. I will stick to whatever message you send me. I will not do a thing which I know to be wrong for my own self.” If we have honesty of purpose, then it is none else but God himself who guides.

One of the basic prayers in Hinduism is the *Gāyatrī*. By reciting the *Gāyatrī* we ask the Lord, “You direct our intellect, you direct us through the intellect. Whatever guidance you will give, I will practice it and manifest it in my life.” If we do not follow this direction of the *parā vāk*, which is the will of the supreme, our life will be ruined. We are repeatedly going through the cycle of

birth and death because we are not able to complete the process of the attainment of the highest stage, i.e., the Supreme Being. This can be attained only in stages. Only by passing through different stages, we attain identity with Shiva. It is only slowly that the *parā vāk* manifests in us. We should not expect to wake up one fine morning and find ourselves listening to the *parā vāk*. It comes gradually. The more we listen to it, the more will be the clarity of the message. *Parā* is ineffable. It must never be betrayed. We must not utilise it for any selfish, vested interest. We must have total absolute faith in it. We must have courage to face the directions given to us by the *parā vāk*. Often we do not have the courage to follow these directions. We feel that if we were to follow these directions we may face a tremendous loss. Once we have faith in Shiva and we feel that He alone knows what is best for us, then the body-mind complex receives the message of Shiva to be realised by the individualised self. We must have courage to follow the directions and we must have honesty of purpose. We must not utilise it to gain some worldly advantage, we must utilise it only to realise our own self. That is why honesty of purpose has been emphasised again and again

Apart from honesty of purpose, we need to be patient. If we are not patient we will not be able to accept the message and work in accordance with it. Sometimes the commands are like a sharp knife or like a serpent in the depths of our being because we are so accustomed to doing things which appear to be correct rather than those

which are correct. The outward show is embedded in us. We are constantly looking around for appreciation from others. In Banaras one finds many pandits taking ablutions in the morning. Standing in the Ganges they repeat their prayers. When other people are around the prayers tend to become longer and when one is alone they are shorter. In short, we are conscious of what the other person will think of us. The underlying feeling is that one's action should appear to be correct even if it is not really so. It is for this reason that when we receive the commands we feel that somebody is piercing our hearts with a knife.

It is through the *parā* that the command of the Lord is 'leaked' out to us. His commands are always hidden but through the *parā* he leaks it out. Through this message we are able to know what our role is. Where is it that we fit in the divine economic order of things. What is the particular part that each one of us has to play. The universe is like an organism. Each organ has to make its specific contribution. We cannot change organisms. We cannot say that the heart is better than the lungs or the liver, each organ is equally important. It is the same way, each of us is an actor in the whole divine drama which is being enacted. We have to find out where we really fit in. We cannot change the drama. We cannot change our role, we should try to follow what we are meant for. This implies an attitude of modesty. Very often the idea that each individual can do what he likes is drummed into us. It is very easy to say this. The biographies and

autobiographies of millionaires lead us to believe that if they could rise from poverty and become millionaires, we can also do the same. But when we make an attempt, we fail miserably. The truth is that the successful man was destined to become rich while we are not, no matter how hard we try. So modesty means that we must perfectly do what we are capable of.

The other day someone said in Switzerland steel is imported at the rate of rupees sixteen per kilogram, but after a watch has been manufactured it is sold nearly at rupees sixteen hundred per kilogram. There are no iron mines in Switzerland. But they import iron and convert it into gold. It costs almost as much as gold. They are able to do this because man is gifted with the power of reflection (*Sākṣī*). Man alone has the power of reflection. Other living beings can perceive but they cannot reflect on their own experience. He can make his experience the object of his study. Most of the time we study the object, but if we want to develop the art of living we must be ready to develop this power of reflection which is the speciality of the human situation. Once the *parā vāk* is contacted in this process the reflection increases and as the reflection increases each act that we do is able to reveal the inner command which the *parāvāk* was giving. Clarity of comprehension leads to clarity of expression. Our *vaikharī vāk* is also purified. What we convey through words becomes important. Vaikharī is revelation of what we are within. Only by dedication to the Lord within, by paying attention to it, reflectively thinking of

all that we have done, we are able to attain the power of listening to the parā vāk clearly. When we are able to see it clearly, we are able to develop ourselves by our honesty of purpose.

How to develop this in practical activity we will discuss tomorrow.



Lecture Four

Friends, we have been discussing the art of living based on the *Madhu Vidyā* of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* and we find that it is based on the twin concepts of truth and love. We have already discussed the problem of will. We tried to find out from where does the will arise and we also dealt with certain disciplines which allow us to contact the lead which the *parāvāk* gives us through which we are able to contact the divine will and thereby strengthen our own will. The other two factors are knowledge and action, intellect and emotion. Truth is the fundamental conception if we want to live happily, properly, blissfully, and ethically. The intellectual search for truth is absolutely essential. This search does not mean logic chopping, and dissecting ideas. Many people feel that by adopting an approach of armchair philosophy they can discover the truth. Truth has to be searched, it has to be investigated and to do that we need to have an entirely open mind. Nature expresses itself in our mind just as it expresses itself in external life. We have to examine the complete internal world the same way we examine the external world to find out what is really there. It is not an exercise to find an excuse for a particular preconceived concept which we may have. It is not to rationalise that we investigate, not to find reason for what we already believe

but to search for that truth which exists in reality. This should be the basic approach. We must try to find out, as I pointed out earlier, what our real being is what we really are, not what we would like ourselves to be what we pretend to be, what society expects us to be, but what we really are. We must be able to see that. Similarly, the love which we are talking about here is not just an emotional froth. It is not like whipped cream which looks substantial, but the moment we try to eat it there is nothing in it, there is no substance. Most of the time our emotions are like whipped cream. At a particular moment we may feel the intensity of the emotion but as we proceed further and further this emotion just dissolves and we discover that it is contentless. Since our childhood we have been experiencing this state of emotion but this state of emotion is not what we need, what we need is love which is essential for the art of living.

A mere show of love is not love at all. Unfortunately in the English language, the word love is used both as a verb and as a noun. As a verb, love is something which we do, something which we show. That is not what is meant by the word love here. Moreover Love has to be practical, it must not merely be a romantic idea. Why is it that most of the time we suffer emotionally? The answer is because we tend to idealise our relationships whether it is between father and son or between husband and wife. We have certain notions of the ideal son in our mind. We stick to those notions and we feel that our son is like that. We confuse what we think *should* be with what really *is*.

Eventually, when we realise that our son is not so, we are disappointed. The same thing happens in the husband and wife relationship. The husband has a certain concept of the perfect wife. The wife, on her part, also has a certain concept of what a husband should be, and when they find out that the real person is not what each expects the other to be, disappointment is the result. Most of our disappointments at the emotional level, are a result of this inability to accept and love the other person as he/she really is. Instead we love the ideal picture of the person which we have in our mind. While analysing the concept of love, Patañjali divides it into four categories—*Maitrī* (friendship), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (happiness), *upekṣā* (overlooking). According to him, love has to be expressed in different ways. For instance, when we come in contact with a virtuous person, an ethical person, who lives life as one should, who lives his own life, is at harmony with himself and society, we must express the feeling of *maitrī*, that is, friendship towards him. It is not essential that we should be physically near him, often we may not be with him physically even then we must associate with him mentally, we must develop this feeling of friendship towards him. When we develop this attitude of friendship, it is an act of love and this love begins to change us. Whatever is on our mind constantly influences us and changes us in that particular way. This change may be slow and we may not feel a transformation within ourselves but the transformation continuously goes on. One point that has been repeatedly emphasised in the

Hindu scriptures is that we must keep an ideal (*iṣṭa*) before ourselves. We may not be able to follow this ideal immediately but if we look up to it continuously we are bound to imitate it. This is the very nature of the human mind. The first expression of love, according to Patañjali, is *maitrī*, friendship towards virtuous people, with those who are in harmony with themselves.

He says that we must show *karuṇā*, compassion to those who are not in harmony with themselves but are trying to attain harmony. These people are striving to reach that stage but have not attained it yet. The love expressed in this case is not *maitrī* but it is compassion because we ourselves are in a similar position, we are also struggling to attain that goal but we fail again and again. The very idea that just as we have failed he has also failed makes us tolerant towards him. In the absence of *karuṇā* we tend to condemn others for their failings. This is perhaps the greatest harm done to modern society by newspapers and magazines. They continuously report the shortcomings, the failures but very rarely do they talk about an ideal human being. They believe that breaking the idol, as they perceive it, is a great achievement. For example, a person may have fifty virtues and he may have two shortcomings. There is no point in harping about his two weaknesses. I am not trying to suggest that a person who commits a criminal offence should not be punished. He must be punished but we must have compassion for him for having failed. We must not forget that we ourselves fail most of the time.

The third category of love is *muditā*. People who enjoy material prosperity, and other advantages in life must be shown *muditā*. We must be happy that they are enjoying what they have. Even though they may not follow the path of virtue, but at least they are doing something which makes them happy. We must be happy at their being happy and satisfied with what they have. Often when we see someone prospering more than what we think is due to him—for instance, he may get a promotion at work, or there may be a windfall in his business—we are jealous. We are very bitter about it. The concept of *muditā* implies that we should be happy when others are successful. For example, a child is playing with a toy and he is happy. He is not ready yet to enjoy either Shakespeare or Kalidas, but he is happy with the toy he has and we are happy that he is happy. Similarly, a person, who is not yet ready to follow the path of virtue, is getting something which is a source of pleasure for him. We must be happy about it and not be jealous or critical about it.

The fourth category of love, Patañjali calls *upekṣā*, i.e., overlooking. Overlooking is also a form of love. We tend to be angry with people who are habitually vicious, who continuously try to harm other members of the society or even society itself. We must control this anger, we must change this attitude into one of overlooking because as I said earlier, what we fight we become, if we continuously think about these vicious people we will eventually absorb that viciousness. Thus, love has an active aspect as well as a passive aspect.

The word *ahimsā*, non-violence, represents the passive aspect of love. We should not cooperate with a vicious person, the term vicious person does not refer to a person who commits a wrong act once in a while but to a person who habitually indulges in wrong acts and thinks it to be right—for such a person we must have *upekṣā*, we must overlook his faults. Love must express the unity which is within us. The unity of self, that is, when we see a person we should try to see not just his body-mind complex, we must see him as an individual, a conscious being, the self within him. Once we realise this, we are able to contact him through this feeling of unity. This point may be further clarified. What happens when I make a mistake? Either I ignore it (it does not matter if I have made a mistake) or I may go a step further and try to rationalise it, (It could not have been helped, it had to be done). But when another person makes the same mistake, we are not able to either ignore it or rationalise it. Thus, ignoring is the first step towards *upekṣā*. When we go further, once we have developed this sense of unity we are able to give a rational explanation of his behaviour and thereby develop an attitude by which we can help him. This process of rationalising the other person's faults is possible only when we perceive him as part of our own being or when we can say that he is an extension of our own being. When we practice this aspect of love, an important step in our search for truth, we move towards perfection.

Shiva is the perfection of our real self. He is not standing somewhere else. He is within us as our pure

being, our very being. Because we identify ourselves with the impurity, the ignorance in us, we feel that we are different and that Shiva is something external to us. But Shiva is our own real self. This perfection has to come through wisdom, culture and by being continuously on our guard and by constantly seeing that we are moving towards truth and not compromising ourselves in this search for truth. We must always be on our guard to make sure that this feeling of love is always present in all our actions. It is this that will make us cultured. Culture is not merely an expression of certain artistic views as many people like to believe today. Culture is that which enables us to follow the path of truth. A person of lower culture means that his lower tendencies are obvious in him. Though he may not express those lower tendencies, he may not commit a sinful act, a vicious act, yet the first reaction is present. That is what indicates lack of culture or lower culture. A person of higher culture would not even think of such a thing. The idea would not surprise him to see how a human being could act in this particular way. This is what culture is; not merely what we express in our actions. This perfection of wisdom and culture through devotion to truth and love is our greatest gift to society by developing the art of living. These are the pillars on which the foundation has to be built. The righteous action, the righteous effort towards welfare has to be socially oriented. Unless we see things from a collective perspective, we will not be able to lead a life of righteousness.

The question may be asked How do I know what is righteousness? How do I know what is right? Though the scriptures have laid down a number of rules. Hinduism never imposes anything. It only proposes. It outlines a number of incidents, situations, and problems and offers a number of solutions. One is free to choose anyone of them or to discard all of them. Hinduism does not impose because imposition has no value as far as the real ethical life is concerned. What should be the thumb rule of right action? When one interacts with another individual or group, one must place oneself in the other's position and one must feel that if one was in that body-mind complex what would one have desired, what behaviour one would expect. Having done this exercise, one is free to do what one likes to that person. At that moment one becomes the giver and the other person is the taker. Now if the roles are reserved and the other person becomes the giver then what would one expect from him. This thumb rule will help us in developing love because it leads to the concept of unity of self within us. A servant breaks some crockery. That provokes us and we get angry. But if we pause to think how often we ourselves have broken things much more expensive which were emotionally a part of our existence and yet we did not punish ourselves. Then the question in the mind crystalises that why should the idea of punishing the other person come. No doubt, one may have condemned oneself and felt bad about it. That is as far as one could have gone and that is as far one should go with the servant. To place oneself in the other person's

position is the easiest way to find out what is right in a given situation; and living up to this ideal is righteousness.

In the art of living means are as important as the end. Both means and end should be in harmony with truth and love. This is why opportunism and expedience have no place in the art of living. If we want to live properly, if we want to develop this art, we should avoid taking a shortcut to anything. Most of the time we live in a crisis situation. We tend to make every situation a calamity. We tend to magnify every loss and we feel that it is the greatest loss and, therefore, we are justified in adopting a course of emergency—what the scriptures have called *āpaddharma*.

Many people often come and ask me questions which have no relevance to their own lives. For instance, they ask ‘Supposing I am in the Tundras and no food is available then how is it possible to be a vegetarian in that situation?’ I generally tell them that when you get your visa and you are ready for departure, then I will answer your question. They are creating a situation of calamity. They want to know what the *āpaddharma* is, what the emergency powers are and they want to exercise them here and now. This is an opportunistic outlook. A person who wants to develop the art of living must do away with this opportunistic outlook. Under no circumstances should he opt for a short cut. Though these short cuts may exist but he is not in search of these short cuts. This emphasis on the total life pattern is important because it is only then that the environmental well-being can come into existence. We continuously find excuses in our

environment but what we fail to see is that the environment is our own creation. Though we may talk about cleanliness yet we feel that this habit of cleanliness is not something which we have to develop. We always talk about big things. Today, every organisation no matter how small say, with a total strength of ten members, calls itself international though it may not even represent a particular city or even a small section of the city. In the same way we talk about bringing about a total change in society and humanity without even questioning ourselves whether we have changed for the better or not. I am not trying to suggest that the environment does not influence us. We are a part of the physical environment, for instance, if the sky is overcast with poisonous fumes, those fumes are bound to affect us. I am not denying that. Neither am I denying that economic conditions influence us and force us to make certain compromises. All this is true. But the question remains how is the change going to come about. The change is possible only when each individual changes himself. When this happens then there is a change in the environment. This is true in all fields, that is why love implies that we work for collective prosperity. Prosperity here does not mean merely economic prosperity but psychological, social and religious prosperity, prosperity in all the different fields. The aim should be collective prosperity and not individual growth.

At the beginning of this discourse on the *Madhu Vidyā*, I had stressed the importance of what Ācārya Śaṅkara calls *parasparopakāritvāt*, i.e., mutual help. If we want

happiness at the cost of society, we are like the dreaded disease, cancer. Cancer is the result of certain cells not functioning for the good of the whole organism and multiplying in their own way. They function totally unconcerned about the harm being done to the organism. These cancerous cells want to prosper at the expense of the entire system. Similarly, the society is one organism. In the collective growth and in the collective prosperity lies the real prosperity. Every joy of life must be shared. Ācārya Padmapāda cites the example of Ācārya Śaṅkara. He says that when Ācārya Śaṅkara realised the highest truth and he was about to enjoy that eternal bliss, he saw people around him suffering in the mire of the world and he felt ashamed. Just as we would feel if there were a hundred hungry people around us and we were given a sumptuous meal. If we are cultured, we will not be able to eat it and we would share the food with those hundred people because their hunger is more, their need for food is greater. Similarly, Ācārya Śaṅkara found that he had attained eternal bliss and joy but how could he enjoy it when the whole society was suffering. Instead of enjoying that eternal bliss he began to share it with everyone.

This idea of sharing all our joys with others will give a new dimension to our effort. The effort of each individual will be to make its members happy. We will constantly ask ourselves what is it that we should do to bring about a social change, a change not only in our own lives but a change that will bring happiness all around. Slowly, this love has to be extended. We may begin with our neighbours

and gradually move towards the group to which we belong, and finally engulf all beings in this love. Love, we must remember, is not something which can be switched on or off. One of the problems of industrialisation is that it has accelerated the pace of life. Today, life has become very fast and we do not have any brakes to control its pace. All our activities are increasing and we do not know how to control them or stop them. These activities have assumed control instead of being controlled by us. They have taken hold of us. Only through repeated exercise of spiritual consciousness can we build up this power of braking, i.e., controlling the speed of life. If we analyse we will find that beneath the current of thoughts lies the absolute, calm and blissful state. To be conscious of this is very important if we want to develop the art of living. Between one thought and the next there is a point where there is no intellectual and emotional control on the parā-vāk. We tend to miss this point and hence we are unable to utilise the spiritual consciousness to control our activities. We must control the speed of our thoughts if we do not want to miss this point. The practice of meditation, the practice of *japa* enable us to learn the art of catching that spiritual consciousness between two successive thoughts.

When a candle burns the flame appears to be continuous, but it is not so. One drop of oil or wax is burnt and the next one is ignited but because the process is very rapid the flame appears to burn continuously. The same principle is seen in cinema. When we see a running film there seems to be activity. But if we examine the negative

film we will not find any activity. For example, a leg will be in different positions in subsequent films but when the film moves it moves so rapidly that it creates the illusion of a sequential movement. In the same way, we feel that our thoughts are continuous because they move at a very rapid pace and we are unable to catch that spiritual consciousness. But when we slow down just as in the case of the film, say, a slow moving film, we can see the different postures. When we meditate we are slowing down our thoughts. We concentrate our attention on an object and slowly apply a brake on that continuous fast movement of the mind. This meditation can be done in two ways to suit people with varying intellectual capacity and nature. We can logically think about a problem in a very intense way. When we practice logical thinking we must watch at every step that our logical thinking is clear and does not have any faults and does follow our desired pattern. We must intensively work out the sequence or logical consequences not become something that we desire which we are wishing but is intent on what should happen. When this logical thinking becomes intense the mind becomes one pointed. Ācārya Udayana says in *Kiraṇāvalī* that by continuously, logically thinking about God I am expressing my devotion. When we continuously logically think about God we are expressing our devotion.

There are other people who have emotional tendencies. They cannot continuously think logically for a long time. They get disturbed. They can think about God in an emotional way, but then this emotion must be intense. It

must not move rapidly, it should not become as it does in the human relationship, an emotional prop. This happens in spiritual exercise as well. A person may be very emotional at the time of meditation but may completely forget about it an hour later when he deals with other people.

There is a story about a girl. She was taught a particular type of meditation by her teacher. She got married and had children. One day the preceptor came to meet her. He stayed with her and found that she was very regular in her meditation but was very harsh in her behaviour towards all the members of the family including the servants. The girl asked him that though she had been very regular in her meditation and did what he asked her to do she had not had a vision of the Lord. The preceptor shocked her by his reply, "God is pure. He does not like dogs around Him." She asked him what did he mean by this statement. He replied, "The way you bark at all the people around you, at the servants, do you think that God will come to you? Are you not able to feel that all these people are also children of God? If someone gives you a nice present but also gives a thrashing to your child and goes away, will you be happy, will you be pleased? Though you are doing meditation regularly and at that time you do get emotional about it, but the moment you interact with others you completely forget about the emotion which was aroused during meditation."

Whether one goes through the path of logical thinking, or whether one experiences emotional feelings, one must

remember that what one gains there, what one experiences there, should bring the power of braking, i.e., control. In other words, one should acquire the power of slowing down the current of thoughts. In real life situations, when one interacts with others one should continuously make sure that the brakes function. When the current of thoughts or the current of emotions becomes rapid, one is not able to reflect and one does not know what one is going to do. Many people after getting angry, after harming someone else for the sake of money feel that they should not have done it. Here, I am not referring to habitually vicious people who hurt others intentionally, but to those individuals who are unable to control themselves at that particular moment because their thoughts move rapidly—Angry thoughts flow very fast. Unless one develops this power of controlling the speed of thoughts, one will not be able to live according to the principles of the art of living. One must continuously ask oneself who is getting angry. Who is it that is behaving in a miserly fashion? Who is it that is getting passionate? This inquiry must be done whenever one has the time, for instance, when one is walking, one must try to feel who is walking. Walking is an activity which is done by only a part of one's existence, the body. But the person is someone different. Walking is done for oneself, for one's good. One gives the impulse and the rest is done by the body-mind complex. Through continuous inquiry — who am I, who is it that is thinking, who is it that is emotionally feeling, we perceive ourselves to be different from this body-mind complex and we

develop detachment just as a flower is detached when it is plucked.

The *Rigveda* contains a beautiful verse which goes as follows. ‘Oh Lord detach me from death and not from immortality.’ This detachment which is known as *asamgatā* has to develop if we want to lead our lives according to the art of living. This inquiry can be facilitated if we feel and inquire ‘Who is it that was sleeping?’ When we are asleep there are no senses, there is no feeling of body, no thoughts, no feeling of mind. The mind is not active, it does not know during sleep. We cannot say that that mind knows that we are asleep. These activities are not present there to experience deep sleep. The fact remains that the state of deep sleep has been experienced because we do recall upon waking that we slept very well. Who is it that slept very well? It is not the mind who has experienced this but it is our real self who has experienced it.

The art of living is not an art of good behaviour. I am not saying that it is an art of bad behaviour. But pure conduct does not make our nature pure. In our *Purāṇas* in our mythology, there are a number of incidents where demons practiced the severest austerities, meditations and worship and were granted a wish thereby indicating that their practices were successful. Yet they remained demons. Their behaviour during the period of austerity was perfect and they reaped the fruit of it. Even though their behaviour was good temporarily, they were not good intrinsically. When good behaviour results from the purity of our nature,

only then do we develop the art of living. The art of living must help us to change the nature of our inner being and not merely change our external behaviour. As we proceed along this path of truth and love, we find that our dedication to anything that we do grows. At present, we do something not because we are dedicated to it but because we have to do it.

We should get rid of this feeling of *have to*. It must be changed into the concept of developing our individuality to be in harmony with ourselves. We must not act because we are forced to do so. The *Gītā* emphasises this concept again and again. It says that whatever we do should be done as worship. When we worship an idol or, when we worship our parents, it is the same thing, because all these are equally manifestations of God, we ought to worship with the sense of dedication, in the sense of an offering. All our acts must be done in that spirit and as we practice this our consciousness becomes more and more subtle. The result is that our actions are always perfect. By perfection, I do not mean that these acts cannot be done better but they cannot be done better with the present body-mind complex that we have.

We must have the satisfaction that at any given moment we have done the best we could. The idea must be clear in our mind. We must be satisfied with ourselves. If we are not satisfied with our own work, even if the whole universe is satisfied with it, it is of no use. We have to live with ourselves continuously. We can live away from anybody else but we cannot live away from ourselves. If

we are not happy, if we are not joyous after doing something, then even if others lavish their praise on us it has no meaning, it has no value.

We must introduce in the practice of the art of living, what I sometimes call, ‘as if’ living. We are not pure but we should live ‘as if’ we are pure. We do not feel that we are in all beings but we should live as if we are present in all beings. In this way we become attuned to Shiva who is present in us. He manifests Himself as truth and love because truth and love is His very nature. We are searching for truth and love; and in that search we are searching Shiva and we are experiencing Him through our acts of love. When we do this we begin to experience the truth and love in ourselves.

As the Lord says in the *Gītā*; “With whatever tendency a person comes to me, I reciprocate.” This is the fundamental thing. When we approach Him through truth and love, He manifests Himself as truth and love and it becomes our nature and a new society is born. Society is not merely a crowd. A crowd is at cross-purposes. Members of a crowd do not have a particular goal, a particular ambition. In Sanskrit, society is known as *samāj*—aj means to move forward. Thus *samāj* is where people move forward towards a particular goal. Why is it that five hundred people in military uniform can control five lakh people? It is because those five lakhs are in a crowd whereas those five hundred move even physically towards a particular goal. When we develop the art of

living it is this society which is born and not a disorderly crowd.

Everyone is in search of happiness. When others see the goals and postulations which we arrived at and they find that we have attained happiness by following them they too are bound to follow them. It is this society which can bring about a complete change, a total revolution of thought in itself. It is through the art of living that we are able to bring about a complete change in society but only if we are conscious to this social calling, to this purpose, for which we are living.



Lecture Five

Friends, we are discussing the *Madhu Vidyā*. The *Upanishad* goes on to relate a tradition how this *vidyā*, this knowledge was inherited by us. This is an interesting story.¹² The particular chapter in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* follows what is known as the *pravargya vidyā* where a particular sacrifice was taught by the great Dadhyaṅgātharvaṇa. According to the story, this sage taught this sacrifice. The disciple wanted to know the ultimate truth, the ultimate reality. The ultimate truth cannot be taught unless the disciple is ready to receive it. There has to be a preparation, what is known as *adhikāritā* in Sanskrit, that is, the fitness to receive knowledge. Unless a person prepares himself to receive knowledge, it will not penetrate deeply into his being. It will remain a superficial knowledge. Dadhyaṅgātharvaṇa told the Aśvinī Kumāras, “You are not yet fit to receive the final truth, the ultimate truth. You must go through certain spiritual practices, certain meditations that will make you fit to receive this knowledge.” He instructed them in the practical preliminary discipline.

The Aśvinī Kumāras went away and practised meditation. In the meantime, Indra, the king of Gods, learnt that Dadhyaṅgātharvaṇa possessed knowledge

which could enable a person to attain the highest happiness. He asked Dadhyaṅgātharvaṇa to impart this knowledge. The sage knew that Indra was not fit to receive this knowledge because he was proud of his position as the king of Gods. A proud person cannot learn the art of living. He cannot make his own life sweet nor can he make the life of others sweet. Humility is a fundamental quality which is absolutely essential if a person wants to acquire the art of living, if he wants to make his life sweet. Indra was very proud. Dadhyaṅgātharvaṇa knew that if he told him so directly, Indra would be disturbed. So he conveyed the message to Indra in an indirect manner. He said, “If you really want to learn the art of living, if you want to make your life as sweet as honey, if you want to make the society around you happy, blissful, you must develop an attitude of dispassion. Dispassion towards all physical goals, because it is the physical things which bring conflict with other people. Whenever you desire something physical, there are other people who also desire it and conflict arises. But when you want to develop yourself internally, when you want to become perfect yourself there is absolutely nothing which will hinder your effort. Nobody will be against you except your own body-mind complex. Hence, there will not be any competition, any bitterness. This attitude of dispassion towards worldly objects is absolutely essential.” After expounding on the nature of dispassion towards all objects, Dadhyaṅgātharvaṇa added that position of the kings of Gods was no better than a dog’s urine. Hearing this, Indra was hurt because he

was so proud of his position. He said, “Enough of your teachings. I do not want to hear any more. If you teach this knowledge to anybody else I will behead you.” Beheading is an important concept. Recently, Heesterman has done a lot of work on the subject. There are numerous stories of beheading in the Indian tradition, both in the *Vedas* and later in the *Purāṇas* and *Itihāsas*. Having said this, Indra went away.

In the meantime, the Aśvinī Kumāras had practised meditation and had attained the level they were supposed to attain. They went to the sage, Dadhyaṅgātharvaṇa and said, “We feel that we are now fit to receive the ultimate truth. If you consider us fit, please teach us.” The sage found them to be ready to receive the knowledge but he told them about his meeting with Indra and the latter’s curse. He said, “As soon as I start teaching you, I will be beheaded and I will not be able to completely impart knowledge to you.” The Aśvinī Kumāras were brilliant surgeons and physicians. They said, “We will do something unusual. We will cut off your head before you begin teaching and we will transplant it with a horse’s head. When you begin teaching with the horse’s head, Indra will behead you. We will put back your own head and you will be able to impart the rest of the knowledge.”

It is no doubt a terrible experience to go through the ordeal of beheading and that too twice. But Dadhyaṅgātharvaṇa remained true to his word even at the cost of such excruciating pain. This adherence to truth is the most important factor.¹³ In spite of the fact that he had

to go through this ordeal, Dadhyaṅgātharvaṇa remained true to his word. In short, in the pursuit of truth if one has to die for it, one should be ready to do so. This is how one can make life sweet. The moment one speaks an untruth, a conflict arises within oneself and one is in conflict with the person to whom one has lied, this conflict will always remain. Later, if one confesses to the other person that one had spoken an untruth, the impasse will not be resolved. Once a person's faith has been shattered, it will always remain so. Adherence to truth makes life sweet. Though one may lose material comforts by following the path of truth, one will not lose one's joy, bliss and sweetness.

This story also reveals the love of the teacher. For the sake of imparting knowledge he was prepared to be beheaded. The twin concepts of truth and love are clearly highlighted in this story. I would like to mention here that often when we read mythological stories we are unable to identify ourselves with the symbols used in these stories because we try to interpret them historically. These symbols are not meant to be interpreted in a historical way. The ideas are being conveyed allegorically and symbolically. If we study primitive societies we find that whenever they want to teach something, they demonstrate the lesson to be learnt. Small children are asked to enact, but people who watch this are told not to do all what was enacted. The same principle is emphasised when we enact the Rāmlīlā. We also demonstrate what should not be done. When a person becomes mature, he does not need the real play, the real act. He can read the story, imagine it

and comprehend the message that is being conveyed. These stories, as I said earlier, are not meant to be interpreted historically. They are symbols with which we have to live.

The above story also tells us how a disciple should act to attain wisdom. The Aśvinī Kumāras performed a terrible deed—they beheaded their own teacher. It is natural for a person to love his father, his mother, his teacher, but to attain wisdom, to attain the final truth, one should be prepared to sacrifice all base feelings. It is only when we are ready to sacrifice to that extent that we can learn the art of living. There is deeper significance of the story. The beheading of Dadhyaṅgātharvaṇa represents the beheading of our own unconscious. To begin with, we are more or less controlled by our unconscious. All our acts are controlled not by our conscious will but by the complexes that have been passed down to us through tradition, through inheritance and through learning since childhood. Now these complexes have to be beheaded and the transplantation has to be performed. It is the conscious ‘I’ which must assume complete control over it.

Most of the time we forget what we are striving for. Actually we hunger for peace and bliss though they are always there. Unfortunately, we do not appease this hunger, we do not quench this thirst most of the time in the name of duty, in the name of responsibility. We are not true to ourselves and that conflict makes us bitter. We desire bliss and peace as a reward for what we have done for others because we have done it with a sense of duty.

We expect others to act as we would like them to act. When they do not, we suffer. But our duty to our own hunger for peace and bliss is important. To some extent it has to be done. Basic hunger can never be denied. As a matter of fact, every person has certain desires which he is not able to fulfill even at a worldly level. We see a businessman, a very successful businessman but he is not at peace with himself. We find that he has certain artistic desires which he wants to express. If he is given an opportunity to do so, he may produce a mediocre painting or music, but in that very process of expressing his inner needs, his inner desires, he becomes peaceful and blissful. This desire for peace and bliss is basic in all human beings. In religion we do something to attain it: certain mechanical rituals which help us to become peaceful. When we worship through certain rituals are mechanical but the accompanying feeling that this will bring peace and bliss is similar to the mediocre production of the businessman. The important point is that he is able to express himself. Gradually this process leads us to the love of the Lord. That love is manifested by way of a deep emotional feeling of separation. We are not peaceful, we are not blissful. We are separated from our peace and bliss. Shiva represents this peaceful and blissful state, that is the perfect state. We feel that we are separated from it and that sense of separation is the first experience of that state which is manifested in the form of love of God.

Ācārya Śaṅkara says,¹⁴ “When will I be able to see you; when will I be able to see that perfect bliss and peace.” We

know that peace and bliss cannot be observed as something apart from our own self. We can only experience peace and bliss. We cannot perceive happiness as something different from ourselves. When Ācārya Śaṅkara says that when will he be able to see that perfection he means “when will I be able to attain that perfection. When will I be able to hold your gracious feet with my own hands, press them with my head, eyes and chest, embrace them, feel the freshness of the lotus nectar, i.e., your feet.” A joy of this kind is not possible even if a person attains the post of Brahmā. That is what Dadhyaṅgātharvaṇa said as far as the post of Indra was concerned. The idea is the same. Even the highest attainments in the world are not able to give us that joy of perfection that is attained by the art of living and it is this love which eventually leads us to the attainment of unity with the self. At the moment we are fragmented from our own self, from society, from every other individual. We are unable to feel the thread which is passing through all of us. We are only able to see the pearls in the necklace without being able to see the thread which is holding all the pearls in the necklace together. When we attain the state of perfection, our horse head is replaced by our own head, that which belongs to our own self. To attain this state we have to be continuously alert, we cannot afford to be negligent about anything. The *Mahābhārata* tells us¹⁵ “Where and how this peace and bliss is to be attained.”

The first thing is *subhaga*—a person who is careful about his own appearance. Appearance does not imply the

clothes one wears, it is something deeper. When we see a person we can find out whether he pays any attention to his physical appearance or whether he is neglectful. We may say anything about the body but the fact remains that all your actions are done through this body. If we neglect this body, it will be entirely at our own cost. We may neglect it after we have attained perfection but not before we have reached that stage.

Pragalbha implies that a person must have a very keen mind. Just as we have to be careful about our physical appearance, we must take care that we develop a keen mind. We must observe things properly. Observation of nature is one of the important elements which make life sweet. Whenever we react with conscious beings, there is a reaction from the other side but when we react with the plant kingdom, the so-called nature, there is no reaction. We are able to give without getting anything in return. We may appreciate a flower, the flower will not tell us anything. It has lead to the idea of appreciation which will develop. We are able to experience and develop that particular sense of appreciation in relation to other human beings or even in relation to animals.

Dakṣa instructs us to be efficient in whatever we do. No work should ever be done in a haphazard manner. We must make sure that the work is done properly. We must not be lazy. Today we talk a lot of entertainment, about leisure but it actually hinders our progress. In India holidays were not meaninglessly declared, holidays were always for a purpose. On Diwali we had to perform certain rituals,

certain social acts and because of that holiday was declared. More or less the same idea underlines Sabbath—Sunday was kept apart to go to church. In other words, it was work away from work, it had to be performed. Gradually, people have forgotten the underlying reason, i.e., do no other work but concentrate on God. That was the concept of holiday, it did not mean not doing anything. This modern concept of entertainment has to be given up.

We must continuously act. Under no circumstances should we get angry. We should always consider our undertaking as devotion to the Supreme Lord. All our acts must be performed with this idea in mind—“We are not doing it for any individual, not even for our nation.” One often hears people who have faced hardships and have made sacrifices during the independence movement complain: “Nobody listens to us, nobody pays any attention to us.” The question is that why should anyone pay attention? The answer is that they want the nation to give them something in return for their sacrifices, and because of this there will always be loss of peace and joy. We cannot develop the art of living if we want anything from any individual, or from the nation or humanity. When we do it only for the sake of Shiva, we are able to do a thing perfectly. The perfection of the action in itself is the reward. It is not for any other reward that we do an action. The *Mahābhārata* says that if we want to attain this art of living then we must always appreciate even the smallest thing that someone does for us. If someone does something for us then we must remember it and forget what he has

not done. It is only then that we can develop the art of living. Today things are just the reverse. We do not remember what someone does for us but we only remember what he has not done.

Jitendriya, i.e., to attain this we must have control over our senses. We must be full of energy. A lazy life is the result of *tamoguṇa*, it is the outcome of something which hinders us. We must always be full of energy. The *Mahābhārata* says that those who have little energy, strength, effort and get disgusted every now and then, will never attain this art of living. Why is it that in yogic practices there is so much emphasis on the *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma* etc.? These are emphasised because they increase the energy of our body-mind complex. We must set a high goal for ourselves. The *Mahābhārata* goes on to say that those who do not strive for a higher goal, do not attain anything worthwhile, psychologically speaking, a certain amount of ambition is necessary to attain success in any endeavour. An important question that arises in this context is—What should one aspire for? What should one's ambition be? If one aspires for something external, it will not bring perfection. It will probably lead to the acquisition of objects but they do not belong to one's own self. No matter how much one acquires in the world, ultimately one has to leave everything here. The only thing that one can take along is one's own self. If one has perfected one's own self, one has been able to realise it, it will always remain with one and that is the real gain. No matter what one has achieved in this world, no matter how

much fame one has earned, it will all be left behind. These worldly attainments will not go along with oneself, only one's own perfection will go along with oneself. This perfection is what we should aspire for. By following these simple disciplines, by being conscious of them or as said earlier, by being reflective about them, we are able to attain this art of living.

The *Upanishad* further asserts that we should not feel whether we will succeed or not. It states that the creator himself has become the creature. In other words, the creature is none else but the creator himself. Since our basic nature is Shiva we are bound to attain this state. If this was not our natural self, then one could question whether we will attain this state or not. The *Upanishad* uses a single term *puruṣa* to describe it. The word *puruṣa* has often been used for the Supreme Being. What does it mean? The word can be derived in two ways.¹⁶ As long as it is living in the body the first derivation is meaningful. The body is like a city, a town, and because it is living there it is called *puruṣa*. It can also mean that it fulfills everything. This derivation is meaningful in a higher view of life. He is the goal that is fulfillment. Thus, He is the teleological cause of the whole movement.

Causality is a peculiar phenomenon. We seek causes in two ways. In the first causality 'A' leads to 'B', 'B' to 'C', 'C' leads to 'D'. Science generally deals with this kind of causality. The other causality is teleological causality. This is another way of looking at it: because 'D' had to happen, 'C' came into being. Here, 'D' is the final cause,

the purpose which attracts things and events that precede it. That is exactly the idea underlying the conscious cause. When a potter makes a pot, even at the start the purpose is clear in his mind, the kind of pot that he is likely to produce. Then he proceeds to obtain the particular type of clay for that kind of a pot, the particular colour of clay. After collecting all the materials he proceeds to create the pot. The scientist make an attempt to see the clay being transformed into a pot, he does not consider even for a moment the possibility that the clay is present there to become the pot. The clay is the cause, but why does the clay exist there? Shiva is the final outcome of the evolving universe. That is the purpose; the purpose of all our actions, the purpose of everything in the universe is to attain that state of Shiva. Though it is the purpose of the whole cosmos, of the entire universe, even an individual, the tiny particle of creation, attains it and experiences sweetness. This can be further explained by an example given in the *Madhu Vidyā*—*madhu*, i.e., honey. It is not that only the entire pot of honey is sweet. Every drop of it is sweet. Every crystal of sugar is equally sweet. We should not think that if the final goal of the evolving universe is realisation of the bliss, then the individuality is lost. The individual attains that state here and now just as each crystal of sugar is as sweet as sugar itself because each crystal is sugar itself. Similarly, when we attain that state, that complete *madhu* we experience the honey-like sweetness. When we come into contact with such a person we experience joy for that moment as long as we are in

the presence of this person. It is as though we ourselves have attained that state.

The *Upanishad* gives the final message¹⁷; the eye sees, the ear hears, the tongue tastes, but the individual is the one who is able to experience all the sensations through the particular sense organs. Similarly, through all our minds it is that one universal self which is experiencing everything. He is experiencing through our body-mind complex as much as through any other body-mind complex. This idea is very important. If we miss it, we miss the importance which Vedānta ascribes to the social outlook. An individual does not exist apart from society. Each individual carries within himself the thread Shiva which holds together all the pearls of souls in the necklace of the universe in place. The thread which holds the pearls together is Shiva and not the individual pearls. The *Upanishad* says that this experience is really the honey of living. When we attain this state, we observe the same thing in every one that we had till now been experiencing in our own body-mind complex. In the absence of this nectar, we continuously die again and again because we have to attain this final stage. Just as in a school, if one does not pass in a particular class, one is detained in that class for the next year. Similarly, we take birth again and again to attain this art of living. We take birth to attain this ultimate realisation and until we realise it we have to take birth again and again. In schools, of course, they have their own rules—if a student fails for three consecutive years, the student is asked to leave the school. Shiva, on

the other hand, never asks us to leave. He allows us infinite chances. It is for us to decide when we want to attain this final state.

The art of living can be practised by three categories of individuals. First, those who perceive the world to be real, but have not learnt anything about the reality of the world. They have not analysed it. They have not gone deep into it. They must practice the art of living because they should realise that it is empirically useful for one's own psychological health and good for society as a whole. Though the idea of perfection is not clear to them, they should not wait to seek philosophical clarity before they begin to practice the art of living. Just as in many theories of science we do not have direct evidence; but, if a particular theory is accepted, certain results should follow, and, if they do, we accept it as a hypothesis, as something which is empirical and practical. Similarly, until we have attained that clarity of philosophical perspective, the wisdom that we have discussed earlier, we must practice it 'as if' it is the truth because we can clearly see that it is the only way we can attain peace and bliss. Any other method is likely to produce disharmony which is not good for our own mental health. Tension always leads to personality disintegration and does not lead to integration. As long as we experience this fragmentation and continue to increase this fragmentation, it is not good for society. At the beginning we assume this wisdom to be a hypothesis. Organisations which are not built on this basis will naturally be built on the idea of

mutual self interest. Whether it is a state, a particular group, or any organisation they come together because of mutual self interest. What happens then? Slowly, the self interest either becomes fulfilled, or a particular person loses interest in the organisation, or he feels that his interest cannot be fulfilled through this particular organisation, and thus he loses interest in it. All organisations are born out of mutual self interest. As soon as the self interest is lost, the organisation becomes weaker and weaker. But, if we are able to use this idea of perfection, i.e., Shiva as the cement which binds the organisation, which keeps the organisation together, then we are not interacting with each other. This is not mutual self interest, it is the interest for self-attainment through mutual cooperation. Since here the ideal is to attain perfection, we will not lose interest in the organisation.

Hinduism has tried to build the whole society on this basis. Even the husband-wife relationship is built on this basis. In Sanskrit the husband is called *pati* and the wife is called *patnī*. There is only a difference of 'n' in *pati* and *patnī*. According to Pāṇini, this 'n' has come to indicate that the two individuals have come together to attain God. There are some other terms in Sanskrit like *bhartā* and *bhāryā*. *Bhartā* is one who provides. *Bhāryā* is the one who is being provided. So where the ideal is not clear, the terms *bhāryā* and *bhartā* are used and not the words *pati* and *patnī*. Only when the goal is clear, Shiva cements the relationship it is because of Shiva, the cement, that we can attain perfection. The ideal is not to

get mere joy out of each other's mutual self interest. This is precisely why both Hinduism and Catholicism do not accept the concept of divorce. The main idea is that if they have come together to fulfill their mutual self interest, then they may find that once the self interest is not being fulfilled, they separate. On the other hand, if they have come together to attain perfection, the question of separation does not arise as they merge into each other when the goal is reached. The practical idea of making Shiva the cement, so that the organisation becomes perfect and permanent, is useful for those who have not yet attained the clear perception of outlook.

There are other individuals who can logically understand. They have learnt. They have thought about it and have come to definite conclusion that the universe is really uni (uni means one). It is just one verse. In spite of this knowledge the old attachment persists. Though they know a thing to be wrong yet emotionally they are unable to act in a way in which they should be acting. They must practice this so that this habit becomes second nature. Whatever we practice again and again becomes our second nature and then it becomes difficult to get away from it.¹⁸

Agyānam is in one who does not know. *Samśyagyānam* is in one who intellectually perceives it, but is not able to be moved by it emotionally. There are individuals who are both emotionally and intellectually convinced that this consciousness is the only real thing. They attain the real honey-like nature, passing through the two stages of *agyānam* and *samśyagyānam* they attain the final stage.

In that state they are honey by nature, and not because they have consciously willed it; they are honey-like in nature because it has become their second nature. They can be nothing else but sweet. They can bestow this honey-like sweetness on the whole society.

Thus we find that the art of living comprises not only those who have attained wisdom but even those who have just started on the path. However, this art of living, as I have been emphasising repeatedly, must be at all levels—social, physical, mental, emotional and intellectual. The art of living does not include merely the way one behaves externally because very often people tend to confuse the two. Social living is a part of it because we are a part of society. The social ethos is not apart from us. We must live at the social level, at the physical level, at the mental level—at all the different levels—we must live, because in natural life we are living on all these levels. One cannot reform just one aspect of living, one cannot attain perfection only in one aspect of living at the cost of others. Those who attempt to do this in a fragmented way, create another fragmentation. Some people feel that we have to live only socially. There are people who will do a lot of work for society but as far as their own lives are concerned they do not live up to it. We may talk about total non-violence where other countries are concerned, but when it comes to our own country we are ready to be quite violent. A person may talk about world peace but the way he talks to his wife and children reveals the kind of peace he has within himself. This is fragmented living. Sometimes we

feel that we will become individually perfect without giving any thought to the social well-being. There are people who also say, “Let society do anything, why are you bothered? We strive to attain perfection as if society was not part and parcel of our being. In other words, at all levels—physical, mental and emotional—the art has to be developed. It is by developing this art at all the levels that we can attain *Madhu Vidyā*. Otherwise, it will elude us. The *Śruti* in this chapter, actually this is part of a chapter, a section, deals with this art of living that we have been discussing all along. We pray to Shiva to bestow on all of us this secret of living and like a drop of honey create an atmosphere of honey-like sweetness all around.



Appendix

इयं पृथिवी सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । अस्यै पृथिव्यै सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमस्यां पृथिव्यां तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मः शरीरस्तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः अयमेव स योऽयमात्मेदममृतमिदं ब्रह्मेदः सर्वम् ॥ १ ॥

इमा आपः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । आसामपाः सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमआसु अप्सु तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मः रैतसः तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः अयमेव स योऽयमात्मेदं अमृतमिदं ब्रह्मेदः सर्वम् ॥ २ ॥

अयमग्निः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । अस्याग्नेः सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमस्मिन्नग्नौ तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मं वाङ्मयस्तेजोमयो० ॥ ३ ॥

अयं वायुः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । अस्य वायोः सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमास्मिन् वायौ तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मं प्राणस्तेजोमयो० ॥ ४ ॥

अयमादित्यः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । अस्यादित्यस्य सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमस्मिन्नादित्ये तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मं चाक्षुषस्तेजोमयो० ॥ ५ ॥

इमा दिशः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । आसां दिशाः सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमासु दिक्षु तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मः श्रौत्रः प्रातिश्रुत्कस्तेजोमयो० ॥ ६ ॥

अयं चन्द्रः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । अस्य चन्द्रस्य सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमस्मिन् चन्द्रे तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मं मानसस्तेजोमयो० ॥ ७ ॥

इयं विद्युत्सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । अस्यै विद्युतः सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमस्यां विद्युति तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मं तैजसस्तेजोमयो० ॥ ८ ॥

अयं स्तनयितुः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । अस्य स्तनयितुः सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमस्मिन्स्तनयितुः तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मः शाब्दः सौवरस्तेजोमयो ॥ ९ ॥

अयमाकाशः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । अस्याकाशस्य सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमस्मिन्नाकाशे तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मः हृद्याकाशस्तेजोमयो ॥ १० ॥

अयं धर्मः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । अस्य धर्मस्य सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमस्मिन् धर्मे तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मं धर्मस्तेजोमयो ॥ ११ ॥

इदं सत्यं सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । अस्य सत्यस्य सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमस्मिन् सत्ये तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मं सात्यस्तेजोमयो ॥ १२ ॥

इदं मानुषं सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । अस्य मानुषस्य सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमस्मिन् मानुषे तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमध्यात्मं मानुषस्तेजोमयो ॥ १३ ॥

अयमात्मा सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु । अस्यात्मनः सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु । यश्चायमस्मिन्नात्मनि तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषो यश्चायमात्मा तेजोमयो ॥ १४ ॥

स वा अयमात्मा सर्वेषां भूतानामधिपतिः सर्वेषां भूतानां राजा । तद्यथा रथनाभौ च रथनेमौ च अरास्सर्वे समर्पिता एवमेवास्मिन्नात्मनि सर्वाणि भूतानि सर्वे देवाः सर्वे लोकाः सर्वे प्राणाः सर्व एत आत्मनस्समर्पिताः ॥ १५ ॥

इदं वै तन्मधु दध्यङ्गाथर्वणोऽश्विभ्यामुवाच । तदेतद् ऋषिः पश्यन्नवोचत् । तद्वां नरा सनये दक्षः उग्रम् आविष्कृतोमि तन्यतुर्न वृष्टिम् । दध्यङ् ह यन्मधु आथर्वणो वामश्वस्य शीर्ष्णां प्र यदीमुवाचेति ॥ १६ ॥

इदं वै तन्मधु दध्यङ्गाथर्वणोऽश्विभ्यामुवाच । तदेतद् ऋषिः पश्यन्नवोचत् । “आथर्वणायाश्विनौ दधीचेऽश्वयः शिरः प्रत्वैरयतम् । स वां मधु प्रवोचद् ऋतायन् त्वाष्ट्रं यदस्रावपि कक्ष्यं वाम्” इति ॥ १७ ॥

इदं वै तन्मधु दध्यङ्गाथर्वणोऽश्विभ्यामुवाच । तदेतद् ऋषिः पश्यन्नवोचत् “पुर चक्रे द्विपदः पुर चक्रे चतुष्पदः । पुरस्स पक्षी भूत्वा पुरः पुरुष आविशद्”

इति । स वा अयम्पुरुषस्सर्वासु पूर्षु पुरिशयो नैनेन किञ्चनानावृतचैनेन किञ्चनानासंवृतम् ॥ १८ ॥

इदं वै तन्मधु दध्यङ्गाथर्वणोऽश्विभ्यामुवाच । तदेतद् ऋषिः पश्यन्नवोचत्
“रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव तदस्य रूपं प्रतिचक्षणाय । इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरुरूप
ईयते । युक्ता ह्यस्य हरयश्शता दशेति । अयं वै हरयोऽयं वै दश च सहस्राणि
बहूनि चानन्तानि च । तदेतद्ब्रह्म अपूर्वम् अनपरम् अनन्तरम् अबाह्यम् ।
अयमात्मा ब्रह्म सर्वानुभूः” इत्यनुशासनम् ॥ १९ ॥

1. वस्त्वधीना भवेद्विद्या कर्त्रधीनो भवेद्विधिः । उपदेशसाहस्री 1.13
2. Br Up 2.5.1
3. Br Up 2.5.2
4. परस्पररोपकार्योपकारकत्वात् तथाभूतं भवितुमर्हति । Br Up शांकरभाष्य 2.5
5. धृतिस्तम्भाधारां दृढगुणनिबद्धां सगमनां
विचित्रां पद्माढ्यां प्रतिदिवससन्मार्गघटिताम् ।
स्मरारे मच्चेतःस्फुटपटकुटीं प्राप्य विशदां
जय स्वामिन्शक्त्या सह शिवगणैः सेवित विभो । शिवानन्दलहरी 21
6. प्रथमा प्रतिमा पूजा जपस्त्रोत्रादि मध्यमा
उत्तमा मानसी पूजा सोहं पूजोत्तमोत्तमा । पाद्मे
7. येनेष्टं तेन गम्यताम् । मनु
8. यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु । गीता 18.63
9. अधिपतिः सर्वभूतानां स्वतंत्रः । Br Up शांकरभाष्य 2.5.15
10. अत्राधिपत्येन स्वातन्त्र्यम् अभिधीयते । विद्यारण्य
11. क्रतौ सुप्ते जाग्रत्स्वप्नसि फलयोगे क्रतुमतां क्र कर्म प्रध्वस्तं फलति
पुरुषाराधनमृते । पुष्पदन्त
12. Br Up 2.5.16

13. सत्यप्रतिज्ञः स गुरुः सोद्वाप्येतादृशीं गतिम् । वार्तिकसार
14. कदा वा त्वां दृष्ट्वा गिरिश तव भव्यांघ्रियुगलं गृहीत्वा हस्ताभ्यां शिरसि
नयने वक्षसि वहन् । समाश्लिष्याघ्राय स्फुटजलजगन्धान् परिमलान् अलभ्यां
ब्रह्माद्यैर्मुदमनुभविष्यामि हृदये ॥ शिवानन्दलहरी 26
15. वसामि नित्यं सुभगे प्रगल्भे दक्षे नरे कर्मणि वर्तमाने । महाभारत अनुशासन पर्व
16. पुरुषे ते यतस्तस्मात् पुरुषो जीव उच्यते ।
सर्वं पूरयति ह्येवं पुरुषो ब्रह्म मन्यते ॥ वार्तिकसार
17. Br Up 2.57.7
18. अज्ञानं संशयज्ञानं मिथ्याज्ञानम् इदं जगत् । वार्तिकसार





Vedanta and Modern Society



Preface

*Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied;
 And vice sometimes by action dignified.
 Within the infant rind of this small flower
 Poison hath residence and medicine power:
 For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part;
 Being tasted, slays all senses with the heart,
 Two such opposed beings encamp them still
 In man as well as herbs, grace and rude will;
 And where the worser is predominant,
 Full soon the canker death eats up that plant.*

Shakespeare

Humanity has reached a crossroad. Within a period of twenty years or so it went through the agony of the two World Wars. Since the end of the last war, during the last thirty years or so, we are living on the threshold of a nuclear holocaust. Humanity is at the mercy of two super states, and perhaps even those so-called super states are also at the mercy of a score or so individuals. During the millions of years that the homo sapiens have existed, they have never been in such a pitiable and dependent state. This is what modern science has given as a present to humanity for the complete confidence and faith that humanity reposed in it. Thus with the nuclear warmongers

of the two camps roaring in the horizon the process of desiccation of spiritual values from the human mind has set in. The earth seems to be a spiritual wasteland, and values but a mirage. Unless humanity is able to neutralise this base instinct, it is headed for total annihilation. Children have already turned to nihilism, for spiritualism seems to have failed. A vibrant spiritual resurgence is the only practical solution for human survival. A devoted heart, boundless faith, deep intellectual introspection, love expressed as active sympathy, mystic intuitive experience and absolute fearlessness is the need of the hour.

Vedānta is concerned mainly with the supreme spiritual reality. This reality is the basis of external as well as the internal world. The identity of *Jiva* (internal) and *Shiva* (external) is the final truth. Though this is to be actually sought within the cavern of one's heart, yet once realised it explodes the barrier of the internal and external, leading to one homogeneous wholesome existence. Such individual realisation serves as a catalyst for the emergence of a deeper change in humanity. The divine state of blessedness does not remain a dream but becomes a reality in everyday life. Such person become capable of turning the mirage of spiritual and ethical values as a palpable reality. Myths, legends and scriptures open up the deep spiritual significance that is embedded in them. The 'joy' of science pales into insignificance in the Sun of Shiva-blessedness. India with its rich cultural heritage is the right spot to bring this blessedness to humanity.

There is vast literature yet unpublished in the Indian languages which will prove a paradise to those interested in bringing a reformation of modern society both in India and the rest of the world. It is bound to add to the references which will enrich humanity and its knowledge quantum.

Homo Sapiens is also socialis. As such he is under constant observation and judgement of other human beings, and in turn is an observer and judge of all those who come in his contact. He also observes the nature around him both in an intelligent and emotional manner. In doing so he evaluates and concludes a situation or a person as good or bad, and sometimes as indefinite. This is what is known as the 'value-judgement'. Values are not consciously created but 'discovered'. Psychologists may claim that social or individual or even the cosmic unconscious creates them, but as a matter of fact even this is only a judgement based on a 'value', which may at least involve a cause and effect syndrome. Thus we are right in claiming that values existed before our birth and will outlast our death. Values in particularity may change, but value as such persists. Just as the content of our knowledge may change, but knowledge as such goes on existing, for the changed-knowledge is also knowledge, similarly values change but a changed value is also a value. Hence a value-less human being is contradiction in terms. It is in this sense that value is eternal. Values can never be transient as objects are transient. Values are like mathematical laws. Mathematics may change models. Decimal system, Pentad system, etc., have given way to

the Diad system in the computer age, but the eternity of laws remain. Similarly the law of love as a value is eternal though models and modulations of love may change.

Human society is more potently affected by values than any other art or science. One may not take cognisance of these laws but they affect us all the same. Values may be subdivided as universal values, categorical values, true values, human values, cultural values, religious values, national values, social values, etc. But all values are necessarily 'demanding'. They dictate 'should do' rather than 'should be'. In ancient India *Dharma* and *Jñāna* were subdivision of Vedas based on this. Jaimini dealt with what one 'should do', whereas Bādarāyaṇa dealt with what 'should be'. Bochenski in the west has dealt with this problem, though somewhat loosely. Aesthetic values, he points out, are 'should be' values for they deal with beauty, elegance, sublimity and so forth. Hindus for that very reason have included joy in 'Brahman' rather than Dharman group. No individual can be entirely bereft of 'should do' whether he calls himself an atheist or a cynic. He expects from other members of society what he will claim is to be complied by all members. Similarly a country may claim to be secular, yet it expects some duties from the populace. Even the cārvākas of ancient India expected their members to observe the rules or laws laid down by the dominant group or the king. Thus every individual is attached to some religion. Irreligion is only a religion which is not my religion. Criminal law is based

on certain values, and no social group or country lacks it totally.

Values must be inculcated in children at the earliest ages. Cultural, social or national values must be implanted in schools, compulsorily in all the groups of society, majority or minority, tribals or otherwise scheduled. These cannot be inculcated merely didactically. They require a medium to be transmitted just as sound needs a medium for transmission. Language, history, geography, sciences, mathematics, psychology, etc., are all such mediums, provided the teachers possess proper vision and are ready to convey it. This is the only method to educate children apart from making them literate. Vedānta's major contribution to modern society is to lay the foundations of intellectual and emotional education. The present ills of modern society spring from a lack of value structure which can be intellectually perceived and emotionally felt by a scientific mind. By supplying this corrective modern society can become the harbinger of paradise on this earth *Sampūrṇaṁ jagadeva nandanavanam*.

Bharatiya Sanskriti Samaj arranged this series of lectures at the FICCI auditorium, New Delhi in 1987. 1987 has been an year of intense search within as far as India is concerned with such issues as the President, the Prime Minister, scandals of Bofors, submarines, etc. The dominant ruling congress party has been functioning anti-democratically and un-democratically, since its inception in 1967. But the present observation of whimsical actions is a new nadir. India is bound to see some fundamental

changes in not too distant a future. Vedānta is bound to become the bedrock of future changes. We hope the thoughts enshrined in these lectures will help in laying the foundations of this change.

Shankar Math

Mount Abu

Bhādra Saṁkranti

Maheshanand Giri



Lecture One

We had discussed the art of living earlier, the next problem we will take up is modern society, the field in which we have to practice this art of living. The word society is derived from the roots ‘socius’ in Latin which basically means a companion. Actually it implies where human beings live together as a group, because that is what we mean by a companion—living as a group. People may live with each other without forming a group but that does not create a society. Also, that group must be in a situation in which the dealings of each individual in that group is for the good of all them, that is, members of the group strive towards common welfare. If members of a group interact with each other, but do not help each other toward a common goal, toward the ideal of common welfare, then one cannot call it a society. In other words, by society we mean companionship, because the concept of companion is intertwined with the idea of helping each other toward the same goal.

The society that we will discuss here is modern society because that is where we have to live. Modern means that which is at present with us. No doubt the word modern also implies just now. But ‘just now’ is merely a concept.

In the present context we can say that from 1450 AD onwards a definite change in the social structure was seen all over the world. Although the ball started rolling with the Reformation in Europe, but somewhere in the mid-fifteenth century there was a complete change of attitude towards certain basic factors of life. From an idealistic culture we moved towards a sensate culture or what is commonly known as the scientific culture. What is the major premise of modern science? It believes that all what is objective is real, all what is valuable is always sensory. In other words, whatever we receive through our senses that knowledge alone is reliable. All other concepts must be reduced in terms of this sensuous knowledge. This led to a change. Though it may have started in Europe, yet slowly this modern social conception, this modern culture, this modern scientific outlook pervaded all over the world.

We are all living in that culture where all cognitions are to be reduced to, what a Vedāntin will call, the *jāgrat* level. As human beings we are continuously moving in three states of consciousness. Sensory perceptions are at the *jāgrat* level, that is, the waking state. Then we move to the dream state where there are no sensuous perceptions. But can we deny its reality? Modern science and modern social outlook want us to forget about the dream state that we all experience. Whenever a Vedāntin talks about the dream state, people will immediately tell him to forget about that state. But one experiences the dream state as much as one experiences the waking state. On what objective criteria can they say that we must reject the

dream experience apart from the fact that there is a superstitious attachment to the waking state. In short, modern science does not want to consider this state. If, at all, this state has to be discussed, then it is taken for granted that it is only a reflection of what has been experience in the waking state.

The third state which we experience is the state of deep sleep. In this state there are no perceptions—neither are there any sensual perceptions nor any mental perceptions. Deep sleep is the state in which we experience nothing but joy. It is bereft of all objective experience. Modern science wants us to forget about this state. This view is based on the subjective experience which modern science does not want to discuss, because that is the source of all intuitive knowledge. Though the senses are not active and the mind is not active in deep sleep state, yet we experience something so deep, so touching, so intuitive that this is the only state from which we get up absolutely relaxed and fresh. If, for a few days, we do not experience that state, we take all kinds of tranquillisers so that we can experience that state. In spite of this modern science, modern social outlook does not want to analyse it.

Of the three states of consciousness, arbitrarily two-thirds of our life is, so to say, cut away by the modern scientific outlook which forms the modern social outlook. This is the reason why more and more emphasis is placed on chemical, physical and biological interpretations of our experiences and values. Everything must be reduced in terms of physical, chemical or biological phenomena.

Some psychoanalysts and psychologists perceive the mind as something of an active nature. But being influenced by the modern scientific outlook, even they try to reduce all psychological phenomena in terms of what has been experienced through the senses. The view that the mind is an active agent is generally denied. We are what we experienced in our childhood or, some may say, what we experienced while we were in the womb. Some experience on a sensuous level has shaped our mind the way it is. The mind is not an active agent in itself. If this is the case of psychological phenomena, then what to talk of religious or metaphysical experiences. The modern scientific outlook decries these experiences entirely. It goes to the extent of repudiating them as something fantastic, something which does not talk about the reality as it is. It emphasises that this is an unscientific way of looking at things. The modern scientific outlook goes to the extent of saying that even if this leads to an experience, it is meaningless and has no utility. This particular attitude of sensate life predominates all our thinking since the middle of the fifteenth century.

Vedānta has defined the framework within which we have to practice the art of living. We must first define what we mean by a Vedāntic frame. Ācārya Śaṅkara has expressed this in a very short verse.¹ He says that even though the field of Vedānta is vast,² it deals with the totality of human experience at all different strata, yet it is a very short, terse form. Brahma alone expresses itself as the source and matter. *Brahmaiva jiva*—the soul is nothing

but God Himself. In short, the Vedāntic outlook is absolutely opposed to the sensate outlook. In the latter God has no place whereas in the former God is present within one as one's own self. The two viewpoints are totally contradictory. One doubts the very existence of God, while the other emphasises that God is the reality which cannot be contradicted. It believes that since we ourselves are God then how can we contradict our self. No one can deny oneself. The whole of the sensate world that we are seeing is nothing but God manifested through different adjuncts. God is present in us as the perceiver and He is also present everywhere as the perceived. Just as the scientific outlook stresses that everything is nothing but sensuous, Vedānta maintains that there is nothing but God.

What is liberation?³ It is nothing but getting established in this truth—where there is no division between the seer and the seen and both are sublimated. We are neither the perceiver nor the perceived but something which has made perception itself possible. Always being in that stage without any contradiction within our own self that is what we mean by the term liberation or *moksha*. This *brahman* is non-dual (*advitīya*). It has absolutely nothing which can be limited in any way either by time, space or causation. Nothing can ever limit it or place it within constraints. This is the message of all the Vedas (*śrutayah pramāṇam*). Even though there are many *śrutis*, many Vedic passages, they all aim to produce the same result. That is why the word *pramāṇam* is used in the singular. The different

Vedas, the various passages of the Vedas do not convey contradictory messages. They all convey the same message without any difference whatsoever.

We can say that the whole conception of modern society is sensate as compared to the conception of Vedānta which is divine. The question arises: though this may be the most ancient wisdom of mankind, can it contribute to modern social living? Can Vedānta be lived in modern society? Is Vedānta relevant today? We can go even further and analyse—can it be an instrument of common welfare? All these questions must be discussed thoroughly because merely saying that Vedānta is an ancient wisdom will place it in the category of archaeology where it can only be studied. It will not be a living guide for us either in our own life, or for the sake of humanity or even nation building. The fact that Vedānta in modern society is practical, relevant and the only instrument through which common welfare can be achieved is what we shall try to assert here. The main reason is that the sensate culture has failed by its own weight. A few years ago people could have doubted the utility of Vedānta. But today we find that science has created its own Frankenstein. It is being killed by its own momentum. We are in very peculiar situation. We see that a person who discovers a hydrogen bomb, something which can destroy humanity, is considered a Nobel laureate. The very idea, the very conception hurts as ordinary individual.

People have begun to wonder whether they are going on the right track, whether their direction is right. Until a

few decades ago, the movement was linear. It seemed as if technology would deliver us from want, from poverty and all that which comes with it. In India even today a part of that superstition persists. Even in highly civilised societies like the United States we find that they have not been able to remove poverty, not been able to remove hunger. It is true no doubt that hunger and poverty have been removed to some extent and these societies have attained a high standard of living. But the crucial point is that they have not been able to eradicate them completely. If they have not been able to eliminate these ills even in their own countries, is it possible that their advanced technology would be able to do so from the whole of human society? Of course people may say that this failure to eradicate these ills completely is due to the fact that those techniques have not been utilised properly. But the question remains—while taking credit for all the achievements, why is technology not ready to accept all the faults that stem from it? This is where superstition comes in. Every development is immediately traced back to science, but whenever we question this illegitimate way of life, it is immediately traced back to values. Why has science failed to give us those values? There must be something fundamentally wrong in the scientific way of thinking.

Ācārya Śaṅkara has expressed this in a very beautiful verse. Why is it that these values are disturbed? Fundamental values are values of renunciation, values of sacrifice. The moment we get rid of those values and try to emphasise the sensate aspect of life, the sensory

perceptions of life, contradictions arise. The Lord, he says, is playing in the garden of Vedānta like a peacock. He says that a peacock has a crown-like thing on the top of its head and because of this the peacock is called *śikhī*.⁴ The Lord is also a *śikhī*. Why is the Lord a *śikhī*? *Ākāśa* always adorns His head. *Ākāśa* is the space. Everything else can be removed from our minds, from our conceptions—materially everything can be removed—but space is something which can never be removed. As far as the material world is concerned, space is irremovable. The Lord's crown is *ākāśa* which is irremovable. No matter how much we try to get rid of space, we cannot get rid of it. Space is not a negative concept as some people seem to think. It is not merely the absence of things. Space makes all movements possible. Any one who has *ākāśa*, that is, the absence of all material things, as his crown, he alone can give the value to life. Generally, people consider space to be something meaningless and without any value. But, on the contrary, it is most valuable because out of that space the whole universe comes into being. Without space there would be nothing. In short, we must make *ākāśa*—the absence of all sensuous knowledge—our crown.

The Lord always has snakes around his body.⁵ *Samasta phaṇinam netrā*, *ananta* and *vāsuki* are the kings of snakes. He adorns them on His body like an ornament. Generally, a snake is considered to be the most dreaded of all animals. As soon as a person sees a snake, he is afraid. That which makes us fearful all the time is what is to be worn as an

ornament. Such should be the state of our fearlessness. Modern society is geared to make us feel afraid all the time. We are afraid of wars, we are afraid of everything. Today in India we are afraid of death all the time.

Vinobā Bhāve has recorded that he was invited to attend the inaugural function of the Banaras Hindu University. The then Viceroy had also been invited. Gandhiji was also present at the occasion. As is the custom among Indians, they regard the king as the manifestation of the divine power. Vinobā Bhāve records that people were trying to catch a glimpse of the Viceroy, they were trying to move close to him and trying to touch him. Touching another person is very natural as far as Indians are concerned. The Viceroy was surrounded on all sides by the police. Everybody was being pushed away so that no one could go anywhere near the Viceroy. Gandhiji was presiding over the function, he said that people were trying to move closer to the Viceroy but they were being pushed away because the Viceroy was afraid. Gandhiji made that remark in the very presence of the Viceroy. Gandhiji went on to say that it would be better if the Viceroy is killed and he faces death once instead of being afraid all the time and facing death every moment of his life. That fearlessness which was implanted in our minds is no longer a part of us. We are afraid of our own people. At least the Viceroy was a foreigner. But we, who belong to this nation, are afraid of our own people.

Once we have accepted that even the king of snakes has to be adorned as an ornament, we have nothing to be afraid

of. Each individual has to die only once. No one can die twice. Then why this fear of death most of the time? Death is a sweet experience. Many people spend a lot of money and go to America or to Switzerland; the middle class go to Kashmir or Ooty; while those from the lower class cannot afford to go abroad or to a hill station so they go to Lodhi Gardens. We all welcome a change of circumstance, a change of environment. What is death? To us Indians, it is only a change of circumstances, a change of environment. Why should we be afraid of death? The concept of being afraid of death is alien to us; the semitic religions believe that they have been given only one chance of life and if they are afraid of death it may make some sense. They feel that they have very little chance of going to heaven and they can only enjoy whatever is here. For us, there is an infinite expanse of lives spreading out before us. What are we afraid of? By adorning His body with the king of snakes. He is giving us the message that only a person who is as fearless as that can give direction to the values of life. A person who is constantly afraid can never give values to life.⁶ Even though he is bereft of all worldly possessions because space is His crown, even though He has accepted snakes as His ornaments, yet who ever goes to Him—*natānugrahī* or the one who goes with humility towards Him—to him He is always full of grace. *Anugraha* means that when a person approaches another humbly only then can he be taught the truths of life. A person who is already full of his own thoughts cannot be taught the values of life.

There is a story which illustrates this very well. There was once a nobleman who went to an abbot at a monastery and asked him to teach him something. The abbot replied that he would teach him but they should have tea first. So they sat down for tea. The abbot poured tea into a cup. Even though the cup was full, yet he continued to pour. The nobleman saw this and told him, 'It seems sir that your eyes are weak. You are still pouring tea even though the cup is full.' The abbot replied that even though the cup was full but why not have some more. Whereupon the nobleman told him that the cup would not hold it. The abbot stopped and poured tea into his own cup. They drank tea and the abbot sat silently. The nobleman again asked him whether he would teach him something. The abbot replied that he had already taught him. The nobleman was surprised and said that he did not understand and he did not hear anything. The abbot said, 'When the cup is already full more tea cannot be poured into it. Similarly, you are full of your own ideas, your own way of thinking, your own superstitions. You have not come here with the attitude of humility to learn. Whatever will be poured will just flow out. It will not be contained. I have taught you that only when the mind takes the attitude of humility that the higher truths can be taught and grasped.'

Those who come to learn, those who are humble enough to know that they have to learn, to them the Lord gives the *upadeśa*, *nath anugrahī upadeśa*.⁷ How does the Lord give this *upadeśa*? Just as the peacock gives a shrill call which

is known as *kekī*. *Kekā* is the sound. The one who produces that sound is called *kekī*. Similarly the Lord gives the *praṇava omkāra* as the final knowledge to him and this final truth leads to the knowledge of all the three states of consciousness. *Om* has three letters in it—*a*, *u* and *ma*. Though *Om* is one sound yet when we analyse we find that it has three aspects. Similarly, supreme consciousness is one but when we analyse we find that it is expressed in the three states of consciousness—the waking state, the dream state and the deep sleep state. The Lord gives the final knowledge with a full-throated sound so that the person is able to absorb and understand it completely.

The Lord is a dancing Lord. For us the concept of Godhead is not that of a supreme judge who makes decisions. This concept does not appeal to the Hindu mind. To the Hindu mind, the beautiful sound of the flute while dancing in the *rās maṇḍala* or a *Naṭrāja* dancing is the joy of life. He is the supreme joy. For Hindus, the concept of God is akin to the concept of joy more than to the concept of justice. Even for a moment one should not think that the concept of justice is not present. The emphasis, however, is on the blissful aspect of the Lord, on the joyful aspect of the Lord. God has not created this universe so that when we do something He will be just and reward us. This is a very prosaic way of looking at creation itself. Parents do not produce children so that they will be able to punish them and reward them. We must ask ourselves: do we create children with this in mind—that we can give them a biscuit or a chocolate

whenever they act properly or slap them whenever they misbehave. We create them out of our own inner joy. We want them to be completely full of joy. We want them to enjoy everything, to be joyful and blissful. We have created them out of bliss and we want them to be blissful. In the same way the Lord has created us out of the fullness of His bliss. He has poured out, so to say, His bliss and He wants our own life to be full of joy and bliss. Like the peacock the Lord dances. The peacock dances when he sees the rain clouds. When does the Lord dance?⁸ He dances seeing Pārvatī, His divine spouse. The rain clouds are dark in colour, so is the mother Pārvatī dark—*śyāma*.

Pārvatī is born out of the mountains, the Himalayas.⁹ Now this is very interesting. On the one hand, He wears a crown of *ākāśa*, the subtlest of all elements, on the other He dances looking at the grossest of the five elements, that is, the mountain or the earth which represents the grossest element. Looking at this gross element the Lord dances, because out of that all what exists comes into being. Only after all the five elements have been created that out of the fifth element spring forth all the varieties that we see around us. All the five perceptions are experienced there—completely and wholly. When we look at the mountains we think that they are inert. But out of those inert mountains emerges Śyāmā or Pārvatī. Similarly when we look at the universe it appears that there is nothing there. But out of that emerges the ineffable manifest universe completely and thoroughly and looking at this universe the Lord dances with joy.

We may ask—where does the Lord dance? Where can we see His dance? All the Upanishads and Vedānta form the garden where He dances. Just as in a garden there are a number of trees and all of them together form a garden. There is, no doubt, a difference between a garden and a place where trees have grown haphazardly, without any harmony. Like the garden, the Upanishads have a harmonious existence. We find that it is in that harmony that the Lord dances.

What is the Lord's own form? His form is *Nīlakaṇṭha*. A peacock's throat is blue, so is the Lord's throat blue in colour. But why is the Lord's throat blue? We see blue because we perceive the poison *halāhal* which can burn away everything. We can say that it is something like an atomic bomb. This poison was of such intensity that even the great gods were afraid of it just as we are afraid of nuclear war, star wars and what not. But the Lord was able to contain this poison within His throat. The poison was not able to affect His whole body and it appeared like a dot on His throat. Similarly, according to Vedānta, we should be able to swallow all the poisonous elements and keep them within us without allowing them to destroy anything external to them, external to our own self. Until we attain that state we will not be able to practice the Vedāntic concept of life. By describing the Lord as a peacock, He tells us how we can attain this Vedāntic view.

Modern society seems to be an unsuitable place for practicing this Vedāntic concept of life. But it has to be practiced here and, what is more, it can be practiced here.

Though I have mentioned only the atomic bomb as one of the problems faced by an individual today, yet there are many other problems—ecological, environmental, etc. Everywhere the poison is spreading. Who is to hold this poison within? It is the consciousness which will be able to hold this poison within. Unless we are able to do this, we will not be able to practice the art of living. Unless modern society is given this particular impetus, this particular direction which Vedānta talks about, it will not be able to withstand the various poisons.

Vedānta emphasises a society based on coherence. The present day societies adhere with each other. In any given society an individual will have a number of social outlooks. For example, you are a Hindu by religion, yet at the same time you are an Indian national. You are Hindu because you belong to that religion and you are an Indian because you belong to that nation. The term adherence implies that the two exist side by side without cohering, without completely merging into something which will produce not contradiction in them but a wholesome view of life. As long as there is adherence this cohesion is not possible. This is true of any given society. For example, a person belonging to Hinduism may be a member of another state, say, the United Kingdom or Canada. Thus he is living in two societies at the same time and if he is not able to bring about coherence and if adherence persists it will breed conflict within his own self. A kind of schizophrenia manifests itself because there is no coherence. Supposing that person is not very religious

minded, he does not care whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim, but he is still an Indian then there will be no conflict. But the question arises: is it as easy as that? It is true that he does not believe in religion, but what about his linguistic identity? He is either Hindi-speaking or Tamil-speaking. Here again he identifies himself with a particular group and unless there is coherence there is bound to be conflict. A person who holds strongly to the national society will say that everything else must be secondary. The Indian nation is the primary unit in this case. But the moment the question of primary and secondary arises another person may not agree. Only recently a minister in Tamil Nadu said that he was a Tamilian first and an Indian later. We cannot deny these experiences. When we deal with a society we should remember that different societies will be continuously interpenetrating each other. These conflicts are seen even in the societies of ants and bees.

When we deal with modern society, we are dealing with a society which has not been able to give coherence to total living. We are only able to postpone decisions and our attitude is let us wait for tomorrow, something may happen, some problems will be solved. Because the sensate society, the society based on sensory perceptions has failed to give us those values on the basis of which we can create a coherent society, Vedānta gives us that basis. It has been tested again and again in the Indian context. Whenever there have been complete social changes.

Vedānta has come in the forefront and has given coherence to all the different societies.

A concept which is often criticised is that of caste. Actually it is a great contribution. It was through the caste system, at a particular time in history, that we were able to give coherence to the whole structure. How that coherence was brought about will be discussed later.

To sum up we can say that the art of living has to be practiced in a field and that field is modern society. Modern society is a society based on the fundamental conception that sensory perception is the only real, valid and valuable perception. Vedānta, on the other hand, emphasises that it is only a part of our life. We are greater than this sensate perception. We have to bring about the values from other psychological and spiritual fields. The values which are to be introduced will be discussed later.



Lecture Two

We had discussed earlier what we mean by modern society. We said that modern society could be defined as the period from the middle of the fifteenth century to the present day, because it is this period which has given all that we have of the so-called scientific society or the modern society. We also noted that it emphasised the sensate aspect of life more than any other. Thereby, repudiating the values which were inherent in our religious, metaphysical thought pattern. It has, no doubt, led to increased worldly development, but in the process it has not given us the direction towards which we must move. It has tried to create an adhesive society instead of a cohesive society. Coherence is what we need most today. There is a fundamental difference between coherence and adherence. Coherence is the force by which the molecules of a substance are held together. Though the molecules are different they belong to the same substance. There is a force which holds them together. To express this in the terminology of modern physics we can say that this is due to the fact that the electromagnetic waves are related in such a way with each other that their amplitudes are exactly equivalent. Thereby the molecules rise and fall

together. This is precisely what we mean by a coherent society which includes different social groups.

As mentioned earlier, in any given society there are bound to be different groups because society is basically specialisation and interdependence. Society can never develop unless we have specialised branches of Knowledge, specialised fields of work. We cannot possibly think of a developed society where any individual will be able to do everything. This is just not possible, so we need specialisation. The moment we seek specialisation, we have to create small groups who specialise in those fields, with their own problems and their own ways of looking at things. If these groups are absolutely independent of each other, if they are not interdependent, then they will not form a society. It has already been mentioned in the passing, how this problem was dealt with at a particular moment in the history of India.

Specialisation can be divided into four fields. Some people are intellectuals; others specialise in the art of controlling society from running amok; still others who specialise in increasing the economic welfare of the society; and, finally, the majority of the people who have to be guided, they have to work so that society continuously progresses towards a goal. This division is basically what is known as the *cāturvarṇaya* system. The important feature of this system was that it was interdependent. An intellectual person could not start a business so he had to depend economically on the other group. It must be remembered that a society cannot be

ruled unless there are economic advantages. We cannot have a society comprising only of Brahmins or Kshatriyas or Vaiśyas or Shudras. Hence specialisation and interdependence are important concepts of a society. What happened when we tried to do away with the *varṇa vyavasthā* and substituted language as the basis of forming a society? Each linguistic group thought that it was not dependent on the other group. Had we been able to create a system where different languages were dependent on each other and would not have been able to survive if they moved away from society, then the problem of deteriorating nationalism and national movement would not have arisen. It must be mentioned here that the *cāturvarṇaya* system is not being emphasised as the only system, rather what is being emphasised is that the basic concept underlying this system that of interdependence and specialisation was not realised by those at the helm of affairs. Hence the idea of inter-dependence was not present in the social groups and national disintegration raised its head. Thus, in any given society there will be specialisation and there will be different groups. Only in a coherent society will we be able to develop a system in which each group will be dependent on the other groups and the question of getting away from the main social fabric will not arise. It was noted earlier that in a coherent electromagnetic field the waves are related in such a way that their amplitudes are more or less equivalent. Hence they rise and fall together. In a coherent society economic, social and educational

developments are of the same amplitude for all the different groups in it.

Those of you who are above fifty years of age may remember your childhood. In a village or a small town the standard of living was, more or less, the same no matter how rich or poor a person was. For example, if a rich person went to a barber, he would pay him according to what he had and not according to the services rendered by the barber. If he could afford to pay him five rupees, he paid him that amount. If a poor man could afford to give only four annas, he paid him only four annas. The barber would serve both of them regardless of the amount each had given him.

A few years ago I had gone to Badrīnārāyaṇa temple to attend a puja. The government has taken over the management of the temple. An old man from Bihar had come there with his wife. They were both dressed in torn clothes. The old man's eyesight was very weak and he was wearing very powerful glasses. He moved near the door of the shrine but he could not see anything within. So he told the man in charge of the temple that they had come a long way from Bihar and wanted to have *darshan*. He asked him whether they could go in and have a closer look. The man in charge told him that the *darshan* fee was fifty rupees. Upon hearing this, the old man told him that he did not have that much money and he took out a one rupee note and offered it to the man. The man in charge repeated that the fee was fifty rupees and everything had been regularised since the government took over the

temple. Wealthy people are happy about this because they can do what they like. The old man thought for a long time, discussed the matter with his wife and eventually took out a five rupee note and told the man that this was all the money he had apart from the fare which meant that they would not have anything to eat on the way back. Seeing the five rupee note, the man laughed and said, 'Nothing doing, get out. Nothing less than fifty rupees and we cannot do anything about it.'

I remember the times of the Paṇḍās. When they were in charge of the temple they also took money, but a person who had only one rupee was also allowed to enter and have *darshan*. In case a rich person came along they would demand as much as a thousand rupees. But a poor person also had an approach because the Paṇḍās knew that even though this man had no money today, they had a relationship with him. They had a family relationship with him—may be after five generations, some one from his family would come who would have enough money and they would get from him what they were not able to get today. This family relationship existed in all different spheres of life. Rise and fall went together. For example, if a person was rich, then all those related to him should become rich. If a person from a village graduated and went to the city, say, Allahabad or any of the big cities, and practiced law there, it was taken for granted that any one from that village who desired a college degree would go to Allahabad and stay with him. It was accepted as a norm because this man from the village had grown. He

had used that stage. Today we can stay with him, tomorrow his fortunes may decline and his son may stay with us. This conception of rise and fall at the same time was emphasised in a coherent society. In an adherent society these conceptions do not exist.

Often I tell people that there are certain conceptions in different societies and we should understand them properly. These days we hear that there is widespread nepotism. What is nepotism? Have we ever tried to analyse the concept? If a person is related to us in some way and we want to give him a lift it is perceived to be nepotism. Have we ever thought that in the Indian context, is it not our duty to help a person who is related to us? Are we not being ungrateful when we deny him that opportunity to rise with us? How do we try to check nepotism? A Brahmin would normally be related to another Brahmin and the only job that he can offer him would be teaching, he cannot offer him the job of a chaprasi even though he is related to him. Nepotism can only be checked when there is specialisation so that people related to a person would belong to the same specialised field. Nepotism today has taken the other form, the uglier form, because a Brahmin wants to give the job of a chowkidar—a Shudra's job—to another Brahmin who is related to him.

When we try to analyse society we must take society as a whole. Often the mistake that we make is to depend on Westerners or their coordinates to analyse our society. Society has to be analysed from within, only a member of

that society can understand its problems and not some one who is outside that society. When an outsider analyses, he does not take such important factors into consideration as what have we based our society on and what are our relations. The idea of interdependence was present, the idea of rising and falling together was present, but through the very concept of specialisation it was restricted. We cannot say that a man in a particular post would recruit his own people everywhere, because he would be able to exercise his authority only in a limited area. As I said earlier, we may have to evolve an entirely different system but before we develop that system we must find out the fundamental values on which we will base that system.

The word for society in Sanskrit and Hindi is *samāj*—*sama* + *aj*. *Aj* means to move, when we move together towards a goal.¹⁰ The Śruti says that when we move together, the movement is together. But a crowd also moves together can we call it a *samāj*? There must be understanding of each other—*saṁgatyā ajati*. Though there may be several different fields of specialisation yet there must be basic understanding. The emphasis should be on understanding each other—*sammatyā ajati*. After understanding each other there must be *sammiti*, that is, a view most of us agree to. For example, Kamaraj without being influenced by any Western powers was able to select two Prime Ministers in India. His selection may have been right or wrong, we will not go into any political discussions here, but the fact that he was able to create a consensus without breaking up the whole social group—a

particular party in this case—is the core of our *sāmājic* conception. *Sammiti* is important, a total identity of views is not possible because in that case it will not be *sammiti*. However, we can arrive at a consensus.

Today laws are framed without any particular goal in mind. We may talk about Indian society but do we have any particular goal for that society. The moment we talk about goals the reaction is that certain groups may not accept these goals, hence we must be tolerant. This is not toleration. In fact, this is destroying the very fundamentals of society. If we want to bring about a change in a particular social group, even there we find no understanding or *saṁgati*. We may decide to do something but we never make an attempt to explain why and what for that decision has been taken. Hence, when there is no convergence towards a goal, when there is no understanding of the goal, the question of *saṁgati* does not arise. There is no consensus on any issue and, as a result, whenever any decision is taken immediately there is an opposition to that decision. Certainly, in any given society there will be people who will oppose but if there is *saṁgati* and *sammiti* then they can be easily won over.

What happens today in the name of democracy, in the name of minority, in the name of majority—a large number of people are always opposing any step which is taken. We see this at the level of the government—there is no issue on which we have a national consensus, the moment the government takes a decision, those in the opposition feel that they are in the minority and hence

they have to oppose that decision. Being opposition parties they have nothing else to do but oppose.

We see the same thing in a business concern, in an industry. There may be difference of opinion between labour and the management but they never reach *sammiti*. They never reach an agreement on any decision, the moment a decision is taken by the management and agreed to by the workers that they will work to make it a success but at the back of their minds they want to make sure that it is unsuccessful. The desire to make an agreement successful is not present because that *sammiti* has never been reached.¹¹ When we are moving together there must be a common feeling for each other—*samhṛda sahr̥dyatā*. While doing anything we must be able to understand the difficulties of others. Until all these are present at all the different levels, we cannot have a coherent society.

Adherence involves different molecules which do not have equality of amplitude. They are merely together because circumstances have brought them together. It is something like growth in the body. Biologically, we can say that it is joining together of fibrous tissue. If there is a wound in the body, the fibrous tissues will close the wound but there will be no strength because that is lacking. Though the wound has joined together yet it has not formed oneness. At present our society is an adhesive society. Even though we talk about national integration yet we feel that we are here by chance and, somehow or other, we have to live as separate groups. In every field of

life we are trying to find a solution to the problem of living together, not how to live as one, or how to live in the sense of unity. Vedānta emphasises that we must not only have a coherent nation but also a coherent humanity. All the different national groups should cohere not because there is one world government, if this happens then we will have the same problem that we are facing in India today.

Often I feel that India is like a crucible, a place where God conducts experiments for the good of humanity. We find that all the different religions, all the different linguistic groups are fighting here, is it not a mini panorama of what is going on all over the world. Therefore, if the problem can be solved here, then not only the problem of this nation would be solved but that of the entire humanity. These groups have always existed as an adherent society and the result has been conflict which has been taken for granted. If we go back one thousand years in Indian history, we find that different cultural groups, different religious groups, different social groups and different tribes came here. Even at that time—a thousand years ago—they had formed a coherent society. Today if we talk about that society we say that it had only one name—the Hindu society. Though that society comprised different groups yet they had become coherent because each was given independence. It was basically a federal structure.

Western people often laugh at us, they say that on the one hand we talk about *advaita*, about the universal

consciousness being present everywhere and on the other we worship the basil leaf tree (*tulsi* tree) and the *vaṭa vṛikṣa*. Is this not a contradiction? They do not understand the fundamentals of a coherent society. A person who came from a particular social fabric or tribe worshipped a particular tree or leaf or bush and we accepted this and gave it greater meaning. We related this belief to a complete thought pattern—the basil leaf or *tulsi* is no longer just a bush but it becomes a manifestation of the divine. This is how a coherent society evolves. A coherent society implies that we have accepted the difference and having accepted we try to build up a fundamental wholesome unit.

We will discuss the concept of this *samāj*—the modern society—in the Sāmmanasya Sūkta of the Atharva Veda where it has been described.¹² The Lord says that I bestow on you a heart full of love (*sahrdayam*), a mind full of virtuous thoughts (*sāmmanasyam*), and a life devoid of animosity (*avidveṣam kṛṇomi*). May you love each other just like a cow loves its newborn calf.¹³ This is indeed beautiful imagery. The word used here for cow is *aghnyā*. *Aghnyā* means that which is never to be killed. The Vedas, we find, often refer to a cow as *aghnyā* because the cow should never be killed. The point being emphasised here is that just as a cow should never be killed, similarly a society should never be killed. We must never entertain thoughts of getting rid of the society. That is the fundamental conception. Like a cow loves its newborn calf, a society must love each different group equally and

totally. This is a two way process—a group in a society should have the attitude of *aghnyā* towards the totality of society. We must not do anything under any circumstances which will kill the spirit of a society. No social group in the society should believe that it can suppress or destroy any other social group. This love between the part and the whole is what is important. Each social group is a part, it is like an organ of the body whereas society is like the body. The organs are interdependent, all the organs of the body are required to sustain the body. Similarly all the social groups must be absolutely necessary for the survival of the society.

The kind of society we evolve will depend on the particular ideology we follow. According to the Atharva Veda, and even the Rig Veda, there are basically three types of societies—the Marya society, the Narya society and the Divya society. The Marya society is oriented towards this worldly goal. Religion in a Marya society is also directed towards this world. Today's sensate society is, more or less, a Marya society. Here religion is judged not in terms of its spiritual values, but in terms of the type of bureaucracy it involves, the type of hierarchy it entails, the buildings and funds it has at its disposal.

Whenever we talk about different religious groups in India, do we ever discuss which group has produced, in the last thirty years or so, the greatest number of spiritual leaders, the greatest number of spiritual ideas or books? We merely talk about different bureaucratic movements and this has led to a very peculiar situation. Hinduism has

never been a fundamentalistic religion, it cannot be fundamentalistic because a fundamentalistic religion is restricted by a particular time, space and book. Going back to that time, to that circumstance is fundamentalism. Hinduism, on the other hand, is Sanātana Dharma. We cannot say that there is a particular period of history or person or anything else which we want to go back to. Go back to what? Go back to Rāma's time or Kṛṣṇa's time or Buddha's time or Śaṅkara's time? The very idea of fundamentalism does not appeal to the Hindu mind, temperament or religion. Then why has this concept emerged? There is no spiritualism involved here. The sensate society seeks power, wealth and all the other external worldly things but it does not seek spirituality. Desirous of all these worldly things, the sensate society wants to see the same thing in a Hindu group.

We have always emphasised that whenever religion is not present, religious practices do not exist, then where does *dharma* reside. *Dharma* does not reside in any textbook. We may have a huge library of all the religious texts but does that make us religious? Does religion lie in those textbooks?¹⁴ Ācārya Śabarasvāmi says that religion is that which is practiced. When we practice religion, only then it becomes *dharma*. When we say that one should speak the truth, this statement by itself is not *dharma*. Only when a person speaks the truth that it becomes *dharma*. In other words, religion is something which is to be practiced, *dharma* is something which is to be practiced.

Once I was invited to a particular place to attend a religious function. The arrangements were excellent, the organisation was superb. There was a big Shiva temple nearby. The conference was ending a day prior to Śivarātri. When I inquired whether they had organised any puja in the temple to celebrate Śivarātri, the organisers were all surprised and remarked that they were not aware that Śivarātri was the following day. This is what I call Hindu fundamentalism. People will talk about Hinduism but there is no spiritual content in their discussion. For them religion is a political or an economic movement. Thus, the Marya saṁskṛti always emphasises this worldly things.

We can conduct an experiment to see this for ourselves. On Tuesdays there are long queues outside a Hanumān temple. If we were to ask each person in the queue the reason for his being there, I am sure that 99 per cent of the people would reply that they desire some worldly object. Not one person would say that he was there in the hope of getting salvation so that he could have peace of mind. This is what the Marya culture, the sensate culture gives us in the garb of religion. If this is the case of religion which is another worldly object, then what to say of other things in society. In other words, in the Marya saṁskṛti, in the Marya society, the emphasis is on orientation towards this world.

Opposed to the Marya saṁskṛti is the Narya saṁskṛti which denies the value of this world, completely and entirely. It propagates world negation. At a particular period in Indian history this viewpoint was emphasised.

In Europe too during the middle ages this view was emphasised. This is what I sometimes call the puritanical or the kill-joy society. It cannot tolerate any one enjoying himself. It is essentially a reaction against the Marya culture which emphasised that everything should be in terms of worldly enjoyment. The Narya culture denies everything. According to this viewpoint, there should be no music, no dance in a religion. Music and dance and all other such things were always found in our temples because they were a part of our lives and life was not to be negated. God has not given us things so that we reject them. If, for example, we have to close our eyes all the time then why did God give us eyes. If we have to shut our ears all the time then why did God give us ears. Narya culture, in short, is a world negation and as mentioned earlier, it evolved as a reaction against the Marya culture.

Vedānta emphasises the concept of a Divya society, where everything must be oriented towards God and not towards the joys of this world. Here joy is not negated but the orientation is towards God. All our joys should be through the divinity and not directly. This is the greatness of Divya society and this is precisely why we are able to rise and fall together. The basic idea being that God is in the centre. Basically in a field, action and reaction take place together. Society exists so that individuals can act and react with each other. It is the resultant direction which shows us the goal towards which a particular society is moving.

In any given society there will be people who have a worldly outlook; others who are world negating; and still others who are God oriented in their approach to life. No society can be bereft of all these three categories of individuals. When we speak of a Marya or Narya or Divya society, we refer to the resultant of this action and reaction of individuals and society. Is the resultant movement towards God or is it towards this world or towards a negation of this world? Action and reaction will always be present. Each individual is free to react. The action stems from the society and we have no control over it but what we can control is how we react to it. When a Hindu, a Vedāntin, talks about fundamentalism, if he is forced to talk about it, his fundamental value will be that under all circumstances he will stick to the Divya view. He will also believe that he has complete control over his own reaction, but he does not have complete control over the way another person will react.

A Divya society is duty oriented, the emphasis is on what we have to do and not on what the other person has to do. In the Manusmṛti or the Yājñavalkyasmṛti nowhere do we come across any reference to a Brahmin forcing another person to prostrate before him, to do *namaskāra*. When the duties of others are described then the question is what are our duties. The question of our rights does not arise here. When the duties of women are described, the issue of their rights does not arise. When the duties of a husband are discussed, there is no discussion of his rights over his wife and children. A Divya society always tries to

teach us what we ought to do because that is where we are independent. On the other hand, a Marya society or the sensate society, always makes us conscious of our rights. It is taken for granted that one must be made conscious of his rights. A right is something which we demand and it is for the other person to give it or not. This is the easiest way to make another person unhappy. No one wants to give us what we want from him because all the time he is conscious of what he is not getting from us. A rights oriented society, a Marya society, is conflict ridden.

We have tried to create a society based on the concept of duty. To do duty is in our own hands. There is an interesting story. Atharvan had a son called Bhūti. He was ill-tempered and was always ready to condemn anyone and become angry at the slightest offence. He had a disciple called Śānti. The teacher, as was his habit, was always angry with him. One day he was invited by his brother Suvarcas to perform a particular sacrifice. Before leaving, he instructed his disciple Śānti to tend to the fires so that the fire did not go out. That was the ancient way of worshipping. One day Śānti was away collecting fuel and it took him very long, when he went back he found that the fire had extinguished. He could have, if he wanted lit the fire again but he knew that his teacher would get to know and he would be very angry. So he began praying to the Lord in the form of fire— ‘Please come back or my master will be very angry and will drive me away instead of teaching me’. His prayers were so heart rending that the Lord in the form of fire appeared before him and told

him to ask for anything. Śānti told the Lord that He should bless his teacher with a son so that he would know what love meant and he would learn to love all beings. The Lord was very pleased with Śānti because he has not asked anything for himself but had asked for something for his teacher. Śānti wanted his teacher to get rid of the one weakness he had. This is the conception of a Divya society. All the time we think of what we can do for others, how we can help them. In this story Śānti did not entertain any thought of condemnation for his teacher. The only thought present in his mind was how could he help his teacher.

Today this concept is no longer seen in our educational institutions. A few years ago I was in Mount Abu. A mother was sitting by me. Soon her son joined us. They were Brahmins. The son was explaining to me that teachers these days were hopeless as they asked the students to buy vegetables from the market. He said that buying vegetables was not their duty. When the mother heard this, she told her son that his maternal grandfather was a teacher and all the students would work for him. She told him that there was nothing wrong if his teacher had asked him to do something. This change from duty orientation to rights orientation is what we see today. Earlier, every student believed that it was his duty to serve his teacher. Every student believed that the teacher was imparting knowledge which he had acquired through hard work and therefore, he must do something for the teacher. Today the attitude has changed and we say that it is our right to get education

from him. It is our right that he should teach us but we have no duty towards him.

Marya, Narya and Divya cultures involve entirely different ways of looking at things and the reality. We must ask ourselves which way are we looking at the reality. Are we looking at it in terms of what we can give or in terms of what we can get? Today we observe this difference even in a family, between a husband and a wife. This is where the basic cultural unity comes in. A family is one unit where two or more members fuse into one 'we'. It is no longer I and you, but 'we'. We rise and fall together, we are happy with each other. The feeling of animosity is not present. There is *sahṛdyatā* and *sāmmanasya*. We are always thinking of the good of others in the family and that is the fundamental concept of the family. In the absence of this feeling of 'we', we have today what is called companionship. We are only companions because of certain advantages we get from each other. The moment we see that there are more advantages in another situation, we are ready to walk out of the present situation because there is no fusion into one 'we'. If, within the family, we are not able to introduce this concept of we, how can we introduce it in the society at large. In other words, we have to emphasise the concept of what we can give and not what we can get from others.

How do we develop this idea of what we can give? There are three stages of development of our own 'I'. According to Vedānta when a person has not been trained into anything, his idea is different.¹⁵ The Mahopaniṣad

says that to begin with a person thinks that he is only from head to foot, that is, the body which has emerged from the mother's womb. At that time that is the only I which is present. Apart from this body there is no 'I'. The Marya saṁskṛti lives and dies with this idea. All the time people in this society think of nothing but this body. Whether they talk of development or any other progress, they only talk in terms of the body and not even in terms of the mind.

In the last forty years has any census been taken to determine the number of people who think that they are happy. There have been censuses to estimate the number of roads that have been built, to estimate the average income of the people, or to determine the number of people who have houses to stay in. But has any census ever been taken to ascertain the number of people who are happy? We are not bothered about happiness, we are only concerned about the body. In the sensate culture, only this body is the centre of 'I' and everyone feels that they are just this body. This stage is without any reflective thought. It is taken for granted that we are only this body.

The moment we begin to think, we realise that we cannot be this body; the reason being that when this body was ten inches long at the time of birth and when it is six feet tall today it is not the same. The question remains—have I changed? What I was in my youth, I am not in my old age. But the 'I' is the same. Hence 'I' cannot be the body because the body is continuously changing but 'I' remain unchanged in that body. To some extent even the Marya society has to accept this.

This point can be illustrated with the help of the following story. Once a person committed a theft and he was caught and produced before the magistrate. Since he was caught redhanded, there was definite evidence that he was guilty. When he was asked whether he had anything to say, he replied that his hand had committed the theft and punishment should be given to his hand. This is a very novel idea. The magistrate agreed and wrote in the judgement that since his hand had committed the theft, his hand should be imprisoned. He was free to decide whether he wanted his whole body to be imprisoned or not. The lawyer was very intelligent. When the judgement was delivered, the man wore an artificial hand. He took off his hand and gave it to the judge to be put into prison. The hand has not really committed the theft and punishment should not be given to the hand but to the person who has committed the theft. If that was the case, then people in India would be very happy because our courts sometimes take as long as twenty years to give a judgement, and they could easily plead that they are not the person who had committed the crime, the body had changed, the person had changed.

In a Marya culture, in a sensate culture, the body is taken as 'I' but under some circumstances even this culture has to accept a continuing 'I' which does not change with the body. When people in the Marya society think about this they conclude that the soul is different from the other changes in the body.¹⁶ But how different? This difference is emphasised in the Narya saṁskṛti. The

Divya saṁskṛti goes a step further, it talks about a duality. The body-mind complex is a changing phenomenon and the 'I' is the unchanging concept. In the Narya saṁskṛti the unchanging is emphasised at the cost of the changing and that is the reason for the world negation. In the Divya saṁskṛti we go even further and ask where does this body exist apart from the 'I',¹⁷ Does this body exist apart from me? In the Marya saṁskṛti the body is 'I'; in the Narya saṁskṛti, I am different from the body, and in the Divya saṁskṛti, the body cannot exist apart from me. All that which exists is a part of me. In the Divya saṁskṛti there is nothing which is to be denied. But everything has to be denied, as a part devoid of the whole has no reality of its own. A hand removed from the body may be a piece of flesh but definitely not a hand. Similarly an individual out of society is not the same though he may still continue to live. Each thing as an individual and each thing as apart from the whole is to be denied, but each thing as part of the whole is also to be asserted.



Lecture Three

We have been discussing the concept of modern society. We analysed that all the social forms can be divided into three categories—those which are oriented only towards this world; those which are a negation of this world; and those which sustain this world, that is, divine oriented (*divya*). We have also seen that the society is basically a field, an interaction, thus the individual has as much of a contribution to make as the whole social group.

During the last hundred years or so, the emphasis has been more on what we can do collectively, rather than on what we can do individually. This emphasis has slowly weakened the very fibre of the individual. The individual looks upon society as something happening outside him, to the extent that he does not feel responsible for whatever is going on around him. This feeling has weakened the struggle to reform society. All the time we depend on an organised way of doing things. Therefore, we feel that a large number of people, somehow or the other, by gathering together would bring about a change. When we study the history of culture we find that it has never worked this way. It is only an individual or a few individuals who strive for a higher goal and in the very process of that striving, they are able to bring about a change in the whole

social outlook. This realisation must dawn upon us that each one of us is responsible and is capable of transforming society. It is not that we have to wait for something to happen, but it is within our power to change society.

Why is it that we feel so helpless? There is a reason behind this helplessness. We do not try to analyse. Each of us have conflicting egos, different responsibilities are heaped upon us which sap away all energy that we have. And unless we are able to rise above this, we will not be able to transform even ourselves, what to speak of transforming society. This weakening arises because we are continuously identifying ourselves with our body-mind complex. The limitations of the body and mind will be discussed later in detail.

The limitations of the body and mind continuously puts an albatross around our neck and we do not feel buoyant enough or strong enough to withstand that pull. Until we are able to disassociate ourselves from this body, from this mind, we will never be able to do anything worthwhile. Theoretically, we know that we are basically the spirit which remains unchanged at all the different stages of life. We know that, yet we are not able to withdraw into the spirit when the situation arises. Why? The answer to this can be found in the following story.

There was once a king who was a simpleton. One day he heard jackals howling.

He asked his courtiers ‘What is the matter, why are they weeping?’

We all know that when jackals howl the sound is similar to that of a child weeping. The courtiers thought that this was a good opportunity to make a little extra money.

They replied, ‘They are howling, they are crying because they have no house to stay in and it is very cold outside. If they are provided with houses, it would make them happy.’

The king being a simpleton thought that it was a good idea and sanctioned the funds to build houses for the jackals. After some time he heard the jackals howling again. He again inquired why they were crying.

The courtiers replied, ‘You have provided them with houses. But they do not have any food, they are crying for food.’

The king ordered that they should be given food. Some time passed and he heard them howling again.

He asked, ‘What is the matter?’

The courtiers replied that they did not have any clothes. Whereupon the king gave orders that clothes should be provided to them. When he heard them howling again, he inquired what was troubling them.

The courtiers said, ‘Now that you have provided them with everything. They are just thanking you.’

This continued for a long time. Then an intelligent minister joined the court and while checking the accounts he found that a large sum had been sanctioned to provide shelter, food and clothing for the jackals. Upon inquiring he was informed that those were the king's orders.

He told the king, 'You have done a very good act. But we should go and see where those houses are and how they are living.'

As soon as he made that suggestion all the courtiers were alarmed because they were staying in those houses and enjoying all these advantages. This is not very surprising. We see the same thing even today, so much money is being provided for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Whenever there is a drought, whenever there are floods, huge funds are provided for their relief. But if we go and see how much is really being provided to those people who are in need, we find that the situation has not changed very much. The same thing is true of our own powers. In our everyday provision for material comforts all our energies are wasted and we do not have the energies to move towards a higher goal.

Ācārya Gauḍapāda has expressed this in a beautiful verse.¹⁸ He says that first, we imagine that we are responsible for this body-mind complex and that this body-mind complex will not move without us. Even a little bit of analysis shows that we are not conscious of most of the functions that take place in our body—how the blood is pumped, how digestion takes place, how

blood circulation takes place. We do not know about most of these functions and yet they are just taking place in our body. The same is true of our minds. Do we know why a particular thought arises in our mind at a particular time? We sit down to meditate, to think of God, and we start thinking of some political issue which does not concern us in any way, and no matter how hard we try to get rid of the idea we are not able to get rid of it. Are we really thinking, or has the thought just arisen? When we analyse we find that our conscious and unconscious activities are taking place on four different levels.

Most of our activities are purely biological and we have practically no control over them. I am using the word practically because it is only through great effort of Yoga that we are able to control them. It can be said that they are not entirely beyond control. Yet in the case of a normal person we can say that they are not entirely under his control. Unconsciously functions are taking place. We all have the urge to eat, even animals have this urge. They do not have to think about it. Whenever there is an experience of intense heat, we want to alleviate that suffering—this action is at a biological level. Even if we are fast asleep and the sun is shining on our body, we turn on the side where there is shade. All these things take place automatically and we have practically no control over them.

The next category includes what are known as bio-conscious energies. They are biological drives no doubt, but we are conscious of these processes. For example, the

urge to eat is a biological necessity. At a particular intensity, we will not be able to resist eating, we will not be able to resist drinking—that is the unconscious level. But most of the time a human being is conscious of this urge. That is why they are called bio-conscious energies. They are rooted in our biological existence but we are conscious of them. The moment we are conscious of an activity, we can talk about good and bad, right and wrong, what we call *dharma*—the oughtness. As long as we are operating on an entirely unconscious level, the biological level, we cannot talk about rightness or wrongness, of what ought to be and what ought not to be. The moment this idea of oughtness arises, we find that conflicts arise out of our bio-conscious energies. At times we may feel hunger and thirst. We are conscious of both, but we have to decide which one must be given preference. The moment we want to give preference, we make a value judgement. Unless we have analysed the order of values, we will be in a state of conflict. We will not know what exactly we must do at a particular time. Here the entirely biological ego, so to say, has been replaced by a conscious ego because we have become conscious of it. When we want to eat it is a conscious act, not just the urge to eat, but we want to eat. There are certain foods we ought to eat, certain foods we ought not eat. Immediately the idea of *dharma* arises. Every culture specifies certain foods which can be eaten and certain foods which cannot be eaten.

In this context Pannikar has recorded that when he was in China, he was once eating with Chiang Kai-Shek and

while eating Marshal Chaing Kai-Shek enquired whether he liked the food. Pannikar recalls that the food was very good. Whereupon Marshal Chaing Kai-Shek informed him that what he was eating was a snake. As soon as he heard that he was eating a snake, Pannikar recalls that his stomach started to churn. As long as he was eating without knowing what it was, there was no problem. In China a snake may be considered a delicacy, but in India we do not consider it to be edible. So the moment we use our bio-conscious energies, all these problems arise—what ought, what ought not be done. For example, we are walking in the street and we see delicious food. We can steal the food, but we will not steal it because there is an oughtness involved in it. As far as the urge to eat is concerned, it is immaterial. But it is a conscious decision at that particular point of time, consciously we decide to eat a particular food. There are social ways of doing a thing and there are anti-social ways of doing a thing. So as long as we are dealing with purely biological urges, the question of oughtness, i.e., rightness and wrongness does not arise. But the moment we operate at the bio-conscious level, *dharma* enters, the concept of righteousness arises. Since it is rooted in biological urges, there is a limit to it.

The third category includes the conscious, socio-cultural energies. Here, the biological urges of the body do not direct us. These socio-cultural energies are generated by a conscious meaningful interaction of thinking persons. Here, being conscious is more important. The moment the idea of being conscious

becomes more important, the concept of meaningfulness coexists. In bio-conscious energies the concept of meaningfulness is not present, only the idea of right and wrong is present, because they are rooted in biological necessities. But here we are talking of something which is meaningful, and this emerges from an accumulation and transmission of many cultural patterns through generations. These things develop slowly in a particular society. Different societies have grown out of different meaningful interactions. For example, a Westerner comes to your house with his wife and child. As far as he is concerned he has come with his entire family. Supposing your father is also present, he will ask the visitor, 'How is your entire family?' Because as far as he is concerned mother, father, brother, brother's wife, sister, sister's husband, all these people together constitute the *entire family*. These are meaningful interactions which have developed in different ways in different societies. In India if a woman is called mother she feels very happy. But in a European society if a woman is called mother she will be angry. Of course, these ideas have slowly infiltrated in Indian society and there are women who object to being called mother. Their immediate reaction is whether they are old enough to be the other person's mother. When a person in Indian society uses the word 'mother', the age factor does not determine his response. It is a particular love and respectful attitude which determines his response. It is an intense form of love which he is trying to express. These notions are inherited through generations.

Society has been patterned in definite scientific ways of looking at things. It is easy to say that science is something universal. But when we begin to analyse, even science shows its own pattern. Different cultural groups, different social groups will have a different attitude towards the same scientific phenomenon. Provisionally, we may say that as far as something external is concerned it will be the same as far as the observation is concerned. But the science is not mere observation. It is the way in which we connect our different observations, and that way of connecting observations changes in different social patterns.

Philosophical thinking is controlled much more by the social pattern. In religion this control will be still more as here we are dealing entirely with value judgements, value systems. It will be still more if we are dealing with an artistic object. These values become totally entwined with feelings and feelings develop out of a particular social pattern. So the moment we talk about art, it is very difficult to reach a consensus as to whether it is the highest type of art. For example, in India we have always considered that every great epic should end in 'and they lived happily thereafter.' The whole of Greek thinking perceives tragedy to be superior. These are fundamental ways of looking at things. That particular pattern has been imprinted on that social group because it depends on conscious interaction. The same applies to technology.

What is the reason that there is so much conflict all around us today. One of the basic reasons is that

technology and science, even philosophy and art, is being imposed on a social group which does not absorb that particular idea because the social pattern has not changed. We are just imposing something from above. Because this is an interaction all these different processes lead to different egos, as was mentioned earlier. A person possesses as many egos as the number of social groups to which he belongs—family, state, occupation, local community and political community. When you are at home, you are in a particular environment. The moment you go to your place of work, your ego undergoes a change. You cannot possibly behave in the place of work as you behave at home. It is not possible, you will be considered a queer person. At your place of work, you have to behave in an entirely different way. Similarly, in a religious place there is a particular environment, a particular way of looking up to the priest or teacher. The attitude here is entirely different from that when you are in a political party. You cannot possibly look upon your party leader as some one having extraordinary authority, as you would look upon your priest. So these concepts vary in different groups where we act differently. But human being is one. When we move from one group to another, we are not able to entirely divest ourselves from the previous value system with which we were working and as a result conflict arises. Values can be entirely different. It is easy to say that when we are in a political party we must forget about our religious convictions. But it is not that easy because man is the same. So the ideas

persist, and as this conflict increases, it becomes difficult for a person to absorb and interact in an objective way.

Pavlov conducted an experiment with dogs to illustrate this point. A dog was shown a circle, a perfect circle, on a screen, and he was given food. At other times he was shown a parabola but he was not given any food. Slowly the circle and parabola were made so similar that it became difficult for the dog to differentiate between the two. He did not know when he would get food and when he would not get food. He had learnt that if he could identify the circle he would get food. But now the figures had become so similar that the dog was not able to differentiate. The dog began to bark, showed signs of nervousness, not knowing what was going to happen next.

The same thing holds true even for human beings when faced with conflicting issues of equal importance. To begin with these issues are not equally important. In a particular social group, politics may be more important than religion. In another group the opposite may be true, that is, religion is more important than politics. In some groups the family may be more important than occupation and in other groups it may be vice versa. But a stage comes when two or more issues acquire equal significance. It is then that a person shows signs of nervousness and does not know what to do. His will power is slowly undermined. It is the certainty, the self-confidence, knowing definitely what he wants and the means by which he will get it which increases will power. When that certainty is not present, a person's will power is undermined. This is exactly what is

happening today in our society. A person has two sets of values. He must please his boss and at the same time he must do his work properly. Generally, at no point can he say whether his boss will be pleased by flattering him, or by doing the work properly. So the person's will power is weakened. He does not know at any stage what he is supposed to do, what will lead to the desired result. When will power is weakened, vitality and energy are sapped up because the moment conflicts within a person increase, it is not possible to do any thing with the same vitality and energy.

This is where we have to be very careful even with our own children. Most of the time our children do not know how we will react—whether we will be happy or whether we will scold them to make them keep quiet. Children slowly develop conflicts. We often find that they are not good at their studies, they are not good at games and we wonder what is wrong. The problem is simple—we have not helped them build up that will power, we have not taught them proper value judgements which will help them decide. Slowly the peace of mind is disturbed and the child becomes hesitant in doing anything and is confused. He does not know what he is supposed to do. Gradually his behaviour becomes inconsistent. That inconsistency which initially began as a reaction to an external situation, has now become a part of him and may even lead to serious mental disturbances. These mental disorders in society breed what we call today delinquency and terrorism. Today this problem is seen in every part of

the world. People feel that they can curb terrorism merely by forcing a person not to engage in terrorist activities. What they do not realise is that the seeds are in the mind because the whole society has failed to provide a proper consistent attitude on which they can rely and, therefore, people become nervous, even nervous wrecks, and this leads to all sorts of disturbances in society.

How do we deal with this problem of terrorism? One way of tackling this problem, which most people adopt, is to disassociate ourselves with certain groups. If there are two conflicting issues we should get rid of one of them. It may be possible in certain cases. For example, if our occupation interferes with our family life, we will either divorce our wife or divorce our work. We can opt for one of the two alternatives. But there are situations where this strategy cannot be adopted. As a result some people become sceptics. They begin to doubt everything and are totally cynical in their attitude. That is the attitude of despair. We cannot do anything, nothing can be done, so there is no value which is absolute. The first strategy, at least in the matter of religion, many people in India try to adopt. People often say that religion comes into conflict with their views. They feel that if they can do away with religion and not be associated with it, their conflicts would decrease. They believe that religion produces conflicts. Similarly, there are a large number of people who have become basically sceptics and cynics. They do not believe in any values. They believe in taking advantage of an opportunity and do not attach importance to any

value judgements. This leads to desocialisation. Cynicism always weakens the social fabric because the basic concept of society is common welfare. If the idea of common welfare is not present, then we are not dealing with a society. Such people become the basis of desocialisation and this eventually demoralises the whole society. Of course, at this stage biological and bio-conscious urges are largely predominant and man is guided by these urges because he wants to do away with all that has been inherited as an interaction between individuals.

There are some people who believe that they should have something which is superior to other things, instead of fighting about certain values, there should be a master urge. For instance, they believe that they should be Indians first and foremost and only then belong to any other group. That means being an Indian is a master urge. But the trouble arises when people do not agree to a particular master urge. As far as a particular group is concerned, it may be more important to belong to a particular religion—Hinduism or Islam—than just being an Indian.

This particular value cannot be imposed because the social fibre existed before the creation of the super society, namely, nations. So all the other master urges are always present. The concept of imposing master urges does not solve the problem.

There is a fourth energy which we have not tapped, and that is the superconscious energy in every human being. It is this what we call the divine in man. Though it is present, yet we have not tapped it. It is something which stands apart from all these relationships and yet controls all these relationships. If given a chance it integrates these multitudes of egos. After all, it is one individual who has associated himself with all the different egos, all the different social groups. But who is he? If we are able to tap this energy, then we will be able to integrate all these different egos and identify the unity behind all these changing egos. But that can be done only through analysis.

In the Marya culture we accept the sensate, the sensuous perceptions as they are without analysing them. In the Narya culture we only analyse and do not go any further. But in the Divya culture we analyse and synthesise at the same time. All these different egos can be digested because there is something which is behind all these egos. It contains them all, because it is this which keeps all these different egos in harmony with each other. No doubt conflicts will arise. But before conflicts arise, there is some harmony. What is it that keeps them in harmony with each other? When we use a phrase like 'my mind', 'my intellect', we are presupposing something of the nature 'I' which is different from our mind, from our intellect. Otherwise we cannot say 'my mind' and 'my intellect'. We have experienced it. We sit for meditation, or to do some other work, so there is someone who sat to work. The person could not concentrate because the mind

was disturbed. In other words, there is an 'I' who wanted to work, which is different from the mind who refused to work. This 'I' has to be tapped because it is the master of mind. But we have not tapped it properly to control all these different egos. Being different from all these egos, it is called 'ego-less'. The word egoless is a very peculiar term but we have to use it. The identification of different biological, bio-conscious and socio-conscious processes we call 'egos', this is where the identification takes place. The moment we talk about something which does not identify with any of the egos but which is the matrix of all identification we call it 'egoless'. When it starts operating, one ceases to be a mere bio-conscious or even a socio-cultural ego. Only through practice we are able to get in touch with it. We have to analyse this 'I'. We see that throughout the day we receive various types of knowledge preceding each other. For example, we know a pot, then we know a vessel, and a man. There is something which is common in all this knowledge, and that is the knower, the 'I' who knows all these things. While doing things we should become conscious of this 'I'. This must be practiced slowly.

Most of the time we are not conscious of ourselves. The biological urges play freely during this lack of consciousness. One of the ways to control this is to sit for meditation. Select a particular object on which you are going to meditate. It may be a feeling, or an organ in the body like the heart, or the centre of eyebrows, or a religious symbol. Whatever the particular symbol, we

must think only of that symbol or that organ or that feeling as intensely as we can without being distracted by anything. Initially, we will experience external distractions. But gradually we will be able to shut ourselves out. Then we will find that our own bodily tensions distract us. We must slowly control this, and forget the biological pressures throughout our body, throughout our organs. As we go deeper into meditation we will be surprised to observe that things which had never crossed our mind, as far as the bodily organs are concerned, will be felt by us. But slowly we learn to ignore them. While meditating on an object it is very important to see it as clearly as possible. Most of the time when we meditate, the object of meditation does not become clear and hence there is no intensity. So the imagination, so to say, has to increase, because it is then alone that the mind will become absolutely concentrated on that particular object and even though these biological tensions are felt, they will not be a distraction. Slowly we will reach a stage where this effort will cease. We will be at ease, we will feel happy. In the initial stages it is a great struggle and we will feel tired after meditation. But once we are no longer conscious of the biological tensions, the bodily tensions, we will observe that we are completely relaxed. The process of meditation will cease to be and there will only be a subject and an object, that is, the person and the object of meditation. Through this process we are able to reach that state of egolessness. No doubt we experience that state of egolessness in deep sleep, but

here this egolessness is through ignorance. And that is why even though we are egoless in deep sleep, as soon as we get up, we are in the same state as we were in before we entered it. But when we reach the state of egolessness and we emerge from that state we find a change in ourselves. The change is easily observable by anybody—this is the creativeness. The moment we reach that state of egolessness, there is a lot of creativity within us. It is pushed into us so to say. Any good scholar, or a good grammarian, or a teacher of English knows the syntax, knows the words, knows the language, but does he become Shakespeare? Once he enters that state, he becomes a changed person.

We know the story of Kalidas. He was totally illiterate to the extent that he cut off the branch of the tree on which he was sitting. Upon being questioned as to why he was doing so, he answered that the branch would fall and he come down. His wife was a woman of very high intellectual calibre. The story is a long one. When his wife discovered that Kalidas was totally illiterate, she just drove him away from the house. Kalidas was very unhappy and he began to worship the Divine Mother to attain knowledge. He attained proficiency in writing great epics and it was only after he had acquired knowledge that he returned home.

Every student of Sanskrit knows how to write Sanskrit but does he become a Kalidas? Every person who knows music, know all the seventy-two rāgas, knows all the talas, but does he become a Thyāgarāja? So it is

something beyond these egos, something beyond these techniques, which gives one that creativeness and one is able to create something out of the way. That creativeness indicates that one has touched the fountain of that egolessness. The story of Ramanujan is well known. He was an ordinary postman with no education at all. But he was able to solve many mathematical problems which could not be solved for hundreds of years. He was asked how he was able to do this. His answer was that whenever he sat for meditation, the Divine Mother would appear and give him all the solutions.

Ācārya Gauḍapāda, has expressed this in a beautiful verse.¹⁹ He says that who ever—whether he is educated or not, whether he is an intellectual or not, whether he is a great artist or not, what ever type of person he may be—touches that egoless state,²⁰ that *aja*, that which is always unborn, that which is *sāmya*, that which never changes, remains the same in all circumstances. When he is able to touch it (*sunīścītā*) and touch it in a way which has become his nature²¹ then he attains all the knowledge which is worth attaining. Ordinary people cannot even understand how that creativeness has come into being, how it arises.²² As far as they are concerned that creativeness will always remain a miracle. They think that it is a very strange thing and wonder how it has happened. But actually that creativeness emerges upon entering that state. Some people are able to do it in a very conscious way, while others are able to achieve it because they have practiced it in their previous lives. There are some people who have

the capacity to enter that state of egolessness since birth. All the creativity comes out of it whether it has been practiced in this life, or whether it has been practiced in an earlier life.

As the person goes deeper and deeper into this state of egolessness, he finds that there are three things: a subject, an object and the conscious effort. This is called trinity or *tripuṭī* in Sanskrit, that is, three things are present there. Gradually only two things remain—the subject and the object, because the effort ceases to be as it has become his nature. It is something that he is able to do in an absolutely relaxed fashion. It is with ease that he is able to dive into this state of egolessness. Slowly the feeling of duality is also lost. The subject becomes absolutely one with the object. The self is united with the object. This is called *iṣṭa* in Sanskrit. *Iṣṭa* means what we have willed to be, what we have chosen to be. So the individual becomes totally absorbed in the object he is meditating upon. His subjectiveness melts into it and become one with it. He is no more conscious of it as something separate from him. When he first began to meditate the same thing was present because it was through his own mind that he had made his *iṣṭa* present there. In short, he was the one who had created it. Consciousness was present though it was something separate from him. Now he has attained the state where it has become one. In other words, first he sees consciousness as something separate from him, but eventually he melts into it and it becomes one identical experience. In Sanskrit this is called the *akhaṇḍa vṛtti*, that is, where the subject

and object relationship does not exist. When he reaches this stage then he attains complete knowledge and all the extraordinary powers become natural to him because he has touched that which is the root of all powers. When he has attained that state, then there is absolutely no conflict whatsoever; because wherever he is he has analysed and differentiated his 'I' from all the different egos. At that stage he can see how that 'I' takes place and is being reflected in all these different egos. In other words, synthesis has taken place. In the initial stages, he identified himself with the body, without thinking and analysing what he was identifying with.

First, he has to analyse and see himself separate from the body. Once he has analysed this, he finds that the body is nothing but his own extension. He saw the body as something different from him, so that he could analyse it properly. To make things simpler, let us consider the example of deep sleep. In deep sleep what happens to our eyes, to the power of seeing, the power of hearing, the power of touching, the power of moving, the power of holding and the power of speaking? Where are all these powers when we are in deep sleep? We can only say that they are all absorbed into us. We have withdrawn, so to say, all of those powers within us, because as soon as we wake up, our body has all those powers. So they are all within us and now we are manifesting them through this body. What is this body? Is it apart from all these powers? The moment all these powers cease to exist, we are called a corpse and not a body. We invest the body with these

powers when we are in the state of wakefulness and we withdraw these powers when we enter the deep sleep state. Of course this is only an illustration, because there is one power which exists even when we are in deep sleep state and that is the power of *prāṇa*, the vitality. The body carries out all the biological functions even when we are asleep. All the other powers of cognition and action have been endowed into the body by the conscious ego. Similarly, when we reach that stage of egolessness we find that the whole universe is being made meaningful and powerful with our power, with the power of that egoless ego. The whole concept changes. The experience has been described by various people. One of the great masters, Sarvajñātma Mahāmuni says²³—I am seeing all this universe of different variety, as if it is different. But I am, all the time, in that partless consciousness which is infinite, that itself is my body. That infinite consciousness which is being expressed through all the different egos, through humanity, through all the living beings, throughout the universe, it is in that eternal consciousness in which I am residing, that is my body, that is my reality, that is my *vapu*. Residing in that consciousness I look upon all this duality as something very peculiar.²⁴

All these things appear to be like a rope which has been burnt and reduced to ashes. But until the wind does not blow away the ashes, anybody who sees it will believe that it is a rope, though it is really not a rope because it has been burnt and reduced to ashes. Similarly, I am able to see this whole universe in an entirely different way.

Earlier, it was continuously binding me and I was always in bondage. Now when I look at this whole universe it no longer binds me because it has been burnt and only the ashes apparently appear as before.

It is this experience which leads to totality. It may lead to the building of organisations. Merely trying to build organisations—without this experience—by imposing external pressures which can change the whole society will not work. We cannot change society because the instruments that we are using are not ones which can bring about a change. There may be any number of archbishops, bishops and abbots who know all the methodology, and the Bible by heart, but can they bring about the change which St. Francis of Assisi brought? Can they bring about the changes which are a result of that creativity, that touch which he had with the Lord. So, when we talk about the Divya saṃskṛti, we talk about a society in which we are able to introduce that divine content. But, first that divinity must be touched within our own hearts. Unless we are able to touch that divinity within ourselves, any change outside will not be possible.



Lecture Four

We have discussed how to attain non-dualistic experience which forms the basis of the Vedāntic conception of society. It is a difficult path. I am sure that many of you may be wondering if it is possible to have society where a majority of the people will have that experience and particularly in modern society, but that is true at all times. Vedānta is not so naive as to believe that a large number of people can attain that realisation or absolute sublimation. Once we begin to follow that path even though we may not attain the final beatitude or final realisation, yet we will be able to create a society. Vedānta is also conscious of the fact that more than 85 percent of the people, more or less, follow what the best or the greatest individuals in any given society consider to be an ideal. They cannot analyse for themselves.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has said that common people will follow that person who is perceived to be the best, the finest and the highest in any given society.²⁵ Most people do not have the ability to analyse and discover for themselves. They are so accustomed to doing things mechanically that it is just not possible for them to do anything but mechanically. Unfortunately this is the bitter truth. The

following example will enable us to understand this better.

The Bank of England has a rule which states that who ever comes late to work must mention in the register the reason for being late. The weather of London being what it is, people are generally late because the buses run late due to fog. If the first person who comes late mentions the reason 'fog', the others just write 'ditto' without reading the reason mentioned by the first latecomer. One day people were surprised to find that someone had come late because his wife had given birth to twins in the morning, and all the people who had come to work after him had just written 'ditto' without reading the reason. Most of us are like that. If one person does something, immediately another person will imitate him and all the people will follow without thinking. In any given society norms are established by those who are the best. Others simply follow them.

Vedānta deals with the science of reality, reality as it is perceived, known and experienced. This is precisely why it does not base its coordinates, its morse, its norms, its values and judgements on any given text as such. Texts have their value, but Vedānta emphasises that unless the truth of Vedānta is realised in a particular historical period, it is not valid for the people of that age. It must be made an object of experience and it must be experienced. Unless it is experienced by someone who belongs to our age, we can never be sure of the meaning of that particular

text. This is the reason why we do not see fundamentalism in any form in the field of Sanātana Dharma.

Fundamentalism refers to second hand, third hand, or even fourth hand knowledge. It refers to the experience of another and not to our own experience. It refers to the experience of a different age, a different place. It does not refer to the experience of a person who is living in our times. Vedānta has emphasised that even to find out what the scriptures really mean there must be a man of realisation who knows what they exactly mean. Words change their nuances and we can never be sure what a particular word means. If we were to read Chaucer or Shakespeare today, we would find that most of the words have lost those particular shades of meaning which were prevalent when those works were written. We would require a commentary to understand these works. The person who writes the commentary must base it on his own experience. Only when he has experienced that it becomes a living scripture. While insisting on the science of reality, Vedānta says that the norms have to be lived in our own age. Though only a few individuals will be able to attain this state, yet they will be able to guide the large majority. A few *Brahmajñānīs*, so to say, are essential for the survival of a society and for a balanced view of life. Fortunately, India throughout the ages has produced such individuals because we emphasised this aspect of living the Vedānta. There is something peculiar in the Indian context which includes certain spiritual concepts and values. If we do not emphasise this idea of realisation,

not many individuals will follow this path and attain this state.

Often people ask the question: how many individuals really attain the final beatitude? I ask them that tell me the number of primary school children who enter a school and the number of doctorates and post-doctorates. Whatever is the proportion in that case is the proportion here.

The Lord says that of the many people only a few will have the desire to follow this path, and of the many who try, only a few will succeed.²⁶ And it is those few successful people who are able to guide humanity and the society in which they are. When we closely examine what they have continuously preached and repeatedly emphasised, we realise that it is that effusive love towards all human beings. The unity of all beings has to be expressed in terms of this love. Out of the experience of non-dualism, out of the experience of oneness, what emerges is love. And this is what determines the norms of a society. Love presupposes certain things. In the context of the modern society this is very important.

Darwin emphasised that the growth of a species depends on competition—survival of the fittest. This is only a part of life. When we analyse we find that no species can survive without a non-competitive element because love is basically a non-competitive element. For example, a newborn child is absolutely helpless, he cannot compete with us. Why do we protect him? The answer is that if a species does not give protection to its

young ones it will die. In short, love is equally important, if not more important, than the spirit of competition. Since Darwin, the notion of competition has come to occupy the main stage of our thinking. We think that society can survive only because of competition. There are national competitions—different nations fight among themselves for supremacy. Within nations there are different groups who fight among themselves for supremacy. That spirit of love which we have repeatedly emphasised is lacking in modern society and as a result the fibre of our living together has become weak.

This problem has been discussed by other scientists who were interested in Darwin's findings. Koestler discussed this problem in detail and later Kropotkin examined it. No species can survive without an element of love and it has been proved that a society which emphasised competition was always destroyed by its own effort. We see the same thing today. What is it that we feel will destroy humanity? This spirit of competition will ultimately destroy humanity. Why are we afraid of nuclear wars? Again, the answer lies in the spirit of competition. Had the practice of love been present, scientific progress would have given us all the things that we need for our biological survival and our social survival.

A number of studies have been conducted to study this problem. For instance, in the United States Dr Murphy observed children between two and four years of age for 216 hours and found that 169 times these children did an

act of love. Even if we observe an infant, say, an infant of twenty days, he will respond to our smile. This is a response of love. These things are fundamental aspects of our life and we have not tried to emphasise them.

When that love expands not only in a particular group but to the whole cosmos, then we can say that we are living not as a bound soul or *jiva*. *Jiva* has been replaced by *Shiva*. The word used is ‘animus’, that is, life is anew. Once we accept that norm then instead of living as *jiva* we begin to live as Shiva.

Generally when a person follows spiritual practices, goes deep into meditation, he has to limit his external activities. Other people around him usually say that he is leading a selfish life, and he is trying to realise or attain liberation only for himself, so what good is he to society. If he is working for his own body-mind complex which is the self as an ordinary human being understands it, then he could be called selfish, but he is working for Shiva who is the final goal of all striving. He wants to attain identity with the whole cosmos. Thus he is not being selfish as other people understand it. Having reached that stage there are some persons who have much more power than others like a Yājñavalkya or a Vasiṣṭha or a Kṛṣṇa or a Rāma or a Śaṅkara and they are able to bring about a complete change in society and we are able to see this for ourselves. But there are others who attain that stage but do not have as much power. Their actions are generally not understood by ordinary people. But they are like light houses, like stars. A Yājñavalkya or a Vasiṣṭha can be

compared to the sun in whose light we can do all activities. It is true no doubt that a star does not give as much light as the sun but it does show the way. By looking at the stars we know the direction in which we are going. Just as the stars show us a particular direction, similarly those who have realised and attained that state are able to show us the direction in which we have to move. This is why it is emphasised again and again that one must attain this state and only then one is able to correctly interpret the scriptures. Such a person tries to change the total outlook of humanity from an egocentric view to the cosmo-centric or deo-centric view. People who are unable to understand this believe that the sensate experience is the only experience.

Ācārya Gauḍapāda says that there are three types of individuals because there are three types of experiences. The first is the waking experience where we have an object and we have knowledge of that object. Next is the dream experience where there are no objects but we merely have knowledge of those objects, that is, knowledge of non-existing objects. Then there is the experience of deep sleep where there are no objects nor is there any experience of those objects.

Following these three experiences, there are three types of individuals.²⁷ The first type he calls the *laukika* or the ordinary people. These people believe that the world is really real and whatever they perceive is really real. They believe in an objective reality and also believe that the experience is objective. Because they perceive the world

to be absolutely real, they perceive their body-mind complex to be absolutely real. This explains why they are selfish, egoistic, full of hatred and harbour feelings of animosity. For them the world is absolutely real, and they act in an anti-loving way. Not only do they not love but they also do things which are against love.

The second category of people are the non-loving type. They are not anti-loving most of the time. These people will not try to cheat anyone and they are content with what belong to them legally. But they will not be willing to part with anything that belongs to them. They want their rights. The anti-loving type on the other hand is not bothered whether a thing morally belongs to him. He is not concerned whether he deserves a thing or not.

There is an interesting story which throws light on the anti-loving type of individuals. There once lived a man in a village who was anti-loving by nature. He always tried to create problems in every family. Slowly people around him realised that whatever he said or did was basically to harm others, so they began to ignore him. When he found that he was not able to create any trouble and satisfy his need to do so, he went away to a forest. Someone who was passing through the forest saw him and asked him the reason for his being there at that hour of the evening, especially since there were wild animals in the forest. The man offered to take him to his village. But he refused to go with that man and told him that he was in the forest with the intention of being killed and eaten by a tiger. The man was surprised when he heard this and thought

that pressures and problems of life were driving him to commit suicide. He reassured the man that he was not being driven to commit suicide because of problems in life but he had a particular goal in mind which he wanted to achieve even at the cost of death. He then explained that the tiger would become a man-eater after killing him and would attack the people of his village. If he could not do any harm by being alive, then he would do harm by dying.

These people are anti-loving by nature and they are never bothered about others. Today, there are people who manufacture drugs which do not contain even a bit of the medicine. They are not concerned that those who take these medicines may die. There are others who adulterate foods without thinking that the people who eat that food may suffer. This is the anti-loving way of doing things. Not everyone falls into this category. Some people are of the non-loving type, they do not part with anything that belongs to them and neither do they take anything from the other person. Many social workers, who appear to be doing social service, fall into this category. They do not part with anything that belongs to them but they work for the good of the society at other's cost.

The third category of people are the pseudo loving type. These people will talk of nothing but love, helping others and being sympathetic but the moment they are expected to act, they simply recoil. They are convinced that their behaviour is correct and they can also convince others that they are in the right. They are absolutely bereft

of love. Though it appears that they are convinced of loving others, yet this is only a type of pseudo loving. All these three types of individuals consider the universe to be real as it is.

In the next stage we find individuals who are convinced that they are able to experience these things, but they also know that these things are not really real.²⁸ The word *avastu* means that they are not really real. There is something else which is greater, which is really real, whereas these things are only passing phases. They are not really real even though we experience them. Individuals who follow this view are able to express their love in action.

While expressing their love, some people do not even understand what love should take into consideration. When we love a person we must see to it that we act for his good and not do what pleases him even though it may not be good for him. For instance, a drunkard may ask for a drink. We may feel compassionate and allow him to have a drink and we may even give him some money. The man will have to suffer later. This is not understanding love. It is love no doubt because we are parting with something which belongs to us. We are trying to share what we have with someone else. What we do not understand is what we should share and what we should not share. For example, a doctor may tell the mother that the child should not be given any chocolates because sweets are not good for his teeth. In spite of this the mother gives the child a chocolate. Though the mother is

doing an act of love yet it is without any understanding. The important point here which needs to be understood properly is that while giving the chocolate to the child, the mother does feel a sense of pleasure and happiness. Many will try to interpret this by saying that the mother has given the chocolate because she is deriving happiness. But here pleasure is only a by product. Though she derives pleasure by giving the chocolate yet she does not give it for that pleasure but she gives it out of love for the child.

If utility or pleasure is the aim, if we do something not out of love but because we derive pleasure from it, then it will not be an act of love. Here I am talking of a situation where even though we may derive pleasure yet that is not our aim. This must be understood clearly because the so-called egoists will try to impress on us that we are deriving pleasure from an act, our acts are egoistic and whatever we do is not out of love. Of course, we may make mistakes while we do an act out of love. The ideal situation of course is to be creative wisely, wisdom should determine our actions instead of blindly or passionately doing an act of love. We can say that the concept of love is present because we are able to give away something without expecting anything in return. We know that the thing in itself is not real, there is something else which is higher.

The final stage is similar to the state of deep sleep.²⁹ A man of realisation not only perceives things to be unreal but all these differences are not even perceived by him as differences. He is able to see the underlying unity in all the things. This unity is based on supreme love, what is

known as *param premāspada* in Sanskrit. Love is the *param* element, the supreme element. It is the supreme guiding factor. Love itself has become the supreme factor which guides us in all our actions. The joy emerges from that supremeness of love. Initially, man was selfish but this selfishness has given way to complete selflessness. Throughout the process, the emphasis is on the concept of love, on the manifestation of this love.

Sometimes people question that since they have not attained this final beatitude, how should they behave? In all spiritual practices and, for that matter, in scientific experiments we have to act 'as if'. Why do we conduct an experiment in the chemistry or physics laboratory in a particular way? The reason is that we take it for granted 'as if' the hypothesis is true. When we are asked to conduct an experiment, we do not say that we will not conduct the experiment in the prescribed way but we will do something else. We act 'as if' it is true. After the experiment we are able to say that the hypothesis has been verified on the basis of an experiment. We have been able to verify the hypothesis because we acted 'as if', if we had not done so we could not have verified the hypothesis. For instance, if we read a recipe in a magazine we try out the recipe as if it is true. But if we begin to question while reading the recipe whether what is written is true, whether the dish will be good, then we will not be able to experiment.

In the same way we have to conduct the experiment in our life as if this final truth of unity is real. As we practice, slowly we will move towards this truth and our

experiment will tell us that we are on the right path. This moving towards the truth is an important part of life. It must be remembered that all of us cannot attain the final beatitude, or perhaps even the higher stages of meditation. But we can at least start living as if this unity is true and real. We must remember that love cannot be practiced until we act as if this unity is present.

There is an interesting story. A great musician called Puṣpadanta used to offer flowers to Lord Shiva and when he could not find good flowers, he would steal them from others' gardens and offer them to the Lord. One day he came across the king's garden which was not only beautiful but it was covered with a myriad of flowers. Having discovered the garden, Puṣpadanta was very happy and he made it a practice to go there often to steal flowers to offer to the Lord. This theft was noticed by the king who wanted to catch the culprit but he failed to do so. So he consulted some Brahmins who told him to place a *Shiva nirmālya* on the gate so that who ever came that way would lose all his powers and would be easily caught. The king did as he was told. As was his practice, Puṣpadanta came and crossed the *Shiva nirmālya* and lost all his power of movement. He immediately realised what had happened, he looked around and found that he had crossed the *Shiva nirmālya*. He began to pray to the Lord. He told the Lord that he had committed a sin and would not commit it again. He prayed to the Lord to rescue him from that situation.

In the hymn that he recites he raises a very interesting point. He says that if we wait till we know the Lord fully, as the learned know Him, then we will not be able to praise Him because He is ineffable.³⁰ If it is said that only a person who knows the Lord completely can praise Him, then no one will be able to praise Him. Puṣpadanta further says that if a person has tried his best and he expresses what he has known after reaching his own limit, then he cannot be faulted.³¹ Even though a person does not know a thing completely and thoroughly yet we cannot find fault if he is describing what he has experienced. If this is true then Puṣpadanta says that even his praises are right because he is merely describing what he has experienced.

The Lord should not only be praised verbally but through all the pores of our being. Through all our acts we must praise Him. Our attempt is to convey what we have experienced within. For instance, a scientist does not say that he has discovered the final truth. What he says is that he has discovered what he has told us, he has gone this far and others may go still further. And we take his word for it. No one says that until we have realised the final truth why should we talk about the intermediary steps. We have to rely on these intermediary steps as we go further and further. Similarly in spiritual life, we cannot say that only a person who has attained the final realisation can express himself. Whatever experience we have had, the amount of unity we have experienced, the degree of love that has become *paraprema* to us, the supremeness of love that we have attained that we must express in our acts. We should

not feel that we cannot express ourselves because we have not attained the final realisation. The expression must be in accordance to the level we have reached. In this way the whole social fabric changes gradually.

Puṣpadanta's story is only an illustration. In a sense all of us are Puṣpadantas. What did Puṣpadanta do? He did an egoistic act, what any man in a sensate culture would do. Even though he steals flowers to offer to the Lord, he still wants to worship the Lord. It does not matter if he has to steal. This is what all of us do, we try to get a thing anyhow and we do not bother about the means we use to obtain it. Since he is stealing without any evil intention, a time will come when he realises that using any means to obtain a thing is not right. When a person crosses the *Shiva nirmālya* it implies that he has tried to take something which does not belong to him.

What is it that Shiva has given us as his *prasada*? The *dharma*, the righteous action is what He has given us. When we cross the *Shiva nirmālya* we are actually crossing those ethical fundamentals which we should not cross because the moment we cross them we become egoistical and we lose that contact with divinity. Puṣpadanta realises that by trying to obtain a thing through illegal means, he has committed a crime, an immoral act which cannot possibly please the Lord. He prays to the Lord and promises never to commit this mistake again, and promises to lead a life of love and dedication as far as it is within his power to practice it. Once he prays to the Lord and begins to lead that life, he

gets back his power. What we lose by committing a mistake, we get back by following the right path.

Hinduism holds another view. A father punishes his child when he makes a mistake, the aim of punishing the child is to make sure that he follows the correct path. If the father finds out that the child will not commit the same mistake again and he has realised his mistake and is sorry, will he still slap him because he made that mistake? The punishment was not for committing the mistake but for reforming the child. The same applies to us when we try to reform ourselves.

This has been expressed in a very beautiful verse in the Gītā.³² The Lord says that no matter how sinful a person has been,³³ but the moment he decides to follow the path of unity and love,³⁴ and decides to love all beings as his own manifestation, he should be perceived as a good person or as a *sādhū* from that moment onwards because he has decided to follow the right path. The question of punishing him does not arise any more. When Puṣpadanta realises his mistake then the question of punishing him does not arise and the way is open. What he praises pleases us. This is what he bestows on us. Everyday we repeat that particular stotra. By repeating those verses we try to remember that we are like Puṣpadanta. Even though we make mistakes like him, yet we can overcome those mistakes as he did. He has shown us the way to do this. This is what happens when a person realises that divine love, he is able to show us the way.

We must practice this Vedāntic realisation of unity as much as we are able to realise it. We may start on a small level in our own village. Initially, it may not be possible for us to empathise with the people of Ethiopia. But we must be conscious of that feeling when it arises. Most of our acts are not out of this realisation of love and unity. Some people are able to feel sympathy and love for those whom they have not even seen. This is not easy. The presence of another person arouses sympathy and love if we practice it. This is why our scriptures emphasise activities like feeding a guest every day. By guest we do not mean guest in the modern sense of the term, that is, some one who has written to inform us that he will come to see us. This is not what we mean by the word *atithi* in Sanskrit. The term *atithi* implies that a person has come to our town or village, but he does not know anyone nor is he related to anyone. He is in need of food and shelter. In ancient India communications were limited and people either walked or went on horseback. It usually took months to travel from one place to another place. What a person required was food and shelter for one day as the next day he would go on his way. The concept was that even though we did not know him, we would feed him and give him shelter for one night because we believed that he was a part of the human society. Today in every village we find people who are in need of this sympathy and love. Let us begin by bestowing it on them. It is only through practice that we will be able to create a non-

dualistic society. The present society is a divisible society, it can be divided by its very nature.

At the very outset it was pointed out that we would not deal with a society which could be divided, we would discuss a society which was indivisible. The concept which Advaita emphasises is that of a non-divisible society, one which cannot possibly be divided. The idea is not that society can be divided and it has to be kept together somehow or other. Today, we begin with the idea that India has diversity but how do we bring about unity. We talk of national integration. These words presuppose that there is no integration, there is no nation, it is a divisible nation, diversity is its very nature and we have to bring about unity. The moment we use such words the question arises: Why should we be integrated? One person may be in favour of national integration but another person may be against it. On the other hand the Advaitic society maintains that all divisions including divisions of the so-called nations are just arbitrary. What do we mean by the term nation? Till a few years ago Pakistan formed a part of one nation—India. Today they are two separate nations. Similarly at one time, Sri Lanka and Burma were also a part of India. Today they are separate nations. We do not even know what is going on in Burma. No one even seems to be interested. We can see for ourselves how nations are divided. Why does this division take place? The belief underlying this is not that we are indivisible but that we are divisible. And divisible to what extent? Each village, each household may feel that it is a separate entity and it

is for them to decide whether they want to be integrated or not. Advaita, on the other hand, emphasises that all humanity, all life, all living beings, the whole cosmos is really indivisible. It cannot possibly be divided. Since it cannot be divided, we cannot think in terms of a division. We can only think of how to prevent a division. The question is how will we do this?

Vedānta has a beautiful answer. It says that all the contents of this world are *māyika*, they are produced from *māyā*. *Māyā* is inexhaustible. People generally think that the objects of this world are real and therefore exhaustible. This belief gives rise to the spirit of competition. The idea being that if we do not compete we will perish. *Māyā* is inexhaustible because it is *māyā*. For example, a person cooks a *gulāba jāmuna* or a *rasagullā* for us to eat. Then he has limited the amount of *khoyā* or *māvē* or *paneer-chenā*, to prepare the *rasagullā* or *gulāba jāmuna*. On the other hand if there is a magician who shows us a *rasagullā* or a *gulāba jāmuna*. How many *rasagullās* and *gulāba jāmunas* can he show? The number is infinite because the *rasagullā* or *gulāba jāmuna* is produced from *māyā*. When we say that the world is *māyika* what we are trying to say is that the power of *māyā* is inexhaustible. There will never be a shortage of anything because the world is basically *māyika*. For example, a textbook of physics written a 100 years ago described how slowly the sun would cool down and human beings would die as a result of this cooling effect and there would be no light and heat available for human beings. Today we know that all those

calculations were wrong. This sun has an inexhaustible source of energy. Similarly in an atom electrons move around protons, can we say that its energy will ever be exhausted? Will we reach a stage when the atom will cease because the electrons cannot move around? This inexhaustible source of energy can be explained only if the world is *māyika*, produced out of *māyā*, not out of any concrete thing.

Once we realise this inexhaustible source, we will give up the whole linear conception which we live in. Today, the conception of development is linear. We move in a line and, therefore, there is an end and a beginning. One of the greatest discoveries of humanity, scientifically speaking, is the discovery of the wheel. All our motions, all our developments have taken place because of this discovery of the circular motion. We have to re-discover the circular motion not only physically but in human civilisation as well. In human society, we have to think not in terms of a linear development, but in terms of a circular development. This wheel goes on. That is why the Purāṇas talk about an infinite number of creations and dissolutions moving in a wheel-like fashion. We do not have to think that our movement is only linear. This basic conception can completely change our thinking in every field.

Sometimes I give a very gross illustration. We sow a seed and a tree grows from it. We take a twig and use it as a tooth brush. That twig again becomes manure and another tree grows in its place. This is a circular motion. From the tree the twig, from the twig again the tree, the

circular motion takes place. The water rises from the ocean, goes to the Himalayas or any other mountains, the water flows back to the ocean and again the circle is complete. These are examples of circular motion.

The type of society we want to build, the Advaita emphasises, is basically a circular type of society. When we produce a tooth brush or a tube of tooth paste, the motion is linear. All our technology has been developed on this concept of linear motion, which has introduced the concept of competition. All our technologies and scientific developments, based on the Advaita conception, think and work out technologies which follow a circular motion and therefore we are not afraid of exhausting anything.

This conception of Advaita based on love, is always based on this idea of giving and taking. Long back an interesting article appeared in the *Reader's Digest*. A person was travelling in the United States and he ran out of petrol. Many cars passed by and finally one stopped and gave him a jerry can of petrol. He wanted to pay him. But the man told him not to pay him but fill the jerry can and keep it with him. Whenever he came across any other person in need to petrol, he could give it to that person. A few years later the man who had given this jerry can ran out of petrol and he stopped at the same place. A car which was passing by stopped and gave him that jerry can. He recognised the can and asked him how did he get this, whether he had bought it. The man told him that someone had given it to him and had also told him to give it to

anyone who was in need. This is circular motion. This is how love should be manifested.

What happens or used to happen in India earlier? A student went to a Gurukula. No fees was charged. The student went to the village and food was given to him free of charge. The person who gave food knew that today, yesterday or tomorrow, his son would also go to school, would also go to a Gurukula and somebody else would feed him. This is the conception of circular life, whatever we give will eventually come back to us, but we are not egoistically demanding it. This Advaitic conception of society is what comes out of that realisation—of the identity of the subject and the object—of the Advaita experience that we have discussed earlier.



Lecture Five

We have been discussing how the individual must live up to the particular revelation that he has had. We know that it is not possible to get the final revelation initially. But we must move on with what we have attained, not wait until the final revelation has taken place. This is what is known as living what you have attained. This is what we mean by *prabodha*—the real wakefulness. Most of the time we are not awake. We are asleep. Although we have attained certain insights we do not put them into practice in our everyday life. We do not live them. Any revelation that we get must change our life pattern, must bring about a change not only within but without. What we gain in the depth of our meditation, we must be able to communicate to all those who are around us through the expression of love.

Vedānta holds that *māyā* has two powers: of veiling and revealing. It veils things, it hides the reality. But it does not merely hid it. It hides it and then reveals it again. The term reveal means to pull back the veil; the veil is pulled back and then it is replaced. That revelation is partial to begin with. We will not go into the details of philosophy here. But it is in the order of things to mention here that according to the Vedāntic viewpoint, even when

one is looking at a pot, it is the reality which is being revealed only partially. Even in this case one is contacting the consciousness which is being revealed, but it is not the infinite consciousness. Hence, it does not eradicate ignorance completely, but at least partially one knows something which is true, which is real. So as one moves onwards, the veil is increasingly withdrawn and until the veil is not completely withdrawn, the egotistic nature of all our activities and feelings is not destroyed. That is exactly what we mean by *yajña*. *Yajña* means sacrifice. Sacrifice is in the very nature of human existence. The Vedas lay down that sacrifice is the centre of the whole universal movement.³⁵ *Nābhi* is the centre of a wheel. Kṛṣṇa translates the same by saying that all activities not done for the sake of sacrifice lead to bondage.³⁶

What is this sacrifice that we are talking about? Ācārya Śaṅkara makes this very clear by quoting a passage from the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa. Sacrifice or *yajña* really means that which is the all pervasive Lord.³⁷ So whenever one is acting not for one's own body-mind complex, not for one's egoistic fulfillment, self-aggrandisement, one is actually making a sacrifice. Whenever one is working for the good of the whole cosmos, as one understands it, one is performing a *yajña*. To begin with, we may work for the good of the village community only. Later, it may be the nation, or humanity, or whatever one perceives as the whole, i.e., one is moving away and sacrificing one's ego for the sake of attaining that wholeness. Whenever one gets away and sacrifices it, a *yajña* is being performed.

The prime manifestation of the Vedāntic view of all our actions is *yajña*. *Yajña* is the first and foremost manifestation, to the extent that the Vedas go on to say that sacrifice is to be done for the sake of sacrifice alone. Sacrifice is a value in itself, just as modern society emphasises that one has to serve oneself for one's own sake. The idea is that whenever one is acting for one's own self one need not ask any questions, it is taken for granted. Whenever one is acting for someone else, then the question arises is he doing something which is different from what is considered normal. One may appreciate it, one may consider it as something very superior, but it is still not normal. Vedānta says that actually sacrifice is in the very nature of things. The *yajña* way of perceiving things, the sacrificial way of perceiving things, is totally opposed to the modern social view where the self is the centre, self-aggrandisement is the main objective in life.

Sacrifice is a very interesting word. It means making something sacred. The same connotation is implied when we use words like *aśvamedha*, *gaumedha*, *puruṣamedha* and *sarvamedha*. The term *medha* means to purify. When we talk about *aśvamedha* we are talking about purifying the horses. What is a horse? The senses through which we act are really like horses.³⁸ They have to be purified. *Gaumedha* refers to the mind through which we gain all knowledge and this has to be purified. *Puruṣamedha* means that the soul itself has to be purified; and *sarvamedha* implies that the whole universe has to be purified.

The conception of sacrifice is to make whatever we give out absolutely pure. It is entirely different from the attitude underlying the concept of charity that we have become accustomed to. We give in charity what we consider is not quite useful to us. We do not give our best suit away in charity. We take the trouble to select an old suit, one which we are not going to wear. No doubt this is also giving and it is better than not giving at all. But in sacrifice we give what we consider best.

In Sanskrit, we have two conceptions—*dāna* and *dayā*. *Dāna* connotes giving to someone who is superior to us, who can make better use of a thing. On the other hand, *dayā* has more or less the same connotation as the term charity—we give something which is not up to our standards. In sacrifice, on the other hand, we do not give away something which we do not desire and which we consider inferior. On the contrary we have made it so sacred, so pure that we think that it is the best that we can offer. This idea of sacrifice, i.e., giving our best is a fundamental conception which makes the Vedāntic view totally different from the modern social viewpoint.

In our own age, we have the example of Vietnam, a very poor country with practically no weapons compared to the military strength of the United States. It was able to defeat the United States in spite of its formidable strength. Why could not the Americans suppress the Vietnamese? The answer lies in that very idea of sacrifice. They were not in possession of things but they had the spirit of sacrifice. The same spirit can be seen, to some extent, in

our fight against the British. We had no weapons, but we had the spirit of sacrifice. We must learn to sacrifice momentary material gains for permanent moral conquest. These material gains do not leave any residue which can make the fabric of our existence strong. Moral conquest, on the other hand, strengthens us and gives us something to live by. It is something which will always be with us, leading to strength, energy and the conception of fulfillment. The moment the idea of sacrifice emerges we move away from the idea of exploitation.

Modern society is basically a society of exploitation. The entire structure of industrial civilisation is based on the idea of exploitation. To begin with it may be exploitation of the natural resources. In this case the idea is what we can get from nature rather than what we can give to nature. The same tendency is seen when we exploit economically. Marx has made this concept of economic exploitation very clear. Today, we are quite conscious of economic exploitation and we all feel that it should not take place. But we are not yet conscious of emotional exploitation. We try to exploit a situation emotionally. What happens? A particular issue is raised. People's emotions are whipped up. They are emotionally aroused and they elect a person, whom they would not have elected otherwise. On that particular emotional level, we are able to exploit people. Even in our everyday relationships, a husband may try to exploit the feelings of his wife. Or a wife may want to exploit the feelings of her husband. There is intellectual exploitation as well. For instance, in communist countries

certain literatures are banned and common people do not have access to them. People will get only that kind of knowledge that the state wants to give them. This intellectual exploitation leads to Nazi movements, national socialism, etc. Basically, these movements were nothing more than intellectual exploitation. Certain ideas were continuously drummed into a particular group so that the reactions of that group were controlled by a few individuals.

In an industrial society consumerism is very important, therefore it is based on consumerism. All the advertisements, all the propaganda are essential to exploit other people mentally. This is also a kind of intellectual exploitation. Then there is social exploitation. We exploit a particular group because we can obtain certain advantages in terms of votes, etc. We are not concerned about the good of that particular group, but we are only conscious of how we can exploit that group. There is religious exploitation as well. When we talk about Jihad or other such religious problems, we are not trying to enlighten people about real religious values, but we are trying to exploit the feeling which a person has for a religion. There are various types of exploitation in our modern society and the whole society is based on that conception of exploitation.

Sacrifice is an anti-thesis of exploitation, to the extent that the Vedas say that if a person cooks food just for himself without the idea of sharing it with anyone else who is near him or is friendly to him, he is actually consuming the sins which are being committed in eating that food.³⁹

The same idea has been discussed in the Gītā. A person who cooks for himself is eating nothing but the sins.⁴⁰ Some of you may be able to recall your childhood. Supposing all the members of the family had gone out and your mother was alone, she would not cook for herself. She would eat a little gruel or *khicaḍī*. The underlying belief was why cook for oneself. But if children had to be fed, or if the family had to eat, she would cook a lot of things.

Earlier, most families had their own deity. Food was cooked and first offered to the Lord. The idea being that food was cooked not for ourselves but for the sake of the Lord who symbolises the cosmic spirit. Only after offering Him food we ate the remnants of this sacrifice. The same idea was present in all other activities. While laying the foundation of a house, the first question was where should the shrine be? Today things are just the opposite. When we discuss the plans of a house with an architect, we discuss the bedrooms, the drawing room, the dining room. And only after the house has been constructed that we think of a place to do worship—either under a staircase, or somewhere else a small niche is found to place the deity. The idea here is that we are going to build a house for our own self. Earlier, it was considered essential to have a guest room in the house because guests were always welcome. Today, even one's own parents are treated like guests and it is desirable if they do not come at all. However, if they do decide to come, they should stay for a few days like a guest and then go their way. If that is

how we feel about own parents, where is the question of feeling for others. Anybody who comes cannot be welcomed in such a house. I know there are economic constraints, but what will we do if we were to have a child. We have to think of his accommodation, food, etc. These ideas of sharing should become a natural part of our life style. This is what we mean by the word sacrifice.

The entire modern social outlook is based on exploitation whereas the attitude which Vedānta emphasises is the attitude of sacrifice, the attitude of *yajña*. We live for the sake of *yajña* and not for any material gain here and now for our own body-mind complex. The Vedāntic conception of society has no room for any type of exploitation. By exploitation we do not merely mean economic exploitation, even though in modern times the term connotes economic exploitation. In no sphere should there be exploitation. Instead society must be based on the idea of sacrifice, the idea being emphasised is what we can give and not what we can get. This idea should dominate all our relationships.

The moment we talk about exploitation, some people may say that we must first fight against a particular exploitation before fighting against other exploitations. This is again another way of exploiting—exploiting the feeling that we have against a particular exploitation. Some people may want to get rid of economic exploitation before thinking of other kinds of exploitation. For instance, we may promise to free someone from economic exploitation. And then we will exploit him intellectually and emotionally

because we have promised to save him from economic exploitation. Later, we will think of other exploitations.

Exploitation is a way of thinking. It does not exist somewhere outside. It is how we take life, how we react to life. It is a form of habit. For example, a father may ask his son to fetch him a glass of water. The son, in turn, may ask his younger brother to bring a glass of water for the father. This is the habit of exploitation. Because one is senior, one can order one's younger brothers or sisters. The attitude is not what one can do for one's brother, but what one can get from one's brother. The father has asked the elder son to fetch a glass of water, and he must do so like an obedient servant. He could have asked the younger son also, but he did not. So exploitation is basically the way we look at things. If we look at things with the intention of taking advantage of a situation, we are acting as an exploiter. And if in any given situation, we think about what we can give to society, what we can give to others then we move away from exploitation and go towards sacrifice. We have to get rid of this habit. This exploitation is in our minds and we must get rid of it from there. Because we see exploitation outside, we feel that it takes place in the external world.

There is an interesting story. Once a queen had gone to take a bath by the side of a pond. She kept her necklace on the bank and went for a bath. As soon as she finished bathing and came back, she found that the necklace was missing. Immediately she asked everyone to search for it. In spite of all efforts no one could find it. And it was even

more surprising since nobody was around. Everyone thought that it might have fallen into the pond. People dived into the pond to look for it. But all attempts proved unsuccessful. Later someone saw it floating in the pond. The queen requested the king to ask the divers to retrieve the necklace which they could now see. But no matter how hard they tried, they could not retrieve it. Everyone thought it to be very peculiar that though they could see the necklace yet they could not reach it. Meanwhile a person who was passing that way enquired what the matter was. He was told about the lost necklace which could be seen floating in the pond but was still beyond reach. The man was intelligent, he thought over the matter. He said that if none of the divers could find it then obviously it was not there. It must be somewhere in the opposite direction because its reflection must be falling on the water. He began to trace it backwards and he saw that near the reflection of the necklace was the reflection of a branch of a tamarind tree. He tried to locate that tamarind tree and found it nearby. He climbed the tree and found the necklace hanging from a branch. Some bird had taken the necklace, thinking it to be something edible because it was shining and after discovering that it was not something edible, had left it there. The necklace hanging from the branch of the tree was being reflected. All the time people were trying to retrieve the necklace from the pond, while it was only being reflected in the pond.

Similarly we see exploitation in society and we feel that exploitation exists in the external world, and if we remove it from there, it will no longer exist. Actually exploitation exists in the minds of men, and unless we remove it from the mind, it will persist. What happens is that we substitute one type of exploitation by another type of exploitation, instead of getting rid of exploitation itself. Exploitation will disappear when we realise that all the universe and all the souls everywhere are nothing but God Himself.⁴¹ So whom will we exploit? We can only exploit ourselves whenever we try to exploit someone else. When this realisation comes, sacrifice becomes the natural mode of thinking. We no longer see others as different from us, we realise that it is the Lord Himself who is being manifested in all beings. This realisation does not dawn suddenly, it comes slowly through continuous practice. Ācārya Śaṅkara points out that what ever a man who has realised himself finds natural must be practiced with effort by those who want to attain that state.

We have been trained to think of exploitation as natural. I have deliberately used the word trained for a child is not by nature exploiting, but as he grows up we imprint upon him that survival and growth are results of exploitation. Every being is born in a particular environment. It is true that each one has his own individuality. We are always in a group and continuously we react to each other. Only 15 per cent may be our own contribution in our own mental make up; 85 percent is due to the particular social environment, the particular patterns which are being continuously

impressed upon us. Living in an egoistic society we become egoists. Living in a sacrificial society we become men of sacrifice. In India we can easily see this. What was the reason that during the independence movement we were able to make great sacrifices for the sake of the nation? What is the reason that suddenly within a period of thirty years the very idea of sacrificing anything for the sake of the nation seems to be like a distant dream? Why has this change come? The answer to this is that the whole social fabric at that time was permeated by the thought—how much can each contribute for the sake of the nation. On the other hand, after independence the attitude is what can we get out of the nation. Certain people at the helm of affairs began to drum this idea continuously. They emphasised that we must consciously think about what the state can do for us. Slowly, this idea was imprinted on our minds. All the time we are preoccupied with what the state is doing for us, what the nation is doing for us. No one questions himself what is he doing for the sake of the nation.

The same is true of religion. Today we do not ask ourselves what are we doing for the sake of religion. Rather we ask what is religion doing for us. We say that temples have funds, why do they not use those funds for our economic growth. Do we have any duty towards the temples? No, because we do not have time to go to the temple. We do not even believe that going to the temple is of any use. And most people only go there to condone for their sins. In spite of this we want the funds which are

available in the temples. The same attitude underlies our feelings towards the nation.

Slowly, habits have changed. But now we have to reverse the process. A sacrificial society alone can produce individuals who have the spirit of sacrifice. A few people who possess the spirit of sacrifice should come forward. They should try to preach to all those they come in contact with. But what do we mean by the term preach? As was pointed out earlier, preaching is not merely what we say, it is what we live. Only when we live the spirit of sacrifice, that it starts appealing to others. It is only through living a principle that another individual can be changed.

To develop this spirit of sacrifice, we must develop the spirit of dependence on the Lord, dependence on Shiva. Now we feel that the whole society and the whole cosmos is something inert. It is not inert. Gradually we will develop this idea that the whole universe, the whole cosmos, the whole environment, which is acting with us, is pervaded and controlled by Shiva. Since He, a conscious being, is controlling we have nothing to fear. We have only to be sure that we are exerting our utmost to deserve His care. We must ask ourselves: are we doing something by which He will be able to take care of us? Or, are we fighting against Him, working against Him? We can understand this better with the help of an illustration.

When a person is drowning and another person tries to rescue him. What happens? Instead of trying to get help,

he tries to catch hold of the person who is trying to rescue him. And that is why if the rescuer does not know how to save a drowning person, he may also be drowned. The rescuer always pushes the person he is trying to save towards the bank but never allows the latter to hold him, because if the latter held him strongly then he would not be able to swim himself. So he must be allowed to push the drowning person towards the bank and not the other way round. Similarly we must allow Shiva to give us protection rather than trying not to help Him in giving us protection. What is it that helps Him in giving us protection? It is definitely by practicing this conception of sacrifice. If we do not possess the spirit of sacrifice then we want to know what we can get out of the Lord rather than what we can do for the Lord. If we do not believe in this concept then the Lord will not be able to protect us because we will become more and more egotistical.

When most of us pray to the Lord we do not ask Him how we can be of use to Him, how we can help Him, how we can be ethical in our conduct all the time. We do not pray for all this. We pray for material gains and even unethical gains. For example, if we know that we will lose a case because it is illegal we will pray to the Lord that we should win it somehow or other. Even though we know that it is an immoral case, we still want Him to help us in those circumstances. Naturally, the Lord does not help us. And when the Lord does not help us, we begin to wonder why He does not help us. We feel that in spite of the fact that we prayed so hard nothing happened. The fact is that

we are not allowing Him to help us. So we should always ask ourselves the question—are we exerting ourselves to be in His care or are we working against Him? It is only through this that we will be able to reach the stage of *abhaya* or fearlessness. Unless we become fearless, it is not possible to follow this idea of sacrifice. All the time we are afraid. Modern society exploits this fear and tries to control us through this fear. Everyone is trying to impress upon us that if we do not act in a particular way then we will be destroyed.

Once I read the Memoirs of Khrushchev, whether they are authoritative or not, we do not know, Khrushchev has recorded a very interesting incident. He recalls that Stalin in his last days was once standing in the balcony and humming to himself that the picture was complete now because he did not even trust himself any more. Stalin never trusted anyone. He thought that everybody was either siding with the British or with the Germans or with the Americans. Suspecting everyone had become his very nature. He was humming to himself that now he did not even trust himself any more: whether he was doing all this for the sake of communism or merely for his own power.

Continuous fear is imbedded in us, and everyone tells us that we will be destroyed if we do not follow a particular path, and in the process we move away from sacrifice towards self-aggrandisement. This fear is constantly imprinted on our minds through newspapers, magazines, radio, television and other media of mass communication. It may be fear of nuclear war or it may be fear of ordinary

things. We have to see through this whole series of fears. Whether it is the army, or the police, their aim is to emphasise that if it had not been for them, everyone would be destroyed. Once we know that there is greater spirit to save us, we need not fear and depend on others to protect us. Do we ever realise that a tiger or a lion has no friends since he kills all the other animals in the forest. In spite of this he sleeps without any police or any army around to protect him. If a tiger or a lion can relax and sleep peacefully, are we so helpless that we need complete protection all the time? Because that fear has been imprinted on our minds, we are afraid all the time.

If we examine our scriptures, we often find descriptions of the fight between the devas and the asuras. The story is more or less the same. The demons always win initially. Then the devas pray to the Lord who comes to their protection. The final victory is always of the devas. But the important point is that initially they are always defeated. That is the very nature of our own mental life. Whenever we want to do any ethical act, we are reluctant to do it initially. We are afraid. But once we have become conscious of the fact that there is a greater reality—Shiva is there to give us protection—only then we become courageous enough to be ethical and moral. The same is true of our social attitudes. We should realise that though the devas may be defeated in the beginning but through the help of Shiva they always win eventually. If, at any time, we are able to revive this idea in us that there is a greater force facilitating the sacrificial process, then we

will be able to sacrifice and eventually succeed. By continuously taking shelter in the Lord, we will develop that spirit of *abhaya*. In our dealing with other people we will not be guided by *bheda* or difference but by identity.

In the Gītā, there are two instances where the Lord refers to those people who are continuously doing good to others. At one place he refers to those people who have overcome the idea of duality, of this worldly difference being *really* real.⁴² At another place He refers to those people who can see *sama*, that is, the Lord everywhere with equanimity.⁴³ They alone can do good to others.⁴⁴ To do good to others is possible only after we have overcome this idea of duality, this idea of difference, the idea of *bheda*.

No matter in which society Advaita is emphasised, that society has always grown and emerged victorious. Whereas a society which emphasises *bheda* is always conflict ridden. The moment we try to emphasise and consider the *bheda* really real, conflict arises. If two are really two they will always be in conflict; and a conflict afflicted society, unless cured of the conflict, is bound to be annihilated. Unfortunately during the foreign regime in India, the conception of *bheda* was imposed on this social pattern and everything was divided. We have not been able to get rid of this division even after independence.

Sometimes I feel, I may be wrong and I hope I am wrong, that there are certain powers in our own country who want to divide our society. I am not talking about other countries who have a vested interest in maintaining

this division. This is eating away the very vitals of our society. Our society is becoming weaker and weaker because of this conception of difference. As noted earlier, there will always be difference, but if the unity is real, and the division is apparent, then the society grows. But if the division is real and the unity is apparent then there will always be conflict within a society because the duality is real. That is why we have not talked of a society belonging to a particular period of history. We refer to our society as Sanātana society. Sanātana means *sadā bhava*, that is, the one which continuously rejuvenates itself. Therefore, living the ideal here and now is emphasised. The emphasis is not on dry contentions.

Sanātana Dharma never believed in any proselytising. Even today it does not believe in this. Why? Because we do not feel that by using a label anything of worth can be achieved. There are people in India who are labelled Mohammedans. But if we look closely we see that basically they are Hindus. How is that possible? According to Islam, there can be no worship of any kind, particularly of a dead person. But in India the worship of graves, the kabra pooja of the pirs is very important. Why is this important? The reason being that worship is in the very nature of things, it is imbedded in our society. We may change their labels, but essentially they remain the same.

Vijayalakṣmī Pandit recalls in her Memoirs that when she was Governor in Bombay, she had a cook. One day he appeared to be very worried. Upon inquiring it was found that he was worried because he could not find a suitable

match for his daughter. She writes that she was rather surprised as he was a Christian and finding a Christian bridegroom should have been no trouble. The cook told her that it was very difficult to find a boy of a Sārasvata Brāhmaṇa clan who was a Christian. She wanted to know how he could be a Christian and a Sārasvata Brāhmaṇa at the same time. He answered that he was Christian by religion and a Sārasvata Brāhmaṇa by caste.

We can change labels but by changing labels things do not change. The attitude towards life does not change. It is not possible to accept the Harijan as an equal, even though he is labelled a Christian or a Mohammedan. The same is true of everything else. And that is why we never tried to change labels. There were people like Rahim and Raskhan who were devoted to Kṛṣṇa, but we never tried to change their labels and say that they were Hindus. Though we could have easily done that, but we let them develop their tendencies as they liked, because it is the individual who has to change and not merely the label which has to be changed.

We believed that the power of a group accrued from the power of each individual in the group. This is something akin to a rope. If we want to increase the strength of a rope then we must increase the strength of every thread in it. Only then the rope will become strong. Similarly if we want to develop a society oriented towards non-dualism, oriented towards unity and sacrifice, each individual must be trained and properly developed accordingly.

All reformation, according to Vedānta, must start from the heart of man. A man's heart must be changed. Only if we can change a man's heart can we change him. A change in his feelings and his mode of thinking will bring a change in society. It is very easy to talk about reformation as if it is something external which can be imposed. It cannot be imposed. It has to grow from within. That is why Advaita (non-dualism) must be felt, this sense of identity must be felt within. For example, a *sahrdaya* goes to a drama, say, Harishchandra. He has heard the story of Harishchandra several times. But when he sees the acting, he feels the pangs which were felt by Harishchandra or his wife or his child, Rohit. Because he is able to empathise, therefore, he is *sahrdaya*. There are some people who go to a drama but they are not able to empathise with the actors. The same thing is true of our own lives. There are people who do social service without any feeling within. This may be social service, it may be charity, but this is not the experience of Advaita, that unity which we are talking about. It must be felt in the heart. We must be able to feel the pain of others, only then the sacrifice becomes natural, because that pain has become a natural part of our lives.

In Banaras there is a place called Piśāca Mocana. An avadhūta used to stay there. Once he was wounded but he did not apply any medicine and as a result big worms entered that wound. These worms were big enough to fall down. Every time they would fall down he would put them back on the wound. When he was asked why he was doing this, he replied that they had nothing to eat and if

they fell down they would die. When he was told that they would harm him if he placed them on the wound, he replied that they could only harm to some extent but he would not die because of them. This is what is known as Advaita being felt in the very core of our being.

As I pointed out earlier, I do not expect that every member of society or even a large proportion of society can attain this state. But this state becomes the light house. We must know how much empathy must enter our being, into our way of feeling, to attain this state of Advaita.

Ācārya Śaṅkara has expressed this idea of society, which we have tried to elaborate to some extent, in one of his stotras.⁴⁵ Every member of society should try to ensure that he does his share to protect *dharma*.⁴⁶ *Dharma* has been compared to a bridge. The word *dharmasetu* appears in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upanishad. *Dharma* is that which forms a bridge between our selfishness and the complete spirit of God dedication. All other things about *dharma* are only detailed analysis to show us how we have to practice it. Basically we are centred in our body-mind complex but we have to reach that state where this body-mind is of no value to us. These are two shores and *dharma* is the bridge which takes us across. Whenever any *adharma* enters our mind, an unrighteous thought crosses our mind, we must immediately obliterate it.⁴⁷ We must not allow it to linger on.

There is *karma pāśa*, that is, whenever we do an act, our immediate reaction is what fruit will this act bring.⁴⁸ We

must cut this thought at the very root. We must act out of love, we must act because sacrifice has become our nature, and not because we will get something out of it. This alone can give us peace. If we follow this path in this particular way, then only we will be able to attain that state.

We began by analysing what we meant by modern society; we analysed the major premise of modern society: sensuous knowledge is the only real knowledge. We started with that base because that is the base of modern society. Fulfillment of selfish desires is the main force which holds society together. We found that the major premise of modern society is absolutely wanting in essentials, because it does not give us values towards which we can move. Modern society has given us technology and other developments by which we can attain a lot but attain towards what? It does not tell us anything about this. Thus, it is found absolutely wanting in this essential aspect, that is, giving direction to society.

Analysing the Vedāntic view, we found that it has given us three fields—Marya, Narya, and Divya. Through these three field concepts, it gives us the three views connected with them. One view is in which the world is real in itself and as we see it. That is what we call the *laukika* view following Ācārya Gauḍapāda. Then there is *śuddham laukika* view, when we analyse we find that things are not really real as we perceive them to be, though the perception is real. That is the second stage towards which we move. In the final stage we know that neither the thing as we see it is outside, nor even the perception is outside, it is

identical with us. These three fields and how they are adopted by the individual were discussed in detail.

There is a triple stream of experience. These streams are the waking state, the dream state and the deep sleep state. To attain that final stage we discussed how by practicing the different modes of meditation we are able to contact reality as it really is. Even though that final revelation has not taken place, we should live slowly whatever has been revealed. Wherever we are able to identify with the greater whole, we should start practicing it here and now, because it is only by continuously practicing that we will be able to develop the sense of unity. Thus we find that this Vedāntic conception of Advaita is on an experiential level. It is based on experiment, it can be experienced by us. It is not accepted because it is written in some text. Only by re-living it does it become relevant in our lives. Thus Vedānta is relevant in our everyday life in modern society because it is able to give us an experimental basis on which we can build our philosophy of life.

We began with the question ‘Is Vedānta Relevant?’ and we found out that Vedānta is absolutely relevant. Unless it is able to show the way, we feel that the whole modern society all over the world will come to naught because it is continuously being attacked by the fear psychosis and that fear psychosis is eating away the very vitals of the whole social fabric.



Appendix

1. वेदान्तसिद्धान्तनिरुक्तिरेषा, ब्रह्मैव जीवस्सकलं जगच्च ।
अखंडरूपस्थितिरेव मोक्षो, ब्रह्मद्वितीयं श्रुतयः प्रमाणम् ॥
— विवेकचूडामणिः ४७८
2. वेदान्तसिद्धान्तनिरुक्तिरेषा ।
3. अखंडरूपस्थितिरेव मोक्षो ।
4. आकाशेन शिखी समस्तफणिनां नेत्रा कलापी । शिवानन्दलहरी ५३
5. समस्तफणिनां नेत्रा कलापी ।
6. नतानुग्राही प्रणवोपदेशनिनदैः केकीति यो गीयते । शिवानन्दलहरी ५३
7. नतानुग्राही न कामग्राही ।
8. श्यामां शैलसमुद्भवां घनरूचिं दृष्ट्वा नटन्तं मुदा ।
वेदान्तोपवने विहाररसिकं तं नीलकण्ठं भजे ॥ शिवानन्दलहरी ५३
9. श्यामां शैलसमुद्भवां ।
10. सम अजति, संगत्या अजति, सम्मत्या अजति, संहदा अजति ।
11. सम अजति, संगत्या अजति, सम्मत्या अजति, संहदा अजति ।
12. सहृदयं साम्मनस्यम् अविद्वेषं कृणोमि वः ।
अन्यो अन्यम् अभिहर्यत वत्सं जातमिवाद्या ॥ अथर्ववेद ३.३०.१
13. वत्सं जातमिव अद्या ।
14. क्रियमाणो हि धर्मो भवति ।
15. आपादमस्तकमहं मातृपितृविनिर्मितः । महोपनिषत् ६.५५

16. अतीतः सर्वभावेभ्यः ।
17. जगज्जाल पदार्थात्मा सर्व एव आहमक्षयः । महोपनिषत् ६.५७
18. जीवं कल्पयते पूर्वं ततो भावान्पृथक् विधान् ।
बाह्यानाध्यात्मिकांश्चैव यथाविद्यस्तथा स्मृतिः ॥ माण्डूक्यकारिका २.१६
19. अजे साम्ये तु ये केचित् भविष्यन्ति सुनिश्चिताः ।
ते हि लोके महाज्ञानास्तच्च लोको न गाहते ॥ माण्डूक्यकारिका ४.९५
20. अजे साम्ये सुनिश्चिताः भविष्यन्ति ।
21. ते हि लोके महाज्ञानाः ।
22. तच्च लोको न गाहते ॥
23. पश्यामि चित्रमिव सर्वमिदं द्वितीयं
तिष्ठामि निष्कलचिदेकवपुष्यनन्ते । संक्षेप शारीरकम् ४.५४
24. आत्मानमद्वयमनन्तसुखैकरूपं
पश्यामि दग्धरशनामिव च प्रपञ्चम् ॥ तत्रैव
25. यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः । गीता ३.२१
26. मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद् यतति सिद्धये । गीता ७.३
27. सवस्तु सोपलम्भं च द्वयं लौकिक मिष्यते । माण्डूक्यकारिका ४.८७
28. अवस्तु सोपलम्भं च शुद्धं लौकिक मिष्यते । तत्रैव
29. अवस्तु अनुपलम्भं च लोकोत्तरमिति स्मृतम् । माण्डूक्यकारिका ४.८८
30. महिम्नः पारं ते परमविदुषो यद्यसदृशी ।
स्तुतिर्ब्रह्मादीनामपि तदवसन्नास्त्वयि गिरः । शिवमहिम्नस्तोत्रम् १
31. अथावाच्यः सर्वः स्वमतिपरिणामावधि गृणन् । तत्रैव
32. अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥ गीता ९.३०

33. अपि चेत्सुदुराचारः ।
34. भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
35. यज्ञो वै विश्वस्य नाभिः । अथर्ववेद ९.१०.१४
36. यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः । गीता ३.९
37. यज्ञो वै विष्णुः । तैत्तिरीय ब्राह्मण १.७.४
38. इन्द्रियाणि हयान्याहुः ।
39. नार्यमणं पुष्यति नो सखायं ।
केवलाघो भवति केवलादी ॥ ऋग्वेद १०.११७.६
40. भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् । गीता ३.१३
41. ब्रह्मैव जीवस्सकलं जगच्च । विवेकचूडामणिः ४७८
42. लभन्ते ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृषयः क्षीणकल्मषाः ।
छिन्नद्वैधा यतात्मानः सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥ गीता ५.२५
43. संनियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः । गीता १२.४
44. सर्वभूतहिते रताः । तत्रैव
45. धर्मसेतुपालकं त्वधर्ममार्गनाशकं ।
कर्मपाशमोचकं सुशर्मदायकं विभुम् ॥ कालभैरवाष्टकम् ५
46. धर्मसेतु पालकं ।
47. अधर्म मार्ग नाशकं ।
48. कर्म पाश मोचकं ।



