

come to the conclusion that ‘indeed forgetfulness of our real nature is death.’ Marshalling of the above arguments was done only to explain this statement of Sanatkumāra vividly and impress its inevitability on the seeker’s understanding.

Having given these arguments, Śaṅkara says, ‘Therefore, there is no death other than forgetfulness. This forgetfulness of our real nature alone is living death.’ Forgetfulness can come only when one identifies oneself with the sense objects. This is death; death to all aspirations of any spiritual seeker. To the spiritual seeker who is trying to quieten himself, who has got the spiritual knowledge and who has got the knowledge of the five kośas, and the required discriminative power, ‘forgetfulness’ is death indeed.

‘Forgetfulness’ is death because it immediately breeds imaginations and they bring forth desires. Desires give birth to activity. Activity precipitates more and more vāsanās, which bring more and more thoughts, more the thoughts, more is the activity. In order to exhaust the new found vāsanās, a fresh body has to be taken up. Thus, the individual falls into the whirling wheel of births and deaths. Indeed, other than forgetfulness, there is no death (pramadāt na parosti mṛtyūḥ).

‘When the mind is withdrawn from the objects-emotions-thoughts world and when it starts contemplating upon Brahman, refuse to initiate any new saṅkalpas. In the *Gītā*, we are similarly advised, ‘Having set the mind upon That, thereafter never initiate any new line of thought.’ Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, “Little by little let him attain quietude by the intellect held in firmness, having made the mind established in the Self, let him not think of anything”¹. Similarly, here we are told how when the mind has been withdrawn from its outer wanderings and held in abeyance (samāhita), at the chosen point of contemplation on Brahman, one gains the goal truly. Then what are we to do? We must ourselves become quiet without projecting any thoughts (samāhita-ātma-bhāva). Let us try to withdraw our minds from objects, emotions and thoughts

¹ *Bhagavad-gītā* – 6.25

and contemplate upon our own real nature, the ‘one Self in all’. Withdrawing from the external activities of the physical, mental, and intellectual imaginations, let us teach ourselves to bring our entire attention to the Consciousness within.

Contemplate upon the Self, ‘with great care’– Meaning slowly (sāvadhāna). You cannot force open a bud and make it a flower. It must take its own time. A forcibly opened up flower will not have real beauty or true fragrance. Never hurry up. Let it take its own time. All that we have to do is to put ourselves on the rails, on the right track, running in the right direction. We shall reach in time our coveted destination.

Therefore, very very carefully and slowly, may you gain a state of inner peace, fully abiding in the Self.

