

THE DISCOVERY OF THE SOUL

The Dualistic Approach *

There are two types of dualism; one is the dualism of spirit and matter, and the other is the dualism of God and soul. In this talk, I shall deal firstly with the dualism of spirit and matter, and then with the dualism of God and soul in so far as they concern the discovery of the soul.

There is a necessity, an undeniable imperative to discover oneself; and it is an imperative which one can evade or escape from, only for a time, since it returns with renewed vigor after each banishment. The imperative is further enforced by the sense of bondage and misery and opposition that is manifest in all the dealings of the individual with the universe around him. The individual recognizes himself as an active intelligent conscious entity possessing a body through which he gains his knowledge; and with the help of his sensory and motor organs, he is able to satisfy to the degree permitted by his knowledge of the outer world, the needs of his body. Thus the most self-evident fact is that we have each a body which we feel to be our own and with which we identify ourselves. This body is material, insentient (acit), having extension or occupying space, and is the object of our endeavors as well as an instrument of our enjoyment of the universe. The outer world is the field of our sensory and motor activities. It almost appears that from beginningless time our efforts have been in the direction of knowing the nature of the things about us and around us, and this adaptation to the environment has had its own consequences. The outer world is transitory, continually changing and perishing. And our knowledge of the same has been commensurate with our ability to deal with it and has always been attended by restrictions, limitations and failures. Though this is so, since man is preoccupied with the discovery of the laws of Nature so as to be able to gain mastery over his environment he has not been able to gain mastery over his fully, for in the process of his struggle for mastery over nature, he has by granting partial knowledges (*kalas*) and not integral and real knowledge almost bound him, made his consciousness

fragmentary and restricted to surface-character. So long as man is moving outward of himself and feels that the outer world is the enjoyable world wherein he can find a delight and a fulfillment that he cannot get within himself, and considers that the aim and goal of his existence is to be the enjoyer (*bhokta*) of the world (*bhogayam*), he is bound to develop ignorance (*avidya*) which is the nature of the scientific know ledges (*kalas*) for these *kalas* lead him away from his own self-consciousness and spiritual awareness and involve him seriously and deleteriously in the admiration of the material forms and to take delight in the pleasurable sense actions of the body. The sense of possessiveness grows and this inflicts misery and sorrow, disease and defeat; and an uncertainty infects his consciousness. And in the presence of death he discovers that without a soul or living self (*jiva*) the body is incapable of being anything, of doing anything and is only capable of disintegration and change. It is his will and presence that make the body throb with life and movement and maintain the unity of the parts of the body. And it is the beginning of this consciousness of distinction between the body and the soul that leads to the general formulation of the utter disparity between these two entities, spirit and matter; thus is revealed a subjective personal aspect to the individual privacy of his own nature which is radically other than the objective material basis of his body, and it dawns on him that he should extricate his soul from its involvement in nature. The cognition of the *dehatma-bhrama* or the illusion that the body is the soul is made with the help of the knowledge that it is different in every respect from matter. The soul then begins to experience a new sense of values and its range of consciousness and pretension grow vaster, subtle and intuitive. This is the first step in emancipation. This is the *vidya* the liberating knowledge, different from the objective knowledge or the science of causes and uses of Nature (*avidya*).

The world of Nature is a vast snare which enthralls the soul and leads it down the abyss of ignorance and in conscience. Therefore from the dawn of the spiritual history of the world, seers of all countries and races and times, have been counseling that the soul or self is an immortal entity different from the material encasement and the world of Nature, and that the attainment of that knowledge of the soul is the saving fact. The path of soul-discovery or the self-discovery is obviously a path to be traversed with the help of introspection and discriminative reason. The individual has to move inward

into himself till he comes across the central luminous self-evident core of his being , which he could legitimately call his true self or 'I' By this process of self-discrimination, the senses the breaths, speech and mind and all other functions of the body are found to be not-self ; and they are found to depend for their functions on the spiritual entity within, which they cannot know but which is the knower behind all their knowing and livings. When this discrimination is further supported by constant renunciation of the fruits of all actions that one has perforce to do, and by withdrawing consent to the activities of the senses by means of the practice of non-injury, non-possessiveness, right speech, right thought, selflessness, cleanliness and love for all and equanimity the extravert tendency of the mind is checked, and the soul stands revealed as the inner light and peace governed by fearlessness, stable, well-established and permanent. The man then realizes that the delight he sought in Nature was within himself and not corrupted as in the other case by ignorance, precariousness and fraught with the dangers of darkness and in-conscience. The mind and intellect thus subdued and the senses brought under control, the soul begins to rest in itself and knows itself to be pure consciousness- bliss and capable of intuitive knowledge unlimited by any corporeal limitation. Though Nature is neither abolished nor cancelled by this self-discovery, it ceases to have any purpose for him who has found his soul, and as the Samkhya Rishi Kapila stated, it utterly withdraws itself from him.

One man's liberation or self-knowledge, however, does not entail the liberation of all the other souls nor the total disappearance of Nature. Plurality of souls is a fact and it has to be reckoned with, and Nature or objective existence seems to be assured a permanency also. Purusha and Prakriti, Spirit and matter, are the two realities that we find and the emancipation of the soul or spirit individual from the grips of matter is the only way by which it is possible to attain peace and transcendence over the material effects and establish oneself in peace and truth and immortal existence. This is the search. The questions why he ever was involved in material effects and how he ever began to take delight in its evanescence are not explicable; and no philosophy has been able to account for them. Though man's consciousness is freed from all illusion and delusion that it is identical with matter, though he sees with this soul-vision of fundamental real-consciousness, yet his finitude remains. He finds himself to be a monad

among monads. Bondage and finitude, these are the two that man found at the beginning of his search to be the causes of his ignorance and misery and frustration and mortality. Through growing out of bondage he begins to see that his own soul contains within it a mystery of unity with all others souls. His finitude is not a 'closed' finitude and is not synonymous with bondage nor its cause holding within it the seeds of bondage or ignorance nor a resultant of such ignorance but the unique expression of the relationship that he bears to that Mysterious Unity, the One Supreme Universal Self of all, radically different from every other soul, not in respect of its selfness but in respect of its universality and infinitude and power. The finite soul sees its own being to rest on this principle of unity, the Purushottama and its reality to consist in being dependent on him. Thus we come across the duality that is available between the individual soul and the Isvara, the Universal self in all beings, the inner controller (prerita) of both souls and Nature, the destiner of all processes (niyanta).

He it is who upholds the multiplicity of the souls and the multiplicity of planes and orders and grades of Nature and ordains the laws of action and the fruits and uses by means of His self-law (Rta). He is infinity (*ananta*) bliss (*ananda*) and sole independent (*svatantra*). It is He, of whom the Upanishad speaks as having the whole universe as His body, dependent upon Him utterly and absolutely, existing for His sovereign bliss and purposes. The individual thus is not dependent upon anything other than God because he is the body of that Godhead, and he is eternally and inseparably and ever organically related to God as his attribute, mode amsa or part, or ray or power. The individual by relating himself to God consciously through the knowledge of his dependence on God, can shed his exclusive privacy and solitariness, for by realizing the supreme Lord within himself he can perceive all things in the Divine : for, as a Śrī Vaishnava theologian wrote "the knowledge that the soul is dependent on God is more important for the purposes of realization of the soul even of its own nature than the knowledge that it is different from Prakriti or Nature." It is this God-awareness within oneself that frees one utterly from one's bondage to Nature on the one hand while on the other hand simultaneously it draws one inward to one's inner truth and central light and uncovers the Divine who is the inner self of all creatures and things, and in Him enjoys the universe and all, even as the Alvar Sathakopa has said. By this

knowledge one become aware of one's own finitude indeed as a necessary and organic expression of one's true place in the Divine scheme and universe, and as an eternal free worshipper (*bhakta*), servant, instrument (*karana*) and vehicle of the Divine, who is the Lord of all works, of all beneficence and glory. In Him, the soul finds its fullest expansion of consciousness or knowledge and its perfection and solace and eternal nature.

The soul has to contemplate on the Divine as the true '*aham*' or 'I' by means of the concentric meditation called '*ahamgrahopasana*' as intimated in the mantra of the *Vajasaneya Samhita* beginning with

Hiranmayena patrena satyasyapihitam mukham

Tat tvam pusan apavrnū satyadharmaya drstaye.

Pusannekarse Yama Suryas Prajapatyas

Vyūha rasmin samuha tejah

Yat yo 'satyasyapihitam mukham

Kalyanatamaw tat te pasyami.

The individual who contemplates the Divine as his own self and as the self of all things realizes the omnipresence of God who as the master and One Being and Absolute holds every thing by His omnipotent, lordship in Himself. The contemplation on God is of the form of surrender, an unreserved placing oneself in all one's parts at the feet of God, for the sake of protection, emancipation, and transformation. *Tam eva saranam gaccha; sarva dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja* said Bhagavan Śrī Krishna. In Him alone is to be found peace without taint and freedom and fulfillment. Though the three entities Nature soul and God called by the three entities Nature soul and God called by the Upanishad as *bhogyam bhokta and prerita* are radically different from one another yet they are interrelated; the *prerita* or God controls the other two and indwells both as Master and Self.

The soul's ignorance began when it attached itself externally and directly to Nature. Its bondage was the result as well as its misery. When it knows itself as different from it then it escapes from its tentacles. When it perceives within itself resident in its heart the Isvara, the universal self or *sariri*, it is freed from its privateness and attains liberation into the bliss of Brahman and can move in the other world or the *parama Pada*. This is the culmination of its discovery of itself, the great discovery. It is the business of the soul to know its God –who is the God of all-the Vasudeva and that He is the all-self. It is then that the soul knows that God is Love, Light, and that His Grace is all.