

INTRODUCTION TO VEDANTA

Swami Paramarthananda

Chapter 1

PURUSARTHA

UNIQUENESS OF HUMAN BIRTH

There are several features common to human beings and other living beings. They are *ahara*, *nidra*, *bhayam*, *maithunam*. *Ahara* means 'eating'. Animals eat for their survival. Some even store their food for a rainy day. A human being also works for his or her food and preserves it. Next comes *nidra*, sleep. After working for its livelihood, every being takes rest in its own way. Animals sleep. Human beings also sleep. The third feature is *bhayam*, fear - fear from other animals, fear from natural forces etc. Like food and rest, fear also is common to both animals and human beings. Both have their own methods of protecting themselves. A human being tries and provides for the protection of his/her life and property. All the security forces, police, guards, dogs etc. are maintained with the intention of protecting the life and property of human beings because there is an inherent sense of insecurity.

The next common feature is *maithunam*, love for the perpetuation of one's own species, *santatih*. Not only do I want to live, but I also want propagate the species by getting children, grandchildren, etc. I want to survive through them. So I name the grandchildren after me. If I do not physically survive, at least I want to continue through the grandchild. Animals also instinctively and naturally propagate. Plants also do this. In this respect also, there is no difference between humans and other living beings.

Now the question is, if animals and human beings are the same in all these respects, then, what is the unique characteristic of a human being? In what way can we claim superiority, say that a human being is the roof and crown of the creation?

Human being is superior for different reasons. To start with, there is the faculty of speech, which is unique to human being. No animal can orally communicate except by making sounds. A human being, on the other hand, can develop thousands of languages. He can have sophisticated methods of verbal communication, all because of the superior faculty of speech.

There is yet another unique feature of a human being. This is the superior intellect, i.e., the faculty of thinking, studying, analyzing etc. As this Sanskrit verse says, '*buddhirhi tvam adhiko vriesah*'. For human beings, intellect (*buddhi*) is an extraordinary

feature. This does not mean that animals do not have intellect. Animals also have intellect and many animals like the gorilla and dolphin are considered to be very intelligent. But, the intelligence in a human being is so far superior to that in any animal. This is the reason animals do not read newspapers or our great book of literature. If the intellect is removed from a human being (*buddhya vihinah*), he/she will be as good as an animal only (*pasubhih samanah*). A human being without intellect is as good as an animal or sometimes even worse than an animal. So intellect is a unique faculty of a human being.

A human being is capable of seeing his life very clearly because of this unique thinking faculty. Animals may have some instinctive ability in storing some food, but they cannot think of their life far ahead. They don't ask questions like "what will I do in my old age? Will I get pension? Should I have life insurance coverage?" and so on. They do not bother about their children also. They do not think about saving money for the future. Such farsighted thinking, fixing specific goals and working for their fulfillment remains the most unique feature of human birth. In Sanskrit, these human goals are called *purusartha*. *Artha* mean a goal. *Arthyate iti arthah* that which is sought after, that which is desired is called *artha*. And therefore, the word *purusartha* means 'the end or goal which is desired or sought after by human beings (*purusah*)'.

And how many such goals are possible? As many human beings are there, so many different goals are also possible. Each human being has got his *purusarthas*. One person wants his name to appear in the Guinness book of world record by eating chillies. Another wants jump from the mountain without a parachute. He wants to open his parachute at a height of 100 feet only. He does that successfully and creates a record on that. Isn't he satisfied? No. he wants to break his own record and goes jumping till he dies when the parachute fails to open. Thus chillyeating is a goal; freefall is a goal; and yet another eats iron pieces. And there are some others who want to climb Mt. Everest, some want to become a scientist or a politician and so on. In fact, there are as many goals as there are human beings.

And if you take one human being, he himself has many goals. And these goals keep on changing too. As a child I had certain goals. When I become a young man, my goals change. When I become a grandfather, the goals may be different. Therefore, even for one human being there are many goals. But, our scriptures say that though the goals are innumerable, they can all be categorized into four types as *caturvidhapurusartha*.

FOUR TYPES OF HUMAN GOALS

1. ARTHA (Wealth)

The first type is called *artha*, all types of wealth, moving or nonmoving, i.e., all forms of wealth which are meant for one's own security so that the person can safeguard himself from diseases, suffering and even death. So *artha* can be translated as all types of security to free myself from troubles like hunger, thirst etc. This is security to free myself from insecurity. In fact, every human being fundamentally wants to make sure that his life is not threatened and that he can survive. That is why they call this goal the basic need food, clothing and shelter. Food is for protection of life, because, without eating I cannot survive. Clothing is again for protection from the weather, dust or any external danger. Shelter once again is for protection. So every human being will first ask for freedom from pains and threats called *dukkhanivrtti* in Sanskrit. *Dukham* means all kinds of pains and *nivritti* means freedom. This is the first goal. But the only difference is that an animal pursues that purely instinctively, but a human being does it thoughtfully.

If you analyze foodclothingshelter pursuit itself, you will see that animals eat the same food or similar type of food all the time whereas a human being relishes many types of dishes. He eats with spoon, fork, etc. And how many different types of vessels, tables and cups! So even though an animal also seeks food like a human being, there is sophistication about it in the case of the latter.

Similarly shelter. Animals build their shelter basically in the same form anthill, honeycomb, bird's nest etc. A human being on the other hand builds newer and new types of houses. This also comes under '*artha*'.

A similar refinement and sophistication can be seen in clothing also. All these come under the first *purusartha* namely *artha*. Now, once I have security through food, clothing, and shelter, I no longer feel threatened. I have a simple basic human life. So *dukkhanivrtti* is now over. There is no more pain, or threat, or fear coming from outside.

3

2. KAMA (Entertainment)

My next interest in how to enjoy life, i.e., *sukhaprapti*. I listen to music, or see TV. When I do not like TV programs, I go to a VCR. Thus, recreation, or pleasure hunting is the next pursuit of a human being. But any entertainment or enjoyment comes only after *artha*. In other words, I look for pleasure only after my security is taken care of. Therefore the second *purusartha* is called *kama*, i.e., source of pleasure, entertainment, or recreation.

3. PUNYAM (the Invisible Favourable Factor) .

The third *purusartha* is called *Dharma* or *Punyam*. This is because there is a belief in rebirth in Indian culture. There is an acceptance of past birth, and there is a belief in future birth, even though one does not know the details. And a believer in future birth is interested in the wellbeing of the next birth also. I am providing for my postretirement life, because I believe that I will survive until then. I also have an unconscious fear that my children may not take care of me. As this fear is on the increase nowadays, oldage homes are also on the increase. Therefore, even though I spend money on my children, I want to keep some for my old age too. In the same way, if I believe in a birth after this, I am interested in the wellbeing of that life also. And, for the wellbeing of that life, whatever I have to acquire, I work for it. We are not considering the nonbeliever here. He may not bother about the next birth. We are talking about the believer. **He has a third *purusartha* *dharma* or *punyam* that is meant for the well being of the next *janma*. *Punyam* is the invisible (*adrsta*) result gained through noble activities prescribed in the scriptures.**

What happens at the time of death? Our scriptures say *artha grhe nivartante*, that is, all the wealth I have acquired is left behind at home. *Smasane mitrabandhavah* friends and relatives are left behind at the cremation ground. Then the question is who follows the *jiva* (the individual) after death? Neither money nor relatives. Then what follows ? *Sukrtam duskrtam caiva gacchantam anugacchati*. Only the *punyam* and *papam*, which one acquires during one's life, follow one to determine the next *janma*. And, those who believe in these *punyam* and *papam* naturally want to accumulate *sukrtam* or *punyam*. Therefore, *punyam* becomes the third *purusartha*.

If you analyze, almost all the people in the world are working for these three only. After pursuing these three for sometime, an intelligent and sensible human being who has learnt

4

from experience, will find that these three human goals have certain innate limitations or *dosas*.

LIMITATIONS OF THE FIRST THREE GOALS

(1) Pain

What are the limitations in the pursuit of security, pleasure, and *punyam*? All these pursuits, in spite of being wonderful, have certain limitations, just as a beautiful rose has a thorn. They have both positive and negative consequences. What are these

negative aspects? We are well aware of the positive aspect. If we are given money, married life, children, house, relations, traveling etc., we welcome these, as these are enjoyments. Since everybody is after these enjoyments, everybody is aware of the positive aspects very well. Therefore, we need to discuss only the negative aspects here. The first negative aspect is that all these pleasures are mixed with an equal amount of pain or sorrow. They are no doubt pleasurable but they are mixed with an equal amount of pain too. How?

Firstly, acquiring them involves a lot of pain, a lot of effort and a lot of competition. Supposing everyone wants to go to *Kodaikanal*, what will happen? It will become crowded; there will be water problem, exorbitant rent and an exorbitant rate for everything. Hence, everyone enjoys all right. But when one counts the amount spent on this enjoyment, he/she feels disturbed. There was a person who had built a very big marble house. After seeing it, I said it was a wonderful house. He said, "Swamiji, you say it is a wonderful house, but do you know how much it cost?" So, even though it is wonderful, his mind keeps on thinking about the expenses involved all the time. In other words, acquisition involves loss. **There is no gain without the corresponding loss.** The higher the gain, the higher is the loss. Loss in terms of money, energy, and so on. Therefore, acquisition involves pain.

With acquisition is it over? No. Preservation involves an equal amount of pain. There will be some repair invariably. While repairing, the mechanic makes sure that something else will come under repair before long. Maintenance involves pain.

In spite of maintenance, they are all going to be lost because none of the things is permanent. Therefore, *artha* is lost, *kama* is lost, *dharma* or *punyam* is also exhausted. If the acquisition is painful, maintenance is more painful and the loss is going to be the most painful. Thus, the first limitation is that the pleasure we derive is always mixed with pain (*duhkhamisritatvam*.)

(2) Dissatisfaction

The second limitation is *atrptikaratvam*. Any amount we acquire, we will not be satisfied. With bank balance of one *lakh rupees*, I feel insecure. With ten *lakh rupees* also insecurity continues. In fact, the higher you go, the greater the insecurity. Just think of the expenses involved in the care of the Prime Minister or any Chief Minister. They have all things to make their life comfortable and pleasurable. But they require more security. Thus, dissatisfaction or discontentment is the second defect.

The story of *Yayati* comes in the *Mahabhdrata*. After growing old, *Yayati* wanted to enjoy the pleasures of youth. He was given a peculiar boon by which he could exchange his old age with anybody's youth. *Yayati* did so several times. At the end of it

all he said, "Even though I have gone through all of them, there is no satisfaction." So he threw away everything and went to the forest for doing penance. Thus in spite of repeated enjoyment, there is dissatisfaction.

As a child, I thought I will be satisfied when I become a young man. As a young man I thought everything will be fine once I get married. Once married, I feel that life with children will be wonderful. Afterwards we want the children to get settled in life. Thus, this goes on and on. The satisfaction I am waiting for never comes.

(3) Dependence

The third *dosa is bandhakatvam*. This is when one becomes addicted to things or dependent on them. For security I depend on external factors; for enjoyment or entertainment I depend on external objects. For enjoyment in the next *janma* also I depend upon *punyam*. Thus, I am always dependent on external factors. As *artha*, *kama* and *punyam* are external factors, I will become addicted to them by depending on them. They are like some of the drugs or steroids, which make me dependent on them once I get addicted to them.

Now, when I become more and more dependent, am I becoming free or am I becoming bound? I am becoming more and more bound as I am pursuing these. Without them I cannot be comfortable, happy, secure, or full. This limitation is *bandhakatvam*, having the nature of causing dependence.

Most people, shortsighted as they are, ignore these *dosas* and pursue them. However, there are a few intelligent people who realize that though these appear wonderful, they have these three limitations. These people look for the fourth *purusartha*, the fourth goal called *moksa*.

6

4. MOKSA (Inner freedom)

Moksa means freedom. Freedom from what? Freedom from all types of dependence on external factors. In other words, I should not depend on any external factor for security. I should discover security in myself and not in the people around or on the money I possess. I should discover happiness in myself *atmanyeva atmana tustah*. I should not depend even upon *punyam* for future security or pleasure.

Discovering happiness in myself, discovering security in myself is called *moksa*. What will happen because of this self discovery? I will no longer depend upon external factors. If I do not depend upon them I need not bother about acquiring them. If they

come to me, let them come. If they do not, I don't need them. I do not depend on anything, any person, or any situation. Their arrival is fine; their departure is also fine. This inner freedom is called *moksa* and this is the highest *purusartha*, the *paramapurusartha*. This is called *parama-purusartha*, because there is no further pursuit once this is fulfilled.

The pursuit of *dharmaarthakama* is a permanent struggle. In *moksa*, all the struggles end, because I discover security and joy in myself. The four *purusarthas* can be thus reduced to two basic goals viz. *preyas* (consisting of *dharmaarthakama*) and *sreyas* (*moksa*), the apparent and the real goals. We can choose anyone of these two as the primary goal of our life.

7

Chapter 2

SASTRAM

In the last chapter, we saw that all the human goals can be divided into two: *preyas* and *sreyas*. This is the content of our scriptures. Scriptures are called *sastram* in Sanskrit. Scriptures are that body of literature which helps a person in the fulfillment of the two goals. We should understand that the scriptures have come only to help humanity, not to bind it, not to create problems to humanity, not to restrict the freedom of humanity. Scriptures have come only to help the human being to fulfill the human goal, and the scriptures do not impose themselves too.

Scriptures are like the "May I help you?" counters in the railway station. In other words, if we want help, they are ready to provide it. If we are confident of managing on our own, they wish us the best. The person at the counter does not call everyone and advise. The counter is only for those who need help. Similarly the scriptures do not force themselves, but they make themselves available for those who care to seek their help.

What is meant by the word '*sastram*? *Sasanga trayate iti sastram*. That which teaches a human being, and helps him/her is *sastram*. *Sas* means 'to teach'. *Tra* means 'to protect'. As the person at the enquiry counter saves the person from a lot of trouble or waste of time, similarly the scriptures save a lot of time and trouble for human beings.

Our *sastram* is a voluminous one. In other religions, the scripture is a small one, which you can finish in a day's reading. Perhaps, even one night is enough. Whereas our scriptural literature is a vast one, which we can study for lifetimes, *janmas*. Even then, we may not complete it.

THE VEDAS: THE PRIMARY LITERATURE

A peripheral view of our scriptural literature will also help us get an idea of the greatness of our *rsis* and forefathers who had worked so much to produce and preserve this vast literature. Of these scriptures, the most important and primary one is called the *Vedas*. They are the *mulasastrams* or the primary scriptures. The *Vedas* are four in number the *Rgveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Samaveda* and the *Atharvanaveda*. According to tradition, the *Vedas* we have now is incomplete, as many parts of the *Vedas* have been lost in course of time. We are not able to find some portions that *Sankaracarya* quotes, because between *Sankaracarya*'s time and our time, portions of the *Vedas* have been lost. Tradition holds that the four *Vedas* originally had more than thousand branches, of which a few are available today. The existing

9

branches themselves are so voluminous that we are notable if we study even one *Veda* completely. We try to study *Gayatri* as the essence of these *Vedas*.

Now, who are the authors of these *Vedas*? According to tradition, the *Vedas* were not invented by the human intellect at all. They are not considered a human product. In Sanskrit, a human product is called *pauruseya*, that which is the product of human effort. *Vedas* are not considered to be *pauruseya*. They are considered to be the gift of the Lord. Therefore; they are called *apauruseyasastram*, a nonhuman product. How did the Lord gift the *Vedas* to the humanity? It is said that the *rsis* served as the media for receiving the *Vedas*. Each *rsi* is like a TV set, which is the receiving center, receiving information from the transmission center, which we do not see. Transmission is not from a place on the earth or anywhere local. Transmission is from the Lord Himself. '*Yo brahmanam vidadhati purvarp yo vai vedamsca prahinoti tasmai*'. Thus, the *Vedas* were available in the form of '*sabda*' or sound or waves and the *rsis* were the qualified people to receive them. The *rsis* received these *Vedas* and gave them to the entire humanity. Thus was set up a tradition. And the *rsis* are called *mantradrastarah*, the seers of the *mantras*. The *rsis* are *mantradrastas* and not *mantrakartas*.

THE SECONDARY LITERATURE

To support and elaborate these four *Vedas*, we have many secondary scriptures. These secondary scriptures are not revelations from the Lord. They are written by great *acaryas* (teachers). Therefore they are called '*pauruseya sastram*'. *Veda* is called *apauruseya sastram*; whereas all the secondary scriptures, which elaborate the *Vedas*, are called *pauruseya sastram*. These secondary scriptures are meant to elaborate the

vedic teachings and therefore these scriptures also deal with the attainment of the basic human goals, i.e., *preyas* and *sreyas*.

Why should we ever have secondary literature? Are not the *Vedas* sufficient? Secondary scriptures are required due to many reasons. The *Vedas* contain many ideas which are abstract in form. As they are abstract in form, many people who do not have a subtle intellect cannot understand them. Therefore, the abstract ideas of the *Vedas* will have to be presented in concrete form. This is similar to teaching numbers to a child. Numbers are too abstract and a child does not understand them. In the kindergarten sections these are set in concrete form so that the abstract idea is concretized. To teach "number one" to a child, one banana is placed before the child. Similarly with other numbers and colors. The names of colors come very easily to an adult. However, to a child, each color has to be represented by an object. Thus, the child required something concrete to bring the abstract before him. Similarly, the secondary scriptures bring many ideas into concrete form through various stories, either imaginary or

10

true. Some stories are historical and help even a research scholar. Some may be a mixture of both fact and fiction. But the aim of the story is to convey abstract ideas. Therefore, we require secondary scriptures.

There is another reason that' is more important. Though the *Vedas* teach a lot of things, the information given is not systematically arranged. The *Vedas*, in fact, are like a wild forest in which there are vegetables, flowers, fruits and so on, with varieties in each of them. But these are not arranged properly in a systematic manner. The *Vedas* talk about various types of *sadhanas* for a *brahmacari* (a student), a *grhastha* (a married one), a *sannyasi* (a renunciate) etc. All these are often mixed together. The secondary literature arranges them systematically.

THE SUTRAS

The first and foremost secondary scripture is called the *sutras*. We have *dharma sutras*, *trautasutras*, and *grhyasutras*, written by many *rsis*. We have *sutras* codifying the contents of the *Rgveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Sama veda* and the *Atharvanaveda*. Here, the vedic teachings are well codified and arranged to clearly indicate the duties of a *brahmacari*, a *grhastha*, a *vanaprastha*, and a *sannyasi*. They also enumerate the duties of a *brahmana*, a *ksatriya*, a *vaisya* and so on. For the sake of easy remembrance, all these are presented in a *sutra* form a terse form called an aphorism. A profound idea is stated in a short form so that people can learn these easily by heart

. It should be remembered that they did not have literature in written form. Either they did not write it out, or the facilities were not available then. All the *Vedas* were chanted from memory, so also the *sutras*.

THE SMRTIS

When things are presented in a terse form, there is a possibility of our missing something. It may lead to confusion. So came the next stage of literature called the *smrtigranthas*. The authors of these secondary scriptures studied the *Vedas*, remembered the teaching, and systematically presented them in their own language. Hence they are called *smrtis* "remembered wisdom". We have many *smrtis* like the *Manusmrti*, *Yajnavalkyasmrti*, *Parasarasmti*, *Vyasasmrti* and so on. They are metrical composition consisting of verses, *slokas*). Each *smrti* is well codified too. So, if you want to know about a particular topic, you may do so by choosing the relevant chapter. If you want to know about a topic in the *Vedas*, you will see that some information is available in the last portion of the *Rgveda*, some in the middle of *Yajurveda* and some more in *Samaveda*. But in the *smrtigranthas*, we can easily find out the material under the chosen heading.

Samanyadharmas (general duties), *visesa dharmas* (specific duties), and *apaddharmas* (duties in crisis) are given in a wellcodified form. They are all neat presentation of rules how to treat your father, mother, wife, husband, children, *sisya*, the *guru*, and so on. These are the *smrtis*.

THE PURANAS

Then came the next range of literature called the *puranas* where we find stories for every duty. The *puranas* show how difficult it is to follow these rules and how some people, in spite of all the difficulties, remain steadfast in following the same duties. The *puranas* thus remain a very vast literature. In the *smrtis* we have a few thousand verses, whereas each *purana* consists of 15000 to 80000 verses. It is because there are stories running into thousands of verses for every value that is talked about. For just one *vedic mantra*, '*satya vada*' (speak the truth) we have the whole story of *Hariscandra* in the *purana*. The *puranas* show the number of problems one has to face if one has to follow one value. There will be more occasions to violate them than to follow. *Hariscandra* remained steadfast and finally got the benefit. Thus, for one '*satyam vada*' we have the whole story of *Hariscandra*. Similarly, for each value we have stories some of which are factual and some of which are a mixture of fact and fiction.

We have 18 *puranas* and 18 *upapuranas* totally running to 36. Most of these are attributed to *Vyasa*. Thus, we have *lakhs* and *lakhs* of verses. Translations of these

puranas also are available. The *puranas* are so called because they are '*pura api navah*'. In other words, even though they are ancient, they are ever valid, ever meaningful, ever useful, and never obsolete. Even though the stories appear fictitious, through them are conveyed eternal truths. The society may change, but these truths will never change. Even today, when there is a mythological story shown on TV, there is attraction. The beauty is it attracts not only the child by catering to its fancies, but also the elders by providing food for thought. Along with philosophy there is ethics, sociology and psychology. The western psychologists are today talking about the greatness of our *puranas*. We do not require a Walt Disney, for we have our *puranas* to cater to children's fantasy. We have instances of man becoming animal, or man becoming a stone, a stone becoming an animal and so on. All these and more.

THE ITIHASAS

Then comes the final range of literature called *itihisas*. *Itihasa* literature is historical literature, which is literature dealing with history or based on history. We have here the well known *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, for we believe that the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* deal with events that really took place long ago. A few fictitious things may

11

have been added here and there for the sake of story value. This is similar to taking a movie out of a real life incident. We have "The Titanic", a movie which is a mixture of fact and fiction.

The word '*itihasa*' means 'thus it happened' (*iti ha asa*). *Ramayana* means the life style of *Rama*, the path of *Rama*, the way of life led by *Rama* (*Ramanayayanam*). *Mahabharata* is the story of *Bharatavamsa*. It is a book that runs to one *lakh* verses. It is so voluminous that it got the title of *Mahabharata*. We have two *itihisas*, the *Ramayana* (24,000 verses) and the *Mahabharata*. (100000 verses). Sage *Valmiki* and Sage *Vyasa* wrote these respectively.

TWO PORTIONS OF THE VEDAS: VEDA PURVA AND VEDANTA

The *Vedas* ask us whether we want to lead a life of dependence or one of independence. We seem to love dependence because we have got used to it like the rat that got used to being in the box and was not ready to come out. We too, like the rat, have got used to a life of dependence on people, things, money and all those things needed for security and entertainment. We want to acquire and maintain. If we want to acquire things and maintain them, the *Vedas* help us. If we become tired of

dependence and are wise enough to seek independence, the same Veda will provide us the method. The *Vedas* never impose anything; it is for us to decide and choose.

Based on this, the *Vedas* are broadly classified into two portions: *Veda purva* and *Vedaanta*. *Veda purva* deals with the fulfillment of the first three *purusarthas* that leads to a dependent life. Security and entertainment are dealt with in *Veda purva*. It talks about earning wealth and becoming prosperous; about having a large family; about traveling all over; about material education, and so on. In other words *Vedapurva* talks about *preyas*.

Once a person becomes mature, he/she wants to become independent and it is at this time that *Vedaanta* comes to be of help. *Vedanta* helps in discovering independence, *moksa*, *sreyas*. The content of the *Vedas* consisting of *Veda purva* and *Vedaanta* is the content of the *sutras*, *smrtis*, *puranas* and *itihisas*.

12

Chapter 3

VARNASRAMA VYAVASTHA

It was mentioned that the *Vedas* consisting of *Veda purva* and *Vedaanta* help us in fulfilling our goals of *preyas* and *sreyas*. For this purpose, *Vedas* prescribe a life style. What is the life style prescribed by the *Vedas* for the fulfillments of our goals? The vedic scheme of life is known as *varnaasramavyavastha* (*varna-asramascheme*). This scheme consists of two separate schemes, one is *varnascheme* and the other is *asramascheme*. Of these two, the *varna*-scheme is meant for the maintenance of social order and social progress. Since a human being is a part of the society, he/she cannot ignore social harmony and live happily so also, communal harmony and ecological harmony. We have to take into account the totality of existence, because a human being is not an isolated individual. Therefore, the setup influences our life. We should have a scheme for the maintenance of social harmony. This is *varnascheme*. At the same time, we have to safeguard our individual interests. We cannot spend our entire life for society alone. As a person, I am interested in personal harmony and personal progress. Hence, we should have a scheme which should take care of my peace and also my progress as an individual. This is *asramascheme*. **Our lifestyle should be so balanced that it takes care of social harmony as well as individual progress.** If the balance is not there peace will be lost. There are many social workers who have contributed a lot to society but have failed miserably in their family or personal life. Their wives and children may be the most disappointed people. There have been people who have done well individually but their contribution to the society is nil. They have been utterly selfish. The *vedic* scheme is a wonderful scheme, which takes care of a person as an individual and as a social member, a responsible citizen

of the world. Thus social harmony is taken care of by the *varnascheme* and the individual is taken care of by the *asramascheme*.

THE VARNA SCHEME

The word *van*, indicates a particular group or class in a society. It is based on the classification of the society into various groups and each group is called a *varna*. It is a very broad classification applicable to all nations and all religions. But, generally, it is a scheme and the classification is into four groups. Thus we have four *varnas* called *brahmana*, *ksatriya*, *vaisya* and *sudra*.

In the *Bhagavadgita* Krsna uses the word *caturvarnyam* (*catugrah vamah caturvarnyam*). This classification is not from one stand point; it is done from three standpoints. Any

13

classification can be done based on different standpoints: It can be sexbased, agebased, educationbased, languagebased, and so on. Therefore, whenever we talk of classification we should remember that it requires a reference point. This *varna* classification has been made from three standpoints; one based on birth, the second based on character, and the third based on profession.

VARNA VYAVASTHA

Category	Brahmanas	Ksatriyas	Vaisyas	Sudras
By birth	Born of Brahmanas	Born of Ksatriyas	Born of Vaisyas	Born of Sudras
By character	Contemplative	Selflessly active	Selfishly active	Idle
By occupation	Scriptural education and Priesthood	Administration and Defense	Commerce and Agriculture	Unskilled labour

VARNA BASED ON BIRTH

Based on one's birth we have four *varnas*. In Sanskrit, it is called *jativyavastha* (jatischeme). This alone has become notorious today as the caste system. In Sanskrit, the word '*Jati*' means 'birth' or '*janma*'. Based on this we have *jatibrahmana*, *Jatiksatriya*, *Jativaisya*, *Jatisudra*.

VARNA BASED ON CHARACTER

Based on one's character, *svabhava* or *guna*, we can have divisions. This is *gunavyavastha*. Broadly based, we can have four possible distinct characters. One is a spiritual character. Such a tendency is called *brahmanaguna*. The people with this character are called *gunabrahmana*, though by birth these people may not be *brahmana*. To put in scriptural language, they have *sattvaguna* predominance backed by *rajoguna*, *sattvarajastamas* in that order - SRT.

Some others are selflessly active though they may not go to a temple or do meditation; they spend their entire life serving the society. These people remain members of several social organizations and remain busy doing one service or the others; they may not have time even for their family. These are the people who are extrovert and active but all their activities are meant not for themselves but for others. This character is called *ksatriyaguna* and the

14

people with this character are called *gunaksatriyas*, though by birth they may not be *ksatriyas*. In scriptural language, they have *rajoguna* predominance backed by *sattvaguna* (RST).

There are some others who are selfishly active. They are also so active that they don't have time for their wife and children. Most of their activities are centered on gathering money, possessions etc. for themselves and their family, and not for the sake of society or others. They may be striving for either name or fame or status or anything, but they basically remain selfishly active. This character is called *vaisyaguna* and the persons having this character are called *gunavaisyas*, though by birth they may not be *vaisyas*. These people have *rajoguna* predominance backed by *tamoguna* (RTS)

The fourth possible character is marked by indolence and mechanicalness. There is no activity at all. The only activity you see in such people is eating and sleeping. They may have some hereditary property and thus they are not forced to earn any wealth. They merely sit and eat and continue to be lazy. Their minimum activities are mechanical, unskilled and routine activities. Such a person cannot be expected to do any job that requires any discrimination. Such a character is '*sudraguna* and the

person with this character is said to be *gunasudra*, though by birth he may not be a *Sudra*. This group has *tamoguna* backed by *rajoguna* (TRS).

VARNA BASED ON PROFESSION

We have four *varnas* based on *Karma* also. We are not dealing with a person's birth or character in this. On the other hand, we are dealing with his profession and based on that, we divide society into four groups. The first possible *Karma* or activity, is religious activity or religious teaching i.e., a life committed to the study of scriptures, the teaching of scriptures and helping the society in leading a religious life. This profession is akin to priesthood, where the entire life is committed to religion and helping others in following religion. This profession is called *brahmanaKarma*. The person who takes to such a profession is called *karmabrahmana*.

Then the second possible profession is politics, a profession in which one dedicates oneself to the service of society or the country. One may join in politics, government or administration. This includes the army also. In fact, this takes into account all those occupations, which are connected with the protection of the country. This is called *ksatriyakarma* and the person who takes to such a profession is called *karmaksatriya*.

15

The third possible profession is commerce or business. It includes agriculture as well as the production and the distribution of various commodities. This profession is called *vaishyakarma* and the person who takes to such a profession is called *karmavaishya*.

The fourth possible profession is service. The person belonging to this profession does not take to any one particular profession but he serves the *karmabrahmanas*, or the *karmaksatriyas* or the *karmavaishyas*. This service is called *sudrakarma* and a person who takes to such a *karma* is called *karmasudra*. He is not a leader; he is an employee, a person who is led by the leaders in the other three professions.

Now if we take an individual's *jati*, *guna* and *karma*, they need not be the same in one person. An individual can be a mixture of these three *varnas* based on the three standpoints. There is no rule that a *jatibrahmana* should be a *gunabrahmana* or a *karmabrahmana*. If a person is born a *brahmana*, he is a *jatibrahmana*. If he becomes an a minister, he is a *karmaksatriya*. If he is selfish, he comes under *gunavaishya* group. Similarly, we can have other permutations. But rarely is a person a *jatibrahmana* a

gunabrahmana and a *karmabrahmana* all in one. It is not that they should be different. It is normally different.

VARNAS AND THEIR GRADATION

Now the question is whether there is any gradation in these *varnas*. Can we say any one is superior or inferior to the other? *Jatibased varnas* are all the same, there is no gradation. Birth cannot give any superiority to a person. Hence, a *jatibrahmana*, a *jatiksatriya*, a *jativaisya*, a *jatisudra* are all equal. If we take the *guna*-based division, we say that there is a gradation based on character. In a society, a person of noble character is definitely respected more, compared to others. Thus *gunawise*, there is gradation among *varnas*. *Brahmanaguna* is supposed to be the best and *gunabrahmana* deserves worship in any society, whether we call him *gunabrahmana* or otherwise. If Gandhiji is respected it is not because of his birth. We respect him for his selfless service and noble character. The *saivaite* saint, *Nandanar* was respected not because of his birth but because of his devotion. We have the 63 *Nayanars* (*saivaite* saints) whom we worship. Many of these *Nayanmars* were not *brahmins* by birth. However, they are worshipped to this very day by the *brahmanas* themselves. This is possible because of their *gunabrahmana* status.

Then what about one's profession? There is no gradation *karmawise* for all professions are equally important for any society. Business is as important as politics is. We normally treat politics as something negative. We have come to believe so nowadays; but it should be

16

remembered that politics is important for administration. Similarly service and religious teaching are also necessary. Some people should dedicate their lives for the preservation and spread of scriptural teachings.

The different professions can be compared to the different functions of the body. If society is like a body, then the different professions are like the different functions of the body. Which function of the body is important? Can we say removal of waste is an unclean function? Can we look down upon it? We know what will happen if there is renal failure. just as the different functions are important, so also the different *karmas* are important.

We can see another example also. In an organization there are different departments like the finance department, the research department and so on. Which department, can we say, is more important? All the departments are important. Thus,

we can conclude that professionbased gradation cannot be there; birthbased gradation also cannot be there; *guna* based gradation alone should be there in a society. Society will always respect a person who leads a selfless and spiritual life. *Ramana Maharsi* was not very active. Still people flocked to him. As a spiritual seer, he is respected the world over.

VARNA AND CHOICE

Now we have to see whether we have any choice in determining our *varna*. And the question once again is which *varna*. If we analyze, as far as *jati* is concerned, we do not have any choice because we are already born and we cannot change our parents. As the biological parents cannot be changed, so also *jati* cannot be changed. We have no choice in this.

So let us not worry about our *jati*; let us accept it. Fortunately, we can happily accept our *jati* because all are equal from the standpoint of *jati*; gradation is not there. Then do we have any choice in *guna*? **The scriptures say that with regard to character we do have a choice in gradually evolving to a better state.** Suppose a person happens to be a *gunasudra*. In other words, he is born lazy and mechanical. The scriptures say that he should convert himself from a lazy mechanical character to a selfishly active person. He need not bother about selfless service at this state. He has to work for money, fame, name and children. **In fact, the scriptures themselves prescribe a lot of rituals for selfish benefits.** Many people go to the temple for selfish interests only. Very few people go to Venkatalapati and say '*sarve bhavantu sukhinah*'. This person shows his commercial attitude in his worship of the Lord and offers 10% to the Lord if he earns profit. Thus, a *gunasudra* becomes a *gunavaisya*. And

17

the scriptures say, 'let the activity continue, but let it be more selfless.' Only then does the person become a *gunaksatriya*. Finally, he has to become a *gunabrahmana*. In fact, **the entire vedic sadhanascheme is this conversion from *gunasudra* to *guna brahmana*.** A *gunabrahmana*, in fact, is ready for *moksa*. And thus, *gunawise* we have a choice.

Now, then, with regard to profession, do we have any choice? Professionwise we do have a choice. We can go by heredity or by aptitude. In the first case we take the family profession. We have the advantage of starting early, maximum exposure, and constant guidance as in *gurukulavasa* (residential institution). This was generally followed till recently. The second possibility is to go by character, aptitude. Visvamitra became a *brahmana* and even revealed the *gaytrimantra*. To choose according to my aptitude I should know my aptitude clearly. Today I have *brahmanaguna*, whereas

tomorrow I feel I have *vaisayaguna*. Most people are indecisive with regard to everything. If I am able to know my inclination clearly, I can choose any profession based on that. If I am not able to choose a profession based on *guna*, the second option is given. I can choose my profession based on heredity. If the parents are in the field of religious duties or priesthood, I can also become a priest. If the parents are politicians, I become a politician. Many children take to parent's business.

Thus, there are two choices available. There is no necessity for anyone to feel any kind of complex because all professions are equally good. However, the scriptures say that when you choose your profession let it not be a money based choice. In other words, let money not become the primary criterion for choosing a profession. If money based choice is made, there will be competition for certain professions while, for a few others, there will be no takers. For example, there are very few people opting for a religious profession. Very few people are opting to learn and propagate the scriptures. In the twenty first century our wonderful scriptures may merely decorate libraries. In other religions, every family feels proud to dedicate at least one child for religion. In Hinduism, even the priest feels reluctant to send his own child to the *vedic* profession. The *vedic* scholar may become an endangered species some day.

The reason for all this is moneybased choice of profession. People will become more and more materialistic if money is the primary criterion. Our ancient culture and the scriptures will be forgotten. Therefore, even as I practice a profession, the goal of my life and my character should be gradually changed. I should change from a *gunasudra* to *gunavaisya* to *gunaksatriya* to a *gunabrahmana*. This is called *varnavyavastha*.

18

THE ASRAMAScheme

Now let us go briefly into *asramavyavastha*, the scheme of stages of life. The scriptures talk about four stages of life, which every body has to go through, either externally or at least internally. Mentally every person has to go through these four stage of life. The word '*asrama*' here means a stage of life in the progress of our spiritual journey. The scriptures talk about four stages *brahmacari*, *grhastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa* stages.

In English, we can call the four stages as the studentstage, householder's stage, the hermit or ascetic stage and the monk or the renunciate stage.

As a *brahmacari*, a person has to first go through a life of learning. Professional learning helps a person become professional. In addition to this, a religious learning is

also necessary because it helps a person in the fulfillment of the four *purusarthas*. While scriptural learning is common, acquiring professional skills differs from individual to individual.

The householder's *asrama* is the second stage where a person concentrates on *preyas* - the fulfillment of *artha*, *kama* and *punyam* and prepares for *sreyas*: To a householder *preyas* is of primary importance; *sreyas* or *moksa* receives secondary importance only. Gradually the priority has to shift from *preyas* to *sreyas*. Thus, in the *vanaprasthastage* *moksa* is *pradhana* or primary while *preyas* is secondary. There is a gradual withdrawal from *artha*, *kama* and *punyam*. The fourth stage of *sannyasa* is fully dedicated to *sreyas* or *moksa*. Thus, by gradually shifting the vision, a person finally dedicates himself/herself wholly to the pursuit of *sreyas* and attains *moksa*.

A person can attain *moksa* by following this *moksamarga*, the *varnasramascheme*. A person who keeps his ultimate goal as *moksa* is called a *mumuksu*. Now the question is: as a *mumuksu*, how do I discover *moksa*? What is the means of acquiring *moksa*? The scriptures prescribe a series of disciplines to help a *mumuksu* attain his goal. This series of disciplines can be divided into three stages or threefold discipline, namely *karmayoga*, *upasanayoga*, and *jnanayoga*.

By following these *sadhanas*, a person will ultimately attain *moksa*.

19

Chapter 4

KARMAYOGA

Karmayoga is a compound word consisting of two simple words '*Karma*' and '*yoga*'. By *Karma* here we mean 'proper action'. The second part is *yoga* which means 'proper attitude' or 'proper state of mind'. Thus, doing proper action with proper attitude is called *Karmayoga*. Now what is proper action? Based on the scriptures we can divide all actions broadly into three categories. They are *sattvikaKarma*, *rajasaKarma* and *tamasaKarma*.

SATTVIKA KARMAS

SattvikaKarma refers to certain actions which are prescribed by the scriptures as compulsory for every *mumuksu* or seeker of *moksa*. Since these actions are compulsory, there is no question whether I like them or not. If I like them, it is wonderful; if I do not like them, I should better learn to like them. They have to be done. As these actions are not based on our likes and dislikes or on our *kama*, they are called

niskamaKarma. Why do scriptures prescribe those compulsory actions? All *sattvikakarmas* primarily contribute to the inner and spiritual growth of a person. They are not primarily meant for the material growth of a person. They are not meant for money, name, fame, status, family, children and the like. To put it in technical language, they are *dharmamoksapradhana*; they are not *arthakamapradhana*. Their focus is inner growth. By performing these actions a person does not get much material benefit; does not get any visible, tangible benefit. The benefits are all subtle internal benefits.

PANCAMAHAYAJNA

What are these *karmas* or actions prescribed for the inner growth of an individual? They are the *pancamahayajna*, the five sacred *karmas*.

1. *Devayajna* Worship of the Lord in any form. It may be in the form of a ritualistic sacrifice (a *yaga*), it may be in the form of a *puja* in front of an idol or a photo; it can be in the form of *japa*, repetition of the name of the Lord; it can be in the form of temple visits or it can be in the form of service to the temple by giving my time, my energy or other resources. All these come under *devayajna* or service to the Lord.

Devayajna is not meant for money. This will not benefit me visibly or tangibly. In fact, superficially seen, it may even appear as a mere waste of time. If I take a job during this time, I may earn some money. It is for this reason that whenever people find themselves with too much work, they decide to drop some of these activities immediately. We find that we have

20

no time for *puja* or *parayanam* or a temple visit. In fact, *sattvikakarma* can be humorously defined as that which we generally drop whenever we are more busy. We drop it because we don't find any tangible benefit out of it and consider it a mere waste of time. On the other hand, a subtle mind will understand that I am getting an invisible result. A tremendous inner growth is taking place through such activities. Hence this *devayajna* is indispensable for a *mumukshu*.

2. *Pitryajna* Worship of parents and forefathers. If the parents are alive, respect them, take care of them properly. Daily, I offer my *namaskarams* to my parents too. In the *Ramayana*, *Rama* offers prostrations to his father, King *Dasaratha*, even when the king asks him to go to the forest. Similarly when *Bharata* comes to the forest to take him back to *Ayodhya*, *Rama* conveys his reverence to his mother *Kaikeyi* who was instrumental in sending *Rama* to the forest and whom the whole world hated. Such unconditional reverence to parents is necessary. The scriptures say, "*matrdevo bhava, pitrdevo bhava*".

Like the parents, the other forefathers also, alive or dead, should be treated with reverence. As a part of this, the scriptures prescribe certain types of ceremonies to be performed on special days. All these ceremonies come under *pitryajna* and they are compulsory. Thus *pitryajna*, the second *mahayajna*, also comes under *sattvikaKarma*.

3. *Brahmayajna* Worship of the scriptures and the *rsis* who have given us the scriptures is called *Brahmayajna*. *Brahma* means Veda. *Vedayajna* and *rsiyajna* are together called *Brahmayajna*. What is this worship? It is not just offering flowers to those scriptures as we do on special days like *Sarasvati-puja* day. We have to ensure that books are treated properly. We have to learn to respect the contents of the book also through regular *parayanam*. *Parayanam* means regular reading of the scriptures preferably with the knowledge of its meaning. If we do not know the meaning of the scriptures, our involvement will be more. If we do not know the meaning, the reverential reading of the Gita or *Sahasranama* helps in building up this respect for the scriptures. In fact, we are doing this even now, as a part of our tradition.

In the past such a reading was common. Today it is becoming rare. Even if you don't read the scripture, worshipping and remembering the *rsis* who have given them to us is *Brahmayajna*. Before any *japa* or *parayanam*, the preparatory steps involve remembering the respective *rsi*.

Promotion of scriptural studies is also *Brahmayajna*. One should study and teach or help others study and teach. Today many *pathamatas* are closing down because most people

21

do not know the importance of the scriptures. One *mahayajna* cannot replace another *mahayajna*. Donating to orphanages is wonderful but that cannot replace *Brahmayajna*. Neither can it replace *pitryajna*. Each one has its own important place. While eating, rice alone cannot be eaten. We need nourishment. We get carbohydrates from rice, but we require proteins, minerals, vitamins and so on. Similarly society requires all types of contributions. To contribute just to one thing alone is not correct. Therefore, all the five are compulsory and important. A person may do more of one and less of the other, but all the five are equally important.

4. *Manusyayajna* This is worship of or service to humanity. All types of social service will come under this category. Many people think that this *manusyayajna* alone is enough. There is a general question everywhere: should we spend so much money on temples, ornaments for the Lord? Why can we not spend all that money on feeding the poor children? We don't say poor children should not be fed. But to argue that we

should abolish temples and *patasalas* so that we will have enough money for feeding poor children and the destitute is a lopsided vision.

Children have to be taken care of; poor people have to be protected; but equally important is spending money on temples. Many people think that Hinduism does not include social service in its philosophy. The general impression created is that we have to learn from other religions. We need to remember that we have the scriptural commandments which instruct us to take care of the people also. The only problem is that the Hindus do not follow the injunction. It is not a defect in the religion but it is a defect of the followers. If everybody takes care of *manusyayajna*, there will be no poverty. While cultural deterioration is because of the absence of *Brahmayajna*, social deterioration is because of the absence of *manusyaya yajnas*.

5. *Bhutayajna* - This is worship of and service to all other living beings. These include animals., birds, plants, forests, the aquatic creatures etc. In a nutshell, it means respect towards life. Vegetarianism., in fact, is part of *bhutayajna*. I do not want to kill animals to satisfy my tongue. Therefore, vegetarianism becomes a part of *bhutayajna*. Elephants are killed merely for the sake of their tusks which serve as decorative pieces inside a house. Rhinos are destroyed for the sake of their horns. We also need to know how these animals are killed. Some of them are burnt or skinned alive. There is nothing but cruelty in these killings. We have not understood that nature is very delicately balanced. If we tamper with any part of nature, it will lead to different kinds of problems. Ecology has developed as a very important science in the recent past only. Global meetings are held often nowadays. The *Vedas* have already said that if you revere nature you will never be selfish. So *bhutayajna* is done to help one become aware of the importance of these animals. Many gods have taken animals as their *vahanas*. When we worship these gods, we indirectly worship these animals too. Daily before we eat, we feed the crows or the cows. This is *bhutayajna*. There is a ritualistic type of *bhutayajna* also.

All these actions take me towards *moksa* but I do not see it; it is an invisible growth. These *pancamahayajnas* come under *sattvikaKarma* or *niskamaKarma*, which one has to do whether one likes it or not. How big or small these should be will depend on the availability of time, convenience, financial resources of the person concerned etc. These actions are *sattvikaKarma* forming the best part of *Karmayoga* because they directly contribute to spiritual growth.

RAJASAKARMA

Next comes the second kind of action called *rajasaKarma*. These are actions based on our desires. Hence they are called *sakamakarmas* (desire-prompted actions). The scriptures permit a person to do such *karmas* too. It is not compulsory but

if a person wants to do, he is permitted to do. It is not considered a sin. A person can fulfill the desires in a legitimate manner without corruption. The scriptures themselves prescribe a number of rituals for fulfilling our desires. There are rituals for getting money, land, rain, and so on. These are for fulfilling our selfish interests. The scriptures, however, do not ban them. They are considered *madhyama* (medium). They primarily contribute to our material wellbeing. So their contribution to our spiritual growth is less. In *sattvikaKarma* the primary benefit is inner growth; the secondary benefit is material wellbeing. *Rajasakarma* primarily contributes to material wellbeing and only secondarily contributes to spiritual growth.

TAMASA KARMA

Tamasa karma, the last type is *niddhaKarma* (prohibited action). These actions take me away from *moksa*. They have a retarding effect on me and pull me backwards because the actions are wrong. Violence, cheating etc. are *adhamam* (the lowest). The aim of a *mumuksu* is to avoid *nisiddhakarma*.

Increasing *sattvikakarma*, reducing *rajasakarma* and avoiding *tamasa Karma* should be the aim of the *Karmayogi*. Sometimes I may come across certain situations where I may have to do some *nisiddhakarmas*. For example, when I clean the house, I may use some insecticides. Some amount of sin will have to be incurred. Even while taking vegetarian food,

23

we are harming the vegetable kingdom. Hence, there are certain unavoidable *nisiddha Karma*. The aim of a seeker is to reduce these to the minimum. This choiceless *papa* is called *sins* in the scriptures. These choiceless *papas* have to be neutralized by *pancamahayajnas*. Thus, *pancamahayajnas* are important in two ways in neutralizing *papas* and in spiritual progress.

YOGA

Now, coming to the second part in the word *Karmayoga*, what is *yoga*? It is proper attitude, which *Krsna* calls in the Gita as *samatvam*. It is the mental state of equanimity, balance, an unperturbed condition which helps in making life effective. Many people say life is a university. We can learn a lot from the experiences of our life only if we maintain a balanced mental condition. Without this, learning is impossible. Therefore *samatva* or balance is the mental state which is to be entertained by a *karmayogi* or *mumuksu*.

How can one get this mental balance? One can get it by cultivating certain healthy traits. Four of them will be mentioned here.

(1) Acceptance As a part of living; I have to do certain actions enjoined by the scriptures and also a few worldly actions like taking care of the family. Some of them I do happily, while certain others I do with great reluctance. The tendency therefore is to grumble by labeling some actions as unpleasant. Learn to accept all actions and also the result of all actions; accept both choiceless actions and choiceless results of actions.

(2) Noncomparison comparison creates problem. When I compare myself with another and find myself less lucky, I do not accept what has been give to me. This disturbs the mind. Hence, there should not be any comparison not only while doing action but also while receiving the results. Our problem, most of the time, is not because of the results that we get; we tend to accept our results. When the other person has a little more than what I have, it upsets me. Thus, comparison while doing actions or while receiving results creates problems. Hence I have to learn to avoid comparison.

(3) Humility If I am able to do a noble action, I should thank the Lord that I am blessed to do this action. This is especially true of *pancamahayajnas*. When I do some good action, it gets into my head and I start feeling proud about my achievements. That I am but an instrument of the Lord is forgotten. Therefore, be humble.

(4) Devotion Devotion is dedicating all my actions to the Lord as worship with the following words "Oh! Lord, whatever be the consequences, I will accept them as Your *prasada*, Your gift. It may be spiritual growth or material growth or adverse effect. I will accept all the consequences as Your gift. I do not resist anything that comes in my life. Anything that comes in my life is the result of my own good or bad action and I know that You are never unjust. Whatever comes from You will refine and elevate me". If I have this devotional attitude, it will lead to *samatvam*.

Thus, doing the right *Karma* with the right state of mind is *Karmayoga*, which gives me inner growth. I may not materially become richer like other people, but I am rich and calm internally. I grow internally. This benefit of inner growth is called '*sarpskara*' or 'refinement'. This is the first discipline which every *mumuksu* has to follow.

BENEFIT OF KARMA YOGA

What will happen if a person follows *Karmayoga*? The benefit is that the priorities of life will get reshuffled. Initially my priorities were different; it was money, by hook or crook. *Artha* and *kama* had got top priority while *dharma* and *moksa* had receded to

the background. Even if there was a desire for *moksa*, it remained a *mandaiccha*, a mere lukewarm desire. *Karmayoga* changes my attitude and gradually the priority will be given to *moksa*. The *mandamumuksutvam* changes into *tlvramumuksutvam*; it becomes an obsession like a tennis player wanting to win the Wimbledon. When *moksa* becomes the top priority, *artha* and *kama* become secondary. Thus one benefit of *Karmayoga* is spiritual inclination.

The second benefit of *Karmayoga* is spiritual competence. It is not enough that I desire *moksa* but I should be competent and qualified to attain *moksa*. Many students may desire to join an Information Technology Course but those who can actually join it are not many. Therefore, desire is one thing and competence is another. One may desire *moksa* but he may not be qualified. By practicing *Karmayoga* he will get the necessary spiritual competence also.

Thirdly, *Karmayoga* will produce sufficient *punyam* to provide a conducive situation, the spiritual opportunity for the pursuit of *moksa*. It will help in getting a guru. We will see the importance of the guru later. I do not know who a guru is. Therefore, I require *punyam* to help me on my way. Even if the guru is around to guide me I must be able to make use of his presence. For this again I require *punyam*. Thus, the third benefit of *Karmayoga* is a conducive situation for the pursuit of *moksa*. And, once a person has gone through *Karmayoga* successfully, he has to go through the next stage of *sadhana*, which is *upasanayoga*.

25

Chapter5

UPASANA YOGA

Upasanayoga can be translated as disciplining and integrating the personality. This is a topic elaborately discussed in the *astangayoga* of *Patanjali*. *Sankaracarya* accepts the *astanga yoga* of *Patanjali* and renames it *samadhiyoga*. Both are the same. Let us see a brief summary of this *yoga*. We should first know the purpose of disciplining. Why should there be discipline at all? Disciplining the personality is like building or constructing a dam across the river. Why do we construct dams? A lot of water which will wastefully flow into the ocean is conserved by a dam. This is one benefit. Once I conserve this water, it can be utilized for constructive purposes like irrigation, production of electricity and the like. This is the second benefit. This is true in the case of our personality also. We have a lot of power (*sakti*) inside which is normally wasted. Every human being is a resource of power. Every great thing that happens in the world is because of human power. And wherever there is power there is a possibility of that power being wasted also. Once I learn to conserve my power, I can utilize this power for any constructive purpose. Hence discipline is meant for

conserving and channelising the powers. *iccha saktii*, *jnana sakti* and *kriya sakti*. *iccha sakti* is the power to desire, a wonderful power with which we can seek the highest goal. A dog cannot desire for *moksa* but I can. Hence the power to desire is a great one. *Kriya sakti* is the power to act. *Jnanasakti* is the power to know. Conserving these powers and utilizing them is the benefit of discipline.

What is the principle of discipline? The principle of discipline is quality control and quantity control. In any action that we undertake, not only the quantity but the quality also is controlled. This control over quantity and quality is the principle of all disciplines. To put this in another language moderation in everything is the highest discipline (*ati sarvatra varjayet*). This will help us in maintaining the quality. Broadly speaking, the scriptures talk about discipline at four levels.

1. The first discipline is physical discipline, which is the discipline of the body.
2. The second is verbal discipline, the discipline of speech.
3. The third is sensory discipline, the discipline of the sense organs and
4. The fourth is mental discipline which is the discipline of the mind.

Let us briefly discuss each one of them.

26

PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE

In physical discipline, we have to pay attention to the physical body and physical activity because a healthy physical body is the basic requisite for any achievement including *moksa*. Without health, we cannot accomplish anything. Even if we accomplish anything without health, we cannot enjoy the benefit of accomplishment. Imagine a person who earns a lot of money by working 24 hours a day, traveling all over the world without any rest, without proper food habits, without following any discipline. He may earn a lot of money but very soon he finds that his health does not permit him to enjoy. We never understand the value of health when it is there; we understand its value only when we lose it. But by then we would have reached a stage from where we cannot get back. Even to have the minimum enjoyment of eating we should maintain good health. To seek after *moksa* too, we need to have health. Health is sought after through all the prayers of the *Upanisads*. A person can never neglect his body. In the Gita, Krsna says that for the sake of health one has to follow discipline in food, both in quality and quantity. Too much eating is as dangerous as too much fasting. Similarly too much activity is as dangerous as too much inactivity. Activity and

rest must be balanced. Eating and fasting should be balanced. Sleeping and waking should be balanced. All these things should be disciplined so that the physical body remains fit for studying the *sastras*. *Yoga*, physical exercise, and dietary discipline are some of the methods of keeping the body fit.

VERBAL DISCIPLINE

The next is verbal discipline. In terms of speech also, there is quality and quantity control. It is significant that the *sastras* give a lot of importance to verbal discipline, otherwise called *vaktapas*. We should avoid argument. Avoiding argument saves a lot of time and energy. *Vadah tyaiyah*. In addition to straining relationships and increasing the blood pressure of the persons concerned, it also leads to wastage of time. Avoid gossip. Never talk about others. Finally avoid worthless talk, i.e. talk which is not useful to the speaker or to the listener. Talking about the past or the future is also meaningless. Talking about the present based on the past and future is meaningful. Based on the past experience and future possibility, I can talk about the present. Dwelling upon the past and future is worthless. Thus by avoiding arguments, gossip and worthless talk, if we plan to speak, we will not have much to speak at all. This way we can avoid a lot of rumors also. All rumors are born out of indiscipline. We can also avoid hurting others or breaking relationships. This is quantity control.

27

Then what is quality control? Speech should be nonhurtful, polite, useful and truthful. If these four conditions are maintained, then, that speech is of very good quality. Thus keeping an eye on the quantity and the quality of my speech is a great discipline. This is accomplished through an alert and deliberate use of one's organ of speech.

SENSORY DISCIPLINE

The third one is sensediscipline. The sense organs are like open doors – gateways through which the world enters our mind in the form of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. Words from other people enter my mind. Some sense organs can be closed while some cannot be closed. For example, I can close my eyes. But I cannot do so all the time. I cannot close my nose. Again, I cannot keep my sense organs closed all the time nor can I keep them open all the time. The sense organs are open when I get into the external world. And whether I like it or not, they enter my mind. When the world enters, it is capable of disturbing and polluting my mind. Therefore, if I do not have discipline, then, the world can disturb me. I should have a clearcut norm as to what I will perceive and what all I will avoid. I should learn to avoid anything that can pollute my mind. *Dussarigah sarvada tyaiyah*. Thus avoidance of unhealthy

atmosphere is sensory discipline. Even the so-called healthy things I should avoid overdoing. Avoidance of excess and avoidance of unhealthy exposure is necessary because the sense organs are open gates. *Swami Chinmaydnanda* has beautifully said, "Put a board, 'No admission without permission'. Don't make your mind a public toilet to get dirty" This is sense discipline. This is achieved through a life of alertness and discrimination.

MENTAL DISCIPLINE

Finally comes mental discipline, which is the most important one. In this we have to take care of several aspects of the mind. There are four aspects of the mind to be taken care of for the mental discipline.

1. Relaxation mind should enjoy relaxation. Nowadays everyone is talking of a stressful life and a stress free life. There is a lot of stress in our presentday life. A relaxed mind alone can accomplish anything in life, whether it is spiritual or material accomplishments. Mind should therefore learn to relax.

2. Concentration mind should have capacity to focus.

3. Expansion or accommodation mind should expand enough to accommodate everyone in the creation.

4. Refinement cultivation of ethical values.

28

To develop these faculties or disciplines of the mind, the scriptures prescribe meditation, otherwise called *Upasanam*. *Upasanam* is a wonderful exercise to discipline the mind and to acquire these qualifications. Based on the faculty that we want to develop, meditation also can be classified into four varieties. Each type of meditation will develop a particular type of faculty.

RELAXATION MEDITATION

One type of meditation is relaxation meditation in which I develop the relaxing capacity. I do not concentrate on any thing. I just want to remain physically and mentally relaxed. It is a wonderful exercise. We have different methods of doing this. One method is mentally visualizing beautiful surroundings like gardens, mountains, the sky, or the ocean. Nature is always relaxed. There is no tension in nature. The trees, the bird and the animals are all relaxed. If there is a cow or a buffalo on a busy road, the animals are relaxed; the human beings alone get tensed up. In fact we get more

tensed seeing the relaxed condition of the animals. This visualization of nature is one method of relaxation.

CONCENTRATION MEDITATION

The second type of meditation is concentration meditation in which some activity is given to the mind; this can be either mental worship of the Lord or mental recitation of some prayers or mental repetition of some *namas* of the Lord. Mental worship can be done elaborately or in the simple manner. I can mentally offer *naivedyam*, do *diparadhana*, *namaskara*, *pradaksina* and so on and I try to do as realistically as possible. What is the difference between recitation and repetition? In recitation there may be verses like *Sahasranama*; the chanting may be in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada or in any language I know. The chanting is done mentally. In repetition you do not have verses. You have only one *mantra* like *Namah Sivaya*, *Namo Narayanaya* which you mentally repeat.

EXPANSION MEDITATION

The third type of meditation is expansion where I can change my perspective. I look at anything that is vast. It can be ocean meditation, it can be sky meditation. When there is a tree, right in front of me, it looks very big because of its height but the same tree looks small if you look at it from a mountain. Not that the tree has become small, but my perspective has changed. Similarly, as our ego is very big now our problems are also very big. After expansion meditation, our problems become as unimportant as a mosquito bite. The death of someone, for example, which appears as a very big calamity becomes acceptable when you look at the

29

millions appearing and disappearing due to the law of nature. It is my mistake that I had a wishful thinking that we will continue to exist. But if I look at the whole thing from the cosmic angle, life is nothing but the flow of one generation into another. Not only do I accept the events of life, but also I learn to accept all the things and beings. This is expansion of the mind. Meditation of the totality is called *Viratupasanam* or *Visvarupaupasanam*. It is beautifully described in the eleventh chapter of the Cal Arjuna sees *Krsna* not as a person but as the whole universe. It is universal vision.

VALUE MEDITATION

Next comes **valuemeditation**. **In this meditation I take up every positive virtue and see its importance in my spiritual life** *satyam*, *daya*, *ksama*, etc. I take each value and dwell upon its importance in my spiritual growth. I also take the negative qualities like

impatience hurting other people, gossiping, jealousy, hatred etc. and see how damaging they are to my spiritual life, how it creates mental sickness and how it retards my spiritual growth. Having mentally seen the positive and the negative aspects of these traits, I repeat to myself that I have the positive virtue. I say so even if I do not have them. I say that I am the embodiment of patience, of love, of compassion and so on. I go on repeating. Even mere mechanical repetition will bring about a gradual change. It is said that when an ant moves on a rock, even though the ant is light and the rock is hard, the ant slowly and gradually erodes the rock. Similarly if you go on repeating, you unknowingly imbibe those virtues which *Krsna* describes as *daivisampat*. Gradually the unhealthy traits will go away. The unhealthy thoughts are called *asurisampat*. Such a change is called refinement of the mind, which is the result of valuemeditation.

These different types of meditation bring in a wonderfully disciplined mind which is ready for the next stage of *sadhana*. In *Kathopanisad*, a beautiful example is given. Life is compared to a journey. The physical body is compared to a vehicle in which we do the journey. The sense organs are like horses while the mind is like the reins and the intellect is compared to a driver. If the vehicle is not in good condition, there is the risk of an accident. Therefore I cannot afford to travel by such a vehicle, if I want to reach the destination. *Kathopanisad* rightly says that one who has a disciplined mind and an intelligent driver will reach the destination of *moksa* successfully. Thus, discipline is the second stage of *sadhana*, which we call *upasanayoga*.

30

Chapter 6

JNANAYOGA

Now we have to see *jnanayoga*, which is the third and final stage of *sadhana* prescribed. When a person becomes more and more refined and disciplined, he begins to question the very purpose of life. Introspection becomes serious. When a person seriously questions his pursuit, he finds all his pursuits are meaningless ones. They are not what he is seeking for. These pursuits take him towards dependence only. And when a person realizes that he is going more and more towards dependence only, he starts questioning whether he is really interested in dependence or independence. The instinctive urge of every living being is freedom. A bird is never happy in a cage; an animal is never happy in a zoo; a child is never happy if it is confined to its room. It wants to be free. Even a child holding on to its mother's hand decides to become free the moment it finds itself strong enough to be on its own.

The innate urge of every human being is renunciation of all dependences. This *tyaga* is not a struggle. It is the innate nature of everyone. A person is holding on to things now, not because he loves those things but because he has found that he cannot be otherwise. The moment there is a choice he will give up everything because every person wants to depend on himself alone. What one seeks is not *dharma*, *artha* or *kama*, but the renunciation of these freedom from dependence on these. *Moksa* is giving up of dependence and discovering independence. This is the innate nature of all humanity, in fact, all living beings. Therefore a person who is a *Karmayogi* and *upasana-yogi* slowly gets convinced that what he wants is *moksa* or freedom. His top priority is not *artha*. It remains merely an incidental thing needed for living. His top priority is not *kama*; entertainment is like a pickle which can never be the main dish. Similarly with *dharma*. None of them is his top priority. *Moksa* alone is his top priority, he discovers.

Now his problem is how to discover that selfdependence or independence. He continues with *Karmayoga* and *upasanayoga*. With the grace of the Lord, he finds help from outside. Either he comes across a person who is informed about *moksa* such a meeting is called *satsanga* or he comes across a book which discusses the topic of *moksa*. He gets more information regarding *moksa* from the scriptures or from the people who had learnt the scriptures.

31

SEEK WITHIN

The first thing that the scriptures point out is that security and happiness can never be got from outside. The moment I read this statement, a bell rings in my heart. The inner heart tells me what the scriptures tell is the truth. I myself had experienced this in my life. Now I develop a faith in the scriptures. I feel that the scriptures know about life and its goal. When an astrologer reveals something correct about the past, I develop faith in the astrologer. So when he predicts something about the future, even though it is unknown to me, I start believing in what he says because I have checked the truth of his prediction from the past. Similarly the scriptures tell the truth that the world cannot give security and happiness which I have been discovering all the time. I am able to concur and develop some kind of faith in the scriptures.

Then the scriptures reveal the next thing the security and happiness can never be found in the external world because they are my very nature. What is within me, I cannot find outside. If I miss a key which is in my pocket, I will never find it anywhere else, however hard I may search for it. Since the search is a misplaced search, I fail. My failure is not because of any lack of effort on my part; it is because of lack of direction. Thus I am told that security and happiness are my own innate nature. In

other words I understand that I need not depend on anything for my security and happiness. My very nature is independence. Since independence is my very nature, dependence makes me uncomfortable. If dependence is natural to me, depending on the external world will make me feel comfortable. But the fact is I am not very comfortable with dependence. All the time I am struggling to stop being dependent. I am like the child who wanted to drop his mother's hand and run away the moment he realizes that he can be on his own.

Whatever is unnatural will make me feel uncomfortable or sick. In our body system also as long as things are natural we find ourselves healthy and comfortable. The moment something enters into our system which is unnatural to us we become uncomfortable and there is a struggle to eject that foreign body. Therefore the struggle to get rid of an unnatural situation is natural. As dependence is unnatural to us, we are naturally struggling for independence because it is my very nature. The scriptures point out that our nature is *moksa*. Due to ignorance, we have disowned our nature and taken ourselves for granted.

A person analyses the nature of everything in the creation. We have study of plants, animals, stars, atoms, rivers, mountains and the like. Everybody does research without inquiring into the basic thing who am I? Without making an inquiry I have concluded that I am a

32

miserable mortal depending on the external world for my happiness. This has been an unquestioned conclusion regarding myself. Therefore the scriptures say what you require is *jnanam* or knowledge. Knowledge of what? Knowledge of my own true nature, which is discovery of independence discovery of *moksa*. This person, until now a *mumuksu*, a seeker of freedom, becomes a seeker of knowledge. Knowledge of his own independent nature. What is the difference between a *mumuksu* and a *jijnasu*? *Mumuksu* is a seeker of freedom and *jijnasu* is a seeker of knowledge. *Mumuksu* seeks freedom. But he does not know how to accomplish it. He has no direction. On the other hand, a *jijnasu* is an informed *mumuksu*. He knows that his problem is Selfignorance. He seeks self knowledge. He has direction.

PRAMANAM MEANS OF KNOWLEDGE

We know that any knowledge can be gained by using a proper instrument or means of knowledge. To know the colours I have to use the instrument called the eyes; to hear a sound I have to use the instrument called the ears; to know the taste, I have to use the instrument called the tongue. In short, without an instrument, I cannot gain any knowledge. The means of knowledge is called *pramanam*. There are many

pramanams. For our convenience, we can divide them into two: primary *pramanam* and secondary *pramanam*. **Primary *pramanam* is direct perception and secondary *pramanam* is analysis of direct perception.** From this analysis we can derive more information. The biochemist presents his clinical data from direct perception. The doctor arrives at the disease through analysis. This is secondary *pramanam*.

But all those instruments are meant for studying the world; none of them is useful for studying oneself. This is because sense organs basically are extrovert in nature and so they cannot help in the study of the subject, which is myself. The eyes cannot see themselves. Then what to talk of my true nature? Thus we discover that all the regular instruments of knowledge are for the search of an object and not for the study of the subject. Now the scriptures come and tell us that there can be only one means by which one can know the Self and that is the scriptural teachings themselves. The end portion of the *Veda* i.e., *Vedanta*, serves as a verbal mirror in revealing my nature. When I want to see my eyes I look into a mirror. There is no other means. Similarly, I use *vedantic* words as the mirror to see my nature. There is no other means. This means is called *sastrapramanam*.

ROLE OF GURU

Then the seeker encounters another problem. When I try to study *vedanta* in any language whether it is in Sanskrit, English, Telugu, Tamil or Kannada I don't understand anything of

33

it. In fact, it seems to be a bundle of contradictions. **At one place, it says that my nature is not known through the mind. Elsewhere it says mind alone knows.** Thus, it goes on using the language of contradictions. Therefore I am not able to use the scriptures properly because I do not have the key to open the scriptures. The situation is like having a cold coca cola bottle with me when I am thirsty but I am not able to drink it because I don't have the opener. The scriptures seem to be a source of knowledge but I do not have the key to open it. The key seems to be somewhere but not within my reach.

The scriptures themselves say that I have to go to a guru if I want to open them. The guru has the secret key or secret number. Resorting to a trial and error method is not going to be of much use. The only method is to seek the guru and humbly ask him for he knows the right answer. If you want to avoid wasting time and wandering all over, the best thing is to take the help of a guide. *Curumukhatah vedanta vicarah*. The only method of gaining knowledge is enquiry into *Vedanta* with the help of a guru. This

is called *jnana yoga*. In other words it is enquiry into the scriptures with the help of a teacher.

Now comes the next question. If I am going to study the scriptures with the help of a teacher or without the help of a teacher, will it not be bookish knowledge, will it not be a secondhand knowledge? How can it lead to discovery of the Self? Can it give firsthand knowledge? Yes. The teacher gives firsthand knowledge and not secondhand. If it is properly received from a teacher who knows how to teach properly and if both the student and the teacher are competent enough, then, the very communication will lead to an instantaneous Selfdiscovery.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT KNOWLEDGE

The rule goes like this. Suppose I want to know about the Himalayas, which is far away, I read a book on Himalayas. Naturally, when I read a book on the Himalayas, I get the knowledge of the Himalayas. Is this knowledge firsthand or secondhand? Definitely, it is secondhand knowledge. **From this we get the general law that any word describing a remote thing will give only indirect knowledge.**

If the Self is also remote, then the study of the scriptures will also give an indirect knowledge only. I will have to go and meet the Self. But, the Self is not like the Himalayas or London. It is not a remote object. The Self happens to be my own intrinsic nature. **Therefore, when words describe a thing which is intimately available, then the knowledge gained is not indirect but direct.**

34

I went to a school many years ago as the school headmistress had invited me for a talk. When I reached the school, the headmistress was not there. She had gone to the next room to attend to a phone call. The other teachers who were there, who had together organized my talk for the children of these school did not know me in person nor had they seen me earlier. They only knew that a *swami* was going to come. Only the headmistress knew me in person. At that time I was much younger and much thinner. The teachers had expected an elderly person. In their vision a *swami* is usually an elderly person with a beard, and that too a grey beard. When I got down I saw them waiting with a *purnakumbham* and other things but nothing was offered to me. I got down and stood in a corner waiting for the headmistress.

Later on I came to know that they had concluded that I should have been a disciple of *Swami Paramarthananda*. One of the disciples should have come in early to set the stage. Then the headmistress came and welcomed me. The teachers discovered only then that I was the *swami* they were waiting for. When the

headmistress addressed me as *swami*, through her words they discovered *Swami Paramarthgnanda*. Previously they were waiting for me not knowingly. The moment they heard the word they discovered me. This discovery is direct knowledge.

JNANA YOGA AND DIRECT KNOWLEDGE

Therefore we can conclude that words can give direct knowledge when the object of knowledge is already experienced in front. In the same way the scriptures are talking about my own inner nature which is not away from me. The scriptural study thus can give me direct knowledge through *jnanayoga*. *Jnanayoga* involves three stages: *sravanam*, *mananam* and *nididdhyasanam*.

SRAVANAM

Sravanam means enquiry into the scriptures with the help of a *guru*. *Sravanam* is not passive hearing. It requires the full participation of the student and he has to travel along with the teacher. The teacher is trying to communicate something which is not an object but which is my own true nature. In other words, consistent and systematic study of the scriptures for a length of time under the guidance of a competent *guru* is *sravanam*.

In other words, looking into the scriptural mirror which the teacher shows for me, is *sravanam*. Initially when I start doing *sravanam* I get lots of doubts. I should never ask questions initially. I will have to be patient. Whatever question comes up I should keep it in my mind or write it in a book with the hope that all the questions will be answered as I understand

35

more and more, as the teaching opens up new vistas, as the unfolding starts revealing new information. The student should have faith in the scriptures and the teacher for this. Therefore, no questions are allowed. just receive the whole vision comprehensively. Let all the questions be there. Then having done comprehensive listening for a length of time and having got all the aspects of the teaching, look back at your questions. A painter cannot paint the whole picture in one stroke. The painting unfolds gradually. Until the painting is over, don't disturb the painter. Similarly *sravanam* should be done for a length of time setting aside all your doubts. Thereafter the teacher says, " Now come on. See if you accept the teaching; see if you are convinced."

MANANAM

After *sravanam*, the student can come out with any number of questions. All the doubts are let loose and all of them are attacked. This is called *mananam*. This continues until I am convinced. There should not be any doubt or question. Once I have done *sravanam* and *mananam* satisfactorily, **I feel convinced that I can be independent. But as I have been addicted to dependence for so long, I find it difficult to be independent.** I have to try to give up all dependencies just as a person addicted to smoking tries to give it up. I can help him by telling him that he can live without smoking. Similarly, we have to learn to come out of all dependences.

NIDIDHYASANAM

The person addicted to smoking is slightly nervous of leaving it as he has been addicted to it for years. Hence there is a doubt if he can live without it. There are withdrawal symptoms and he has to train himself to handle them. This is discovery of true independence. This third stage is called *nididhyasanam* and through *nididhyasanam*, the person learns to drop dependences and be independent. Initially there is fear; there are also withdrawal symptoms but later he finds that he can be happy without people around. He discovers he can live alone too. In short, *nididhyasanam* helps in converting knowledge into emotional strength. Thus through *sravanam*, *mananam* and *nididhyasanam*, a person becomes *jivanmuktah*, a liberated person.

36

Chapter 7

BHAKTI

Today, I will deal with the topic of *bhakti*. It is a very important topic found in the scriptures and a topic with various shades of meanings in different contexts. Therefore it is a confusing topic also. So we should clearly understand what *bhakti* is. The word *bhakti* is used in the scriptures in two different meanings.

THE FIRST MEANING OF 'BHAKTI'

Bhakti means devotion towards God. Devotion is love directed towards a higher principle. Reverential love can be defined as devotion. We talk about *matrbhakti* and *pitrbhakti*. In our tradition, we look upon the parents as of worship. Similarly, we talk about *gurubhakti*, *dehabhakti* and *Isvarabhakti*. Therefore, in general, ***bhakti* is love towards a higher principle, especially love towards God.**

THREE DIRECTIONS OF LOVE

The topic of love has been very elaborately analysed in our scriptures, both in its general form as love and also in its specific form as love of God. Scriptures point out that all forms of love that a human being entertains are directed towards only three things. The first one is love of goal. Whatever goals or ends we want to accomplish in life are all ends that we love. It is because we love them that we want to acquire them. So I will call it love towards various ends or various goals "Endlove". Then, later to accomplish the ends we have to use various means. Only through means can we accomplish the ends. Since the means are useful to accomplish the ends, we love the means also. Why? Because it is useful to accomplish the end. Therefore, the second direction of our love is, love of the means. I will call it "Meanslove". The third object of love is oneself. Everyone loves himself or herself. I will call it "Selflove". **Therefore all forms of love are only of three categories: "Means love", "Endlove" and "Selflove". This is love in general.**

GRADATION OF LOVE

The scriptures point out that there is a gradation in the intensity of these three forms of love. Love of the means is the least in its intensity. Love of the end is medium and love of oneself is the highest form of love, wherein the love has got the highest intensity. What is the reason? Reason is simple. Love of the means is not for the sake of means itself. It is only for

37

the sake of the end. Once the end is accomplished, the attitude towards the means is completely different. After accomplishing the end, the means is often forgotten. Rich people are loved more than the poor people because they are the means for the end called wealth. As long as the end called the wealth can be accomplished through these rich people they are loved. The moment money goes from them, thereafter, that person is not approached. Elderly rich people are very sincerely served by family members. You know where the sincerity lies. I don't generalize it. Often, the service is with the hope that they can inherit or get the wealth. Suppose the elderly person gives off all the money before death itself. After getting all the money, the old person is deserted. He advises other old friends never to give the money to the next generation until death.

Most of the time love for people is purely the love for the means to accomplish the end. And often money is the end. Therefore the love for the end is superior to the love for the means. If means is dear to you, the end is dearer to you.

Now, between the love of the end and oneself, which love is superior? If you logically analyze, I love various ends not for the sake of the end itself. I love various

ends hoping that they will give me comfort, security, happiness. It is for my benefit, my comfort, my security, my happiness, I love various ends. The moment I see that a particular end does not give me joy, then the end is changed. Even after accomplishing the end, it is disposed off. That is why even marriages break down nowadays. Couples who choose each other get separated. Loved ones are rejected when they are found uncomfortable for oneself. So, the Self is the dearest. The *Upanisad* says: "Nobody loves the husband for husband's sake, everybody loves the husband for one's own sake." (*Na va are patyuh kamaya patih priyo bhavati, atmanastu kamaya patih priyo bhavati*) Therefore no end is loved for the end's sake. Everything is loved for one's own sake only. Therefore, if you have to grade "Meanslove" is *manda*, "Endlove" is *madhyama*, and "Selflove" is *uttama*. This is the general principle regarding human love.

THREE GRADES OF DEVOTION

Now let us apply this in the field of God. If a person loves God, what will be the intensity of that love? Scriptures point out that the intensity of love depends upon how you look upon God, because different people see God in different ways. The way you look upon God will determine the intensity of love. Majority of people look upon God only as the

38

means for various worldly ends. "If I go to this temple, I will be able to accomplish this end" this is my approach. As long as you look upon God as a means, that love is called *mandabhakti* (inferior devotion). That is why such people get angry with God also. Last week only a lady came and said, "I am angry with God. I asked Him to get my daughter married. But He didn't accomplish that. Therefore, I have stopped worshipping Him and I have thrown all my prayer books into the waste paper basket." Why? Because it is a conditional love. If the condition is fulfilled, I love. If the condition is not fulfilled, I allow God to go. I reject. Therefore, such a *bhakti* is called *mandabhakti* and this is the prevalent one.

The next set of people is still rare. They don't look upon God as a means for various ends. They are mature enough. Their understanding of God is clearer. They are able to choose God as the end of life. The end of life means the goal of life. They know God represents security. God represents peace. God represents happiness. They know that everyone is seeking security, peace and happiness alone. Naturally their love of God is as the end and therefore it is more intense than the previous one. Therefore, this *bhakti* is *madhyamabhakti*.

You can extend this further and find out what will be *uttamabhakti*. What should be *uttamabhakti*? What is third and rarest form of love which is the most intense form of love? It is a love in which I look upon God neither as the means nor even as the end. The Lord and the Self being identical, Godlove is equal to Selflove. Since Selflove is the most intense love, that form of love is called *uttamabhakti*. For *mandabhakta* God is dear. For *madhyama bhakta* God is dearer and for the *uttamabhakta* God is the dearest. *Krsna* beautifully elaborates this in the seventh and the twelfth chapters of the Gita. Therefore what is *bhakti*? Love in the form of *manda*, *madhyama*, and *uttamarupa*. This is the first meaning of the word *bhakti*.

THE SECOND MEANING OF 'BHAHTI'

Now, we will come to the second meaning of the word *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is the course of discipline meant to accomplish the highest goal of life namely '*moksa*' or freedom. To convey this idea of *bhakti* as a course of discipline, the word *yoga* is added. So, when *bhakti* means a course of discipline, we use the word *bhaktiyoga*. Therefore, the suffix *yoga* indicates *bhakti* as a course of discipline.

BHAHTI YOGA THE THREE FOLD SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

The next question is what is *bhaktiyoga*? What course of discipline is indicated by the word *bhaktiyoga*? If you remember our previous talks, we have dealt with the threefold course of discipline for attaining *purusarthas*, the human goals. While talking about the three

39

fold course of discipline we talked about *karmayoga*, *upasanayoga* and *jnanayoga*. We never talked about *bhaktiyoga*. So the question is what do you mean by *bhaktiyoga* as a course of discipline? Is it a fourth *yoga*? Our answer is : *bhaktiyoga* is not an exclusive or separate course of discipline at all. But *bhaktiyoga* is the name of the entire group of disciplines consisting of all the three. It is not a fourth one. But it is the name of the entire threefold course of discipline known as *karmayoga*, *upasanayoga* and *jnanayoga*. If you want you can say that the first stage of *bhaktiyoga* is *karmayoga*. The second stage of *bhaktiyoga* is *upasanayoga*. The final stage of *bhaktiyoga* is *jnanayoga*. It is one consisting of all these three. So *karmayoga* + *upasanayoga* + *jnanayoga* equals *bhaktiyoga*.

Then the next question is: why do you call all these three commonly as *bhaktiyoga*? Why don't you treat it as a separate fourth *yoga*? The answer is : *bhaktiyoga* is the common name for all the three because *bhakti* is the common atmosphere in which all these three *yogas* are practiced. *Karmayoga* has to be imbued

with *bhakti*, *upasanayoga* should be soaked in *bhakti* and *jnanayoga* must float in the syrup of *bhakti*. In *karmayoga* the attitude that one enjoys is that of dedicating all actions to the Lord and accepting, without resistance, all the consequence of the actions. How can there be *karmayoga* without *Avaraarpan*, *abhavana* and *prasadabhavana*. Therefore a *karmayogi* should necessarily have *bhakti*. In *upasanayoga* I have to meditate upon the Lord for developing mental discipline and integration. How can I meditate on God if I do not have *bhakti*? *Manasa puja*, *manasaparayanam* and *manasajapa* are part of *upasana*. So *upasanayoga* also must take place in the atmosphere of *bhakti* alone. What about *jnanayoga*? *Jnanayoga* also involves *bhakti*. The study of scriptures is started with some prayer or the other and we end with a prayer. Not only that. In *jnanayoga*, we are enquiring into our own real nature discovering the identity of our real nature with the nature of God. Hence, *jnanayoga* involves Selfdiscovery which is none other than Goddiscovery. Therefore, *jnanayoga* also involves *bhakti*. So, the second meaning of *bhakti* is the entire course of spiritual discipline.

Thus the first meaning of *bhakti* is the love of God in the form of *manda*, *madhyama* and *uttamaprema*. The second meaning of *bhakti* is a course of discipline consisting of *karmayoga*, *upasanayoga* and *jnana yoga* to attain the goal of liberation.

THE OBJECT OF DEVOTION

Now I like to include one more topic in this context. *Bhakti* is love or devotion towards God. Without understanding the principle of God, how can we discuss the topic of devotion?

40

The integral part of love is the object of love. In fact, you cannot develop love towards anyone without understanding who that one is. How can I love an unknown thing or person? That's why people want to move with a person to decide whether they can love or not. When they decide they can love, they get married. After marriage they understand more and declare, "I understand. That's why, I am not able to love." So, I cannot talk of love of God without understanding and that's why knowledge of God becomes necessary. Therefore, we will briefly discuss the nature of God, who is your object of love. Scriptures give three definitions for God depending upon the maturity and intellectual caliber of the seeker. Scriptures are very practical. We will see three levels of definition directed towards people of three levels.

FIRST DEFINITION OF GOD

God is the creator of the universe. In Sanskrit, *Jagatkarta*, *Isvara*. We present a simple and easily understandable reasoning. What is that? Any well designed product must have an intelligent being behind it to design. The more well designed it is, the more you appreciate the designing intelligence. That is why new products are coming with new designs so that you will be tempted to buy. So, if an ordinary product requires a conscious intelligent being behind the creation, what to talk of the most wonderful universe which is well designed and very purposeful? Some person defined a weed as a plant whose purpose has not yet been discovered. It is not useless but we have not yet discovered its use. That means nothing is purposeless in the creation. If the creation is purposeful and well designed, there will be an intelligent creator behind it. That intelligent creator (jagatkarta) *Isvara*. Once I identify *Isvara* as *Jagatkarta* you will visualize God as a person because the only intelligent being known to us is the human being. Therefore we imagine a very intelligent personal God who is omniscient and omnipotent. Since we do not see Him around, we safely place Him above the clouds. He is also safe. We are also safe. Let it be he or she, we have got both. This is God as a creator as a personal God with a special form. Rama, Krsna, Visnu, Siva etc. are the personal form of God as the creator. I will call this God *ekarupa* *Mra* **God with a specific form. This is for the beginner.**

SECOND DEFINITION OF GOD

Once you are grown up sufficiently and capable of thinking further, the scriptures present the next level of *Isvara*. God is the cause of the world *jagatkaranam* *Isvarah*. Earlier *jagat karta* *Isvarah* and now *jagatkaranam* *Isvarah*. How do we introduce that? It is like this. Suppose, I understand God as the creator of the world, the question comes regarding the raw material out of which the world is created. Any creator can create something only with a raw

41

material. Carpenter requires wood as raw material; builder requires iron, wood, bricks etc. as raw material. Therefore, without raw material nothing can be created. If I understand God as the creator of the whole universe, what was the raw material? Nothing else is available because, before the creation of the world, God alone was there, none else. Even space was not there. What to talk of things? Scientists say that before the big bang we cannot even conceive of timespace. You can talk about them after the big bang, not before. Therefore, before the creation of time and space and object, when God alone was there, where is the raw material? So scriptures point out that God Himself happens to be the very material also out of which the world is shaped. And we say God is the *karanam* the very material out of which the world is created. The scripture gives the example also. Just as a spider finds the material for its web in itself, God creates out of Himself. We despise a spider but it is a beautiful example

useful for *Vedanta*. It does not take any material from anywhere. Unlike a bird or an ant or a human being, it finds the material in itself. Similarly God is the material cause of the universe. The raw material alone becomes manifold product. Since God is the raw material, God alone has become the universe. Therefore, the universe is nothing but God alone. So where is God? The whole universe is God. Since the whole universe is God, every form is God's form. He is no more a personal God. He is universal God. He is no more **ekarupalsvara**. He is *anekarupalsvara* or *vivarupaisvara*. To have *darsana* of God I need not go up. He is available everywhere. In *Rudram*, Lord diva is worshipped as the rising sun with different hues. All the different hues of the sun are the complexion of the Lord. This is the second definition.

THIRD DEFINITION OF GOD

First I say God created the world. Then I say God became the world. Once you are ready for the next level, the scriptures give the third definition. That is, *Jagadadhghanam Isvarah*. This is the highest, the toughest and is the culmination. When we say God has become everything, you will immediately ask Swamiji, there are ugly things, the diseases, criminals etc. in the creation. Are they also God? Suppose I say yes, no devotion will be there. How can I accept the evil as God? If such a question comes, **we are ready for the third definition. God does not become the world. God appears as the world with different forms.** He is not affected by any form in which he appears. To put it in another way, God is the very substratum of all the forms. He transcends the entire creation. God is the ultimate substratum behind the creation. But not affected by them. He is *Jagadadhistanam*. **Since God transcends all these forms of the creation, no particular form belongs to God.** Therefore, God as *adhistanaisvara* is *arupaisvara*, i.e. formless God.

42

Now, What are the three levels? To consolidate in sanskrit, God is *jagatkarta*, *jagatkgranam*, *jagadadhistanam*. In English, God creates the world first stage of understanding; God becomes the world second stage of understanding; God appears as the world third stage of understanding. God has one form *ekarupa* first stage of understanding; many forms *anekarupa* second stage of understanding; form less – *arupa* third stage of understanding. We have to understand all the levels gradually. In the initial stage, I have to go through *ekarupabhakti*; in the middle stage my *bhakti* is *anekarupabhakti*. When I reach the final stage, my *bhakti* is *arupabhakti*. **When I talk of three stages, remember that the latter one does not replace the former. Arupabhakti has eka and anekarupabhakti. Arupabhakti includes the other two.** They happily worship God with any particular form also. They happily appreciate the Lord as beautiful nature also. One does not replace the other. Just as Einsteinian physics does

not displace Newtonian physics. Both are valid in their levels. This is the understanding of God that develops in the mind of a seeker as he studies the scriptures.

Summing up all the topics discussed above, we have nine forms of *bhakti*. The first three are: *Manda*, *madhyama* and *uttamabhakti*, wherein *bhakti* is the love of God (*Bhavanadrstya bhaktitrayam*). The next three are: *karmarupa*, *upasanarupa* and *jnanarupabhakti*, wherein *bhakti* means spiritual discipline (*sadhanadrstya bhaktitrayam*). The last three are: *eka*, *aneka*, and *arupabhakti*, depending upon our understanding of God (*devata drstya bhaktitrayam*). The word *bhakti* is used in all these meanings and therefore we should understand the context and grasp the meanings. This is a very important topic in the scriptures. With this, I conclude the topic of *bhakti*.

PARIBHASA TECHNICAL TERMS

Now we shall see a few scriptural terms and concepts, which are required for studying any scriptural text. We should have an understanding of these scriptural terms and concepts. In Sanskrit it is called *paribhasa*. *Paribhasa* means technical terms which are unique to a particular science. The science of medicine has its own particular terms. Similarly economics or biology or botany have their own technical terms. In the same way, we have technical terms in *Vedanta* also.

Here is an interesting incident to make you realize how a technical term needs specific translation. A person in Delhi built a house without a ceiling. He decided to conduct a house

43

warming ceremony and invited his friends and relatives. When somebody asked him the reason for building a house without a ceiling, he said that he had read a news item that said that the government was going to put a ceiling on all urban property. He had thought that there was no need on his part to construct the ceiling when the government was offering to help him. He did not realize that this ceiling was different from the first one. Thus, every science has its own jargon. This is true of our scriptural science too. Without understanding those technical words, if I study the scriptures it will not be meaningful. To become familiar with these words, let us look into a text called *Tattva bodha* and learn the important terms and concepts.

44

Chapter 8

SADHANA CATUSTAYAM

The text *Tattvabodha* first talks about the qualifications required for a student of the scriptures, especially of *jnanayoga*. These qualifications are listed as a group called '*sadhanacatustayam*' the fourfold qualification. The person who has this fourfold qualification is called an *adhikari* (an eligible student).

Now what is this fourfold qualification?

1. Viveka (discrimination)
2. Vairagyam (dispassion)
3. Satkasampatti (sixfold discipline or discipline in general)
4. *Mumuksutvam* (*desire* for freedom)

Remember, all begin with 'D' Discrimination, Dispassion, Discipline and Desire. These four 'D's' put together is called fourfold qualification and the one who has these four qualities is called the qualified student or *adhikari*

VIVEKA (Discrimination)

Viveka is recognition of the superiority of *sreyas* and the risks involved in *preyas*. The discrimination between *sreyas* and *preyas* is *viveka*. Unpredictability, risks, problems and potential sorrows are associated with *preyas*. *sreyas* gives peace, and happiness. *Preyas* *sreyas* *viveka*. Discrimination between *preyas* and *sreyas* helps me choose the right path, of *sreyas*.

How do we get this discrimination? Only by going through the experiences of the life without being mechanical will help us get this. Intelligent experience of life will make me mature and help me learn lessons. This intelligent living is the life of *Karmayoga*. Somebody has said that our life is a university from which I can learn a lot. Our schools and colleges teach us how to read and write without teaching us what to read or write. What my goal is and how I can attain it, is not made clear. The scriptures say that a person should examine every experience he goes through. He should ask whether his problem is because of the external world or whether it is because of his dependence on the external world. An external condition can cause a problem only when I depend on it. External world by itself can never be a cause of a problem. Therefore the problem is with myself. To realize this it may take a lot

of time for some people; many years for some people; for some even a few *janmas* may be required. Take your own time but one day you should be clear about the priorities of life and know the superiority of *sreyas*.

VAIRAGYAM (Dispassion)

Viveka leads to *vairagyam* or dispassion with regard to *preyas*. After understanding that *preyas* is only dependence which is not healthy for me, I decide not to dedicate my life for the pursuit of *preyas*. At least it does not remain as top priority. We cannot totally drop earning money; nor can we totally drop our recreations. We need them for survival and health. But that cannot be the primary goal of my life. It is like a pickle for a meal, helping me to eat the main dish. Earlier *preyas* was my main "dish", now it has been replaced by *sreyas*. While pursuing that, I make use of other things merely as support. They remain secondary. They are not given up. Such a healthy attitude towards *preyas* as a secondary thing in life, as something merely like a stepping stone, as an intermediary stage is called *vairagyam*. *Vairagyam* does not mean hating *preyas*. *Preyas* is to be used as the means and not as an end in itself. It is said money is a good servant but a bad master. Similarly *preyas* is a wonderful means but it is grievous if you take it as a *sadhyam*, an end. *Preyas* as *sadhanam* is healthy; as *sadhyam* it is a bondage. *Sadhanam* is the means while *sadhyam* is the end. The growing out the *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* is *vairagyam*.

MUMUKUSTVAM (desire for freedom)

This is also a consequence of *viveka*. When I discern the fact that *sreyas* (*moksa*) is superior to *preyas* (*dharma*, *artha* and *kama*), I choose *sreyas* as my primary goal. Suppose a child is holding a fiverupee note. You ask the child if it would take a 100rupee note. The child will answer that it does not want the 100 rupee note and will hold on to the 5rupee note. The child does not know the difference between a 5rupee note and a 100rupee note. Once the child grows up, it gets the most important *viveka* in life that this is a 5rupee note and this is a 100rupee note; that the 100rupee note is more valuable. Now if you ask the child if he wants the 100rupee note; he will immediately drop the 5rupee note and ask for 100 rupee note.

Dropping the passionate hold on *preyas* is *vairagyam*. Stretching ourselves to reach *sreyas* is *mumuksutvam*. Both are possible because of *viveka*. *Viveka* leads to *vairagyam* and *mumuksutvam*. Thus, intelligent living i.e. a life of *Karmayoga* alone leads to *viveka*, *vairagyam* and *mumuksutvam*.

JAMADISATKA SAMPATTI (The Sixfold discipline)

The next qualification is the sixfold inner discipline. This is to be accomplished through *upasanayoga*, the second *sadhana*. Through *karmayoga*, *viveka*, *vairagyam* and *mumuksutvam* are obtained and through *upasanayoga* we have to get the qualification called *satkasampatti* or sixfold discipline. What is the six fold inner discipline?

1. *Sama* (mind control)
2. *Dama* (sense control)
3. *Uparama* (withdrawal or the capacity to withdraw)
4. *Titiksa* (forbearance)
5. *Sraddha* (faith in the scriptures and the *guru*)
6. *Samadhanam* (concentration)

SAMA (mind control)

Mind control is the capacity to regulate and direct our mental energy, which includes all our powers *iccha sakti*, *jnana sakti*, *kriya sakti*. We have the power to regulate them. Redirect them so that there is no wastage of energy. It is like damming a river and channeling the water. Unless water is channeled floods cause havoc in one place while there is untold suffering due to drought in another place. Both lead to loss. Both types of destruction are to be avoided.

In the same manner, I have to channelise my mental energy. Mind control, therefore, does not mean suppression. Psychologists say it is dangerous. **By control we mean regulation, channeling, directing the thoughts.** It is similar to a driver controlling the steering of the car, directing the car through the roads.

DAMA (sensecontrol)

Sense control means directing the sense organs in the chosen field. I decide what the things are to be contacted. Let us remember Gandhiji's three monkeys here. See only what is proper, hear only what is proper, and speak only what is proper. This does not indicate suppression. On the other hand, it indicates direction. For example, there

are so many channels in the TV. I should know what I should see and what I should avoid. Thus sensecontrol is regulation of sense organs.

47

UPARAMA (withdrawal)

The third one is *uparama* or withdrawal, not being too much of an extrovert. Extrovertedness is a very big obstacle because an extrovert will not find time for any higher pursuits of life. He will have time for *artha* and *kama* only; *dharma* and *moksa* will not mean anything to him. Therefore an extrovert person may enjoy life, perhaps, but he cannot grow in life. Even if his physical body withdraws, his mind does not withdraw. The success of life is not in enjoyment; it is in growth. This withdrawal, however, is not total. If I totally withdraw and go to a cave and sit, I will become insane. This withdrawal is such that I have time for the pursuit of *upasanayoga* and *jnana yoga*. Therefore withdrawal must be not only physical but also sensory and mental. When you are listening to *Vedanta* you are supposed to be dead to your family, your business, your future plans. This capacity to physically, sensually and mentally withdraw is called *uparama*.

TITIKSA (forbearance)

Titiksa means the physical and mental capacity to experience the pairs of opposites without seriously getting affected. It is the toughness to withstand the ups and downs of life. All the austerities like fasting, pilgrimages etc. are to make the person tough. Otherwise, when the Lord is allpervading why should our forefathers build temples in inaccessible places like Badrinath, Kedarnath and so on? After all, if God is everywhere you can invoke God in your house. The idea behind building such temples is that as you walk and eat all types of food and sleep anywhere under the sun or rain, your body and mind become tougher and tougher. This is required for any success. As they say "when the going gets tough the tough get going." Living in an airconditioned room will not make the body tough. Hence, *vratams* and *tapas* are advised. These will help in withdrawal from other activities also.

SRADDHA (faith)

Faith is the trust in the validity of the scriptural teachings. We develop faith in anything by worshipping it. Faith is developed through worship even if it is mechanically done. I can worship something only if I have faith in its glory. Unfortunately faith can be developed only if I worship. Here is a problem of mutual dependence. We try to find a solution by mechanically worshipping even if we don't

have faith. That is why we are asked to worship in childhood itself before we learn to question things. Later, after growing up, questions start. A child learns to worship God, the scriptures and the *mahatmas* (noble souls) without undue questioning. Actually worship is twofold; mental worship which is a reverential attitude and the other is physical worship like *namaskaram*. A child cannot do mental worship. Therefore

48

introduce the physical worship in childhood itself and the chances are, as the child grows, it will develop faith in God, the scriptures and the *mahatmas*. However, there is no guarantee; after the child grows up the worship may be dropped. We can only pray that the child develops faith. If one nourishes faith during childhood, later, it will be reinforced. Until then it is open mindedness alone. Therefore, develop faith by worship, worship of the three God, the scriptures and the *mahatmas*.

SAMADHANAM (concentration)

By concentration, we mean both short term and long term focusing. By short term focusing we mean freedom from distraction. When I listen to the scriptures I should be able to keep my mind in that subject without distraction. For different people the duration of concentration is different. A child will play with a toy for a minute and then throw it away. It needs a change very frequently. Some people cannot watch one show on TV for 2 minutes. They keep changing the channels. It is called channel surfing. At least for an hour I should be able to focus on any field.

The second thing is long term focusing. In and through my various pursuits, I should not lose sight of the ultimate goal of *moksa*, which should be at the back of my mind. This is like a long train journey. The immediate goal is the next station. At each station, I may get down. But whatever I do at each station, in and through all of them, I remember it is an intermediary station. I have to reach my destination. I do not lose sight of it. Similarly I may raise a family, earn money, build houses, travel abroad etc. None of them is the final goal of my life. The success depends on whether I have achieved the real thing; in other words, I should die with total fulfillment without lacking anything, as a *purna purusa*. According to the scriptures, a person who discovers fullness in himself before dying is a true *brahmana*. A person who does not discover that fulfillment is an unfortunate person who has to be pitied because he has wasted this wonderful life. And therefore constantly I should remember, *mahata punyapanyena kriteyam kayanaustvaya'* you have bought this body boat from the Lord by paying a lot *punyam* as cash; *param duhkhodadhergantum* it is for crossing the ocean of mortality. In other words, to cross the ocean of *samsara* you are given this wonderful boat. Before the boat disintegrates, cross the ocean, *tara yavanna bhidyate'*. This goal must be at the back of my mind. This is also known as *samadhanam*. All types of

meditations, *japa* and *sastanga* are meant for this long term concentration and short term concentration alone.

Thus the sixfold discipline has to be acquired by following the necessary *sadhanas*, the main *sadhana* being *upasanayoga*. One who has acquired these four qualifications is called *adhikari*. He is the one who has *sadhanacatustayam*.

49

Chapter9

SARIRA TRAYAM AND AVASTHA TRAYAM

Every individual is endowed with sarira trayam i.e., three bodies. We are aware of one body but the scriptures talk of three bodies. We need, therefore, to understand them. They are:

Sthula sariram or the gross body

Suksma sariram or the subtle body.

Karana sariram or the causal body.

With regard to each body, we have to understand four important features. The first one is the raw material of which it is made. The second feature is the components or the constituents of each body. just as a house has various parts like the walls and the windows, so also the body has its components. The third feature we have to know is its function. If a body does not have a function, it need not be there at all. Whatever we keep in a house has a particular function. In human creation, some objects may not have any function. But in God's creation, where everything is beautiful, perfect and orderly, everything must have a function. Even a weed is a particular plant whose function is not yet understood. The fourth feature is its nature.

Sariram / body	Raw material	Constituents or parts	Function	Nature
Sthula-sariram (gross body)	Gross matter	Head, trunk, hands and legs.	Abode or the residence of the	Visible and experience able

			experience	to others and me
Suksma - sariram (subtle body)	Subtle matter consisting of five subtle elements	Sense organs of knowledge (5) Sense organs of action (5) Physiological system(5) and Inner organs (4)	Instrument of interaction with the world	Invisible to others and experience able to me
Karanasariram (causal body)	Subtlest form of matter called avidya	Physical and subtle body in unmanifest form	Resolution of sthula & suksma-sariram	Unmanifest form. Invisible to others and me.

50

STHULA SARIRAM

In the above chart is mentioned the four features of the three bodies. The *sthula sariram* being gross is made up of gross matter, consisting of the five elements viz. space, air, fire, water and earth. The parts of the gross body are the head, trunk, hands and legs. The scriptures point out that the gross body functions as an abode or residence of the experiencer. It is a temporary house which the experiencer will have to vacate at any time. Sometimes notice is given. Sometimes, without any notice, the experiencer will have to vacate. Residing in the gross body, the experiencer interacts with the external world. Thus, the gross body provides the operational address for the experiencer. Then, what is the nature of the physical body? Being gross, it is clearly perceptible to oneself as well as to others. It is also subject to change like birth, growth, decay and finally death, which are called *vikara*. Above all, it has a shorter life, the maximum of a hundred years. In other words it leads a limited life.

SUKSMA - SARIRAM

Now let us see the four features of the subtle body. The first feature is the matter or material it is made up of. The scriptures say that the subtle body is made up of subtle matter consisting of the five subtle elements. We require *sastras* to enumerate the parts of a subtle body as these are subtle and cannot be seen. The parts of the subtle body are as follows:

- Five sense organs of knowledge (*Jnanedriyas*)

Srotram (ear) the sense organ that perceives the sound.

Tvak (skin) the organ that perceives the touch.

Caksu (eye) the organ which sees colours and forms.

Rasana (tongue) the organ which perceives the taste.

Ghrana (nose) the organ which perceives the smell.

Thus, there are five organs to experience five types of objects.

- The next five components of the subtle body are the five sense organs of action (*Karmendriyas*). They are:

Vak (mouth) the organ of speech, whose function is to speak.

Pani (hands) the organ which does varieties of actions like carrying, lifting etc.

51

Pada (legs) the organ which helps our movement from one place to another.

Payu (organ of excretion) the organ which removes wastes from the body.

Upastha (organ of reproduction) the organ which helps in the propagation of the species.

If you compare and contrast the organs of knowledge and the organs of action, it will be seen that the *jnanendriyas* are meant for receiving experiences from the world. They are like entrance gates while the *karmendriyas* are meant for our contribution to the world. Therefore, they are like exit gates. When I am speaking to some one, I am not receiving anything through the organ of speech. I am contributing to the other person in the form of words or ideas. All transactions involve give and take and therefore we are given one set of organs for giving and the other set of organs for taking.

The next set of organs is the *pancapranas*, the five physiological systems which are meant to produce energy and support the sense organs.

A car needs not only wheels but also fuel for its running. Just as we supply fuel to the car which gets converted into energy to make the car run, so also we supply food as fuel to the body which gets converted into energy to make us work.

We have a big hole called the mouth into which we dump varieties of food. There is a tongue in between to ask for taste. When we supply fuel through the mouth a converter is required to convert this fuel into energy and supply to the sense organs. Our body is indeed a beautiful machine to which fuel is added. The fuel is converted into nutrition and energy and the wastes are removed through the exhaust pipe. We also have many pipelines carrying nutrition and energy throughout the body.

This inner system, which energizes the body, is the *pancapranas*. The system has five functions. They are:

Prana the respiratory system which is very important for breathing in oxygen and removing carbondioxide, to purify the blood.

Apana the excretory system which does the work of an exhaust pipe.

Samana the digestive system which converts food into nutrition and mechanical energy.

52

Vyana the circulatory system which circulates the nutrition and the energy produced to various organs. It is the transport system which supplies this energy to every cell of the body. Even the hair should get nourishment. Otherwise it starts failing off.

Udana a system for protecting the body from unwanted, extraneous things. It throws out what is not good to the body. Sneezing and vomiting are examples. Generally the food has to go inside but sometimes it gets thrown out. The normal process is reversed. This reversal system is called *udana* which functions only when the body has to be protected from toxic extraneous things. The *udana* becomes active at the time of death also.

These are the *pancapranas* which are very essential in energizing the *pancajanendriyas* and *pancakarmendriyas*. Even if any one of them stops functioning, we see that the activities of the sense organs get affected.

The last four organs are called *antahkaranam*. They are the fourfold inner organ. They are

Manah the mind, which is associated with emotion, desire and doubt. It is the emotional faculty.

- * *Buddhi* the intellect, which is associated with analysis, judgement, conclusion etc. It is the rational faculty or the intellectual faculty.
- * *Cittam* the memory faculty, which stores all information acquired. So, whatever, we have experienced from childhood are all there deep inside.
- * *Ahamkara* the ego which is associated with selfidentification. Through this, I claim the bodymind complex as myself. In fact, the fourfold inner organ represents the four faculties of one organ only.

All the organs put together make 19 organs. While enumerating the last four inner organs, some books reduce the last four into two i.e., the mind and the intellect. Memory and ego are included in the mind and the intellect. Thus, instead of 19 organs, 17 organs are mentioned. These are the components of the subtle body.

The subtle body serves as a medium, as a counter, as an instrument of interaction with the world. In other words, the experiencer contacts the world only through the subtle body and each organ helps in contacting each part of the world.

53

For example, through the sense organ called the eye, I can contact only that part of the world consisting of forms and colors. For a blind person, one-fifth of the world is nonexistent. The paintings, the Olympic shows, the TV programs all these are nonexistent. If a person is deaf, another one-fifth of the world is nonexistent. When we

say the world is nonexistent, we mean that the world is there but for this experimenter there is no contact with this specific world.

Hence, any contact is possible because of the linking medium which acts like a telephone. The moment the telephone stops functioning my contact with that part of the world is gone. Therefore all the organs act as different links helping me to contact each part of the world.

The gross body is called *dyatanam*. the subtle body is called *karanam*. While one is the abode, the other is an instrument. This is the third feature of the subtle body. Next we have to see the nature of the subtle body. The first point we have to note is this: the subtle body is subtle because it is made up of subtle matter. The gross body is gross because it is made of gross matter. Now What is meant by gross and subtle? A gross body is experienceable to others and me. But in the case of the subtle body, I can experience it but others cannot do so, I know the conditions of my sense organs, my digestive system, the intellect and the mind: I can know what is in my mind but you cannot know it. Therefore 'subtle' is defined as something experienceable to myself but not to others. In other words, we can say the gross body is fully manifest but the subtle body is only partially manifest.

Finally, we have to note that the subtle body has a longer life than the gross body. In other words, when the gross body dies, the subtle body does not die. It survives and takes another physical (gross) body. It continues to take physical bodies until the resolution of this world, which is called *pralayam*.

DEATH AND THE SUBTLE BODY

The concept of rebirth can be understood only by a person who has known the subtle body. *Sthulasuksmasariraviyogah maranam*. Death is defined as the disassociation of the subtle body from the gross body. *Sthulasukma sarirasamyogah punarianma*. Rebirth is the association of the subtle body with a new gross body.

Therefore to understand birth, rebirth or death, a clear understanding of the subtle body is necessary. Again, we should remember that the subtle body is one which keeps in it all the *punyam* and *papam*, the results of all the good and bad actions. The subtle body remains the storehouse of all these and therefore it is very important.

Moreover, we have to remember that when the subtle body leaves the physical body during death, we will not be able to see the subtle body because of its very

nature. As we have seen, the subtle body is one which is not perceptible for other people even when I am alive. How can others see the subtle body after it quits the gross body? Thus, we can conclude that the subtle body survives the death of a person but it cannot be seen. Now the question is how do we know that the subtle body has quit the gross body? The moment the subtle body quits, all the transactions end, because the medium of transaction has left the body.

KARANA SARIRAM

Next we shall go to the next body called the *karana sariram*, the causal body. Here also we should see all the four features. To begin with, let us see the material of which it is made up the scriptures say that the causal body is made up of causal matter, which is the subtlest form of matter. In *Tattvabodha* it is called avidya, a very technical word. Normally, avidya is translated as ignorance. **But the word avidya has a technical meaning in Vedanta. It means causal matter, the subtlest form of matter.**

The next topic is its components. Here we have to understand certain basic principles based on which alone we can understand this clearly. We know that matter can never be destroyed. It is scientific truth. We don't even require the *sastras* for this. But we generally talk of destruction of some thing. What we actually mean is a thing going back to its original unmanifest form. This is similar to the destruction of a wave in the ocean. When a wave is destroyed or resolved, the matter which makes up the wave has gone back to the ocean form from which it has appeared. We generally say that it has gone back to the ocean.

But can we see the wave in the ocean? We will definitely not be able to say which part is the wave and where it has resolved in the ocean. Hence, when we talk of destruction of the wave, we actually mean that the wave has gone back to its unmanifest condition and from there again it will come back to the manifest state. The wave keeps repeating this process.

Similarly when water gets evaporated during boiling, water disappears; it becomes steam or gas in the atmosphere; it does exist in an invisible form. Extending this, the scriptures say that when all the gross and subtle bodies get destroyed during *pralaya* which is a total destruction of the universe, then, all the gross and subtle bodies go back to the invisible, unmanifest form. This is because matter cannot be destroyed. Thus the gross body along with the subtle body exists in an unmanifest form which is called the causal body.

The causal body is made up of the subtlest form of matter, the fundamental form of which even the scientists have not come to know. Scientists are aware of the grossest matter which they call as matter; they know also about the subtle matter which is in the form of energy. But here we are talking of the subtlest form of matter in which even different energies resolve and become fundamental.

Scientists have succeeded in reducing all forms of energy into four or five types. They are trying to reach at one fundamental energy from which even these four or five are formed. Once we reach the most fundamental form of matter, it gets reduced to one. Scriptures have named that one fundamental form of matter '*avidya*'.

Let us imagine a state before the creation of the world (i.e. *sristi*) or after the destruction of the world (i.e. *pralayam*). The physical body cannot be totally destroyed; so too with the subtle body. Both continue to exist before and after the destruction, just as the ornament continues to exist even after melting not in the form of the ornament, but as gold. Thus all our sense organs existed, all our minds existed and all our *pranas* existed, all our bodies also existed. This form in which they existed is known as *karana sariram*.

In the *karana sariram*, the various parts will not be clearly visible, just as the various parts of the tree are invisible in a seed. Hence the components of the causal body are the physical body and the subtle body, present in an unmanifest, undifferentiated, causal or seed form.

The function of the causal body is to be the ground for the resolution of all the bodies and functions as well as the source for their origination. Gold is the resolution ground of all the ornaments and is also a source for the origination of all the ornaments. It is like a green room in a drama stage. A green room is the place to which the actors can go when they are no more playing any role. Not only this; that is the place from where all the actors come out also. We do not see the actors but we know that the actors are in the green room, because we see them entering and coming out. All of them exist in a differentiated form on the stage but when they are in the room, I know they exist, but I do not know the details.

Similarly *karana sariram* serves as the green room for the *sthulasariram* and *suksma sariram*. When the *sthulasariram* and the *suksma sariram* do not function, they very much exist in the green room of the *karanasariram*. I know their existence but I do not know the details.

Therefore, *karanasariram* functions as the resolutionground and also as the source for the other two *sarirams*. But it is not involved in any transaction because all transacting organs are dormant.

Now, we will study the nature of *karana sariram*. We saw that the gross body is gross, experienceable to me and to the others while the subtle body is experienceable to me, but not to the others. **The causal body is neither experienceable to me nor to the others because it is a state in which all transactions have ended including perception, thinking and feeling.** Thinking and feeling will take place in the subtle body alone in which the mind, intellect and ego function. **But the *karana sariram* is that in which the physical and subtle bodies have resolved; the locus and instrument of transaction are resolved.** Then, where is the question of any operation or function taking place? There are no more transactions. It is a state of blankness, a transactionless state, and therefore it is not available for me also because my intellect and mind are also resolved. This happens during *pralaya* when everything is resolved, when there are no more transactions. Does the *karanasariram* exist at all? It must exist because of the law that matter can neither be created nor destroyed. I do not experience this body because all the divisions in the form of the experiencer and the experienced are resolved.

Its nature is fully unmanifest. In **Sanskrit, it is called *nirvikalpa state***, which means a state where all distinctions like the subject and object are resolved. In the ocean where the waves have resolved, I cannot distinctly see which wave is where. When different rivers are merged in the ocean, I know all the rivers are there but I will not be able to say which is Yamuna, which is Godavari etc. I cannot see the difference but the rivers are there. Before merging they were in *savikalpa* form. The gross and subtle body are in the *savikalpa* form. Whereas the causal body is *nirvikalpa* where the differences are not evident.

AVASTHATRAYAM

Now we shall go to the next topic called *avasthatrayam*, which is another very important topic in the scriptures. *Avasthatrayam* means the three states of experience. They are:

Jagradavastha, the waking state

Svapnaavastha, the dreaming state

Susuptiavastha, the sleeping state

JAGRADAVASTHA (WAKING STATE)

Waking state is that state in which the experiencer functions through the physical body and the sense organs and experiences the external world. When I function through the physical body and the sense organs and contact the external world, I am in *jagrad avastha*.

When I contact the external world; two things happen. One is the experience (*anubhava*) of the external world, which is the *sthulaprapanca*, the gross universe. This is the *sthulaprapanceanubhava*. There is another thing also. While contacting the external world, the mind records and stores all the experiences in the form of *vasanas* or impressions. A audio cassette recorder can record only the sound. A video cassette recorder can record the sound, forms and colours too. But the mind, being far superior, can record *sabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa* and *gandha*.

A local audio or video cassette can store only a few hours of a program. Thereafter we have to look for another cassette. We also have to change the cassette. The mind, on the other hand, can record for not only hours, days, weeks, months and years, but also *janmas*. When we record a new thing in an ordinary cassette, the previous recordings get erased. But our wonderful mind retains the previous recordings also. Thus *jagratavastha* is a state in which recording in the form of *anubhava* and storing in the form of *vasanas* take place.

SVAPNAAVASTHA (DREAMING STATE)

The second state is called *svapnaavastha*. After recording all our impressions in *jagradavastha*, when we go to bed and stop functioning through the physical body and sense organs, the external world disappears. My identification with the physical body disappears. I do not know that I have a physical body. Other people know that I have a physical body but I do not know this. I am no more transacting with the external world through the physical body. But in this *svapnaavastha*, I encounter a new world with its own *sabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa* and *gandha*. This is the dream world which is not an external world but an inner world, a projected world born out of the activation of the *vasanas*.

This inner world is very much similar to the external world. It is a fullfledged world with roads, buildings and people; with the sun and the moon and the other planets. In this projected world we also have our own physical body. It is an inner projected body with all limbs and projected activities. Only after waking up do we know that everything is projected inside our mind but, while dreaming, we do not even know the fact that it is dream. When I

see a snake in dream, I believe that the snake is outside me, and that it is a real snake chasing me and I run away from it. Such a state in which the inner world is solidly real and I do not know it is my projection is the *svapnaavastha* or dream state.

According to the scriptures, we get certain dreams based on the *vasanas* gathered in previous births also. We have to remember that, between this birth and the previous birth, only the physical body is different. The subtle body continues to be the same. Hence, the *Gita* says that rebirth is like changing the clothes. Behind these different clothes, which are worn and cast away, remains the subtle body which is the same for all the births. Hence, dreams born of the activation of *purvajanmavasanas* are also possible.

Sometimes, we develop a liking or hatred for a particular thing without any reason. Some people develop a great love for music when they are still young. The scriptures explain that these people get attracted to the particular person or object through the activation of old *vasanas*. A child becomes a prodigy because of the activation of the *purvajanmavasanas*.

Sometimes, the activation may not be total. In such cases, the memory is vague. I feel a familiarity with some people and objects but I don't have a clear idea about them. It is the activation of the previous *vasanas* which makes some people feel easily attracted to spirituality. Thus *vasanas* play a contributory role in *jagradavastha* and a prominent role in *svapnaavastha*.

SUSUPTIAVASTHA (SLEEPING STATE)

The third state of experience is called *susuptiavastha*, the deep sleep state. It is a state in which I don't experience the external world because I don't function through the physical body and sense organs. Since the mind also does not function, the *vasanas* are not activated. Hence there is no inner projected world. Only involuntary actions like blood circulation, breathing and digestion go on. There is no conscious willful functioning through the body. There is total blankness without any experience of either the external world or the inner world.

This state of dreamless sleep is a state of relaxation without any strain. This makes the deep sleep state a highly refreshing one. Sleep is a natural relaxation which refreshes the physical and subtle body.

These three states – the waking state, the dream state and the deep sleep state are introduced in the *sastras* for a particular purpose. The three bodies – the physical body, the

subtle body and causal body cannot be physically separated. And it is not easy to understand them distinctly because they are always together. Therefore, we have to find out the state in which each one of them functions prominently so that we will be able to distinctly understand its role.

The scriptures say that the waking state is an ideal state in which the gross body can be discerned very clearly for, in the waking state, the gross body plays a very prominent role. During all our interaction, we are referring to the physical body only. In dream state even though the physical body is there, the subtle body plays a predominant role primarily because the *vasanas* or impressions are playing an active role. *Vasanas* belong to the subtle body. Thus, the dream state is an ideal state to understand the subtle body.

Finally, the deep sleep state is the ideal state to understand the causal body. In this state all the functions of the gross body and the subtle body are resolved. The *karmendriyas* and *jnanedriyas* do not function. Thinking or feeling is not there. Even *ahankara*, the 'I' notion, is resolved. All go back to the causal state called *karanasariram*. Even though the two bodies are not resolved, they are as good as resolved because they are without voluntary functions. Thus, the deepsleep state can serve as a model for *pralayam* (total dissolution).

Chapter 10

PANCA KOSAS

Next, we shall see the *pancakosas* or the *kosa pancakam*. *Kosa* is another technical name used for the bodies themselves. The *sariram* itself is called *kosa* from another angle. Literally, the word *kosa* means a cover. The sheath or encasement in which a knife is kept is called a *kosa*.

ANAMAYAKOSA

The three bodies themselves are divided into five *kosas* from the standpoint of their function. This division is the functional division of three bodies. The *sthulasariram* (the gross body) is known as *annamayakosa*. Its function is receiving *annam* (food) and growing with the help of *annam*. After its death it becomes food for the next generation.

PRANAMAYA KOSA

The *suksma sariram* consisting of 17 or 19 organs is subdivided into three *kosas* based on three functions or three faculties. Each *kosa* represents one power or faculty. The three faculties are *kriya sakti*, the power of action or activity, *iccha sakti*, the power of desire and *jnana sakti*, the power of knowledge. In fact our entire life is an expression of this threefold faculty only. When we read the newspaper to gain knowledge of various things, the *jnana sakti* is functioning. When we become interested in a particular program or discourse, *iccha sakti*, the faculty of desire, starts functioning. When I go to attend the discourse, *kriya sakti* starts functioning. When I attend the discourse and listen to the speech, again *jnana sakti* functions.

Desire is preceded by knowledge because I cannot desire for something I do not know. Hence desire is produced because of knowledge. However, every knowledge need not be followed by desire, whereas every desire is preceded by knowledge. Thus, the whole life is the three faculties functioning together. A human being remains unique because of these three faculties only. If animals are inferior, it is only because these three faculties are inferior in them. A cow or a dog does not wish to attend discourses; nor does it think of planning for the future whereas a human being can do these. Man has landed on the moon because of the extraordinary power of these *saktis*.

61

The fivefold *prana* along with the five *karmendriyas* (sense organs of action) form the *pranamayakosa*. The fivefold *prana* serves as the energy tank or the fuel tank which consumes food, processes it, converts it into energy. Fuelled by this energy, the *karmendriyas* express their *kriyasakti*.

MANOMAYAKOSA

The next faculty is *icchasakti* or the faculty of desire. This is represented by six organs - the five sense organs of knowledge and the mind. Desire can arise only if we gather information through the sense organs; desire is needed again for experiencing the external world through the sense organs. At both stages, sense organs are involved. Therefore, *icchasakti* requires sense organs. This group consisting of five sense organs and the mind is called *manomayakosa* which represents *icchasakti*.

VIJNANAMAYAKOSA

The next faculty is *jnanasakti* which is also represented by six organs, the five sense organs of knowledge called the *jnanendriyas* and *buddhi*. It is to be remembered that for gaining any knowledge, we require intellect but intellect cannot gain any knowledge unless there are sense organs to report from the external world. Thus,

pancajnandriyas together with *buddhi* represent *jnana sakti* which is called *vi jnanamayakosa* , the rational or intellectual faculty.

ANANDAMAYA KOSA

The *karana sariram* is the only one left out. This is called *anandamayakosa*. *Karana sariram* plays a prominent role in deep sleep state because everything is resolved in deep sleep state. Then we are in total relaxation. We don't experience any division or limitation. So, everybody is happy in deep sleep state i.e., in *karana sariram*. When I am awake, I cannot say I am always happy. In the dream state also, I am often disturbed by nightmares. Therefore, both the waking state as well as the dream state do not guarantee happiness. The deep sleep state alone gives me happiness in an uniform manner. Sleep is a universally loved phenomenon; it is *ananda*. Therefore, *karana sariram* is called *anandamayakola*.

62

All these put together *sariratrayam*, *avasthatrayam* and *kosapancakam* is called *anatma*, which can be roughly translated as matter. This is because *sthula sariram* is gross matter, *suksamasariram* is subtle matter and *karana sariram* is the subtlest form of matter. All of these are nothing but matter at different levels. Science considers energy also as another form of matter. While science talks about only two different levels of matter, gross and subtle, *Vedanta* speaks of causal matter also. This causal matter is *avidya*. Other than this *anatma*, the scriptures point out that there is another entity called *atma*, which is the Self or Spirit.

63

Chapter 11

ATMA

We saw that *sariratrayam* is made up of matter. We know from experience that matter is an inert principle. From the stand point of modern science also, the body is made up of various elements like carbon, iron, calcium etc. which are inert in nature. This is the reason why doctors find iron or calcium deficiency in a body. Thus, the body is made up of matter or chemicals, which are inert by nature. The scriptures also reveal that the body, made up of the five elements, is inert in nature. In other words, all the three bodies, which are made up of inert matter, also should be inert in nature. They are subject to the law of chemistry, physics, electricity and magnetism.

If the body also is made up of matter, then how is it different from the external world of matter? What makes the body alive i.e., sentient or conscious?

Consciousness has remained the biggest mystery throughout history. Theories have been put forth and have been refuted. The scriptures teach us that this consciousness is not the property of the body because matter is intrinsically inert in nature. Consciousness is not a product of the body. It is not a part of the body as well. It is a separate, independent entity different from the body but it pervades the body and makes it alive and sentient. This consciousness is called *Atma* in the scriptures. Consciousness is '*cit*' in Sanskrit.

To understand this principle let us see an example. I hold this book in front of me and I ask, what is here in my hand? You will immediately answer that there is a book. Then I ask you what else is there? You say, nothing else. I say that there is one more thing on the book, which is very evident, which everyone takes for granted. In fact, because of this alone I can see the book. It is the light which helps me see the book. The book is bathed in this light, enveloped in it, spread over by the light.

Now let us note the following points:

Light is not a part, property or product of the book

Light is an independent entity which pervades the book and makes it visible.

Light is not limited by the boundaries of the book

Light is not destroyed when the book is destroyed. Thus the light survives the death of the book.

64

- * Finally and most importantly, when the book is removed, the light continues to be there, but is not visible when there is no reflecting medium.

The scriptures point out that the Consciousness is comparable to light. Hence we can extend the above to the Consciousness also.

- * Consciousness is not a part, property, or product of the body.
- * Consciousness is an independent entity, which pervades the body and makes it sentient.
- * Consciousness is not limited by the boundaries of the body.

- * Consciousness survives the destruction of the body; it continues to exist even after the death of the body.
- * The surviving Consciousness is unrecognizable because the reflecting medium called the body is not there.

Since the Consciousness continues to survive after the death of the body, it is immortal. It is not limited by time. It exists at all the three periods of time the past, the present and the future. Hence, it is called '*sat*'. Moreover, the Consciousness is not restricted by the boundaries of the body. Hence, it is not limited by space also. That which is not limited by time and space is called *ananta*, limitless (*antah* means limit). Thus, *Atma is sat, cit and ananta*.

The scriptures point out that this limitlessness alone when experienced mentally is termed as *purvatvam* or *ananda*. The sense of fulfillment is called *ananda*. When a job is left incomplete, there is no sense of fulfillment whereas when the job is completed, the sense of fulfillment expresses itself in the mind in the form of *ananda*. Sense of limitation expressed in the mind is *duhkham* or sorrow. Whenever a person is sorrowstricken, we try to find out what is that which causes this incompleteness. On the other hand, when there is *ananda*, there is a sense of completeness, a sense of fulfillment. *Satcitananta* is always *satcitananda* also.

Therefore the nature of *Atma* is *satcit ananda*. This *Atma* pervades in and through all the three bodies which are *anatma*. Thus every individual we see is a mixture of two things. *Atma* and *anatma* i.e., Consciousness and matter.

Generally, whenever I use the word 'I', I refer to the reflecting medium, the *anatma*, the matterpart.

65

When I give my biodata, I refer to either the *sthulasariram* the physical body or the *suksma-sariram* the subtle body This identification with *anatma*, the matterpart, is the cause of my *sarmsara* problems related to birth, old age etc.

SHIFT OF VISION

Scriptures point out that we need to shift this vision from the *anatma* medium to *Atma*, the Consciousness part. Instead of identifying with and owning up the *jataacetanaamsa*, shift the perspective to *cetanaamsa*, to *satcitananda*. What shall be my advantage if I shift the 'I' from the *anatma* to *Atma*? From the perishable decaying body I have come to *sat*. From *mrityu* (mortality) I have come to *amrtam* (immortality).

Thus, there is freedom from the sense of mortality. To facilitate this shifting the scriptures have named the Consciousness as *Atma*. *Atma* means 'Self'. Body is called *anatma*, the nonself.

This shifting requires long training because our entire life pattern is governed by the assumption that I am the body. *Sankaracarya* has said '*udaranimittam bhaukravesah*'. I go to school for getting a degree to get a job, for earning a salary. I earn this money to maintain my body, to provide for the body, to entertain the body. My entire life is spent in providing for the body in the present as well as in the future. The very perspective of life is governed by my understanding of myself. Dayananda Swamiji says **self judgment leading to selfconclusion determines my personality and pursuit. Since my whole life has been governed by the self misjudgment, shifting the perspective cannot be done overnight or in a month or a year. it requires a lot of training.**

Once I shift my vision from *anatma* to *Atma*, I should apply everything we used to refer to *Atma* to the word ' I '. Who am I? I am not a part, a product or a property of the body. I am someone different from the body; I pervade the body and enliven it. A time will definitely come when the body will perish but I will survive the death of the body. Finally, when this body dies, the surviving I will not be able to transact or interact with the world; nor can the world interact with me. Not because I am not existent; but because I have no medium of transaction. This knowledge is called *aham satcit anandaatma*. This is the training I need.

To facilitate owning of this *Atma*, the scriptures give a certain pattern of thinking. If we get used to this pattern of thinking, it will help us in shifting our perspective. This pattern is based on the law that whatever I experience is different from me, the experiencer.

To understand this, let us see this example. The eyes can see everything in the world except themselves. We cannot see our own eyes. Similarly, we can contact all the numbers

66

in our telephone except our own number. Thus we arrive at a rule the subject is different from the object. Extending the same principle, we can say, I, who am the experiencer of everything, is different from everything that I experience.

The entire world can be negated this way because it is clearly experienced by me, the experiencer. Everybody knows this I am not the book; I am not the table, I am not

the donkey, I am not the elephant and so on. Then, is the body experienced or not? We know that the body is intimately experienced. Every condition of the body is known to me. Similarly the mind is also experienced by me. Every emotion is intensely experienced by me. Both the body and mind are objects of my experience.

The objects of the external world are subject to arrival and departure. Similarly, the body and mind are also subject to arrival and departure. The body is accessible to me in waking only and not in dream and sleep. Similarly the mind is accessible in waking and dream; not in sleep. Thus the body and mind are objects of our experience like the external world. So all of them are *anatma*, different from me.

However, the body and mind are intimately connected to me. So I mistake them as myself. They are included in the word 'I'. When somebody asks me what I see before me, I enumerate all the things I see in front of me except the spectacles I wear on my eyes, though it is evidently an object. As I see things through the spectacles, it serves as a medium for perception and I include the medium along with the subject. The physical body and the subtle body are more intimate to me than even my spectacles, that I include these with the subject. So I have to learn to look upon the bodymind complex also as an object, though it is intimately close to the subject. This method of thinking to bring about the subjectobject discrimination is called '*drgdrsyaviveka*' the discrimination between the experiencer and the experienced; the observer and the observed. By adopting this pattern of thinking I learn to identify myself with Atma, the experiencer, the witness Consciousness principle.

67

Chapter 12

SRSTI

So far, we have learnt the following *vedantic* terms: *sadhanacatustayam*, *sarira trayam*, *kosa-pancakam* and *Atma*. Next we enter into an analysis of the universe. As a part of this, let us discuss the topic of creation. What is creation? How did it happen? Before the world came into existence two things were existent. The first one is Consciousness, because it is eternal and allpervading. In this context, the Consciousness gets a new name *Brahman*. *Brahman* means infinite or limitless. The two names *Brahman* and *Atma* are generally given depending upon the context of discussion. When the individual is discussed, Consciousness is given the name *Atma*. In other words, from the microcosmic (*vyasti*) standpoint, it is called *Atma*. The same Consciousness is called *Brahman* when we discuss the universe i.e., from the macrocosmic (*samasti*) standpoint. Depending upon the context, the same place gets different names. When I am abroad, I say my native place is India. In India, I say it is

Tamil Nadu. In Tamil Nadu, I say my native place is Tirunelveli. Similarly, the name of Consciousness changes when the stand point changes.

Before creation the inert universe did exist in seed form or potential form. As matter can never be created or destroyed, it will always exist in some form or the other. The desk existed in plank form. Earlier it existed in tree form. The tree itself existed in seed form before. Nothing is created anew. Creation, in other words, is bringing out to manifestation what is potentially existent. The entire cosmos was existing before in an invisible, dormant, *nirvikalpa* form. This potential state of existence of the universe is known as *karanaavastha*, the causal state of the universe.

This *karanaavastha* can be subdivided into two. One is the *karanasariram* which is the potential form of *sthula sariram* and *suksma sariram*. The second is the *karana prapanca* which is the potential form of the entire world of experience. So *karanaavastha* is made up of *karana sariram* (causal body) and *karanaprapanca* (causal universe). *Karana sariram* is known as *avidya* also. Similarly *karanaprapanca*, the causal universe, is known by another name *maya*. *Maya* and *avidya* put together form the causal state or *avyaktam*. Before the creation, *Brahman* and *avyaktam* alone existed. Both are beginningless. They are not created. However, *Brahman* is changeless Consciousness principle. But *avyaktam* is changing matter principle.

68

Of these two principles, the inert *avyaktam* principle evolves to become the body and the universe. This evolution is a gradual process. Just as the seed becomes a sprout, in a similar manner the causal state gradually evolves into a subtle state, consisting of the five subtle elements called space, air, fire, water and earth. These subtle elements are the invisible five elements from which alone we have got the subtle body and the subtle universe. This is born first.

Later this subtle state evolves further into a gross state consisting of five gross elements which are all visible. These produce the gross body and the gross universe.

ORIGINAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND REFLECTED CONSCIOUSNESS

We have already seen that the three bodies i.e., the causal body, the subtle body and the gross body are made up of matter and that all these are termed *anatma*. However, even though the body is matter by nature, it enjoys consciousness because it is blessed by the Consciousness principle. Consciousness pervades all of them and enlightens them; makes them conscious or sentient. The bodies, in fact, are functioning like a mirror.

A mirror does not have any light of its own. If the mirror is kept under sunlight, the sunlight is reflected on the mirror and the mirror becomes bright. When the mirror enjoys reflected light, it can illumine other things also not by its original light but by its borrowed light. Thus, the nonluminous sometimes becomes luminous. Similarly, the insentient becomes the sentient because of reflected consciousness.

Thus, each body has a reflected consciousness making it sentient. Since there are three bodies, we have three reflections. It is the reflection of the allpervading consciousness that makes my body sentient. Similarly the consciousness principle enlivens the universe also because of which alone the cosmos is functioning in an orderly manner. In fact, the universe is like the cosmic body of the Lord. Just as our organs function in an orderly manner, being blessed by the consciousness, the universe functions in harmony. It functions like a huge organism. If we disturb the harmony of the world, it retaliates like a huge organism. All this shows that the universe is not a chaotic mass of inert matter. **Being pervaded by a conscious principle, it functions intelligently.** Just as there are three bodies, there are three universes viz. the causal universe, the subtle universe and the gross universe. All the three are blessed by Consciousness. Hence we have three reflections of Consciousness at the universal level. (See the chart in page 73.)

69

VISVA, TAIJASA AND PRAJNA

We have one original Consciousness blessing the three bodies at the microcosmic level. RC1 is the reflected consciousness blessing the causal body and it is known by the name *prajna*. The same consciousness blessing the subtle body is called *taijasa* (RC2). The consciousness (RC3) becoming manifest in the gross body and enlivening it is called *jiva*. **Thus *jiva*, *taijasa* and *prajna* are the names of reflected consciousness at the microcosmic level.** Every individual is a mixture of *jiva*, *taijasa* and *prajna*, which are inseparable. These three put together is called *jiva*.

VIRAT HIRANYAGARBHA AND ANTARYAMI

Similarly, at the macrocosmic level, the reflected consciousness (RC4) behind the causal universe is called *Antaryami*. The subtle universe is blessed by *Hiranyagarbha* (RC5) and *Virat* (RC6) enlivens the gross universe. *Virat*, *Hiranyagarbha* and *Antaryami* are inseparable. And, the three, as a whole, is called *Isvarah*. **In short, *jiva* and *Isvara* are the reflections of one Consciousness obtaining in the microcosmic medium and the macrocosmic medium respectively.**

This is *srsti* as given in the scriptures. While the scientists continue to study and offer many theories about the origin of the world, *Vedanta's* view of the cosmos is complete.

70

Chapter 13

JIV AISVARAAIKYAM

Vedanta then moves on to the next important topic which is the essential oneness of *jiva* and *Isvara*, called *jiva Isvaraaikyam*. The scriptures say that *jiva*, the Consciousness in the microcosm and *atma*, the Consciousness in the macrocosm are one and the same. The differences we perceive belong to the reflecting medium. There is no difference in the essential Consciousness at all. In the scriptures there are many statements which reveal this oneness, and these statements are called *mahavakyas*.

MAHAVAKYAANALYSIS

Mahavakya is a *vedic* statement which reveals the essential oneness of *jiva* and *Isvara*. This is the primary theme of *Vedanta*. All other topics are secondary. To discover the oneness of *jiva* and *atma*, I have to analyze the *mahavakya*. This is called *mahavakyavicara*. How are we going to discover this essential oneness of *jiva* and *Isvara*? We are going to see that *jiva* is also an expression of the Consciousness obtaining in the individual *sariratrayam* and *Isvara* is also another expression of the Consciousness obtaining in the *prapancatrayam*. Therefore both of them are expressions of one Consciousness. In other words, we are going to see that Consciousness is the essential nature of *jiva* and *Isvara*, that is, the essential nature of both *jiva* and *Isvara* are one and the same.

Let us now see an example to understand this concept. Imagine a dark room without light, when all the doors and windows are also closed. I want to illumine this dark room and don't have any torch light, not even a match stick. But I have a mirror in my hand.

Now the mirror does not have any illumining capacity nor is it a source of light; it is not a luminous entity. I now make use of my intelligence and go out. I open one window or door of my room. I keep the mirror in a particular angle so that the original sun, which is up above, is reflected in the mirror.

A reflected sun is formed in the mirror. Once the mirror gets the reflection of the sun, it is illumined by the sun. Simultaneously, it becomes a bright source of light also. The non luminous mirror becomes a luminous mirror. However, what is the difference

between the sun's brightness and the mirror's brightness? The sun's brightness is a natural one whereas the mirror has only borrowed brightness, caused by the reflected sun.

71

This reflected sunlight may be called *pratibimbasurya* and the original sunlight is *bimbasurya*. The mirror with its borrowed brightness now gets a new status; it becomes the illuminator of the dark room.

This reflected sunlight can be thrown in any angle by keeping the mirror in a particular angle. It is with this *pratibimbasurya* that the moon appears bright on a full moon day. Thus, we have to take note of three things the original sun, the reflecting medium and the reflected sun. **We should now understand that there would be as many reflected suns as there are reflecting media. But, the original sun is always one.**

The next question is this : **If there are many reflected suns, will there be any difference in the quality of reflection. The answer is: there will be differences depending upon the quality of the medium. A small medium will produce a small reflection, a big medium a big one, a dull medium a dull one and so on.**

Thus, all the reflections and their capacities are different. With a small mirror you can illumine only a small area whereas with a big one, we can illumine a bigger area. Though these reflections are superficially different, they are essentially an expression of the original sun, which is one and the same.

When some body says that the moonlight is nothing but the sunlight, it might look contradictory, because the moonlight is the light of the moon. But, when I start analyzing, I am able to say that the moonlight is nothing but the sunlight. This is called enquiry. When a relative sends a money order to me, how do I receive the money? I receive it from the postman. Do I conclude that the postman has given me the money? I know that it is my relative who has given me the money through the postman. Similarly, the moon acts as a postman. It is the sunlight which is truly illumining the earth through the moon. In other words, the essential nature of the moonlight is the sunlight. Thus, all the reflected sunlights are essentially the same though they are superficially different because of the reflecting medium.

Let us use this example for understanding *jvaisvaraikyam*. The original sun is to be seen as the allpervading Consciousness. We have two types of reflecting media. **One is the *sariratrayam*, that is, the three bodies that reflect consciousness. This can be compared to the small mirror.** The second reflecting medium is the *prapancatrayam* which can be compared to a big mirror. **The reflected consciousness which enlivens**

and unifies the *sariratrayam* is *jiva*. The reflected consciousness that enlivens and unifies the *prapancatrayam* is *Isvara*.

72

BRAHMAN, THE ORIGINAL CONSCIOUSNESS (OC)

	CAUSAL BODY	(RMI)	CAUSAL WORLD	(RM4)
	REFLECTED	REFLECTED		
(RC4)	PRAJNA	CONSCIOUSNESS }	CONSCIOUSNESS	
	AN T A R	(RC1)		
			YAM I	
	SUBTLE BODY	(RM2)	SUBTLE WORLD	(RM5)
<	REFLECTED	} (RC2)	REFLECTED	
	CONSCIOUSNESS		} (RCS) H IRAN Y ATAIJASA <	
AR B HA			CONSCIOUSNESS	
	GROSS BODY	(RM3)	GROSS WORLD	(RM6)
	REFLECTED (RC3)	REFLECTED	(RC6)	
VIVA	CONSCIOUSNESS	CONSCIOUSNESS	v IR A t	

Superficially there seems to be a difference between the *jiva* and *Isvara* because the reflecting media are different and the reflections also appear different. **As the *jiva* functions behind the individual *sariratrayam***, his powers appear limited. He has limited knowledge, limited power and occupies limited space. On the other hand, *Isvara* functions behind the total *prapancatrayam*. He is *sarvajna* (omniscient), *sarvasaktiman* (omnipotent) and *sarvavyapi* (omnipresent). All the natural forces are His.

Superficially seeing *jiva* and *Isvara* appear not only different but diagonally opposite. One calls the *jiva* a servant (*dasa*) and the *Isvara* a master (*svami*). The *jiva* is called a creature and the *Isvara* the creator. *Jiva* and *Isvara* seem to be diagonally opposite to each other.

The *Veda puvabhaga*, the first portion of the *Vedas*, deal with this superficial difference alone. All the *pujas*, *yajnas*, *praycittakarmas*, and prayers are based on these superficial differences between the *jiva* and *Isvara*. Whereas the final portion of the *Vedas*, the *Vedanta* points out that the Consciousness in *jiva* and the Consciousness in *Isvara* are none other than the original Consciousness.

The limitations belong not to the original Consciousness but to the reflecting media. Thus, *jiva* and *Avara* are essentially the Consciousness. *Jiva* and *Isvara* are one and the same This recognition is called *jivaisvaraikyajnanam*. This is the topic of all the scriptures. Any statement which reveals this essential oneness is called *mahavakya*. There are many *mahavakyas* occurring in the *Vedas*, but generally one *mahavakya* is chosen from each *Veda* as a sample.

73

The sample *vakyas* are:

VEDA	UPANISAD	MAHAVAKYA
Rg-veda	Aitareya - Upanisad	Prajnanam brahma
Yajur-veda	Brhadaranyaka- upanishad	Aham brahmasmi
Sama-veda	Chandogya- upanishad	Tat tvam asi
Atharvana- veda	Mandukya - upanishad	Ayam atma brahma

Thus all the *mahavakyas* reveal the *jivaisvaraikyam* which is the most important and the central theme of *Vedanta*. This *jnanam*, which alone liberates a person from *samsara*, is called *advaitajnanam*. This *jnanam* reveals that *jiva* and *Isvara* are not two but one and the same essentially. As long as there is *dvaitajnanam* there will be *samsara*. Only by *advaita-jnanam* will there be freedom from *samsara*.

All other *sadhanas* including prayer, pujas and the like may give temporary freedom from our sorrows of life. When you have a huge burden to carry on your shoulder you shift from one shoulder to the other. This gives a temporary relief. All other *sadhanas* other than *advaitajnanam* gives such a relief only. A permanent solution is given by *advaitajnanam* alone. The *Vedanta* gives *advaitajnanam*.

74

Chapter14

JNANA PHALAM AND THE LAW OF KARMA

Jnanaphalam, the benefit of knowledge is presented in two forms in the *sastras*. One is the benefit obtained in this life and the other is the benefit after death. The first one is called *jivanmukti* and the second one is called *videhamukti*.

JIVANMUKTI

Jivanmukti is the benefit of knowledge enjoyed at the mental level in various forms. It is purely at the mental level.

The first and the most important form of benefit is *purnatvam*, the sense of fulfillment in life. As I know that I am *satcitanandasvarupa*, I am free from limitations; everything belongs to me. I am free from isolation or rejection. Nobody can either isolate me or reject me because I am the allprevailing *Atma*. Even as space cannot be rejected by anyone, so also *Atma* cannot be rejected by anyone.

This leads me to the second form of benefit which is independence. I am mentally, emotionally an independent person. The presence and absence of things will not affect me emotionally. Only when I am dependent on external factors, their presence and absence will upset me emotionally. Presence or absence of money, status, persons, respect, etc., does not upset me emotionally. We cannot get physical independence because we have to depend upon the world physically. We depend on food, clothing and shelter. In old age, we may have to depend on physical supports. Therefore nobody can avoid physical dependence. But we can avoid emotional dependence.

The third form of benefit is *samatvam* or emotional balance or stability. It is the capacity to face the ups and downs of life. *Jnanam* acts like the shockabsorber of a vehicle. While the shockabsorber is there in the vehicle, it is free from violent jerks. The potholes do exist on the roads, but it does not affect the vehicle too much. Similarly, *Jnanam* as shock absorber helps me face and accept all the upheavals of life. I do experience emotional fluctuations. I might be affected slightly but I am not overpowered. All these different forms of benefit enjoyed by the mind is called *jivanmukti*.

VIDEHAMUKTI

The Second benefit that we get as *jnanaphalam* is *videhamukti*. While *jivanmukti* is freedom while living, *videhamukti* is freedom after death. We should know what happens to an ignorant person after death to understand what happens to *jnani* after death.

In the case of an *ajnani*, an ignorant person, the physical body is dropped at the time of death. In fact, death is actually defined as separation of the physical body. That is why the physical body decays and merges into the *pancabhutas*, the five elements. The subtle body and the causal body continue to exist even after the separation of the physical body. This subtle body then seeks out another physical body to continue the journey. Thus an *ajnani* travels after death. His *suksmasariram* and *karana-sariram* travel and acquire another physical body. This is called *punarjanma*. Death, thus, is the dropping of a physical body while rebirth is acquiring another body. In *Gita*, Krsna compares this to the change of clothes.

In the case of a *jnani* all the three bodies merge into the total at the time of death. The *sariratrayam* merges into the *prapancatrayam*. Hence the *jnani* does not survive as an individual, but he survives as the *samasti*, the total.

He no more remains a *jiva*. There is no individuality because we don't apply the name *jivatma*. The *sariratrayam* which is the cause of the individuality is gone. Even as a river loses its individuality when it merges into the ocean, so also the *jiva* merges into the total losing its individuality. Hence there is no question of *punarjanma* (*rebirth*).

He does not have the *sukma sariram* to acquire another *sthula-sariram*. Hence a *jnani*'s death is *videhamukti*. It is nothing but freedom from *punarjanma*. And how does *jnanam* give this benefit of *videhamukti*? The scriptures says the *jnanam* stops *punarjanmas* by destroying all the *karmas*.

LAW OF KARMA

We have to understand the law of *karma* to know how a *jnani* becomes free from *karma*. The scriptures point out that every action, small or big, produces results (*phalam*). No action goes without a *phalam*. The *karmaphalam* is divided into two types: *drsta phalam* (visible result) and *adrstaphalam* (invisible result). The *adrstaphalam* is divided into two: the good one (*punyam*) and the bad one (*papam*). The causes of *punyam* and *papam* are determined by the scriptures. **An action prescribed by the scriptures will produce *punyam* whereas an action prohibited by the scriptures will produce *papam*.** In other words, *vihitakarma* produces *punyam* and *nisiddhakarma* produces *papam*. *Adrstapunyam* later becomes *drstasukham*

(happiness). Hence *punyam* is potentially good. On the other hand, *adstapapam* becomes *drgaduhkham* (unhappiness) in course of time. Therefore *papam* is potentially bad.

Certain actions may be favourable from the stand point of *drstaphalam* but the same may be unfavourable from the stand point of *adrstaphalam*. Doctors speaking from the stand point of *drgaphalam* might say that a little bit of liquor is good for health, but the scriptures prohibit the consumption from the standpoint of unfavourable *adrstaphalam*.

The *sastras* always prescribe a life style from the stand point of both *drsta phalam* and *adrstaphalam*. What is favourable from one stand point may not be favourable from another stand point. The lifestyle prescribed by the *Vedas* is better because it has a holistic vision. It takes into account *sukham* and *duhkham*, *punyam* and *papam*.

How long will it take for today's *adrstam* to be converted into *drgam*? The duration is never a fixed one. It will vary from *karma* to *karma*, from *punyam* to *punyam* and from *papam* to *papam*. Certain types of *punyam* fructify immediately while others take a longtime also. Similarly, certain types of *papam* fructify now or late. When I sow different types of seeds, they sprout at different duration. A *papaya* seed may sprout quickly and become a tree in no time. On the other hand, a mango or a coconut seed takes a very long time. The gestation period is different for different animals. Insects multiply within hours. A human being is born after nine or ten months after conception. From this we can see that all actions need not produce results uniformly.

Thus, when a person dies there are many unfructified *punyapapas* which remain potential in the *suksmasariram* of the individual. At the time of death every individual loses the physical body only. The *suksmasariram* and the *karanasariram* will continue. In that nucleus called the individual are embedded all the unfructified *punyapapas*. As these unfructified *punyapapas* have to produce *sukham* and *duhkam*, another physical body is required. There can be no interaction with the world without the physical body and there can be no experience of *sukham* and *duhkham* without interaction. Hence there is *punarjanma* or rebirth.

Punarjanma is getting associated with a new *sthula sariram* which depends on the unfructified *punyapapas*. Both the *karana sariram* and *sukma-sariram* are the old ones only. While experiencing *sukham* and *duhkham* in the next body, the individual performs more actions and consequently acquires fresh *punyam* and *papam*. Many of these remain unfructified and thus produce the next body. Thus, the cycle of birth and death is perpetuated by the *punyapapas* which are regularly replenished.

It is to be remembered that God does not determine the type of birth and the type of experiences. God cannot do so. Both are determined by the *punyapapas* acquired by the individual himself/herself.

The cycle had started from *anadikala*, from beginningless period. We have had infinite *janmas* in the past. We will have infinite *janmas* in the future also. The cycle will be broken only by *jnanam*. This is the law of *karma*, one of the most important features of vedic teaching. Every individual has to learn this law and assimilate this law very well.

Understanding and assimilating the law of *karma* has many advantages.

1. The law of *karma* alone explains the differences or disparities in the living beings from birth. We often wonder why innocent children are born handicapped. The law of *karma* says that this is because of *purvapapam*. Physical or mental disparities can be explained only through the law of *karma*. If law of *karma* is not accepted, life will become a mere accident. Thus, **the first advantage is that it can explain disparities.**

2. The second advantage is that I can accept my suffering even though I have not done any mistakes in this *janma*, even though I have led a good life. Often the question comes: why should I suffer? And, I tend to blame the world or the Lord. The law of *karma* tells me that I have to accept my suffering because I have acquired such an *adrstaphalam* in the past *janma*. **I learn to accept my problems without blaming others.**

3. **The third advantage is I can take charge of my future.** If my present situation is because of my past, then the future situation in my life will be determined by my present actions. As a *karta* I can direct the course of my life. I learn that the world does not determine my future; God does not determine my future; my own actions alone determine my future. Therefore, I accept a free will.

The present which is determined by the past, is called fate. But the future which is determined by the present, is governed by my free will. As a *bhokta* in the present, I have no choice; but as a *karta*, I have a choice to determine my future.

4. The next advantage of the law of *karma* is almost the corollary of the previous ones. This answers one of the general questions, which most people ask: why do good people suffer and corrupt people have a gala time? This is universal question. Only if we accept the law of *karma* can this question be answered. Corrupt people are enjoying wealth today as a result of the fructification of their past *punyam*. But they are definitely going to pay the price

in future for their present corrupt practices. Similarly we can say that the good people are suffering for their past *papas*. But their present good actions are definitely going to get them *punyam* which will get fructified in the future.

Without the law of *Karma*, our society will be rid of all morals and youngsters might conclude that *dharma* does not pay, *adhama* alone pays. Thus, the law of *Karma* is necessary to teach and ensure morals in the society.

Only if you accept the law of *Karma*, faith in God will be restored. In the assimilation of the law of *Karma* alone I understand that the Lord can never be unjust. If a judge acquits a person in a case and gives different degrees of punishment to others, it is not because of his partiality. The decision of the judge depends upon the type of actions done by the people. The Lord, the universal judge, can never do injustice. If a devotee suffers, he is paying the price for the actions done in the past. His *punyakarmas* will help him get a better future.

If I understand the law of *Karma*, my devotion to the Lord will remain intact. I will see sufferings as an exhaustion of my *papam*. I will learn to see it more positively. Even as I suffer, the *papams* are washed off and I am becoming purer and purer. The Lord purifies me by giving sufferings, which is actually the removal of *papam*. Thus the acceptance of the law of *Karma* reinforces my faith in the Lord, strengthens my respect for *dharma*, explains my difficult situations and gives me a hope for my future.

Thus, life is not an accident. Nothing is an accident. Everything is based on an invisible moral order. While scientists talk about the visible physical order in the cosmos, the law of *Karma* talks about the invisible moral order. Without a cause, there can never be an effect. Sometimes I see the cause, sometimes I don't see it. Medical people talk about idiopathic diseases whose causes are not known. If the cause is not known, it does not mean that the cause is nonexistent. In fact all medical researches are to find out the cause of such diseases. And such researches are based on the conviction that without a cause, there can never be an effect. Thus the acceptance and assimilation of the law of *Karma* is a boon.

These *adrstapunyapapas* are divided into three types.

Sancitakarma All the unfructified *punyapapas* accumulated in the past infinite *janmas* are called *sancitaKarma*.

Prarabdhakarma Of this huge amount of *sancitakarmas*, a portion fructifies giving a physical body. This fructifying portion is called *prarabdhakarma*. *Prarabdha* means that which

79

has begun to fructify. *Prarabdha* alone determines the type of the body, the type of parentage, the duration of life, and so on.

While exhausting *prarabdha* we are doing fresh *karmas* in this *janma*.

Agamikarma The *punyapapas* which are acquired in this *janma* are called *agami-Karma*. *Agami* means arriving.

Thus, we can say, accumulated *karmas* are *sancita*, fructifying ones are *prarabdha* and the arriving ones are *agami*.

In this *janma*, while I am exhausting the *prarabdhakarmas*, I am earning *agamikarmas*. When life comes to an end, the *prarabdha* will be exhausted. In fact when *prarabdha* is exhausted, life comes to an end. Some *agamikarmas* will fructify in this *janma* itself. These fructified *agamikarmas* will also get exhausted. The unfructified *agamikarmas* will join the *sancitaKarma*. Out of this *sancitakarma* another portion becomes *prarabdha* leading to the next birth.

Thus, the cycle of *sancita*, *prarabdha* and *agami* goes on and on. A horoscope is an indicator of *prarabdhapunyapapas* in coded language. When we say saturn affects my life, the actual idea is that the *prarabdhapdpam* is affecting my life. When *sukradada* helps me win a lottery, it is the unfoldment of *pun, yam*.

When I do *prayascittaKarma*, I am creating an *agamipunyam* to neutralize the *prarabdhapapam*. The *agamipunyam* will either eliminate the *prarabdhapapam* or at least reduce its impact depending on the strength of the *prarabdhapapam*. In the worst case, *prayakitta* gives the strength to withstand the onslaught of *prabala* (strong) *prarabdhapapas*. We will never know the power of *prarabdha* in advance because it is *adrstam*. So we have to continue or repeat the *prayakitta* until we get the required benefit.

The question now is: what happens to the three *karmas* in the case of a *jnani*. The scriptures say that *jnanam* is so powerful that it is capable of destroying all the *sancitakarma*. *Janam* straight away burns down all the *sancitakarmas* even like the radiation burning all the cancerous cells in the body. Thus, the *sancitakarma* of a *jnani* gets burnt.

The *prarabdhakarmas* of a *jnani* are exhausted through experience. He accepts the *prarabdha* as God's will and allows the body to go through those *karmas*. We take care of the body and protect it because we need the body to help us achieve our goals. A *jnani* has

80

attained the highest and does not require the body for achieving anything. Therefore, he allows the body to go through the *prgrabdha* till all the *prarabdhakarmas* are exhausted.

Agami does not come to a *jnani* because his actions are done without **ego (without identification with *anatma*)**.

Therefore, at the time of death, there is no *karma*. *Sancita* is burnt; *prarabdha* is exhausted; *agami* is avoided. Hence, there is no question of *punarjanma*. And so, all the three bodies *sthula*, *suksma* and *karanasarirams* merge into *sthula*, *suksma* and *karanaprapanca* respectively. In other words, *jnanl* becomes one with the Lord. He attains *videhamukti*. He enjoys *jivanmukti* as long as he is alive and enjoys *videhamukti* after death. This is the *phalam* that a seeker will acquire through his *jnanam*. He/she may drop his/her body in a holy place or unholy place; at a holy time or unholy time. The wise person is free from all forms of bondage.

81