

SEVA AS SADHANA

The *Vedanta* declares that the mind (*Manas*) leads man, either into the cage of bondage or into the vast open spaces of liberation. If it involves itself in sensual pursuits, it drags man down into the sub-human level; if it engages itself in seeking the higher truths, the deeper realities, the more lasting joys, then, it enables man to rise to the level of the Divine. Science deals with matter, *Jada* (things), as distinct from the living, the *Chitta* (conscious), having *Chaitanya* (Supreme Spirit). Those are the provinces of religion, of spiritual *Sadhana* and Yoga applied to mind control. This is the age of scientific advancement, when equal attention is not being paid to spiritual advancement, or religious progress. The *Jeeva* is but the reflection of *Deva*; which means, man is but the reflection of God. Humanity is very proximate to Divinity: but, man seldom recognises this nearness. He allows his mind to lower him into the animal level, from which he straggled up through many births. A diamond may appear as a piece of glass; but, only those who do not know its value will use it as a paperweight and keep it on the table in the office room. Wise men will keep it inside an iron safe, under lock and key. Man is a diamond, not a piece of glass; he has to shine brilliantly, after going through the process of 'cutting' or *Samskara* (purificatory acts).

Contentment And Happiness Are Attributes Of Mind

Samskara transforms man into God—*Manava* into *Madhava*. We have a watch on our wrist, which costs Rs. 500 or 600 or even 1,000. The steel out of which the entire watch was made may cost only four annas (erstwhile Indian currency, 4 Annas = 25 Paise); but, the *Samskara* it underwent by means of human skill and intelligence raised its value and usefulness. Man too can transform himself into a priceless instrument for God-realisation through the proper use of his mind and intelligence. By the forceful alchemy of the mind, he can attain *Jnana* (spiritual knowledge) and see the Truth that satisfies and illumines. We feel that the people of our country will be happy, if we only provide them with food, clothing and housing. We feel that they are suffering, because they have not got these things in an adequate measure. That is an illusion, for contentment and happiness are attributes of the mind. The mind must be trained to achieve peace and acquire joy. Without such a mind, man is helpless even under the most affluent circumstances. A person may be strong, and charming; but, when he has lost his eyesight, he loses joy. There are many countries on the very peak of material civilisation and are very proud about the heights which they have reached. But, have they acquired mental peace? Have they got rid of fear or hate, greed or pride? Of course, there must be a certain degree of comfort for man, physical and mental. But, gaining the things that give comfort should not be the aim of living; once that path is selected, wants multiply and satisfaction becomes impossible to find. The capacity to distinguish between right and wrong will be

dulled; egoism will become sharp and strong. Thirst will increase with each quaff; hunger will gnaw more and more with each morsel of the food of material possessions. That is their real nature. Ask yourself the basic question: Is there something that can be called *Sukha*? Can it be attained by the accumulation of material things? No. *Sukha* (happiness), can be got and retained only through *Atma Jnana* (the knowledge of the Self) through the *Atma* which is the source and spring of *Ananda*. We delude ourselves when we argue that happiness can be derived from things outside ourselves.

By Losing Your Separateness, You Lose Misery

Life as man is the chance given to everyone to achieve one glorious end, namely, realising the *Atma* and its Universality. He queries everyone about his name and whereabouts; but, does not know an iota of his own identity. Who are you, really? You are not the body or the senses or the intellect or the mind, for you speak as if you own them and are different from them, when you say, my body, my senses, my intellect, my mind. He who is the master of all these is the 'I', the 'I' that makes everyone else also feel similarly. With every breath, man inhales the consciousness that the Universal Eternal Principle that pervades and persists in the entire Creation. That is why he is repeating silently, *Soham*, with the inhalation and the exhalation, *Soham*. During deep sleep, two ideas, (the very duality) disappear. The idea of "that" and the idea of "this" go, leaving only the sense of 'I'; 'Sa' and 'ham' fade out leaving only 'Om', in the sounds *Soham*. That is the seed sound, the *Pranava*, which is the *Prana* (breath). Merge in that Om, the Primal Universal Sound and you lose your separateness and your misery and pain. That is the ultimate stage of man-his *AntaVedanta*—the final stage of man, his *Vedanta*, his *Jnana*. Man starts as a *Brahmachari*, a student of the *Brahmic*, the *Atmic* path; he enters the *Grihastha* (householder) stage, the stage of apprenticeship in the joys and pleasures of the world; then he promotes himself into the *Vanaprastha* (recluse in the forest) stage, of detachment and discrimination; that leads him on to the *Sanyasa* (ascetic) stage, of intense spiritual exercise. This ends in the consummation of *Samyoga* (merging in the Absolute), like the river merging in the sea, losing in the process, its taste, its form and its name. He who knows *Brahman* becomes *Brahman*; the river that enters the sea becomes the sea.

Fill Every Act Of Service With Prema

You are all engaged in service of one type or other and I know that you are frustrated with the result; you are not happy at the service you do, nor are the recipients happy when they receive the help. But, try to develop *Prema* (unselfish Love), based on *Satya*, *Dharma* and *Shanti*; try to fill every act of service with that *Prema*, try to see every act of service that you receive with the eye of *Prema*; then,

there will be no frustration. The person who serves is the person served; you serve yourself when you serve another. You serve another because his suffering causes you anguish and by relieving it, you want to save yourselves from that anguish. Unless you have that anguish, your service will be hollow and insincere. Frustration is caused also by wrong diagnosis of the causes of suffering. A patient may be beating his head, for he is having excruciating pain in the stomach; his pain will not be diminished, if you apply some ointment on the head, imagining that his trouble is centred on the head which he was seen beating. Delay does not matter; discover the real root of the trouble and then apply the remedy. The real remedy for all troubles is a proper sense of values—first things first. Married couples think they will be happy, when they get a child; but, that is but the beginning of a series of worries. They worry about his health, his habits, his schooling, his friends, his mate, his marriage, his prospects—and so on, in an endless chain. The mind multiplies the roots of worry, anxiety, and grief.

There Can Be No Peace Without Eliminating The Mind

We say '*peace of mind*'; but, unless the mind is eliminated, there can be no peace. The mind is but a pattern of desires, warp and woof of wishes, resolutions, plans, ambitions, attempts, attachments. A young man of twenty with his two feet walks about free, wherever he likes. He marries and becomes a quadruped; his walk is rendered slow; it is circumscribed. He gets a child and he becomes six-legged. The more the legs, the slower the movement, the nearer the ground, the greater the attachment to things earthy. You can develop detachment by dwelling on the great heritage of man; then, you will not engage yourself in low deeds and thoughts. Man is called in the Indian texts, '*Manuja*', he who is born of Manu, the great exponent of *Dharmashastra*. So, *Dharma* (righteousness) is his heritage; he has no right to deny *Dharma* or act contrary to it. Contemplate on that *Dharma*, on *Satya* and *Prema* which are the foundations of that *Dharma*, and then, all your acts will be in consonance with real *Bharatiya* culture. See yourself in all and all in yourself. That alone entitles you to be a *Sevak*, to serve. This expansive *Prema* was cultivated in our country, under the leadership of its sages and seers; so, many *Sadhaks* (spiritual aspirants) were able to succeed in seeing God's *Virat Swarupa* (Omnipresence) everywhere. For some years now, this *Prema* has become abridged and narrowed by egoism and greed, we have become so hard hearted that we are not affected at the sight of suffering and want. People have learnt the wrong attitude of separating themselves from others; so, this land of *Annapoorna* (abundance in food) has to go about from door to door, in foreign capitals, asking for food for the people.

Meditate On The God Who Fills The Universe

Try to offer people your *Prema*; they will respond with lasting gratitude. Give them clothes, houses – they are apt to lose them. Give them education; they may or may not use it for their good. But, give them *Prema*; they will imbibe it gratefully and fill their hearts with it and be happy as never before. You can grow in *Prema*, by building the mansion of your life on the four pillars of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and Bhagavata and the Bhagavad Gita. If you are not able to read these great books and assimilate them, do not worry. Books are only guide-posts, with road signs. They do not indicate the ups and downs met while traversing the roads indicated. That can be known only by actual experience. If you are not able to understand the big texts, I would advise you to simply contemplate on the wonder and beauty of God's handiwork, from the tiny worm to the most distant star, from the circulation of blood in one's own body to the movement of planets and solar systems. Meditate on the God who fills the Universe and transcends it; then, that glory will fill you and you can never more be small minded or mean. Your acts and words will echo the glory of God. Seva that comes from such experience will certainly bear fruit.

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