

OM SAI RAM

Welcome to this Question and Answer Session

Q. 322, "PRACTICAL VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY"

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This text excerpt is taken from Prof. Anil Kumar's book "Satyopanishad, Vol. 1", pages 159-165

Swami! What is Vedanta?

Bhagawan: The Veda is dualism. Vedanta is non-dualism. There is nothing beyond Vedanta. Milk on curdling becomes curds. You get butter when you churn the curds. When you heat butter, you get ghee. Ghee is the final stage of milk. Even if you heat it further, it remains the same. So, milk after passing through changes, becomes ghee. Milk represents dualism and ghee represents non-dualism.

Swami, do you view that the three schools of Vedanta philosophy like dualism, dvaita, qualified non-dualism, visistadvaita and non-dualism, advaita as contradictory to one another? Does one school advocate just the opposite of what the other says?

Bhagawan: This is how it is usually understood and practiced by many. But, truly speaking, it is not so. In fact, these three are integrated. You find one as being the continuation of the other. You will notice that one leads to the other.

Take for example, sugarcane. You find juice in the sugarcane. Here, there is pulp and juice. This is the state of dualism. Now, you can extract the juice, separating the pulp from the sugarcane. The juice, though very important and the very essence drawn out of the sugarcane, does not stay long or cannot be preserved for long. This state of obtaining the juice by separating the pulp from the sugarcane is the state of qualified non-dualism. This juice is purified, refined and processed into sugar and sugar remains the same forever. This is the state of non-dualism. You can make use of sugar in any way you like.

Swami! One cannot escape from the effects of fate or destiny. Things are pre-ordained and accordingly events happen in our life. This being inevitable, we suffer and face difficulties. Would you please tell us the way out of this?

Bhagawan: Everything in life is nothing but a reflection of your own thought and deed of your earlier life or lives. You pretend happily to think that none can notice you. But God within you knows full well all your thoughts, feelings and deeds. God is everywhere. You

cannot hide anything from Him. One day or other you must face the consequences of your actions. This is the supreme truth.

You think and blame someone else, holding him responsible for your troubles. You are thoroughly mistaken here. Your actions are responsible for both the good and the bad you experience in this life. God is an eternal witness of all human activities. He created this world and gave it to man for his enjoyment but on one condition -- that he must face the consequences of his own actions. God is like a postman. He is least bothered about the contents of the letters that he hands over to people. It is all a matter of the relationship that exists between you and the one who writes you a letter. God is not concerned in any other way about the matter. Well, when you receive a wedding card, you don't pay compliments to the postman, do you? If you receive a threatening letter from someone, you don't blame the postman either. The postman is merely an instrument in the process of delivering letters.

But, prayer does help you to withstand these tensions and problems with courage. Intense prayer, deep devotion, strong faith, sincere repentance, constant yearning and supreme love for God can alter the sequence of events in life. They can make even God reverse His own will. Take for example the life of Markandeya. Fate granted him only sixteen years of life. But his devotion to Lord Siva was so intense that He made him immortal. God had to review and revise His own master plan in response to the prayers of Markandeya

Take another example. There is a prisoner punished according to the laws of the penal code. During the period of imprisonment, if the character and conduct of the prisoner are found to be good and if he follows all the rules, regulations and code of discipline imposed by the jail authorities, there is scope for the reduction of his jail term. There is another point you should note. Suppose the appeal of a person in a criminal case is lost in all the courts from the district level to the High Court, even the Supreme Court, and when punishment like death sentence or life imprisonment becomes imminent and inevitable, the President of India can still order his release from jail, on grounds of mercy and for special reasons.

Similarly, though you are bound to suffer and destined to face difficulties as a result of your past actions, God, in response to your sincere prayer and repentance, will change the course of your life and save you from your suffering. God confers special grace on you, being pleased with your single-minded devotion to Him.

Swami! Bhagavad-Gita wants us to give up the fruits of our actions, karmaphalaparityaga, both good and bad. Since we rarely do good, there is very little or nothing to offer You as the fruits of our good actions. We feel that it is not proper to offer evil or bad to you. What is to be done?

Bhagawan: You have to surrender both good and bad to God. Never get yourself attached to the results of your actions, be they good or bad. God is beyond these two opposites as He is non-dual. Any water, whether pure or impure, when mixed with

Ganga, does not affect the sanctity of Ganga. This you will notice. The sanctity never diminishes. Similarly, whatever you put into the fire gets burnt. The fire is in no way affected or polluted by those things that are put into it. Hence, if you offer both good and bad to God, ultimately you will be benefited.

A small example: Suppose you have a five hundred-rupee currency note in your pocket and you need to go out on some business and return later. You will be very careful to see that you do not lose it. You keep your hand on the pocket if you go to a cafeteria for a cup of coffee so that no one will pick your pocket. Even in a theatre, you will be vigilant. But on the other hand, if you deposit that money in the bank, it will be credited to your account and it will be safe. Then, you don't need to bother about it further. So also, if you surrender all the good you have done to God without attaching any value to the results, what happens is that you will be humble and simple. Here, you do not take the credit. You thank God. You are full of thankfulness and gratitude to God.

But if you own and claim the results of all your good and meritorious deeds, you will feel that you are the doer, so much so, that you will become proud and egoistic. Hence, you should surrender the reward of your good actions to God.

Then, how about the evil or bad to be offered to God? You may feel that it is not proper to do so. Yet, you will notice that it will help you finally. Here's a small example for you regarding this matter. Suppose you have with you a spoiled dirty and half-torn five hundred-rupee note. You don't throw it away as it is a valuable currency note. But you have not been able to use it. No one will accept that note. You are not in a position to buy anything. So, you can neither throw it away nor use it. But if you deposit the very same currency note in the Reserve Bank, they accept it and give you a brand new note. One thing is very necessary. The number on the currency note should be very clear for them to accept and give you a good note.

Similarly, if you offer God the currency note of your deeds and the consequences of your bad action, He will see your 'number' of 'devotion' on the note and in turn give you the good note or transform you. God is the Reserve Bank. Only God can receive your evil tendencies and misdeeds and transform them into good ones and give them back to you. Hence, both good and bad must be offered to God for your own ultimate benefit.

Swami! All experiences, which are dual, are obtained due to our mind. Swami says, 'Mind is a mad monkey.' Pleasure and pain are both due to our mind. How are we to kill the mind (manonasanam), annihilate it?

Bhagawan: The mind never makes you suffer; it all depends upon the way you use it. It is everywhere. It takes the form of that which it gets into. It is deathless. So, it is said that the mind is the world, *manomulamidam jagat*. Therefore, annihilation of the mind, *manonasanam* is not correct. What you should desire is the merger of the mind with the divine, *manolaya*.

Just as the river merges in the mighty ocean, the mind should also merge in the Self. The mind surrendered to God becomes *Ramadas*, servant of Rama. But the mind full of desires is a slave to the organs, *kamadas*.

The mind should not be allowed to be lured by what we call in Telugu *balimi*, strength, *kalimi*, wealth and *celimi*, friendship. It should be filled with divine thoughts, so that it may become one with God.

There will be more on practical spiritual wisdom in the next sessions. Thank you for your time.

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