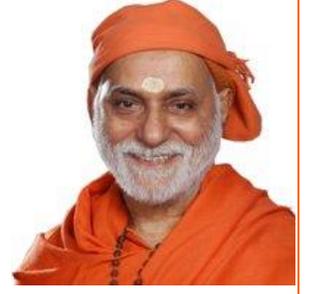


The Path of Spiritual Life through *viveka* and *śraddhā*

prabhāta-raśmiḥ

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Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru.

Spiritual life is actually a full subject by itself. In this, first of all, a proper exposure is necessary. Is there anything called spiritual life? And what is it? How are we to start and go about? This is an important question. The answer to this is that one must have a very strong and deep sense of discrimination. In Sanskrit we call it "*viveka*". That discrimination should be quite sharp on the one hand, subtle, more important is that it should be very sublime and holy.

Once you have *viveka*, it has to be focused on particularly this point. Everything around us, constituting the world, has a transitory plight or fate. Whenever we refer to our own body, our body is included in the world of objects. We are able to see our body, so it is an object. We are able to feel it by touch, it is an object. Our body also is transitory. Nobody is going to live here for a long number of years. We are born a few years back, we are continuing to live, and may be a few decades we shall live here. After that the body will go. As I always say, our body after birth continues to grow, up to the age of 21 maximum. Once you reach 21, thereafter every moment is a moment of decline towards death and extinction. What about the mind, intelligence and ego, which are the only three constituents within the body, animating and activating it? They are subtle objects. Just like with the senses we see our body and feel our body, there is something within us by virtue of which we come to know, recognize or cognize our mind, intelligence and ego. They are also objects. That the mind is changing, I don't think any explanation is required. The intelligence also is subject to transitoriness, the ego also.

If the whole world is transitory, and our personality, with which we interact with it, is also transitory, the question necessarily arises - are we to live a transitory life with transitory belongings and possessions, or is there anything greater, or more to be done? This is how the *viveka* is applied. Now the *viveka* is given an answer. What is that? Focus it on the difference between the transitory and the lasting. Whenever something is transitory, it cannot by itself become so. A change is always possible only on the substratum of something changeless. It can be explained by so many factors. Vehicular traffic is there on the road as well as rail. If the wheel has to revolve very fast, it has to revolve over a ground which is stable. Over the rails which are stable, alone can the train run. So every change will

have to be around a substratum which is changeless. So there must be something changeless. This changeless is denoted by the term "I" by everyone.

Whenever we refer to the 'I', is it something that tells us about the body, mind, intelligence and ego? No! You are seeing and sensing the body; you cognize the mind, intelligence and ego. So all of them come under the objects. If all these are objects, there must necessarily be a subject. What is that subject? That is what you denote by the term 'I'. We started saying 'I' right from young age. And we continue to say 'I' even when we are old, and about to drop our body. There is something more. This 'I' manifests itself in three different states, we call it *avasthā*. And the one, in which we are all, I am talking to you and you are hearing and seeing me, this is called the wakeful state. What is meant by wakeful state? Wakefulness is that state where I become awake. Awake from what? From sleep. So I was sleeping, and I left sleeping, and I woke up - I woke up, all independently. Nobody helped me. Similarly, at the end of the wakefulness I go to sleep. And when I sleep, I am, or I was alone. There was nothing like the body, nor the mind, nor the intelligence, nor the ego. I was myself alone, and when I wake up, I say, "I slept comfortably not knowing anything."

So, what is that I? Subject, object, all these things, relationships, interactions, etc. are only in the wakeful state. So if the wakeful state itself has to be suspended and dissolved, there is something that dissolves it. And that is the 'I'. This 'I' survives in wakefulness, sleep and also dream. The dreamer, the waker and the sleeper are the same. No difference at all.

In wakefulness, I interact with objects and experience them. In sleep, I interact with nothing. I slept alone by myself to report that I had a comfortable sleep. And nothing was seen, heard or felt. In dream, the mind produces its own world all suddenly, at the end of it packs it up and wakes up. This 'I' certainly should be a reference to the substratum of the transitory world, including our own personality.

Now, *viveka* applied in this manner, leads you to a discovery that though the world is changeful, our personality also is changeful, fleeting, there is something as a support and that is changeless. This is the discovery *viveka* has to make!

Now this discovery can be had, only by attention and application of it. This attention is called *śraddhā*. In Sanskrit, *śraddhā* means assiduous application to anything whatsoever. You apply your mind, you apply your intelligence, observe the ways and characteristics of the world, including your own personality, body, mind, intelligence and ego, you will find all these are transitory. But thank God, we have something absolutely not transitory! That is the 'I'. Is it at a distance? No. Where is it? Inside! Closer to us than the body, mind, intelligence and even ego!!

If that is the one and only everlasting substratum, then am I not to look to it? So, employ the entire *śraddhā* that you have towards this everlasting substratum within you, which you indicate by the term 'I'. Its existence is not doubtful at all. Its experience also to a very large extent we already have. Then what has to be done? We have to focus our attention, on this 'inside' - let us say 'consciousness'.

The supreme reality is described as existence, consciousness and blissfulness. So this consciousness, which brings about the display called the mind, intelligence and ego, going to the source of it, the substance of it, until at last by meditation and finally by *samadhi*, you are able to be immersed in that inwardly, in a state of abundance and fullness. This is how we proceed in a vedantic way. Primarily, it is the role of *viveka*. Secondly, it is the role of attention, *śraddhā*, the assiduous application of your mind, intelligence, and ego to unravel the mystery of this 'I', to arrive at the substratum, which always shines with its own sovereign brilliance. This attention is very important. This is called *śraddhā*. Sankara will put it in this manner.

guru vedāntavākyeṣu bhaktiḥ śraddheti viśrutā

Now you will not be able to appraise this inner hemisphere all alone by yourself. It is necessary to go to a sadguru, listen to him, have a lot of faith, attention, and fervor to grasp whatever he says; consider guru to be God and your own self, and then equally so, our *śāstras*, the Vedanta; whatever Vedanta reveals, have enough of faith in their revelations. And give maximum attention, with fondness, with fixity and with resolve. This is called *śraddhā*.

guru vedāntavākyeṣu bhaktiḥ śraddheti viśrutā

The devoted adherence to the words of the Guru, revelations of the Guru, as well as the *śāstras*, this is called *śraddhā* – assiduous application. *śraddhā* is a word, as I always say, it doesn't have a proper English equivalent. But we can manage by saying, it is that assiduous application of your inner resources to something that you want to probe into, understand, discover, realize, and experience.

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru.

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