

Verses for Introspection

Mā Gurupriyā

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The Ignorant, the Scholar and the Wise

देहोऽहमित्येव जडस्य बुद्धिः
देहे च जीवे विदुषस्त्वहंधीः ।
विवेकविज्ञानवतो महात्मनो
ब्रह्माहमित्येव मतिः सदात्मनि ॥

deho'ham-ity-eva jaḍasya buddhi:
dehe ca jīve viduṣastvahaṁdhīḥ ।
viveka-vijñānavato mahātmāno
brahmāham-ityeva matiḥ sadātmani ॥

- Vivekacūḍāmaṇi 160

The ignorant man thinks "I am the body". A scholar thinks that he is a combination of body and soul. However, a Mahātmā who has viveka and vijñāna (discrimination and realized knowledge), knows that "I am Brahman, the eternal Self".



Narayanaashrama Tapovanam

Points for Introspection

In human life, the Ultimate Truth is the knowledge of the Self, 'I' or the 'Subject', the 'Soul'. The Self or Soul is different from the body, mind, intelligence and ego. Whereas, the body-mind complex is transitory and perishable, the Soul is immortal, imperishable, birthless, deathless and changeless. It is taintless, has no attributes and is undivided.

The highest purpose of human life is to realize oneself as the eternal Self, different from the body-mind complex; also, to realize that the individual Self is the same as Brahman – the Universal Self, Self in all. Brahman alone is the Real entity in this world, the all-pervading, the One without a second.

When an individual realizes this Truth and is able to identify with the Self, he transcends happiness as well as unhappiness, and experiences supreme bliss, being unaffected in any situation in life.

Who is the one who experiences this bliss? Who is the one whose mind always dwells in the thought of Brahman?

In this śloka, Śaṅkarāchārya has described three categories of people.

The ignorant man has no idea about the Self – the eternal, limitless, imperishable identity that he is in essence. He thinks his identity is nothing but the gross body, which is limited and perishable. He feels 'I am this body' and 'I have a mind which thinks'. More than this, neither is he aware of, nor does he want to know.

By his wrong identification with the body, which is limited, changeful and perishable, the ignorant considers himself to be mortal, whereas he is essentially immortal. Again, by thinking 'I am this body', the ignorant man considers all that is related to the body as 'mine'.

Because he is not given to viveka (discrimination between perishable and imperishable, between what is transitory and what is everlasting), he holds on to the perishables, which give immediate pleasure and a deep 'mine-ness'. Because of 'mine-ness', he feels extremely attached to all that he possesses – wife, children, other family members, relatives, friends, house, profession, property, name, fame, etc.

He also identifies with his mind, its emotions, sentiments, etc. Whenever anything goes wrong with the body and things associated with it, or whenever the mind passes through various emotions and feelings, the ignorant man gets affected by either happiness or unhappiness. He is either elated or depressed. He considers the changes as his and ignorantly misses the core identity which is unchanging.

People of the second kind are the ones who have read about the Self from scriptural texts. They have come to know about the Self or Soul and its attributes. But in practice, since they have not realized the Self as their own real identity, they still identify with the body and feel in a natural manner "I am the body". Because of their theoretical knowledge about the Soul, they think, "I am the Soul too".

However, for such scholars, the knowledge of the Soul does not get translated into a living experience. Although they know that the Self is changeless, taintless, etc., they get affected by the joys and sorrows in life and are not able to be seated in the state of unaffectedness of the Soul.

People of the third kind are the ones who always dwell in the thought “I am the pure consciousness, I am Brahman”. Not only they dwell in the thought, but they have realized their identity as Brahman – the eternal, changeless, imperishable – the Self in all, the One without a second. They no longer identify with the limited body that is subject to affectation caused by joys and sorrows.

A man who realizes the Truth, identifies himself with Brahman not only at certain times but always. In reality, he becomes Brahman itself – Brahman *brahmaiva bhavati* (ब्रह्मवित् ब्रह्मैव भवति). He attains this lofty state through ‘viveka’ – discrimination between the real and unreal, eternal and transitory, imperishable and perishable. By constant *vichāra* (application of viveka), he is not swayed by all that is unreal and perishable. Instead, he holds on to what is real and imperishable. He is never affected by anything and floats in supreme bliss.

The man of the third category gets established in Brahman and is liberated.

When this śloka is repeatedly chanted, we are able to analyze which category we belong to and a deep aspiration arises to be in constant identification with Brahman.

Word Meaning

देहः (deha:) = the body; अहं (aham) = I; इति (iti) = thus; एव (eva) = indeed, truly; जडस्य (jaḍasya) = of an ignorant person; बुद्धिः (buddhi:) = intelligence; देहे (dehe) = in the body; च (ca) = and; जीवे (jīve) = in the jeeva; विदुषः (viduṣa:) = of the scholar (man of bookish knowledge); तु (tu) = and; अहंधीः (ahaṁdhī:) = the I-notion; विवेकविज्ञानवतः (viveka-vijñānavata:) = of one who has discrimination as well as realization of the Truth; महात्मनः (mahātmāna:) = of the Mahātmā; ब्रह्म (brahma) = Brahman; अहं (aham) = I; इति (iti) = in this manner; एव (eva) = indeed; मतिः (mati:) = thought (understanding); सदा (sadā) = always; आत्मनि (ātmani) = in the Self.

अन्वयः - (Prose order)

जडस्य एव अहं देहः इति बुद्धिः। विदुषः देहे जीवे च अहंधीः। तु विवेकविज्ञानवतः महात्मनः सदा आत्मनि एव अहं ब्रह्म इति मतिः।

jaḍasya eva aham deha: iti buddhi:. viduṣa: dehe jīve ca ahaṁdhī:. tu vivekavijñānavata: mahātmāna: sadā ātmani eva aham brahma iti mati:.
