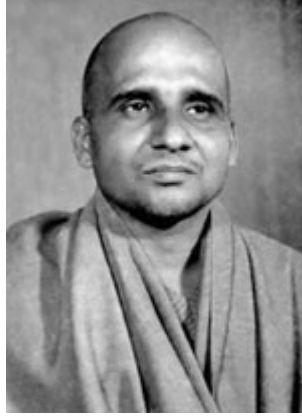




THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

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RECAPITULATION

Chapter V

THE PRINCIPLES OF MEDITATION

The Fifth Chapter is entirely devoted to various descriptions of symbolic meditations. We are told here that different symbols can be taken as helps in meditation on Reality, just as we can reach the ocean through any river in the world. Inasmuch as the whole of Reality cannot be envisaged by the senses, or conceived by the mind, some visible form of It is taken as a prop in meditation. But the object of meditation chosen is not the end of meditation; it is only a means to a transcendence of the quality of meditation through that object. We have to rise gradually from the external symbol, the form of the object chosen, to its deeper implications which are subtler than the visible gross form of the symbol and subtler even than what we can conceive as the subtle reality behind it. It has a transcendent form and when it reaches its highest state, it ceases to be an external object. The more we go deep into the nature of an object, the more do we realise its affinity with our own existence. But the more we conceive of its externality and grossness of form, the more also remote does it appear to be from us. The grosser is our concept of an object, the farther it is from us and the more difficult it is to come in contact with it. But the deeper we go into it by insight, the more does it reveal its connection with us in its essentiality, even as we go into the depths of the ocean and realise the background of all the waves on the surface which are apparently different, one from the other. This is the principle behind these symbolic meditations. The items mentioned are, ether, heart, truth, creativity, sun, mind, lightning, Vedas, Vaishvanara—Fire, austerity, Prana,

Power and the Four Feet of the Gayatri-Mantra. In fact, anything can be such a symbol, provided the principle of the technique is not missed.

We are also told in this Chapter that there are three great obstacles to spiritual approach and they are the weaknesses of personality, whether it is celestial, human or demoniacal. Every personality has defects of its own, a characteristic weakness, which has to be overcome by great effort; otherwise the finitude of that personality would get emphasised by the repeated acquiescence in its weaknesses. These have to be stepped over by deep meditation, the principles of which have been described in the symbolic methods mentioned.

The passion of the mind to run after objects of sense is one weakness. It is characteristic of everyone. The mind rushes to objects outside and it cannot rest quiet without them. The mind is always thinking of something outside—this is the weakness of a polished quality. Everything else comes after it. This weakness has to be tackled properly. Why does the mind run after objects? What is its secret? What does it expect from the objects? While history has shown that every attempt at contact with objects has ended in the misery of the individual, why is it that there is a repeated attack on the object by the senses and the mind? This is the organic weakness of individuality.

The other form of finitude or weakness is greed, the desire to appropriate everything to one's own self. People have no desire to share anything with others. The more one would like to have, the better it is. Each one is fond of one's own self, much more than one is attached to anything else. When the test is made, it will be found that one loves one's own self much more than anyone else. Finally, one would try to save oneself only, as when a catastrophe threatens a person. This is the principal greed, the love of one's own self, which manifests itself as greed for objects outside—wealth, property, acquisitions, etc. The more you have it, the still more do you want to have of it. It is an irrational trait in the individual to appropriate things, even those things which may not belong to oneself, justly.

The third weakness is the finding of joy in the suffering of others, the inflicting of pain upon others, cruelty of any kind, harm done to others. This is the demoniacal instinct, whereby we get enraged and commit violence upon other living beings. The tendency to wreak vengeance, do harm or injury, bring about destruction in respect of others, is a weakness—the worst one. Greed by which one appropriates things to oneself is a weakness, and attachment to things, the great passion for objects, is another weakness. As long as these weaknesses preponderate in oneself, spiritual aspiration is out of question, God-realisation is far from one's reach. So the Upanishad, by way of an anecdote, or a story, tells us that the Creator, Prajapati, Himself told the celestials, the humans and the demons that they should restrain themselves (Damyata), that they should be charitable (Datta), and that they should be compassionate (Dayadhvam). These were the instructions given by Prajapati to his children—the celestials, the humans and the demons.

In connection with the injunction of meditation on the Gayatri-Mantra, it is enjoined upon the meditator that the first foot of the Mantra should be identified with the three worlds—earth, atmosphere and heaven; the second foot with the three Vedas—Rik, Yajur and Sama; the third foot with the three vital functions—Prana, Apana and Vyana; and the fourth foot with the sun. The result of such meditation is mastery over the worlds, proficiency in the higher knowledge, control above all living beings, and transcendent spiritual excellence. This Mantra is called ‘Gayatri’ because it protects (Trayate) one who recites it (Gayan). Thus, the Gayatri is all the worlds, all the Vedas, all beings, nay, Reality Itself. Whatever one wishes through it, that does take place.