

Discourses/Articles

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GOD AND HUMANITY

I

A question which is purely technical, which cannot be decided at once by the generality of mankind, arises in the mind of a serious seeker after Truth, viz., his relation to society and to its institutions. Judged dispassionately, the issue of the necessity or otherwise of such a seeker to concern himself either with society or institutions seems to arise due to a thoroughly misconceived notion of the nature of the Truth – the existence of God. The need or the absence of need for relations of any kind, much less obligations or duties, towards society and institutions crops up only if God is an other-worldly being, as is the conclusion of the usual theological concepts in all religions, and his existence somehow falls outside the scope and operation of the world and society. There have been controversies and heated arguments over the extent of importance to be given either to meditation or service, for example, and several schools of thought have risen out of this dichotomy in position. This is, to put it prosaically, the controversy between the schools of Jnana and Karma – knowledge and action – a subject which has been discussed by many scholars ever since the Acharyas wrote commentaries on the cardinal scriptures on which Indian culture is based.

All this is just mentioning in different ways the same old problem of man's relation to God and to the world or society. Unfortunately, people get emotionally warmed up in themselves whenever this question is raised and it is rare that one finds time to consider the subject in a scientific spirit by objective observation as a research man in any field of learning would actually be expected to do. The factor of emotion immediately rushes in whenever there is a talk of humanity, 'other people', 'our brethren' or 'the sufferings of people', and the general mind would even regard it as heretical to raise the question of the need or otherwise of a person to concern himself with this complexity, which is almost equated with the duty of man.

But, to come to the point again, our approach has naturally to be scientific and not emotional and, really, this is one of the precise conditions of conducting any successful research. Hence, the problem has to be tackled in an unbiased manner, placing oneself in the position of a mere witness and not a party in the game. Thus analysed, it comes about that the question of man's relation to society and institutions has much to do with the nature of God's existence and, unless this is first settled, what follows from it is a consequence also cannot be properly ascertained. Now, the existence of God, to define it impersonally, taking God by himself in his own independent status, has been accepted to be free from limitations of any kind, which means to say that he covers all states of being, manifested or unmanifested, and there can really be nothing unknown to him and hence outside the purview of his existence. This would imply that there can be no reality worth its name outside the Being of God, and the world and the individuals have to be

summed under his Infinite Being, so that the world and humanity fall within the scope of the Existence of God.

Here, any doubt as to whether God exists or not should be considered wholly irrelevant, since our definition of God is that it is an appellation of the nature of Being in its absolute state, whose significance cannot be set aside even by modern physical science, what to speak of the more amenable sciences of biology and psychology. The theories of electromagnetism, quantum, wave-mechanics and relativity, with many things that follow in the wake of their discoveries, border on the acceptance of the Absolute as the only reality. The more metaphysical and spiritual approaches, both in the East and in the West, have held this premise as the very rock-foundation of the edifices of philosophy.

But there have been a multitude of misconstrued ideas which apparently seem to follow from this definition of God's Being, viz., that mankind or humanity is God and, as a corollary of this position, that service of man is service of God. But it is forgotten that the concept of humanity is a concept of limitation, while it has already been agreed that God has to be free from limitations. God is neither an individual among many others nor a sum-total of individuals, which is precisely the character of humanity. Hence the identification of humanity with God is an unreasoned result of emotional enthusiasm in relation, which easily takes hold of the mass-man, by dinning into the ears of people slogans, shibboleths and stock sayings on the theme that humanity is God, its worship is the worship of God, and the like. One's upbringing in family and social conditions from one's very childhood in the circumstance of an untiring repetition of such formulae and mass-propaganda carried on in such religion, to whose steady effects no ordinary human mind can be immune, is responsible for the insinuation of the concept of a socialised God into the minds of mankind. This doctrine, no doubt, carries one to some extent and even appears to succeed for many years through history, as any repeatedly propagated cult can. But propaganda is not and has never been a weapon of final victory. For, it is a uniformly adopted medium of any theory or ideal, real or unreal. The nature of reality, however, springs up spontaneously, slowly blooming like a flower, in the hearts of gifted men who begin to see an indivisible limitlessness extending through and beyond the obvious and natural limitations of humanity and the world.

This urge of reality, when it rises in one's heart, becomes irresistible, for what is real can never be resisted. It is in the light of this urge, which certain Western philosophers have called the *nisus* for reality present in all Nature, which rare souls visualise the existence of a transcendence of spiritual immanence in the universe and recognise at once the impossibility of any identification of the finite with the Infinite. No man can be God, not even all men put together can be God – thus God transcends humanity – because humanity is the name of a particular species of individuals whose mathematical total is regarded as a unity only in the psychological sense of one individual *thinking* the other, but never *being* the other, but God is Supreme Being. Here is the unarticulated but ostensible difference between the nature of humanity and the nature of God. But this truth can never become patent in an uninitiated mind which is accustomed to think in terms of slogan and propaganda, cults and creeds, and thinks, also, only through the emotion.

Nevertheless, the mass-mind cannot at once be educated, because its main defects are dependence on sense-objects for the assessment of any value and a rather too heavy emphasis on the economic and biological existence of man than any deeper intrinsic worth or meaning in his existence as once having a non-dependent status of its own. It may be added here that much of the cult of humanity-worship and its deification is a cumulative outcome of the urges of hunger, wealth, self-glorification and power, which constitute the triple passion in an individual. When these urges become so dominant as to be regarded as necessities of life, they begin to rule mankind as its masters and what comes out of man begins to subordinate him to the level of a mere tool or puppet that is operated by strings. Psychology and psycho-analysis in modern times have done much research in this line and the nature of the consequences of these human urges, including the gregarious instinct, has been studied and analysed into its components. That man is under an illusion of the spell cast before him by the urges of wealth, sex and power is not something unknown to well-informed minds and the present-day crisis of humanity cannot but be traced to the working of a long rope that has been given by man to these urges that are trying to destroy him from the very roots. A careful study of advanced sociology, history and psychology will prove this fact to the hilt.

The spiritual seekers, mention of whom has been made above, are, however, an exception to the general mass thinking through the gregarious urge and they keep themselves alive to the urge for God, the Almighty, within themselves, as the *nisus* to perfection. When the urge for God rises within the soul of the seeker, the whole universe would appear to suck him into its bosom, from every atom and part of its extensive mass of creation, and in the initial stages this divine urge would seem to be the shooting of a luminous spark from within oneself and then gradually it increases its proportion into the surge of a rushing star, then the flash of a lightning, a flaming conflagration and, finally, an inundating flood of oceanic force and grandeur. A seeker caught up in any one of these divine manifestations would be able to see inwardly a super-mathematical unit of indivisible existence whose minutest manifestation exceeds the totality of mankind and the world, for the spirit is not magnitude, measurable in terms of the space-time extension. Ushered in by this current of the divine flood, the seeker can no more see meaning in the multitude of finites, and individualities and even the whole of humanity and the world, because all these which have so much significance to the mind that sees through the senses present themselves before the seeking soul as parts melting into the whole to which they organically belong and in which God becomes their very Soul, their very existence. To those souls that seek God in his essential Being, not merely as a transcendence but also as an immanence and absoluteness, the question of their relation to society, institutions and the world does not arise; it just does not exist. Truly, this is the ideal and the goal of anything, anywhere and no man on earth can hold an ideal superior or even equal to this grand consummation of one's enthronement in Universal Being. And this does not call for any proof or demonstration of its indubitably.

II

But it may be held that the question of one's relation to the world and humanity shall remain valid as long as knowledge comes through the senses and the world is visible before one's eyes. This situation of the sensibility of the world includes the

perception of others outside oneself, especially other human beings. One's physical and psychological limitations manifesting themselves *generally* as hunger, thirst, heat, cold and fear of death and *especially* as the desire for wealth, sex and power, compel a person to depend upon other persons for the fulfilment or the mitigation of these instincts, and this results in the concept of humanity as a corporate body, an indispensable necessity and where utter selfishness of individuals or a group of individuals does not attempt to ruin other individuals even at its own peril, mankind exercises that understanding by which it recognises the need for a mutual co-operation among people, naturally involving some sacrifice of personal interest, and realises the impossibility of existing in the world without such co-operation. While the majesty of the Absolute in its superabundance and completeness referred to earlier in this section above is mainly the central content of the Upanishads, a divinely related humanitarian concept of mutual service is the preponderating doctrine of the Bhagavadgita. The sage of the Upanishad merges into the Absolute and enters the very fibre of all creation as its very soul and existence, and the Krishna of the Bhagavadgita, while he draws into his personality the dignity of the Universal God, at once becomes the paragon of humanity and exemplifies in his life the integrality of behaviour, conduct and action which sweeps over all mankind and unifies it as a social organism not only spiritually but also ethically and politically. We are here speaking of the position of man who is incapable of avoiding the sensing of a world outside him and Krishna's teaching is to such a man. It is also with due consideration to this situation of man in the world that the ancient seers ordained upon him the daily performance of the five great sacrifices known as Pancha Mahayajnas, viz., service to the celestial beings, service to the seers of learning, service to the ancestors, service to man and service to the sub-human creatures of the world. This is an all-comprehending system of ritual to accentuate service of others which is obligatory on the part of man as long as he enjoys personally the bounties of Nature and the charitableness of other human beings. This is the position impossible of avoidance so long as the universal flood of God-urge has not yet been stirred within oneself and man perforce hangs on the world and the other individuals for his subsistence in a variety of forms.

With this intention of the fulfilment of duty as mutual service and support, the organisation of people into the spiritual, political, economic and labour groups was formed in ancient times, particularly in India, under the Sanskrit names of Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. These groups were especially classified as mutually inclusive powers and never exclusive elements as they later on got interpreted by habit, prejudice and selfishness of the part of the ego of man. Everywhere, it should be easy to see that fulfilment and complete success of the core cannot be achieved without the mutual collaboration of spiritual power, political power, economic power and manpower. This classification of human groups for the purpose of the constructive activity of society as a whole can never be gainsaid and substituted, much less avoided, by any other means of achieving human welfare. Spiritual idealism bereft of the other three brother forces in the world is likely to get degenerated into arm-chair philosophy and impractical suggestions for the improvement of man's condition in the process of evolution. Here we have to carefully distinguish between this class of spiritual ministry as a part of the social set-up and those rarer, master-minds who seek to merge and absorb all these four values of life in the universal divine flood about which we have made sufficient observation above. These are the higher classes of an almost super-human type who are a little different from the kind of spiritual teachers and guides who

are referred to here as forming a group to minister to the spiritual needs of people. Where the political aspect is emphasised to the detriment of the other three aspects, it may land in tyranny, despotism and dictatorship. The history of the world has seen both these over-emphases through the churches of the religions and the rulers of states. A tendency to emphasise the economic aspects leads to materialism, atheism and hedonism, which is the marked trend of the present day world, especially in the second half of the 20th century. This aspect is, however, linked up with the emphasis of the labour group also, so that, today, we find the third and the fourth groups getting mixed up promiscuously and attempting to rule human destiny. It need not be reiterated that such illogical over-accentuation of any particular group is not only harmful to the growth and function of the other three essential aspects of the life of man but also defeats its own purpose in the end, due to its false isolation of the other necessary aspects of the life complete.

There is also another aspect of this question which has originated in the rising of several institutions in the world whose founders honestly felt a need to serve humanity. But the intention of the founders is with difficulty carried through by their alleged followers not only on account of inadequate spiritual inspiration and understanding but also the intrusion of practical interest of a personal nature that dilutes the original wish of the founder. This deficiency has another awful side and it is the fact that where the spiritual ideal is ignored, the material aspects of life automatically get bolstered up, even as strong winds begin to blow when the sun is covered with clouds. This is natural law and it does not spare anyone from the impact of its operation. Thus, religious churches and institutions may degenerate into centres of mere economic force which may exclusively attract the attention of their heads who may not be aware that they have totally missed the aim for which the organisations were originally formed. But the difficulty does not end here. It goes further head-long into the political field and the institutions may not only engage themselves in their own internal political administration but also take part in the outward politics of the State, far, far from the original ideal of the founders. Now, nothing can be a greater travesty than this, that the intention to do service gets side-tracked along the lanes of wealth and power.

III

Spiritual seekers, to clarify whose position is the intention of this article, thus get bifurcated into the purely God-inspired, whole-timed Sadhakas and the probationers on the path who aspire to seek perfection but cannot escape the shackles of the world and human society. There is little difficulty before the higher class of seekers, but the troubles of the second group are galore. The reason for this is that they are unable to strike a balance between God and the world, the technique of which the Bhagavadgita has endeavoured to explain in great detail. A harmony between the inner and the outer is difficult enough to maintain always because of the strength of sensory forces influencing the mind through out the waking life of the individual. A counter-force from within has to be generated to keep the balance of consciousness so that the outer forces of sense-perception may not overwhelm it and make it merely an instrument of sense-gratification and the physical urges. This art is called Yoga, the union of the inner and the outer of the higher and the lower. If God is indivisible existence in his pure absoluteness, unrelated to externality of any kind, he appears as harmony in the universe of manifestation. Hence we can safely conclude that wherever is this balance

and harmony of forces, there is the presence of God in some proportion. The harmony has to be worked out in the body, mind and spirit, as well as in society and the world. Physical harmony is health. Mental harmony is sanity. Spiritual harmony is intuition. Social harmony is the peace of the world.

The consciousness of indivisibility originally receives the touch of the relative in self-consciousness which immediately implies the existence of space outside oneself, though, in this primordial state, the consciousness of space may look inseparable from self-consciousness. Almost simultaneously with this, there is the consciousness of time as a process in which the consciousness find itself. The fourth step is the consciousness of objects outside, which primarily may appear to be organically related to consciousness. Up to this stage, it may be said, consciousness has not been 'entangled', in the sense in which this situation is generally understood, But the difficulty commences with the further movement of consciousness when it assumes the mark of an individuality of its own and isolates itself from other such centres of consciousness as well as objects by regarding everyone of them as external. There are, however, certain implications of the consciousness of separated individuality, which are mainly the sense of heat and cold, hunger and thirst and the fear of death of oneself as a bodily entity. The metabolic process is set up into action and sleep then becomes a necessity to cause repair to the wear and tear of the body thereby, as well as due to continued object-consciousness in the 'wakeful' condition, one which is obviously unnatural to pure consciousness. The functions of breathing, thinking, feeling and understanding, with their concomitants, follow at once. Up to this stage, the individual may be said to have been externalised into the biological and the psychological make-up of personality. In the case of man, this is pure *humanity*.

But certain other processes which should be regarded as the abnormal functions of the individual's psychology now commence with the rise of the desire for material possessions – wealth and property – the desire for sexual contact and the sense of self-respect which materialises into the desire of self-glorification and the exercise of power over those outside oneself, which all come step by step, in succession. Here, the entanglement of consciousness is complete, and this is what is known as Samsara, or the painful earthly life. It is unfortunate that the mind of man does not rest even with this self-degeneration and, by process of time, getting itself accustomed to this condition, as if it is its natural state, forms its philosophy of 'it is better to rule in hell than serve in heaven'. The result of this is the formulation of erroneous philosophies such as materialism, scepticism, agnosticism, pluralism, formalism, such as we find in the addiction to mere ritual, as well as the several arts and sciences which man regards as his highest achievements today but which are intended only to rationalise and perpetuate the condition of entanglement of consciousness with objects of various kinds, into which it has already descended. Even the so-called impersonal sciences of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and empirical psychology appear to be valid only so long as Nature is regarded as external consciousness. A philosophy based on this bifurcation of experience cannot therefore save consciousness from the pains it suffers in entanglement.

The technique of Yoga as a method of striking a balance between consciousness and objects is the first part of the individual's return to the universal. The second part of this attempt is the still higher stage of meditation by which the realisation comes that

consciousness and its objects are not merely in a state of organised balance but form one unitary being. Philosophers like Kant, in the West, with all their acuteness of analysis, came to the conclusion that Reality cannot be known by consciousness, because of the difficulty in getting rid of the usual intellectual prejudice that the object of consciousness has always to be outside itself. This led Kant to the position of what he calls the paralogisms of conflict in philosophical position in regard to the truth of the mutual relation among God, the world and the individual. This difficulty is overcome in the philosophy of the Bhagavadgita and the Upanishads, a careful study of which every student of Yoga should make, going to the essential spirit of these teachings. It is outside the scope of this essay to go into details of the great gospels given by these scriptures to humanity, which constitute an independent subject by itself. It is hoped that seekers on the spiritual path will fare well if they take note of all these unavoidable aspects of their spiritual life, and where sincerity is the keynote, God is sure to shower his blessings.