

The Problem is You; The Solution is You.

The Seeking.

Two Types of Seeking:

Anything that is considered desirable by us becomes an object of seeking. There are two types of seeking in our life. First is the seeking of things which I look upon as desirable and which I do not have. Things like comforts, money, power, progeny etc., fall in this category. I search for these things, and make efforts to gain or accomplish them with the help of the knowledge, skills and resources available to me. These things appear very desirable to me at the moment and so becomes *sādhyā*, to be achieved. Later on, I may change my view about them.

The second kind of seeking also pertains to objects which we consider desirable. But there is a difference. Whereas the first kind of seeking pertains to objects we do not have, this second kind of seeking is for the objects we have but we think we do not have. Here also, the seeking is the same as in the first case. I think I do not have the thing and so I seek it. It is like the case of that man searching for his lost glasses.

This man, one Sunday morning, wanted to read the newspaper. He needed his reading glasses. He opened the drawer of the desk, took out the glasses, wore them and started reading the newspaper. While he was reading, a friend happened to come to see

him. He placed the newspaper on the side, lifted the reading glasses so that they rested above his forehead and started talking to the friend. The friend went away after half an hour and this man wanted to resume reading the newspaper. He lifted the paper, discovered the need for the reading glasses and started to search. Where are my glasses? He searched in all the usual places; the glasses were not on the table, nor in the drawer, nor on the floor. When he could not find them anywhere, he started shouting, "where are my glasses?" The wife came out from the kitchen and stood there staring at him. The children also came out and dispassionately watched the drama. Finally, the youngest son could not hold it any longer and pointed at the glasses which were on the father's forehead! The man realised that the glasses he was searching for were with him all along.

Now this seeking was there not because the man did not have glasses; it was because he *thought* he did not have glasses. He was the problem and he was the solution. He was the problem because he thought he was the non-possessor of glasses. He was the solution because he was the possessor of glasses. There is no physical distance between the non-possessor and the possessor of glasses. But still there is a distance which makes him a seeker. This is the distance created by ignorance.

Therefore one can seek for what one does not have and one can seek for what one *thinks* one does not have. If one thinks one does not have a given thing and one considers it desirable, one cannot but seek.

The Seeking in Human Life.

If we look at our life and enquire as to what it is that we seek, we find that all the varieties of activities that we undertake are prompted by an urge to acquire something or get rid of something. All the urges that a human being feels, fall under three basic categories: (1) to live – to live a day longer, (2) to gain happiness, and (3) to acquire knowledge.

You carry out a set of activities to keep your life going : I do not want to die today, about tomorrow, I will see. That means there is no tomorrow at all – every tomorrow is today. I am alive at the present moment and I cannot think of decimation of my existence. There is a natural love to be. “I want to live” is a natural, universal urge, not planted by someone else. Even a newborn baby has an urge to live; there is a great attempt on its part to sustain itself as a living being.

There is definitely an attempt to avoid death and therefore aging also. But then we also find some people who feel like committing suicide and there are some who do commit also. Thus, it looks as though the urge to live is not such a universal urge because there is a contradiction – someone is ready to give up one’s life. So I add one more clause: I want to live and live happily. If I consider my entire life and come to the conclusion that the future alone is my lot, I become depressed. This wrong process of thinking can prompt me to

commit suicide. One commits suicide to escape sadness. Thus, to live happily is as powerful an urge as the urge to live.

Again as a human being, one cannot stand ignorance. From childhood onwards, there has always been an attempt to know. You give a child a toy to play with and the first thing it does is it opens it. Questions such as why? What? How? Arise in one’s mind without being prompted. There is a love for gossip, for reading newspapers, magazines etc., because nothing should go around without your knowledge. Thus ignorance is one thing you cannot stand. You are in a great hurry and speeding in your car but if you find a group of people gathered on the side-walk, you slow down, stick your head out and try to see what is happening there. If you want your wife to miss her sleep during the night, just tell her, before going to sleep, that you have an important thing to tell her but that you could not tell her at the moment and that she should wait until the next morning. She will urge you to tell her at least something about it because she cannot stand ignorance. This is how these magazines and television serials keep your curiosity alive by cutting off the story or drama when it has reached a critical point so you will want to read the next issue or see the next showing. We do the same thing in our talks too ! So ignorance is bliss only when it is total. If you know a little, you want to know more.

Thus, all activities in life are towards fulfilling these three natural urges. There are activities to stall death and old age because I have concluded that I am mortal. There are activities to make myself happier than what I am. I want to get rid of unhappiness, because there is conclusion, “I

am unhappy". I feel I am incomplete and so there is an attempt to be free from incompleteness, unhappiness. There are activities to make me informed, more knowledgeable because I have a conclusion that I am ignorant. These three conclusions – I am mortal, I am unhappy or incomplete, and I am ignorant – form the basis of all my activities.

This three-fold conclusion is the problem. Vedanta says this is an unwarranted problem. In the vision of Vedanta, you are just the opposite of what you take yourself to be, "I am sad" is the problem and that is solved only when I see that "I" as other than sad, as free from sadness. Vedanta says that "I" is free from sadness and we shall presently see how that is.

The problem of Sadness is centred on "I"

Sadness arises out of the notion, "I am sad", and so the problem of sadness can only be solved by seeing the fact, "I am not sad." In the vision of Vedanta I am just the opposite of what I take myself to be and have to see that fact.

If you say you are bound, you have to be free. If there is bondage in the "I" sense, there should also be freedom—freedom from hunger, freedom from thirst, freedom from being bullied by the world, freedom from being impinged upon by the world. That freedom has to be centred on your "I", it cannot be outside you, much less inside you. It has to be you.

If the sadness is due to the world, happiness is also due to the world only. You find yourself sad when you view one side of a situation; but there is the other

side also, which is as good a fact as this side and which can make you happy. This is what we call *samsāra*. *Sukhī aham* (I am happy); *Duḥkhī aham* (I am unhappy). Now understand: *sukham* (happiness) is one thing and *sukhi* (happy) is another. *Duḥkham* (unhappiness, pain, sorrow) is one thing and *duḥkhi* (unhappy, sorrowful) is another. This is an important thing to know. *Duḥkham* is sorrow while *duḥkhi* means, "I am sorrowful", "I am sad". Now all our attempts are to remove *duḥkham* to remove sorrow by bringing about changes in the situations. But the problem is not *duḥkham*, sorrow; the problem is the notion "*Aham duḥkhī* – I am sorrowful."

The animal has only the *sukham* and *duḥkham*, pleasure and pain. It does not have the notions, "*aham sukhī*" – I am happy" or "*aham duḥkhī*", I am unhappy. A cow can be a lucky cow if it has a master who feeds it well, maintains it well. It is a healthy cow and does feel the pleasure, but it does not have the notion of *sukhitvam*, the notion, "I am happy". It does not have a complex, "I am a superior cow, I belong to such and such family" etc. A cow does not have any sense or notion or judgment like this, centred in itself. If another cow has crooked or ugly horns, it does not think, "I am ugly, other cows are good-looking. I don't know what to do. I am stuck with these horns because I cannot remove them or else they will call me a bald cow" etc. Cow does not have a problem like this. If a cow does not get food, it does feel pain and if it gets food, there definitely is some pleasure. Cows do suffer and they do experience comfort, but they do not seem to have the notions of *duḥkhitvam* or *sukhitvam*, of being sad or elated.

The human being on the other hand, has a judgment centred on 'I' and that gives rise to problem. The white man wants to be white but not all that white. This is a complex and so he goes to a beach to bake himself in the scorching heat to become a little less white. The black has his own complex: he wants to be a little white; he wants to be a little whitened. In India, we have our own complexes. "The girl is beautiful, but dark"! Cows do not have such complexes. There are these two cows which belong to the same breed, are about the same age and give an equal amount of milk. But there is a great difference in their selling price. Why? Because one cow has shapely horns and the other one has crooked horns! The cows themselves do not seem to be aware of that difference and so they do not have any complex. It is the owner of the cows who has problems! This problem of complexes is a human problem.

The human being is aware of himself or herself as a person and in the person, one sees sukhitvaṁ (the state of being happy) and duḥkhitvaṁ (the state of being unhappy). So there arises such complexes as, 'I am sukhi (happy)', "I am duḥkhī (unhappy)", "I am bound". "I am being held down by others," etc. These are problems. That I am dependent upon a hundred million things for my security and happiness, is a problem. The world definitely limits me and if that is the problem, if that makes me duḥkhī, the problem of duḥkhitvaṁ can never be solved. If the duḥkhitvaṁ arises from the world, if my unhappiness is because the world limits me, I should always be duḥkhī – sad, bound, sorrowful. But in spite of my

being small, being limited by the world, being deprived of many things I wish to have, I do find myself occasionally, a happy person. During those moments the very person who looked upon himself or herself as sad, looks upon the self as happy. What change has taken place in the world or the self, for me to become happy? The body has not changed, the emotions, the knowledge, the memories have not changed; they are all the same. The world has not changed; the job has not changed; the environment has not changed; the government has not changed; I still have any number of complaints against the community. Thus, the world still very much limits me and still I am able to laugh. I become happy now and then which means those are the moments when I look upon myself differently, entirely differently. Formerly I saw myself as duḥkhī and now I see myself as the one who is free from duḥkham. This happens even when I laugh at a simple joke.

There was this man who thought he was a cat. He was afraid of coming out of the house because there were street dogs and he thought they would chase him. He was taken to a psychiatrist who convinced him, by comparison with an actual cat that he was not a cat; that he had none of the features of a cat. And by comparison with himself, the psychiatrist convinced the man that he had all the features of a human being, that he was a human being. Being thus convinced by the psychiatrist, being relieved of the complex, the man came out happily. But the next day, he refused to go out of the house anyway! He was again presented before the psychiatrist who asked him,

'Aren't you convinced that you are a human being and not a cat?

"Yes, I am convinced."

"Then why are you afraid of coming out of the house?"

"I know I am not a cat but how do I know that the dogs know it?"

You laughed at this now. What change has happened in you? What problem have you solved? Your job is the same; your wife is ill; the mother-in-law has not yet left! All the problems are intact and still you laughed.

It is true that there are problems which have to be faced factually, objectively. But the problem of sadness has nothing to do with the external world. The problem of sadness is centered on you and your vision or notion about yourself and the world. You are the problem when you say, "I am sad". And when you laughed, what are you? You are the solution. There was no fulfillment of a desire for a solution of an external problem when you laughed. All that happened was that you looked upon yourself as you are. All that is required to be free from sadness is that you look at yourself as you are.

It is said in our scriptures that the mind is the cause for both bondage and liberation. Mind here means your notion about yourself – your conclusion, "I am this much alone." This notion, this self-judgment is the problem and therefore self-clarity, self-knowledge is the solution. In the vision of the upaniṣads, the self is free. Like even in the case of jigsaw puzzle, when you thought the solution of the puzzle lay

outside the problem, the āpta, the one who knows, could see the solution in the very problem. Here, in the vision of the āpta, the ṛṣi, the upaniṣad, you are the solution.

The vision of the śāstra, scriptures that I am the solution seems valid enough in view of the fact that in spite of all the problems, I do see myself happy occasionally. If all these problems and notions were real, I could never give them up. And I can never be happy unless I give them up. The fact that I feel happy means it is possible to give up the notions about myself. Now consider this boy who thinks that his teeth are not presentable. His teeth are not in alignment and he has two extra teeth. He does not accept his teeth and is conscious that his teeth are ugly. He definitely avoids laughing and closes his mouth as soon as he remembers his teeth. But even this boy laughs sometimes. Do you know why? Because at that time, he is the person that he really is; he has given up the notion that he is ugly. That notion being not real, sometimes he catches himself laughing and so it is clear that the boy is not ugly in reality, that he is looking upon himself wrongly. The vision of śāstra is valid.

My natural longing to be free from unhappiness is the further proof of the validity of the vision that I, the self is free, happy. There is a natural longing to be free from being unhappy. I love what is natural and I want to get rid of what is unnatural. If unhappiness, littleness, were natural to me, if they were the essential characteristics of ātmā, the self. I could never give them up. But in deep sleep and in moments of happiness, I do give up all the notions that make me feel small, limited. I find myself happy when those notions are absent.