

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION:

Q. 307, EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL WISDOM

Feb. 17, 2024

Om Sai Ram

Welcome to this Question and Answer session, Q. 307, "Examples of Spiritual Wisdom."

This text excerpt is taken from Prof. Anil Kumar's book "Sathyopanishad, Vol. 1", pages 13-18.

Swami, we heard about King Dasaratha, the yaga called 'putrakameshti', and so on. Kindly tell us something about King Janaka.

Bhagawan: Janaka was a Rajayogi, a man of great wisdom, utterly devoid of the sense of the body. Therefore he came to be known as *videha*, one without attachment to the body. As the daughter of that King, Sita came to be known as *vaidehi*. Janaka was an ideal King, possessing immense devotion to the preceptor, extensive knowledge of the Sastras, and the spirit of renunciation. He performed Sita's marriage as his bounden duty. Later on, Rama left for the forest along with Sita and Lakshmana. Though their stay in the forest stretched into years, Janaka never set foot in the forest. Such was Janaka's abounding wealth of *jnana* and *vairagya*.

Swami, we hear that Adi Shankara died at a young age. What could be the reason?

Bhagawan: it is true that the founder of the doctrine of *advaita*, nondualism, died young. He wrote commentaries on three important sacred texts known as *Prasthanatraya*, viz. the *Upanishads*, the *Brahmasutras* and the *Bhagavadgita*. Besides emphasizing *jnana*, he composed a large number of hymns on *bhakti*. He traveled all over the country and established *peethas*, centers of worship and spiritual learning. He symbolises *Sanatana Dharma*, the ancient, imeless spiritual culture of this land.

Adi Shankara went to the ancient pilgrim center, Kasi, where he prayed to the presiding deity Vishwanath to pardon him for the three mistakes he had committed. The first mistake happened to be his behaviour contrary to what he had been stating all along. While saying, *Vasudevas sarvamiti*, God is everywhere, he had come to Kasi to see God. The second mistake was that even while knowing that God is beyond our comprehension and description, *yato vaco nivartant e*, he tried to write books on divinity. The third mistake was that while knowing that one God manifested himself as

many, *ekoham bahu syam*, and that the same God is present in everyone, *atmavat sarva bhutani* and that awareness is in everyone, *prajnanam brahma*, he organised *mathas*, centers of learning, considering his disciples separate from him

You may also have heard another episode connected with his life. He prayed to his mother for permission to become a *Sanyasi*, a lifelong celibate. She didn't accept the proposal initially. One day Shankara went to a nearby river to have a bath. Suddenly a crocodile caught his feet. Then he started crying, "Mother! Mother! This crocodile is pulling me into the water. It is not going to leave me until you permit me to become a sanyasi!" His mother at last gave her permission and Shankara was released by the crocodile.

The inner meaning of the episode is that the river is comparable to *samsara*, worldly life in general, and the crocodile to *visaya*, sensual pleasure. Man is dragged into the river of life by the crocodile of worldly pleasure. Release is renunciation or detachment

Shankara shuffled off the mortal coil soon after completing the tasks he had set for himself because he was sure that his mission would be carried further by his disciples, the torchbearers of his philosophy, and that his theory of *advaita*, non-dualism, would be widely spread and propagated. His disciples too were of the stature and eminence to carry on his mission successfully.

Swami, Tyagaraja, very well known as a devotee of Rama, composed kr tis (kritis) (hymns in praise of the Lord) which are sung even today. What is special about them?

Bhagavan: There are many names of devotees who composed devotional songs all over the world. God also responded to them. Those songs make you ecstatic and sublime. But the hymns of Tyagaraja have a specialty about them. Every song of his is related to an incident in his life.

For example, when the King of Tanjore sent him jewels, provisions and costly presents, Tyagaraja mildly and politely rejected them and put to himself a question in the form of a *kr ti*, "*Nidhi cala sukhama ramuni sannidhi seva sukhama?*" Is it money that makes you happy or is it nearness to God?

Once his brother threw all the idols worshiped by Tyagaraja into the Kaveri River. Tyagaraja cried and cried for this loss. One day when he was taking his bath in the Kaveri, he could get by the grace of Rama those lost idols and holding them in his

palms, he brought them home singing, '*rara ma int i daka raghuvira sukumara:*' "Lord Rama! Please come home."

Like this, every song composed by Tyagaraja is associated with some real life occasion or incident. The hymns of Tyagaraja reflect practical devotion and surrender.

God is attributeless. He is above sattvika, rajasika and tamasika qualities. But we are bound by these three attributes. How can we realise God then?

Bhagawan: The Divine has two aspects. He can be experienced as the one with attributes and also as beyond them. You should know one thing chiefly. God is in the attributes. But, the attributes are not in Him. Attributes or traits cannot function and operate without divinity in them. Gold is in the jewelry. But jewels are not in gold. Pots are made of clay, but not vice versa. Silverware, like a glass or a plate, is made of silver. But, the glass and plate are not in silver

Likewise, God is present in the attributes. They are not present in God. So, in a way we can say that He has attributes and at the same time He is attributeless, *saguna* and *nirguna*.

Every man has three qualities, *satwa rajas* and *tamas*. But the one that dominates the other two decides his thinking feeling and action. But unless we transcend these three qualities we cannot experience Divinity in the true sense.

Thank you for your time. We will continue in a similar fashion next week.

Jai Sai Ram!