

Pain, Its Cause and Cure.

BY T. R. SUBRAMANIA IYER.

सर्वाणि भूतानि सुखे रमन्ति
सर्वाणि दुःखस्य भृशं त्रसन्ते ।

“All beings revel in pleasure; all shrink greatly from pain” (*Mahābhārata*). But in spite of any amount of effort, there is none who can say that unalloyed pleasure has been his lot in life. Kings as well as mendicants undergo miseries; none is immune from them. What, then, is the origin of pain and what its remedy? The *Vāsudevamanana* (the meditations of Vāsudeva), a standard work on the *Vedānta*, throws much light on this intricate problem.

Pain cannot be natural to man. If it were so, there would be no possibility of our ever freeing ourselves from it. For, any attempt to get rid of what is natural to oneself is to destroy one's own individuality. Hence, it follows, that pain is not natural but only accidental to the *Ātmā*. ‘अखण्डमानन्दमरूपमद्भुतम्’ “It (the *Ātmā*) is undivided, blissful, formless and wonderful.”

How then is misery caused, if bliss is the very nature of the *Ātmā*? It is only through embodiment. So long as the Self is in the body, there is misery. (Here, ‘body’ must be understood to mean not only the gross but also the subtle vehicles). It will be universally admitted that there is no such thing as unmixed happiness in the world. But the

reverend author of the *Vāsudevamananam* goes a step further and says that no happiness at all is enjoyed by anybody. It is only pain which appears, through delusion, as happiness. For example, a cooly who has got accustomed to carry heavy loads, is seen to sing and laugh as he trudges along with his burden.

If misery is the result of embodiment, what is the difference between a spiritually wise person and one who is not? The difference lies in the mental attitude of the two. Having known that pain is due to embodiment and that the *Ātmā* is of the nature of *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* (Absolute Existence, Knowledge and Bliss), the knower of Truth is free from all miseries. He does not identify himself with the body and knows no distinctions of class, nationality, etc. Although, through the connection with the body, he may seem to suffer, he remains unaffected, knowing the impermanent and illusory nature of the world.

The state of dreamless sleep is the nearest approach in our experience to the disembodied condition when we feel no misery. Hence, it must be known that embodiment is the cause of pain.

What is the cause of this embodiment? It is *Karma*, the result of past actions, good, bad and mixed, giving rise to the manifold differences

in birth. The human body is the result of mixed Karmas.

Now Karmas are performed by the three organs, mind, speech and body, impelled by various motives, good and bad. Lust, hatred, anger, arrogance, envy, etc., lead to evil actions and must be subdued. Faith in the sacred scriptures and Devotion to God lead to good actions and must be cultivated. Thus the mind must be cleared of all evil and made pure. For "bondage or emancipation arises to men in this world only through their mind and nothing else."

The motives and desires arise through attachment (*Abhimāna*), which is caused by the non-discrimination between the real and the

unreal (*Avivēka*). This want of discrimination is the result of *Ajñāna*, or ignorance of the true nature of the Self. Thus ignorance is the ultimate cause of Pain.

Ignorance is removed only through understanding. Renouncing all other undertakings, one must devote himself entirely to the enquiry into the nature of the *Ātman*, through the three methods of *Śrautya* (learning, literally hearing), *Manana* (reflection of the mind), and *Nidhhyāna* (continued meditation). "Whoever pursues this line of enquiry, is released even in this life from all bonds of mundane existence, and becomes emancipated in an embodied state and (afterwards) in a disembodied one. Thus do all the Vedāntas proclaim with one unanimous voice."
