

By Panchanana Tarkaratna.

(1) We should believe in God in order to attain the goal of our human existence.

Explanation:—

All living beings are under the influence of *Maya* (the enrapturing power of God), which consists of three properties, viz. *Sattva*, (Harmony), *Rajas* (Activity) and *Tamas* (Inertia). Knowledge and pleasure are the predominant features of *Sattva*, activity and pain are the main characteristics of *Rajas*, whereas obscurity and infatuation are the distinguishing marks of *Tamas*. These three attributes manifest themselves in all living beings in varying degrees. The faculty of reason is not fully developed in creatures other than human beings. Hence the *Tamas* element has the upper hand in them. Human beings, on the other hand, are pre-eminently active and should therefore ordinarily be classed as those having the *Rajas* element preponderating in them. But the *Sattva* element is also present in them in a varying degree according as they are born in a higher or lower grade (वर्ग) in society.

This triple cord, consisting of three attributes, binds all living beings. Individuals having the *Sattva* element predominant in them are bound by shackles of knowledge and pleasure, those in whom the *Rajas* element predominates are bound by the chains of activity and pain, whereas those in whom the *Tamas* element preponderates are under the influence of drowsi-

ness, error, sloth and fear. One can shake off these bonds only through Divine grace. The Lord Himself says in the *Bhagavadgita*:—

मामेष ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ।

“Only those who betake themselves to Me tide over this gulf of illusion.”

Letting alone the above dictum, a little effort on our part can enable us to perceive this truth intuitively. Whatever be the state of our mind, let us sit down a while even against our will and concentrate it on the lotus-like feet of our beloved Lord, installed on the pedestal of our heart, even though for a brief space of time. Then we shall see how delightful is the peace of mind we derive at that moment. The longer we are able to continue this practice the greater will be the degree of peace we enjoy. Once this composure of mind has acquired a permanent footing we shall easily attain the path of liberation in the event of our casting off this tabernacle of our body in such a state of mind. Disbelief in God can never enable us to attain this peace. We may possibly derive great pleasure from contact with woman and gold just as one who is addicted to wine is intoxicated by the same. But it does not give us peace of mind, nor does it lead to liberation. This cycle of birth and death has been likened to a perennial stream, and there is no knowing to what dreadful fathomless ocean we may be carried along this stream. Devotion to God is like an islet of bliss situated in the middle of

this stream. One who attains the shore of this islet is prevented from drifting along the stream. Otherwise there is no certainty as to in what particular species a man may be reborn after he has left this human frame, and may again be thrown into the whirlpool of birth and death. Surrendering oneself to God alone will make life worth the name. Then alone will it be able to make headway against the current and reach its very source.

(2) There is no harm which does not accrue from disbelief in God.

Explanation:—

An atheist may betake himself to truthfulness by way of expediency, but under such circumstances there is every likelihood of his being imperceptibly deflected from the path of truth. One who lacks faith in God and does not seek to win His grace can never escape the occasional fits of anger, lust, etc. by taking his stand on mere expediency, however keen he may be in serving his society, to say nothing of treading the path of peace. Thus, from disbelief in God accrue a number of evils such as deviation from the path of truth, loss of control over one's senses and inability to seek the path of peace.

(3) According to ancient philosophers God is above all proof. I am not inclined to say anything as to the significance of this dictum. My own belief, however, is that He is substantiated by all sorts of proofs. All created objects, from a planet down to the meanest blade of grass, testify to His existence. This universe, which is likened to a banyan tree, with its endless variety of objects, is not an accident, nor has it evolved out of something devoid of intelligence. The consummate skill

with which it has been modelled cannot be manifested by anyone else than the omniscient and omnipotent God. Besides this, I make bold to assert, on the strength of my own belief, that He makes himself visible and even audible to his devotees. Apart from the testimony of scriptures, I repeat once again that He is proved by all sorts of testimony. He is perceived by means of the senses, deduced by means of inference and known by the oral evidence of credible persons. No further proof for His existence need be sought for.

(4) Some 34 years ago, one night, I was going home from Calcutta by the 8 O'clock train. It was the dark half of the lunar month of Sravan and it was a cloudy night. I am a resident of the village of Bhattapalli, which is 22½ miles to the north of Calcutta. The railway station of Kankinara is at a distance of 22 miles from Calcutta. About six minutes' walk to the north of the station leads you to our school, and by walking further north for about four minutes my house is reached. A metalled road now connects the house with the railway line, though it did not exist then. There was, however, a small pond in front of the school, and to the east of it there was a wire-fencing along the railway line. A narrow foot-path ran to the east of the pond and westward of the wire-fencing. The Lord in His infinite mercy so willed that my mind was absorbed in repeating His name while the train was about to reach my destination. When the train arrived at Barrackpore, it was drizzling. The whole compartment which I occupied was vacated at Barrackpore, and I was transported with joy on my getting a splendid opportunity to repeat His name loudly. The thought of the rain and the dark night, however, made me a bit nervous for a few mo-

ments. I called to my mind the slippery road alongside the railway line and the difficulty of wading across the pond. I set my joy of the moment against the inconvenience which I was going to experience after alighting from the train. But the very next moment, the thought disappeared from my mind and I again began to enjoy the pleasure of chanting His name. This should not, however, be taken to mean that I had for the time being lost all consciousness of what was going on outside; for, when the train reached Kankinara, I was aware of it and got down from the train. My recitation of His names now stopped. It was dark everywhere. The direct route to my house was slippery, whereas the public road, which was the longer route, was infested by sots. At last my choice fell on the shorter route and I proceeded along it cautiously. I had not gone far when I came in sight of some one with a lantern in his hand, advancing rapidly towards me. On my approaching the verge of the road I recognised them to be two of my own students and asked in a tone of surprise as to whither they were going. They replied that they were going to receive me. I further asked them as to how they had come to know that I was coming by that train. They wondered whether it was not I who had been calling them by name so loud from the train which had just passed in front of them, and added that it was in response to my call that they had hurried along. I then pointed out to my students that the train had left in a northerly direction, and wondered what had brought them southward. They replied, "We cannot exactly tell you why we did so. We meant, however, to look for you at the Kankinara station first and then to proceed northward to Naihati, if we failed to find you at the

former station." I thought how unlucky I was. I could not imagine the extent of divine favour which would have been showered on me, had I not thought of the ordinary inconvenience which I was to undergo on the way. The state of my mind at that moment was more than what I can now describe: tears were streaming from my eyes. My heart was too full with gratitude, and I congratulated the students in a choked voice on the rare fortune of having heard the blessed words of the Lord Himself; for I had never called them.

Both these students in course of time secured higher diplomas and turned out to be teachers. One of them, Mathuresa Tarkatirtha, secured an appointment as Court Pandit in the Simlapal Estate. He is no more in this world. The other, Ramaraksha Tarkatirtha, is the principal of the premier Sanskrit school in the District of Midnapur.

I would have had further proofs of divine grace in those days; but, as I advanced in age, my devotion to the Lord gradually diminished. I am now far off from the Lord. I am a forlorn servant and an offender. I was little inclined to bring these things to light; but the fact that He has slipped out of my memory and that I am no longer able to feel His mercy has made me despondent, and that is why I find myself compelled to record my experience to-day.

I shall conclude my answer to the fourth question by recording that I was only ten when I lost my father and subsequently my mother within an interval of 22 hours. Ever since then the Lord, who is the Father, the Mother, the Supporter and the Grand sire of this universe, all in one, (पिताहमस्य जयतो माता यता पितामहः) has been both a father and a mother

to me. It is He who brought me up, educated me and did all that parents do for their children. Every trifling incident relating to that period testifies to His being both a Father and Mother to me. The knowledge of these facts, however, is confined to myself alone: there is none else who can be produced as a witness. Hence I have refrained from mentioning them and have recorded only one incident which can be corroborated by a living witness having a sound brain. It was, indeed, He who called my students, lantern in hand, to the railway station. What has driven me to this conclusion is that the students in question were reading in my school along with many others. It is impossible for a human voice coming from a moving train to be heard from a distance. Although our school is about 60 feet from the railway line, to call out repeatedly from the moving train and that, too, in my voice cannot but be the work of the Lord. The students said to me, "We hastened to meet you, doubtless led by your voice. Naihati is $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of Kankinara. Had we missed you here, we would have gone there. What brought us to Kankinara

even though we heard you calling out from the train which had left Kankinara for Naihati, we cannot say. A strong impulse, however, prompted us to look for you at Kankinara first."

This instance of Divine grace, though a trifling one, reveals the solicitude of the Almighty Father, who foresaw the inconvenience that I—His child—would have to face in traversing the slippery road in the dark night, and provided against the same. As the exact time of my arriving home had not been fixed beforehand, I could not make any previous arrangement. This was done by the Almighty Father, who provided for my being met in the way by my students with a lamp.

Even now, though I am destitute of devotion and have grown hard-hearted, I am really filled with rapture when I recollect this instance of His kindness. There are several other incidents as well, which, however, I find myself unable to record here.

Dear Poddarji, may you live long! Your question has revived my feelings of that time and comforted me for a moment.

