

# The Mystery of Life.

BY JAYADAYAL GOYANDKA.

The world is, indeed, a wonderful show. Man is born here and grows, he enjoys, procreates, brings up children, acquires money, land, dwellings and all other objects of enjoyment; in acquiring these things he acts indiscriminately without any sense of right and wrong, and, in the end, leaving all those things here, meeting with disappointment and a sense of frustration, carrying a heavy load of worries and sins over his head, he departs from this vain world. Such, indeed, is the story of life of the majority of men. Where lies the difference between this life and the life of an animal?

The animal also fills its stomach, procreates and, in the end, dies. In some respects, however, the animal fares better than the modern man. It has not to worry about the future, it does not accumulate and does not cut other's throat for that purpose. The animal has not that sense of good and evil with which God has endowed man. But still man does not reflect for what purpose this human life has been given him—is it for satisfaction of the palate, for the accumulation of wealth and objects of enjoyment, and, in the end to leave everything here and die in utter helplessness? Does the fulfilment of human life, which, according to the scriptures, even the gods envy, lie only in sense-enjoyment? Other species of beings also readily get these enjoyments. The joy which

Indra, the chief of gods, derives in the company of his queen is the same in kind which a dog derives in the company of a bitch. A hog finds in ordure the same pleasure of taste which we derive from the most delicious dishes. An ass feels as comfortable by stretching himself on a dung-hill as we do in reclining on soft velvet cushions. Where, then, lies the distinction between man and animal? Why do we consider ourselves superior to animals? How many of us seriously turn our thoughts on these questions? We have made of this life an occasion only for sense-enjoyment and constantly think of ourselves only in terms of the physical body. We have come to regard the body itself as our self and do not consider it necessary to know whether there is anything beyond it. We are loath to inquire whither we have to go after death or whether there is any life beyond; whether even after death we have to reap the consequences of our good and evil deeds done here in this life. All that we seek is that we should be happy and prosperous in this very life, holding positions of power and honour and getting things of sense-pleasure. That has come to be the goal of our life. But is this the correct goal? Let us consider the point in the present article.

Life has not been given us only for the enjoyment of worldly pleasures.

All such pleasure is transitory, unstable and momentary. Like the momentary flash of a fire-fly, sense-enjoyment creates an impression of joy only during the process of enjoyment. But both before and after that experience it is only a source of trouble; for before enjoyment one suffers from the desire for enjoyment, and after enjoyment from the consequence of it. The joy identified with the object of enjoyment is a false joy. Inherently the external object is not the source of joy. If it had been so, the joy should have subsisted and not vanished. For while distinguishing between the real and the unreal, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has taught us in the *Gītā* that the real never ceases to exist, while the unreal has no existence whatsoever 'नासतो विद्यते भावो नामावो विद्यते सतः ।' Therefore, the joy which is immutable, eternal and imperishable is real joy. The joy which is momentary, now existent but lost the very next moment, is no joy at all; it is a false appearance of joy—an illusion. The Lord classifies all objective happiness as Rajasic in character and as painful as poison in its effect:

विषयेन्द्रियसंयोगाच्चतदग्रेऽमृतोपमम् ।  
परिणामे विषमिव तत्सुखं राजसं स्मृतम् ॥

( *Gītā* XVIII. 38 )

"The happiness which is derived from contact of the senses with their objects appears like nectar in the beginning, but in the end becomes like poison. Therefore, it is called the Rajasic form of happiness."

Similarly, the Lord describes happiness of the Tamasic kind as follows:

यदग्रे चानुवन्धे च सुखं मोहनमात्मनः ।

निद्रालस्यप्रमादोत्थं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥

( *Gītā* XVIII. 39 )

"The happiness which deludes the soul both in the beginning and in the end and which is derived from sleep, indolence and carelessness is called the Tamasic form of happiness."

With a view to bring home the truth that happiness derived from sense-objects is only an appearance of happiness and not real happiness, Mahātmās generally repeat an illustration. On the bank of a lake there stood a tree in one branch of which hung a gem of exceptional lustre and beauty. The gem reflected in the water of the lake. A passer-by accidentally saw this reflection and taking it to be the gem itself plunged into the water to take possession of it. He began to dive repeatedly into the water but could not catch hold of the gem. A Mahātmā, who observed this fruitless effort of the man spoke to him as follows: "Friend, it is not the gem, which you are trying to get in the water, but only a reflection of it. The gem is there hanging in a branch of the tree. If you go on plunging after the reflection all your life, you will never be able to catch hold of it. If you seek to possess the gem, do not trouble yourself any longer by pursuing the reflection, but look up and climb the tree and get the gem." The man now realized his mistake, therefore turning away from the reflection he climbed the tree according to the direction of the Mahātmā, and secured the gem. Those who wander after

sense-objects in search of happiness are like the ignorant man in this illustration vainly trying to get hold of the reflection. This is what is actually happening in the world today. That is why we are deprived of real happiness and have to suffer all our life. But in spite of our repeated disappointments and griefs we do not abandon the hope of getting happiness from sense-objects, but always cling to them. How great is the power of Delusion! Like the man intoxicated with wine and lost to all sense of the past and future we, too, have lost our power of discernment intoxicated with this wine of Delusion and are wandering like lunatics in pursuit of the objects of sense-enjoyment—“पीत्वा मोहमयीं प्रमाद-मदिरासुग्मत्तभूतं जगत्”.

Even if we admit for a moment that there is some amount of happiness in sense-objects—as we have actual practical experience of it in life—this much must be clear to all minds that that happiness is scanty and ephemeral; it cannot last for ever. Had it been eternal, those who possess it in abundance would always remain happy and would never know any grief. But such is not the case in the world as we know it. On the contrary, it is found that the greater the number of objects of sense-enjoyment possessed by a man, the greater is his misery and unhappiness. And this is quite natural. For objects which are themselves ephemeral, can never bring eternal happiness. Every object of the world is perishable and is moving towards destruction.

Rather it may be said that every moment it is perishing. Like the flame of a lamp or water in a river, which though appearing constant is always changing; every object is undergoing change from moment to moment. Take, for instance, the case of milk. Its appearance, quality and taste will change from day to day with the passage of time. The sweet milk of today will be the sour milk tomorrow and it will begin to emit stench when kept for another day. A few days more and the milk which in taste and effect once worked as an elixir, would become a poison. This analogy applies, more or less, to all objects of the world. Some undergo the change rapidly and others slowly. But all must change. How can it be reasonable for us to expect eternal happiness from these transient objects?

Nor are our relations with the objects eternal. The things that we possess and are proud of today, may be snatched away from us tomorrow. Even this body on which we base our relations with objects, does not belong to us. How, then, can these objects belong to us? Our contact with this body may at any moment be cut off and when that happens, all objects which we hold as belonging to us will naturally no longer belong to us. We do not even remember what things we possessed and who our relations were in our previous life, not to speak of the nature of those things or relations. In the same way, once we depart from life we shall have no connection

whatsoever with things which belong to us in the present life. Their very memory will be effaced from our mind. However hard we may try, not a single object will accompany us to the other world. Death is sure to come in its own time. We shall not be able to avoid it for a single moment when it comes. Under the circumstance, we can ourselves realize how far it is wise for us to remain attached to these worldly objects, regard them as our own and spend our whole life in accumulating them?

Besides, all sense-enjoyments are momentary as well as fatal like honey mixed up with poison. Although appearing pleasant at the moment of enjoyment, they are painful in their effect. Take the case of sexual indulgence. Compare the seeming joy of the moment with the great grief it brings in its train. It destroys strength, energy, vital power, longevity and power of the mind; it ruins one's prospects in this and the next world and brings physical lethargy and fatigue. Is it not foolish to throw away one's life in pursuit of such momentary pleasure? Therefore, we should try our best to give up the infatuation for sense-pleasures and seek with all our heart the real, imperishable and eternal joy which survives even after death. To attain that happiness is the goal of human life, it is the supreme object of effort, the one thing which the Vedas and all other scriptures command us to attain. When this is attained man becomes happy and exalted for all

time and his life's mission is fulfilled. He gets over the cycle of births and deaths; he is freed from grief, fear, sorrow and worries and delivered from every form of bondage. This is called realization of God, or realization of the Supreme State. To attain this is our foremost duty. It is for this purpose that we have been granted the privilege of human birth.

Sense-enjoyments can be obtained in the lower strata of life as much as on the plane of the gods. We have all lived innumerable lives. Times without number we may have enjoyed celestial pleasures, times without number we may have held the position of Indra, the chief of gods, and overlordship here on earth; times without number, again, we must have enjoyed the pleasure of sex, the pleasure of possessing children, the pleasure of the palate and all other sense-pleasures. But we are not yet satisfied, and our search for happiness is as strong as ever. And so long as we do not reach God, the source of eternal and boundless happiness, this search and hankering for happiness will remain unimpaired, we shall never know any peace or satisfaction. The nature of the soul is to seek Infinite Bliss. Unless this is reached, it will not find peace and rest, and its wanderings will not cease. It is, therefore, man's imperative duty that he should resolutely turn away from all fruitless wanderings after sense-objects and, without turning either to right or to the left, engage himself in constant and indefatigable effort for the attainment of Supreme Bliss.

Supreme Bliss is possible of attainment only in a human body, and in no other. For the other bodies are passive instruments for enjoying pleasure or pain as determined by past Karma. In them one has to reap the consequences of good or evil deeds done in the human body. Freedom of action and will lie only with man, wherefore the human body is called the field of Karma (action), and as such held superior to all other bodies. Goswami Tulasidasji has aptly called it the place of Sadhana (साधन-धाम), and the gateway of liberation. That is why the gods always long to take birth in a human body, which though shorter than celestial life is still enviable to them. It is only through the grace of God that one gets this birth. When wandering through the eighty-four lakhs of Yonis (species of life) the Jiva feels thoroughly exhausted and distressed, God takes pity on him and grants him the privilege of a human birth:

कवहुँक करि कहना नर देही । देत ईस बिनु हेतु सनेही ॥

What can be a greater folly if even after the possession of the human body, we do not attempt to fulfil the object of our existence—the object to gain which we are born here on earth? Men who neglect this goal are called by the scriptures ungrateful and destroyers of self. Goswami Tulasidas repeats the same Shastraic declaration when he says:

जो न तरै भव सागर नर समाज अस पाइ ।  
सो कृत निंदक मंदमति आतमहन गति जाइ ॥

“He who though possessing a human birth does not (attempt to) cross

the ocean of existence, is an abuser of the good done to him, a fool, who follows the course of those who are guilty of committing suicide.”

We shall not get this human body over and over again. It is a rare opportunity and if we lose it, we shall have nothing but repentance as our lot. Lower beings than the human have not the discriminating power of good and evil, of right and wrong, nor the capacity for a right ordering of life according to the Śāstras and reaching the highest state of happiness through pursuit of a definite course of spiritual discipline. We should, therefore, attain to that state of perfect happiness as early as we can in this very life, leaving no stone unturned in our effort to attain it. In that lies our wisdom and the fulfilment of the object of our existence. If we do not achieve this, all our acquisition of worldly objects, wealth, honour, fame, cars and aeroplanes, large family, retinue of servants and dependants, in fact, all the paraphernalia of a man possessing riches would be not only of no avail but direct means to hell, to a life far below the human level as a result of the wrongs and sins we may perpetrate in their acquisition. On the other hand, if we put our life to its best use and achieve the purpose for which we entered it, we have made a success of it, we have fulfilled the very object of existence, even though from the worldly standpoint we have to live a life of misery and suffering, without honour and fame, despised by all,

driven from door to door and with none even to sympathize with us.

Now let us consider what are the means of total annihilation of suffering and attainment of eternal happiness. All beings crave for happiness, none seeks to be unhappy. But happiness is nowhere met with in this world. Wherever you turn you will find people raising plaintive and piteous cries of distress. All are burning in the fire of agony and restlessness. One who appears comparatively happy is hankering for greater happiness, he is not satisfied with his present conditions and is burning with jealousy at the sight of other people who are happier and more prosperous than he; he plans to bring about the downfall of his opponents and lives in constant dread of losing or being robbed of the honour and wealth he now possesses. He cannot bear the slightest opposition and becomes fearfully jealous and revengeful against those who oppose him or act against his wishes. Others pay him in his own coin and thus the whole atmosphere is filled with fear, malice, hatred and dissensions in the flaming fires of which men burn themselves day and night, making their lives miserable and restless followed after death by unbearable tortures in hell. This is why the Lord describes the world as the 'abode of sorrow' दुःखालयम्. Everyone of us smarts under the feeling of one or other kind of want, and want is the cause of sorrow. To turn away the face from this painful existence, to abandon all hope of happiness from this abode of grief

and take refuge in God, who is the supreme repository of Bliss, to know Him in truth and cultivate devotion for Him, to practise the Japa of His Name and meditation on His form, to obey His commands and remain content with whatever He ordains for us, is the one easy way to gain His grace and it is grace which frees man from all misery and sorrow and makes him competent to reach the highest state of Bliss, which having been gained there remains nothing more for man to gain, his life's object gets fulfilled, and all duality and struggle come to an end.

Now, the question arises, why does man become a victim of worry, grief, fear and sorrow, etc.? If all our happiness and grief proceed from our Prārabdha, *i. e.*, Karma which has begun to bear fruit, the fact has to be explained with its reference to the case of liberated souls who also are subject to Prārabdha, for without the residue of Prārabdha they cannot remain in the body. We often find them to be afflicted by physical ailments and physical suffering; and yet they are not subject to pleasure and pain, joy and grief. The *Śruti* says: हर्षशोकौ जहाति "He abandons joy and grief." "तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः" "where is the cause of delusion and grief, when he is established in Oneness" The same thing has been said by the *Gītā*, "गतात्मनगताश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः" "The wise do not bemoan the dead or the living." Many similar extracts may be quoted from the scriptures to show that great souls who have realized the Self are

not affected by joy and grief, pleasure and pain. Occasions which bring joy and grief to ordinary men, produce no such effect in them, they remain unmoved and equal under all circumstances. This proves that Prārabdhā is not the cause of joy and grief, happiness and sorrow; it is ignorance which causes these reactions. When ignorance is dispelled, worry, fear and grief utterly disappear. And ignorance is dispelled by true realization and knowledge of the Supreme Being. As darkness disappears before light, even so the darkness of ignorance disappears when the sun of Knowledge rises in the heart. Therefore, in order to get release from grief and sorrow, man should devote all his time to attainment of the real Knowledge of the Paramātmā, and not rest until he has gained it. This Knowledge can be gained by the practice of virtues described by the *Gītā* as divine qualities (दैवीसम्पद्) and cultivation of discrimination and dispassion. The divine qualities can be gained by the practice of Devotion. Thus practice of Devotion is the best discipline for realization of Divine Knowledge. Man should take to this practice with faith in the Lord and love for Him.

In the practice of devotional worship of God, all men have an equal right. Of whatever caste, race, society or occupation a man may be, there is nothing to bar his practice of Devotion to God. It does not demand any learning or knowledge; even the most ignorant and insignificant man,

and the greatest of sinners can by the practice of devotion purify themselves and receive His grace and attain Him quickly by the power of grace. The Lord thus declares in the *Gītā*:

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।

साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।

कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

( IX. 30-31 )

“Even if the most sinful worship Me with exclusive Devotion, he too should be accounted righteous; for he has rightly resolved. That is, he has decided once for all that there is nothing which is equal in importance to Bhajana or devoted worship. Quickly he becomes virtuous and obtains lasting peace. O son of Kuntī, know for certain that My devotee never perishes.”

Not only this, the Lord Himself endows His devotee with supreme Knowledge and dispels the darkness of ignorance of his heart. Says the *Gītā*:

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।

ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥

तेषामेवानुक्मार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः ।

नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्यो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥

( X. 10-11 )

“On those ever united (with Me) and remembering and worshipping Me with love, I am pleased to confer that intellectual equipment by means of which they are enabled to reach Me. To confer My favour on them, I, dwelling in their heart, dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining light of wisdom.”

It should be no wonder for a man of devotion and meditation to gain by God's grace, highest bliss and perfect peace, when even a man of no knowledge, of no mental development, can reach the Divine by taking shelter under a devotee of God and carrying out his instructions. The Lord says in the *Gītā*:

अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वान्येभ्य उपासते ।  
तेऽपि चातिदरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥

"But others not knowing (Dhyānayoga, Jñānayoga and Karmayoga), worship by hearing from others; and those, too, who are intent on hearing and carry out instructions, go beyond death."

Now, it may be asked what is the reason that by constant practice of Bhajana all sufferings are brought to an end and God is realized? This truth will be made clear by a consideration of the following psychological fact. Whatever thought or idea a man strongly cultivates throughout life, is bound to be the object of remembrance at the time of his death, and he attains after death whatever idea takes possession of his mind at the last moment. The *Gītā* says:

यं यं वापि स्मरन् भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।  
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥

"Whatever thoughts, O Arjuna, a man may be possessed of at the last moment when he leaves the body that he attains, being absorbed therein."

That is why the Lord says:

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्मुक्त्वा कलेवरम् ।  
यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥

"He who, at the time of death, leaves the body, remembering Me alone, attains My state. There is no doubt about it."

All this shows clearly enough that any man, howsoever sinful or unintelligent he may be, can be delivered from bondage in a moment, if he only takes to the practice of God-remembrance. We should, therefore, habituate ourselves with the constant remembrance of God amidst all our external activities. This practice, when properly cultivated, will eliminate, root and branch, all propensities for sin and vice, and make life virtuous, and endowing us with the true knowledge of God, will bring us easily, swiftly and for all time realization of Supreme Bliss and Supreme Peace.

