

WHO ARE YOU? I AM I

*Peace has become extinct
Truth has become scarce
Mind is the cause for both
Oh! Valiant sons of Bharat! Listen!*

(Telugu poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Bharatiya does not mean a person born in the country of Bharat alone. The culture of Bharat is the mother. The country of Bharat is the father. Bharatiya is one who has faith in and lives under the care of these parents. Several noble souls have taken birth in Bharat, followed the great culture of this country and set examples to others. Sri Sankaracharya is one such great personality who spread the culture of Bharat throughout the length and breadth of the country and earned eternal fame. Adi Sankara taught the philosophy of Advaita. Three centuries after him came Sri Ramanujacharya who advocated the Visishtadvaita system of philosophy which emphasised Bhakti (devotion) and Prapatthi (surrender) to God. Two centuries after Sri Ramanujacharya, Sri Madhwacharya arrived on the scene and propagated the Dvaita system of philosophy emphasising the devotional path to the people vacillating between several systems of philosophy. However, the fundamental principle underlying all the three schools of philosophy is one and the same, that is, Atma Tattwa (Atmic principle).

The Advaita (non-dualistic) philosophy of Sri Sankaracharya

advocates the oneness of Jiva (individual soul) and Brahman (cosmic soul). The Visishtadvaita philosophy of Sri Ramanujacharya presupposes that Jiva and Brahman are different. Sri Madhwacharya explained that there are, in fact, three concepts, namely, Dehatma Bhava (body consciousness), Jivatma Bhava (individualised form of God) and Paramatma Bhava (the universalised soul or the Supreme self). Nobody need hold on to a particular school of thought or deride the others. The question of adhering to a particular school of philosophy depends upon the mental frame work of the individual. Sri Sankaracharya emphasised that though the cloth is of different varieties, the thread underlying the cloth is one and the same. "The cloth is made of a number of threads woven together", explained Sri Ramanujacharya. One has to recognise the underlying principle behind the three schools of philosophy, namely, the Advaita, the Visishtadvaita and the Dvaita,

Ornaments are many, gold is one;

colours of the cows are many, milk is one;

Beings are many, the Indweller is one;

Nationalities are many, humanness is one.

Adi Sankara had a short life span of 32 years. Though the philosophy advocated by Sri Sankaracharya, Sri Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwacharya acquired different names, namely, Advaita, Visishtadvaita and

Dvaita, the underlying nature of the three types is one, that is Atma Tattwa. The same can be explained with the example of gold forming the base for ornaments with different names and forms. Not realising the fundamental unity between the three schools of philosophy, people adhering to the different schools of philosophy derided one another which gave scope for a number of misconceptions in the world about the country of Bharat. In order to explain the truth *Ekatma Sarva Bhutantaratma* (one Atma dwells in all beings), Adi Sankara gave some examples. He took out an ornament and explained that the metal with which the ornament was made was gold, thus going into the fundamental principle. The same principle was explained in a different way by Sri Ramanujacharya who emphasised that though gold forms the basis for the ornament, since it has assumed the form of a chain, it should be termed as a gold chain. Sri Sankaracharya while advocating the Advaita philosophy quoted the Vedic dictum *Ekameva Adviteeyam Brahma* (God is one without a second). Sri Ramanujacharya, however, did not agree with this view. His viewpoint was how could there be a Prathibimba (image) without a Bimba (object). He thus explained the oneness of the object and the image, which he termed as Visishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism). Another example given in this context was the sugarcane juice. The juice is extracted from different varieties of sugarcane and a number of sweetmeats are made out of the juice. Though the juice is one, it has now assumed different forms. While Sri Sankaracharya

emphasised the oneness of the sweet juice and the sugarcane, Sri Ramanujacharya dwelt upon the different forms the juice has assumed. Thus, ever since the times of the three great Acharyas till today, there are a number of arguments and counter arguments between the three schools of philosophy. But, present day students do not have faith in any of these three schools of philosophy. They just brush aside these systems as a figment of imagination. Sugar made out of the sugarcane juice is the main ingredient for making various sweets. The sugar is sweet. Similarly, Brahman is the source and sustenance for the entire universe. Wherever you see, you will find manifestation of the Divine (Brahman) in ever so many forms. The forms change and are illusory in nature. Brahman alone is the eternal, changeless principle. That is why Sri Sankaracharya has declared *Brahma Sathyam Jagat Mithya* (Brahman alone is real, the world is illusory). All the three great Acharyas, namely, Sri Sankaracharya, Sri Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwacharya propagated the same principle, that is Atma Tattwa. The Upanishads declare that the entire universe is permeated by the same Atmic principle. That truth is contained in the Upanishadic dicta *Ekatma Sarva Bhutantaratma* (one Atma dwells in all beings), *Easwarah Sarva Bhutanam* (God is the Indweller of all beings) and *Isavasyam Idam Sarvam* (the entire universe is permeated by God). The rain, the water that flows into the river and the sand in the river that sustains it, all are one and only one. Everything is Brahman. Since every object in this universe is Brahman, nothing can be disregarded or ignored. This principle of

Brahman is called “Divine” in the English language. But, many ignorant or cynical persons take it as “deep wine” and take to imbibing intoxicating substances. Disregarding such perversion, we have to realise that the sweetness underlying Divinity is one only. This oneness in the great culture of Bharat has been propagated since ancient times. In keeping with this great tradition, consider everyone, whether it is an ant or an animal or a human being, as verily Brahman. Some people may have a doubt in this context whether a human being and an animal can be equated. Yes, so far as the Atmic principle is concerned. However, the behavioural pattern of the animal is different from that of the human being. Considering this aspect, one may conclude that they are different but the underlying Jiva Tattwa is one and the same. On the basis of this Jiva Tattwa, you cannot differentiate at all between the living beings. Thus, *Sarvam Brahmamaya Jagat* (the entire universe is permeated by Brahman). This truth can be explained by a simple example. This is a white cloth and that is a saffron cloth. Though the colours are different, the cloth is one. The cloth may be of different colours and put to different uses, but the cloth is only one and the same. The cloth is the source. One has to recognise the oneness of the source. Once you recognise the source, all differences vanish in no time. Unfortunately, today, we are giving importance to the names and forms, forgetting the basis and source for all names and forms. As a result, we are undergoing innumerable difficulties and sorrows.

Adi Sankara has explained the

Advaitic principle beautifully in his famous Bhaja Govindam song thus:

*Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam
Govindam Bhaja Moodha Mathe
Samprapthe Sannihithe Kale
Nahi Nahi Rakshati Dukrun Karane.*

(Oh foolish man, chant the name of Govinda, the rules of grammar will not come to your rescue when the end approaches.)

If the end approaches, nothing can save you except the Divine Name. Therefore, chant the Divine Name. Thus, Sri Sankaracharya exhorted, awakened and taught the world.

Further explaining the sorrows and difficulties faced by man in his life’s sojourn in this objective world and the need to seek refuge in the Divine grace, Sri Sankaracharya composed the following stanza:

*Punarapi Jananam Punarapi Maranam
Punarapi Janani Jathare Sayanam
Iha Samsare Bahu Dustare
Kripayapare Pahi Murare.*

(Oh Lord! I am caught up in this cycle of birth and death time and again; I am experiencing the agony of staying in the mother’s womb. It is very difficult to cross this ocean of worldly life. Please take me across this ocean and grant me liberation.)

One has to analyse, in this context, as to what is it that is subject to birth and death again and again. The Deha (body) undergoes this cycle of birth and death, but the Atma is eternal. As long as the Atma remains in the body as the Indweller, there will be consciousness in the body. The moment the Atma leaves the body, it becomes jada (inert). This

phenomenon is called death. Unable to realise this truth, man subjects himself to sorrow. Birth and death are only for the outer form, not for the Atma. A short story in this context. There was once a philosopher-son, who was learning Vedas. By the time he completed his Vedic learning, his mother completed forty years of life. She left her mortal body in her 40th year. The son was deeply immersed in sorrow. Then, his guru called him and tried to counsel him explaining, "Whom do you consider as your mother? The body? No, this is not your mother. You are wailing over a dead body which your mother has left. In fact, the body is right before you. Why should you have to weep? The Chaitanya Shakti (power of consciousness) has left the body. It means that Chaitanya Shakti represents your father and mother, not the forms and attachments to those forms. No doubt, it is true that relationship does exist with the physical form for sometime. But, thereafter the body ceases to exist. When you realise the truth, you will understand the futility of the relationship with the physical body". The objects may be different, but the source and sustenance for the objects is only one. The same source assumes different names and forms. One should not develop dependence on the names and forms, which are subject to change. This simple truth based on the Mooladhara Tattwa has been explained by different people in different ways as high sounding philosophy. This has given scope to some misconceptions to a certain extent. In fact, the underlying principle behind the Advaita philosophy of Sri Sankaracharya and Visishtadvaita philosophy of Sri

Ramanujacharya is one and the same.

Embodiments of Love! Students!

Today, we are taking very lightly such a great and noble philosophy. Sri Sankaracharya's Philosophy is profound in nature and explains the great truth in simple and beautiful poetry. Any amount of explanation will be insufficient to bring out the underlying philosophy in full measure. Sri Sankaracharya has written a great commentary (bhashya) on Bhagavad Gita also. In his commentary on Gita, Adi Sankara has explained that there is Advaita in Dvaita and Dvaita in Advaita. Further, the Visishtadvaita contains both Advaita and Dvaita concepts as well. All the three schools of philosophy, therefore lead to the same goal and their underlying meaning is *Brahma Sathyam Jaganmithya* (Brahman alone is the truth and the world is illusory). The whole world appears as containing innumerable names and forms. One should not be enmeshed with these names and forms. It is only when the names and forms are set aside and the underlying source is identified that it is possible to recognise the truth. And that truth is *Tattwamasi* (That Thou Art). That is *Prajnanam Brahma* (constant integrated awareness is Brahman). That awareness is *Ayam Atma Brahma* (This Self is Brahman). When you analyse the Mahavakya *Tattwamasi*, it will lead you to the awareness "I am That" and "That I am". When you are able to realise this truth, you will find that the principle "I" underlies everything in the universe as the principle of unity. We have to recognise that "I" principle which is universal. It is a futile exercise to get into arguments and counter-arguments over

this matter and waste one's time. The only aspect you have to realise is "I am Brahman". When somebody questions you who you are, the proper answer would be "I am I", "I am the word, I am the form and I am the name". This "I" represents and explains everything. When somebody questions who you are, do not reply by quoting your name. The name represents the name given to the body. You are not the body. Hence reply "I am I". Everyone should strive to attain that state of unity.

The Vedantic concepts lead to endless arguments and counter-arguments. Do not enter into them. Always be under the awareness "I am I". This "I" principle is beyond names and forms. It represents Brahma Tattwa, which is one without a second entity.

When somebody enquires who you are, you reply, "I am I." Similarly, when you enquire somebody who he is, his reply would be "I am I." Thus all are "I am I." It is only when you think "I am not I" that there will be several questions.

Dear students!

You have to finally make a firm resolve "I am I." You should not identify yourself with the body and say, "I am a child", "I am a young man", "I am an old man", etc. These differences relate to the age factor. What is the next stage after old age? Nobody knows. But, "I" principle exists in the child, youth and old age. This is the fundamental and changeless principle. Therefore, when somebody enquires who you are, you reply, "I am I." If he is unable to understand this principle, do not bother; you hold on to your principle. It is only when you develop such firm conviction that you will be able to achieve

anything in life. The philosophical concepts can be explained in ever so many ways. They contain several meanings.

On the 20th October 1940, I made a declaration for the first time revealing my true identity thus:

*Know that I am Sai in reality,
Cast off your worldly relationships,
Give up your efforts to restrain Me,
The worldly attachments can no longer
bind Me,
None, however great he may be, can hold
Me.* (Telugu poem)

Since I made this declaration on the 20th October, people celebrate this day in a big way. We should not give too much importance to the dates and try to celebrate them as birthday, Avatar Declaration Day, etc. Once Rukmini, the consort of Lord Krishna invited Him to her palace saying, "Swami! Today is my birthday. Please come for dinner." Sathyabhama, another consort of Krishna who was present on that occasion was angry. She argued, "If today is your birthday, this is also the day on which I entered into the in-laws' house. Krishna tied the nuptial knot round my neck on this day. Therefore, He should visit my house only, on this day." Thus, the day turned out to be a day of quarrel between the two consorts. Lord Krishna, however was prepared for visiting both the houses. He does not differentiate between them. Thus, one has to recognise the principle of unity in Divinity.