

CHAPTER XVII THE DIVINE

Brahman (The Impersonal or Supra-personal Absolute) Brahman and the reality of relative experience- Personal Deity, known also as Isvara, Maya and Sakti-God in every thing- The Divine both with and without form-Some Divine forms,-Divine immanence- The Divine and man's moral responsibility

Brahman (The Impersonal or Supra-Personal Absolute)

835. What is the conception .of **Brahman**? It cannot be explained in words. If a man is called upon to give an idea of the ocean to one who has never seen it, he can only say, "It is a vast sheet of water, a big expanse of water; it is water, water all around."

836. The Vedas, the Tantras, the Puranas and all the sacred scriptures of the world have become Uchchhishta as it were (*i.e.*, defiled like the food thrown out of the mouth), because they have come out of, and have so often been repeated, by human mouths. But **Brahman** or the Absolute has never been so defiled, for no one has yet been able to express it by speech.

837. What is the nature of **Brahman**? It is without attributes, without motion, immovable, unshakable, firm as the Mount Meru.

838. **Brahman** is unattached to good or evil. It is like the flame of a lamp. You may read the **Bhagavata** (a holy scripture), or forge a document-you can do both with the help of the same light. Again, **Brahman** is like a serpent. What does it matter if it has poison in its fangs? It is none the worse for it; the poison does not cause its death. It is poison only to other creatures whom it may happen to bite. Much in the same way, misery, sin and whatever other evil we find in this world, are just so only in relation to us. **Brahman** is above and beyond all these. Good and evil in creation are not so to **Brahman**. **Brahman** is not to be judged by any human standard of good and evil.

839. **Brahman** is above and beyond both knowledge and ignorance" good and evil, **Dharma** and **Adharma**. It is indeed beyond all dual throngs.

840. **Brahman** is beyond mind and speech, beyond concentration and meditation (**Dharana** and **Dhyana**), beyond the knower, the known and knowledge, beyond even the conception of the real and the unreal. In short, it is beyond all relativity.

841. The Absolute is like the air which carries odours, be they good or bad, but remains ever untainted by them.

842. The Absolute is beyond all attributes-beyond whatever is connected with **Maya**. **Brahman** and **Maya**. Then, lowering one finger, he taught him that, when **Maya** vanishes, nothing of the universe remains. Only the Absolute **Brahman** is.

Brahman and the Reality of Relative Experience

843. God alone is true; His manifestations as living beings and the world **Jiva** and **Jagat**) are untrue, *i.e.*, non eternal.

844. It is an easy thing to say that the world is an illusion, but do you know what that really means? It is like the burning of camphor, which leaves no residue. It is not even like the burning of wood, which leaves ashes behind. Only when discrimination ends, and the highest **Samadhi** is attained, there is absolutely no recognition of 'I', 'thou' and the universe.

845. In the course of his instructions to his disciple, the **Guru** raised two fingers, by which he meant the duality of **Brahman** and **Maya**. Then, lowering one finger, he taught him that, when **Maya** vanishes, nothing of the universe remains. Only the Absolute **Brahman** is.

846. **Brahman**, the absolute and the unconditioned, is realised in **Samadhi** alone. Then it is all silence-all talk of reality and unreality, of **Jiva** and **Jagat**, of knowledge and ignorance, is hushed. There remains, then, only 'Is-ness' (Being), and nothing else. For verily the salt doll tells no tale when it has become one with the infinite sea. This 'is **Brahma-jnana**.

847. *Q*. How has the delusion arisen of the undifferentiated **Atman** getting differentiated into the individual soul?

A. The dialectical Advaitin, as long as he relies on the unaided powers of his reason, answers this question by saying, "I do not know." The answer which realisation gives alone is conclusive. As long as you say, "I know" or "I do not know", you look upon yourself as a person. And as such, you must take these differentiations as facts, not delusion. When all personality is effaced, one realises the knowledge of the Absolute in **Samadhi**. Then alone are set at rest for ever all such questions of delusion and non-delusion, fact and fiction.

848. As long as you are a person, your Absolute must imply a 'relative', your **Nitya** (the Changeless), must imply a **Lila** (change), your Substance must imply qualities, your Impersonal must imply a 'personal being', your One must imply 'many'.

849. As long as you are in the plane of relativity, you must admit both 'butter' and 'buttermilk' ,-you must admit both Personal God and the universe. To explain the analogy, the original milk is **Brahman** realised in **Samadhi**, the 'butter' the Impersonal-personal God, and the 'buttermilk' the universe made up of the twenty-four categories.

850. Let not the Advaitin say "My position is the only correct, rational and tenable one; those that believe in a Personal God are wrong." The personal manifestations of God are by no means less real, but infinitely more so, than the body, the mind or the external world.

851. No sooner do you talk of **Advaita** (monism) than you postulate the **Dvaita** (pluralism). Talking of the Absolute, you take for granted the 'relative'. For your absolute, until realised in **Samadhi**, is at best the correlative of the 'relative', if not indeed a mere empty word. You cannot possibly put It as It is; for in doing so you cannot but enamel It with a foreign element, that is, with your own personality.

852. So long as there is the 'I' in me, there is the Personal God also before me, revealing Himself through various forms of glory, and as the world and living beings.

Personal Deity known also as **Isvara, **Maya** and **Sakti****

853. When the Supreme Being is thought of as action less - neither creating, sustaining nor destroying - I call Him by the name of **Brahman** or **Purusha**. But when I think of Him as active--creating, sustaining and destroying-I call Him by the name of **Sakti** or **Maya** or **Prakriti**.

854. While speaking of the Sankhya theory that the world has come out of **Purusha** and **Prakriti**, the **Master** said one day: "The Sankhya philosophy says that the **Purusha** is action less and **Prakriti** is doing all works. The **Purusha** is only a witness of all these activities. **Prakriti** too cannot do any work of itself without the **Purusha**. Have you seen how things take place in a house during a marriage? The **Master** of the house sits in one place, puffing away at his hookah and giving commands. But the mistress of the house always moves about here and there in the house, dressed in a cloth marked with turmeric. She is busy supervising the arrangements and cordially receiving women and children. Now and then she goes to the **master** of the house, and reports about all happenings and seeks' advice with the help of gestures and movement of lips. Understanding all that she wants to convey, the **master** only nods his head or expresses his assent. The case of **Prakriti** and **Purusha** is just like this."

855. The action less **Brahman** and the active **Sakti** are in fact one and the same. He who is the Absolute Existence Intelligence-Bliss, is also the All-knowing, the All-intelligent and All-blissful Mother of the universe. A precious stone and its luminosity are one and the same, for you cannot imagine a stone without it, and *vice versa*.

856. God the absolute and God the personal are one and the same. A belief in the one implies a belief in the other. Fire cannot be thought of apart from its burning power; nor can its burning power be thought of apart from it. Again the sun's rays cannot be thought of apart from the sun, nor the sun, apart from its rays. You cannot think of the whiteness of milk, apart from milk nor milk apart from its, . milky whiteness. Thus God the absolute cannot be thought of apart from the idea of God with attributes, *i.e.*, Personal God and *vice versa*.

857. The distinction between **Brahman** and **Sakti** is really a distinction without a difference. **Brahman** and **Sakti** are one (Abheda), just as fire and its bunting power are one. **Brahman** and **Sakti** are one, just as milk and the whiteness of milk are one. **Brahman** and **Sakti** are one, just as a gem and its 'brightness are one. You cannot conceive of one without the other, or make a difference between them.

858. Wherever there is action--creation, preservation and destruction-there is **Sakti**. Water is water whether it is calm or disturbed. That one Absolute Existence-Intelligence-Bliss is the eternal intelligent Energy that creates, preserves and destroys the universe, just as 'Captain'¹ is the same whether he remains inactive at times or whether he engages himself at other times in performing worship or visiting the Governor-General. He is the same 'Captain', only these are his different Upadhis or states.

859. As sometimes I am in dress and at other times naked, so **Brahman** is sometimes with attributes, and at other times without. The **Saguna Brahman** (God with attributes) is **Brahman** in combination with Energy **Sakti**); He is then called **Isvara** or Personal God.

860. Be it known that my Divine Mother is both one and many, and also beyond one and many.

861. My Divine Mother is the one Being manifested as many. Of infinite power Herself, She has differentiated Herself into **Jiva** and Jagat (living beings and the universe) of manifold powers,-physical,

'intellectual, moral and spiritual. And my Divine Mother is no other than the **Brahman** of the Vedant. She is the Personal aspect of the Impersonal **Brahman**.

God in Everything

862. Right discrimination is of two kinds-analytical and synthetical. The first leads one from the phenomena to the Absolute **Brahman**, while by the second one knows how the Absolute **Brahman** appears as the universe.

863. Even those that have realised the Absolute in Samadhi come down to the lower plane of sense-consciousness, and have just sufficient ego left to hold communion with the Personal God. It is very difficult to raise the voice incessantly to 'Ni' (Si), the highest note of the gamut. Hence the necessity of devotion to a Personal God.

864. To him alone who comes down from **Samadhi** to the plane of sense-consciousness is left a thin ego like a line (Rekha)-a length without breadth-just sufficient individuality to retain only the spiritual vision (Divyachakshus). This enables him to see **Jiva** and Jagat, including his own self, as the One manifesting Oneself in different forms. This vision of glory comes to the **Vijnani** who has realised the Nirakara **Nirguna Brahman** (formless and attributeless Godhead) in Jada or **Nirvikalpa Samadhi** (ecstasy without objective content), and also the Sakara **Saguna Brahman** (Godhead with form and attributes) in Chetana or **Savikalpa Samadhi**, (ecstasy with objective content). You cannot conceive, think of, perceive, God otherwise than as a person, so long as you are a person with an ego of your own; the Unconditioned cannot but manifest Itself to you-both within and without-as a conditioned being, as a Personal God. These personal manifestations of the Deity are by no means less real than the body, the mind, and the external world; rather are they infinitely more real than these.

865. It is a case of involution and evolution. You go backward to the Supreme Being and your personality becomes lost in that of His-this is **Samadhi**. Then, with this higher personality, you retrace your steps and come back to the point whence you started, only to see that the universe and your ego, are evolved from the same Supreme Being, and that God, man and Nature are identities, so that if you hold on to one of them you realise the others.

866. Whose is this **Lila** (this universe of change, the manifestations of which can be called a play of God), His And He is also that which transcends both form and formlessness. He alone knows all that He is.

872. Do you know what the form aspect of God is like? It is like the rising of bubbles on a sheet of water. It can be actually seen that the different forms are rising from the **Chidakasa** (sky of Pure Consciousness). The Divine Incarnation is one of the forms.

873. Unless one sees God one is not able to realise all this. For the sake of those that love the Lord, He manifests Himself in various ways and in various forms.

A dyer had his own way of dyeing clothes. He would ask the customer, "In what colour do you want your clothes to be dyed?" If he said red, the dyer dipped the cloth in his tub and brought it out saying, "Here is your cloth dyed red." Another wanted his cloth dyed yellow. The dyer dipped it in the same tub, and when he brought it up, it was dyed yellow. In the same way, when some other colour was wanted-blue or orange or violet or green-the same tub was used with the like result.

A customer who was watching all this came up to the dyer and said. "My friend, I am not fond of any one colour. I desire to consult your taste and should like to have my cloth dyed just as you please. I want the colour in which you have dyed yourself." The Lord manifests Himself, with form or without form, just according to the need of the **devotee**. Manifested vision is relatively true, that is, true in relation to different men placed in different conditions and environments. The Divine Dyer alone knows in what colour He has dyed Himself Verily He is not bound by any limitation as to the forms of manifestation, or their negation.

874. A certain monk went to the temple of **Jagannath** at **Puri**. He had doubts as to whether God is with form or without form. When he saw the holy image, he desired to examine it and settle his doubt. He passed his staff from the left to the right in order to feel if it touched the image. For a time he could not see anything or feel anything with the staff. So he decided that God was without form. When he was about to pass the staff from the right to the left, it touched the image. So the monk decided that God is both with form and. without form.

875. When a bell is rung, the repeated ding-dongs may be distinguished, one from the other, as if each sound has a form; but when we stop ringing, the indistinguishable sound, which is audible for a while and gradually dies away appears formless. Like the sounds of the bell, God is both with and without form.

876. God with form is visible. Yes, we can touch Him and talk to Him face to face as with our own dearest friend.

877. To think of Him as formless is quite right. But take care that you do not run away with the idea that that view alone is true and that all else is false. Meditating upon Him as a being with forms is equally right. But you must hold on to your particular view until you realise God; and then everything would be clear.

878. God is the absolute and eternal **Brahman** as well as the Father of the universe. But the indivisible **Brahman**, who is pure Existence, Intelligence and Bliss, is incomprehensible like a vast shoreless ocean without bounds and limits; in which we only struggle and sink. But when we enter into the spirit of the sportive Personal God, we easily obtain peace like the sinking man on being gently carried ashore.

879. At a certain stage in the path of devotion, the **devotee** finds satisfaction in God with form, and at another stage, in God without it.

880. To a **Bhakta** the Lord manifests Himself in various forms. But to a person who reaches the height of **Brahmajnana** in **Samadhi**, He is the attributeless **Brahman** once more, formless and unconditioned. Herein is the reconciliation between **Jnana** and **Bhakti**.

881. As water, when congealed, becomes ice, so also the visible form of the Almighty is the materialised manifestation of the all-pervading formless **Brahman**. It may be called in fact Sachchidananda solidified. As the ice, which is a part and parcel of water, remains in water and afterwards melts into it, so the Personal God, Who is a part and parcel of the Impersonal, rises from the Impersonal, remains there and ultimately merges into It and disappears.

882. Fire itself has no definite shape, but as glowing embers it assumes different forms. Thus the formless fire is seen endowed with forms. Similarly, the formless God sometimes invests Himself with definite forms.

Some Divine Forms

883. God appears in various ways-sometimes in human form, sometimes as a spiritual expression (**Chinmaya-rupa**). But one should have belief in Divine forms.

884. No one can say what Sachchidananda is like. That is why He first took the form of Ardhanarisvara (half man and half woman). Do you know why He did so? It is to show that both **Prakriti** and **Purusha** are Himself. At a step still lower, Sachchidananda became several Purushas and Prakritis.

885. Sea-water appears dark-blue from a distance, but when you take a little of it in your hand, it is all pure and limpid. So Lord **Krishna** appears azure from a distance, but He is not really so. He is the Absolute, taintless and colourless.

886. **Sri Krishna** is called **Tribhanga**, *i.e.*, bent in three different directions. It is only a soft thing that is capable of being twisted. So this form of **Sri Krishna** implies that He are His diverse forms and the manifestations of His glory.

887. A **devotee**: Why is the Divine Mother called **Yogamaya**?

The **Master**: **Yogamaya** means the union of **Purusha** and **Prakriti**. Whatever you see is nothing but that union of the two. Haven't you seen the **Siva-Kali** image-**Kali** standing on **Siva**? **Siva** is lying prostrate like a corpse and **Kali** is with a fixed gaze upon **Siva**. All this means the same **Purusha-Prakriti** union. **Purusha** is inactive, hence **Siva** is lying down inert like a corpse. But by virtue of the union with Him, **Prakriti** is doing everything--creation, preservation and destruction. The same is the significance of the coupled image of **Radha** and **Krishna**.

888. The more you advance towards God, the more you will find His attributive grandeur falling off. The first vision an aspirant gets is of the ten-handed form (**Durga**) the form of the Supreme Mistress of the universe. In that form there is a great expression of power and grandeur. Next She appears in a two-handed form; no more are there the ten arms with all their respective weapons. Next comes the vision of the **Gopala** form. Here there is absolutely no expression of power and grandeur - it is simply the form of a tender child. There is a vision even superior to this--the vision of the effulgent Light.

Divine Immanence

889. God is in all men, but all men are not in God; that is why they suffer.

890. Every object is **Narayana** (*i.e.*, God). Man is **Narayana**, the animal is **Narayana**, the sage is **Narayana**, the knave also is **Narayana**. All that exists is **Narayana**. The Deity (**Narayana**) sports in various aspects. All things are His diverse forms and the manifestations of His glory.

891. Says God, "I am the snake that bites and the charmer that heals; I am the judge that condemns and the servant that inflicts the punishment."

892. The manifestation of **Sakti** (the Divine power) varies in varying centres of activity; for variety is the law, not sameness. God is immanent in all creatures; He is even in the ant. The difference is in manifestation only.

893. Divine power is greater in those who are honoured, respected and obeyed by a large following than in those who have no such influence.

894. *Q.* How does the Lord dwell in a physical body?

A. He dwells in the body, as a piston-rod in a syringe; He is in the body, and yet apart from it.

The Divine and Man's Moral Responsibility

895. *Q.* If God has become all, is there. no sin, and no virtue?

A. Yes, there is, and at the same time there is not. As long as He preserves the ego in us, He retains in us also the apprehension of duality, and the consciousness of sin and virtue. But at times, in some; He completely wipes away the ego; then they go beyond all good and bad. So long as one does not realise God, the perception of duality, and the idea of good and bad, are sure to exist. You may say in words that good and bad have all become equal to you, that you do just what He makes you do. But in your heart of hearts you know that all these are mere words. The moment you do some evil actions, your conscience will begin to prick you.

896. *Q.* If it is He who is actuating me to all actions, then I am not responsible for my sins. Am I?

A. **Duryodhana** also said like that. He said, "O Lord, Thou abidest in my heart, and I do as Thou makest me do." But he who really believes that God alone is the doer and that he himself is only an instrument, cannot commit any sin. A perfect dancer never takes a wrong step. Indeed, till the heart becomes pure, one cannot even believe in the existence of God.

897. A **devotee**: Sir, I have a doubt. They say that our will is free; that is, we can do whatever we like-good, bad or otherwise. Is that true?

The **Master**: Everything depends upon the Lord's will! This is all His play. He is making us do various things in various ways, good and bad, great and small, weak and strong-all these are ultimately from Him. Good men, bad men-all these are His **Maya**, His play. For instance, all the trees of a garden are not equal in height, beauty or grandeur.

So long as one does not realise God, one thinks that his will is free. But it is He who maintains this delusion in man. Otherwise there would have been a mighty increase of sins; people would not have feared to do evil, nor would there have been any punishment for crime or sin.

But do you know the attitude of him who has realised God? He says and feels: "I am the machine, Thou art the mechanic; I am the house, Thou art the dweller; I am the chariot, Thou art the charioteer; I move as Thou makest me move; I speak what Thou makest me speak!"

898. God impels the thief to go and steal, and at the same time warns the householder against the thief. He does everything.