

Je Je Bhete Bhoot

(“Every living being that you meet.....”)

(An extempore spiritual dialogue based on a hymn by Saint
Dnyaneshwar)

By Sadguru Chandrakant Anant Bhosekar

This e-book is an English adaptation of the original book written in Marathi By Sadguru Chandrakant Anant Bhosekar. Marathi is the official State language of the State of Maharashtra, India. The city of Mumbai is the capital of the State of Maharashtra.

About Je Je Bhete Bhoot

This book is a dialogue on important spiritual issues related to self-realization. The two characters engaged in this dialogue are 'Maharaj' and 'I'. Though the characters are imaginary, the issues are real. 'Maharaj' is a spiritual master and 'I' is a common man who is deeply interested in meditation, in understanding God, in knowing about mysteries of the Universe and human existence. (In India, Maharaj means a King but it is also used to refer to a spiritual master or a Guru.)

'I' is very familiar with Maharaj. He is also vaguely aware about the spiritually enlightened status of the Maharaj but due to the familiarity, asks him all sorts of questions ---- on most occasions without any inhibitions and sometimes rather naively. These questions span the whole gamut of spirituality.

In short, 'I' is a representative of all keen students of spirituality and Maharaj is the master who is capable of clearing all his doubts on the subject. Mysteries of spirituality thus unfold in a very readable and interesting manner and the reader can get several doubts on spirituality cleared in an effortless manner.

The title of the book is a part of a well-known hymn from the spiritual master from Maharashtra, India, Saint Dnyaneshwar (Literal meaning: The God of Knowledge) who lived in the 13th century A. D. in Maharashtra. A spiritually self-realized soul, the Saint is one of the legends of spiritual India and is credited with writing in the native tongue (Marathi) a lucid poetic interpretation of the Bhagvad Geeta, which is an all-time great scripture of India, considered by many thinkers all over the world to be the last word on spirituality and more so on the synthesis of spiritualism and the daily chores that no spiritual person can escape. Since the Bhagvad Geeta largely consists of the advice by Lord Krishna to his warrior friend and devotee Arjun, and that too in Sanskrit, a majority of the masses never really got to understand and benefit from the treasure house of spiritual knowledge.

Established upper caste priests and other high-caste power centers in the society wanted to keep the illiterate or less educated masses away from the knowledge and wisdom contained in several Sanskrit scriptures in order to maintain social and intellectual control over the society. They were thus bitterly opposed to any attempt by anyone including Saint Dnyaneshwar, to unlock this knowledge and make it openly available to the people at large.

Saint Dnyaneshwar, much to the extreme displeasure of these power centers, showed courage, conviction and creativity to write Dnyaneshwari (also known as Bhavarth Deepika), this all-time classic interpretative adaptation and commentary on the Bhagvad Geeta. Even after over 700 years, Dnyaneshwari is still considered a beacon of spirituality for the Seekers.

The Master (Maharaj) unfolds to his eager disciple the secrets of spiritualism and shows a simple and unique path to self-realization through a detailed discussion and interpretation of this two-line hymn by Saint Dnyaneshwar.

Inspired and blessed by my Guru, I took upon the task of translating this book into English so that the spiritual wisdom of Maharashtra, the land of Saints, Seers and seekers, will be available to anyone in the world.

He read the English version of book and gave a green signal to make it available to readers who do not understand Marathi. The translator was fortunate to get a clearance from his beloved Guru. Unfortunately, the Guru left for his heavenly abode on January 13, 2006 before this English version is being made available today.

It is hoped that people from all over the world will find this practical, do-it-yourself action plan to self-realization without any fees, royalty or the need to personally sit at the feet of the Guru. This is because Guru Bhosekar believed the spiritual world is non-linear and thus, physical travel to the Guru's house and personally meeting him again and again are not relevant if the seeker has enough passion and the ability to surrender to the Almighty.

--Anand Aashay

About the Foreword

I was fortunate enough to get a Foreword to this book by Sir's closest spiritual comrade and his co-translator of J. Krishnamurty's books, Krishnabhakt Diwakar Anant Ghaisas. When I approached Mr. Ghaisas with a request to write the Foreword, he instantly agreed. At that time, he was more than 90 year old, but was still a busy man, a prolific writer of spiritual books that he was ! In fact, after Sir's demise, it was Ghaisas-ji whom we all would look up to for any guidance. It was thus more than a welcome happening that he too readily agreed to write a Foreword to this book. (Mr. Ghaisas passed away on 6th July 2016).

So, here is the foreword....

Foreword **An Experience In Universal Consciousness**

There are some books which are small in size, but very important in giving guidance to us in the way of our living. In the field of religious literature, or philosophic subjects, these small books often wax exceedingly high in their value in human life. Great volumes giving final doctrines have their own place, epics have their own role in giving comprehensive knowledge and rules of conduct for a common family man or uncommon ascetics. But the smaller books like the Bhagvad-Geeta or Hari-path (collection of devotional songs of Saint Dnyaneshwar that are deeply seeped in the Saint's personal rich spiritual experiences) , are companions for common people in their travel towards liberation.

One Ovi (hymn) by the Saint Dnyaneshwar is the subject of this "booklet" in the form of a dialogue. It describes the attitude of a real devotee in his life which decides whether he is on the right path of devotion. It says that the Lord Krishna emphasizes the set of the mind of a devotee to be such that whatever and whosoever is met by the devotee in the animate as well as inanimate world, should be treated as God; and gives his opinion that this the essence of the path of devotion.

The small booklet written by the author, i. e. by Mr. Bhosekar contains the definitions of various terms such as God, Being, Devotion, Yog, etc. In dwelling in detail on the Nature, Function and Greatness of God, he has approached the problem from the point of view of

modern science as well as philosophy. The booklet is in Marathi, of which this English translation leaves no scope for correcting the English terms so as to let them represent the weight and meaning of Marathi words.

The translator deserves all credit to make this compact spiritual guide available to the vast body of people throughout the world who are acquainted with English language and philosophy. I have been given the work of writing some few words by way of introduction. But, to give some salient features of the text will become inadequate and misleading.

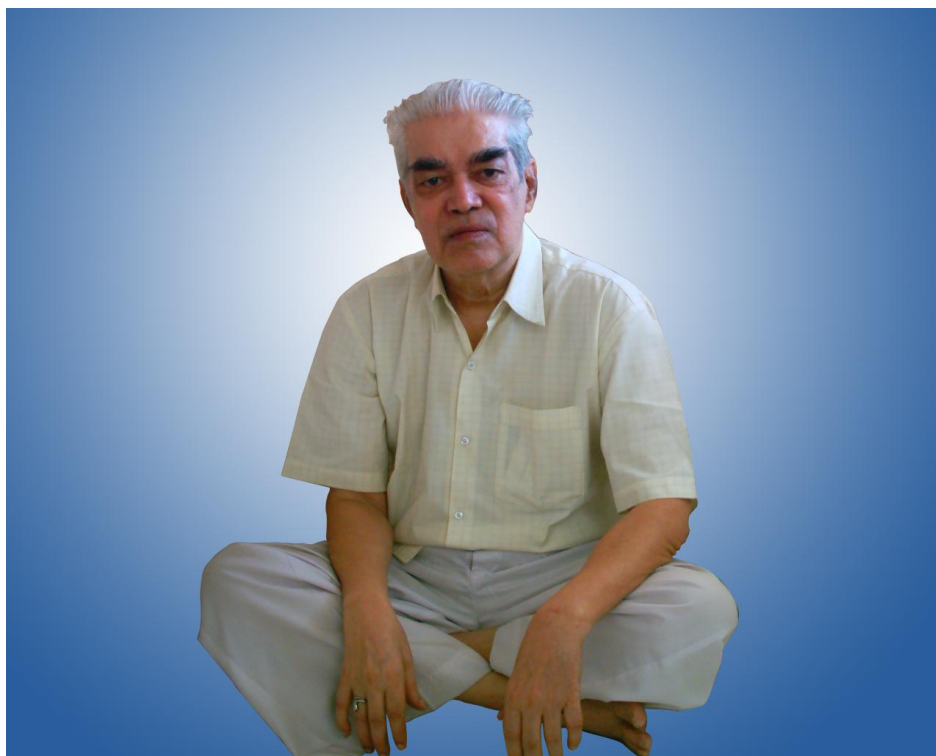
As the test of a cake is in eating it, so the joy of this book is in reading it sincerely. If some persons will be inspired to respect all life and reach God through expansion of human perceptive qualities, the job of this booklet will be successful and the purpose will be fulfilled. The readers are advised not to read this booklet while their mind is wandering, but give their complete attention to its contents so that the truth of their own life will not be missed in their haste of devouring words and gulping down the sentences.

- Diwakar Anant Ghaisas

(Mr. Diwakar Anant Ghaisas has been a very close co-passenger in the spiritual journey that Bhosekar Sir had undertaken all his life. Mr. Ghaisas and Mr. Bhosekar were the co-translators of several books of the spiritual master J. Krishnamurty from English into Marathi. Thus, in a sense, Mr. Ghaisas continues to bear the spiritual torch that Mr. Bhosekar left behind after he passed away on 13th January, 2006. The translator feels honoured that Mr. Ghaisas wrote this Foreword. Incidentally, Mr. Ghaisas is widely known as Krishnabhakta Diwakar Anant Ghaisas. Krishnabhakta means a devotee of Lord Krishna. Mr. Ghaisas lives in Dombivali, a suburb of Mumbai, India, and follows a hermit-like life style, staying 'alone' in a perpetual Krishna-consciousness. Therefore, when asked about where and with whom he lives, he unmistakably says " Krishna and I live together. " Stories and anecdotes of miracles that keep happening to Mr. Ghaisas due to the Divine company that he keeps are many. ---- Anand Aashay)



The revered Guru Chandrakant Anant Bhoosekar



Photograph by Pravda Aashay.

The revered Guru Chandrakant Anant Bhoosekar (fondly called as Bhoosekar Sir) was born on 4th July 1932. He had a life full of contrasts. He started off as a non-believer. Also, his life was enslaved by several addictions. For more than a couple of years, his uncle used to urge Bhoosekar Sir to accompany him to Pune for meeting the well-known Yogi Gulawani Maharaj. Due to uncle's insistence, he reluctantly agreed to meet the Pune-based Yogi. However, he agreed on the condition that he will merely come and meet him but will not bow before him. In reality however, when they came face-to-face, Bhoosekar Sir was almost "pulled by some unknown force" to the feet of the Yogi. The year was 1970. The rest, as they say, was history! The conversation went on on these lines:

" Will you accept me as your disciple?" came out the question.

The Yogi replied, " Yes, only on the condition that you will give up all your addictions here and now, immediately."

"Yes sir, I hereby give up all my addictions, " came a resolute reply. And from that moment, all addictions vanished from his life instantly...never ever to return !

This proved to be a turning point in his life. And then began an intense enquiry and search for the God.

But this called for a very challenging and an arduous tight-rope walk !

...And a real tight-rope walk it was ! Since 1955, he was employed with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in Mumbai. Balancing his demanding responsibilities in the middle-management position at RBI, commuting to work around 45 km one way every day through crowded suburban trains; looking after the family consisting of wife, one son and two daughters and playing harmonium at concerts across India...While fulfilling all these responsibilities with complete dedication, Bhosekar Sir simultaneously plunged deep into the exploration of the spiritual Universe and in the process attained god-realization after deep, sustained meditation for almost 20 years.

Never once did he allow the busy schedule to come in the way of his rigorous spiritual pursuits.

His typical daily routine would begin at 3 in the morning, when he would devote time for his first meditation session from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. Meditation as well as God-remembrance (Naam-smaran) used to continue during the to-and-fro train journey as well as during the lunch break in the office.

Along with the above-mentioned meditation-practice, Bhosekar sir used to attend lectures by the mystic Yogi Jiddu Krishnamurty in Mumbai. He was deeply influenced by his approach to spiritual self-realization. In fact, when he was transferred to Hyderabad for a couple of years, Bhosekar sir experimented exclusively with the Krishnamurty way of 'non-judgemental choice-less awareness'. He used to say that this resonated well with the meditation path shown by Sadguru Gulawani Maharaj. " Both complemented each other and in fact strengthened me as a seeker, " was his verdict. Later, Krishnamurty Foundation India assigned the task of translating some Krishnamurty books from English into Marathi, to him. He had the honour of translating a few books along with his closest spiritual co-passenger Krishnabhakt (Devotee of Lord Krishna) Diwakar Anant Ghaisas. Later Mr. Ghaisas translated some books alone.

One notable thing in this journey was that Sir (hereinafter I will refer to him as only Sir instead of Bhoosekar Sir) always kept away from conventional ritualistic practices such as visiting places of pilgrimage, doing elaborate Poojas, observing fasts and so on. He used to say, “ This is entirely an inward journey and therefore, any activity involving external entities such as temples, rivers, pilgrimage, religious festivals, etc. does not really serve any meaningful purpose, except that for the totally un-initiated people, it can serve as a door-opener.”

During the 24-year long and arduous voyage to self-realization, Sir experimented with systematically achieving freedom from anger, attachment and other foibles; and also focussed on living in the present moment. Like other similar travellers on this path, he too started experiencing the ‘entry of mystic intuitive powers’ in his life. However, he intensified his passion and dedication towards the meditative practices. The objective was that these powers should melt away, since they have been described by all saints and yogis as obstructions to attaining spiritual bliss.

All this led to Sir himself attaining the status of a Guru around the year 1994. From this year till the year 2006, he initiated disciples into *Kundalini Shakti Jagruti* meditation (Kindling of Kundalini Power). What this meant was that Sir could activate the primordial *Kundalini Shakti* in his disciples merely through a thought, from remote and without the need to sit face-to-face with a person.

“This power is universal and non-linear,” he would say, “and thus, the distance between the Guru and the disciple (whose *Kundalini Shakti* was going to be kindled) is immaterial.”

Apart from the Kundalini initiation, Sir used to also initiate some disciples into God remembrance (Naam-smaran) path of meditation if a particular disciple preferred it over the Kundalini path.

Kundalini Shakti is the spiritual energy/power encased at the bottom of the spinal cord of every human being, which, when activated, surges in power, cleanses, brings spiritual purity and leads to god-realization. This is the same Shakti (energy or power) that, along with Shiv, created this Universe that we see --- Shiv, the

passive partner providing the foundation for Shakti to manifest herself through trillions of beings in this Universe.

In 1991, Sir retired from the Reserve Bank of India as Assistant Chief Officer. Parallel to his spiritual journey was another pursuit of excellence ---- classical music. Sir was an accomplished flute, harmonium and tabla player. Thus, after retirement, he opened an informal music school wherein he taught these instruments to students absolutely free of charge. His musical lineage was from the legendary flute maestro, Pandit Pannalal Ghosh, from whom he had received top-class training in Indian classical music. Sir was also an expert in crafting top-class flutes from bamboos. Thus, his life was an embodiment of spiritual wisdom and musical knowledge. He also wrote several books in his mother-tongue Marathi based on the literature of the saints of Maharashtra and India such as Saint Dnyaneshwar, Saint Ramdas and Jiddu Krishnamurty among others.

Bhosekar Sir left for his heavenly abode on January 13, 2006.

Chapter 01

Comprehensive meaning of the term God

Maharaj: Come, my dear son, come.

I: I am aware I have come after a long gap. But the home work given by you the last time on " Naam " (Literal meaning: Name. Contextual meaning: God's name and the art of chanting it as a form of meditation) was so exhaustive that I just had to spend that much time.

Maharaj: It does not matter really how much time you take to do the home work. But tell me, how is your Naam meditation progressing ? Or to put it precisely, how is your Sadhana (meditative spiritual study aimed at self-realization) progressing ?

I: Maharaj, I am a common man and I do not think I can really do much in respect of Sadhana or meditation. All that I try to do is to chant the God's name whenever I can. However, everything is fine with your blessings of course. However, today I have come to you for a different reason.

Maharaj: OK. Let us hear what is your question today.

I: The famous saint of Maharashtra, Brahmachaitanya Gondavalekar Maharaj, (1845-1913 A.D.) used to say that his Guru taught him to see Lord Ram in everything and everywhere. Does it mean devotees of other Gods should also see Lord Ram in everything and everywhere ?

Maharaj: This revered Saint from Gondavale (a small village in the Satara district of Maharashtra State, India) used to worship Lord Ram. So, he could see him everywhere.

I: Does this mean that if I chant Ram's name, I too should be able to see him everywhere ?

Maharaj: If you are meditating on Ram's figure, you will be seeing Lord Ram incarnate everywhere. However, this can happen after an intensive effort, normally stretched over a long period.

I: But, Maharaj, I think this will lead to a lot of confusion. When I return from my office in the evening and if I start seeing Lord Ram in place of my wife, how can I tell her "Darling, may I have a cup of tea ? " Back in the office, if I start seeing Ram in my subordinates, how can I take them to task for some work not done properly ? I think let me not get into this mess.

Maharaj: (with a smile) Tell me, do you meditate on Lord Ram's idol ?

I: No, I only recite and remember his name.

Maharaj: Then don't worry my son. No such confusion will ever arise in your life.

I: Then what will happen in my case ?

Maharaj: You will not see Ram in things and people around you.

I: Oh, does that mean all my reciting of Ram, Ram, Ram has been a sheer waste ?

Maharaj: (With a chuckle) You say that if you start seeing Ram everywhere, there will be a major mess in your life. At the same time, when I tell you that nothing like this will happen, then you get worried whether all the chanting of the Lord's name will go a waste. Now, how shall we resolve this ?

I: See, Sir. It is like this. I certainly wish to see God, without him creating any confusion or mess in my life and I also want to know how can I have this " Darshan" (the event of seeing God incarnate in front of your eyes) as fast as possible.

Maharaj: Ok. Even that is possible. Do you know what Samarth Ramdas Swami, another famous Saint from Maharashtra once said ?

" There was this one Ram, who was the (mortal) son of King Dashrath. But the eternal Ram is the other Ram who resides in our souls and is the incarnation of the Almighty and is known as Atma-Ram. (Atma means soul)."

So, you can be one with this Atma-Ram. Now, if you want this to happen as fast as possible, you will have to practise one more type of spiritual exercise (Sadhana) in addition to chanting of Ram's name.

I: (Out of curiosity) What is that, Maharaj ?

Maharaj: What else could that be my dear son? This Sadhana is nothing but seeing this Atma-Ram everywhere. This Sadhana has been explained by another well-known Saint of Maharashtra, Saint Dnyaneshwar, who wrote an incisive Marathi commentary on the Bhagvad Geeta. You must be knowing that this commentary is one of the most celebrated and landmark spiritual magnum opuses in Marathi.

Saint Dnyaneshwar as you know, wrote this commentary called Bhavarth Deepika or Dnyaneshwari, in a style which is reminiscent of a mother's love for her child and a mother teaching her child with all the affection, compassion and dedication. This great work has not only become immortal for its enlightening spiritual content but also for its extraordinary literary genius. It is for these reasons that Saint Dnyaneshwar is colloquially and fondly referred to as Dnyaneshwar Mauli. In Marathi, Mauli means Mother.

The hymn No. 118 of Dnyaneshwari's Chapter 10, is a spiritually powerful statement and can act as a beacon to all devotees at all times.

Says the Mauli:

जे जे भेटे भूत
ते ते मानिजे भगवंत ॥
हा भक्तियोगु निश्चित
जाण माझा ॥

***“ Whichever / whatever Being / every Being (living or non-living)
that you see or meet,
Learn to believe it /consider it as God.
Please understand that this certainly is
the absolute essence of my Bhakti-yog.”
(Bhakti-yog means the devotional love-based path to spiritual
self-realization)***

I: But, Sir, this hymn uses the word God (Bhagwant) and the term Atma-Ram does not figure anywhere in this.

Maharaj: My dear son, from the point of view of a common person, it does not really matter whether you call it God, Bhagwant, Ishwar or Allah or Atma-Ram. Just as in your circle of family members / friends, several different persons call you by different names such as Dad, hubby, uncle, brother, Sir, Buddy, Chum and so on ---but you are one and the same. Similarly, you may dedicate your devotion towards any God, but it will surely reach the Supreme Almighty. Haven't our ancient sages said the following?

आकाशात् पतितं तोयं, यथा गच्छति सागरं ॥

सर्व देव नमस्कारान्, केशवं प्रतिगच्छति ॥

“ Just as all the water that comes down from the sky (rain), ultimately reaches the sea, devotional efforts directed at any God, ultimately reach the Supreme Almighty.”

I: But Sir, I really do not find anything special in this hymn by Saint Dnyaneshwar.

Maharaj: Well, in fact I think it tells us something extremely important. Saint Namdeo, another great Saint of this land, had this to say while guiding devotees on how to approach Dnyaneshwari:

नामा म्हणे श्रेष्ठ । ग्रंथ ज्ञानदेवी ।

एक तरी ओवी अनुभवावी

“ Dnyaneshwari (referred to here as Dnyanadevi) is a great spiritual work, but it is not meant for mere reading. Devotees should try and feel and experience' at least one hymn (from the total of 9000 hymns.)”

And I firmly believe that this hymn is one such hymn which falls in the realm of 'worth experiencing'. Its special feature is the powerful spiritual thought which almost tempts one to experience it himself or herself.

Another special feature of this hymn is that it precisely encapsulates a clear-cut definition of Bhakti-yog (Devotional path to spiritual self-realization). It explains incisively what should a devotee (Bhakta) do. It has no place for expressions such as 'if-then' 'may be-may be not' 'perhaps' . It also does not support any statements such as ' a particular possibility cannot be ruled out at least partially.'

On the contrary, it defines Bhakti-yog in a reality-indicator mode. This hymn reminds me of a capsule filled to capacity with medicinal / vitamin powder in it.

Each word of this hymn is a power-packed medicine to cure ills of the worldly existence without disturbing the world itself. For example, if a crop is attacked by pests, the medicine should be able to get rid of the pests without harming the crop itself. If the pesticide is too lethal, it can be harmful for the pests as also for those who consume products made from that particular food-grain.

Another characteristic of this hymn is: it demonstrates that both the means and the end of Bhakti-yog are one and the same.

Thirdly, the devotional path prescribed therein, does not require any external tool or object to practise it. Therefore, one of its greatest strengths is that it is totally non-ritualistic, has nothing to do with any religion and can be practised by a person belonging to any faith or religion.

Fourthly, pursuit of this devotional path can be practised without an iota of fatigue. As a result, it can be incorporated into your daily routine right from the time you get up in the morning till you go to bed.

I: My god, I did not know that the characteristics run into such a long list. Anyway, what I wish to know is which kind of devotional path (Sadhana) has been prescribed or recommended here ?

Maharaj: We can know the secret hidden in it if we explore in detail the meaning of every word in it. But before we do that, let us decide as to which is the most important word in this hymn.

I: Maharaj, I feel the most important word in this hymn is भगवन्त (God).

Maharaj: Absolutely right. So, first of all, we should determine and understand the meaning of this word God.

God, Almighty, Ishwar, Allah, are synonyms, but people have interpreted them differently at different times at different levels. Those tiny idols installed along side an agricultural field, the farm deity, the village deity, Vaastu (house) deity, also deity of the house, deity of the family. Samarth Ramdas Swami has given a long list of Gods and Goddesses in his spiritual masterpiece, Daasbodh. Some of them are: Khandoba, Mhasoba, Satwai, Jokhai, Mari-Aai, Amba-bai, Mangalai, Ekveera and so on.

Each God and Goddess has his or her band of devotees. Most of them answer the prayers of these devotees. They too in turn consider it a great fulfilment of their religious fervour in presenting before their God or Goddess some problem. For example, the devotees say, “ Oh, God, if you solve a certain problem, I will give you this or that gift.” It is a great achievement for these devotees to get all and sundry work done by their Gods.

Then there are Gods and Goddesses who bless (some) devotees with miraculous powers (Siddhis) especially after they worship them very intensely. Armed with such Siddhis, which belong to the world of extra sensory perception (ESP), these devotees then become Swamis or Sadhus or Maharaj and help relieve worldly problems of the devotees. In short, the common man believes that if his prayers and devotions result in seeking the God’s blessings, the welfare of oneself and others is certain.

Then there are many Gods and their incarnations. They include Ram, Krishna, Parshuram, Vishnu, Shankar, Ganapati (Ganesh), Kartikeya (Muruga). There are also Goddesses like Bhawani, Parvati, Kali, Durga, etc. Many devotees worship them in a Sagun way. Sagun-worship is one in which the devotee visualizes a form of this God or Goddess and converts that conceptual form into a picture or an idol. These devotees strongly believe that this worship will take them onto the path of virtue and will result in overall welfare and happiness.

They also have faith in their God or Goddess insofar as he or she will run to their rescue in times of adversity.

Man, by nature, loves celebrations and festivities. So he loves to create festivals around such Gods. Birthdays of Lord Ram (Ram-navmi), of Krishna (Krishnashtami) and of Dutta (Dutta-jayanti); Shivratri, Ashadhi-Karteeki Ekadashi, Navratri, etc. Thousands of devotees assemble together to celebrate these festivals on a grand scale. The scope of the word God in this hymn not only includes all these Gods and Goddesses, but it goes much beyond it. The word ‘God’ as used by Saint Dnyaneshwar is collectively exhaustive and expansively packed with meaning.

I: But.. Maharaj, I am aware of only these meanings. Can there be anything beyond this ?

Maharaj: I am going to reveal to you meanings beyond this. Our ancient sages and Rishis have done deep thinking about this term God. The term God means the Creator of the Universe, One who has filled the entire Universe, One who is omniscient, One who is (Niyanta), meaning the Controller of the Universe and one who is Omnipotent. And here, Mauli has exactly the same meaning of God in mind. Let us now explore each of these words one by one.

I: OK. Shall we start from the Creator of the Universe ?

Maharaj: That's fine. So, God means Creator of the Universe. If you look at the day-to-day life around you, you will realize that everything has a creator. All the objects of our need and luxury are created by the God and men. Even the computer which performs analytical computational tasks similar to the performance of human intelligence and that too at lightning speed, also has been created by human beings.

These objects can be divided into two parts --- those made by man and those created by nature. The objects of the first type are made by man but who is the creator of man ? God is the Creator of man. But, at the same time, who created the natural objects ? Again God ! In fact, scientists are attempting to find answers to these two questions for hundreds of years. They have reached a stage where they are ready to accept the existence of an unknown power which has created them.

That is why, we are compelled to say that the entire nature was created by God and since the creator of an object exists before the object comes into being, God must have existed before the creation. The only difference is that it is uncertain as to how long can men survive after creating things. But since God is without a beginning and without an end, He remains even after the Universe comes to an end and He can create the Universe again as per His wish / plan.

I: Does it mean even the Universe has a birth and death ?

Maharaj: Yes. This is so because every living being is born, then it grows up, exists for some time and finally dies. And the dead body becomes food for other living beings. We should also remember one characteristic feature of this ---- living beings are made up of inanimate particles. One inanimate object or element always gets converted into another object or element.

For example, water into ice and steam. Or hydrogen and oxygen into water. Therefore, we do not apply the word 'death' in such cases. Instead, we use terms like change or transformation. And therefore this Universe too must be passing through the cycle of birth and death or expressed and unexpressed (recognisability / un-recognisability) and vice versa. And the motivation / reason for this is nothing but God.

I: But Maharaj, don't you think the Universe could have been born automatically ?

Maharaj: (Laughs) My dear son, nothing happens automatically or on its own in this Universe. Most of the incidents in this world are subject to the cause-and-effect relationship. Until we grasp the cause-effect chain related to a certain object or event, we feel as if things are happening automatically. In fact, science came into being due to man's inquisitiveness to probe deeper into this phenomenon of "things happening automatically." Therefore, everything does have a reason.

If inquisitiveness exists for unravelling the reasons behind mysterious happenings, then sooner or later one can find it. Similarly, the reason for the birth of this Universe is the Divine Will or Motivation.

I: OK. It is clear up to this point. But what properties the Creator could have possessed before the birth of the Universe ?

Maharaj: If we apply intelligence and try to find out an answer to this, we may arrive at the following statement: Then the Creator must have been infinite, Unexpressed/Unmanifest (un-recognisable) and Almighty.

I: How can you say that?

Maharaj: Because, everything in this Universe is limited by boundaries, that is to say, everything is finite. This means, there must be another thing, object or empty space beyond a thing or object which is limited or bound by boundaries. If the Creator is also a being which is limited in nature (finite), then something else must be there beyond it.

Then who must be the Creator of that which is beyond this Creator ? So, if there is something or some being beyond this Creator, then both the Creators must be the common creation of some other Creator and we call him God. If we think on

these lines, then we will understand that God is infinite. Also, he is Unexpressed/Unmanifest.

This is because anything that can be perceived or felt by our five senses, is limited by boundaries. For example, those stars in the sky which are visible to human eyes, are extremely huge in size but still they are finite, say astronomers. Thus, this Universe is the 'recognizable' form of God. Therefore, God in whom the Universe dissolves, must be otherwise Un-expressed and He must be expressing himself in the form of this entire creation, but at all other times must be in an Un-expressed/Unmanifest form.

I: And why should we call him Almighty ?

Maharaj: He must be Almighty or Omnipotent since he could create this entire Universe merely with His will. This means His power too must be limitless. In this context, we should remember one thing.

I: What is that ?

Maharaj: We should not mistake this power to mean what science refers to as energy. This energy is inanimate power (which is controlled and harnessed by man). The 'power' that we are referring to is the power that is bristling with energy and it is the same power which creates stability and dynamism in the Universe. Saint Dnyaneshwar, in his other celebrated spiritual work अमृतानुभव (amrutanubhav--The Nectar Experience) has used two terms, Shiv (शिव) and Shakti (शक्ति). That Shakti (Power) is incorporated in the concept of the Almighty.

I: But then, what is Shiv ?

Maharaj: He has used the term Shiv to refer to the pre-Creation state of the God, which is Infinite, Unexpressed, Unmanifest and Omnipotent.

I: But, Maharaj, there was nothing before the Universe came into existence except only God. Then from what did He create the Universe ? That is to say --- what was His raw material ?

Maharaj: Good question my dear son. May god bless you.

I: (tongue in cheek) Maharaj, I find that these days in TV interviews even if an interviewer asks some useless question, the person giving the answer says “Wow, it is a very good question ”(only to please the interviewer). Because then he or she can get away with giving an equally poor answer but in the process, the interviewer has to bear with it. Is your praise for my question of a similar type ?

Maharaj: (In equal good humour) No, not all my dear son. In fact, your question brings us to a very fundamental and pertinent issue in this discussion. So, let us get to the root of the question. But, tell me what do you yourself think about this issue ?

I: I feel when man creates anything; he takes a few objects from the world around him, processes them as per their properties, joins or binds them and creates a new object; for example, fan, television, car, etc. This means no creation is possible without external objects or material and a creator. Now, if nothing existed before the Universe was created, what raw material God must have used to create the Universe ?

Maharaj: What you just said has been explained in our scriptures thus: There are two types of combinations: Nimitta Karan (निमित्त कारण) and Upadan Karan (उपादान कारण). Nimitta kāraṇa is described as the Efficient Cause and Upādāna kāraṇa is described as the Material Cause. Karan means cause or reason. When an object which is the ‘cause’ happens to enter the object which is the ‘effect,’ it is known as Upadan Karan and whatever causes it to happen, is the Nimitta Karan.

Let us take an example to understand these concepts clearly. In India, we often give our gold jewellery or gold chips to the goldsmith for him to melt them and make new jewellery from them. Here, the gold is Upadan Karan since gold, which is the cause, enters into the effect, that is, the new jewellery, while the goldsmith himself is the Nimitta Karan since he has caused the new jewellery to come into being.

Because, if the rates charged by one goldsmith are too stiff, we go to another goldsmith. That’s because, who the goldsmith is, is not as crucial as the fact the jewellery has to be made out of gold. Thus, the goldsmith is dispensable but not the material for making jewellery. In the Bhagwad Geeta too Lord Shrikrishna advises Arjun, “Hey Arjun, just become the Nimitta for the destruction of your

enemy, the Kauravs. Because, the destiny has already decided that they will die at your hands. You are going to be only a Nimitta for this destruction.

So, now, what do you think is the answer to your question ?

I: With my little intelligence, I feel God must have created this Universe from Himself.

Maharaj: Well done. You have hit the nail on the head. God, which means that Infinite, Un-expressed, Unmanifest and Almighty principle, must have created the Universe out of itself and from itself. Simpler still ---- this Unexpressed principle must have, with its own strength, taken the form of everything in this Universe and must have determined the properties of each of these things. It is He, that un-expressed principle which has expressed itself into everything, right from an electron inside an atom to the entire cosmos. That is why there is a saying in Hindi कण कणमें भगवान ("Kan Kan Mein Bhagwan"), that is to say: God is omnipresent—present everywhere including the minutest of entities such as the sub-atomic particles.

I: Maharaj, but how must He have created the Universe from Himself ? Can you throw some more light on it ? Do you have any evidence to this effect ?

Maharaj: Oh, yes. A variety of evidence exists to prove this. Have you heard of the atom bomb ?

I: The atom bomb which we forced our parents to buy for us during festival seasons when we were kids and now our kids force us to buy !? The fire-cracker atom bomb whose explosive sound deafens us but we still clap at its sound !?

Maharaj: (With a smile) No, my dear son, I am not referring to that fire-cracker! I am referring to that atom bomb which destroyed two big cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in Japan in 1945.

I: Yes, of course. I know that atom bomb too. But what has it got to do with our discussion ?

Maharaj: A lot, my dear son. Do you know how this atom bomb is made?

I: No, sir. But I surely know that it is stuffed with tremendous destructive power.

Maharaj: Let me tell you how this bomb is made. When neutrons are bombarded onto radioactive Uranium, the atoms of Uranium disintegrate and in the process, Uranium gets transformed into two elements, namely Barium and Krypton. But the sum total of the mass of the atoms of these two elements happens to be less than the Uranium atom's mass. Which means the mass which has got lost has actually got transformed into something else. What is that? It gets transformed into super-scale energy. World-renowned scientist Albert Einstein has propounded a formula to explain exactly how much energy this is. The formula is:

$$E(\text{energy}) = M(\text{mass}) \times C^2 \text{ (speed of light per second)}^2.$$

Here, energy created is equal to the multiplication of the destroyed mass and the per second speed of light (which is about 300,000 kilometres per second) raised to 2, that is 300,000 X 300,000.

I: But Maharaj, I have heard that the weight of the atom is absolutely negligible. In that case, how much energy can get created out of the destroyed mass of atom which itself has hardly any mass.

Maharaj: It is true that the uranium atom's mass and some portion of it which gets destroyed, both are very negligible, but the reason why tremendous energy gets created is because it is multiplied by the square of speed of light per second, which I may remind you is three hundred thousand (or in the Indian parlance, 3 lakh) kilometres per second. When this energy was used for destruction, hundreds of thousands of innocent people in Japan were killed.

I: Oh, my God, I only wish this energy was instead used for some constructive purpose.

Maharaj: The God has done exactly the same. Since he is all powerful, he has contracted his energy, that is, has solidified his energy to create basic elemental atomic entities such as protons, mesons, neutrons, electrons and allotted different properties to atoms created from them. Is this confirmation sufficient for you ?

I (surprised): How do you know all this ?

Maharaj: I have familiarised myself with the science in order to understand the beauty of God's creation. In fact, I feel that every devotee of God should, in order to strengthen his or her faith in the Lord, study sciences such as atomic, bio, chemistry and astronomy.

OK, so coming back to this subject, the list of these basic elements is ever-growing with newer discoveries. Till 1965, they numbered 41. Then the scientists discovered six types of quarks and an equal number of anti-quarks, that is 12 new basic elements. Their various permutations and combinations lead to the creation of the above-mentioned basic elements. In addition to this, scientists as of now believe that apart from the above, there are six types of anti-Leptons, thus $12 + 12 = 24$ types of basic elements embellish this Universe which is full of so much variety.

I: Sir, here I am reminded of a story from our mythology. It talks about the god of Trinity, known to us as Gurudutta. The story says that Gurudutta, himself a Guru of all Gurus, made 24 Gurus from among various beings in the nature. I think these 24 basic elements are the building blocks of the Universe. However, my dear Maharaj, I am still finding it very difficult to understand this scientific information. Can you therefore give me an example from a common man's life ?

Maharaj: OK. There are enough such examples. Now, tell me, normally how do you spend your Sunday ?

I: Given a choice, I love to catch up on my sleep and wake up late, then tea, breakfast, relax and so on.

Maharaj: That's all ?

I: No, it is never all fun on Sundays, since it is also a day of catching up on putting the house in order, clean up, spruce up things and so on.

Maharaj: Have you ever, I mean you yourself, taken a broom or a vacuum cleaner in your hand and cleaned walls and ceilings ?

I: Well, not that I have any great enthusiasm for such things but well, one has to do them from time to time.

Maharaj: Which means you must have seen a cob-web.

I: *Yes, of course.*

Maharaj: Do you know how a spider weaves this web ? It creates a sticky semi-thick substance in its body, then converts it into a thin fibre and weaves an attractive web from it. This web attracts a fly or an insect. They get entangled in glue-like sticky web and the spider waits in anticipation of this to happen since the flies and the insects are its food. It then catches his prey and eats them up. After it digests them, they become the raw material for creating the sticky substance again. Our scriptures have cited this phenomenon to illustrate how the God creates the Universe from himself and eventually how the Universe dissolves into the God.

I: *So, it means every object that I see or which seems to be visible to me is God in different forms.*

Maharaj: Yes. This means that, at the time of the Creation of this Universe, the **Infinite** God takes the shape of all the **finite** objects in this Universe. These objects are limited by length, breadth, width and are thus finite or limited in nature. They also have a limited life span. This phenomenon can also be expressed by saying that the Un-expressed/Unmanifest God expresses/manifests himself through every object in this Universe. Thus, the Almighty God assumes the form of these objects which have limited might and power.

Similarly, all the properties of these objects which we perceive and understand, are the original properties of this God who has now transformed himself into somebody / something. And this body or thing, which also has a shape, has visible properties and qualities which are different from the original divine properties.

Thus, one important thing we need to understand in this context is that these are not the independent properties of these objects. It is often said that God is present in every atom in this Universe. What this means is that He has created objects and “lent” different properties to them. It does not mean that God is present in every atom the way we fully stuff a gunny bag with wheat. This is what is meant by Omni-present (present everywhere).

I: *What is the next word ?*

Maharaj: We have explored the meaning of two words so far ---- Creator of the Universe and Omni-present.

Now, let us turn to Omniscient.

Omniscient means having total, all-pervasive knowledge of everything in this Universe. As such, any creator has full knowledge of his creation. Similarly, the Creator also knows how to set right any defect that may occur in any of his or her creation.

Therefore, God must be having knowledge about everything that happens in the Universe. It is for this reason that whenever any defect arises in our life, we make fervent appeals to God to come and set things right. We also tell him that if he came and repaired the defects, we will pay his 'visit fee' (it is a different matter that in many cases, most of us conveniently forget to pay this visit fee !!).

I: Maharaj, does it mean that God must be knowing everything, every idea, every thought that gets created in my mind ?

Maharaj: Absolutely right. The God residing within us has total knowledge about thoughts even in the deepest recesses of our mind. In fact, these thoughts come into being with his wish. But we will come to it later.

Now, let us turn our attention to the next word, Controller of the Universe. The Universe is governed by a methodical system bound by rules. That is because these rules have been laid down by the God. Even the sun, stars, planets and moons behave in a manner in which God wants them to. Just as God has lent different properties to different objects, it is God who has decided on the properties of an object created out of two different objects coming together under typical circumstances or created out of the chemical interaction between two objects.

And what's more, if he wishes, he can change their properties also. Therefore, you can extinguish fire by using water which itself has been created by the coming together of the inflammable hydrogen and oxygen which helps fires to flare up. Or, the small torch that lights up the kerosene stove, gets extinguished when dipped in a can of kerosene which is actually a fuel. This is Divine miracle --- - flame getting extinguished when it is dipped in a liquid which is fuel to light up fire !

While studying science, one gets this kind of feeling constantly. Whether it is the super-microscopic 10^{-13} centimetre-sized electron which rotates around the centre of an atom at a speed of 10^{+8} per second in a radius of 10^{-8} centimetre or whether it is those gigantic stars having sizes of several hundred light years and which are separated from each other by several thousand light years --- all are governed by Divine rules. Humanity has taken it upon itself to discover and understand these rules with the help of science and utilize them for fulfilling its needs and providing comfort. The only difference to be noted is that in scientific parlance, instead of God, we say nature.

I: (Surprised) But Maharaj, that God whom we have been trying to find out for generations.... how come we did not understand he is so easily accessible and so near us ?

Maharaj: That is because we have been made to believe for ages that God resides somewhere far away in the space and controls everything from there. Moreover, the God himself has set the scene in such a miraculous manner that almost everything can happen without our having to remember Him. Nobody misses God. Take your case my dear son. Haven't you been able to carry on with your life all these years without any active awareness of God ? Well, more or less, similar is the case with almost everyone. The only exceptions are the Saints, Sages, Seers and ardent devotees of the God. These people have properly grasped God, the Controller of everything and pervader of everything.

Now let us take the examples of a few great Saints and how they perceived God. Let us start with one of the greatest ever saints that lived on this earth----Saint Tukaram (1609-1650 A. D.). This is what he said:

वृक्षाचेही पान हाले त्याची सत्ता ।
राहिली अहंता । मग कोठे ? ॥

“ Even the leaf of a tree stirs with His wish, then where is the scope for human ego? ” : asks Saint Tukaram in one of his immortal hymns.

He observes in another context:

कोणे केली बाळा । दुग्धाची उत्पत्ती ।
वाढवी श्रीपती । सवे दोन्ही ॥

“ Do we ever ask ourselves as to who creates milk in the mother’s breast ? Well, it is undoubtedly the Almighty which creates and grows both...that is to say, produces mother’s milk and also gives the baby the instinctive knowledge to feed itself on it and thereby grow up. ”

Saint Tukaram also faces this dilemma:

कासयाने पूजा । करू केशिराजा ।
हाचि संदेह आता । फेडी माझा ।
उदके न्हाणु तरी तुझे ते स्वरूप ॥

“ Oh God, tell me, with what should I perform your Pooja (the ritual of worship)? Because, when I take water to bathe you, I realize it is you in a different form ”.

Dasganu Maharaj (1868-1962 A. D.), a well-known Saint and a close disciple of Sai Baba (1835-1918 A. D. ----the famous mystic Fakir from Shirdi in Maharashtra), describes the spiritual experiences of Saint Sawata Mali, the 13th Century Gardner Saint:

*“ My God Vithhal is the well in my field
The same Vithhal is the bucket that draws water and
he is also my 'Nandya' bull who is pulling the bucket
It is He only who is the seed that I have sown
It is the same Vithhal who manifests himself
through the sprout which springs forth from the seed
It is He again who is the entire harvest
Oh God, you are Vithhal, I am Vithhal
The whole Universe is Vithhal,
Thus when every moment Vithhal is meeting Vithhal
Why should I be so over-eager to separately meet you my dear God ?”*

Therefore, having been convinced that Lord Vithhal (or any God for that matter) is everywhere (all-pervasive) and the same God is filling the entire Universe, this Saint’s fervour for getting a separate Darshan (the moment of actually seeing the God) of the Lord has faded away. Instead of this over-eagerness and fervour, he experiences a kind of peace and serenity which is born out of the all-pervasiveness of God. Because when this enlightenment dawns upon a person, it is impossible to forget God even if one wishes to.

This is what Saint Dnyaneshwar (Mauli) had to say in his Dnyaneshwari (a gentle reminder to all readers: this entire book *जे जे भेटे भूत* is based on another hymn

from the same spiritual masterpiece)says the Saint, quoting Lord Krishna addressing Arjun:

म्हणौनि विश्वपण जावे । मग ते माते घेयावे ।

तैसे नव्हे आघवे । सकटची मी ॥

This means: “ It is not necessary to keep aside the Universe in order to search for me (God). Because the Universe (Vishwa) is myself in another form.”

In Sanskrit, which is believed to be the language Hindu Gods converse in (!), the word Vishwa is derived from Vish which means to enter. So, one who has entered is Vishnu (that is Lord Vishnu, Operator of the Universe --- as against Lord Brahma, the Creator and Lord Shiv, the Destroyer of the Universe) and the entity in which He has entered is Vishwa. Just as the owner of an automobile company gets into a car manufactured in his factory and drives it, Lord Vishnu drives this Universe.

Chapter 02

Pre-decided Divine Will

I: So, to sum up, the meaning of the term God includes in it meanings such as Creator of the Universe, All-pervasive or Omni-present, Omniscient, Controller of the Universe and Omni-potent. Does this cover everything or is anything left ?

Maharaj: That leads us to one important point. In order to explain this point, let me tell you what one of the prominent Saints of Maharashtra, Brahmachaitanya Gondavalekar Maharaj (1845-1913 A. D.), said. Well, he used to say: “ One must realise that the real doer of things or the real author of everything is God (Since he was a devotee of Lord Raam, he has mentioned His name below).” His famous words of advice as they appear in this hymn are:

यत्न कसून करीन मी ।
यश दे, न दे, रामा तुझी सत्ता ॥
हाचि सुबोध गुरूंचा ।
मानावा राम सर्वथा कर्ता ॥



“ I will stretch myself to the maximum to accomplish my task, and Oh, Lord, give me success if you wish or don't give success if you so wish since your are the ultimate power. Therefore, Oh all you students of the spiritual path, this then is the good advice from the Guru that always know that the Lord is the real doer of things and the real author / driver of everything that happens in this Universe.”

Thus, since the time the Universe came into being, till it dissolves into nothingness, a lot of events take place. In some of them we see stability while in others we see dynamism. All these happenings and events take place as per a pre-decided Divine Will or plan. Therefore it is said in our scriptures “ईश्वरेच्छा बलीयसी” (The God's will is superior to everything , that is to say, it prevails upon everything else). God's power gets expressed through everything and that is why it is responsible for these events. The most miraculous and unbelievable part of this is that all these events and happenings have been decided by God before

actually creating the Universe. This is known as the pre-decided or pre-programmed Divine Will.

I: (with surprise) Sir, is that so ? I had always thought that I decide almost everything at my own free will. Now, do you mean to say that even what I will think and decide is also decided by the God in advance ? If this is so then my freedom of thought and expression has no meaning at all.

Maharaj: When you yourself are a small but significant part of the Divine power and when your body also is an embodiment of God, how can there be any place for your 'I' ness and ego ? In fact, all of us are Gods in various forms and shapes and through us he has assumed different properties and through our lives, he unfolds his pre-decided Divine Will or plan.

In fact, all that happens every moment in our lives is the continual unfolding of this pre-decided Divine plan and just nothing else. And God has a system whereby a common person does not come to know this plan until it is actually unfolded. Therefore, we do not know things which are yet to happen.

What we therefore do is we carry out actions that 'we perform' with the help of our intellect. And we keep believing that we have the freedom to either perform or not to perform these actions. We 'decide' something and 'act' accordingly and describe all this as 'my efforts', but those very actions happen because they are destined to happen. But it is due to the illusion called 'I' that we feel that we actually take actions. But, the truth is that God is the real doer, author or driver of everything that happens as per the script willed by Him.

I: No, sir, this one is too tough, too tough to digest. May be what you say has some truth in it. But Sir, do you have any evidence to prove it ?

Maharaj: If you believe, then yes, the evidence does exist. Tell me, have you ever met any person so far who predicts future events ?

I: No, Sir, I have not met anyone like this. Well, however, I have come across a few quack astrologers, but most of what they predicted never came true. But Sir, have you met any such person ?

Maharaj: Yes, by the grace of God, I have met a few persons who could predict the future accurately. **Now, the very simple logic is, how can anyone predict**

what is going to happen unless it has been already decided in advance ? All of us have one centre in our brains, which, when activated, makes us accurately aware of events that are going to happen in future. However, one has to study Yog in an in-depth manner. Now, when this centre in the brain understands or becomes aware of future events, are they decided just around that time ? No, they are pre-decided even before the birth of the Universe.

Let us take an example. Imagine you are standing on top of a mountain from where you can see the undulating road below. Then you look to your right and see far away a red-coloured car travelling speedily towards your left. When you look at your left, you see that a huge tanker has got overturned, occupying the entire width of the road and several vehicles have got stuck on both sides of the tanker. The people in the red car which is speeding towards their destination do not know that a traffic jam is awaiting them a few kilometres ahead. But you have that knowledge in advance because you are standing at a 'higher' level which gives you this superior knowledge or information.

Let us take another example. Have you heard of Bhrigu Samhita. This voluminous scripture has been written by Sage Bhrigu several centuries ago and it is said that it contains the past and future of every man and woman on this earth. One of my friends has experienced the veracity of the truth of this scripture. He told me that his past matched exactly with what has been written in that scripture. Sage Bhrigu got this knowledge as per the pre-decided Divine Will and he wrote it as per that knowledge.

Similarly, if you refer to the Bhagvad Geeta, Lord Krishna also had told Arjun in advance that the end of Kauravas was certain. To take an example from the Western world, you must have heard of the 16th Century French seer and prophet, Nostradamus, who predicted events of many future centuries which are miraculously coming true. So, to sum up, whether you agree or not, whatever happens every moment in this Universe happens exactly as per the pre-decided Divine Will. At least I have no doubt in my mind.

I: (with curiosity) Does it mean this conversation that is going on between us has also been decided by the Almighty in advance ?

Maharaj: I am totally certain about this. In a different sense, it can be said that every current moment in the present is the moment which unfolds the Divine

Will or the God's plan. Thus, the future is that Divine plan which is unknown to us and the past is the treasure of memories of events which were the Divine Will.

All our life is like a cassette. One end (spool) of the cassette is loaded and the other end is empty. When the cassette starts playing, it starts unwinding the tape from one end of the cassette and starts winding it on the other end. Whichever point on the tape comes in contact with the head of the tape player, only that data on the tape can be heard or seen by us. The future gets dissolved into the past through the present. Thus, our past is that Divine plan or Will which is familiar to us.

Our actions in the present are based on our experience of the past. Those actions too happen in accordance with the pre-programmed Divine script. We however become happy when we feel that things happened as per 'our' plans and become unhappy when things do not work out as per 'our' wish. This happiness and unhappiness is the result of our ignorance of the fact that all events happen as per the Divine Will.

I am reminded of a joke here. Once, some robbers loot a bank and return to a room and start counting the currency notes they had robbed from the bank. They want to count them so that they can divide the money among themselves. They soon realize that they are not very literate and also are not used to counting currency notes in such large numbers. As a result, they somehow cannot figure out the total amount of money plundered by them. One of the robbers is smart. He says, "Why bother now? Let us just relax and sleep now. Tomorrow morning, when the newspapers are on the stands, we will come to know how much money has been looted from the bank. Let us then divide the booty." Similarly, things keep happening as per the Divine Will. It is we who take their authorship and credit for us and keep struggling on the see-saw of joy and misery.

I: That reminds me of a funny incident. Once a man from a small village came to a city for the first time and boarded a train for the first time. He had a make-shift suitcase with him. When he saw others keeping their luggage on the upper rack, he too kept his luggage on the rack. After a little while, when the train slowed down for quite some time, suddenly, he got up, picked up his luggage and kept it on his head. When his co-passengers asked him about this action of his, he said, "Why should I give the burden of my luggage to the poor train. Perhaps it is because of its weight that the train is slowing down. So, Let me bear it myself."

Now, it is common sense that just because anyone carried his luggage on his head, the train's burden is not going to be any lesser.

Maharaj: Most of us are exactly like this poor villager. We too carry on our head, the burden of events in our lives by taking their authorship when the burden is actually being borne by the God. But once we are enlightened with this knowledge, we feel relieved like when we have a clean hair cut. However, one must really get convinced about this truth from within. It is in the absence of this knowledge that the mind creates a lot of sinful/evil ideas/thoughts which our scriptures describe as विकार (Vikar).

I: Which are these thoughts and how do they get created ?

Maharaj: **Grief for the past events that should have happened but did not happen, or happened but not in the way we would have liked them to happen, anger against those responsible for this, greed and attraction for objects which we wish to obtain in future, jealousy against those who already possess these objects, pride for objects we already possess, worry about whether things will happen in future as per our wishes; and the tension and stress arising out of all this. These are indicative of a (Vikar) defective state of our mind.**

I: What does Mauli, that is Saint Dnyaneshwar, say about this defective state of human mind ?

Maharaj: Mauli has stated in no uncertain terms thus:

प्रकृती करी कर्म ।
ती म्या केली म्हणे भ्रमे ॥

(Meaning: In this context, प्रकृती means the Divine Will and it is the Divine Will that makes things happen across the Universe but we say out of delusion that we make them happen.)

Mauli also adds:

परी मने वाचा देहे ।
जैसा जो व्यापारु होये ॥
तो मी करितु आहे ।
ऐसे न म्हणे ॥

(Its meaning is: whatever actions / thoughts occur in your mind, through your talk or are performed by the body, do not believe (and do not say) that "I am doing it.")

Every thing, every event that is going to happen in our life right from birth to death has already been decided and it merely unfolds accordingly, every moment. We however do not understand this and so claim its authorship and get trapped in the see-saw of happiness, grief and other Vikars.

That is why Dnyaneshwar Mauli has alerted all of us. His contention is that whatever we perceive every moment, whatever resultant thoughts arise in our minds, whatever we speak and whatever we physically do with the help of our intellect is as per the pre-decided Divine Will and therefore we should never believe that it is done by us.

I: But, Sir, there are over 5000 million people in this world, several million types of living beings whose population must be in billions. Plus, according to scientists, the Universe has 10^{72} atoms. So, my question is simple. How could the God have decided in advance all that is going to happen to all these beings?

Maharaj: My dear son, what is impossible and difficult for the Almighty God ? Just think of this. A compact disk (CD) can store about 700 to 800 megabytes of data. For storing the same data, thousands of physical files would have been required. It is man who invented the computer, its drives, the compact disk, the Digital Video Disk which can store data which is several times more as compared to what the CD can store. And then there are flash/pen/USB drives and as time goes by, there will always be more and more sophisticated storage devices (and of course other types of technology) that will almost always outclass their respective previous versions.

It is man who invents, manufactures and markets a variety of technology marvels and will continue to do so for several years to come. Doesn't this fact surprise you ? If no, then why should you get surprised by the God's ability, the same God who created man who invented computers, satellites, the internet and so on ? I can say with certainty that it is the Almighty God who has created this pre-programmed Universe. In fact I also firmly believe that it is He who has decided in advance, up to the finest details, everything that is going to happen in it.

I: Sir, these computers really dominate our lives in a big way. We also see that several young students want to join some computer institute or become a software professional. People say the computer never makes mistakes. Is it true ?

Maharaj: Not really. Well, it is true that on its own, it does not make mistakes while calculating. But it has no practical knowledge or understanding, at least for now that is. Well, that reminds me of an anecdote.

A person had two clocks. One of them had stopped working while the second one used to be one minute fast every day. When a computer was asked to rate the performance of these two clocks, it did some fair amount of calculation and gave its verdict. It said that the clock which was out of order was better than the one which was running fast one additional minute every day. The reason ? The computer's reasoning for rating the out-of-order clock higher was as follows: The clock which was working but was running fast one minute every day showed correct time only once in 720 days while the clock which was out of order showed accurate time twice every day. Now tell me, will anybody believe the computer's verdict and buy a clock which is not functioning ?!

I: Yes, that's right. But, jokes apart, it is said the computer is by and large extremely useful. But Sir, what actually is a computer and how does it carry out its work ?

(Dear Readers, an earnest request to please note that the original Marathi book was published in November 1996 and thus, some references may look outdated today).

Maharaj: (In a lighter vein) In the second chapter of the Bhagwad Geeta, Arjun asks a question to Lord Krishna regarding a स्थितप्रज्ञ (Sthitapradnya) person, how does he look, how does he sleep, what does he eat, drink, what does he talk about, when does he go into deep meditation ? Incidentally, Sthitapradnya is a Sanskrit word which refers to a person who maintains equanimity (treating happy and unhappy incidents equally calmly and with admirable mental equilibrium) even under the most trying times. Your questions about the Computer seem to be in a similar vein. OK. Be that as it may. Let me put it this way. Just as a pair of binoculars act as a machine that enhances the power of the human eyes, just as the telephone stretches the hearing ability of human ears many folds, a computer is a machine which carries out complex calculations

virtually at the speed of light and thereby expands the ability of the human intellect.

I: What functions can a computer perform ?

Maharaj: A computer can not only perform basic four arithmetical functions of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division at lightning speed, but it can also store, compute, search, collate, analyse data of extreme complexity and multiple parameters at increasingly faster speeds.

I: Why have computers attained so much importance these days ?

Maharaj: As mentioned above, incredible speed of work, miraculous capacity to store, compute, search, collate, analyse data of extreme complexity and multiple parameters at increasingly faster speeds in addition to reliable accuracy and wide ranging utility are some of the reasons for its tremendous spread all over the world, including in our homes. Although a computer is inanimate, its driving force is man's ingenuity and inventiveness and it works faster than human beings. So, the simple logic is what is impossible for God who has created humans ! Saint Tukaram has said:

अशक्य ते काय,
तुम्हा नारायणा ?!
निर्जीव चेतना आणावया ? !

" Oh, Almighty Narayän (one of the many names by which God is referred to), what is impossible for you, as you are the one who puts life into the inanimate. "

Chapter 03

The Mysterious creation of God ----Universe and the Man

I: Maharaj, it is said that this Universe, created by God, is too vast.

Maharaj: Yes, indeed it is and is much much bigger than you and I can imagine. Let me share with you some information regarding the Universe which our scientists have painstakingly gathered over the years.

Our dear Mother Earth has a circumference of about 40,000 kilometres. The moon, inspiration for generations of lovers, poets and artists, is 400,000 kilometres away from us. And the Great Sun, the biggest single source of light and energy for the entire humanity and an object of worship for billions, is about 150 million kilometres away from the Earth.

Distances beyond this cannot be conveniently measured in kilometres. Therefore, a measure called 'light-years' has to be used. One light-year is the distance travelled by light in one year. At the speed of about 300,000 kilometres per second, light travels about 10^{13} kilometres in one year. Our solar system has nine (eight plus our earth) planets (who, in spite of being so far away from us, still 'interfere' with our lives on this planet ! Or at least that is what we believe, thanks to the role played by astrology in our lives !!).

The Sun, around which these planets revolve, is a tiny star in our galaxy (we inhabitants of the earth, call it a milky way). Proxim Centaurus, is the star which is the nearest to our Sun, but it is 4.3 light-years away from it. Our Galaxy which consists of about 100 billion stars, looks like a rugby ball. Another wonderful fact is that scientists believe that our Universe consists of about 100 billion galaxies.

The best of telescopes enable scientists to see that part of the Universe which is only about 10 billion light-years away. **But remember, if you are seeing a star which is 10 billion light-years away, you are seeing it as it was 10 billion years ago and not as it is today, since the light emanating from it took 10 billion years to reach us (our eyes).**

Now, my dear friend, on the one hand you have these mind-boggling distances and on the other hand, we have a big ego residing in the speck-like 5 to 6 feet tall human body. In the eyes of the Almighty God, what is the value or importance of this ego in comparison with the limitless Universe which is so difficult to measure even in light-years ?

I: Sir, I am now really convinced that this God who creates this super mega-size Universe and plans in advance its entire sequence of events right from its creation to its destruction, must be really the Almighty.

Maharaj: This means you have now accepted this thought as the truth rather than a figment of mere imagination. And once a person is deeply convinced from within, he or she never entertains any doubt about it.

I: Sir, there is no doubt left in my mind about this issue. But people often ask a typical doubt. I wonder how to satisfy this particular doubt of theirs ?

Maharaj: What is it ?

I: Some people say that if everything happens in accordance with God's Will, then why should anyone make any efforts at all ? Wouldn't this philosophy lead to widespread complacency ?

Maharaj: This is a commonly asked question whenever the theory of total supremacy of God's Will is put forward. It is true that common people often raise this issue. So, let us probe the root cause of this doubt. It keeps raising its head time and again because we do not try to understand the reality of the Divine Will.

But what is the reality ? The reality is that all the events in the Universe keep happening in accordance with pre-determined Divine Will. At the same time, this Divine Will or plan becomes known to us only in the present tense and the very next moment it becomes a part of the memory and thus gets added to the past tense.

Similarly, every living Being is a manifestation of God. However, one property of the Being, which has been assumed (taken) by the God himself, is that a common living Being does not have any knowledge about the future plans of the God.

Cause>Effect

So, when a wish is born in the mind of a living Being for getting something or avoiding something in the future, the Being starts making efforts towards it. At the same time, it believes that 'I' am making efforts and I must get favourable results. Now, what actually happens is that the efforts produce positive or negative results but they are not a direct outcome of the efforts. They are in accordance with what the Divine Will has decided.

If the Divine plan has pre-decided that a particular effort will bear positive results, it will be so or will produce negative results if that is what has been pre-decided. The 'Being' however, believes out of ignorance that 'I' did my best and that is why 'I' have achieved success/ or 'I' have taken so many efforts but still 'I' have failed. Therefore, the 'Being' creates a chain consisting of wish, efforts and their fruit; and puts forward (this also out of ignorance) a theory of cause and effect.

But in the Divine scheme of things, these three are separate. That is to say, the act or a wish being born in the mind of a Being is an independent Divine plan. Efforts taken by that Being to fulfil that wish is a separate Divine design and its actual result or fruit is also a separate Divine plan or design, all these occurring one after the other and not because of each other.

1-2-3

In this context, it would be interesting to study this often-quoted statement that "*If my God exists, he will fulfil my desires even without my making any efforts.*" **Here, whether I will make any efforts or whether I will just put my feet up and do nothing is also decided in advance by the God. When 'I' make efforts, it is God who has pre-decided whether those efforts will happen through me and whether they will bear fruits or not and if yes, what kind of fruits.**

Similarly, God has also decided in advance whether my needs will be fulfilled although I have just put my feet up. If God has decided to fulfil one's needs and desires even if one is merely sitting and doing nothing, the desires will still be somehow fulfilled.

I: Sir, one more rather stupid question. If this is so, then why doesn't he fulfil everybody's desires ?

Maharaj: Because, God himself, when he assumes the form of a particular Being, also endows it with such properties so that the Being's wishes and desires have no end. Therefore, as per the pre-decided Divine plan, some of them get fulfilled, some don't.

Secondly, his role here is similar to that of a screenplay writer or a playwright. This writer has to weave a plot in such a way that the play or cinema should last for about three hours. He therefore writes a story long enough to sustain itself to that length. Needless to say, he has to build into it several twists and turns. Thus, the hero and heroine are on the point of starting a happy life when some event separates them. A series of misfortunes, misunderstandings, jealousy, suspicion and intrigue follow in which the villain and the vamp contribute substantially to their misery. He also shows a princess or a prince having to work as a domestic servant or a labourer. After this, the end could be 'they lived happily thereafter' or a tragic one. What event will happen where and who will lead what kind of life ---- all this depends on the script writer/director.

The drama or cinema that the God creates is innumerable times more vast in scale and magnitude. His stage is the unlimited and infinite Universe, which can at best be imagined as an entity having space equalling something greater than trillions of light-years of cubic metres inhabited by billions and billions of living Beings. And apparently, He wishes to run the show for thousands of eras and therefore he has created a Universe which is multi-faceted.



So, you will find that in human life, happiness-misery, joy-pain, good-bad, right-wrong, proper-improper operate in pairs. And the point to be remembered is that since all these forms and shapes are God's expressions. He is totally unaffected by all this, that is to say, He himself has neither a cause for celebration nor for mourning.

Thus, this is what happens: the Being 'forgets' that before the birth of the Universe, 'It' was 'itself only' who was the Unexpressed/Unmanifest Infinite, Almighty God and now, in this Universe, 'it' is a 'part' / 'a microscopic fraction' of this great Creator, a sort of a tiny representation of the Almighty. In the process, 'It' pre-supposes / believes that it is an entity separate from the Creator. Since the Being has forgotten that "it" is a representative fraction of the God and has started believing that "it" has an existence separate from that of God, "it" acquires certain new properties and gets stuck in the cycle of ignorance, ego,

attachment, happiness-misery, infatuation, repulsive feeling, a variety of desires and the lasting influence of all these.

I: Sir, although you had told me the properties of the 'Being', I would like to have one revision of the same. What is this 'Being' ? What is its character ?

Maharaj: This family of 'Beings' includes everything from a virus to all the animate living species. There are hundreds of thousands of Beings in this Universe known to man, mainly because they have been discovered by the scientists. A Being can be defined in many ways. One which / who is alive, one which moves / shakes, one which possesses wishes, desires, impulses, inspiration, etc. But the scientific definition of a Being is as follows: "A living cell or Being is one which can, with its own will, take and consume useful things which are outside itself, process those things physically, chemically and biologically, thereby remain alive, and throw out the unwanted remnants of these processes out of its body."

I: There must be a lot of varieties of these Beings ?

Maharaj: The most minute Being found by man so far is called virus. The Being which thinks it is the most advanced one in several respects is called a Human Being. Virus is extremely microscopic in size. It can be seen only with the help of a microscope or an electron microscope. The virus possesses super intelligence to easily kill even an extremely intelligent and powerful Human Being.

It achieves its destructive designs through intrigue and deceit. It is a master strategist. Once it enters a human body, through water, air or food, it reaches the site where protective cells are produced and not sure how, but it somehow manages to change the method of creation and rewrites the code due to which the production centre starts producing virus-like cells instead of the cells that work as police or army for the protection of the human body.

Then all hell breaks loose. The body starts producing virus-replicas and their population soon multiplies by hundreds of thousands. By the time other protective healthy cell-making centres in the body learn about this and send squads of protective cells to this trouble-hit site in the human body, virus production and their strength increases tremendously. Then begins an intense battle between the protective cells and virus cells.

The side which is destined to win, wins. Thus, if the pre-decided Divine plan is for the virus army to lose the battle, the concerned Human Being survives but if the Divine Will is otherwise, then the virus army triumphs and the Human Being dies. (And come to think of it, we humans feel that it was the medicines which saved the dying man ! Of course, this is not to say that the medicines had no role to play in saving the patient but medicines alone cannot perform such miracles !)

I: I had no idea about this at all. Never knew that the virus is so intelligent and powerful. What next ?

Maharaj: Virus, amoeba (having only one cell), small insects, reptiles, fish and other marine creatures, birds, beasts and humans are other varieties of living Beings. Beings in general have a certain kind of in-born feeling/sensation due to which the events in their lives are limited to, as an ancient Sanskrit saying goes: “आहार निद्रा भय मैथुनं च “meaning, only eat, sleep, fear and enjoy sexual pleasure.” They are also bound by another Divine rule which our scriptures have described as जीवो जीवस्य जीवनं (“Jeevo Jeevasya Jeevanam”). It means one Being is the source of life / food for another Being. Several species of Beings have got totally decimated due to this basic fact of life.

I: Sir, all this information is really educative and interesting. Now, I am eager to learn more about human Beings.

Maharaj: Well, let us take a look at human ‘Beings.’ It is generally said that a mother loves all her children equally. However, there are exceptions..., a mother can secretly have a special liking for one of the them. The God too must be secretly having a liking and love for his best creation---human Beings, their body and intellect. In fact, these two things should be called the most miraculous aspect of the Divine creation.

Just as the fundamental element of an inanimate object is its atom, in the case of an animate living Being, it is a cell. A human body (of an adult) consists of approximately 6×10^{13} living cells. And they are so minuscule in size that a pin-head can accommodate thousands of cells. But these cells are different in size.

Each cell in a human body has a centre which is surrounded by a thick liquid-like substance encased in the cell skin. The thick liquid contains many biological and non-biological elements. It also contains energy-creating centres. The cell-skin too is very important. It takes in from the human blood things required to

produce proteins, processes them and gives out into the blood stream useless / disposable things.

The centre of a cell is a micro-seized thread-like substance called chromosomes which have two elements --- DNA (Deoxyribo Nucleic Acid) and RNA (Ribonucleic acid). Every human cell has 23 pairs of chromosomes. As per the scientific knowledge available today, every chromosome carries about 2000 genes. These genes store massive data about the human Being such as hereditary traits, colour of hair, skin texture, body build, illnesses likely to affect him or her, etc.

Chromosomes look like a twisted elastic ladder. These chromosomes are the controllers that orchestrate human life. They are really one of the greatest miracles of the Divine creation. Just as a Saint can perform a miracle, these chromosomes, inherited from the reproductive cells of our parents, can also perform miracles. In fact, we need not look outside our own body to search for miracles. Every moment, thousands of miracles take place in our own body.

I: These cells are truly a Divine miracle. What happens next ?

Maharaj: The most striking feature of this cell is its ability to carry out any function in any part of the body. However, it continues to perform the task designated to it in a certain part of the body. It performs it very diligently. Just as the owner of a drama company doubles up to play any of the most insignificant characters in his own play.

Many such cells together form a human organ. Many organs together form a system. Humans lead their life with several such systems. For example, respiratory, blood circulation, digestive, ejection of waste material, bones, muscles, protective, nervous, etc.

All these systems work in synergy with each other. You are aware of the functions of these systems. But their important characteristic, which is also one of the most incredible miracles in this world, is that if similar processes were to take place in the world (outside the human body), it would require heat worth thousands of degrees Fahrenheit. The same processes can be carried out extremely efficiently at even 98⁰ Fahrenheit which is largely considered as the normal temperature of the healthy human body.

But, sometimes some of these cells get egoistic as it were and they start growing disproportionate to their actual required size and need. This affects the functioning of organs located near these cells. As this does not cause any pain during the initial phase of the chaos, the concerned human Being does not feel anything irregular.

But at a later stage, he or she feels acute pain and then becomes aware of the disproportionate growth of these cells. But in most cases, it is too late by that time and invariably it results in the person's death. This excessive growth of cells is known as cancerous growth. Although modern research is believed to have achieved some breakthroughs in cancer treatment and cure, this disease is still one of the most dreaded ones.

I: This peep into the world of human cells is so exciting. Now, I am eager to know something about the human intellect.

Maharaj: Human intellect is truly a unique thing. Like other Beings, human Beings also possess the inborn intelligence. Thus, a newborn baby, when it feels the first pangs of hunger, instinctively reaches for its mother's breasts for supply of food (milk).

To repeat what Saint Tukaram has said in this context (and has earlier been mentioned in this book):

“ Do we ever ask ourselves as to who creates milk in the mother's breast ? Well, it is undoubtedly the Almighty who creates it, gives the baby the instinctive knowledge to feed itself on it; and helps it to grow. ”

Plus, human Beings learn about the world around them through their senses, think about it through their language, act or react to this information through the body gestures and impulses and also can introspect on it in order to get a real personal experience or understanding of the learning. So, let us get acquainted with this human intellect.

Brain resides at the peak of the human body. Thus, it controls and operates functions of the body by residing on top of it. The brain has a tail similar to the tail of a kite. This tail is known to us as the backbone. By the way, what is the weight of the human brain ? The brain, which has been ruling the entire history

of this planet for ages, weighs a mere 1.25 kilograms. Its touch is rubber-like, soft and a little wet. Its size is equal to a small-sized coconut.

Though its colour is similar to the pink cheeks of a baby, its surface has countless wrinkles like those on the face of an old man!! The brain is placed inside a hard skull in the head and is further protected by three casings, one inside the other and is surrounded by a liquid. In short, it is similar to a precious object kept inside the locker of a safe deposit vault of a bank. All physical pain is sensed inside the brain and so we feel pain. But surprisingly, the brain itself has no sense of pain of its own. Therefore, just as no pain is felt if hair is cut or a nail is trimmed, no pain will be felt by the brain if a surgeon removes a part of the brain right in front of the patient himself !!

A brain consists of approximately 1300 crore cells (approximately 2.5 times the world population as per current statistics). They are called as neurons. Our traditional Indian science calls them चैतन्य विशिष्ट (*Chaitanya-vishishta cells*) पेशी or उपहित बुद्धी पेशी (*Upahit intellect cells*). Other cells in the body are replaced after their death. Newly born cells take the place of the dead ones and they start functioning like their predecessors. It is believed that every seven years, the entire cell population is replaced.

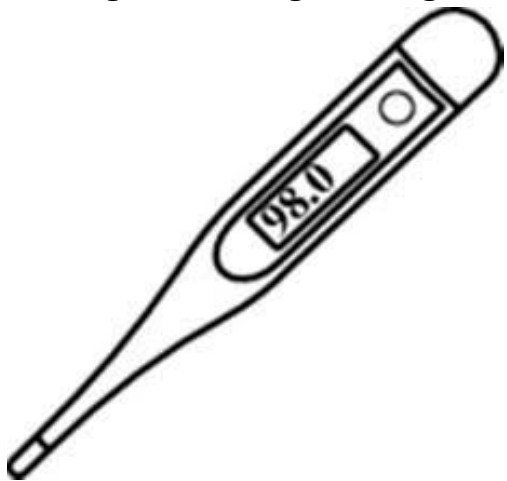
This has great significance from the spiritual perspective. If all the cells in a person's body are तमोगुणी (*Tamoguni*) in character (given to baser instincts, prone to inferior quality wishes, actions and pursuits), he or she can hope to get a new set of cells more superior in character viz, either रजोगुणी (*Rajoguni*, that is, a person having a work-oriented working style/personality which is nontheless influenced by egoism and a craving for name, fame, money, luxurious comforts, etc.) or after a further period of seven years, सत्वगुणी (*Satvaguni*, means a person characterized by spiritual, benevolent, compassionate, pure thoughts, coupled with virtuous actions).

He or she can hope to achieve this through meditation. In the Indian scriptures, there is a story of Lord Ram spending 14 years of his young life in a jungle. What it actually means is two periods of seven years' each spent in meditation to self-realize the God within and then to spend pure spiritually-enabled life.

Though, body cells get transformed / replaced every seven years, the brain cells are an exception to this rule. Once they perish, newly born cells do not take their place, or at least that is what the science believes as of today.

I: My God, if this is so, what will happen when all the cells in my brain perish one by one and nothing is left in the brain ? What will happen then?

Maharaj: God has therefore provided such a massive stock of cells in a human brain that even if a human Being decides to learn a new thing every minute, the cells will be sufficient for 300 years. These cells are connected and powered by miniscule-sized batteries. Electricity in these batteries is generated by burning the blood sugar with the help of oxygen and that electricity is supplied by these batteries to the brain. The sugar-burning during the electricity generation process produces waste known as carbon-di-oxide which is thrown out of the body through exhaling. Though the brain weight is just 2 % of the body weight, the



oxygen and blood supply it gets is as large as 20 % of the total supply to the entire body. That shows its supreme importance in the human body.

The brain functions can be divided into two parts. One part is engrossed in obtaining information from the external world, thinking appropriately about it and taking appropriate action on it.

The second part is engaged in proper operation and control of the body based on information / data received from various parts of the body. This information / data relates to blood sugar, body temperature, rhythm of breathing in and out, the heartbeats tempo, hormones creation, body protection system, etc. And this function takes place without our ever being aware of it. Therefore, we do not take cognizance of it.

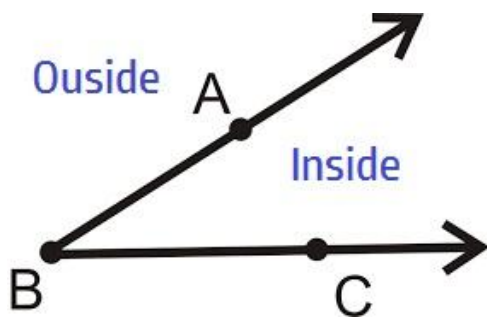
In fact, this brain function takes place in accordance with the principles of doing one's actions without being attached to their fruits, as enunciated in the Bhagwad Geeta. In that sense, the brain is a Yogi who 'lives' this particular Geeta principle as it were. And as long as it performs this function smoothly, we never become aware of it. Isn't this a miracle of human intellect ?

So, a human Being requires several things ---- food, water, air for surviving, clothes and shelter for protecting oneself from changes in atmosphere; a piece of

ground or floor for resting one's body, medicines for helping cure illnesses, training / education for equipping oneself to earn one's livelihood and leisure / entertainment to lighten the boredom.

Over and above all this, he or she requires the warmth of love. Now, all these things have to be acquired from the external world that surrounds us. Every Being and the remaining world together form an homogenous and impregnable Universe. This Universe is a mega-size expression of the God.

But every Being forgets this unity between it and the rest of the world as both forming one unified Universe. Due to this amnesia, every Being starts considering itself a separate independent entity and divides the Universe into two parts ---- oneself and the rest of the Universe. In geometry, an angle creates two parts of the surface, as inside part and outside part. Similarly, the Being begins a new relationship with the Universe (everything apart from itself) as both being two different entities and this leads to its journey on the erroneous principle of duality.



The Being comes into contact with the Universe (for the sake of convenience, we can call it the world) through its senses, it uses its thinking ability to understand whatever it perceives of the world and reacts to it through the medium of its body. The Being requires this knowledge or information

about the world basically to remain alive and to keep its existence intact.

Chapter 04

Human Life Created Out of Ignorance About God

I: Sir, shall we take a look at how does a Being perceive the world ?

Maharaj: Yes, let us take a look. When we are awake, vibrations or particles emanating from an animate Being or an inanimate object enter our senses. The entry into the senses is obviously free. No notice boards announcing 'No entry' or 'No admission without permission.' Then, our sensory organs create their own vibrations and they are conveyed to the appropriate knowledge centres in the intellect. There are several such efficient knowledge centres in the intellect.

Let us take an example. Suppose we see an object with a calm mind. If we are seeing it for the first time, then all its external dimensions and features are stored in our memory along with all the minute details. If the object has a name, that too is noted. Our other sensory organs would make a note of its smell/fragrance, any sound/noise emanating from it, The shape, shades of various colours, the smoothness or roughness of the seen surface, a working idea about the volume of this object fall within the domain of the eye and our sense of touch.

When the object is seen from all sides, more or less complete information about its external appearance can be had. When Hindus visit a temple and have darshan (the act of seeing the idol of the God or Goddess) of the deity therein, they walk around it at least once. This practice must be having its roots in the human urge to observe an object from all its sides. Some devotees also turn full circles around themselves (with an intention to observe the world around you!). If we have seen the object before, we can recognize it with the help of our memory, we can even recall its name.

I: What happens after this ?

Maharaj: Then the next immediate thought that gets generated is whether the object poses any danger to us. And if it does pose some danger, the instant reaction is to move or run as far away as possible from it towards a seemingly

safer place. For example, a railway platform may be extremely crowded, but if suddenly a rumour creeps into the crowd that a time-bomb has been placed on the platform by some unknown terrorists, within no time, the crowd would vanish.

Similarly, even if a snake charmer brings a cobra or a snake closer to us while assuring us that it is poison-less, toothless and harmless, we will still keep moving away from it since a cobra or a snake is a Being which poses danger. Here, a basic principle of existence is at work. That is to say, survival is one of the fundamental objectives of life.

Now, if the object poses no danger, then we start observing it closely, resulting into a minute scrutiny of its features. The next logical step is to compare its present form and appearance with the earlier one. Thus, we get into the comparison mode. The similarities and differences are observed and noted. It is then explored whether the object is useful to us. If it has no utility to offer to us, no thoughts are created and the mind can retain its composure. If the object has some useful features, then we start making efforts to use/exploit them.

Also, if its useful features have given pleasure to us in the past, the mind starts finding out whether even now similar pleasure and enjoyment can be derived from it. If the mind is convinced, then we start making every possible effort to derive maximum possible pleasure from it.

Conversely, if the object has been a source of unhappiness, then we try to find out whether it can cause unhappiness or discomfort to us now. The logical next step is to keep the object away from us or to move away from the object or else to explore ways and means to see if the same object can now give us pleasure by changing some of its features. Whether a particular object would cause us pleasure or displeasure also depends on our past influences. That is because the ideas of happiness and unhappiness, pleasure and pain change with every individual.

Emotions vis-à-vis the object thus get created in our minds based on these past influences. Instances involving all the above get stored in our memory and get linked to our knowledge about that particular object. Thus, harmfulness (उपद्रव), utility (उपयोग), enjoyment (उपभोग), emotions (उद्भाव) and neutrality (उदासीन) are five characteristics of this knowledge.

Now, when I see or meet another human being, that seeing or meeting is a kind of appeal/challenge to me. My reaction to him or her is as per my past influences. That reaction is an appeal/challenge to that person, to which he again reacts. This chain of appeal (/challenge)-reaction is what we call an event and life is embellished with such events.

I: *What do these events lead to ?*

Maharaj: We want to repeatedly get and possess objects of pleasure. In spiritual terms, this is described as attachment (आसक्ती/ राग—Asakti or Raag) or attraction. Bhagwan Patanjali has defined this attachment/attraction as सुखानुशयी रागः (Sukhanushayi Raag).

When a desire becomes very intense and strong, resulting into 'I must have it,' then it becomes what our scriptures have described as वासना (Vasana) or ईषणा (Eeshana). Vasana means lust or a strong urge to own an object of pleasure, while Eeshana means infatuation or excessive attraction.

Four main types of Eeshanas have been enumerated by our ancient scriptures: 1) Infatuation of money (द्रव्येषणा) (2) Infatuation of fame (लोकेषणा), 3) Infatuation of desires (कामेषणा) and 4) Infatuation of sex (दारेषणा) दारा (Dara in Sanskrit means a woman, so दारेषणा literally means sexual attraction that a man possesses towards a woman, but in the macro context, it means sexual attraction between men and women for each other).

Let us closely study each one of them:

A) Infatuation of money / wealth: (द्रव्येषणा)

A large majority of people in this world are obsessed by this infatuation. Money is extremely essential for obtaining objects that fulfil sensual pleasures. That is why people want to be rich. Money is also seen as a means to take care of all needs and comforts of our own life, our family, as also those of our future generations.

Money is also required for fulfilling the remaining three attractions. Since these attractions can never be fulfilled totally, we have to keep on earning money

throughout our life. Since all this money earned cannot be carried with oneself after one's own death, it remains behind and the children and other relatives get it without much efforts and thus they do not appreciate its value!

We human beings earn money through four different means. (1) By being born in a rich family ---- but we do not have a choice to select the family into which to be born (2) To earn money honestly through utilising education and knowledge acquired and also through physical efforts. This is a time-honoured way to earn money. (3) To earn money without immense efforts through lottery, gambling, racing and stock market speculation. This route is beneficial only to a few people. (4) To earn money through unlawful means by exploiting or cheating others or through extortion. This method is spreading, especially in big cities.

Saint Tukaram had described several centuries ago, perhaps the last word on the subject of money, its ethical earning and appropriate spending.

जोडोनिया धन । उत्तम व्यवहारे ।
उदास विचारे । वेच करी ॥

“ Earn (attach) money through the most honourable means (transactions) and spend it in the most prudent, detached and balanced way, ” said Saint Tukaram.

Therefore, money in excess of needs should be spent in charity. Because, it benefits the receiver and it provides the donor mental satisfaction and virtuous credit (Punya).

B) Attraction of people (लोकेशणा):

Lokeshana: The craving for people's attention, praise, fame, etc. is a common human trait. In fact, he or she happens to make it as one of the objectives in life and towards this end too, he starts earning more money. Because as one of the ancient Sanskrit sayings describes it in a rather sarcastic way:

सर्वे गुणाः कांचनमाश्रयंते ॥

“ All good and commendable qualities come and reside (get attracted to the place) where the wealth (gold, jewellery...) resides.”

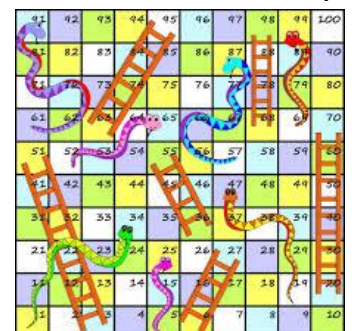
This second craving begins its journey with a typical pattern, especially in the present world. First become an office-bearer of your co-operative housing society, President of some small-time associations in your lane/by-lane, then office-bearer of the village council/ or the municipality, followed by a people's representative in a provincial legislature, then a Member of Parliament, then a Minister and then may be the Prime Minister and so on.

Such a person's लोकेषणा jumps up the ladder (like in the Snakes & Ladder game). This happens smoothly as long as destiny is on his side. When it goes against him, the journey goes haywire and he starts sliding down the mouth of the Snake. Then he has to return to his native place with all power and position gone. Perhaps then he realizes the futility of Lokeshana, that is, craving for people's attention.

(C) Kameshana (कामेषणा): In simple terms, this means all sorts of desires hidden within us. We wish that all (or at least as many of them as possible) these should be fulfilled. After one gets fulfilled, a new one appears and then the next and the next and so on. Let me give you an example from the good old days when radio was a novelty. If somebody bought a radio set, his next door neighbour would have this desire to purchase a radio for his home. If a friend or a relative had a music system, record player, a washing machine, then we also would have the desire to have these white goods.

A person having a black & white television set, would desire to have a colour TV, a person possessing an audio tape recorder, has on his shopping list, a video cassette recorder, then a video camera and so on. A person having an audio music system, would desire to have a system to play VCDs, DVDs and then probably aspire to have an home theatre. A person riding to his office on a bicycle, has this desire to some day have his own motor-cycle or a scooter or at least a moped. A car is next on the list. The wheel of desires keeps rotating continuously like the wheel of the vehicle the person is riding. (With more inventions and passage of time, the names of these objects of attraction keep changing but the underlying principles remain the same.)

These desires convert the mind into an outward-looking mechanism and makes available to it various kinds of pleasures. But the fact remains that these pleasures are of a temporary nature. But in the process, it deprives itself of the



pure and desire-less inward joy. When a man begins to “fully realize” the futility of कामेषणा, its noose starts becoming loose and he starts remaining happy with whatever he gets naturally and effortlessly.

(D) Attraction / Desire towards women (दारेषणा): Figurative meaning... sexual attraction between men and women for each other)

God has created an in-built property in the male and female human species to naturally get attracted towards each other. God has created this in order to sustain the consistency and continuance of the human race. This particular desire springs out of this reality. Man desires that he should have a beautiful and attractive woman as his wife, irrespective of how he himself looks. A woman, irrespective of how she looks, wants her husband to be a handsome man. It is due to this infatuation that men are on their knees before good-looking and attractive women and they (the women) in turn make them dance to their tunes !

The force of this attraction reduces when man starts realising that woman may be an object of sexual pleasure but it is only for the short term. He realizes that in the long term however, a woman is an eternal mother. Thus, when his main vocation / duty requires him to stay away from his wife and children, perhaps in order not to discontinue their schooling, he agrees and adjusts to the reality. In the epic Ramayan, Lord Ram’s brother Lakshman accompanies his elder brother Ram and sister-in-law Seeta to the forced stay in the jungles (वनवास) while his wife Urmila was left back home to take care of the elders...and all this for a long period of 14 years.

All these desires trigger efforts to fulfil them at any cost. This generates a chain of joy-misery, attraction-repulsion. This leads to infatuation, anger, greed, illusions, pride, jealousy, fear and worry. The life of a common, ignorant and egoistic person is replete with them. Because he is ignorant of the fundamental truth that everything happens in accordance with the pre-decided Divine plan / will and the illusive ego believes that it is ‘I’ who do everything in my life. This generates a false sense of love and attachment and mis-placed importance.

Chapter 05

Literal meaning of the Hymn and inspiration springing from it

I: *But Sir, this particular hymn from Saint Dnyaneshwar that we are discussing does not state anything like this.*

(For quick reference of the readers, reproducing the hymn ----- the hymn No. 118 of Dnyaneshwari's Chapter 10, which has inspired this book.):

जे जे भेटे भूत
ते ते मानिजे भगवंत ॥
हा भक्तियोगु निश्चित
जाण माझा ॥

“ Whichever / whatever Being / every Being (living or non-living) that you see or meet, Learn to believe it/consider it as God, Please understand that this certainly is the absolute essence of my Bhakti-yog.”(Bhakti-yog means the devotional love-based path to spiritual self-realization).

Maharaj: Look closely my dear son. In the very first line of the hymn, the Saint says: ***Whichever / whatever Being / every Being (living or non-living) that you see or meet.***” It is worth probing deeper into the subtle meaning and beauty of each word in this mymn.

I: *OK. Then the first thing that occurs to me is, the Saint has used the term ‘Whichever / whatever Being / every Being.’ This is kind of referring to some pair.*
Maharaj: Our human intellect stores various concepts in pairs --- good-bad, proper-improper, praise-criticism, right-wrong and so on. The term ‘ whichever/ whatever’ has this wide canvass. It means to suggest that irrespective of what kind of Being it may be (good-bad, ...), learn to see God in it.

A person who comes to meet us can be a good person or a bad one. If he is a good human being, we feel good and if he is a bad human being, we feel unhappy and pray for quick relief from his presence. If the boss is good, we try to stick around with him and avoid getting transferred. But if he is the harassing type, the employee working under him tries to get himself transferred or looks for another job (naively believing that the boss in the new job is bound to be better than the one in the current job !)

But the Saint says that a good human being and a bad human being --- both are forms assumed by God.

Now, Saint Dnyaneshwar, by using the term ' see / meet ' has actually answered your query.

I: How is that ? Can you elaborate on this ?

Maharaj: Look at this. Whenever I go to meet somebody, normally I go with 'my own wish.' Similarly, when somebody comes to meet me, he does not come due to my wish, but he definitely comes with 'his own wish.'

By using the word 'meet,' the Saint has suggested something specific. What he is trying to tell us is that whichever/whatever/every Being that meets you, meets you not with your wish, nor with his wish but with the God's wish. Suppose you go to meet somebody with 'your own wish,' the truth is that you felt like meeting that person only because of God's wish. Thus, the Saint has very clearly stated that these meetings take place only due to God's wish.

I: What is the significance of the word 'Being' ?

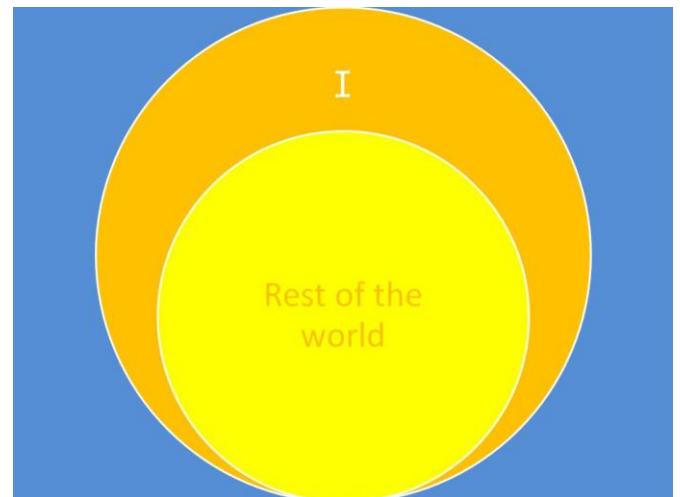
Maharaj: This 'Being' also refers to the five elements which form everything on this earth. They are: पृथ्वी (earth), आप aap or jala (water), वायू vayu or pavan (air or wind), तेज tejas or agni (fire), and आकाश (vyom, shunya, space, zero, aether or void). In the scientific language, solid (earth), liquid (water) and gaseous (wind) are three types of things, plus energy (light) and space / vacuum are the five corresponding terms.

Our scriptures have traditionally believed that this entire Universe is an independent Super Being and the renowned scientist Albert Einstein has proved this. He discovered that just as an object has curved borders, even the space can have curved borders. It is generally believed that the concept of zero is an Indian invention and contribution to the world. Similarly, another Indian contribution is the thought that the space (sky), which seems equal to nothingness, is an independent Super Being.

Our five sensory organs (**eyes, ears, tongue, skin and nose**) can only feel the properties of these five elements and we deduce the existence of a particular object based on these properties. And the Saint has used the word 'Being' to precisely convey this. The Saint has used the term 'Being' for another reason. His contention is that we know about living and non-living objects due to the knowledge stored in our memory from the past.

I: I have understood up to this point. But I wish to know why has the Saint used the expression 'learn to believe it as God' ?

Maharaj: It is a property of the human intellect that it is not able to think or act without presuming something or believing something as a premise.



Down the ages and centuries, we have been carrying on with our life, thinking that every object has a separate existence. But this assumption causes a lot of problems. The only way to solve it is to realize that any object or Being and I are two separate forms, objects or entities adopted by the same God and the same Divine power expresses itself through different media/ different entities; and that is why this power creates an illusion that everything that we see in this world is separate from each other.

Man can take his human life to Divine levels if he realizes, understands and then also experiences this truth that it is not so and in reality all Beings, whether animate or inanimate have the same Divine energy/principle running through them and driving them. That is why the Saint has used the word 'believe/consider.'

I: Sir, I am now convinced that everything happens as per the Divine plan and all past events are nothing but an expression of this plan and its storage in our

memory. But the fact remains that we do not generally come to know in advance the Divine plans related to the future. What then is the utility of this truth in the daily human life ?

Maharaj: Another property or characteristic of human intellect is to look at everything from the point of view of utility and enjoyment. It is like when you see a rose, you think of its commercial use (selling it in the flower market or making a herbal tonic out of it) rather than appreciating it through a pure aesthetic angle.

Now, let us study your question. In algebra, we use X for solving problems. We use X in a formula, solve it and find out the value of X. We do not feel happy or sad whether the value of X is big or small since there are no emotions attached to the value of this X. Similarly, God has created within the human intellect a property which enables it to use an X and a formula which is equal to the knowledge, thought, action and memory which in other words, is the Divine Will.

The only difference is that, in this case, we are keen to have the value of X in accordance with our wishes or plans. We want the value of this X to be always pleasant. So, when the pleasure does not emerge, we become miserable psychologically, not to speak of some physical pain that can also come along with it.

Naturally, a common man's perception of life is that unhappiness far outweighs happiness. Saint Tukaram has echoed this feeling thus:

सुख पाहता जवापाडे ।

दुःख पर्वता एवढे ॥

‘ Happiness is like a tiny oilseed grain and misery is like a mountain. ’ That is why, ignorant men use knowledge from past events and build castles in the air. On the contrary, a self-realized person waits for the Divine plan to unfold in the present and then welcomes the present as the Divine Will or plan. Because he knows that this Will or plan is dynamic and is ever-new. That is why the noted thinker and spiritual leader J. Krishnamurthy, without referring to the Divine Will / plan, used to say that one must always live in the present because it is always fresh and new. For him, the ultimate truth was the Form (रूप), plus its properties plus (its) Power (Shakti) plus (its) Will / Plan.

I: Sir, does it mean we should never think of the future at all ?

Maharaj: No, it does not mean that. We should think of the future only for planning our work. For example, it is alright if I plan for tomorrow. But we should remember that this planning is merely like assuming an X in an algebraic sum. When this X is calculated by using the formula of Divine Will, the outcome value

Knowledge → Desire → Efforts → Outcome

need not be equal to the value expected by us. Because the value is already decided and is anyway going to become known tomorrow. Therefore, we should never assume that tomorrow's happening will be exactly like what we decide.

Let us understand this process. Well, it is like this: we see an object and that leads to a chain consisting of:

1. Knowledge about the object, thoughts triggered after seeing the object and resultant action,
2. Learning about the properties of that object by getting familiar with it. Then, if the properties are pleasure-giving, then a desire gets generated to acquire it, then efforts are made to acquire it and this is followed by some kind of outcome of these efforts---either successful or unsuccessful.
3. Cause, action and effect and knowledge about these things are all active in the intellect of the living Being. For example, the Budget presented by the Finance Minister of a nation has two kinds of figures, estimated and actual. Similarly, the wish and desire of a Being is the equivalent of the estimated and the Divine Will is like the actual figures.

To give you another example, the owner of a business organization has a strong desire to have as much profit as possible and thus, his happiness is dependent on the profit / loss in his business. But the auditors who check and certify the accounts have nothing to do (emotionally) with the profit or loss. Their job is to discover the real state of the financial health of that company.

Similarly, our desires and aspirations are meant to discover the reality regarding the Divine Will. But ignorant human beings believe that all his or her desires are meant to be fulfilled and therefore they get stuck in the quagmire of happiness and misery.

I: *But Sir, a common man like me would say that if a desire is not necessarily likely to be fulfilled, then why should one have desire for anything at all ?*

Maharaj: (In a lighter vein) That reminds me of people who are crazy for tea -- they argue that if no tea is to be had in the morning, why should we get up in the morning at all !! OK, what is your next query ?

I: *You claim that God has taken the form of everything in this Universe. I would believe it only because your are saying so. But then, if it is really true, we will have to worship even Beings such as the robbers, murderers, villains and poisonous animals like cobras and scorpions. Sir, whatever you might say, I am not ready to accept this theory that God has taken the forms of the wicked and cruel rascals and criminals too. Why does my mind rebel against this idea ?*

Maharaj: That is because your mind has still not got broadened enough.



Moreover, since our childhood, we have been taught that for our progress, we should always accept the good and reject the bad. Therefore, all the holy, pure and welfare-creating things are considered by us as godly and all the wicked, destructive powers as those belonging to the Satan. But this thought is limited only to the level of human welfare. And most importantly, the God referred to by Saint Dnyaneshwar does not need to be worshipped separately.

Its real and only worship is to understand it and to have knowledge about it. If you go deeper, you will see that when we perceive an object, one of the first things that we try to know is whether it would pose any danger to our existence and even if the slightest danger is likely, we move away from it until we reach a safe place. Because that object's properties are harmful for us. But this does not refute the fact that God has taken its form. Saint Tukaram has said in one of his immortal hymns:

सर्प विंचू नारायण ।
परी त्या वंदावे दुरून ॥

“ Serpents and scorpions are Gods, but to be prayed only from a distance !”

Thus, one can remember that even a serpent, cobra or a scorpion are forms taken by God but they can terminate your very existence if they are touched or caressed. That is why we have categorized them as wicked creatures.

In our society, as in other democratic societies, private ownership of goods, property, etc is allowed and those who snatch away our belongings are termed as wicked and bad. Now, look at it this way. From the point of view of creatures such as ants, cockroaches, mosquitoes, which are smaller and weaker than us, we humans are wicked and destructive, since during our house-cleaning drives, we kill them en mass.



So, the person who actually sprays insecticide on these insects can be considered as a destructive, cruel and wicked being. But that person never feels so about himself. Because he/she is terminating hundreds and thousands of these creatures in order to keep his / her house clean and lead

a cleaner, more decent, healthier and happier life. This is because humans feel happy and pleasant when they are in a clean place.

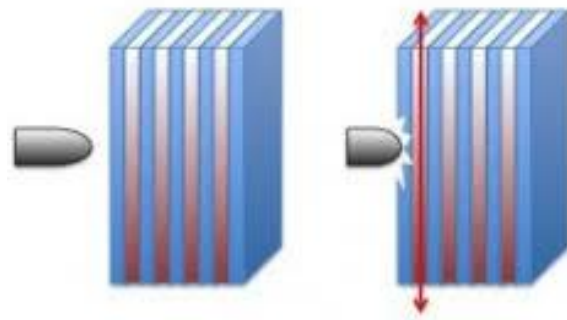
In another context, millions of bacteria and viruses are killed in our body as part of the efforts to remain healthy. It is ironic that even within the body of a pacifist Saint like Gautam Buddha this kind of natural mass destruction of viruses and bacteria must have continued almost daily and precisely because of this, he remained alive for several years to be able to propagate non-violence !

We have divided the world into the good who help us preserve our existence and the bad who endanger our existence. Unless we transcend this thought process, it is difficult to agree that God has taken all the forms in this Universe.

I: Can you give me an example ?

Maharaj: Cycle, motor-cycle, scooter, car, lorry, bus, aircraft --- all these are modes of transport. All of them, without exception, need an accelerating mechanism and also a braking mechanism. Friction created between two things works as a natural brake. Therefore, objects which are in motion, gradually come

to a halt when the motor force applied to them is stopped. That is why we use the accelerator to apply force that increases the speed.



God has to make this Universe run. So, he uses the good people to speed it up and bad people to slow it down. Moreover, both good and bad people are both Him, since He has taken their forms. Just as a car driver uses the same foot to press the accelerator pedal as also the brake pedal. Or like a cyclist who increases the speed of his bicycle by pushing the pedals with his feet and uses his hands to press the brake lever to slow down the bicycle --- but both the hands and the feet are his.

In an automobile factory, two separate departments make accelerators and brakes and interestingly enough, both the departments try their utmost to increase their efficiency for producing the best accelerating and braking mechanism respectively. In a sense, their efforts might seem to be against each other, but from the viewpoint of the factory owner, both are equally important. Similarly, good people try their best to promote welfare of the world while bad people try for its destruction. But it is the Almighty who has taken their forms.

That reminds me of an anecdote: A man had a factory to manufacture bullet-proof glass. He used to supply this glass to the Defence Department. Once the Defence Minister demonstrated that he can shatter his so-called bullet-proof glass with a bullet. The factory owner apologised to the Minister and promised to supply a much stronger glass. Accordingly, he developed a specimen of a much stronger glass and brought it to the Minister. After showing it to him, he came out of the Minister's cabin. At that time, a man was waiting outside the cabin for the Minister to call him in.

Some days later, the Defence Minister again called the glass manufacturer and again demonstrated that the improved glass too can be shattered with a gun shot and it was after all, not a really efficient bullet-proof glass. This man again went back, promising to develop even stronger bullet-proof glass. This happened 3 to 4 times. Every time, he came out of the Minister's cabin, the same visitor used to be seated in the reception lounge, waiting to meet the Minister.

Ultimately, he could not contain his curiosity any more and decided to find out who that mysterious visitor was and why was he always there waiting in the lounge when he came out of the Minister's cabin. He went up to that strange visitor and introduced himself and asked him what was his profession. The strange visitor told the bullet-proof glass manufacturer that he too owned a factory. "In my factory, I manufacture bullets that can break any bullet-proof glass."

"So, then why was he here every time the glass maker was there ?" asked the bullet-proof glass manufacturer.

"Well, whenever I have been giving samples of my bullets to the Minister, he has been showing me a bullet-proof glass which could not be penetrated with my bullets. The Minister has then been telling me to make more powerful bullets that can penetrate even very strong bullet-proof glass. Whenever, I came up with improved bullets that could penetrate the best available bullet-proof glass, the Minister would show me some even better quality glass which remained unbreakable to my bullets," explained the mysterious visitor even as the bullet-proof glass manufacturer listened in disbelief and surprise.

Q

Now, what the Minister was doing was pushing the frontiers of quality-----quality of the bullet-proof glass and of the bullets. The role played by the Minister in the above example, is similar to the God's role in the Universe. He keeps on increasing the hardness of the bad people due to the existence of the good people and increases the patience and bearing capacity of the good people in view of the existence of the bad people. In short, he takes the dual roles and responsibilities which are seemingly contrary to each other. But if you take a uni-dimensional view, then the Minister should be concentrating only on making the bullet-proof glass (which has positive connotations) and not worry about the bullets (which have negative connotations).

Coming back to the example of the automobile factory, a man working in its brake manufacturing section invests his energy in making high-quality braking systems which reduce / control the speed of the car made in his factory. But if he is transferred to the accelerator manufacturing section, he starts thinking as to

how the accelerating mechanism can become more efficient. In the factory called the Universe, God has created many such instances.

The immortal Indian epic Ramayan, describes the story of the jungle pirate Valya Koli who used to prey on people walking alone through a jungle, loot them and then kill them. For every murder, he would put one pebble in a big earthen pot. That was his way of keeping a count of how many people had he killed. Eventually, hit by remorse and reformed by Sage Narad, when the same robber did penance for 12 years, he was transformed into Sage Walmiki.

One day, Sage Walmiki witnessed a heart-rending happening. Once when he was walking through a jungle, he sees an hunter shooting down with his arrow, a love-struck male Krounch bird, thus separating it from its female bird companion. Walmiki's heart bleeds after seeing the plight of the female bird, mourning near the dead body of her lover with arrow in its heart.

This tragic incident triggered a poetic surge in the Sage's mind and he wrote the great epic, Ramayan. Thus, Walmiki, who was heartless in killing 100 people during his role as the pirate, could not bear a bird being killed by an hunter.

Even take my own example. Even I have a negative / bad past, as if I was working in the braking department of the Universe. But thanks to the Divine Will, I was transferred to the spiritual world.

I: It is only because you say that you had a bad past that I will believe it, but otherwise it is not believable at all.

Maharaj: My dear son, what is not possible in God's empire ?

I: This aspect of our subject is very fascinating. Tell me sir, one more example.

Maharaj: There is no shortage of anecdotes and examples. Saint Dnyaneshwar, in his immortal commentary on the Bhagvad Geeta, which is titled as Bhavarth Deepika or Dnyaneshwari, (which contains the hymn Je Je Bhete Bhoot in its 10th Chapter), has given around 4000 insightful examples to demonstrate various universal truths and spiritual concepts.

But let me give you an example from a very common-place human situation.

Imagine a scenario in a typical Indian undivided family in the 1950s or so. It is vacation time and lot of kids have come together to play and enjoy. For every game, they divide themselves into two teams. One team has to win and the other lose. By late evening, when the playing is over, all the kids assemble around the grandmother of the house. Then each team tries to attract her attention and then each member of the team would, in an animated and excited manner, would describe to her in a rather heated style, how in a certain game, one team won and another lost, but still, how it put up an honourable fight, and how there was utter injustice in the other team winning when actually they were the ones who deserved to win.

The wise old granny is flooded with claims and counter-claims. She gives a loving hearing to both the parties, since, she showers almost equal love on all her grand-children. She uses her loving but firm veto to overrule everybody and persuades all of them to wash their hands, feet and faces, freshen up and get ready for an exciting collective family dinner. The granny is playing a role which is similar to that of God in the Universe. Have you now realized how is it that the same God can take opposing forms ---- good and bad. Ram and Ravana, Krishna and Kauns ?

I: Even then, when we hear of an evil man killing an innocent harmless person, it is still very difficult to imagine that even the killer's form too has been taken by the God.

Maharaj: The realization starts dawning when your contemplation/thought process becomes more and more deep and cosmic. Your contemplation/thought process should also develop clarity. And this hymn tells exactly how to achieve this. And consider this too my son: we human beings use trees, plants and herbs entirely for our well-being and happiness.

For example, for our food, we use foodgrains, fruit and vegetable; for getting fragrance and beauty, we use flowers; for building houses, we use wood; for medicines we use herbs and among Hindus, even for performing the last rites of a dead body, wood is used for the cremation. Among those people who bury dead bodies, normally a wooden box is used for encasing the dead body. Now my child, tell me, we humans exploit trees, plants and herbs for our selfish use. Do we ever feel guilty about being so cruel or murderous ?

I: Sir, but our ancient scriptures have said “ Jeevo Jeevasya Jeevanam ” to mean that one Being is the life (or food) of another Being. Doesn't this signify a legitimate food chain involving hundreds of Beings on earth ? Since God has made this rule, what can we do about it ?

Maharaj: God seems to be a compact planner. Apparently, he wanted to create availability of food for the maximum number of Beings with limited resources. If he were to make available separate food for every being, he would have required to create unimaginable quantities of food. That is why we humans kill / use plants, birds, fish and animals for our survival.

However, the notable fact is that we hardly ever feel sad about it. On the contrary, it is often seen at parties and get-togethers how men and women not only eat with great relish, food made out of plants, birds, fish and animals but also discuss in great details, how a particular part of the body of an animal or bird tastes delicious. In the ancient mythology, we have the story of a demon called Vrutrasur who could never have been killed by any weapon known to the Gods except one made from the bones of Sage Dadheechi.

When Dadheechi learnt about this, he voluntarily embraced death and allowed Gods to use his bones to make that deadly weapon to rid the earth of evil Vrutrasur. We hear this story with great admiration. Similarly, every moment some plant or bird or fish or animal too is performing a Dadheechi-like sacrifice so that other animals and human beings will live.

In a Birbal folklore, we see the example of a mother monkey trying her best to save her young one from the rising levels of flood water, but finally, when it comes to her own survival, she stands on top of her young one's body to raise herself above the water and remain alive for some more time. In another mythological anecdote, an otherwise vegetarian Sage Vishwamitra had to survive in an extreme famine by eating the flesh of a dog's leg.

We live by killing other Beings and still do not consider ourselves, evil. But when someone else tries to finish us off, for his own betterment or survival, I term him as an evil man. Isn't this intriguing and also contrasting ?

I: That's fine sir, but how to reconcile this contrasting dilemma ?

Maharaj: My dear son, the moment you are convinced completely that all Beings are different forms of the same Almighty (including you), the contrast melts away. Because even the plant is He and even the plant-eater is He. He is the food and He is the eater of that food. **And what is to be specially realized is that even the digestive power is He himself.** Hasn't the Bhagwad Geeta quoted Lord Krishna as saying:

अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः ।
प्राणापान समायुक्तः पंचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधं ॥

*Aham Vaishwanaro Bhootwa, Praninam Dehamashritaha
Pranapaan Samayuktah, Pachamyannam Chaturvidham*

[I am the वैश्वानर fire that takes refuge in the bodies (in the digestive systems) of living beings and after mixing Praan and Apaan (Two types of winds in the body), I cause food of various types to digest (with the help of that fire)]

Let me share with you one more anecdote: Once upon a time, a seer was caught by thieves. They beat him up squarely and ran away. He fell unconscious. Later, some people saw him and took him home, nursed him and brought back his consciousness. When he was asked as to what had happened, the sage replied, “ He who beat me up on the road, is the same one who is nursing me.” This surprising statement confused those people.

But in reality, there was nothing confusing with what the seer said. What he meant was, “ One form of God beat him (the one beaten up, that is himself, being another form of God) and other forms of the God brought him back to consciousness. He felt so because the duality in his intellect had got extinguished and he had truly started seeing the truth that God takes the form of every being / thing in this Universe.

We too undergo a similar experience. During our sleep, if we get a scratching sensation on our left hand, the right hand scratches it and if its nails are not trimmed for a long time, the scratching can perhaps cause an injury. In the morning, the left hand does neither thank the right hand for scratching it and thereby bringing some relief to it nor does it rebuke it for harming it through scratching. Nor do they settle scores with each other in the future. That's because both hands have one common controller which resides in the intellect.

So, it is we who differentiate between the good and the bad, due to our ignorance. But once the knowledge is born in the intellect that both behave as per the Divine Will, the self-realized soul does not feel angry about the villainous behaviour of another person, nor does he feel proud about his own spiritual superiority. Because he is convinced that both he and the villain are behaving as per the pre-destined Divine Will.

I: But Sir, if this truth is so plain and simple, why can't man easily understand it ?

Maharaj: That is because when God decided to take the human form, He also 'decided' that human Beings should not continue to be aware of their original divine form/'God'ness. If He had not set up things like this, the entire first batch of human beings would have become self-realized spiritual masters by successfully removing the outer layer of ignorance and realising that each Being was in reality herself/himself the Almighty. This would have set them free from the cycle of birth and death.

Naturally, the grand drama of the Universe would not have continued for ages.

Therefore, while deciding the properties of various Beings, God must have decided that most of them would not be aware of their original true divine character but only in due course would this realization dawn upon at least a few of them.

I: But how can an omniscient entity like God take the forms of ignorant, unaware beings ?

Maharaj: What is impossible for the Almighty ? **We, who are a part of him, figuratively cover ourselves up every night in the garb of unawareness/ignorance. We all know this daily state as sleep ! When we are asleep, do we have even a fraction of the knowledge or awareness that we have during the waking part of our lives ?**

What does it matter to a man fast asleep even if a seductively attractive woman comes and sits next to him or conversely, what does it matter to a young woman fast asleep even if a young handsome attractive man (may be her favourite film hero) sits next to her? For that matter, what difference does it make, if, instead of the attractive woman or man, a poisonous cobra settles itself next to her/him on the bed ?

Moreover, when a person sleeps, he loses so much control over herself/himself that she/he does not know for sure whether she/he will wake up alive the next day. But still, that uncertainty does not prevent us from sleeping every night. When someone shakes her/him up, calls her/him or the alarm clock rings, she/he wakes up probably because she/he has completed the quota of sleep.

Similarly, at some stage in our lives, when we realize that we have enjoyed or suffered enough of our long tenure of ignorance (about our original divine form/nature), we seek out a saint, a seer or a book and try to look for some kind of spiritual knowledge.

This particular hymn (Je Je Bhete Bhoot.....) by Saint Dnyaneshwar is one important torch-bearer on this path.

I: But, Sir, why do you think the all-powerful God must have taken the forms of inanimate and animate Beings which possess very little power ?

Maharaj: This is due to self-imposed rules. Let us take examples from the sports arena. Are you familiar with a typical Indian sports called लंगडी (Langdi)? In लंगडी, a player keeps hopping around the play area only on one leg to catch players from the opponent team. Now, he uses only one leg even though he can actually run much faster and with much more power on his two legs. Why? The answer is simple. The rules of the game make it mandatory for the attacking players to use only their partial prowess !

Now, another example. A world-class professional short distance runner has enough stamina to easily run 5 to 10 kilometres daily. However, he runs only 100 metres in an athletic event which is designed to judge the fastest athlete over a 100 metre stretch ! That is because the rules of that game do not require him to run more than 100 metres, leave alone 5 or 10 kilometres.

The God too has set rules for himself wherein he is required to display much less power (than what he actually possesses) over brief stretches of time. If knowledge is combined with even very modest power, it can lead to the creation of that great quality called discretion (विवेक). On the contrary, what we notice currently is that human beings have limited power as well as limited knowledge. But they have created such a big mess of their lives and of the life on earth.

Just imagine if man was made all-powerful, what he would have done! Most probably he would have destroyed the creation. The reason is that as per the cosmic principle, when ignorance and tremendous power come together, it gives birth to destructive ego. Perhaps that is why the God must have taken the form of intelligent but a weak human being.

I: *Why does Saint Dnyaneshwar say in this hymn “**Please understand that this certainly is the absolute essence of my Bhakti-yog.**”(Bhakti-yog means the devotional love-based path to spiritual self-realization)*

Maharaj: Because, Bhakti-yog is a complete devotional system as it does not have any shortcomings, present in other paths of self-realization.

I: *Can you explain this more elaborately ?*

Maharaj: Yog, (योग) which is a Sanskrit word (and which is often mis-spelt and mis-pronounced as (योगा) Yoga !) has its etymological roots in the word Yuj (युज्) which means “to join.” That is why, in daily life, the word Yog also means to acquire something new. This reminds me of an ancient Sanskrit saying, which goes like this:

अप्राप्तस्य प्राप्तः योगः । प्राप्तस्य परिपालनः क्षेमः ॥

This means, to acquire a new object is Yog (योग) and to take care of it is Kshem. (क्षेम)

In our original context, this yog thus joins the mind of the devotee and God seamlessly.

There are four types of Yog. Karma-yog (कर्मयोग), Raj-yog (राजयोग), Dnyan-yog -- -- also written by some as Jñāna yog (ज्ञानयोग) and Bhakti-yog (भक्तियोग). Bhakti (भक्ति) is the opposite of Vibhakti (विभक्ती). Bhakti suggests union while Vibhakti, separation. Thus, Bhakti is the opposite of separation. The Bhakti-yog, referred to by Saint Dnyaneshwar in this hymn that we are studying, is a devotional path that has compensated the shortcomings which are present in the other three systems of Yog.

I: How is that ?

Maharaj: Yes, let us take a look at each of the Yog (योग) systems. Let us study in a simple manner, what each of one of them stands for.

Let us begin with Karma-Yog (कर्मयोग). This yogic path advocates that the practitioner should do his duty without getting psychologically/emotionally attached to its result or fruit. That is to say, he should do his/her duty without expecting (emotionally/psychologically) a certain type of fruit, benefit or result. He or she should not lose the mental equilibrium irrespective of whether the result of one's action is positive, pleasant or negative, unpleasant.

While on the subject, how can we not refer to what Lord Krishna has said in the Bhagvad Geeta, the world-famous spiritual light-house and masterpiece? Says Krishna (to be pronounced as कृष्ण but a lot of people pronounce it wrongly as कृष्णा):

“ Hey Arjun, कर्मणि एव अधिकारः ते, मा फलेषु कदाचन, meaning, you (all human beings) only have the right to action, but no right to or control over its result or fruit.”

This means that I take an action but the result-giver is the Almighty God. But at a subtle level, the process of saying that ' I 'act / ' I 'do some work remains. Therefore, the ego, in whatever miniscule proportion it may be, does exist in Karma-yog (कर्मयोग).

In Bhakti-yog, the mindset is such that I do not do anything, it is the God who gets things done from me / through me. Therefore, there is virtually no scope for 'I'ness or ego.

In Raj-yog (राजयोग), the seer (द्रष्टा) and one's own form/character (स्वरूप) have to merge with each other and this is to be done through the study of this Yog. This study involves efforts. One of the yogsutras (yogic formulae) written by the ancient yogi Bhagwan Patanjali, (believed to have lived in the mid-2nd Century Before Christ) mentions a similar thought. It says: अथ योग अनुशासनम्. (Atha yog

anushasanam). Anushasan means efforts. Where efforts exist, 'I' and 'my efforts' follow.

As against this, in Bhaktiyog, the understanding is that everything happens as per the Divine Will. Therefore, when the enlightenment occurs, the devotee's mindset is such that he believes one finite form of the God (the devotee himself) is becoming one with the infinite God in accordance with the pre-destined Divine Will. So, there is no scope for ego, which is the chief enemy of spiritual self-realization and enlightenment.

The third Yog is Dnyanyog, also written by some as Jñāna yog (ज्ञानयोग). This yogic path believes in the principle of ब्रह्म सत्यं, जगन् मिथ्या ('Brahma satyam, Jagan mithya'). This means "the world which is beyond the scope of sensory perception, the infinite super-conscious cosmic power (ब्रह्म) is the supreme truth/the real truth but the world perceived by the senses is illusory". Dnyanyog meditation is done with this belief. This meditation path is a long journey in which the devotee looks for the Supreme Truth by a process of elimination. The devotee starts looking at everything around him/her and asks this question: "Is this that infinite cosmic super-consciousness (ब्रह्म)? When the answer is "No, this is not Brahman". Then they say, 'Neti, Neti' (not this, not this) and move on to find out what is Brahman (ब्रह्म)?



This meditation is very difficult for common men and is even more difficult for women / mothers. Because, the baby that they give birth to, after keeping and nurturing the foetus in their abdomen for about nine months with all the associated inconvenience, pain and suffering, cannot be easily equated with something that is illusory. Therefore common people normally do not follow the arduous path of Dnyanyog.

On the contrary, in Bhaktiyog, the devotee believes that this entire world and all the Beings and objects in it are nothing but the God in various forms, and thus he has no difficulty in assimilating this God-like truth in his meditative system.

In this way, Bhakti-yog (भक्तियोग) takes care of the shortcoming in the other three yogic paths of God realization. It is because of this that Saint Dnyaneshwar has used expressions such as '...this, certainly, is the absolute essence of my Bhakti-yog.'

Just as a person can get a loan only if somebody stands guarantee to him, Saint Dnyaneshwar has assured that for a devotee following the Bhakti-yogic path, he himself will stand guarantee!

Chapter 06

The meditative practice for becoming one with God: Mantra and Tantra

I: *Sir, so far you have explained elaborately and in depth all the words in the hymn and thus no doubt is left in my mind. Now, I wish to understand the meditative path prescribed in this hymn.*

Maharaj: The speciality of this hymn is that Saint Dnyaneshwar has not prescribed any different type of meditative practice or path here.

This great self-realized saint's definition of spiritualism is very simple: **Whatever we do deliberately are the worldly activities, whatever gets done effortlessly is spiritualism. So, every moment of life spent in God remembrance with pure mind and effortless mode of working, automatically gets converted into spiritual worship and meditation.**

Saint Tukaram, the other great Saint from Maharashtra, believed that it was not necessary to undertake a fast or to renounce all worldly pleasures or to go to a jungle in search of god. This is how he put it:

नलगे सायास ।

(No laborious efforts are required)

जाणे वनांतरा ॥

(No need of going to the jungle)

सुखे येतो घरा । नारायण ॥

(Because, the God comes home with ease/effortlessly)

He also said that even in the midst of worldly activities, one should live in God remembrance in all moments of happiness and misery, enjoyment and suffering, indulgence and repentance.

And Saint Tukaram came to this conclusion after himself trying out arduous ways of sitting on top of the Bhandara mountain (a mountain near Dehu Road, a

suburb of Pune, Maharashtra, India) and meditating for long hours for years. But after he attained spiritual bliss and self-realization, he did not want that other devotees should waste their energy and time. So, this is what he shared from his experience:

नको सोडू अन्न ।
(Do not give up food,)
नको सेवू वन ।
(do not go to a jungle.)
चिंती नारायण ।
सर्व भोगी ॥

(Instead, live in god-remembrance while enjoying various pleasures of life/while passing through various phases of life.)

Saint Tukaram also said:

मातेचिया खांदा ।
बाळ नेणे शीण ।
भावना त्या भिन्न ।
मुंडावया ॥

(When a mother carries her baby on her shoulders, she never feels fatigue due to the weight of the baby. This is because she has a special kind of feelings for her baby. But in case, she starts feeling the burden of the baby's weight, then such an unwelcome feeling must be erased/removed.) (Figurative/hinted meaning: a spiritual seeker's feelings for God are similar to those of a mother for her baby. But if the seeker starts feeling a burden of her/his efforts while taking efforts towards accomplishing the spiritual pursuit, then such feelings should be erased/removed forthwith).

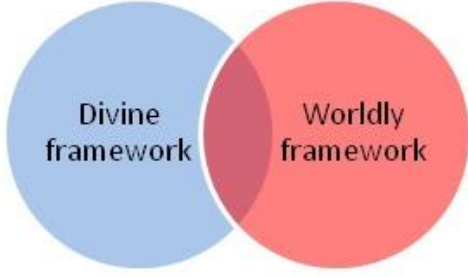
Here is one more gem from Saint Tukaram:

नको गुंतो भोगी ।
(So, do not get (psychologically) entangled in enjoyments/sufferings,)
नको पडो त्यागी ।
(do not take futile efforts to give up/renounce anything either...)
लावूनी सारेची अंगी ।
देवाचिया ॥

(instead, just leave everything to God.)

Saint Brahmachaitanya Gondavalekar Maharaj too echoed the same feelings.

Said he:



नामात् रंगुन्या व्यवहारी सर्व भोग सेवावे ॥

(Get deeply immersed in chanting God's name while simultaneously experiencing all worldly activities)

हाचि सुबोध गुरुंचा भोगासंगे कुठे न गुंतावे ॥

(...but (do this) without getting mentally entangled in any of the worldly experiences. This is the advice given by a good Guru.)

Now, my dear son, I know you do live in God remembrance as per your convenience but is it practically possible for you to set aside all your work and chant God's name throughout the day and to live in solitude? No, and therefore Saint Dnyaneshwar has suggested a meditative spiritual path attainable while carrying out all worldly duties and activities.

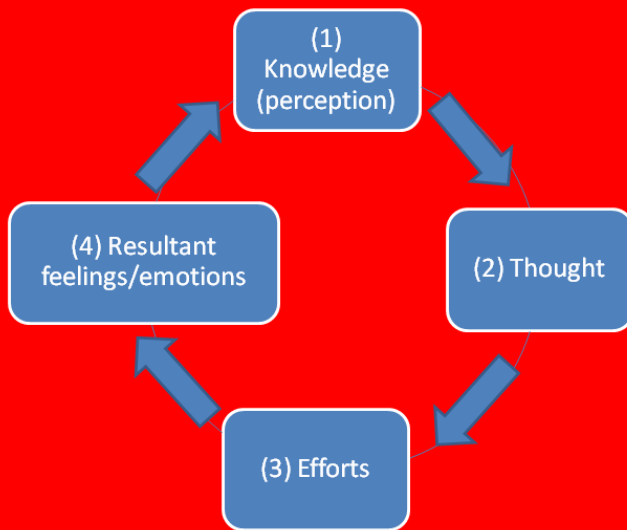
I: (Out of curiosity) How is that? I mean how to practise it actually?

Maharaj: Having probed each word of this hymn individually, let us now understand the hymn as a whole.

To consider as different forms of God, every non-living and living Being/thing that we see or meet every day, every moment, is surely a way of worshipping God, says Saint Dnyaneshwar. Now, your question is how to fit this kind of worship or meditation in your daily routine. For this, all you have to do is to fit the God realization/Divine knowledge framework into the mould of your daily worldly routine.

As such, the God realization/Divine knowledge framework has four aspects to it.

First is that the Universe is filled with countless different forms of God including we ourselves and all of them are finite and limited. These countless forms taken by/assumed by God, have different properties. These properties are assumed by God to suit the requirements of the respective forms, which is the second aspect.



The third aspect is that the same Divine power expresses itself through these different countless forms, each having a unique distinguishing property.

The last and the fourth aspect is that everything that happens every moment in this entire

Universe is in accordance with the pre-decided Divine plan. This 4th facet completes and closes the God realization/Divine knowledge framework.

Every devotee of the Almighty operates within this framework and is also encased in it. This fourth aspect gives a certain kind of finality to the God realization knowledge.

Although we see in our films, the typical love triangle quite often, what is relevant for us is this square framework of the worldly daily routine.

We perceive and recognize objects with the help of our five senses. Then our memory and intellect help us understand their properties. Then we compare the properties of that object with its properties in the past and also compare its properties with those of other similar objects. By doing this, we discern the similarities and differences between them.

Our next action is to think (or sometimes without any thinking) as to how we can use it, enjoy it or avoid any pain or misery that the object may be capable of causing. This again causes happiness/unhappiness, attachment/nausea, attraction, anger, etc. We have earlier seen that the new influences/experiences created out of this chain get added to the existing repository of memories/experiences/influences.

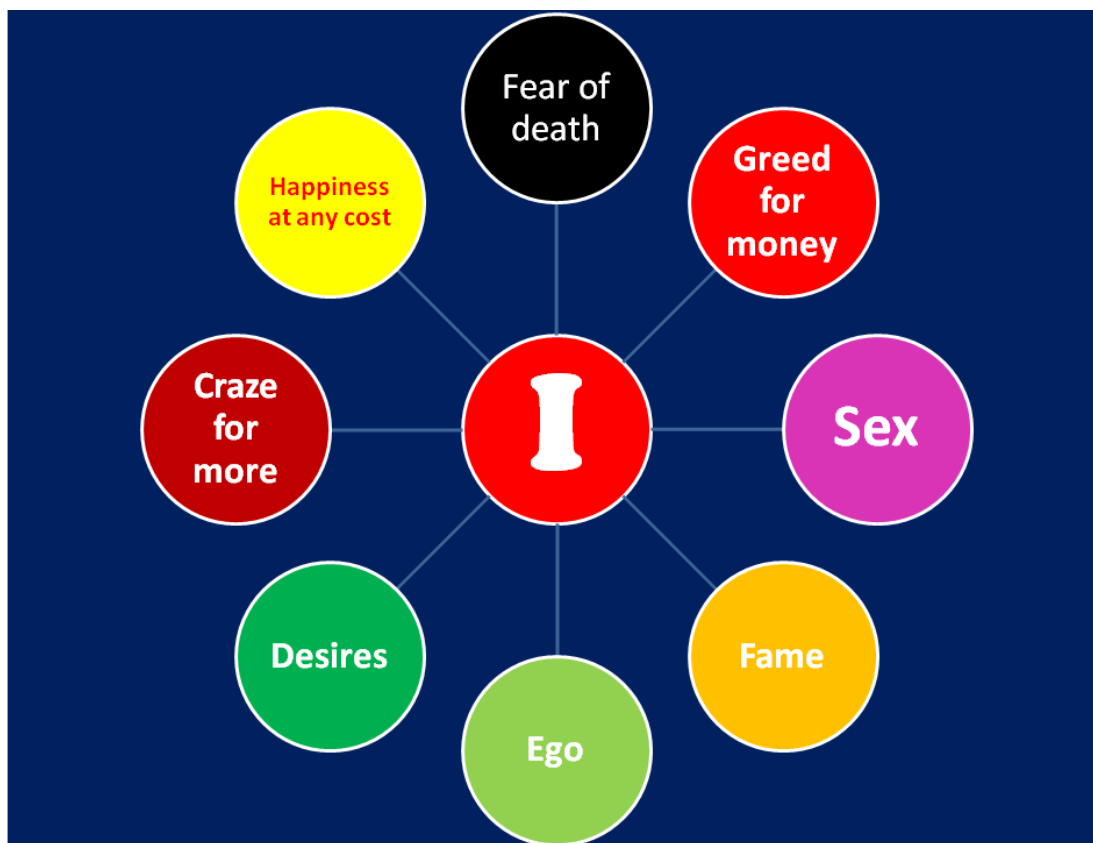
Let us therefore see how to link the framework of the worldly routine, (consisting of knowledge (perception), thought, efforts and resultant feelings/emotions) to the framework of God realization/Divine knowledge.

Shall we begin with 'I'?

When we wake up every morning, even before we open our eyes, and start looking at the world around us, says Saint Dnyaneshwar, "we first meet the 'I' in us." This 'I' has a distinct existence in the worldly space and it has to retain its distinct character. It wants to lead an immortal existence. And that is why it is afraid of death. It also presumes that the life which has so far been running smoothly, will continue to be so.

This 'I' is greedy for pleasure and happiness and it wants them to grow in geometric proportion. It does not wish to have even an iota of unhappiness. So, when physical illness, misfortune or discomfort occurs, it tries hard to get rid of it

and does not rest until it has done so. This causes mental agony.



This 'I' also feels that all its wishes must be fulfilled. Greed of money, sex, fame and a general attraction towards anything and everything

plays havoc in his mind. A vicious circle occurs, due to which, if the existing wishes get fulfilled, new wishes and desires surface, and if they don't get fulfilled, it produces mental agony. Uneasiness until the object of desire is obtained, tremendous efforts to obtain it, gradual dislike for it due to excessive familiarity with it and then craze for acquiring something new ----- the mind gets stuck in this groove. So, this 'I' at the worldly level is caught in an ego-trap.

It plays several roles in the journey of its life....it is sometimes the one who sees/observes, sometimes the one who knows, sometimes an emotional Being and sometimes a plain



worker. It plays a variety of other roles such as being a son-daughter, man-woman, father-mother, grandpa-grandma, uncle-aunty, boyfriend-girlfriend, artist, sportsperson, student-teacher and so on. It is also a human Being.

But, the only thing it really is, but has totally forgotten, is that originally, it is a manifestation of the primordial divine energy of the Almighty.

Thus, this 'I', which disappears during our sleep, is the first one to greet us with all its colours and characteristics as soon as we wake up.

From this point, the meditation, envisaged and recommended by Saint Dnyaneshwar, begins.

The thinking process for this meditation, as recommended by the great saint, is as follows: My body, my mind, my intellect, my soul and I the living Being ---- all these are manifestations of the Almighty God and the collective awareness of all these entities as seen in the 'I' is also a manifestation of God.

Moreover, my good and bad qualities are properties assumed by God in my form and in doing so, He expresses his energy through all Beings. The same energy is expressed through a variety of mediums/avenues in this Universe.

So, now, the first level of awareness is: **I am.**

The next level of awareness is: **I am alive** and

The next level of awareness is: **I am aware that I am alive.**

This awareness is also a manifestation of the same energy or power. The fact of my being alive is in accordance with the pre-decided Divine Will. Apart from being an 'independent Being,' I am also a part of the God with Godly and God-like features. Before the birth of the Universe, it was I who was the infinite, un-expressed, unmanifest and omnipotent God and I will be the same again after the end of the Universe. However, after the birth of the Universe, I have come out of my un-expressed state into an expressed, manifest form by adopting the properties of the Being, whose form I have taken.

Training one's mind on these lines, contemplating on it and absorbing the thought is Saint Dnyaneshwar's meditative path.

I: But Sir, does this kind of thinking have any basis ?

Maharaj: There exists one basis for this in the Bhagvad Geeta. Lord Krishna proclaims in the Geeta: **ममैवांशो जीव लोके जीवभूतः सनातनः** ("Mamaivansho Jeevaloke Jeevabhootah Sanatanaha"). This means "The living Being is my part only and it is as eternal, as timeless, without a beginning and without an end like me." So, we should meditate on these lines until we open our eyes on waking up in the morning.

I: Sir, what can be achieved through this kind of meditation ?

Maharaj: The 'I' at the worldly level looks at the events around him from three perspectives: favourable to the personal wish, against the wish and neutral. Therefore, in the first two scenarios, the reaction is full of some kind of Vikar, e.g. the six most common enemies of the human mind, namely, infatuation (**काम Kaam**), anger (**क्रोध Krodh**), greed (**लोभ Lobh**), illusory love (**मोह Moh**), jealousy (**मत्सर Matsar**) and Dambh (**दंभ Hypocrisy**); of course, the list does not end here as there are these four more ----fear and worry, attachment and hatred, etc. But

if one meditates in the aforesaid manner, then the 'I' gets into the habit of having a continual and constructive dialogue with the Divine Will.

Thus, if a certain event is against the personal wish, one can interpret it thus: I have the Divine part in me and the event, though unfavourable, happened the way it happened because it was decided in advance as per the Divine Will and it must be in consonance with the Universal scheme of things. This prevents the upsetting of the mental equilibrium.

Look at this example: a human being falls ill due to infection from germs or virus. Though the concerned ill person starts feeling miserable due to the illness, the germs or viruses are happily moving about or feasting in this body. If the medicine can cause their death on a mass scale, the patient can get well but their triumph over the medicines can cause the patient's death.

Moreover, the concerned person may feel unhappy about the illness at the 'Being' level. However, the Almighty creator of this Universe has already decided that the event should happen in a certain way and the outcome should be of a certain kind. The only thing is that the person involved in the event does not know the outcome. This knowledge comes only when the Divine Will unfolds in the present. After this realization dawns, unfavourable events stop causing grief since the sufferer has by then realized that he as a Being is a part of God.

Two examples from mythology are a case in point. Eklavya studied archery through the remote method by visualizing that Guru Dronacharya existed before him although what he had in front of him was just the Guru's idol. He was not allowed to learn directly from the Guru because of his low caste birth. When the Guru learnt about this, he ordered Eklavya to surrender his thumb. Eklavya cut off his thumb and surrendered it to the Guru. In another story, Lord Ram agreed to spend 14 years in a jungle so that his father King Dashrath could keep his word given to Queen Kaikeyi (Second wife of King Dashrath and step-mother of Lord Ram).

Neither Eklavya nor Ram felt unhappy about this great sacrifice, as they were aware of the Divine Will and the truth that all 'Beings' are a part of the Almighty. Similarly, a human Being also can start realizing/experiencing absence of grief about a painful/miserable/unpleasant event because of the new-found awareness that he/she is actually a part/a fraction of the Almighty God. Then he/she starts developing an attitude/feeling of a friendly

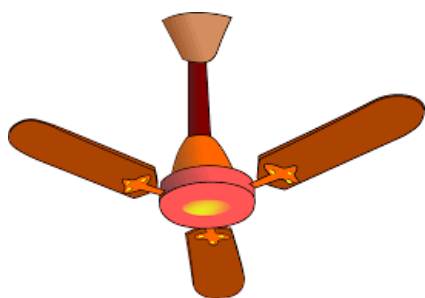
dialogue/understanding; and becomes a neutral observer and an unattached witness to everything that happens every moment. This can then replace anger, hatred, etc.

I: Sir, OK, this is fine. Now, from here on, how to do this meditation ?

Maharaj: When you wake up in the morning and open your eyes, chances are that the first thing you may see is the ceiling fan. Most probably, it would be rotating when you see it and its breeze would be touching you. Your thinking can be on these lines: I am able to see the fan, hear its sound and feel its pleasant breeze. This means its form, speed, sound and its breeze-causing property are perceived by me and most probably I am receiving pleasure from it. Now, who has made this fan ? Man. Yes, true ! But what are its ingredients ? Metal, rubber, plastic, etc. Who created all the raw material from which these parts were made ? The simple answer is God.

But the real riddle begins from here.

The crucial question is which was the raw material from which the raw material like iron ore, rubber trees, petrochemicals was created? When nothing was there at the beginning of the Universe, and before the creation of this planet earth of



ours, what must have been the basic raw material from which the basic elements, the basic building blocks of existence must have been created.

The truth and the only logical explanation is God created everything from Himself. He Himself assumed billions of forms --- both living and non-living. So, when we say that man studied the properties of these elements and developed manufacturing processes, we tend to forget for a moment that when nothing existed, even man did not exist and therefore man too was created by God.

How? He Himself took the forms of all the Beings.

The important thing to remember is that although God has taken/assumed forms of anything and everything in the Universe, He has also assumed specific properties for specific objects, keeping His own Divine properties in a subdued form.

Thus, coming back to the fan, the interpretation should be as follows: The properties of the fan perceived and sensed by you are not just the fan's properties but also God's expression through the fan.

Even more exciting is the fact that the power/energy in me to perceive the fan's properties is the same power/energy that has expressed itself through me and also through the fan.

Outwardly, the power/energy seems to be different --- but it is the same power/energy expressed through different properties.

Moreover, though I feel I am able to start the fan by pressing an electric switch, am able to see the fan blades and able to feel its breeze, all this is possible only because the Divine Will permits it to happen.

My dear son, if you can digest this one, let us add one more thought to this.

I: *(Out of curiosity): Which one, Sir ?*



Maharaj: Before the Universe came into existence, it was I who had decided that it should happen so and that is because I was then in an unexpressed, unmanifest, infinite and omnipotent state. Now, it is I, who as a 'Being', am watching this fan as per that plan and am deriving pleasure from it.

I: *Sir, I think it is too difficult to grasp this thought --- it is really too tough to digest. But I still wish to know the basis for this thought.*

Maharaj: Our scriptures contain four Master Statements (महावाक्य). One of them is: अहं ब्रह्मास्मि (Aham Brahmasmi), meaning, I am that Universal Truth called Brahman. This statement is not to be chanted like a Mantra but is to be contemplated on. Thus, this thinking is based on this Universal Master Statement.

I: *Which are the other three Statements ?*

Maharaj: They are: तत् त्वं असि "Tatvamasī" (You are 'Him' or You are 'That'), सर्वं खलु इदं ब्रह्म "Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma" (Really speaking, this everything is Brahma), अयं आत्मा ब्रह्म "Ayamatma Brahma" (I am a soul, I am Brahma).

Plus, there are two more Master Statements which are of a subsidiary nature: सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तम् ब्रह्म "Satyam, Dnyanam, Anantam Brahma" (Truth, Knowledge, and Infinite Brahma) and प्रद्वानं ब्रह्म "Pradnyam Brahma." (Enhanced Knowledge is Brahma).

I: I think one common word in these statements is Brahma. Sir, please explain to me in a simple manner what is meant by Brahma.

Maharaj: The root word in the term Brahma is Bruha (बृह), which means: to occupy an expanse. Thus, Brahma means the original omni-present and all-occupying state. On the one hand, you have this omni-present original state of 'Being' (Jeev-bhav) and on the other hand a state of awareness of being a part of the Almighty. Brahma is nothing but that which remains after different kinds of properties of Jeevbhav (the awareness of 'I' being the finite body) and Eeshwarbhav (the awareness that 'I' am God) are shed one by one completely.

I: This is still not clear, Sir.

Maharaj: OK. Tell me, what are God's properties? Creator and Controller of all and everything; Omniscient; Omnipotent; and Omnipresent are God's properties. And what are the properties of a 'Being'? Creator of some objects/perishable objects, someone who can control only a few things, one who knows little, one who is finite (limited) and one who can be present only at one place at a time. When one sheds with discretion, the properties of both God and man, what remains is the Brahmic state. And that is the true and original state of a living Being.

I: What happens when one contemplates on these lines?

Maharaj: If things go wrong against one's wishes, one stops feeling sad about them now. The reason? One remembers that "I in my Divine state had planned it that way and that's why it happened that way." Due to this awakening, the

mental agony normally experienced in the ignorant state of a 'Being', is simply not there.

I: *Sir, when the original power is one and the same, how can it display contrasting properties through different media?*

Maharaj: An everyday example will explain this contrast. How many electrical appliances do you have in your home ?

I: *Electric bulbs to light up my home, fans to give breeze, exhaust fan to suck out hot air in the kitchen, air-conditioner to cool and heat the bedroom, water geyser to provide hot water for our bath, refrigerator to preserve food and to provide ice and chilled water, radio receiver-cum-music system with a video DVD player for enjoying a partly customised audio-video entertainment, television to further widen the range of entertainment and news availability, a vacuum cleaner to suck in dust and dirt in order to keep the house clean, a telephone to keep in touch with the world and best of all, our computer with the Internet connection to bring home the world.*

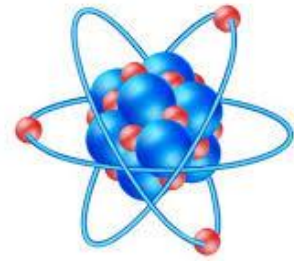
Maharaj: I think you only have replied your own question.

I: *How ?*

Maharaj: Don't these appliances have utilities contrary to each other and varying in range ? One cools, the other heats. One throws air, the other sucks it out. One appliance brings sound of music from far while the other plays and replays the same song as per our

Properties	
<u>God's properties:</u> Creator and Controller of all and everything; Omniscient; Omnipotent; and Omnipresent	<u>Human Being's properties:</u> Creator of some objects/perishable objects, Someone who can control only a few things, One who knows little, One who is finite (limited), One who can be present only at one place at a time.

wish. But the power/energy which runs all these, is the same ----- “electricity.”



In the same manner, the Divine power/energy expresses itself in differing kinds of properties through different media and forms assumed by the same power/energy. So, though it seems to be different, it is the same Divine power/energy everywhere.

Going further, these appliances run on the electrons that get supplied through electricity. Now, think of this: the bodies and structures of all the machines themselves have plenty of electrons in the atoms which come together to form the metals, plastic and other material from which the machines are built. But why can't these machines run on these electrons contained in each atom in the body/structure/parts of these machines ?

That is because these electrons are caged in the atoms and they cannot be released from there.

However, the electrons in the electricity are free and thus they can be used for carrying out various tasks.

We common people are like those electrons imprisoned inside the atoms. We are caught up in our mundane worldly pursuits. That is why our energies cannot be utilized for gainful work.

The messiahs, saints, seers and yogis are freed from the clutches of the ego (atom) and attachment of the world (the power that binds electrons to the atoms). Therefore, the Divine power uses their strength to get good work done for the good of humanity.

I: This is incredible ---- I had really never thought of this. But sir, I want to ask you something about our main course of action. During the day, I would be looking at hundreds of objects and people. So, how is it possible to apply this complex chain of thought every time I see something or someone ?

Maharaj: Once you understand this concept and start thinking on these lines for some time, then with practice, you will require hardly a few moments to think in this manner. Eventually this process will be encapsulated in a simple formula, that is, Divine form + properties + power + Divine Will = God = Unexpressed, Unmanifest, Infinite and Omnipotent principle.

Going further, even one word, which could be any God's name such as Shreeram, Shreekrishna, Shreehari, (you can replace them with the name of the God in whom you have faith), etc. suffices as a replacement for this formula.

I: I know of some devotees who chant names such as Shree Ram, Krishna-Krishna, Hari Om, etc. The secret of this must be the same.

Maharaj: Yes, definitely. If we can make our mind think the same thing again and again, then that particular action happens faster and faster. Eventually, even one word can work as a substitute for this thought even if it involves a long chain.

So, just one chant of a God's name has the potential to mean the following --- one who sees is the God, what is seen is also the God, both the properties of seeing and being seen belong to the God and it is expressed through the seer and the seen and this process happens in accordance with the pre-decided Divine plan....all this can mean just one word ---- Hari or God.

Or Hari(God)=Form+Properties+Power(Energy)+Divine Plan. To constantly remain immersed in the cycle of this meditation and link it to your behaviour is what Saint Dnyaneshwar calls real prayer. Saint Dnyaneshwar calls it हरिपाठ.

Reciting God's name while killing flies or mosquitoes and yawning is not what the real prayer is all about. God should become a part of your Being, he should be seen (and felt) to be residing everywhere ---- in your eyes, ears, mind, in all objects in front of you as also in people around you. Saint Dnyaneshwar describes this thus:

तो दिठी जे पाहे । ते आपणचि होऊनि जाये ।

(What you see with your eyes, you yourself become that)

जे आईके ते आहे । तोचि जाहला ॥

(What you hear with your ears, you yourself become that)

Another prominent saint from Maharashtra, Saint Eknath, too describes this concept in this own style:

जव दृष्टी देखे दृश्याते । तव देवचि दिसो तेथे ॥

‘ When the eyes (sight) sees a scene/an object, what is seen is God only.’

I: *Sir, well, but still I feel that it is not possible to do this continuously.*

Maharaj: Well, I agree. But, how will you know whether this can be done ceaselessly unless you just start doing it ? Start somewhere, doesn't matter even if you can't do it continuously. Initially, do it for as much time as you can spare. But at the same time, do not feel bad about the time which has not been utilized for this purpose. Because even that non-utilization is in accordance with the Divine Will !

Saint Dnyaneshwar has said in one his hymns, quoting Lord Krishna in the Bhagwad Geeta. Krishna advised Arjun thus:

तरी गा ऐसे करी । यया आठा प्रहरा माझारी ।
मोटके निमिषभरी । देतू जाय ॥

“So, my dearest friend, do this: give me one unwavering, totally focussed and totally committed moment (Nimish) out of the 8 parts of a day (of 24 hours.)”

I: *One moment ?*

Maharaj: One moment (निमिष) is the time taken by the eyelids to open and close once. When eyes are open, the mind is oriented outwards. But if eyes are closed, at least for a moment, the mind can be turned inwards. So, begin this study for one moment to begin with, and then let the final destination be to meditate non-stop.

I: *What effect will this have on me ?*

Maharaj: That effect will be as per the Divine Will. But if we try and understand the life stories of saints, we can guess this effect. Just as this meditation goes deeper and over longer durations, the attitude towards life gets transformed. It

changes from pettiness to broad-mindedness. You must have realized that all human interactions are based on our understanding of the properties of various objects.

Thus, objects and human beings having lovable properties are loved and sought after. And similarly, objects and people having irritating properties are avoided. We then make the maximum efforts to obtain the company of such people and objects.



In short, our role in life is one of an acquirer. That is why one important question that stares us in the face is “Finally what have I or we achieved in life ?” But how can we acquire or obtain something unless there are

those who give ? This meditation helps us change our role from being a taker to becoming a giver.

I: Sir, does this transformation happen overnight ?

Maharaj: In a sense, it happens in one moment but it may be years before this moment can occur. Thus, in another sense, this transformation happens gradually as the meditation gets deeper and deeper and gets more and more ingrained in us.

I: How does this happen ?

Maharaj: Before a person begins meditation, he believes that the ultimate knowledge is our knowledge about ourselves and about the properties of objects around us. Therefore, we give disproportionately higher importance to self and objects around us. This causes happiness-grief, love-hate and attachment-repulsion. Moreover, the duality between I and that object also remains.

On the contrary, look what happens as a result of the meditation prescribed by Saint Dnyaneshwar. You start realizing that I am one form of God, that favourite object or person is another form of the same God. Since the same God has taken two different forms, both become equally important. In other words, both get a divine value. A balance is created in both the pans of the weighing scale. This is

the scale of seeing, its one pan is the seer and the other is the seen. This is something similar to an actor who plays many different roles in many plays but all are equally important to him.

Moreover, although the one and the same Divine power expresses itself through different media, once I know that essentially all are one, I start looking at things with a fresh perspective. Earlier, I used to think that I am a combination of my body, my mind and my intellect. Now, I have this new understanding that I am also a part of this Divine power/energy which has expressed itself through me.

The real me is thus a representative of the Divine power/energy and the same power/energy has filled the entire Universe.

What happens after this awareness dawns?

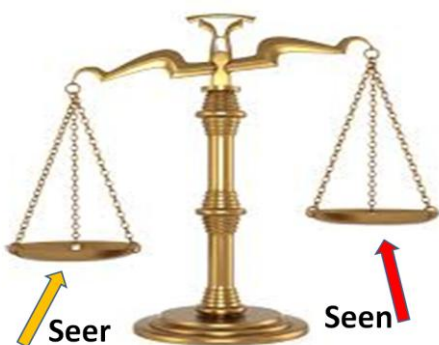
Apart from the difference between I and another object, I also start feeling a unity between the power/energy in me and power/energy in that object. So, in addition to having an attraction for that object, I also start feeling affection towards it. In due course, the affection gets transformed into unconditional love and I start loving the other object and person the way I love myself.



I: Is that all ? Or something more happens ?

Maharaj: I realize that the attraction I feel for an object or for a person is in accordance with the Divine rules and the resultant actions/transactions done by me also are as per the Divine Will. In the normal course, I would have justified my actions/transactions but now I do not resort to any justification. Therefore, no new Vikar (blemish) gets created in the mind; and the mind begins to remain calm and peaceful.

Such a peaceful mind becomes an ideal vehicle for meditating in a deep and intense way.



Such a mind can start experiencing a wide spectrum of realities such as God being without a beginning, without an end, unexpressed, unmanifest and all-powerful and I get an experience of being a part of him. Only such a mind can have this kind of experience and then the mind can remain submerged in that experience. Therefore, whenever I see an object, my mind interprets it to be a form of God and starts meditating on God.

It is a common experience (at least in India) that we can guess the financial status of a man from the clothes and jewellery worn by his wife. So, it is this married lady which is in front of our eyes but our mind is contemplating about the financial status of her husband!

Similarly, any object, thing or Being I see, reminds me of God. Since God is present everywhere, I start forming a kind of unity, a kind of one-ness in my mind. This creates in my mind, love and cordial feelings towards all objects in this world.

I: Sir, why do we start feeling this love?

Maharaj: That is because any Divine experience culminates into a feeling of one-ness with the world around you and this creates love. This happens because one-ness and love are very closely interlinked. Another reason for this is that one of the chief characteristics of God is being full of infinite and supreme love. Therefore, Divine meditation generates love and this love transforms us from the 'taker' mindset to one of 'giver' mindset. This Divine love has no motives, no expectations and is pure.

I: Is there any difference between the love as we normally understand and this Divine love?

Maharaj: Our worldly love springs from a process of give-and-take and is thus dependent on give and take. The Divine love is born out of our love for God. This love transforms the devotee into a 'giver'. Earlier, whenever I met any person, I would normally think about what will I get from him/her. But now, I look for any need or want that man/woman may have and start feeling good if I can fulfil at least some of it.

The obsession now is how much more can I give. Because my life now has become Divine.

I become like water which moves ahead only after it has filled potholes in its path. My life gets transformed inside out. And what's more, I am all the time aware that this transformation too has happened in accordance with the Divine plan and thus I do not take the credit for it.

Now I see God everywhere. So, I cannot harm or damage anyone. On the contrary, all my actions lead to the well-being of the people around me. Saint Tukaram expressed this condition thus:

तुका म्हणे आता । उरलो उपकारापुरता ॥

(“ Says, Tuka, I am now existing only for doing good to others.”)

This condition is created by the Divine love.

I: What is precisely meant by supreme and infinite love that you referred to sometime back ?

Maharaj: Supreme and infinite love has no comparative and superlative degrees. Moreover, it is not dependent on prior familiarity and give-and-take. It is the highest possible state of love.

When a man/woman makes / creates even a small object, he/she starts loving it beyond any comparison. Then what must be the depth and expanse of love God has in his mind for this great creation of His --- that is, the entire Universe!

Another every-day life example will explain this further. If we know someone not very closely, we just wave to him from a distance. When the familiarity increases, we go up to him and shake hands. When more closeness develops, we put our hands on his shoulder and also pat him. With further closeness, we even hug him.

An even higher state of love is Mother's love for her young ones. A mother carries the baby in her womb for approximately nine months and thus it becomes

a part of her body. She loves her/him throughout her life. This love is thus of a very premium quality.

When a mother feels so much love for her daughter or son with only nine months' one-ness, how much love God should be having for the Universe created by him and filled by him in every atom! And finally, how much love should I feel for the God who has occupied every cell of my body? Instead, this love I actually have for myself.

But I do not know that, this love is springing out of the fact that I am a part of the God ! This meditation makes me aware that it is 'I' who is everywhere. This understanding transforms the love I have for myself into love for the Universe.

Then, I also get filled with that infinite love. This love then becomes visible in my eyes and becomes apparent through my behaviour. My touch transmits that infinite love effortlessly. I start showering love like a waterfall showers water and all those who come within its orbit, get drenched with satisfaction and happiness.

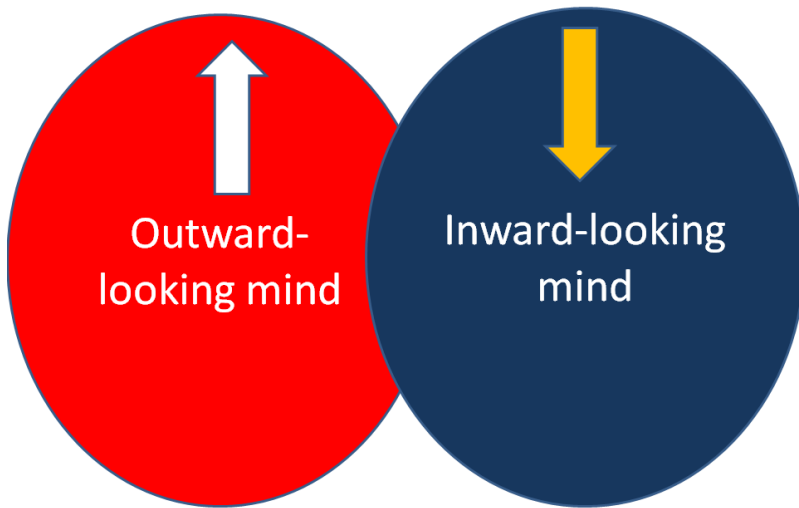
In this 'transaction', the receiver gets benefits as also joy and happiness while the 'giver' gets a sense of fulfilment, satisfaction and some valuable bonus points from the God.

Chapter 07

Direct Experience

I: Sir, can this meditation give us some direct and actual experiences ?

Maharaj: Yes, of course. But only after your mind becomes inward-looking.



I: Maharaj, what is meant by inward-looking ? I only know that when I look inwards, I become aware of the tongue which makes it possible for me to taste a variety of food and drinks !

Maharaj: My dear son, the inwardness you are referring to is physical and relates to your body and senses. The inwardness I am talking about is related to your mind and not body.

An inward-looking mind has got seven stages:

- 1) Eyes are closed but you are aware of the external world.
- 2) You feel the touch of the seat, chair, wall to your body.
- 3) Thoughts emerge in the mind.
- 4) You start seeing things, events, colours on your mind's screen.
- 5) You start seeing clusters of light, clouds, stars...
- 6) You start becoming aware of your breathing.
- 7) You become aware of the fact that 'I am', 'I am alive and awake.'

The mind has two fundamental states. One outward and one inward. Outward mind is that which, when awake, is curious to obtain knowledge about external subjects, to think about them and to react to them. Once this curiosity calms down, what happens is, even that part of the intellect (which collects knowledge

/ information, thinks about it and reacts to it,) also starts calming down. This mind, which has calmed down, gets detached from that subject and turns inward.

For example, when you are watching a suspense thriller, your curiosity is alive only until you learn about the secret. Once you know it, your mind becomes calm and cool and then you are not eager to see the same movie again. And even if you see it again, the mind does not much remain outward.

I: Doesn't it mean that mind is not permanently inward ?

Maharaj: No, and it is not even necessary that it should be so. The mind can be outward about subjects in which it is interested and can be inward regarding subjects in which it is not interested.

I: OK. What happens when the mind becomes inward ?

Maharaj: After this stage occurs, the devotee should ideally start meditating in solitude. Because, this experience of inner calm and peace first occurs in solitude, it then crystallizes and jells there and then the experience is replicated even in day-to-day life. That is why this meditation is best done the first thing early morning.

In the peaceful environs of early morning, one should sit in a convenient and easy posture, thereby ensuring that the body is tension-less. Let the mind be happy. Let the eyes be closed and one should sit quiet. When one sits quiet, the sensory organs take a break from work: seeing stops since eyes are closed, hearing organs are relaxed because of the peace around.

Likewise, the other three sensory organs, nose, tongue and skin too, do not have any assignment during that period --- except of course the breathing that the nose would any way continue to do.

Thus, if there is some fragrance in the air, the meditator would feel it. But even the seemingly innocent fragrance can cause distraction. The fragrance may enliven some old memories and the mind would start running behind them.

Then the mind has to be brought back to its original slot. Similarly, the meditator / devotee will also feel the touch of the ground / chair on which he is seated, but it is advisable to steer the mind away from it, so that the feel of this touch will fade away.

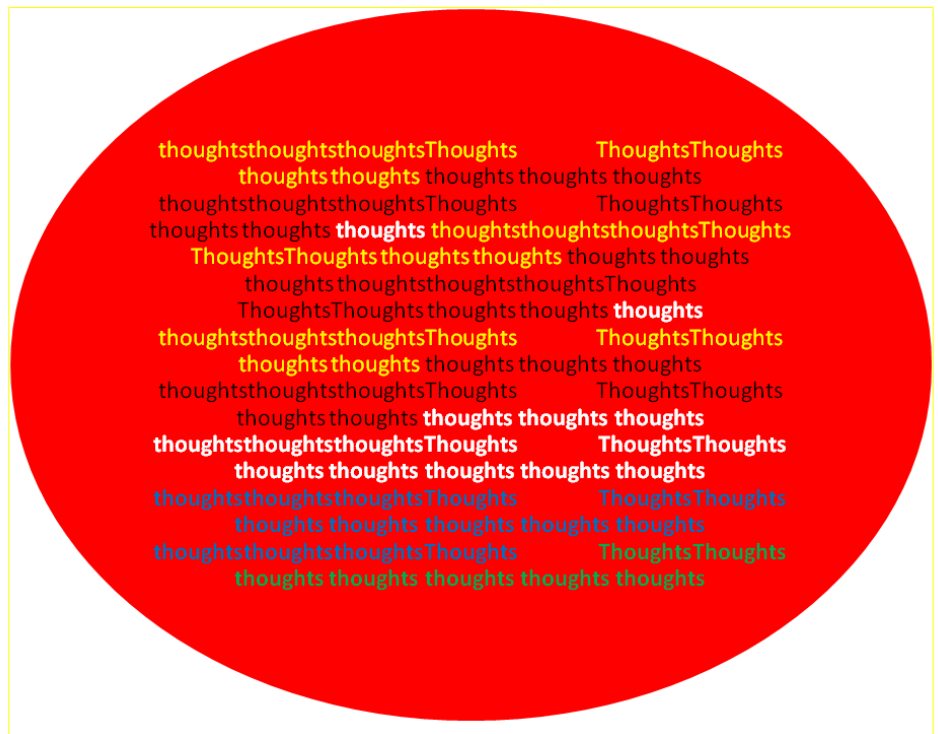
I: How to steer the attention away ?

Maharaj: After you close your eyes, you may see something. If you concentrate on it, the attention on the other sensory perceptions and thoughts can be moved away.

But I should mention here that three types of distractions / constraints occur while doing this meditation.

Our scriptures call them: Vikshep (विक्षेप), Kashay (कषाय), and Laya (लय). The first one, Vikshep, means thoughts. When one sits quiet, thoughts about the past and future keep coming again and again.

These thoughts are mostly about things which are important to us. They also have a certain pattern: “ It would have been good if a certain thing would not have happened the way it did. It would be great if things happen the way I want them to happen.”



I: How do I stop them ?

Maharaj: The first thing is to reduce the importance we give to the things we like.

I: How ?

Maharaj: Once we start realizing that the properties of our favourite objects are actually properties of the God who has taken the form of those objects, we also start realizing that the same God is everywhere.

Then the importance of these objects gets reduced and God's importance starts increasing. Similarly, events in the past which have happened in a certain way, happened because they were destined to have happened that way only and it is no point thinking about them.

Similarly, events which will happen in the future are unknown to us, and we cannot do much about them and therefore, it is equally useless thinking about them. The thoughts can be stopped by applying this mode of thinking.

Another area which leads to a lot of thoughts is about unfinished tasks. Therefore, one should look at them as tasks assigned by God and should thus try to accomplish them as fast as possible. Then, thoughts about them also stop entering the mind. If one continues the study in this manner, only planning-related and proper thoughts enter the mind and such thoughts are very few. As a result, the mind can remain virtually thoughtless for an increasingly longer time. However, it takes a lot of time to reach this stage.

The second impediment is Kashay (कषाय). When we close the eyes and sit quietly, a variety of strange scenes unfold before our eyes as if in a dream. Sometimes, some kind of sounds are heard, while on other occasions a variety of colours appear on the mind's screen. Sometimes, the scenes are very pleasant and fulfilling, as if the God has appeared before us in person.

Due to all this, we can get scared, but sometimes, can get thrilled since there is a feeling (it may actually be an illusion) of God realization. We feel we have arrived, we have now reached the self-realization phase or the God has personally blessed us and so on. We start living in a fool's paradise, start behaving like a sage or a seer or a Guru and even start attracting a band of disciples.

But this condition has no basis in reality and is pure illusion and the devotee must cross this stage at any cost and that too very carefully. In fact, as the devotee perseveres sincerely on this path, he or she develops a robust discretion to differentiate between the illusory and the real.

I: But how to cross it ?

Maharaj: The more inward-looking your mind becomes, the easier it is to cross this stage.

But the third obstacle is waiting in the path. It is called Lay (लय). It means sleep. We straightway start sleeping more and more.

How to counter this ?

Try and stay awake while closing the eyes and keep the mind inward-looking in such a tactful manner that the first two obstacles (namely, intrusion of thoughts and illusion) do not get created.

After this, whenever we close the eyes, the mind becomes thought-less and illusions too stop. The attention gets focussed on the slow-paced breathing. If you become more inward, you even stop hearing the sound of breathing. But you start seeing in front of your eyes inside the eyelids, misty, greyish and yellowish light.

Simultaneously, an intelligent state of mind keeps rising within, indicating to you that you are separate from this light. However, this too is the final passing phase of Kashay. If you are able to look even more deep inside, the mind reaches a kind of point where only a very fundamental, subtle awareness keeps getting inspired



and the vacuum in which this awareness keeps rising, is known as the mind-sky. (चिदाकाश).

This is the ultimate point (Para-bindu) (पराबिंदू) and the mind cannot go deeper or beyond it. Just as the birth of a mighty river like the Ganges is in one drop of water, dripping down from the source

fountain with a rhythmic sound, the source of the mind power is in the pure awareness in this ultimate point.

And it is this mind power which keeps us alive and makes us perform various tasks as per the pre-determined Divine Will. This pure awareness can be described thus: I am, I am alive and I am awake.

I: Sir, all this is too tough to understand.

Maharaj: It is quite natural for you to feel so. Because a common man never experiences these levels of awareness in the deep recesses of the mind. And it is not possible to comprehend anything merely by listening to some story on the subject. I am therefore aware my dear son about your problem.

Just now, you reminded me of a small child who gets totally confused while listening to a discussion on high-level mathematics. But I had to elaborate on the topic since you asked a question.

But have patience. The pure awareness that 'I have reached the ultimate point' cannot go beyond that point. Just as a train cannot go beyond a train terminus, like the Churchgate or Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai. Any tourist or visitor who wants to reach a place beyond the CST (Railway terminus), will have to come out of the terminus building and either walk, or take a bus or a cab to reach the Gateway of India or the Taj Mahal Hotel to behold the vast Arabian sea.

Likewise, even though this pure awareness cannot transcend the ultimate point, it can move alongside upwards and with meditation, can settle down on another point.

Our scriptures call this point Brahma-randhra, (ब्रह्मरंध्र) which if translated in English, would mean the super-microscopic aperture of the Brahman, that is the ultimate consciousness. This is situated in the center of the top of our head. Some people translate it as a tunnel or a passage for the Brahma.

Because it is through this very microscopic aperture that our awareness can become one with the Brahman or God and merge with that state of being.

Many sages and seers finally leave their body through this aperture and become one with the ultimate consciousness. In this state, the eyeballs are fixed on the centre of eyebrows. This point is called as Aadnya-chakra (आज्ञाचक्र). When our awareness reaches the ultimate point (para-bindu), it can fill only the mind-sky (चिदाकाश).

Therefore, the Being keeps experiencing its residence in the human body. But the characteristics of the aperture is that this pure awareness can transcend the mind-sky and spread into the Universe.

In other words, it can outreach the mind-sky (चिदाकाश) and fill the macro-sky (महदाकाश), which is beyond it. The result is that the devotee starts getting an extraordinary experience of being totally one with everything (along with all objects contained therein) that this awareness starts occupying.

Saint Dnyaneshwar expressed it thus:

“किंबहुना चराचर । आपणचि जाहला ॥”

“I myself became the Universe, straddling the entire spectrum of the living and non-living.”

When the devotee’s pure awareness starts occupying the macro-sky, this awareness itself starts becoming weaker, fainter and rarer and it eventually vanishes like a balloon which expands to become bigger and bigger and bursts.

After this, a new awareness is born in the aperture of the Brahman. It again expands, spreads into several parts of the Universe and fades away. Just as waves emerge one after the other in the ocean, slide towards the beach, bang against the shores, break and fade away, this pure awareness gets into similar cycles of emergence, expansion and fading into nothingness.

Maharaj: Now, observe and understand this: There is a miniscule time gap between the fading away of one cycle of the pure awareness through this aperture and another cycle emerging.

What happens during this momentary time space is that the awareness has dissolved and the God, or Brahman is witnessing its own infinite and unexpressed existence.

It is during this moment that the devotee’s mind is devoid of any cognitive awareness. Such mind can become one with God or with the pure state of the Brahman. This state is infinite and unexpressed. And this moment can range from a micro-second to anything.

However, the devotee does not understand or feel how much time has passed. That is because his cognitive ability, which measures things, has calmed down.

This is like after waking up from our sleep, we cannot exactly specify the time duration for which we slept. Our science of Yog calls this the Asampradnyat (also spelt as Asamprajnata) Samadhi (असंप्रज्ञात समाधी). (Some experts translate the word Asamprajnata as non-cognitive or supra-conscious.)

I: How much time it takes to reach this stage to experience God ?

Maharaj: This cannot be specified exactly. It depends on how much time the devotee will require to flush out the impact of the deeds of the past and present birth as also the unfulfilled wishes, sins and virtues of the past births.



- Deeds of the past and present birth



- Unfulfilled wishes



- Sins and virtues of past births

Moreover, the devotee has to carefully watch and ensure that new sins, virtues and desires do not get created. Because, otherwise the devotee would need more time to get rid of these new burdens.

But one thing can be said with certainty. The greater the sincerity, urge and intensity of the devotee and more the time she or he can devote for meditation, the greater the degree of surrender to the God, the faster will she or he reach the milestone of this experience.

I: Sir, you have described how one can get this unique experience while meditating when eyes are closed. Can this experience be had even when the eyes are open ?

Maharaj: Oh, yes, you can have it even when eyes are open. Once this experience has totally become one with your existence, it can be had even while the eyes are open.

I: How ?

Maharaj: To understand this, let us first take a look at the normal state. When your eyes are open, they normally zero in on one of the several objects they can see. You start getting knowledge about that particular object and other objects are relegated into a kind of foggy background. (In the jargon of photography, they are called out of focus).

If the object on which you have focussed, is pleasure-giving, then the eyes which are fixed on it start concentrating more on it and you don't take your eyes away from it easily. As long as your attention is on that object, you start getting pleasure in the outward condition of your mind. This keeps getting repeated. This pleasure is stored in your memory and you can again enjoy it from the memory.



If you have assimilated God-experience without this awareness, then whatever scene your open eyes behold, you will turn your attention to an object which is of immediate use or importance and you will interact with it in accordance with the pre-determined Divine plan.

(Remember, even after reaching this very sublime state, as a human Being, you have to interact with people, objects and have to perform some daily chores).

But in case the scene does not consist of any such useful or important object, then the whole scene becomes God incarnate and since the eyes are not fixed on any specific object, the whole scene seems misty and foggy.

Naturally, no reaction to it emerges in your mind. With practice, the mind then automatically becomes inward. If this inward movement develops and reaches the aperture of the Brahman, then you can experience solitude even while keeping eyes open.

Maharaj: You also start getting an intense experience that the whole Universe, along with you yourself, is charged with God and is replete with God. This kind of experience is sensed by the 'inner eyes' even while the eyes are open. This can be improved through study. When you come out of this state, your eyes again behold a scene and the eyes get transfixed on some object of utility or importance, otherwise it again focuses inside and enjoys the God experience.

This cycle of taking cognizance of objects of utility through open eyes and living the intense experience in the inward recesses of the mind in touch with God, continues the rest of life. And since the devotee is totally aware that even this cycle is as per the pre-determined Divine plan, he becomes a pawn in the God's hands, or rather he starts realizing and experiencing that he is after all a pawn in the hands of the God.

I: (with great astonishment) Frankly, Sir, description of these happenings in a cyclical manner is still difficult to understand for a common man like me. But I also wish to know whether our Saints have experienced something like this ?

Maharaj: If the Saints had written down these experiences, we would have come to know about them. But since this experience is very difficult to capture in words, very few such accounts are available. But don't lose heart. It is not as if there is no account at all. Devotional lyrical compositions of Saint Tukaram do chronicle his spiritual development in a very vivid manner. In one such composition, the great Saint describes the experience of the pure awareness filling the macro-firmament.

Says he:

अणूरेणूया थोकडा । तुका आकाशाएवढा ॥

("I am so miniscule that even the atoms and sub-atoms are bigger than me and at the same time, this Tuka(ram) is as vast as the sky.")

This term Tuka is no doubt a reference to his own name Tukaram. It also refers to that pure awareness which resides in the ultimate point. The reference to the atoms and sub-atoms describes the tininess of the aperture of the ultimate consciousness and the reference to sky is the mind-sky as also the macro-sky.

Thus, Tukaram experienced that he had become one with that Divine power which has filled the smallest of atomic entities and the infinite Universe symbolized by the sky. Other Saints also have chronicled their experiences.

I: Sir, one more question, if you don't mind. In fact, a little childish one at that.

Maharaj: (smiles) My dear child, please feel free to ask anything even if you feel it is childish. As such, you are like my child. Only a child has the right to ask childish questions, right ?

I: Well then. My ..err... question is... Sir, have you yourself ever experienced this one-ness with the Universe ?

Maharaj: (with a chuckle) Well, tell me how is that information useful to you ?

I: Most of the famous saints are not alive, so people like us cannot meet them. But since you are very much here right in front of me, it would be great to know your own experience in this context. I will then really believe that even a person known to me also can have this kind of experience and that it is not something only to be read in the scriptures or to be heard in mythological stories.

Your experience can really trigger a powerful motivational force in my life and I can take meditation very seriously.

Maharaj: (Smiles again). Well, if it is going to really help you get going in your meditative journey, I don't mind letting you know that I have indeed experienced it.



I: (Overwhelmed) Sir, you have really simplified a very complex spiritual concept. I do not know how I can really thank you enough.

Maharaj: (With a friendly lit-up face) My dear son, all this was pre-decided in the Divine plan and that is why you came to me and I happened to talk to you on this subject. And if at all you wish to thank anyone, thank Saint Dnyaneshwar and other spiritual luminaries.

I am reminded of what Saint Tukaram once said and also because my state of mind is exactly similar to what is described therein:

काय म्या पामरे । बोलावी उत्तरे । परि त्या विश्वम्भरे । बोलविले ॥

Who am I, the simple common man, to answer questions, when it is the Almighty who makes me utter the answers?

साळुंकी मंजुळ । बोलतसे वाणी । शिकविता धनी । वेगळाची ॥

A cuckoo sings through its musical chirpings (or so it seems) but it is the Master/owner of the universe who speaks/sings through her.

काय वानू आता । संतांचे उपकार । मज निरंतर । जागविती ॥

I can never thank enough the Saints who have taught me how to remain totally aware all the time?

तुका म्हणे सारा । संतांचा हा माल । मी तो हमाल । भारवाही ॥

Says Tuka: all this treasure belongs to the Saints. I am only a coolie who transports it from one place to the other!! ”

May God bring you this state of mind as soon as possible and God bless you.

I: Thank you Sir, and may I take your leave ?

Maharaj: Bye bye and have a great spiritual future.



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Epilogue

When I translated my spiritual guru's Marathi book, जे जे भेटे भूत (Je Je Bhete Bhoot), a few years ago, and now, when I revisited it during the last 70 + days when the book was being serialized, I gathered some thoughts about what message the book gives.

Here are a few key ones:

1. God as a concept has always mystified or outraged most human beings, regardless of whichever religion they belong to.
2. The principle difficulty or challenge that stands between human beings and God is that He cannot be easily seen, nor can he be captured in a test tube in a laboratory and shown as "This is God."
3. Thus, most human beings lead their lives by just performing certain rituals handed down to them by previous generations, without questioning many customs, beliefs, dogmas, assumptions and activities.
4. This leads to a kind of monotony. As a result, we see that trillions and trillions of human beings across the world generally spend their time and energy in following dumb repetitive actions/rituals just because most others among their relatives, family friends, peers do the same.
5. We are thus left with a miniscule minority which looks at the concept of God critically by questioning beliefs systems, customs, rituals; trying out various methods to check if what some so-called saints/sadhus/fakirs have advised is true after all.
6. In this process, some lose faith in God and become atheists or agnostics.
7. However, some do decide to "find God" at any cost.
8. This gives birth to pure spiritualism as against organized religion and actually cuts across religions.
9. Most such spiritual systems (and in fact some religious systems too) advocate some kind of meditation to explore and experience the mystic, the divine and the extra-sensory.
10. **Most meditative practices... and this is very important...advise the practitioner to try and live in god-remembrance for as much time as possible, the final objective being uninterrupted, continuous remembrance of God in some manner without even a moment's break.**

11. This seems very easy but in reality, is very difficult to practice. That is because, all attempts to spend every moment of one's life in god-remembrance actually get broken or interrupted all the time by some other thoughts, ideas, memories of the past, dreams about the future, repentance/frustrations about defeats/lost opportunities, plus of course, the other faculties such as anger, greed, lust, jealousy, selfishness, hatred, etc.
12. Thus, we need some simple solution, tool to help us remember god for uninterrupted long durations to begin with and ultimately break-less, seamless and continuous (24X7) god-remembrance. Meanwhile, why do we have to remain in god-remembrance at all? The simple answer is to achieve a state of self-realization, and experiencing oneness with the divine-cosmic energy and attain a state of super-consciousness.
13. I think this one hymn by Saint Dnyaneshwar (which has actually inspired my Guru to write this book) offers this simple tool, solution. It says that once you start seeing god in every living and non-living Being that you come across, (in simple terms, once you start becoming aware of the energy encased in every living and non-living Being), **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO MAKE ANY SEPARATE EFFORTS TO REMEMBER TO REMEMBER GOD. THUS, ONE CAN ACHIEVE THE STATE OF NON-STOP GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS VERY EASILY.**
14. **I think this book thus makes a very simple, yet powerful spiritual statement and guides a human being into a certain and unequivocal road to attain spiritual self-realization.**

Thank you,

Anand Aashay
13 January, 2018

About the translator

Anand Aashay is a communications professional with 39 years experience in Mumbai. This includes 6 years in English journalism (His last assignment in journalism was Chief sub-editor at Financial Express, Mumbai), 23 years with the Corporate Communications function of Larsen & Toubro and 10 years with the Marketing Communications function of Larsen & Toubro Infotech.

During the stints in the Corporate world, Anand was involved in a wide array of communications responsibilities / projects including writing, editing and printing of more than a dozen in-house magazines, two video magazines, media relations, as well as writing for a wide variety of media; a major re-branding exercise for L&T Infotech, creation of marketing collaterals, participation in exhibitions, revamping of website content, internal communications, corporate gifting, campus recruitment communications, taking responsibility for crafting and sharing Director-level management's communications to employees, event management and media relations.

Anand was identified as a Mentor for younger communications professionals and was also the Brand custodian.

During his journalism and corporate / marketing communications career, Anand has been involved in a wide variety of content writing assignments including feature stories, personality profiles, news reports, press releases, speeches for corporate leaders, scripts for corporate and marketing films, copy writing, case studies and so on. He has also been a Visiting Faculty at various colleges and media schools in Mumbai and Pune including Somaiyaa College, Xavier Institute of Communications, Suryadatt Institute, Indira Institute, MIT-Art, Design, Technology University and Seamedu School of Pro-expressionism.

Here are a few key highlights about him:

- 1) He has a deep interest in the spiritual and the mystic and has continued his study of various spiritual paths including Vipassana, Tejgyan, Silva Mind Control, traditional *naam-smaran* as well as the J. Krishnamurty method of meditation. He has recently started conducting Workshops on Mindfulness and Beyond for Wellbeing.
- 2) Formal education: MA in English Literature from the University of Mumbai and a mini-MBA from the Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad.
- 3) He loves to perform at concerts to present old Hindi film songs, ghazals, devotional songs, Marathi bhavgeet, etc.
