

Knots of the Heart in Sanātana Dharmā

- *Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai*

Human birth is the rarest to get because it is given only to humans to realise ones divinity, which is the true purpose of human life, says *sanātana dharmā*. In the previous article, we learnt that to realise ones divinity one needs three blessings, namely, a human birth (*nara janma*), desire for self-realisation (*mumukṣutvaṃ*) and the guidance of a *guru*(*mahāpuruṣa saṃśrayaḥ*). The true seeker must have four pure qualifications which is to have discrimination (*viveka*), dispassion (*vairāgya*), the six qualities of *shama, dama, uparati, titikṣā, śrāddha* and *samādhāna*- (together called *shat sampat*) and an intense desire to realise the truth (*mumukṣutvaṃ*). The question that remained unanswered in the last article was, why is that most humans don't seek to realise their divinity; why don't they have such an intense desire for liberation? We shall ponder upon that here.

There are three reasons for this as elucidated by our scriptures - *avidyā* or ignorance, *kāma* - wrong desires, and *karma* - actions directed towards such wrong desires. Well, if one dwells deeply, the root cause of the later two can be discovered in the very first reason - ignorance.

The desire to know something develops only if some one gets to know that such a thing exists; for instance, unless you know that a new product version has come in the market, be it of your favourite car or a phone, you won't be able to develop a desire for it. So, the first reason for not having any desire for self-realisation is the ignorance that such a concept exists in the first place. And that's due to the company of those who are also equally ignorant about it. This is called '*avidyā*' or ignorance which is the foremost reason for people lacking a desire to know their divinity. While on one side it is the ignorance of the existence of divinity, on the other side it's also the incorrect knowledge about the world around which is experienced by the body and the mind of a person. Sri Krishna says in the *bhagavadgītā* - '*anityam asukhaṃ lokam*', - this world is temporary and sorrowful - but due to the wrong knowledge or ignorance of this fact, most get deluded by the tinsel and glitter of the world and forgo the true gold of self-realisation. The classic example of this incorrect knowledge is the illusory appearance of a snake in the rope, in the twilight. Though the world and the joys that it seems to offer appear to be real, they are but transitory, whereas the knowledge of the *Self* bestows permanent happiness. Unfortunately, due to ignorance of this truth or incorrect knowledge about the impermanence of the world, people don't develop intense desire for realisation or *mumukṣutvaṃ*.

The second reason, is '*kāma*' or wrong desires, born out of *avidyā*. Faulty knowledge of the world, and its transitory pleasures, makes one believe that this world is real and the joys will be ever lasting; this creates a chain of desires to seek the world instead of God. Also, even if someone comes to know that such a thing as divinity exists, the distractive desires which seek paltry pleasures of the body, and instant but fleeting joys of the mind, do not allow one to constantly pursue the path of self-realisation. The body and its various needs, the mind and its endless wants, constantly drive the person into the dogged pursuit of their gratification, leaving barely any energy left to dedicate one's self for self-

realisation. Think this way, you started from your home to your destination, but on the way met someone who was so engaging that you forgot the very purpose of why you even started and ended up spending all your time with the new-found friend. It happens all the time; a student who wants to study for examinations is often distracted by the video games on the phone, or a person wanting to lose weight may get distracted by the tasty food that comes his or her way, and so on. This determined effort to know ones divinity is diminished by the endless distractions that the world around oneself offers.

This third reason - '*karma*'- actions, is born out of the second - '*kāma*' - or the desire for something. When one develops a fallacious desire, in the sense that it is a desire that is different from self-realisation, then, one is compelled to undertake actions to fulfil them. For example, if you want a new gadget or a particular possession, you need to acquire it by certain efforts, righteous or otherwise. We all know Newton's third law of motion which states that every action has an equal and opposite reaction, and this applies in the case of *karma* or action too! Every action undertaken also produces reaction or consequences. These consequences can be pleasurable or painful depending on the kind of action undertaken. But the reaction or consequences of *karma* called - '*karma prabhāva*' have to be experienced without fail. This reaction born out of any action leads to the next action and therefore the next reaction, and this cycle goes on and on - like you might desire for a new wristwatch that you may have seen the other day on a billboard. Now to buy that, which is slightly beyond your budget, you must spend some of your savings or earn some money or take a loan. Each of these will affect you in its own way. If you spend your savings, you are left with lesser security which may make you anxious and compel you to earn more to compensate for that. If you have to earn more, you will have to work extra hours, which means you will have to take time out from other activities like rest and leisure, and that may impact your health. If you borrow money to buy the watch, well I do not need to explain the consequences, the loan which will have to be repaid will naturally create anxiety and restlessness. So while there is the pleasure of having acquired the prized possession of the watch, it did set off a trail of action-reaction behind it. And more often than not, by the time you finally buy the new model of that watch, there is this newer version up for sale in the market, triggering a new sequence of desires and actions.

This way having developed a desire other than liberation, one would be bound by the chain of action and reaction. These actions and reactions which are like the alternating links of a chain born out of desires other than self-realisation, is in turn born out of the ignorance of the true purpose of human birth, and is the cause why most people don't pursue the path of self-realisation.

However, if one finds the company of spiritual people or enlightened Masters, there is a good chance that he or she will eventually overcome this three-fold obstacle of ignorance, desires and action-reaction and lead a life dedicated to knowing the truth.

These three - *avidyā*, *kāma*, *karma* are known in our scriptures as *hrdaya granthi*, or knot of the heart. They bind oneself in tight knots which are difficult to unloosen and free oneself. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads* says that the person who has realised his or her divinity is freed from this knot of ignorance-desires-actions, all his doubts are dispelled, and the

seemingly unending chain of action-reaction is cut asunder. Thus, the person attains peace and bliss.

What is that state of self-realisation? What is the quality of that peace? What kind of happiness is experienced by a realised person? These shall be our subject of discussion in the next article.

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(Original English version of the Article published in Vijayavani, a leading Kannada daily Newspaper, on 18.05.2021)