



ATTACHMENT AND DETACHMENT

Only they can be happy who remain in the world, who work in the world, who are in the world but who are not attached to the world. Those who are attached to and dominated by the world, can never be happy.



Experiencing God is not difficult. What is difficult is to get detached from the attractions of the world. Withdrawal from the attractions of the world is difficult because of habit. The more we withdraw and the more we become detached from the external attractions, the more we find inner peace and nearness to Truth and God.



Just as we are unable to see anything during the night due to the darkness, so normal ignorant people, blinded by the attachments of the world, are unable to see anything in the field of spirituality. They are blind to divine consciousness, pure love, sense of duty, and all these higher elements of life.



The first thing to understand is that as long as we have likings, we shall be victims of dislikings; and as long as we have attachments, we shall have aversion or hate.



Liking and disliking - attachment and aversion - are both bondage.



An ignorant person cannot experience true love, what he feels is only attachment, for the body, for money or for another selfish interest. It is only after Enlightenment that we are capable of experiencing real Love. All attachment disappears and we achieve inner purification. By Self-realisation, you come to know by experience that everybody is the same individuality that you are yourself.



How to get rid of attachment? The secret for getting rid of attachment is service to others. You should serve others, and particularly those towards whom you feel you have most attachment. If you adopt an attitude of service for them, then by doing service, a time will come when attachment to them will come to an end. You will achieve inner purification. You have performed the duty that you owed to that person. That debt towards that person has been paid off by service. Inner purification takes place, and attachment disappears.



One of the greatest men from my country, Ramakrishna, who was the guru of Vivekananda, explained attachment and detachment in a simple way. He used to say compare it to a boat on the river. The boat has to be in the water, but the water must not be in the boat. You have to be in the world, there is nowhere else you can go, but

take care that the world is not in you, and that you are not attached to it. If water enters into the boat, it sinks. If attachment is in you, you will also sink in the world.



Again and again you will meet situations, when the attractions of that objective world will try to overtake you. A successful spiritual journey means that you remain unaffected by the attractions of the external world, that is, you do not lose your subjectivity in the attachments of the objective world - the witnessing power is not clouded, you remain a witness. In this way, you gradually develop greater and greater detachment and stability inside, and then the time comes that you realise your true Self.



Attachment diminishes to such an extent that one starts considering oneself as separate from the body. Attachment towards the body remains as long as we desire to experience the enjoyments of the body. As soon as the body is used for the service of others, attachment to it starts diminishing.



The real cause of our miseries is what is known in Hindu philosophy as attachment and aversion - liking and disliking.



The problem in human life concerns these opposites, joy and sorrow, honour and ignominy, liking and disliking. This fluctuation between opposites applies to all creatures in the world. It is there in all the creatures but it is only a human being that can transcend these pairs of opposites and go beyond both pleasure and pain.



Pleasure and pain, a pair of opposites, are two sides of the same coin. This swinging between the pairs of opposites goes on happening again and again with all the creatures. It exists everywhere but it is only in the human body that both of these opposites, pleasure and pain, can be transcended. Then what happens? Then bliss happens, bliss of the *Atman*, bliss of the Self, bliss of the Divine. It happens in this human body only and nowhere else. God is realized, God beyond both pleasure and pain. He already exists here but He has got to be realised.



As soon as there is a glimpse of the Self, every worldly attraction and relish for sensual pleasure disappears. But before Self-realisation all efforts should be made for self-control and discipline.



There is nothing wrong with physical beauty, because that beauty has come from nowhere else but the Divine. Every fine gift has come from God, including physical beauty. When we see the Divine in physical beauty we use our eyes properly but when we see physical beauty from the point of view of enjoyment we misuse our eyes.



Try to remain most of the time with your own self, in your own self, busy in your own affairs, committed to your duty, and remembrance of God. A time comes when you start feeling you are in the world, but not of the world. In other words,

detachment starts happening, you become more at peace with your own self, more competent in performing your duty, and more in harmony with the world around you.



If we understand the purpose of life and the difference between the body and soul, and recognise the permanence of the soul and the impermanence of the body and the inevitability of old age and death, we will be able to give up desires. When we have given up desires, we can be free from attachments.



If we do not have something, we desire it. In our real Existence, the soul, we never lack anything. When we are the Spirit, the real Existence, what need can there be for anything? What desire can there be except through ignorance? When someone realises that he or she is the eternal Spirit, which was never born and will never die, what is the point of desiring anything?



A state comes when desire and attachment go away. The person comes to know that all objects belong to the world and not to him. Objects are in the world and belong to the world. Even this body is from the world in that it is composed of elements like air, earth and light and water, etc. So how can all these objects be mine? How can my house, garden, land and car be mine? It is only for the smooth working of society that we have the concept of ownership of property. Not having the idea of mineness does not mean that we do not make use of the objects which we have at our disposal. Whatever comes into our hands, we utilise it for the service of the world. When the attitude develops that we use whatever comes to us for the world, then attachment towards objects starts disappearing.



As long as we use material prosperity and worldly objects for the satisfaction of our desires, attachment for these objects remains. When our attitude changes, and we start using our wealth, body, senses, mind and intellect in the service of the world, we realise that we are the eternal Spirit, and that we do not need anything but are perfect and complete in ourselves already. It was only through ignorance that we did not know our own truth.



House, money and relatives - all these we leave at the time of death, but we carry with us the attachment to them, and that attachment is a bondage. Therefore, wisdom lies in getting rid of this attachment before physical death.



Saints say that ego contains the essence of all the physical entities. When ego disappears, physical objects are not required, because ego is our identification with the body and it is only the body which needs or desires physical objects. When you come to the conclusion that you are not body but Spirit, you become completely free. This total freedom is a question of experience.



The difference between attachment and love is very important and you should make efforts to gradually reduce the element of attachment that you have. With every attachment there is an expectation of reciprocity, and whenever there is expectation, conflict is bound to follow. Attachment is not desirable and should be replaced by

love. In particular, between the male and the female, lust and sexual attraction should never be considered as 'love'. As I explained earlier there is a correlation between lust and love. When there is greater degree of lust, there is lesser degree of love and when real love starts, sexual attraction or attachment begins to fade away. In pure love, there is no place at all for physical attraction. It simply does not remain.



Do not have attachment to the fruit of action, but do not have attachment to inaction either. Here in India a large number of people, particularly so-called spiritual people, have misunderstood this point. They think that, since everything is in our destiny, we can just take it easy. A large number of people here have adopted the tendency of not working. If you asked them what they are doing these days they would say that they are doing nothing since God will look after them. In the West, people have a different tendency: "I will do this and it will be done. I have the capacity and I will certainly get it done." This is ego! In India people think that, since everything will happen regardless, they need not bother to be active. There the disease is ego and here it is indolence.



It is a question of purity of mind. It is delusion which causes one to have attachments with the enjoyment of this world as well as the enjoyments of the next world. If mind becomes purified, one develops indifference to all these enjoyments.



God wants you to experience His love but you want to experience someone else's love though it is only attachment. Well, then this is your choice - if you want to have the ups and downs of sorrow and enjoyment, you are free to do so!



As soon as sense-contact is made with an object, those who are unwise enough not to take up the path of spirituality and yoga, develop attachment for the objects. Dwelling on sense-objects causes attachment to develop for them. You may see a beautiful woman or handsome man and come into contact with them again and again for several days. The more contact you have with them, the greater the possibility of attachment. You think she is a fine woman but after a few days you think she is exceptionally fine! You develop an attachment through contact with the object, and when the attachment becomes powerful, then you develop a desire to possess the object.



As soon as we develop the attitude that our activity, our body, our money and our possessions are to be used for the service of the world, we start becoming detached from our bodies and from the material world. Our attachment starts disappearing and at the culmination of this loss of attachment, Enlightenment happens by itself with no difficulty.



What is the meaning of non-attachment? It means that the temptations of the world do not attract us.



There is nothing wrong when you have attachments, but it is better to have love in place of attachments. It is a question of normal growth, growing from one step to

another. There is nothing wrong at any step, all steps belong to human life. There is a process of evolution in life from one step to another.



If you remember the mental state of a person who is above attachment, then you will also start becoming unattached. The principle is that you become what you think.



A true spiritual seeker takes care of his body but he does not have any attachment to it. He takes care of the body because he realises that it is the instrument for service and work, and that the manifestation of the Spirit takes place through body. As long as the body is there he makes use of it. When the time comes that it has become old and is of no more use, he is ready to give it up willingly in the same way as he changes his clothes.



Fighting against a weakness is as much a problem as attachment to it. A man or woman may be interested in the opposite sex and has a problem with this. Others say that they do not want to have anything to do with the opposite sex and they also have the same problem. The opposite sex is constantly on both their minds, to one on account of attachment to sex and to the other on account of his opposition to sex.



At home everyone tries to be of service to their children, husbands or wives. People do this mostly on account of attachment. However, there may be a person who does not act from attachment but from the inner notion that: "This opportunity to serve others has been given to me, so let me take it and play the part to the best of my ability." This new inner motivation is the first step in a person's spiritual evolution.



It is not freedom when you see your girlfriend or boyfriend, with whom you think life would be just ideal, in the company of somebody else, and you cry out: "Oh, my God, what is this?" This wailing is not freedom. This is a life of slavery, the slavery of attachments and passions.



There is a liking for certain activities and there are activities to which one has an aversion. For one whose aim is nothing but spiritual realisation - experiencing God - all aversions and attachments should go away. The activities which are prohibited should not be performed but, when they are given up, they should not be given up with a feeling of aversion or disliking. If there remains hate for some activities, then, even though the activity has been given up, there will remain an impression of hate. In the same way, activities are performed, and they are to be performed, but if attachment remains when they are performed, then the impression of attachment will be there (in the subtle body).



Simply speaking, the essence is that some actions appear to us as agreeable and others appear to us as disagreeable. The actions which we do not want to do we should not do, but then there should not be hate. And the actions which we want to do, we should do, but there should not be attachment.



After some time the stage comes when attachments are there, but, side-by-side with the attachments, there has also developed the wisdom to see the futility of those attachments.



As long as someone wants to remain healthy, the fear of disease will exist. As long as there is attachment in life, aversion or disliking will exist. It is not possible that someone enjoys only health and will never suffer from disease. It is not possible that one can have attachments and no aversions or disliking. If there is liking for something, then there is bound to be disliking for something else. Liking is with reference to disliking - they are related. And as long as there is relativity in life, conflict will remain and permanent peace cannot be realised.



The real question is to establish the difference between attachment and love - *Rag* and *Prem*. There is a great difference. There is so much difference that, if we want to describe it as such, we can say that it is just like day and night!



If there is attachment in life, it has certain characteristics. Attachment means a relationship with temporary objects and relationships of the world. Attachment means possessiveness. Whatever we have attachment to, we want to claim that thing and to possess it. Attachment means: "It is mine and no one else's!" Attachment is the product of ignorance; we do not know who we are. When we consider ourselves as bodies, then attachment is bound to be there. Even if we consider ourselves as emotions or mind, even then attachment will be there.



In true love there is no possessiveness. In attachment there is possessiveness: "Such and such belongs to me." This is not an indication or symptom of love. In attachment, the centre of attention is that person in whom attachment exists. The person considers himself/herself as the end and all other people as the means. In love, the real lover becomes the means and the loved one becomes the end: "The person I love, I am for him or her." As long as someone wants others to be for him or her, it is not love. In true love, there is no expectation. If there is expectation from the loved one, then it is not love. It should be all freedom for the loved one: "Oh, I love you and why do you care? You are free. Take from me whatever I can give you and then be happy." If there is an expectation, then, in the same degree in which the expectation exists, love is adulterated.



Those who have a spiritual attitude in life, should have two things together – care of the body and detachment from it. Now there appears to be a contradiction. If we take care of the body, how can there also be detachment? Combining these two things together is not easy and it takes time. Detachment will develop in the Subtle (Astral) body, in the mind, by having the knowledge that this body is given to one by God for a specific purpose and for a specific period of time.



The more we approach the experience of seeing or knowing the imperishable Spirit, the less we feel the pain of separation. The farther we are from the changeless Spirit and the nearer we are to the changing body, the greater is the pain we feel.



It is said that one does not lament the death of a husband, son or daughter but only feels grief for one's own loss due to attachment with the dead person. It is the individual's attachment on account of which he or she laments, not for the death of the departed one. If our sorrow was due to the fact of death, we would lament the death of everybody who dies, and we certainly do not do this. After the death of a person who was our enemy or did us some harm, we feel relief and there is no question of any sorrow at all. Therefore, it is our inner attachment on account of which we feel the grief.



Someone is attached to his own body; someone to the husband or wife; someone to his son or daughter; someone to learning, when one thinks one is very learned, there is attachment to it. As long as there is attachment, there will remain anger. Anger and attachment go together. Because, as soon as there is an attack on that attachment by anybody, one will become angry. A person may be very learned, one may be a Nobel Prize Laureate, a world-famous person, but if attachment is there, and someone says to that person that he does not deserve the Nobel Prize, at once the person is likely to be angry, even though the person is learned. Because of his attachment to learning he feels injured and gets angry.



The stage of detachment does not come easily. The method for this is that activity has to be performed with a sense of duty: "This is my duty, it has come to me, there is no question of whether I like it or dislike it. It is my duty, it is my task, therefore, I have to do it." In this way all these likings and dislikings regarding activity go away from life.

