

## Where There Is

# DHARMA

## There Is Victory

*A Talk by Swami Jyotirmayananda*

*Om poornamadah poornamidam poornat  
poornamudachyate  
Poornasya poornamaadaaya  
poornamevaavashishyate  
Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih*

That is Full; this is Full. When this is taken away, what remains is Full.  
May there be peace, peace, peace!

This peace chant sounds like a riddle, but it is a profound statement of the great philosophy of Vedanta presented through the Indian scriptures. It means that God, the Absolute, is Full, and from Full comes Full. This world is basically Full—there is God behind all things; all names and forms are sustained by the fullness of God. But names and forms go on changing. So if all the names and forms are taken away (if one transcends them through Self-realization), what is left is the Fullness of God.

### **The Unchanging Self Alone Is Real**

To better understand the basic teaching of Vedanta, view the world as a cinema show. Your mind is constantly projecting the show of multiplicity on the screen of the unchanging pure Consciousness. This Ultimate that does not change is known as *Chit* or *Chaitanya* in Sanskrit. When we speak of this Consciousness, we are not re-

ferring to vital, biological, mental or sense consciousness. We are referring to the Consciousness that is the underlying Reality behind all that exists, behind the entire universe—the innermost Reality within you that never changes.

That Consciousness, which is the universal Truth across different cultures and religions, is the “I Am” of the Old Testament as well as of the Upanishads. In the Biblical story, when Moses goes to worship God, he sees a vision in the mystic fire of a burning bush. And from within comes the voice of God. Moses asks, “What is your name?” and the answer comes, “I Am That Am I.” In the Upanishadic writings, that answer is expressed as “*Soham*”—“I Am That.”

### **The Changing Ego**

The true “I Am” within you is not the ever-changing ego. Remember the ego you had as a child—full of dreams and desires for toys? But as you grew up, that ego evolved and shifted. Imagine if all your childish wishes were granted now — it would lead to chaos.

This highlights the transient and illusory nature of desires. What you think most desirable for you today will, a few years from now, be undesirable. So thank God for not fulfilling every desire when it arises! Thus we see the illusoriness of the ego, which rises and falls and constantly changes. If our egos transform like

this within this lifetime, consider the complexity of the transformations that occur in the multiple lifetimes of repeated embodiment.

A thousand years ago, where were you? A thousand years ago, you were already existing, and your presence was not bound by time. To say you were nowhere is unscientific and irrational. As you journey through the passage of time, your essence remains eternal. In every moment, past, present, and future, your existence transcends centuries and eons. You could never imagine your non-existence in the past or the future. Countless years ahead you will be there. You are a timeless being, woven into the fabric of infinite existence.

Your ego has continued to change. You are continuously evolving with little recollection of your past identities. While some memories linger, the finer details remain hidden from your awareness. Your present focus lies on the relationships and responsibilities that shape your current existence. Delving into past obligations would complicate matters immensely. Suppose suddenly you were to remember your responsibilities not performed for people in your past life, or the money owed to someone from another life who exists in your neighborhood now. That would be quite confusing. And if you were to walk down the street and see the faces of young children and realize they were your grandfathers and grand-

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mothers, that would be most confounding. By God's Grace, there is something called oblivion—loss of memory. Your memory is blocked so you are not aware of these confounding details related to your changing ego-personalities of past lives. Embrace the Grace of such “forgetfulness” and stride forward with clarity.

### **Dream—Spinning Multiplicity Out of Your Consciousness**

Unaffected by those changing ego-personalities that manifest in each lifetime, your true essence remains constant and transcendental. This innermost core, referred to as *Chaitanya*, *Chit*, Consciousness, *Brahman*, the Absolute, or God, exists beyond the constraints of time and space. It is on this profound Center that the mind projects the world of multiplicity, a diverse world of perceptions and experiences, creating the illusion of individuality within a realm of relativity.

Embrace the miraculous power that resides within your mind, unveiling itself daily in your dreams. In mere minutes, your consciousness effortlessly projects a myriad of alternate realities, which you immediately embrace without questioning, without hesitation. Nothing is shocking to you about the remarkable spontaneity in the way your soul effortlessly reveals its innate power.

In the world created by your consciousness during dream, you encounter diverse illusory realities where everything appears utterly normal. During that dream experience, your true essence, the Self, the eternal “I Am” known as *Brahman* remains untouched by the confines of the dream. Similarly, in the waking world, your “I Am” remains unencumbered by the experiences you encounter. Your mind creates the drama of individuality upon this eternal Self. Engaging in this illusion, you experience pleasure and pain, prosperity and adversity, self-confidence and uncertainty.

It is due to ignorance (*avidya*) that one becomes entangled in the projected drama of life. One does not realize that behind the projection, sustaining the projection, there is sublime tranquility, unruffled awareness, profound silence, and boundless joy. Deep within your heart there is God. The Kingdom of Heaven is within Thee. God is all Full—overflowing with Bliss, with Love. And yet, within your egoistic perception of yourself, a sense of separation from God prevails, giving rise to confusion, anguish, and suffering. Overcoming this affliction of feeling detached from God is your most important task in life. The spiritual journey—*dharma*, in its all-encompassing and universal form, aims to cure this ailment and reunite individuals with their Divine Source.

**E**very religious or spiritual movement has three aspects: the metaphysical or intuitional aspect, the mythological aspect, and the ritualistic aspect. Among religions and spiritual practices, the mythologies and the rituals differ greatly, but the mystical or intuitional truths that underlie the mythology and ritual are One. Whether you are a Christian, a Jew, a Mohammedan or a Hindu, if you are truly religious, you attain unity with God, Who is the underlying Reality of all. You transcend the drama, the projection. You see past the images. You see the screen. You become One with all. That is the goal towards which all religions lead. “*Ekam Sat Vipraa Bahudhaa Vadanti*”—“Truth is One but Sages speak of the truth in different ways.”

As Sage Ramakrishna Paramhansa illustrated, there are many *ghats* or landings by which one can enter the same lake. Similarly, there is one God, but people “enter into” God by adopting different religions. The distinctions between religions are like differences between languages. The words vary, but the feelings are the same. If a Frenchman is joyous, he expresses his joy using French terms. An Englishman or a German may not know the words he is using, but they will understand his feelings. Religious expressions may differ, but the profound and mystical

aspects of spirituality are rooted in personal experiences that transcend religious boundaries.

## DHARMA—THAT WHICH PROMOTES PROGRESS

Though religions may vary in their practices and beliefs, at the core of all faiths lies a singular Reality, with the central theme being love of God. When you have an intense love of God, you become truly religious. *Dharma* (righteous behavior) is a special term that means religion in the true sense. Literally translated it means righteousness, virtue, goodness. *Dharma* is defined in Sanskrit as: “*Yatobhudaya Nihshreyas siddhisa Dharmah*”—“that which promotes progress and Liberation, that which promotes spiritual evolution and emancipation—That is dharma.” Genuine religiousness will fuel genuine progress within oneself.

**B**ut what is true progress? The materialistic concept honored by many in today’s world measures progress by wealth and technical possessions. That is certainly not true progress. A deeper, more meaningful understanding of progress goes beyond mere material accumulation and physical luxury.

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**W**e might compare this materialistic concept to the following humorous example: Suppose a person has been given a wonderful horse. He is so excited by the gift that he jumps upon the horse backwards, so that he faces one direction and the horse faces the opposite direction. He whips the horse to gallop as fast as possible, and feels increasingly exhilarated by the idea that he is rushing forward. But, in reality, he is going backward! Unaware of looming calamities, the rider may suddenly find himself in danger when the horse falls into a chasm, risking both his own and the horse's well-being. This predicament mirrors the perils of being devoted to materialistic notions of progress.

*Dharma*, the ethical value of life, should be the foundation of your economic progress. You should earn money and have economic security, but never by outstepping the ethical conscience within you, never based on violence, greed, hate, or any practice that hurts others. Even though your karma may cause you to remain poor, if you have always upheld *dharma* you will have inwardly progressed considerably. But, if you become rich by outstepping *dharma's* ethical codes of life, you would be like the person who jumps upon the horse backwards, unable to handle the power he possesses. Striking a balance between financial success and ethical integrity is key to leading a fulfilling and meaningful life.

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In a modern materialistic culture, individuals are endowed with extraordinary powers and insight into the secrets of nature. How amazing it is that a spacecraft can be manipulated in the vastness of space! However, right at home, when a wife quarrels with her husband or a husband quarrels with his child, they do not know what to do to settle the matter. Despite the advancements in materialistic pursuits, many remain completely unaware of simple truths that promote a peaceful and fulfilling life. What do you do if your mind becomes sorrowful or dejected? How can you handle your shifting moods? How can you reduce the stress within your heart? If these inner realities are not faced, all materialistic progress and attainments become empty.

People may have everything, but a small adversity can leave them feeling lost and helpless, struggling to cope with the unexpected circumstances around them. Taking away material possessions can even make some people feel suicidal, as if they have nothing left to live for. This is not true progress or spirituality.

**I**ndian scriptures emphasize four key values: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *Moksha*. *Artha* is the material value essential for achieving economic balance and stability. *Kama* is the social value that encourages genuine connections and warmth in human relationships, emphasizing honesty and sincerity over deception and superficiality. *Dharma* represents the ethical value, the foundation upon which all other values rest, the value that gives meaning and purpose to all the other values of life. Through these values, individuals can communicate effectively, understand one another, and share experiences of joy and sorrow in a manner that helps them to mutually evolve.

When you have *dharma* as the basis for your life, aided by economic stability and harmonious relationships, you find yourself drawn to the attainment of *Moksha* or Liberation. This quest leads you to the profound realization of your unity with the Divine Self—your inner reality is *Brahman* or God. Embracing this under-

standing, you transcend your ego-self, fostering a deep sense of humility. This diminishing of the ego is the greatest indication of spiritual advancement, and all noble virtues develop when the ego fades.

**W**hen you reduce your ego to a transparent minimum, you enjoy immense peace. This is difficult for some people to understand, but it becomes clearer when you reflect upon the tranquility experienced in deep sleep.

Through this profound lesson of sleep that nature teaches day by day, you exist without all relationships, without time and space, without objects. When you outstep your ego in sleep, you are completely relaxed. But the moment you wake up, ego asserts and you become aware of what went on yesterday, the problems you face today, and what should be done tomorrow. Past, present, and future all become real the moment ego arises. Yet, through spiritual growth and by diminishing the grip of the ego, one may attain immense peace while continuing to handle effectively the practicalities of the waking world.

True spiritual progress is expressed by genuine humility—your ability to be detached from your ego. To the extent you can do so, you are a person of *dharma*, of religion, of spirituality. Merely professing faith or allegiance to a particular belief system is futile if ego reigns supreme. Those who cling to their ego are like a parrot trained to recite profound prayers, but defaults immediately to its natural squawking tendencies in times of adversity.

## PATHWAYS TO PROGRESS

Thus, one must learn how to reduce the “cloud” of ego to a minimum by allowing it to become *satwic* (spiritually pure), so that it no longer obscures the Light of the “Sun” of the Self. In Yoga philosophy, there are four major methods: The path of action, the path of devotion, the path of meditation, and the path of wisdom.

## The Path of Action

The first method is Karma Yoga—the Yoga of Action. Put your energy to use for projects that transcend selfish motives and expand beyond your individual self. The moment you infuse your actions with the essence of Yoga, you have applied *dharma* to karma.

Without *dharma* (righteous activity), actions lead to bondage. Living life without spiritual guidance can result in unfulfilled desires and complex karmic patterns. The cycle of birth and rebirth continues endlessly, creating a puzzle of life with no clear resolution. By integrating *dharma* and spiritual insight into your actions, you transform them into Karma Yoga, which purifies the unconscious and speeds your journey to Enlightenment.

In the Divine Plan, each individual is gifted with a special way of performing action. What one person does, another cannot do in exactly the same manner. Your aim, whenever possible, should be to engage in actions that are natural to your personality, in accordance with the true essence of *dharma*.

To give you a humorous illustration: One summer afternoon a squirrel was frisking around, jumping from branch to branch. The mountain laughed at the squirrel, saying, “You little squirrel, what are you doing?” The squirrel laughed at the mountain and said, “Oh giant mountain, you may ridicule me for being small, but I can crack a nut and you can’t.” Similarly, every individual has been given a special, unique quality in this world process. No one can be considered small. No one can be considered big.

When adopting the principles of Karma Yoga, one holds a deep appreciation for fulfilling their duties. Certain duties come to you naturally, known as *swadharma*. By following the path of righteousness, you simplify yourself and gravitate towards actions that feel natural.

If this does not happen, one finds themselves struggling with pursuits that are not in harmony with their true nature. In a world driven by greed,

many individuals become entangled in actions that are harmful for their true worldly success as well as spiritual unfoldment—and lead to an increase in crime and various perversions in society.

When a person acts on the basis of a complex mind, driven by greed and desire, that creates intense stress and pressure. Despite outward abundance of wealth and possessions, one experiences internal conflict and emptiness when they are disconnected from righteous action. This state of turning away from *dharma* is known as *adharma*.

However, if an activity is righteous and comes naturally to your personality, you will pursue it relentlessly. By following your positive, innate inclinations, you help promote a more serene state of mind within yourself. Your actions lead to a reduction of ego-based desires and nurture the feeling that you are a mere instrument in Divine Hands, living to serve God in others and promote peace and harmony in the world.

### The Path of Devotion

Another important method of reducing the ego and attaining true spiritual progress is through devotion or love of God. By applying *dharma* to the feeling aspect of your personality, you cultivate an awareness that your actions are a form of serving God. When you serve someone you love, you feel energized and uplifted, finding joy in your work instead of feeling fatigued or burdened. Mothers willingly stay awake all night to attend to preparations for their daughters' wed-

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dings out of love. The power of love in worldly affairs is undeniable. Now, envision directing that same overwhelming and all-consuming love towards serving God — this is *bhakti*.

When *bhakti* appears on the horizon, you understand that there is a Divine Hand behind all developments—not your ego. It is by constantly giving credit to your ego that your mind becomes increasingly stressed. Through devotion, allow your ego to relax. Make the best self-effort you can at every moment, in all circumstances of pleasure or pain, gain or loss. But understand that in all your experiences, God knows best. Once you understand that you do not have to pursue the ego's dictates, you have discovered the secret of inner peace. The sweetness of that discovery guides you towards a journey of devotional meditation.

### The Path of Meditation

The next aspect of the spiritual journey is to explore the profound essence of meditation. It is *dharma* applied to your mental process. Meditation is like visiting a tranquil lake embraced by the first light of dawn, entering the lake, and enjoying the serenity of the atmosphere. Meditation allows you to delve deep into the stillness within, nurturing a sense of peace and tranquility. At any moment during the day you can sit relaxed and enjoy the quiet lake of your mind.

Through this ancient art, you transcend the limitations of the ego and connect with the all-encompassing, universal energy, leaving you rejuvenated and centered. Unveiling the secrets of advanced *dharma*, meditation unfolds virtues like fearlessness, contentment, and humility, nurturing a relaxed mind and a subdued ego.

### The Path of Wisdom

The next aspect of Yoga on the journey is Jnana Yoga, the Path of Wisdom, where *dharma* is applied to your intellect and reflective mind. *Jnana* involves delving into the profound question of "Who Am I?". As your intellect becomes

increasingly subtle, it reveals that the ego is not you. You understand that the world of ego is merely a transient projection, a reflection of the Divine Self in the “waters” of an unenlightened mind. Transcending the illusions of the ego, you are led to the profound realization of your essential identity with that Supreme Self, God, *Brahman*: “*Aham Brahmasmi*”—“I Am That!”

**W**hen experiencing a movie at the cinema, you are faced with a choice: immerse yourself in the story, allowing the vampire with his terrible teeth to cause you to shiver in your seat; or, you can look beyond the illusion, acknowledging that the actors are just playing a role, the teeth are not real, and the blood is simply ketchup and tomatoes! You come to understand that beyond the agitating projections lies a serene screen that remains unaffected. This realization brings you a sense of relaxation. Similarly, by transcending the ego through wisdom, you cultivate a profound serenity, a mystical peace, and a tranquil silence that remains undisturbed by external events.

Most people believe that unless something happens they are not going to be happy. They are convinced that their real happiness and real security depend on certain happenings. That illusion has continued for countless lives, yet the ideal happening has never arrived—and never will. Such is the nature of the world. The world will never give you any situation that will bring lasting fulfillment. Even the best of situations will come and will go away. Yet, you can choose to be happy despite what is happening in the world.

And so, you learn to change your concepts, to change the angle of your vision. You realize that you do not need to wait for a future happening to make you happy. True happiness is here and now, in the present moment. It lies in transcending the limitations of the ego. Whether the clouds are soft and silvery, or dark and ominous, the sky beyond is always the same. Similarly, no matter what the situation, the real You is always the same—glorious and unaffected. That is Jnana Yoga—the Yoga of Wisdom—the most intense form of *dharma*.

## Integral Yoga—The Victory of Dharma

If your daily life is a harmonious blend of selfless action (Karma Yoga), devotion (Bhakti Yoga), meditation (Dhyana Yoga), and subtle reflection into “Who am I?” (Jnana Yoga), you are practicing the highest form of righteous behavior or *dharma*. There is a Sanskrit saying, “*Yato Dharmah Tato Jayah*”—“Wherever there is *dharma*, there is victory,” implying the triumph of spirit over matter. This victory is attained by revelation, and not by doing anything strange in the world.

Your ultimate destiny is to transcend the apparent limitations imposed by matter: the physical body, senses, mind, ego, as well as everything in the material universe. Your journey towards victory involves uncovering the truth that the ego is not your true Self, and realizing your innate Divinity: you are essentially the eternal and imperishable *Brahman*.

As you journey through the process of self-discovery, you gradually cultivate the highest virtues within your being. These virtues, intricately explained in the Gita and other Vedic texts, include fearlessness, cheerfulness, contentment, humility, magnanimity of heart, compassion, endurance, and patience. They are the embodiment of genuine spiritual progress, reflections of living in alignment with one's righteous path—*dharma*.

**I**f you are managing your ego with spiritual insight and recognizing the Divine within, you are following true religion, regardless of which religion you follow. Your victory lies in understanding that “Wherever there is *dharma*, there is victory.” This victory is your ability to transcend your circumstances and overcome the limitations of your ever-changing physical body. It is realizing that deep within you lies boundless strength, immense power, and clear insight. Keeping this ideal at the forefront of your mind is key to navigating your spiritual journey to its ultimate victory: Self-realization.