

The Need for a Cognitive Change¹

Understanding Īśvara as Order²

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

My understanding of Īśvara (I use this word for the Lord) becomes very intimate when I understand Īśvara as all-knowing, manifesting in the form of this *jagat* (world), in the form of various orders. Just as in my dream, my knowledge is manifest in the form of the dream world, the knowledge of the Lord is manifest in the form of this *jagat*. That is the reason why I can appreciate the world (*jagat*) in terms of self-knowledge.

There is order, and order means predictability. The connection between the means and the ends, action and reaction, are all very definite at the macro level. Everything we see is at the macro level, while particles are at the micro level. This manifestation of Īśvara is understood in the form of physical order. Thus, when I study physics, I am in touch with Īśvara. Every form in this macro and micro world is the knowledge of Īśvara manifesting. The details are endless. I can spend my whole lifetime understanding a flower. In every object there is both knowledge and ignorance. You know, for instance, that this is a flower. What kind of flower? It is a carnation. There is no ignorance. Why does the carnation smell the way it smells? Why does it have so many petals? Why is this carnation different from that carnation? Why does the rose smell differently? Why is it of this color? Every object that you know is also an object that you don't know totally. The ignorance is much greater than the knowledge. The ignorance is immense, *immensa!* And therefore, my appreciation of God is not going to be anywhere near what God is. Still, while I don't have all the details, I have the knowledge in general of Īśvara, as very, very immense.

The Order of *Dharma*

To proceed, I'll reduce the Lord in my understanding to the various forms of order. There is the physical order, the biological order, the physiological order, the psychological order, and an intellectual or cognitive order. And there is another very

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important order, the order of *dharma*. “Good” and “evil” are the creation of a petty mind, but there is “right” and “wrong.” Anything can be right or wrong. While interacting with the world, I can always be right or wrong. A cow, on the other hand, is always right. Even a tiger, which may kill a cow, is right because he doesn’t know anything else. Neither the cow nor the tiger has a choice, but you have a choice. You can kill the tiger, and then take a photograph. This is a most idiotic thing—which a human being *alone* can do. If at all you want to kill a tiger, try to do it with your bare hands. The tiger doesn’t approach you with a gun. So when you come with a gun, it is no match. What is the use of slaying like this? This is like Mike Tyson knocking down an urchin in the street and then taking a photograph. You can understand what the human being can be. This is because he has choices. Therefore, he can be right, he can be wrong. However, “good” and “bad” are judgmental words. “He is a bad person.” How do you know? Are his legs bad? Are his hands bad? His eyes? What do you mean by bad? That person you call “bad” has a wife, a good wife. He also is capable of love. There is no “bad man” — as if every cell is bad. To label him as such is judgmental, and even when I say that you are judgmental, I am judgmental. This is a categorical expression of a person, like calling someone a criminal or a beggar. I don’t use the word ‘beggar’ or ‘criminal’. I say there is a person who is prone to crime, or a person who is begging—because he is a person. There is no beggar. When you call him a beggar, that is a judgment. Understand the difference. This is a very important thing in my understanding of *dharma*.

Dharma, the word, is also used with words like ‘ethics’, ‘morals’, ‘morality’, etc., to make judgments about people. That creates the feeling, “I am holier than thou.” Here we need a change in our cognition that concerns having been given a faculty of choice. I have got to choose, and in choice there is right and wrong. Right and wrong are a manifestation of the same Īśvara, the Lord. The moral order is another manifestation of the Lord. By conforming to the moral order I find myself free from conflicts. What it means to conform to the order is a very difficult thing to understand, because right and wrong are not always black and white. There are areas where one finds oneself in conflict, wondering whether something is right or wrong. For instance, a marriage counselor is faced with this choice. Should he tell the person to break up the marriage or should he strive to make the marriage continue? According to our *dharmaśāstra*, the book dealing with *dharma*, breaking up a marriage is considered to be the worst thing that one can do. It attracts *pāpa*, the result of a wrong action. Now that means all our

marriage counselors must be great recipients of results accrued because of wrong actions, because when you go to a marriage counselor, generally the marriage is already over. It is very difficult for the marriage counselor to decide whether to work to bring the people together, or tell them that it is better for them to separate. Which is right, which is wrong here? Similarly, should I discipline my teenager or should I give him the freedom he wants? If I give him the freedom, he may end up in a cult. And if I chastise him too much, he may rebel and run away from me for good and take to crime. Which is right, which is wrong? Here, right/wrong ought to be replaced by appropriate/inappropriate. I don't see anything right and wrong here. It is a question of something being appropriate or inappropriate, something that may work or may not work, because basically I am interested in the person. Right and wrong are used only when I am interested in destroying the person or elevating the person. When I am interested in the welfare of the other, naturally, any advice can be appropriate or inappropriate. That also is very important.

There are different cultures in the world. Growing up in the Indian culture, my mother would tell me that when I eat I am supposed to eat, I am not supposed to talk. Therefore, they need not instruct me not to talk with food in my mouth—because I am not supposed to talk! Now in the Western culture you talk. It is over the dining table that marriages are made, starting with a pizza parlor. And big contracts are struck at the luncheon table. Therefore, here, talking while eating is a part of the culture. I don't say this is right or wrong. When you are sitting among orthodox Indians in India and they are eating, to sit and talk is inappropriate, and for an Indian to come here and not talk at all while eating is also inappropriate. Anything that disturbs another person is inappropriate be it your action, your word, your demeanor, your dress, or your hair-do. There may be nothing wrong, but it is a question of what is appropriate in a given situation and what is inappropriate. This is an important thing. Whether you accept a person's customs or thinking or not, it is inappropriate to disturb that person.

What is appropriate or inappropriate is connected to what is right and wrong, *dharma adharma*. At a given place and time I find myself in a situation where I have to respond; in this response, I can be right or wrong. And I can also be appropriate or inappropriate. Thus, the appropriate and inappropriate behavior get connected to *dharma* and *adharma*. In life when I take into account what is to be done in a given situation, and how it is to be done, and I do it, I find I am in harmony. With what? With the total, with

Īśvara. When I don't rub against the law, I find myself free from conflict. I am in harmony. And when I do or fail to do certain things, that leads me immediately into a state of guilt, fear, and later remorse. Commission and omission both cause conflicts, both disturb the person. It is easier for me to do exactly what is to be done. And if I don't see very clearly what is to be done in a situation, I can always consult another person who is not in the situation, or at least who is clear, even though he is in the same situation. I talk and then behave. This is possible only when I recognize first the basic relationship between me, the core conscious person, and the Lord, and when I am aware of the various expressions of roles that I play in terms of Īśvara. How?

I am a conscious being, an individual, related to the world, the total. And the total is not separate from the conscious being, Īśvara, the Lord. So, this relationship between me the conscious cognitive person, the small-knowing individual, and the all-knowing Lord, the total, is, I would say, a static relationship. But when I recognize this static relationship, which is already obtaining, already existing, then, it becomes dynamic. The dynamic form manifests when I assume the role of a father or mother etc., and there is something appropriate and right to be done as a mother or father. Then, right and appropriate become the manifestation of the same Īśvara. That is the reason why you feel good when you play the role properly, when you follow the script, and you do it well. Even when others omit part of the script, omit the lines, you make up for the loss and thus keep the drama going. Therefore, your role-playing does not keep you away from being aware of Īśvara, the Lord. In every appropriate expression you see Īśvara. In inappropriate expression there is also Īśvara, but your contribution as an individual is much greater. The small person is very much there, and that in fact is an ignorant person. So, the more you are aware of Īśvara in the form of *dharma*, in the form what of what is proper, improper, appropriate and inappropriate, the more you can see and you can say, "Īśvara *is* in that form." Your awareness makes you always in touch with Īśvara, even while playing roles. You don't have to remember Īśvara. People complain, "Swamiji, when I play the role of a father I am not the same person; I forget everything." How can you forget? You forget because you conceive of God as another object to be contained by a thought. Like a pot is remembered, a pot is forgotten, a person is remembered, a person is forgotten—God is remembered, God is forgotten! Remembering and even forgetting are another form of the Lord. In the Bhagavad Gita the Lord talks about this: *mattaḥ*

smṛtir jñānam apohanaṃ ca, means, “Remembrance is Me and forgetting is Me.” There is nothing outside of the Lord.

Therefore, it is easy. Basically, you have a static relationship with Īśvara. The awareness of this relationship makes you religious. You don’t need to belong to a denominational religion—that is all politics and control. But your awareness of Īśvara makes you basically a religious person in the world. And when you play the role of a father, it is as a devotee father. When you play any role, it is as a devotee: devotee mother, devotee son, devotee daughter, devotee husband, devotee wife. When two people are related through marriage, the devotee husband has a certain script and the devotee wife has a certain script. That script is what is called duty in our *śāstra* (sacred books). Therefore, *dharma* also includes duty. What is the appropriate thing to be done at this time and place, what is the duty of a husband, what is the duty of a wife? In one sentence you can say it is to make the other happy. To make the other happy, both should try—it should not be one sided.

Psychological Order: Managing Anger

Another very important thing here is the appreciation of the Lord in the form of psychological order. If you have anger, there is a reason for it. Generally, the cause for anger is always attributed to another. The other may be the triggering point of anger, but you are already angry. You only need some small thing to trigger it. Like an apple that was so ripe that when a small bird came and sat on it, it fell down. The bird cannot be blamed for bringing the apple down. It was ready to come down and the bird sitting there became the *nimitta*, the efficient cause for the apple to fall.

Anger in the Gita is said to be nothing but another form of your desire. That means your unfulfilled desire as a child, is in the form of frustration and pain, and that pain, *pāpa*, expresses in the form of anger. This anger you should have expressed when you were a child of four, three, two, five, but you could not express it. It couldn’t be expressed because as a helpless child you wanted your father to be the all-knowing father. The rules of the home also did not allow you to express your anger and frustration. These rules and the need for the child to keep the father all-knowing, almighty, infallible caused you to keep your anger in the unconscious for later processing. The child blames itself, yet it also knows it is not to blame. Thus there is tremendous confusion. This pain has to come out and it comes out in the form of anger—especially when you love

somebody, trust somebody. That person becomes the object of your anger towards your mother, towards your father. And therefore, what happens? The other person is surprised, “I did such and such, a small little thing, why are you so angry?” Thus, we need to change the way we handle anger.

In keeping with our understanding here, what is appropriate is Īśvara. When you are in touch with Īśvara, it means you are in harmony. You don't rub. Do you know what rubbing is? It looks as though, as a human being you have the prerogative to rub or not to rub. You can rub. Find an old oak tree, any tree and rub the bark. What you have to do is remove your T-shirt and with a bare back you are free to rub against this tree. Rub ten times, and then look at the tree. Nothing has happened. The tree seems to be okay, but how are you? For ten days you can't wear any shirt! Why? You rubbed the tree and you got rubbed, not by the tree – by the law. But here, when you rub against a human being, what happens? Not only are you rubbed by the law, but also by the human being.

Your anger is legitimate, because it is there. I cannot say, “Don't be angry!” – because you can't oblige me. You didn't choose to be angry; you cannot choose to be angry. If I request you to clap, the freedom is there in your hands. Suppose I have one more request, “Be angry for half a minute.” Are these Argentinean angels I am talking to? Or have angels descended from heaven to Argentina? – no anger! No. I can't choose to be angry. I will get angry, and I don't know when. In fact, slowly the people who live with you, children, spouse, and employees, all come to know what is your vulnerable area, what will make you angry. Generally, they try to avoid touching that area. Mother tells the children, teaches the children, educates the children, “Dad will get angry!” Father tells the children, “Mom will get angry!” Therefore, there is no home. It is a place where everybody is walking on eggshells in order to avoid the wrath of the other. There is no honest relationship; this is what is called a dysfunctional home. It is a Godless home, I would say, because what is inappropriate is what is expressed. In inappropriate expression, you are there, Īśvara is missing. And Īśvara is missing there because I don't recognize that the appropriate expression is Īśvara.

Your anger there is valid, but your expression of anger can be inappropriate or appropriate. If somebody is going to be a victim of your anger, then that is an inappropriate expression. No father, no mother, no husband, no wife has got the right to make anybody a victim of his or her anger, because this is inappropriate. Therefore, I am

giving you a cognitive change. We have seen with reference to our understanding of what is right, what is wrong, what is Īśvara, what is role playing, what is the basic. Now, here is a plan for making a home, in other words, for making my daily life, not only at home, elsewhere too.

Anger is there, so I accept it. I can't say, "Don't be angry!" We say this all the time, and it's an unfortunate thing. When somebody is angry we say, "Don't be angry." Or when somebody is sad, "Don't be sad." But nobody chooses to be sad. When you say, "Don't be sad," relating to you makes somebody more sad. When this anger has come, over which you have no choice, there are always two persons involved. When it happens, you can tell the other person, "I am angry now, I'll talk to you later." Then, there is no inappropriate expression; there is appropriate Īśvara. This is what you need to be aware of. Then, you are a devotee and it becomes easy. There is a script and you can play the role properly, because the pressure is not big. The pressure is there, but it is not big because there is that small little flame of devotee. Here, the cognitive change gives you the freedom, the space to say, "I am angry now; I'll talk to you later." Not only that, you can empower the other, also, by saying, "Whenever I am angry, please point that out to me so that we can talk later." Generally, what happens when you are angry and begin expressing your anger is that the other person also gets locked into that. Both forget in the heat of this anger that they can empower one another by simply saying, "I am angry now; I'll talk to you later." If you have children at home, empower them by giving them the freedom to say that to you. "Hey, whenever we are angry, please tell us. When you are angry we will also tell you." And thus, it becomes a whole home. So, telling each other, "You are angry, we will discuss this later," is the greatest heritage you can give to your children, because then you also grow in the estimation and adoration of your children. You'll be initiating a new tradition of living.

Now, another thing you must know here. This anger, which you didn't express because you came to understand that inappropriate expression is not right, has to be taken care of. If it is not processed, not properly expressed, in time you will find smoke coming out of your ears. Therefore, you have to process it; write the anger out. If you are particularly angry with the person, then address a letter to the person. Write in a language that you are very comfortable with. The most suitable language is the one in which you know all the swear words. Write that letter out, then destroy it. If the anger still doesn't go, beat the bathroom floor with a wet towel or go to a park and scream your head off.

This is called appropriate expression of anger. Nobody is victimized. Your anger is gone. Anger is valid. Your hatred is valid, your jealousy is valid, everything is valid because it is there. I don't need to find the cause; it is enough that I know there is a cause. Every cause leads to another cause, because it is in the unconscious. Give yourself the space to process it.

Now, this psychological order, because of which one finds one has anger, anxiety etc., and applies to every human mind, this human psychology is the manifestation of Īśvara. If I am aware of this, I am within the psychological order of Īśvara. I am pervaded by the psychological order of Īśvara. I am pervaded by the cognitive order, the moral order, and the karma order also, which I didn't talk about. Then, there is a physiological order, a biological order, and a physical order. If I am pervaded in this manner, I am in order or I am in disorder. Please understand, if I have a stomach disorder, is it within the physiological order or outside the physiological order? It is within the physiological order. The disorder can be brought to order. Therefore, this order/disorder is within the Order! Similarly, with this psychological order because of which alone I am what I am, it is the same. Therefore, can you say that you are not in order? After this cognitive change, you cannot say that. I am in Order, but that is a basic change that gives you space to even correct your anger by the method I pointed out.

Managing Shame and Fear

Everybody has shame. And you can never get out of shame without laughing about it, talking about it. If you did a foolish thing and then are always afraid of others pointing out that you are foolish, if you say, "I was so foolish, I did this," then, they will say, "Oh, you are better than me, I did this." You will find that you have got a lot of company.

Welcome the fear, welcome grief. Whenever you have fear, generally you have fear that you have fear. Then, we have fear that we have fear of fear, then every cell becomes fear. How will you manage? What is the order here? What is the psychological Order? The Order is to welcome fear. You only welcome the fear. Suppose somebody has fear of death. You are not welcoming death, "Oh, death please come." That is not necessary. You only welcome the fear, "Oh fear of death, please come I welcome you." I welcome the fear of loss of name, the fear of loss of power, the fear of loss of money, the fear of the loss of relationship—it is the fear I am talking about, not the relationship, but

the fear of loss. Then, you are objective; you welcome the fear. Do you know how you do that? By saying, “I am not afraid of the fear of—whatever. I welcome fear; I welcome anxiety.” When you welcome anxiety, anxiety goes. When you welcome depression, where is depression? Do you know why? You have Īśvara in the form of psychological order. You are never away from the Lord at any time. You are totally validated.

A therapist is supposed to validate you. He validates your fear, your anger, your depression etc. He validates by putting the blame with mother, father etc. But then, you have to validate the therapist. Already you have a problem in trusting. You can't trust because you are too hurt to trust anyone. You trusted this person and he takes money from you every day, yet he says he cares for you. Every time you sit with him, you have to pay him, so that in itself completely invalidates your trust. And then, he has also married twice. Generally, all therapists are minimum twice married. Exceptions are there, I salute them. They are exceptional. And naturally, how much trust I can have. So, the therapist's validation of me depends entirely upon my validation of the therapist. He is fallible! He is not infallible!

I need an infallible therapist, who *will* validate me and whose validation is infallible, is totally, absolutely acceptable for me. I have an infallible one, because God is not infallible, the infallible is God. Generally, we always say God is infallible and we pray to him, then nothing happens. We conclude, therefore, that God is fallible. That is why we need a cognitive change.

No, God is not infallible, the infallible is God! Because he is in the form of Order and the Order is infallible. Therefore, the one who is in the form of this *Maha* Order, Total Order, is infallible. The Order is infallible and the Order is the Lord. Therefore, I am always validated; every whiff of emotion in me is valid. My own awareness of Īśvara, the Lord, gives me a super therapist and he is always available on my own couch. And he validates me every moment to moment. Then, I am in order. I am totally acceptable to Īśvara because I cannot surprise him. By my emotion, by my behavior, by my anything, by my limitation, I am not going to surprise Īśvara. That makes him all knowing, knowledge-wise infallible.

And so, in this cognitive change you have to say, “I am in order.”