

7. Cults and culture

SATHYA and *Dharma* are the two cardinal principles of *Sanaathana Dharma* (ancient but eternal spiritual code). They are the goals of all faiths, the teaching of all saints, the core of the achievements of all sages, the under-current in all scriptures. They spring out of the *Aathmathathwa* (essential nature of the Self), which is the lesson taught in the Geetha. The Geetha is the essence of the *Upanishads*, the *Vedhaantha* (the concluding essence of *Vedas*). On the day when you are celebrating the anniversary of the Inauguration of *Dharma-kshethra*, it is necessary to remind yourselves of this. The *Vedhaantha* declares, '*Ihsaavaasyamidham sarvam*' (All this is enveloped by God), and so, how can man hate or deceive another? The rules and disciplines laid down in all religious systems have as their aim the application in daily life of this great Truth, the Immanence of God.

Sathya and Dharma (Truth and Righteousness) are the two eyes of every religion that has emanated from the primal *Sanaathana Dharma*: of Buddhism, Christianity,

and Islam. They are further elaborated and exemplified in the epics and *Puraanas* of India. Raama entered the forests and suffered poignant agony for the sake of upholding Sathya. The Paandavas exiled themselves from their Capital and swallowed, unmoved, excruciating insults, in order that the cause of Truth may prevail. Harischandra reached the nadir of grief and humiliation, but never gave up his hold on Truth! These are the models held before the men and women of this land for millennia, through song, drama, sculpture, painting, poetry and philosophy. They are beacons beckoning the people of all lands to a higher, nobler and more beneficial destiny. Nevertheless, today the children of Bharath are enticed by tiny titillating achievements, in the material sphere, won by western scientists and technicians, such as travelling in outer space or flying to the moon!

Might must ever bow to Right at all times

Consider the five Paandava brothers, immortalised in the *Mahaabhaaratha* epic by Vyaasa. The eldest is Dharmaraaja, born of *Dharma*! The second is Bheema, of the Mighty Mace. The third is Arjuna, the foremost Bowman of the age. But yet, both Bheema and Arjuna yielded ever to the slightest nod of Dharmaraaja, for, Might must ever bow to Right. Transferring the story to modern times, we find that contemporary America is the Arjuna, Russia is Bheema; and both have to bow before Bharath, the Dharmaraaja, who upholds the cause of Right against Might, military, economic or other. What a great tragedy is it, then, that we who have to guide the world in the path of *Dharma* are ourselves losing faith in that path and straying into the riotous road of Power or Might!

The *Mahaabhaaratha* teaches other lessons as well. Let us turn to the opponents of Dharmaraaja, Arjuna, Bheema and others. The uncle, who is leading the cousins and their wicked brood against the Paandavas, is Dhritharaashtra, the blind ruler. He has no 'Vision.' Yes; the vision that only righteousness can confer! He was blind, that is to say, he had *no Jnaana*, the recognition of man's incompetence and God's Omnipotence. The Paandavas made up for their inferior military strength by faith in God's Omnipotence and their own impotence! And, so, God Himself led them into the field and won for them victory from the jaws of defeat!

Karma illumined by *Jnaana* brings about success. *Jnaana* alone---the discovery that God is all---that alone can win the Grace of God; self-effacement is the first criterion of the *saadhana* that can save man from bondage. Dhritharaashtra was blind, because, as that name itself implies, he

held on to the *raashtra*, held on to all things that were not 'he!', the real 'He,' that passes from birth to death, and again gets born only to die, unscathed. Everything that is not 'you' is an object; it is luggage for the journey; the less of it, the more comfortable the journey!

Dharmakshethra and Kurukshethra are within everyone

Dharmakshethra and Kurukshethra are not to be looked for near Delhi or Hasthinaapur, on the map or on the ground. Nor are the Paandavas and Kauravas merely princely clans figuring in the tale. The human body is named *kshethra*, and so *Dharmakshethra*, is in every one. When the owner of the body discards all desires, all passions, all impulses and all propulsions, then the body becomes *Dharma-kshethra!* A child has in its heart only *Dharmakshethra*, for, it has not yet developed sensual desires. It accepts whatever is offered. Its ego is not yet ramified into the objective world of multiplicity. But, later, when it grows branches and foliage, the *Dharmakshethra* takes the shape of *Kurukshethra!*---the battlefield where the mind struggles between hope and despair, and is compelled to consume the diverse fruits, sweet and bitter, of one's acts.

The Aathma is described as a *Vidhyullekha* (a streak of lightning), of the splendour of a crore of suns! The word Geetha also means 'Lightning' and so, that *Vidhyullekha* is the Krishna in us, that is to say, the Geetha in us, the *Aathma* that is counselling us and correcting us, as the God within.

Do not throw overboard the *Bhaaratheeya* culture

Dharmakshethra, it was mentioned, is being developed as an International Centre for saadhakas and inquirers, eager to learn the *Sanaathana* (ancient) way of life. India has no dearth of temples and institutions claiming to guide the pilgrims to God. In a *Granthaalaya* (Library), only people interested in books will gather; the *Bhojanaalaya* (Boarding House) is frequented only by those who want a meal; the *Vaidhyaalaya* (Hospital) is resorted to only by the sick; but in the *Devaalaya* (Temple of God), we do not find today either devotees or God! This is the only House where the legitimate owner is absent! Temples were the centres for the spread of *Bhaaratheeya* Indian culture, and, when the attraction for western culture became strong, they were deserted, and left open to the ravages of time.

Everything is being judged with the American eye; American ears do the hearing for us! The American heart feels and fears, fancies and fashions our reactions to events and things. Of course, it is useful to learn from others. But you should not throw overboard the culture that has grown through the aeons on this soil, and fostered by the love of your ancestors, for your benefit.

How can the culture of America or that of any other country be congenial to Indians? Now the time is 7.80, evening. If you phone your friend in the States and tell him, 'I am off to a film show now,' he will reply, "It is 7.30, here too. I am off for my breakfast !" When it is morning here, it is evening there; when the sun sets here, he rises there. Time, climate, vegetation, temperament, ideals, the nuances of languages, folk ways, all take on a strange colour in a country that has had a different history. So, indiscriminate imitation will result in the loss of the peace that follows fulfilment. *Bhaaratheeyas* can get peace best through the folkways that have been prescribed by the folkmind of this land, as a result of centuries of observation, experience, trial and error.

Develop brotherly feelings for all

Bhaaratheeya culture has emphasised the valid ways in which one has to spend energy and money for service of the distressed, the diseased, the hungry, the illiterate, the ill-housed, the ill-clothed. It condemns the spending of energy and money for pomp, for vengeance, for

competitive faction, for material triumphs. Wealth is to be held on trust and used for promoting the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. This culture also lays down that nothing should be done to damage any one's faith in God or in his own self. Faith is a tender plant and it needs all the nurture that you can give.

My desire is that you should not censure other religions. Develop brotherly feelings for all. God is One; there are not many Gods, one for each tribe among men! Love is One; it transcends caste, colour and creed, if it has to be genuine. Truth is One; there cannot be two. For, two can only be One, occurring twice. The Goal is One; for, all roads must lead to the One God. Why then should men quarrel and fight over the Eternal and the Absolute?

Dharmakshethra has a great part to play. It is in Bombay, which is the stomach of Bhaarath. The Himaalayas are the Head and the Kanyaakumari is the feet. When the stomach is inefficient, the entire body suffers the consequences. So, keep the *Dharmakshethra* efficient and strong. Do not allow it to degenerate into a *Kurukshethra*; let not friction and faction raise their heads here. Let the high ideals of *Dharma* (righteousness) be upheld here. This is the real *seva* (service) I expect from you and through you. If this is done, our land will have peace and security.

Dharmakshethra, Bombay, 12-5-1969

Attachment causes pain and detachment results in joy. But, you cannot easily detach yourself from activity; the mind clings to something or other. Make it cling to God, let it do all things for God and leave the success or failure of the thing done to God, the loss and the profit, the elation or the dejection. Then, you have the secret of Shaanthy and contentment.

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