

## 7. Strive for World Peace and Prosperity

THE dualistic attitude of man was born out of a sense of separateness which was not correct. Man should realise his inherent divinity and get rid of identification of his real Self with the body. The body is only an instrument for realising the Self. No great scholarship is needed for achieving this realisation. The attitude of surrender to the Divine and dedicating all thoughts, words and actions as an offering to the Divine will lead to Self realisation. The bliss one will experience in that state is beyond description in words.

Today marks the beginning of the year *Akshaya* (according to the Hindu Almanac). *Akshaya* is a combination of "*Kshaya*" and "*A*." "*A*" represents *the Atmaswarupa--the Absolute, the Eternal*. "*Kshaya*" represents *the Jivaswarupa--the individual entity that is liable to change*. *Akshaya* indicates the union of the unchanging Eternal Spirit and the impermanent individual entity. Because of the association of the human entity with the indestructible and eternal principle, you have to investigate what is permanent and unchanging and what is transient and liable to decay.

The march of time is inevitably associated with ups and downs, joys and sorrows, gains and losses. This is inherent in the nature of the world, which is called *Jagat--That* in which birth and death take place. ("Ja" means birth and "ga" means passing).

### Very few practise what they preach

According to Indian astrology, today marks the beginning of a new year, with the first day of the first month *Chaitra*. It is a Thursday. For every year, there is a ruling deity and there is a minister to the ruler from among the nine planets. For this *Akshaya*, the ruler is *Brihaspati* (Jupiter) and the minister is *Chandra* (the Moon). Both these planets are favourably placed and will have beneficent influences on the world, according to astrology. Because of the moon's favourable aspect--the moon being the presiding deity for the mind--the mental dispositions of people in general are likely to be calm and peaceful. It is essential, in this connection, to recognise the intimate link between thoughts and actions. All the world's troubles today are due to the fact that there is no harmony between men's thoughts and words and their deeds. There is no dearth today of persons who preach *Dharma* (righteousness). There is no limit to propagandists, but those who practise what they preach are few and far between. The world needs today more people who will practise the good life and strive for the welfare of mankind. Rather than preach a hundred precepts, it is better to practise a few of them.

### Significance of rituals

In many of the religious practices today, there is concern only for observing the external forms, with little regard for the inner significance of these rites. For instance, one wishes to offer a coconut to the idol in a temple. No care is taken to see whether the coconut is a good one or not. The mere breaking of a coconut, even if it is a rotten one, is considered enough for fulfilling the offering. Note the inner significance of the ritual. The coconut is a symbol of the heart. Before it is offered to God, all the outer fibre has to be removed. This means, spiritually, removing the *Tamasic* (evil) tendencies from our heart. The shell of the coconut symbolises the *Rajo guna* in us. The white kernel inside the coconut represents the *Satwa guna*. What we have to offer to God is a pure heart, without the *Tamasic* and *Rajasic* qualities such as anger, hatred and attachment. It is this purity of heart that must be manifested in making any offering to God and not the mechanical breaking of a coconut as a meaningless ritual.

Some persons imagine that they will derive spiritual benefit merely by going to a sacred shrine and spending sometime there. When you are in a temple, your thoughts should be centered on God. When you are inside a temple, you must install God within you. That is true worship. If you merely sit in a temple, while your mind is wandering in the bazaar, there is no merit in it.

There are persons who recite *mantras* regularly, repeating the words correctly. But such recitation is of no use if there is not some understanding of the meaning of the *mantras*. Meaningless chanting of *mantras*, visiting temples without thoughts of God and breaking coconuts before idols without purity of the heart are spiritually useless. In every small act of worship, one must have regard for its inner significance and sacredness and do it with earnestness and purity.

### **Do not allow faith in God to weaken**

Whatever troubles you may face, whatever ordeals you may encounter, you should not allow your faith in God to weaken to the slightest extent. You must learn a lesson from the *Chakora* bird. There may be terrible thunder and blinding lightning in the sky. But the *Chakora* bird will follow the cloud to catch the raindrops in the sky and will not go to any other source for water. Nothing less than the pure raindrops from the cloud will satisfy the *Chakora*. Likewise, you should yearn always for the bliss of nearness to God, whatever difficulties or joys you may experience in life.

Moreover, in the quest for mental peace, you should not be concerned only about your individual need. Apart from such a quest being an index of intense selfishness, it is also a futile one. Is it possible for a single individual alone to achieve peace? If there is chaos and unrest all around you, how can you alone have peace? If there is no peace in the home or in the community, how can you have peace? Your peace is dependent on peace in the family, in society and in the world. When there is peace in these, you will get peace.

You cannot be indifferent to the state of the environment in which you live. One who wishes to dig a well for pure water will choose a spot far from polluted or saline areas. If you want to achieve peace, you have to see that the atmosphere around you is conducive to peace. This means that you have to cultivate the feeling that your individual peace is intimately related to the peace of the world. It was out of a realisation of this profound truth that the ancients prescribed the universal prayer: "*Lokaas-Samasthaas-Sukhino Bhavanthu*" (May all the people in all the worlds be happy).

### **Faith and love are necessary for godly life**

It is only when we strive for world peace can we ensure our own individual peace. The mark of a genuinely godly person is that he strives not only for his peace, happiness and bliss, but also for the peace, prosperity and happiness of the world as a whole.

Faith and Love are the two primary requisites for leading a godly life. These two are as important for man as the two wings for a bird or the two wheels for a chariot.

You must take a pledge on this Yugadi day to face with equanimity all the vicissitudes of life, the joys and sorrows that are incidental to human existence. Traditionally, on Yugadi day people consume a preparation made up of ingredients with various tastes---sweet, sour, bitter, etc. The inner meaning of this 'practise is that one must be prepared for every kind of experience in life. Whether happiness or sorrow, praise or blame, gain or loss--whatever comes along--you must resolve to face it with serenity and faith. Our ancients placed this ideal before the nation out of

their experience and realisation. Today no heed is being given to their teachings. The traditions and teachings that have come down to us are full of significance and have perennial validity. It is only when we practise these truths that we will realise their inner purpose and enduring value.

### **Good prospects for *Akshaya***

*The Akshaya* year will be altogether a fairly good year with no serious untoward developments. However, the first two months---from mid-April to mid-June---are likely to witness some serious troubles. The heat will be excessive and some fire disasters may occur in May-June (*Vaisakha* month). Serious accidents during travel are likely. From the third month onwards (that is, after mid-June) conditions will be favourable for peace and prosperity. Astrologically, important changes all over the world are expected during the year. But all these will be for the good. Not India alone, but all countries will benefit from these changes.

In this context, it is the foremost duty of everyone to pray for the peace, welfare and happiness of all people in every country. Everyone should take note that during this year, however soft and careful one may be in speech or action, there is likelihood of differences and divisions developing between persons and groups. Even friends are likely to fall out. Every care has to be taken to observe restraint in speech.

Compared to the past two *years--Rakthaakshi* and *Krodhana* - the new year *Akshaya* promises to be a good year. Some hangover from *Krodhana* may continue *M Akshaya* for a short spell. Hence in the first two months people have to conduct themselves with caution. After that, *Akshaya* will be *Akshaya*. (The year *Akshaya* will see no deterioration or decline.)

### **Promote the welfare of the world as a whole**

Promote the welfare of the world as a whole Strengthen the "*Akshaya*" in you--the imperishable Supreme--and there will be no need to worry about any year or month. Fill your mind and heart with the spirit of *Akshaya* and sanctify your lives by having pure thoughts and doing pure actions. This is my benediction for you all on this sacred *Yugadi* day. Everyone must strive to promote the peace and welfare of the world. You must broaden your outlook, shedding the narrow concern about your own well-being, and developing the eagerness to promote the welfare of the world as a whole. You must recognise the basic truth that your individual well-being is bound up with the well-being of all people. On every available occasion recite the sacred name of the Lord.

*Yugadi Day discourse at the Mandir in Prashaanthi Nilayam, on 10-4-1986.*