

## 1. The Crowning Virtue

*The man that is bereft of Dharma,  
Of Compassion and Truth,  
And hath no virtues in him,  
But is replete with vices,  
Cannot find happiness here  
Or in the Hereafter.*

Embodiments of Divine Love! The term *Dharma* is derived from the root *Dhr*. *Dhaarani* means that which binds the universe in unison through *Dharma* (righteousness). "*Dharmo Viswasya Jagathah Pratishtaa*" (It is righteousness which upholds the universe). "*Dharme Sarvam Pratishtitham*" (Everything abides in righteousness). The presence of this *Dharma* cannot be established by sense of perception or through inferential deduction. It transcends the canons of logic. Its existence has to be derived from the *Vedas* (the authority of revealed scriptural testimony).

What is *Veda*? "*Vetthyanena iti Vedah*" (*Veda* is that which enlightens or expounds fully a subject or matter). For instance, *Dhanur Veda* expounds the science of archery. *Natya Veda* is the treatise on Dance. *Sama Veda* is the science of spiritual music. *Ayur Veda* is the science of life and medicine. The prefix figuring before the term *Veda* indicates the type of science that is dealt with in that particular *Veda*.

### **Actions to be performed in daily life**

*Dharma* (Righteousness) and *Moksha* (Liberation) are transcendental---beyond the intellect and sense perceptions. How can the *Vedas* throw light on *Dharma* and *Moksha*, which are beyond the reach of the senses? They can do so only by indicating the *yajnas* and *yagas* (sacrificial rites and rituals) that constitute the spiritual exercises leading to *Dharma* and *Moksha*. Even the *Vedas* are not competent to provide direct access to *Dharma* and *Moksha*. That is why the *Vedas* have declared: "*Naa Karmanaa, Na Prajayaa Dhanena Thyaagenaike Amrutatvamaanasuh*" (Not by meritorious deeds, progeny or wealth can immortality be attained. It can be experienced only through renunciation). But the *Vedas* show that through good deeds and practices, one can acquire the competence to realise *Dharma* and *Moksha*.

The Emperor Manu coined a special term to describe the significance of the *Vedas* as the scriptures prescribing the spiritual and worldly actions to be performed by men. He gave the name *Vidhana* to all the actions to be performed in daily life to direct mankind in the path of truth. At the present day, in the *Kali Yuga*, the term *Vidhana* has been associated with legislative bodies. *Vidhana* means that which lays down the law. Because the proper significance of the term has not been understood, mankind has gone astray.

*Dharma* is a term which is all embracing. The whole universe is bound by it. What is the need, it may be asked, for propagating *Dharma* when it encompasses everything. The reason is that, though *Dharma* is present everywhere, it is covered by ignorance and pride, like fire that is covered by ashes or water by moss. These coveting elements have to be removed so that the true

nature of *Dharma* may be revealed to the world. *Dharma Prachar* (the propagation of *Dharma*) is needed only for this purpose.

### ***Dharma Prachar* and practice**

Propagation of *Dharma* does not mean spreading knowledge about something that is not known. Its basic purpose is to promote the practice of *Dharma*. Only those who practice *Dharma* are qualified to propagate it. It is because *Dharma* and *Sathya* have not been propagated by persons practising them that they have been eclipsed, as it were, and are not perceivable. It is only when they are practised in daily life that their true nature and value will be realised.

A man is judged by the nature of his actions. If his actions are good, he is described as a good man. If his actions are bad, he is described as a wicked person. One's qualities and actions are interdependent. Actions reveal qualities and qualities determine actions. Hence, everyone should strive to reform himself by developing good qualities. Swami Ramakrishnananda (who has spoken earlier) asked what good has been derived by persons who had been listening to spiritual discourses for years and who had been living in the *ashram* for a long time. Unless an effort is made to put into practice at least a few of the teachings, all these exercises are futile.

Qualities like *kshama* (forbearance), *dhaya* (compassion), truth, love and sympathy are not associated with any particular nation, faith or community. They are spiritual qualities and are essential for people anywhere, at all times.

### **Four types of purity**

Among the qualities a man has to develop if he is to realise his divinity, the foremost is *Kshama--forbearance* or forgiveness. It is essential for every human being. It is supreme among virtues. *Kshama* is Truth, Righteousness, Sympathy, Non-violence and all else. *Kshama* comprehends every quality.

How is *Kshama* to be acquired? It is acquired by practising four kinds of purity:

1. *Dravya Soucham* (purity of materials); 2. *Maanasika Soucham* (purity of mind); 3. *Vaak Soucham* (purity in speech); 4. *Kriya Soucham* (purity in action or purity of body).

*Dravya Soucham* (Purity of materials): This covers all things used by a person--from clothes, food and cooking utensils to houses--and all the varied things used by a person. Everything that is in daily use should be completely pure.

*Maanasika Soucham* (Purity of the mind): This calls for total elimination of attachments and aversions from the mind. Hatred and envy should have no place. One should cultivate the large-heartedness to return good for evil and not to cause pain to anyone in any circumstance. This is a mark of a pure mind. Today people are filled with hatred and envy. They cannot bear to see others happy or prosperous. This is a sign of a polluted mind. Men with evil minds develop demonic traits. To be truly human, one has to have a pure, unsullied mind. He has to recognise that the same divinity is present in everyone. He should realise that the pure spirit that dwells in him and the power that animates him are present equally in every human being. One who is conscious of this unity will have an untrammelled mind.

### **A vile tongue fouls the mind**

*Vaak Soucham* (Purity of speech): This means that one must speak the truth. He must be sweet and pleasant in speech and avoid using harsh words. Excessive talking should be avoided. Purity

in speech implies avoidance of falsehood, garrulousness, abusive language, slanderous gossip and speech which causes pain to others. Today there is very little purity of speech. Bad thoughts and bad words are the order of the day. A vile tongue fouls the mind and dehumanises man.

*Sareera Soucham* (Purity of the body): The body has to be purified by performing *Aachamana* with water (this ritual involves uttering the names of the Lord thrice and drinking three spoonfuls of water from the palm).

When these four kinds of purity are practised, the quality of *Kshama* develops to some extent.

### **Have no enemies**

Once when the Pandavas were living in exile in the forest, Bhima and Draupadi approached Dharmaraja (the eldest of the Pandavas) and asked him what plans he had for dealing with the enemies, the Kauravas. Smilingly, Dharmaraja replied to them to pacify their feelings, "We have no enemies. Our own qualities are either our friends or foes. Our actions can be our enemies. We should try to conquer these enemies in the form of bad thoughts and bad deeds. Our bad feelings get themselves reflected in others and make them appear as evil-minded. Realise, Oh Bhima, we have no enemies. The Kauravas, whom you regard as our enemies, are not so. If we fill our hearts with good feelings, the Kauravas will be our friends and brothers."

To give another illustration from the *Mahabharata*: Once Vidura went to Dhritrashtra, the father of the Kauravas, and said to him: "Dhritrashtra! You are not only physically blind, but you are lacking the eyes of wisdom. You accepted the five Pandava brothers as the children of Pandu on the authentic testimony of *Maharishis* (great sages). Many did not know that they were children of Pandu. Moreover, the great Bhishma, who has the gift of the divine sight, also testified to this fact. You accepted Pandu's children and kept them with you. But your sons did not favour the affection and consideration bestowed on them. Your evil-minded sons subjected the Pandavas to all kinds of ordeals and hardships. Out of your misplaced love for your sons, you have allowed these wrongs to be perpetrated. If an individual takes poison, he alone dies. If an arrow hits a person, he alone is injured. But when a ruler pursues an unrighteous policy, the entire state is ruined. The people as well as their ruler perish. By succumbing to bad counsel and evil ways, you are leading your kingdom and your dynasty to disaster. This is not proper."

Vidura warned the king to recognise the truth. He did not mince words in his accusation of Dhritrashtra. He said: "Those who are born blind or deaf and dumb, those who are insane and those of unsteady mind have no right to rule. When any such person is a ruler, he causes universal ruin. You are a great sinner and because you have been enthroned, you are destroying the kingdom with your own hands."

### ***Sathya* and *Dharma* are the bases of life**

"Dharmaraja is endowed with the supreme virtue of *Kshama* (forbearance). You are mistaking his forbearance for cowardice. Forbearance is like a crown on his head. Very soon the Pandavas forbearance will bring about your complete ruin." It was this forbearance which brought ultimate victory to the Pandavas and conferred lasting glory and fame on them. This forbearance is based on the four kinds of *soucham* (purity). Purity has its roots in Righteousness, which in its turn, sustains Truth. Man should adhere to Truth and Righteousness as the bases of life in the world.

*Dharma* is not the word to be bandied about. Repeating oft-quoted aphorisms like "*Dhaarayatheethi Dharmah*" (*Dharma* is that which sustains) and "*Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah*"

(*Dharma* protects its protector) are easy enough. But what is needed is practice of *Dharma*. Right conduct alone constitutes *Dharma*. The man who leads a righteous life is bound to find peace.

When you go into towns and villages for propagating *Dharma*, you have to tell the people: "Do not cause harm to anyone. Do not abuse anybody. Perform your duties with devotion. Make your heart pure."

Realisation of the Divine is the goal. But most of our actions are related to worldly concerns. The only way to sanctify all actions is to do them as acts of worship, as an offering to the Divine. Thereby life itself becomes sacred.

You must shed the feeling of "mine" and "thine." You have to realise the Truth that "the Divine dwells in every human being" (*Eko vaasi Sarva bhootha antharaatma*). You must develop this sense of oneness and share it with others.

### **Who are *sadhus*?**

The distinction made between householders and *sanyasis* is not of real significance. The wearing of the ochre robe alone will not make a man a devotee of God. By the mere mouthing of *mantras*, one's sins will not be washed away. Carrying the *Gita* and shouting slogans will not make one meritorious. Only the man whose thoughts and deeds are in harmony can be called a *Sadhu* (a saintly person). Who are *Sadhus*? Not merely those who don the ochre robe. All are *sadhus*. All beings have *sadhutva* (goodness and purity) inherent in them. They have to foster and manifest these qualities and not the external vesture. It is the purity of one's thoughts which reveal his *sadhutva*.

There is no need to put on the orange robe to become a *sadhu*. The heart must be pure. Ravana put on a guise of an ascetic to kidnap Sita. His garb only concealed his evil intent. It is the evil qualities that have to be given up. Even if the process is begun in a small way, it will result in great good. The start must be made when one is young.

### **God helps if we pray with a pure heart**

A mother and son were living in poor circumstances. The father died when the son was born. With great difficulty the mother put the son to school and made him reach the final year. Then he had to pay Rs.90 as examination fees. The mother was at a loss how to find so much money. She was shedding tears under a tree, when the son importuned her to reveal the cause of her sadness. When she said that the boy would have to give up further studies as she did not have the money for paying the examination fees, the son asked in his childish innocence, whether there was anybody who could help them. He would repay the amount later. The mother said: "God alone is the helper for the helpless. He is the source of all wealth and He is the universal provider."

In his innocence, the boy asked his mother: "Where is that God? By some means or the other I shall get the money from Him." The mother said: "He is in Vaikunta." The boy implicitly believed in his mother's words. He ran to the post office, wrote a letter, bought an envelope, enclosed the letter in it and addressed it to "Sriman Narayana, Vaikunta." He was trying to post the letter in a post box which was fixed a little too high for him.

The postmaster, watching his plight, came to his help and asked him: "To whom are you sending this letter?" The boy replied "Sir, this is a very urgent letter. I need money by tomorrow to pay my fees. Please see that this letter is dispatched quick." The postmaster took the letter from the

boy and found that it was addressed to "Sriman Narayana, Vaikunta." He asked the boy who had given him that address. He related his entire story and what his mother had told him about Sriman Narayana as the refuge of the poor and the forlorn.

The postmaster was moved to tears by the boy's story. He wondered at the innocence and pure heartedness of the boy and told him: "Dear Child! I shall post the letter. You come here tomorrow morning. The money will be received by then and you can take it." The boy was happy beyond words and conveyed the news to his mother. The next morning he went to the postmaster and asked him whether the money had come. The postmaster went in, brought Rs. 90 and gave it to the boy. He ran with the money to his mother. The mother wondered how he had got the money, whether he had stolen it or got it from someone. She asked him how he had got the money. He related what had all happened. He swore that the money had been sent by Narayana Himself. The mother then asked him to take her to the postmaster. The postmaster told her: "As soon as I saw your son's letter, God induced me to come to your son's help. The money has come from Him. I am only an instrument in His hands."

### **Pray with childlike innocence**

The moral of the story is that if we pray to God with a pure heart, God will make use of someone to respond to our prayer. It is silly to raise such questions as: Where is God? How will he help? By raising such questions only our faith is weakened. That is the reason why Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa said: "If you want to pray to God, be like an innocent child." Jesus also said the same thing when he told his disciples: "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." He also used to say: "Even if I am like a child for even a brief moment of the day, how pure can I become?"

It is such innocence and purity that we have to possess in our hearts. Children must listen to the words of their mothers. Mothers should avoid putting wrong ideas in the children. When there are such exemplary mothers and children, the world will be full of joy and festivities. When Bharath has such mothers and children, it will be an example to the world.

There is no use in preaching to others, if your own thoughts and conduct have not changed. Engage yourselves in *sadhanas* to cleanse your heart and mind and to fill them with pure thoughts and feelings.

### ***Sadhus* on the move**

The burden of spreading the *Dharmic* message has been shouldered by Swami Bhoomananda, who has been going round the villages despite his age. Though he is a *sanyasi*, he has dedicated himself to the propagation of *Dharma* and is constantly on the move carrying the message to the people. Other *sadhus* are also co-operating with him in this sacred mission. Swamis Sachidananda, Ramakrishnananda and others are carrying on this work with enthusiasm. They are all pure-hearted. I bless them all and want them to continue this work they have taken with redoubled vigour and redeem their lives.

Whatever they do should be regarded as service to the Divine. They should consider themselves as Divine instruments. This alone is real service to society. Doing *japa* and *dhyana* for individual salvation is one form of selfishness. You must develop largeness of heart and strive to take others with you to the supreme goal of liberation. Giving up the narrow outlook, you should have love for all. It is high time the old attitudes of hatred and envy are given up.

There are here people today from overseas countries who have travelled thousands of miles to obtain peace and serenity before they return. It is a pity that those who have been here for years have not tried to cultivate these qualities and are immersed in worries and confusion. They are like frogs in a lotus pond who are not aware of the nectarine honey in the lotus in search of which bees gather from long distances. This supineness should go. Those who are here should practice at least a few of the things that they learn here so that they may go forward towards their divine destiny.

The great movement for the propagation of *Dharma* launched by Dharma Prachaar Parishad is bound to succeed. Swami will extend all necessary help and strength to this movement.

*Discourse to the Sri Sathya Sai Dharma Prachaar Parishad, in the Poornachandra Auditorium, 7 Jan 1988*

*Add two spoons of water to two seers of milk; the water too is appreciated as milk! So too, let your tiny drops of love for things material merge with the stream of love for God and be elevated. At present your sadhana can be described only as adding two seers of water to two spoons of milk.! Have the love of God filling and thrilling your hearts; then you cannot hate anyone, you cannot indulge in unhealthy rivalries, you will not find fault with anyone. Life becomes soft, sweet and smooth.*

*Sathya Sai Baba*