

## 12. Brahmacharya

The edifice of life is a four-storied mansion. In this mansion the ground floor is most important one. The upper three storeys are based upon this. It is known as *Brahmacharya* (continenace or celibacy). In everyone's life childhood and youth are extremely important. This period of life should be regulated by practising purity and tranquillity.

*Brahmacharya* means leading a life of pure thoughts, pure actions and pure aspirations. Unfortunately today people tend to regard *Brahmacharya* as living somehow in an unmarried state. The term *Brahmacharya* carries within it its sacred import. *Brahma-charya* means whatever thoughts we entertain, whatever actions we perform, whatever enterprises we undertake, they should all be filled with the consciousness Brahman (the Supreme Omnipresent Divine). Conducting ourselves with the awareness that the Divine is present everywhere is "*Brahmacharya*."

### ***Brahmacharya* is present in all four stages**

The basic characteristic of *Brahmacharya* is that one should be full of pure thoughts, all one's actions should be sacred and one should be engaged in selfless service. *Brahmacharya* is not confined to the early years of one's boyhood and adolescence. *Brahmacharya* is a state that is implied in all the three other stages of life also (*Grihastha*, *Vaanaprastha* and *Sanyasa*). The base is *Brahmacharya*. The second stage or storey is that of *Grihastha* (the householder). The third is *Vaanaprastha* (retirement to the forest). The fourth is *Sanyasa* (complete renunciation of all attachments). *Brahmacharya* is present in all three other stages like an undercurrent: *Brahmacharya* in the *Brahmacharya* state, *Brahmacharya* in the *Grihastha* state, *Brahmacharya* in the *Vaanaprastha* and *Brahmacharya* in the *Sanyasa* states. In all four states, *Brahmacharya* is immanent in equal measure. It signifies purity in all the states. Only when there is purity, *Brahmacharya* has any meaning.

*Manava* (Man) means one who is pure. Man means one who is noteworthy. It also means one who has faith. These are the various meanings of the Sanskrit word *Manava*. Delving into the meaning of the word *Manava* further, it will be noted that it consists of two terms: *Maa* (ever) and *Nava* (new)--that which is ever new, that which is always fresh. In this freshness there is *pavitrata* (purity or sanctity).

Hence, in this sacred human birth, to lead a life filled with pure thoughts and pure actions is characterised as *Brahmacharya*. So the real meaning of *Brahmacharya* is not confined to the corporeal discipline of celibacy attached to it in the physical sense, but it implies recognition of the Divinity inherent in man and leading a life based on that recognition. Therefore, for the life of the householder, the recluse and the renunciant, *Brahmacharya* is the foundation.

### **The foundation of a student's life is purity**

The period of a student's life is a crucial stage in life. All the three other stages are based upon one's life as a *vidyarthi* (student). Whatever purity or sanctity you develop during your student days will determine the degree of purity in the other three stages. Life as a student is thus a foundation for the rest of one's life. Hence a strong foundation must be laid for the ground floor. If the ground floor is weak and gives away, the whole edifice will collapse.

Hence, the entire human existence should be sanctified by observing *Brahmacharya*. This implies that, by practising purity and recognising the omnipresent Divinity, one should regulate

one's daily life by spreading purity and sacredness everywhere. Purity of mind, purity of *Chittha* (consciousness), purity of the heart and purity in action---this fourfold purity constitutes *Brahmacharya*. Whatever you do, you must act with the same sense that it is an offering to the Divine. This is the real significance of *Brahmacharya*.

Food is the primary requisite for life. Without food one cannot live. Hence life has been described as *Annamaya* (composed of food). But man is not content to live on food alone. The mind is not satisfied if the stomach is full. Although food is essential for the body, the mind craves for *Ananda* (bliss). Life can find fulfilment only if *Ananda* is experienced. Hence, man cannot rest content with merely being alive. He has to be active and ever on the move. In the process he has to ask himself the questions' Why am I restless? Why am I active? What do I do to engage myself in actions? When the right answers are found for all these questions, all actions become sacred.

### **The heart should be filled with sacred feelings**

"What for am I performing these actions? How am I doing them? What is the sanctity attaching to them?" It is when one enquires into these matters, he will realise their true purpose and meaning. This enquiry has to be conducted in the proper way. He should ask himself whether the enquiry is purposeful or futile. Once he comes to the conclusion that a certain action is right, he should do it with earnestness. *Brahmacharya* is the primary requisite for developing pure thoughts and performing pure actions.

Moreover, in practising *Brahmacharya*, it is essential to cultivate sacred thoughts. The heart should be filled with sacred feelings. You must eschew from your mind any thought of causing harm to anyone. Only then, the life that starts with *Annamaya* (food-filled) will culminate in *Anandamaya* (a blissful life). Man should not consider that happiness consists in having a house full of children and equipped with all the amenities for comfortable living. Nor can peace be realised through wealth, power or position. Peace is the outcome of our actions and thoughts. If our thoughts are pure, our actions will also be pure. When actions are pure, life itself becomes holy.

### **Concentrate on your duty in the present**

The primary reason for the lack of peace in the world today is that the thoughts and conduct of people have gone astray. The first step, therefore, is to make our thoughts pure. We need not bother about the past or the future. Concentrate your attention on your duty in the present. Dedicate all your energies to the fulfilment of this duty. This was the basis on which our ancients directed their lives, according to the injunctions of the *Vedas* and the *Sastras*. Today there is a wide gulf between the lives led by our ancients and the prevailing modes of living. What is the reason for this difference?

Admittedly, food is essential. But there is scarcity of food today. What is the reason for this shortage? The fact is people have given up the practice of *Yagas* and *Yajnas* (sacrificial rites and rituals) which used to be performed in the past. *Yajna* is not merely sitting in front of a fire and uttering some *mantras*. *Yajna* really means the spirit of sacrifice or *thyaga* (renunciation). Today this spirit is totally absent. Indeed, the desire for *bhoga* (enjoyment) has grown limitlessly. Because of this, the fascination for external objects has developed, leading to the forgetting of one's true nature. As a result, man has become prey to the numerous sufferings.

Divinity is ever present in man in all its purity. But man is unable to recognise this because of his attachments to transient pleasures like the black bee. This bee has a proboscis with which it can bore a hole through a strong bamboo or even through the human body. But when it enters a lotus flower and the lotus folds itself, the bee is unable to get out of its tender petals because it is immersed in the enjoyment of the honey in the lotus and forgets its own real strength. Likewise, man today, forgetting the Divine that is present within him and in everything he beholds, immersed in worldly concerns and intoxicated with mundane pleasures, is oblivious to his own true Divine nature. Man forgets his inherent capacity in the involvement with the mastery of the external world.

### **Do not ever give up faith in Divinity**

The youth of today must get away from these involvements and develop confidence in their true selves. Whatever difficulties they may confront, whatever obstacles may come in their way, they should regard them as passing clouds. Nothing in the world is permanent. Only one thing is permanent and unchanging. That is the Divine. Install firmly in the minds the Divine and regard it as the only permanent entity that can confer enduring bliss. All others--whether they be relations, friends or possessions--cannot give you lasting bliss.

One of the students had spoken about how in one year both his parents had passed away, leaving eight children, of whom he was the eldest. In this tragic situation, Swami alone could offer solace and courage to the bereaved children. From that time to this day Swami had been looking after the children who looked up to Swami as "Sai Mother" and "Sai Father." No kith or kin could have looked after them in this manner. The Divine does not give up anyone who has faith and trust in the Divine. Difficulties may come in succession like mountains, but they will disappear like snow if Divine grace is there. What is required is firm faith in God. Strengthen your faith in the Divine.

Another devotee (an American businessman) was once faced with such difficulties that he wanted to wind up his business. But Swami advised him not to do so. Because of his past experiences with Swami, he had firm faith in Him and carried on his business. He was able to get over his difficulties. No one has suffered in this world who has had firm faith in God. Many have come to grief because of lack of faith.

### **Disbelief in divine affirmations**

Today you believe in what you see in the films or what you read in the newspapers or novels. You believe in what you see in a play or what is said in an almanac. But you have no faith in the Divine pronouncements of the *Vedas: Thath Thwam Asi* (That thou art), *Ayam Atma Brahma* (This *Atma* is verily Brahman), *Aham Brahmaasmi* (I am Brahman). *Prajnaanam Brahma* (The Constant Integrated Consciousness in man is Brahman). People have no faith in these *Mahavaakyas* (Divine affirmations), but are easily misled by the meretricious declarations of worldly men. This is the lamentable degraded plight of man today. The mason is man has abjured faith in God. He has become a victim of faith in wordly things.

The first requisite is for men to develop faith in God. This is even more essential for the youth. Whatever plans you may draw up for the future, base them on faith in God. They should be righteous. You will then achieve success.

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