

16. True Sacrifice

Students! Embodiments of Divine Love! Life is fraught with vicissitudes, trials and tribulations. The world looks attractive but is the abode of suffering. Life is like a water bubble on a lotus leaf. The lotus is born in water, grows in water and depends on water for its existence.

"Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantham Brahma" (Being, Awareness, Eternal--the Omni-self). This is the Lake of the Eternal Divine Spirit. From this arises a lotus in a subtle form. Thoughts and feelings are the fragrance emanating from this lotus. *Maya* is the lotus leaf. Life is the water bubble on this leaf of *Maya*.

The *Atmic* principle is the basis for everything in creation--its origin, growth and dissolution. Considering the evanescent body as permanent and real, and leading a life devoted to worldly and mundane pursuits, man is lost in delusions, which cause sorrow and suffering. Ignorance of his true nature is the root cause of all sorrow. When this ignorance goes, there will be freedom from sorrow.

***Gita* lays stress on enquiry into eternal**

Man is compounded of two basic constituents: one which is permanent and the other which is transient. They are: the *Atma* and the *Anatma*; the body and the indwelling spirit; the *Kshetra* (field) and the *Kshetrajna* (Knower of the Field). As one who is essentially Divine, man's primary duty is to enquire into what is permanent and what is impermanent, what is real and what is unreal, discard what is false and adhere to what is true. This is the theme of the *Gita* in the cantos devoted to *"Kshetra--Kshetrajna Vibhaaga Yogam."* and *"Gunathraya Vibhaaga Yogam."* *The Gita* lays stress on enquiry into the eternal and the evanescent as a primary requisite for man. The aim of education should be to enable one to discover his own true nature.

By concentrated effort and by sacrifice of every kind, different paths have been discovered for experiencing Divinity. The *Upanishads* have declared "Not by rituals or progeny or wealth can immortality be attained. It can be got only through *Thyaga* (renunciation)." What is it that has to be renounced? What is it that has to be sought? Man should be engaged in a perpetual enquiry to find out from the myriad objects in the universe, from his varied experiences and his multifarious activities, the means of achieving *Ananda* (bliss).

Today the world is plunged in chaos and conflict. What is the reason for this? All the joys and sorrows experienced by man stem from his actions. The actions themselves are the result of thoughts arising in the mind. It is only when the thoughts are good that the actions will be pure. When man's actions are pure, society will be healthy and peaceful.

Lessons to be learnt from Nature

The secret of true renunciation has to be learnt from the trees, the cows and the rivers.

The trees bear fruit for the benefit of others;

Rivers flow for the good of others;

Cows give milk to nourish others;

The human body is for rendering service.

When trees, cows and rivers are setting such an example in unselfish service to others, human life will have no meaning if it is not devoted to selfless service.

When we start enquiring, "Where is God? Who is God?" Nature as the vesture of God provides the answers. It is well known that the earth spins around itself at the rate of 1000 miles an hour. It is ceaselessly doing its duty without rest. Because of this rotation you have night and day. Moreover, the earth is going round the sun at the speed of 66,000 miles an hour. As a result, we have changes in seasons conducive to cultivation of crops. The earth, the sun and the moon are providing a lesson to man regarding the fulfilment of one's duties. They are also demonstrating the importance of activity for mankind. All of them--trees, rivers, cows, the earth and the sun--are acting unselfishly. At the same time, what they are doing is essential for man's existence.

When these are rendering such selfless service, what kind of renunciation is man displaying? Man is enjoying the benefits provided by Nature, but is showing no gratitude at all in return.

Misconceived magnanimity

Despite all the progress in scientific knowledge, man has not learnt the real purpose of education and has not developed the sense of gratitude. One without gratitude is worse than a wild beast. Doing good in return for good done is nothing to boast about. Real goodness consists in doing good even to one who has done you harm. But in applying this principle, discrimination should be used. History is full of examples of misconceived generosity and forgiveness. Mahomed Ghori invaded India several times and was defeated by Prithviraj, who let him go back as a sign of his spirit of magnanimity. Ultimately, Mahomed of Ghori conspired with Jaichand to take Prithviraj as a prisoner. Instead of showing gratitude to Prithviraj for his magnanimity, Ghori Mahomed gouged the eyes of Prithviraj. History teaches that no quarter should be given to wicked persons who are treacherous and ungrateful. In rendering service to needy people, students should remember these lessons from life and use their discrimination and intelligence.

In the pursuit of education, students should take note of three things. One: You should not talk about matters of which you have no knowledge. It is a mark of foolishness. Two: It is dangerous to pretend that you know something when you are really ignorant. Three: You must strive to acquire knowledge and impart it to others only after you have mastered the subject.

Today many pretend to be all-knowing. This is a sign of *Ahamkara* (egoistic conceit). Egoism can bring about the complete downfall of a person. It is like a pest that destroys the very root of a tree. It has two accomplices: attachment and hatred. The combination of these three is enough to ruin the life of any person. Hence, the primary need is to get rid of egoism, which is fostered by ignorance. Education can become meaningful only when you have developed humility and right behaviour.

Learn the value of leading a simple life

Today much effort is wasted on ostentatious living. Students should learn the value of leading a simple and unostentatious life. You may be aware of Sardar Patel, who was Deputy Prime Minister in the Government formed after Independence. One day, a colleague of his, Mahavir Thyagi, went to Patel's residence. While talking to Patel, Thyagi noticed Patel's daughter, Maniben, doing the household chores. She was wearing an old sari, patched up in some places. Thyagi asked her: "Maniben! You are getting a bad name for your father. What a high position he is holding in the government. He is the Deputy Prime Minister of the country. Being his

daughter, if you are like this, you will be taken for a beggar. The dress you are wearing is not befitting at all." Maniben was indignant and told Sri Thyagi: "Thyagiji! It is only those who have earned money by foul and unjust means that should feel sorry for the clothes they wear. I am not ashamed to wear the clothes out of my own labours while I am carrying on my legitimate duties. Those who spend lavishly on their comforts by the money earned by their parents have to feel ashamed about themselves. I have nothing to be ashamed about. In looking after my aged father, I do my work, wearing the clothes I choose. I do not hanker after anyone's wealth. I know how to maintain my dignity and self-respect. No one need teach me how to conduct myself." Maniben left after saying these words.

The dedicated life of Maniben

Dr. Sushila Nayyar, who was seated on the same sofa as Sri Thyagi, told him in unmistakable language: "Thyagiji! You do not know Maniben well enough. From the time she wakes up in the morning right up to going to bed in the night she is ceaselessly working without any rest. Although her father is the Deputy Prime Minister, she attends to all the household work herself. She cleans the vessels and washes her father's clothes herself. She spins on the charkha whenever she has some spare time. She stitches the clothes for her father. She makes saris for herself out of discarded dhotis of her father. It is difficult to find anyone equal to her in the ideal life she is leading."

Such was the dedicated life led by Maniben in those days. It is hard to find today any young woman or man who can live life like that. Most young people lead ostentatious lives, wasting the hard-earned money of their parents. Students! Realise what you owe to your parents and act in a manner which will not grieve them. Avoid waste of money, of food, of time and energy.

Experience joy in the control of desires

Having come to the Sathya Sai Institute for your studies, you have to set an example to others. You have to get rid of all bad traits. This is the sacrifice you have to make for acquiring good qualities. Real enjoyment does not consist in wearing expensive clothes and leading a luxurious life. You must experience joy in the control of your desires and in leading a tranquil life. Do not poison your minds by excessive desires.

Buddha was once asked: "Who is the richest man in the world?" Buddha replied: "He who has much satisfaction (with what he has) is the richest man." To the question, "Who is the poorest man?" Buddha replied: "He who has many desires."

A Maharaja, who was listening to Buddha's sermons on contentment and renunciation, wished to earn the approbation of Buddha.

Buddha used to keep with him always a rattle-drum. His disciples once asked him: "Master! Why are you always keeping this rattle-drum by your side?" Buddha replied: "I shall play on this drum the day a person who has made the greatest sacrifice approaches me." Everyone was eager to know who this person would be. Such persons are often the forgotten men of history.

Wishing to attain this distinction, a Maharaja loaded his elephants with considerable treasure and went to Buddha. He hoped to offer the treasure to Buddha and earn his praise.

Buddha shows what true sacrifice means

On the way, an old woman greeted the Maharaja and pleaded: "I am hungry. Will you give me some food?" The Maharaja took out a pomegranate fruit from his palanquin and gave it to the old woman. The old woman came to Buddha with the fruit.

By then, the Maharaja had also come to Buddha and was eagerly waiting to see when Buddha would sound the rattle-drum. For a long time Buddha did not use it. The Maharaja stayed on.

The old woman approached Buddha staggering on her legs, and offered him the pomegranate fruit. Buddha took it immediately and sounded the little drum.

The Maharaja asked Buddha: "I offered so much wealth to you. You did not sound the drum. But you rattled it after receiving a small fruit. Is this a great sacrifice.

Buddha replied: "Maharaja! In sacrifice, it is not quantity that counts. It is the quality of sacrifice that matters. It is natural for a Maharaja to offer gold. But what great sacrifice is made when a hungry old woman offers the pomegranate fruit to the *Guru* despite her hunger. She did not care even for her life and gave the fruit. What greater sacrifice can there be? It is not sacrifice to offer what is superfluous for you. True sacrifice means giving up that which is most dear to you, that which you value most."

Students! You must give up your selfishness and strive to please the Lord in whom you have faith by dedicating your lives to the service of the Divine. The whole universe is permeated by the Divine. He is omnipotent, omnipresent, and all-knowing. Be conscious that he is not confined to any place. He is everywhere and in everything, including your body. He cannot be seen by dissecting the body. But when the mind is directed towards God, He can be experienced. The men who landed on the moon declared that they did not find God there. God cannot be found through *yantras* (machines). He can be experienced through *Mantras* (sacred formulae).

Swami wants you to become ideal citizens

Students! This Sathya Sai Institute has been founded to train ideal students who would be able to change the world which is today plunged in chaos and corruption. Bharath, which was the fountain-source of righteousness and spirituality, is today divorced from Truth and Right Conduct and is plagued by evil forces.

Swami does not seek anything from you except that you should develop into ideal citizens who will bring good name and fame to Bharath. This is the sole purpose for which Swami brought the Institute into existence. All education is free here. You have all the facilities needed for your studies. You have to transform yourself and help to transform the country. In olden days, people regarded everything as given by God. They placed God first, the world next, and themselves last. Today all this has been reversed. The 'I' comes first, the world next and God last.

The *Mahabharata* shows what it means to place God in the forefront or otherwise. Both Arjuna and Duryodhana went to Krishna to seek His help in the impending war. Krishna said they could make the choice between himself and his army. Arjuna opted for Krishna and Duryodhana chose Krishna's army. In the ultimate outcome, the Pandavas, who placed God in the forefront, achieved victory, while the Kauravas, who had faith only in arms, lost everything.

Discourse at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute Hostel, Vidyagiri,

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