

## **18. Man and the cosmos**

BHARTRUHARI was a great devotee, a very wise person, a poet and an ideal example to all spiritual aspirants. Once he embarked on an enquiry into his failings. He observed: "When I was a man of little wisdom, I behaved like one who felt there was no one equal to me and acted recklessly. But thanks to association with sages and listening to their wise teachings, I was able to realise the truth about myself." Just as a specific medicine serves to cure a particular malady, the teachings of wise sages enable one to bring under control the vagaries of the mind.

Why should anyone feel conceited? What are you in this vast universe? In the boundless firmament, the sun is a small star. The earth is a small planet, of which Asia is a small part. In it, Bharat is a small country and Anantapur is a district in it. You are in a small room in Prashaanthi Nilayam. In relation to the cosmos, is there any reason for anyone to feel proud about himself?. Such pride can only be the result of delusion born of ignorance.

If you explore in depth the true nature of the human condition, you will recognise the various aspects of its impermanence and mutability. In the vast universe with its millions of stars, what is the reason for divinity manifesting itself in the human form? Very few care to recognise the truth behind this. The highest wisdom is required for securing this understanding.

### **Three kinds of knowledge**

In the world today, knowledge about the universe falls into three categories. (1) In terms of daily life, there is factual knowledge based on perception. To treat facts as truth and fiction as untruth is practical knowledge. (2) In the second category are those who regard the phenomenal world as real and treat all that cannot be seen or heard as unreal or non-existent. They regard Nature as real and God as non-existent. (3) The third category consists of those who make no distinction between one thing and another and hold the view that the whole universe is a projection of the Divine and is permeated by the Divine. This is spiritual knowledge.

Doubtless, knowledge of the phenomenal world is necessary. But one should go beyond it to know the Eternal and Unchanging Reality. Once Nehru asked Gandhiji why he was looking so worried and depressed. Gandhiji answered that he was finding that the education the young people were receiving was making them hard-hearted. "What good can such hard-hearted persons do to the world? This is what worries me," said Gandhiji.

Modern education makes a man pursue what appeals to his mind and not what is good for his mind and soul. Even the heart which is soft and sweet by nature is turned into a hard and unfeeling organ. The sharpest intellect gets blunted.

Parents of children are anxious to see their children become scholars rather than men of character. Only those parents are worthy of esteem who desire that their children develop good qualities even more than academic distinctions. Education is not the be-all and end-all of life. It is only a part of life. Virtues are the backbone of life. The spiritual path is the only means of cultivating virtues.

### **The real meaning of freedom**

In pursuing the spiritual path, one should not get disinterested or indifferent at any stage. Devotion does not admit of rest or revulsion. Steadfastness is the sign of true devotion. Students should cultivate such devotion because they do not have sufficient control over their senses.

Students are inclined to regard freedom to act as they like as their primary goal. But this is not real freedom. Unrestrained freedom is enjoyed by the animals. But how should a man, an educated being, conduct himself?. *Swechcha* (freedom of will) consists of the two words *Swa* and *Ichcha*. *Swa* refers to the *Atma* and *Swechcha* means acting according to the dictates of the Spirit and not of the body. One must use one's discriminating power to decide whether a thing is right or wrong and act according to the dictates of one's conscience. That is true freedom of will. Only then can one have self-confidence.

### **Gratitude is a cardinal virtue**

Students must strive to acquire good qualities even more than academic knowledge. To understand the nature of divinity, devotion is essential. Once there is firm faith in God one can face with ease all the vicissitudes of life. Every devotee has to have as his aides firm faith in God on one side and purity of character on the other.

Students! Gratitude is a cardinal virtue. You must be grateful to all those who have helped you in your lives. You may earn money by your efforts. There is nothing wrong. But it must be spent in righteous ways. Today one sees everywhere the worshippers of *Siri* (wealth) but few worshippers of *Hari*. This is the irony of devotion today. Spiritual wealth alone is true wealth. It is not dependent on anyone's favour. Fire cannot burn it. Thieves cannot steal it. It will protect you like your life-breath. It leads you on the right path, Strive to acquire this spiritual wealth. Then Bharat will become the moral leader of the world.

*Discourse in the Prashanthi Mandir on 26-6-1989.*

*Welcome disappointments for they toughen you and test your fortitude.*

*BABA*