

## 8. Sathyam vada; Dharmam chara

WHAT greater misfortune can there be than the fact that Bharatiyas make no effort to understand their great and Divine culture, based on the most sublime ideals?

Love is the form of *Brahmam*. *Brahmam* is filled with Love. Love can be secured only through Love. Only when one is firmly established in Love can he be qualified to experience the One without a second.

*Embodiments of Divine Love! "Sathyam vada; Dharmam chara"* (Speak the Truth, pursue Righteousness). This is the great pronouncement of the ancient *Upanishads* and scriptures of *Bharatiyas*. Truth and Righteousness are the stepping-stones to human greatness. *The puranas* have also declared: "*Sathayameva Jayathe*" (Truth alone triumphs). Victory adores Truth, "*Sathyaanaasthi Paro Dharma*" (There is no greater *Dharma* than truth), declare the *Puranas*.

Truth is God. It is supreme folly to forget this fact and seek to obtain the grace of God by all kinds of practices. The *Bhagavatha* has indicated a more arduous path. Emperor Bali told his Guru Sukracharya, "Can there be a greater sin than going back on one's plighted word?"

The same truth was revealed by *Bhoodevi* (the Goddess of the Earth) in another context in the *Bhagavatha*. *Bhoodevi* lamented: "Oh Lord! I can bear the burden of any number of sinners. But I cannot bear to carry those who have betrayed Truth."

The glow of Truth has been proclaimed by the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Puranas* and the epics. The *Upanishads* have expounded the characteristics of *Sathya* (Truth). "*Sathyaanna Pramadithavyam, Dharmanna Pramadithavyam*" (Do not disregard Truth. Do not be indifferent to *Dharma*). "In any circumstances do not give up Truth. Overcome all difficulties by adhering to truth" is the teaching of the *Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad* and other texts.

### Harischandra's life as an example

Harischandra, who gave up his kingdom, wife and son and even chose to serve as a watchman in a burning-ghat, is the supreme example of one who stood for Truth. Vishwamitra, who subjected Harischandra to the most severe tests and ordeals, ultimately declared: "The whole earth can be held in the palm of one's hand. The entire ocean can be drunk at one gulp. The earth and the sky can be rolled into one. But it is impossible to make Harischandra utter a lie."

Through Truth not only can the world be subdued, but it is possible even to realise the Lord of the universe. Today in Bharat, because people have given up Truth and Righteousness, they are not able to achieve unity and all kinds of divisions and antagonisms have developed. You have to dedicate yourselves to Truth. In offering worship to Rama. and Krishna, prayers are offered to their manifestations as Truth. "*Sathyam vachanaaya namah,*" "*Sathyapriyaaya namah,*" "*Sathyaswaroopaaya namah*" (Salutations to the One whose speech is Truth, who is a lover of Truth, who is the embodiment of Truth).

In the cause of upholding truth, Sri Ramachandra had to go as an exile to the forest. Rama told the sage Jabali: "For rulers in the Ikshwaaku dynasty, the greatest calamity is going back on the plighted word."

### Pothana's faith in Lord Rama

God should be worshipped as the embodiment of Truth. This is the primary duty of every Bharatiya. Srinatha was a great scholar and writer who was the Court poet of the Andhra ruler,

Singabhupaala. He came to his brother-in-law, Pothana, who was living in poverty, and entreated him to dedicate his *Bhagavatham* to Singabhupaala. "If you dedicate your *Bhagavatham* to that ruler, he will reward you with all kinds of riches," said Srinatha. Pothana replied: "Sri Ramachandra is Lord above all kings. When I have Sri Ramachandra, the King of Kings, what need is there for me to submit to earthly rulers? It is God who offers spiritual benefits, earthly benefits and other benefits to everyone. Cannot the protector of so many countless beings, take care of me?" Pothana firmly held to this belief.

Provoked by Pothana's stubborn attitude and attributing it to Pothana's conceit, Srinatha conveyed his feelings to Singabhupala. The ruler became furious. He sent his soldiers to wrest the *Bhagavatham* from Pothana. Pothana was prepared even to give up his life, but would not surrender the *Bhagavatham*. On the orders of the ruler, his men set fire to Pothana's house. Pothana prayed: "Oh Sri Ramachandra! Will you not protect atleast your own life-story, apart from protecting your devotees?" Appealing to Sri Rama to protect the *Bhagavatham*, Pothana closed his eyes in meditation. Except the *Bhagavatham*, everything else was consumed by the flames.

### **Realise the infinite worth of Lord's name**

Singabhupala heard about this remarkable phenomenon. From that moment he became a devotee of Rama. It is only when one's devotion is firm, pure and unwavering that the Lord is ready to extend every kind of protection. Unfortunately, in this *Kali* era, faith is continually changing because of worldly desires. Man is willing to barter away the precious gem of his life for a piece of charcoal. If he realised the true value of human birth he would not treat it so lightly and go as far even to discard God. Tulsidas also said that the man who did not know the preciousness of the Lord's name, casts it away as worthless. Hence, it is essential to realise the infinite worth of the Lord's name. Mira also recognised the uniqueness and greatness of God's name. "Enjoy the nectarine sweetness of the Lord's name," says Mira. Instead of coffee and tea you must drink the sweet essence of the Lord's name. For the man who has installed the Lord in his heart, there will be no troubles of any kind.

It is not easy for all people to recognise the truth about God. When Socrates was attracting the youth of Athens to get interested in the pursuit of wisdom, his mission was misunderstood by the powers that be. The saint Thyagaraja lamented: "Oh Rama; the people do not understand the greatness of the *Bhakti marga* (path of devotion). People prefer the *Bhukti marga* (the path of enjoyment) to the *Bhakti marga*. Today men pursue worldly studies with diligence, but few are interested in the pursuit of *Mukti* (Liberation). How can such persons ever realise God, whatever may be their education? All efforts are directed towards worldly and material ends, but no effort is made to attain spiritual realisation. Education today enables one to develop intellectual abilities, but does not promote good qualities. Of what value is such education? Book learning may convert the head into a library. But it is of no practical use.

### **Convert ordinary duties into acts of worship**

Socrates was condemned to death for turning the minds of the youth away from worldly concerns to spiritual matters. Socrates preferred to end his life by drinking poison received from the hands of his disciples rather than die at the jailor's hands. This means that more value was attached to spiritual purity than to the physical life.

Today, only sensual pleasures, which are transient and unreal, are valued. Those who imagine that they are deriving pleasure through their senses do not realise that it is the senses that are enjoying them and weakening them.

What is devotion? It is not doing *Japa* or sitting in meditation or doing *bhajans*. Essentially it consists of two things: one, lack of interest in worldly things' two, love of God. Whatever you do out of love for God is devotion. You may engage yourselves in the ordinary duties of life. Only convert them into acts of worship by offering them to the Divine.

### ***Sadhaks are children of immortality***

All of you are devotees, but for want of proper advice you are confused and feel depressed. On account of this confusion and depression you develop doubts. Sai does not ask you to renounce the world. But, in what way should you live in the world? You should enjoy the world with a spiritual outlook. You should realise that you have come down from the *Atma* to the realm of Nature. Today the reverse view prevails among *sadhaks*. They wrongly think that they are proceeding from Nature to the Spirit. You have emerged from the *Atma* and not evolved from Nature. You are the children of immortality. You are sparks of the Divine.

You must recognise the Divinity that is in everyone. Learn a lesson from the birds and insects. If a crow sees some edible, it does not start eating it all alone. It summons other crows and enjoys the food in their company. Look at the ants. If one ant chances upon a lump of sugar, it will not start eating it all by itself. It will bring other ants and enjoy the repast all together. Is man worse than crows and ants? Should he not have the sense of unity which these creatures have? Even the ants seem to have some sense of the Divine. That was why Thyagaraja sang: "Oh Rama! May the *Brahmam*, which is present as love in the ant and in the Supreme, protect me!" Thyagaraja recognised the omnipresence of the Divine in everything from the smallest to the vastest.

People recite Thyagaraja's song. But in practice, if *Brahma* were to appear before them they will offer worship, and if an ant crawls on them they will kill it. Does this demonstrate their sense of oneness? The presence of the ant is not relished. But the spirit of sacrifice and sharing which the ant has is not to be found in man. Neither the practice of hoarding nor that of plundering others is to be found among animals and birds. But today the acquisitive and exploiting tendencies are growing among men from day to day.

*Embodiments of Love!* Realising that human life is precious, fill your hearts with sacred thoughts and lead noble lives, dedicated to the service of society. Such service is indeed service to God. If you offer worship to one idol in your shrine you are worshiping only one. But when you render service to society you will be offering worship to innumerable forms of the Divine.

*Discourse at Dharmakshetra, Bombay on 29-4-1990.*

*Among men, each one is himself the cause of his fortune-- good or bad. He is himself the builder, the architect, fate, destiny, pre-determination, the Will of God--everyone of these explanations is toppled by the principle of Karma.*

*BABA*