

## 6. The Mansion Of Life

*You do not need a lamp  
To see a lamp that is burning brilliantly.  
Likewise there is no need for  
Any other knowledge to know the One  
Who is the very embodiment of all knowledge.*

*When birds and beasts that have known no education  
Lead regulated lives, it is a pity  
That an intelligent human being  
Does not have this sense.*

Students! Embodiments of Divine Love! Life is a four-storied mansion. For any edifice to be strong, the foundation has to be strong. The mansion is visible to the beholders. Its architecture is attractive and pleasing. But the foundation has no such attractions. Nevertheless the safety of the mansion depends on the strength of the foundation. Every part of the mansion may have its own attractive feature. But the foundation has no feeling of pride about its being the base on which the mansion stands nor does it desire that anyone should take notice of it. The foundation is unaffected by praise or blame.

### **The four floors of the mansion of life**

The first floor of the mansion (of life) is *Brahmacharya* (celibacy). The second floor is the *Grihastha* (householder) stage. The third is *Vaanaprastha* (recluse). The fourth is the stage of *Sanyasa* (renunciant).

Many persons pass through all the four stages. Some go through only three of them and some others only two. But irrespective of the number of stages, the foundation is the base.

The first stage (or floor) is that of *Brahmacharya*. You students who are in the first floor of the mansion of life have to ensure the firmness of the foundation. This foundation consists of humility, reverence, morality and integrity. The strength of the foundation depends on these four constituents.

Unfortunately, the nation today is affected by the consequences of seven grievous sins. The first is business without morality. The second is politics without principle; third, education without character; fourth, worship without sacrifice; fifth, wealth without hard work; sixth, human existence without regard for scriptures; seventh, devotion without austerity. These are the seven deadly sins that are ravaging the nation. The country will regain prosperity and peace only when all these are banished and we have morality in business, principles in politics, educated men who have character and work is the basis of wealth. The mansion of man's life should be built on these virtues. But unfortunately today morality and integrity have declined and the spirit of sacrifice is on the wane.

Because these qualities are lacking among students, the nation is suffering from disorders and violence.

Although these statements may not be quite palatable to the students to hear, they should realise what the public feels about the present situation.

### **The actor should relate strictly to his role**

Anyone's thoughts and actions should be related to the role he has to play. If there is no such correspondence between one's role and one's conduct, the social fabric will be shaken.

Once upon a time a strolling actor, Pagati Veshagaadu, presented himself before a king in the role of Aadhi Sankaracharya. The king, welcoming the *Acharya*, gave him an honoured seat and enquired about his welfare. In keeping with his role, the visiting actor recited a stanza. "Birth is sorrow, old age is a curse, marriage brings sorrow. The end is the most sorrowful of all; therefore, beware! beware! There is no mother or father, friend or kinsman. Neither wealth nor home abides. Therefore, beware! beware !" He preached in this manner the truth about the ephemeral nature of human existence. At the end, before the "Sankaracharya" was leaving, the king offered him gold coins in a silver plate. He told the king: "I don't accept this." He declared that immortality can be attained only by sacrifice and not by *karmas*, wealth or progeny as stated in the Upanishadic stanza: "*Thyage Neike Amrithathwam Aanashuh.*" He left the palace, informing the king that he would present himself the next day in a different role.

The next day he appeared as a well-dressed danseuse and danced before the king in his audience chamber. The dance was so superb that the entire audience was enraptured. The king offered the dancer a plateful of gold coins. The "danseuse" said that what was offered was too meagre and asked for more. The king said: "Yesterday you refused to take the gold coins I offered. Today you say these are too meagre. What is the mystery behind these different attitudes?"

The actor replied, "The behaviour is in accord with the role. Yesterday I appeared in the role of Sankaracharya and I behaved as Sankaracharya would have done. Today I have come as a dancer and I am behaving as a dancer would."

The inner meaning of this story is that when people do not act according to their roles in the different stages in life--*Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vaanaprastha* and *Sanyasa*---the nation will be morally ruined.

### **Students and teachers should act up to their roles**

It is only when students conduct themselves according to the role assigned to them that they will acquit themselves well as students. If they do not behave properly as students, the culture and traditions of the entire community are undermined. Likewise, if teachers do not act up to their roles as teachers, the good name of the teaching profession is tarnished.

When householders do not discharge the duties of householders, they bring the *Grihastha* tradition itself into bad repute.

### **Divine operates to reduce the burdens of people**

Whatever the role one has to play at any place or time, and in any capacity, he has to act up to that role properly. It will be seen from the *Puranas* that this principle applies to the Divine also (when the Divine appears in human form). This may be illustrated by a small story from Sri Krishna's life in the *Dwapara Yuga*. Once a *Gopika* went to a well to bring two pitchers of water.

After placing one pitcher on her head, she wanted someone to place the other water-filled pitcher on the first one. At that time, Krishna came there and she asked him to place the water-filled pitcher on the first one. Krishna refused to do so. Soon another *Gopika* came along and helped the first *Gopika*. The *Gopika* carrying the two pitchers reached her home.

Krishna followed her to the house and without even waiting to be asked, he took the top pitcher from the *Gopika's* head and placed it down. She was surprised at Krishna's strange behaviour. She asked him, "Krishna, at the well, you refused to place the pitcher on my head when I appealed to you to help me. Now you take it down from the head without my asking. What is the inner meaning of this action?" Krishna replied, "Oh *Gopika!* I am wont to remove the burdens borne by people and not to add to them."

This shows that the Divine operates only to reduce the burdens of the people and not to increase them. It means that there are rules which govern the role which each one has to play in life. Men, however, find it difficult to act upon this truth.

Man is a seeker of happiness. He is essentially the repository of happiness. But not realising this truth about himself, man goes after happiness all over the world.

He pursues studies in the belief that scholarship will give him happiness. But happiness eludes him. He tries to find happiness in work and fails to get it. Seeking happiness in married life, he meets with disappointment. Nor does he get it through children. Then he gets absorbed in the acquisition of wealth in the belief that wealth will give him the means of securing happiness. At the end of it all, he finds himself a pitiful creature when the wealth he acquired is either stolen or misused by his profligate progeny.

He then realises that all his earlier efforts to secure happiness gave him only some temporary satisfaction but not any lasting joy. A wealthy man behaves like a dog in the manger. He will neither enjoy his wealth nor give it for good causes. A rich man should realise that sacrifice should be the hallmark of a wealthy man and that true happiness is to be got through sacrifice.

### **The five kinds of afflictions**

What is it that prevents man from securing enduring happiness? There are five kinds of *Kleshas* (sufferings) which stand in the way. The first one is *Avidya* (ignorance). *Asthitha-Klesha* (unsteadiness) is another. *Abhinivesha-Klesha* (immaturity) is another. *Raaga-Klesha* (attachment) is the fourth. *Dweshha-Klesha* (hatred) is the fifth. These five types of suffering afflict man.

*Avidya* (ignorance) is one kind of suffering. What is this ignorance? In the scriptures, the question is asked: "Who is a *murkha* (fool)?" The answer is given: "One who identifies himself with the body." By this kind of identification the foolish one forgets his true nature. The day he realises that he is not the body but the eternal Indwelling Spirit, that day he experiences true bliss. The body, the mind and the intellect are all instruments. These are called *Karanas*. It is a sign of ignorance to identify one's Self with these instruments. *Avidya-Klesha* is the suffering arising out of ignorance. As long as man has a body, he experiences various kinds of sorrow.

What is the saga of this body? "In childhood, the young lad sports with his companions. In youth he falls a prey to sensuous enjoyment. In middle age he is lost in the pursuit of wealth. Unable to give up attachments, he is caught up in the cage of *karma* (action and reaction), and at the end he returns to the dust." This is the real truth about the body. Man is thus pursued by a myriad sorrows because of his identification with the body.

### **Mind is the cause of all desires and pains**

The second *Klesha* is *Abhinivesha-Klesha*. For all kinds of desires and pains the cause is the mind. All desires arise in the mind. When desires are not fulfilled, hatred arises. If the desires are realised, the man loses his mental balance. Failing to realise how the mind is the cause of sorrow and giving a free rein to desires is *Abhinivesha-Klesha* (suffering due to mental infirmity). Only when man is able to give up desires and disregard the mind, which is the cause of desires, will he be able to experience *Ananda* (bliss).

The third is, *Asthitha-Klesha* (suffering due to unsteadiness). This suffering arises from an insatiable appetite for all kinds of things. It is the result of one being immersed in the vagaries of the senses. To regard as enduring the sensuous pleasures which are impermanent is the cause of this type of suffering.

*Raaga-Klesha* refers to the suffering arising out of attachment of all kinds. All other evil tendencies in man like hatred, envy, etc., have their root in *Raaga*. It is this attachment which ruins the entire life of man. There should be a limit to one's attachment to persons and things. Excessive attachment is the cause of sorrow. Man is unable to derive happiness from excessive possessions.

*Dweshha-Klesha* (the suffering caused by hatred) arises when a man fails to obtain what he seeks from someone. This is the result of selfishness and self-seeking.

### **Every action begets a corresponding reaction**

Man's failure to secure happiness is due to these five factors. You are today in the stage of students--the first storey in the mansion of life. When you arm yourselves with adequate safeguard at this stage, the rest of your journey will be safe and secure. The basic qualities required for the successful completion of the other three *Ashramas* (stages) in life will have to be acquired now itself. If in the stage of *Brahmacharya* (celibate studentship) you do not acquire these qualities, the other stages in your life will be mined.

Students! Having in view your future, you have to make right use of the present and follow the right path. You are allowing yourselves to drift from moment to moment. You are giving way to the attractions of the moment, failing to comprehend what is transient and what is permanent. You are laying up endless troubles for the future.

The Lord created everything in the Universe, but kept nothing for Himself. Every creature has been given complete freedom. Everyone is free to enjoy anything he likes. But there is one limitation. For every action, there is a corresponding reaction. You are free to do as you please subject to this rule. If you use the freedom given to you to indulge in wrongful acts, the consequences are bound to be bad. These results are not caused by God but are the fruits of your own actions. The Lord inflicts no harm on anybody. Everything that happens to you is the consequence of your own thoughts and actions.

### ***Prabhaava* and *Swabhaava***

Students! Lured by the external, man is forgetting his true nature. The *Prabhaava* (external trappings) are the products of *Praarabdham* (past action). The observance of *Purusharthas* (the practices prescribed for the different stages) determines one's *Swabhaava* (nature). *Prabhaava* is momentary and evanescent. *Swabhaava* is enduring. Today, the permanent and the enduring is

being ignored, while the transient and the trivial are being pursued assiduously. The consequences of this misplaced effort are inescapable.

This freedom given by the Divine to man should be exercised with a due sense of detachment. Examine for a moment how various objects in creation are conducting themselves. For instance, a tree bears sweet fruits. But it does not enjoy the fruits itself. It offers them to others for enjoyment. What a spirit of sacrifice is displayed by the tree! The Lord created the rivers. But the rivers do not use for their own benefit even a drop of their water. The water is offered to those who seek it. Likewise, the cow does not consume the milk it produces, but offers it to its calf and to others.

### **Selfishness is the worst disease of man**

But man, despite all his intelligence and knowledge, does not exhibit this sense of sacrifice. He keeps all that he earns for the benefit of himself and his kith and kin and makes no sacrifice at all. Consequently, man is haunted by all kinds of troubles. He is a victim of many diseases. Neither birds nor beasts are subject to such afflictions. They are content to live on whatever they can get. But man consumes a variety of foods and invites a variety of maladies.

The worst disease to which man is subject is selfishness. Only when man is able to rid himself of selfishness will he be able to understand the meaning of life and experience real Divine bliss. Birds, beasts and trees display the spirit of sacrifice. Man alone is the exception. When man is animated by sacrifice, he will become sublime. If selfishness grows, he loses his radiance and vitality.

### **The lesson provided by three great devotees**

The life-stories of three great devotees--Thyagaraja, Goparaju (Ramadas) and Potharaju (the author of the Telugu *Bhagavatham*)--show what sacrifices they were prepared to make out of their devotion to the Lord. They were totally indifferent to material gains in their love for the Lord.

These three devotees by their sacrifices made themselves *Rajus* (rulers) of the world. This means that only those who make the highest sacrifice are entitled to be called *Rajus* (monarchs). Today, only the wealthy are regarded as "kings." But real kings are those who are prepared to make every kind of sacrifice. At Rishikesh, the *sadhus* are greeted by the pilgrims as Maharaj. In the eyes of the devotees, only those who have given up everything are entitled to be called Maharajas. Maharaja means King of Kings. The term is appropriate only for the person who makes the greatest sacrifice.

It is a pity that today people are wasting their lives in the pursuit of meaningless desires. The true purpose of education is to make one recognise truth. The rationale of education consists in the quest for truth. Realisation of Truth is the Goal. "*Sathyasya Sathyam*" (The Truth of Truths) is how God has been defined.

Students! While you are acting the role of students, you should conduct yourselves according to the role of *Vidyarthi*s (those who have to seek knowledge) and not behave as *Vishyarthi*s (seekers of sensuous pleasures). Otherwise, you will be degrading yourselves.

Humility is the hallmark of true education. Truth and integrity are essential qualities for students. The means to acquire these qualities is devotion to God. Without these attainments, education is a futile exercise.

You all know how the village folk and the tribal population lead more virtuous lives than most "educated" persons. Immoral practices are on the increase in places where there are colleges, universities and courts. More honesty and integrity and compassion and fellow-feeling seem to prevail among the people in the remote forest areas. The "educated" are doing more harm to society today than the uneducated.

### **Compassion is the greatest wealth**

This is not proper education. You must set an example to the world. You must correct your faults and avoid committing them in the future. Love God and earn His love. Redeem your lives by developing compassion and kindness. All other accomplishments and *sadhanas* are of no avail. Compassion is the greatest wealth. Purity of heart comes foremost.

Students should take note of two things. One is the health of your body depends on the purity of your blood. The other is: you can always enjoy real bliss as long as your devotion is pure and unsullied. With purity of body and mind, you are assured of the highest bliss. When you have achieved this, you can carry on your normal lives with ease.

Because of the uniqueness of our University, you have to demonstrate its exemplary character. You have to take in whatever good things you can from others, but you should lead your own ideal life. This is the lesson to be learnt from a tree, which draws its sustenance from the soil, the water, the air, and the sun, but remains true to its own nature as a tree. Surrender yourselves to God and not to anyone else.

*Discourse at the Institute Auditorium after the distribution of prizes to Secondary School students who had participated in the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet in January. 20 Feb 1992*

*Elation at profit, joy and cheer, dejection at loss and misery, these are the natural characteristics common to all mortals. What, then, is the excellence of the Sadhaka? He should not forget the principle, "Be vigilant and suffer the inevitable, gladly." When difficulties and losses overwhelm you, do not lose heart and precipitate some action but meditate calmly on how they ever came to be. Try to discover simple means of overcoming them or avoiding them in an atmosphere of Shanthy.*

*Sathya Sai Baba*