

## 29. Three Cardinal Vices

Dear Students! In order to foster one's individual personality, everyone has to acquire knowledge of ethics and morality. Personality is not an ordinary term. It expresses the essential quality of a human being. For the Sanskrit word *Vyakthithvam* the equivalent term in English is personality. Personality is acquired only on the basis of adherence to moral principles. The term *neethi* in Sanskrit is associated with manners and good conduct. When a man exercises discrimination in daily activity, then he is said to observe morality. A life without morality is utterly useless. The prestige of any community depends upon its morals. If morality is absent, the community comes to grief. Whether it is a nation, a society, or an individual, when they conduct themselves contrary to morality, the civilisation which they might have fostered for a long time will come to ruin. One may have plenty of wealth, position, authority and much else, but all these are meretricious; morality alone enhances the worth of a human being.

Kings and emperors in Bharath from quite ancient times based their lives on morality and acquired honour and glory. It is on account of them that Bharath was called a Divine land, a land of *Karma* (right Action), a land of *Yoga*, and a land of *Thyaaga* (sacrifice). The name and fame of Emperor Ashoka have survived for millennia because he practised in his day-to-day life the great virtues. Akbar, among Mogul emperors, has been esteemed as a great ruler because of his conduct as an emperor.

### **Destroy selfishness totally**

Only a moral life can be called sacred. Man is a sacred being. But when he indulges in selfishness, his sacred, divine life is undermined. The sacred *Aatma* is fundamental for every human being. This is also called *Anthar-aatma*. God as the Indweller guides and directs human life as *Anthar-aatma*, the inner-conscience of every human being.

In human life today selfishness and self-interest have assumed prodigious proportions. Whatever he does, whatever he sees, whatever he studies, man makes it subserve selfish interests. Human life has become a plaything in the hands of selfishness.

Only when selfishness is totally destroyed in the human heart, will man develop a broad-mindedness that will promote unity and sacredness among mankind. When this selfishness grows continually, it takes the form of *Kaama* (lust), *Krodha* (hatred) and *Lobha* (greed). These three vices are demonic in nature. When these three demonic vices grow in them, human beings lose faith in God. Besides losing faith in God, they also develop enmity towards God. Worldly desires increase. The Divine quality declines.

### **Hatred and enmity towards God ruins oneself**

You can find proofs of this in the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavatha* and the *Mahabharatha*. The story of *Ramayana* shows how one who began his career with lust, developed hatred and enmity towards God and mined himself. Ravana was a great scholar. He had mastered sixty-four types of *vidya* (knowledge). He was the first one who invented an aeroplane called Pushpaka Vimaana. He had mastered the language of animals, birds and insects. There was nothing wanting by way of knowledge in Ravana. In terms of wealth and prosperity his kingdom excelled heaven itself. He did a lot of penance to acquire mastery over the physical world. In spite of all these, he had faith only in the phenomenal world and not in the Divine. He did not choose to enquire who was behind all creation.

The universe is the property of the Creator. Rama was verily the Over-Soul itself. Sita was Rama's *Shakthi*. She was the daughter of Mother Earth. She was the embodiment of Nature. Ravana developed enmity towards Rama and wanted to abduct Sita. What was the result of all this? Hating God and going after Nature, how did he end? At the end of it all, not only himself, but his kingdom and his entire brood were destroyed. In spite of all his knowledge and powers, he ruined himself because of his moral lapses. He did not recognise the divinity within him.

What is the lesson to be learnt from Ravana's fate? It is this: However much of worldly knowledge you may have, you should *seek Aatma Vidya* (knowledge of the *Aatma*). Your parents or relations may be distant from you. But God is not distant from you. God is always with you, behind you and around you and He will protect you. Giving up the Divine, which is so close to you, and going after worldly happiness, is fraught with danger. Ravana made all efforts to satisfy his own desire, became an enemy of God and was ultimately destroyed.

### **Lesson from the *Bhagavatha***

Next, you have the *Bhagavatha*. The *Bhagavatha* teaches the lesson that anger destroys people. In the *Bhagavatha*, Hiranya Kashyapa looked upon God as his enemy. He deemed himself the supreme Lord. He felt that there was no power greater than himself. Hiranya Kashyapa was a great scientist. He plumbed the depths of the ocean. He had control over the five elements.

Despite all these accomplishments he developed enmity towards God. He subjected his son, Prahlada, to innumerable ordeals because he was a devotee of Narayana. He tried to drown Prahlada in the ocean and hurl him from the top of a mountain. He got Prahlada bitten by snakes. But Prahlada survived all the ordeals. Prahlada was always chanting the name of Lord Narayana, whom Hiranya Kashyapa hated. Anger causes destruction of wisdom. And when wisdom is lost, everything is lost--honour, wealth, position and life itself. Scientific knowledge without wisdom is of no use. Along with science there should be discrimination.

*The Ramayana* teaches how a person suffers on account of evil desires. The *Bhagavatha* teaches lessons as to how a person suffers on account of anger and hatred. All their knowledge and powers could not save Ravana or Hiranya Kashyapa. It is only God who can give protection. Developing enmity towards God, Ravana and Hiranya Kashyapa courted disaster.

### **Greed goeth before a fall**

Duryodhana signifies one who has wicked thoughts. His minister was Dussasana. Dussasana means one who promulgates bad laws. A combination of these two led to the growth of greed. On account of their *lobha* (greed) the Kauravas were totally destroyed.

On one occasion Krishna said, "Arjuna means a person whose heart is pure, immaculately." Krishna told Arjuna (on the battlefield), "Arjuna! Get up, get up Dhananjaya. Destiny is all powerful. Justice always wins. Selfishness will end in ruin. This is the nature of *Yuga Dharma*. Know the truth (of what is to come). Dhritrashtra may be the father of a hundred children. But, there will not be even one to perform the last rites for him. That is how fate works." Krishna thus revealed to Arjuna the fate of the Kauravas in the beginning itself. Dhritrashtra had a hundred sons. Of what use were they? At the end not even one son remained to perform his obsequies. The reason was greed. The Kauravas were not prepared to give to the Pandavas their rightful share. Duryodhana wanted to keep everything to himself, including what belonged to others. This kind of selfishness is called *Lobha* (greed).

In the *Ramayana*, because of Kaama (desire) Ravana was destroyed. In the *Bhagavatha*, Hiranya Kashyapa, despite his prodigious knowledge and power, was destroyed on account of his anger against God.

### **The fate of those who hated God**

Ravana, Hiranya Kashyapa and Duryodhana hated God and were utterly destroyed. The basic difference between the Kauravas and the Pandavas was in their attitude towards God. The Pandavas had full faith in God. They thought God was their all. The Kauravas were indifferent to God. All they wanted was only the kingdom.

Before the Kurukshetra war, Arjuna went to Krishna to seek His help and Duryodhana also went to Krishna. Krishna saw both of them coming. He closed his eyes and acted as if He was sleeping. He wanted to teach the world the difference between the two. When he was awakened he found Arjuna sitting at his feet. Duryodhana was full of ego. He thought: "I am a king. How can I sit at the feet of Krishna?" He took his seat behind the head of Krishna. On opening His eyes, Krishna saw Arjuna, who was sitting at his feet. Krishna asked, "Brother-in-law, why have you come?" Duryodhana was filled with jealousy. He reflected, "As soon as He got up, Krishna is talking to Arjuna and not to me." He did not realise that it was only natural for Krishna to see Arjuna first because he was sitting at Krishna's feet. Arjuna got up and offered *Namaskar*.

Krishna knew that Duryodhana was sitting behind. He asked Arjuna, "What do you want?" Duryodhana came closer and said, "Krishna I have also come." Krishna said, "So both of you have come. I have two things to offer. On one side I am alone. On the other side there is my entire army. Do you want my army and kingdom or Myself?" Being apprehensive that Arjuna might ask for the Army, Duryodhana came forward and said, "Krishna, I want your army." He said, "Duryodhana, I give you my army, you can go." Arjuna told Krishna, "Swami, I do not want anything except you. I will be happy if I have you alone."

Right from the beginning the Pandavas believed in "God first, the world next and finally the I." The belief of the Kauravas was: "I first, the world next and God last." So, for them God was last.

### **Those who are close to God gets His grace**

In order to prevent a war between the Kauravas and Pandavas, Krishna played the role of an envoy. Duryodhana felt that the Pandavas were successful because of the support of Krishna and hatched a number of plans to get hold of Krishna and do away with him when he came to Hastinapura. Vidura was aware of these plans. Krishna entered the Assembly of the Kauravas along with Vidura. The blind king Dhritharashtra addressed Krishna and said: "The Pandavas and the Kauravas are cousins. When they are children of two brothers, you should have the same attitude towards them. Why are you prejudiced against the Kauravas? Why do you love the Pandavas?" Krishna replied: "Dhritharashtra! You are not merely suffering from physical blindness, mentally also you are blind. I shower my grace on those who take refuge in Me. The one who is close to a fire gets both warmth and light. The Pandavas have been close to the fire. They are getting the wisdom and the grace in the form of light and fire. The Kauravas are staying far from the fire."

Here fire refers to *Jnanaagni*, the fire of wisdom. The Pandavas were near and dear to Krishna. To whom can you compare them? In our body the head is very important. Next the shoulder, the stomach, and the legs. The body consists of these four parts, but it is useless without the heart. Krishna told Dhritharashtra: "Oh blind king, I am giving the analogy of a body with reference to

the Pandavas. In this body, Dharmaraja may be compared to the head, Arjuna to the shoulders, Bheema to the stomach and Nakula and Sahadeva to the legs.. In it, Krishna is the heart. Without Krishna, there are no Pandavas. Without the Pandavas there is no Krishna. That is the kind of mutual relationship between them. They are mutually interdependent."

### **Justice will prevail where there is God**

Krishna made this declaration in the open court, so dear were the Pandavas to the Lord. As they were protection for the Pandavas from Krishna, though they had lost the kingdom and everything else, Krishna was able to get back the kingdom and everything else and confer joy on them. Success comes to those who have the protection of God. When Dhritrashtra asked Sanjaya who would win the war, Sanjaya answered: "Where there is Krishna, the Yogeswara, and Partha with bow and arrow, there justice will prevail and there will be victory. This is my firm conviction."

The Pandavas firmly believed in *Dharma* and God. The Kauravas went and prostrated at the feet of their mother, Gandhari, before the start of the war. She had blindfolded her eyes and was not able to see them. She caressed Duryodhana and blessed him. She observed: "*Yatho Dharmah thatho jayah.*" (Where there is *Dharma*, there is victory). But they had no righteousness on their side. Even their mother blessed them in that manner. Their wickedness was responsible for this. They went to their preceptor Dronacharya, and offered *Namaskar*. Dronacharya declared: "Where there is *Dharma*, there is Krishna: where there is Krishna, there is victory." Thus both mother and their preceptor blessed in these terms. Neither the mother nor the preceptor blessed them with success. The Kauravas relied on their wealth and the power of their arms. But, there is need for God's grace. Along with God's grace, there could be wealth, position, power and knowledge.

### **Earn blessings of parents and God's grace**

Dear students! Pursue your studies. But, together with education, earn the blessings of your parents. In addition, earn the grace of God. Despite all his knowledge, authority, power and prowess, what happened to a warrior like Karna? He lacked God's grace.

Earn God's grace. That is true spiritual education. Along with spiritual education, you may pursue worldly education. A basic requirement for all this is good character. Morality alone helps one in a number of ways. If your conduct is not good, society will not respect you. As long as one is in power, society may respect one. Once power goes, the man will be an object of derision. You may not have any power, but morality will confer honour and respect.

### **Epics to show the power of the Divine**

To recognise the power of the Divine, here is an illustration from the *Ramayana*: Rama and Lakshmana went to protect the *yaga* performed by the sage Viswamithra. There were demons who wanted to undo the *yaga* performed by Viswamithra. Mareecha was one of them. He was the son of the ogress Thataka.

As soon as Rama espied Mareecha, with one arrow he despatched him far away. Mareecha recognised then the power of Rama. He firmly believed that Rama had the power of Divinity. From that moment he gave up his demonic quality. When he was in this state Ravana came to him to seek his help for kidnapping Sita. Ravana said, "I want to kidnap Sita. Rama and Lakshmana are there. Become a gold deer and divert their attention." Folding his palms, Mareecha told Ravana: "Oh King of Demons! You are having so much confidence in your

physical power. Rama is not an ordinary man. I have experienced his prowess. You have lost your senses. Do not embark on this enterprise. You can never achieve victory over Rama."

In a number of ways Mareecha sought to advise Ravana. There is a saying: "When destruction is impending, one's intelligence will be perverted." Ravana was in a rage. He said: "Mareecha will you obey my command or shall I sever your head?" Mareecha thought within himself: "When I become a golden deer Rama may kill me. If I go against Ravana, he will kill me. Death is certain either way. Instead of meeting with death at the hands of Ravana, it is better I die at the hands of Rama." Mareecha did not like to be killed by the wicked King Ravana. That is why Mareecha took the form of the golden deer.

Dear Students! the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharatha* and the *Bhagavatha* teach the lesson that desire, anger and greed cause destruction. Fix your faith on God and not on the things of the world. When you have faith in God, your discrimination will be perfect. You will be guided by your conscience, which will always lead you properly. In Vedantic parlance, this conscience is called *Chith*. God is *Sath-chith-ananda*. *Sath* means Being, *Chith* means Awareness. Where the two are combined them is bliss. That is the meaning of BABA- Being + Awareness + Bliss - *Aatma*.

Dear students! You are all aspirants of Bliss. You should enjoy bliss. You have to combine *Sath* and *Chith* to realise *Ananda*. Without *Sath* (purity), there can be no divinity. Without divinity there is no bliss. Always think of God.

*Sri Sathya Sai Institute Hostel, Prashanthi Nilayam,*

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*Man has become artificial, crooked, twisted out of his normal shape. He has left behind the simple natural ways and made his mind a lumber-room for ideas, worries, anxieties and terrors. He can live on very much less, with much greater joy for himself and others. If only he remembers that he is a treasure chest with the Divine spark in it, he will be more loving and more useful.*

*Sathya Sai Baba*