

8. Sathya and *Dharma* : bases of life

Truth is God.

*Truth is the source of
wealth and prosperity.*

*It is, again, Truth that sustains
virtue in the world.*

WHERE there is Truth, there dwells Lakshmi, the goddess of Prosperity. Truth is changeless and eternal. It is vital to man's life. If, in the midst of misery and suffering in the world, there is goodness, it is because of Truth.

In ancient times, Kings ruled over their kingdom on the basis of Truth. They were ready to sacrifice everything, even their lives, for upholding Truth. Harishchandra stands as the supreme example. He sacrificed his wife, son and the entire kingdom for the sake of truth. He even offered to perform the low task of a caretaker in a crematorium. Because of lack of Truth, there is no peace and security in the world. Truth always protects a nation.

Today we are not adhering to this Truth. Man is dallying with untruth forsaking the path of virtue. He is ruining his life immersed in falsehood and unrighteous actions. Man has lost respect for Truth today. Love is a forgotten value. People deem righteousness as an irrelevance in the modern context. Everything that man does today, all his plans and projects are self-centered. Even spirituality is practised to gain social recognition, more ostentatious than genuine. All human activities are based on attachment and hatred. Selfishness and jealousy dominate the modern man. Human values have lost their hold and hence there is no peace and security.

Truth is the foundation to build man's character

There can be no peace when mankind forgets *Aadhaara* (the base) and concentrates on the *aadheya* (superstructure). Man is swayed by the delusion that life is meant only to enjoy; eat, drink, and sleep. With this view, he acquires wealth and increases his possessions. He makes no attempt to understand the purpose for which **he** is born in this world. Though he attempts to pursue right action, he fails because of his greed, ambition, lust and other temptations.

Truth is the foundation on which the character of man is built. When Truth is not respected, the mansion of life collapses like a building that has a weak foundation. Man does not realise this and pursues a life of sensuous pleasures, ignoring Truth which is the Life Force that sustains his entire being.

This is due to the delusion caused by *Maaya*. *Maaya* is a strange phenomenon that envelops man in spite of all his precautions. It is like a shadow that chases one wherever he may be. The shadow's size depends very much upon the direction of the light. When one moves towards the light and comes under it, the shadow disappears and there is no *Maaya*--only Truth remains.

All worldly knowledge and physical prowess are of no avail if there is no spiritual strength. This is illustrated by the lives of Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaaksha in the *Bhaagavatham*, of Karna and the Kauravas in the *Mahaabhaaratha* and of Raavana in the Raamaayana.

It is doubtless essential to acquire skills of various kinds. But the purpose for which they are to be used should also be understood. They have to be used for the realisation of the four main

goals of human life, described compendiously as the *Purusharthas*. The four goals are: *Dharma* (righteousness), *Artha* (wealth), *Kaama* (desire) and *Moksha* (liberation).

Understand the true meaning of *Purusha*

First of all, the term *Purusha* has to be properly understood. In-common parlance, it is applied to a male person. But *Purusha* refers to the *Jeeva, the Aathma, Praana and the Brahman*. It is the *Chaithanya* (awareness or consciousness) in every being, as distinct from *Prakrithi*, which represents the body (and the phenomenal universe). *Prakrithi* represents the feminine principle, while consciousness represents the male aspect. *Purusha*, however, applies to both man and woman. Among the *Purusharthas*, *Dharma* comes first.

Dharma is commonly understood as referring to activities like going on pilgrimages, offering charity and performing good acts. But these activities serve only to provide mental satisfaction. They do not lead to the Divine. *Dharma* is the very embodiment of Divinity. All efforts to achieve oneness with the Divine can alone be termed *Dharma*.

Artha is ordinarily understood as referring to wealth. But what is the wealth that one should really seek? It is the wealth of *Jnaana*, the wealth of *Brahma Jnaana* (Divine Wisdom). Pursuit of this knowledge is the real quest for wealth, not the pursuit of money and possessions. It is *Jnaana Aishvarya* that one must seek. Only that knowledge will lead man to the goal of human life.

Kaama is not mere fulfillment of worldly desires, which are transient and momentary. The desire should be for *Moksha*, which means liberation from attachment to all worldly objects and cultivating attachment to the Divine. Attachment to the worldly objects is *moha*. The renunciation of these attachments, which is *Kshaya*, leads to *Moha-Kshaya* or *Moksha*.

The speciality of Shivarathri

It is in order to rid oneself of evil tendencies that sacred days like Shivarathri are observed. Nights follow days and days succeed nights. This is an everyday occurrence. What is the speciality of Shivarathri? As the night precedes the New Moon day, it will be pitch dark everywhere outside, the heart will be filled with bright effulgence on this sacred night. Light represents *mangalam* (auspiciousness). That is why the day is observed as Shivarathri. When Hanumaan set the entire city ablaze,

the darkness of the night gave place to brilliant light. But at the same time the heart of Raavana was full of darkness. The significance of Shivarathri is that though the entire world is dark outside, if one keeps his heart filled with divine thoughts, he will be filled with effulgence. Every year in the month of *Maagha*, the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight at midnight, when worldly objects concentrate on the Divine, they experience Divine feelings. This is associated with the Shivalingam that transforms the minds of the people.

The proper way of observing Shivarathri

The significance of keeping awake on this night is that it should be spent in the awareness of the Divine. It is necessary to keep awake the whole night with the name of the Divine on one's tongue without stop. But people tend to give more importance to the aspect of merely keeping awake throughout the night in some form or another. They spend the night in witnessing cinema shows or indulging in other unholy activities such as playing cards. This is not the proper way of observing Shivarathri. It is also customary to observe *upavaasa* (fasting) by giving up their

usual food. The proper way to spend the night is by constant remembrance of *Aathmathathva* (the Inner-Self) by chanting the Lord's Name.

To proceed on one's life's journey successfully is like driving a car safely. This requires right understanding of how to handle the switch, the steering wheel, the gears and the brakes. One should also follow the *Vedhic Maxim*; "*Sathyam Vadha, Dharmam Chara.*" It is an injunction to man to speak the Truth and practise right conduct. This will help him to be true to his conscience.

Those who practise *Dharma* and speak the Truth always in course of time become Divine. They merge in the Divine like the river merging with the ocean. Truth and Righteousness are at the root of human existence. No one should think it is difficult to adhere to truth. In fact it is easier to speak the truth while it needs a lot of cleverness to tell an untruth and sustain it.

Dharma, Karma and Marma

Dharma (Righteousness) is the root of human life. Its importance is not realised just as people looking at the fruit of a tree do not recognise the roots from which the tree and its fruits derive their sustenance. The tree has grown because of the water supplied at its root. People want to enjoy the fruits of life without watering the roots of *Dharma* which nourish the tree of life. The Bhagavath Geetha speaks about *aathma-phala-thyaaga* (renouncing the fruits of one's action). Karma is the tree and the fruit you see in the tree is the result of your *karma*. What is it based upon? That is the *marma* (the secret). It is the unseen *Dharma* that is the secret. It is the unseen root of the tree. The meaning of this *marma* is that we should follow *Dharma* which determines the nature of the fruit borne by the tree.

To use another analogy, the mansion of life may be said to have four walls. These are *dharma, karma, marma and janma* (birth). *Brahma* is based on these four walls.

The *Brahmathathva* (*the Brahman* principle) is within you. There is no need to search for it outside. All that is needed is to make an enquiry about the Self within.

How the Divine works

Take for instance, your body How many realise the miraculous working of innumerable organs within the body? Everyone must understand how organs like the heart function and see that no excessive strain is placed upon them. The heart and the lungs are discharging their functions ceaselessly and regularly with rhythmic precision. All the limbs are doing their functions in an orderly way; apparently up to the Geetha dictum "*Karmanyeva adhikaarasthe*" (You are entitled only to perform your duty). They are carrying out their respective duties without any concern for their rewards. This is, indeed, the lesson to be learnt from the ways of Nature. It has been well said- Nature is the best teacher. Look at the way the heart functions; the impure blood comes through one channel, it is purified and is pumped to all parts of the body through another channel. This is the process by which the body is kept hale and healthy. This is how the Divine works. Whatever doctors may say, the wonderful activities going on within the body ceaselessly and automatically are manifestations of the power of the Divine.

Students today do not realise the inner meaning of some of the rituals practised by the ancients and preserved even today They have been prescribed for specific purposes and are full of meaning. They are intended to achieve physical, mental and spiritual purity.

In this context I would like to relate an incident. The grandson of an old gentleman watched the latter sipping a few drops of water from the palm after uttering a *manthra*. The lad, who was dipping his pen from time to time in an ink bottle to do his homework, asked his grandfather why he was drinking the water in small droplets instead of drinking it all in one gulp. The grandfather asked him why he was dipping his pen into the ink bottle frequently instead of pouring the ink on the paper! Just as the pen has to be dipped for writing a few words at a time the water has to be taken with the words of *the manthra* each time. The lad learnt a good lesson from the example of his action.

You must have full faith in God and should not let anyone disturb it. If an atheist asks you why you believe in God you should firmly tell him that it is none of his business to question the devotee's belief which is purely a personal matter between him and his God. No one has a right to question another man's belief.

Have firm faith in God

God's ways may not be easy to comprehend. But whatever God does is only out of His boundless love to help the devotees. Some do not understand this and attribute partiality to God. This is due to ignorance. True devotees should not give room for such doubts and undermine their faith in God. They should always try to strive to seek the One Divine in the many

Scientists employ all kinds of *yanthras* (instruments) and declare that they have not found God anywhere. But the saints, seeing God with the inner vision, see Him everywhere. They use the power of *manthra* to see God; they see God through the lens of Love.

When some people ask you, "Can you show God?" you should reply: "You are God; that is why you are able to talk and act." There is nothing in the world other than God! To know divinity you should know the sacredness within you. Keeping salt in your mouth, you can't taste anything that is sweet. Only when you cast off the salt and wash your mouth can you experience the taste of the sweet. Worldly desires are like salt. Discard them. Then you can realise Divinity. You must shed the evil qualities of jealousy, hatred and anger and divest yourself of the ego. If you rectify your defects and cleanse your heart, you can realise Sathya and *Dharma* as the basis of your life. This is the Life Principle and with this you can lead a purposeful life. Making use of your intelligence as whip and the mind as the yoke, you can drive the chariot of life, with the senses as horses, to the right destination.

Adhere to your *Dharma*

You must understand your *Dharma* without which you cannot act in the right manner. You are the master with the intellect and mind as instruments. The mind is compared to the moon and the intellect to the sun. When the sky is clouded in the rainy season, the moon is hidden from our view by dark clouds. Similarly, our minds may be clouded by bad thoughts. But when the discriminating intellect represented by the sun comes into play, you have the effulgence that dispels the darkness. Man is unlike animals whose vertebral column is horizontal. Man can stand erect on his two legs. Animals have instincts but no mind or intellect. Man has the power to discriminate between good and bad.

Embodiments of Love! Purify your minds. Shed jealousy and hatred. Chanting God's name will confer bliss on you. You are unable to understand the inner feelings of joy that the chanting of the Divine name will yield. You should identify yourself with the Divine vibrations which are like electric waves creating boundless energy.

"Be human"

The word "human" is full of significance:

'H' stands for "high human values."

'U' stands for "understanding of human sanctity."

'M' stands for being "mindful of one's duty."

'A' stands for "aanandham."

'N' stands for the "name of God."

So you should go on chanting the name of God repeatedly throughout this precious night.

Discourse in the Puurnachandhra Auditorium on 10-3-1994.

Try and prevent the five sins that the body commits: Killing, Adultery, Theft, Drinking intoxicants and the Eating of flesh. It is great help for the highest life, if these are kept, as far away as possible.

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