

21. Dedicate all actions to God

*There is no greater penance
than contentment for securing happiness.*

*There is no worse disease
than insatiable desire.*

*There is no greater virtue
than compassion.*

Peace is the highest spiritual discipline.

EMBODIMENTS of love! There is no greater penance *than shaantham* (tranquillity or peace). Peace is the foremost prize for man. Peace confers beauty on sages. Peace is the fascinating charm of the Divine. "Without such peace there can be no happiness," declared Thyaagaraaja (the composer-saint of south India).

There is no greater *santhosham* (happiness) than being contented. Man seeks happiness in various forms. But there is no happiness equal to *shaanthi* (peace). Thyaagaraaja sang in the same strain, declaring that without peace there can be no happiness. There is no greater happiness than that derived from *santhrupthi* (contentment). What greater heaven is there than contentment?

"There is no worse disease than desire." Contemporary man is afflicted by endless desires. These desires are the cause of innumerable diseases, There must be a limit to desires. Today desires grow limitlessly. Consequently, diseases also increase limitlessly. Owing to endless desires, man is affected mentally and this gives rise to many bodily ailments. Hence everyone should try as far as possible to keep a check on desires.

Compassion-filled heart is the temple of the Divine

"Na dharmo dhayaa samah" (There is no virtue equal to compassion). What is *dharm*a? Compassion is the highest *dharm*a. A heart filled with compassion is the temple of the Divine. Every man should have a compassion-filled heart.

There is a lesson every man should learn. There is the potency of a *manthra* (a sacred declaration) in every word. Every plant has medicinal properties. Every human 'being is precious. A true individual is one who knows and lives upto this truth.

People today do not recognise the value of being human and the preciousness of time.

You spend the whole day in hectic activity.

Do you call this living?

You eat three times a day.

Does this constitute living?

Do you think that living consists

In sleeping comfortably?

*Do you regard indulgence in
Gossip as the aim of life?
Did God give you life for these purposes?
Knowing what is merit and what is sin,
You are indifferent to them.
Is this the way you spend your life-time?
At least from now on,
Learn to lead a truly human life.*

The Divine energy

The cosmos is a creation of the Divine. It is surcharged with energy. This energy is not localised at a particular point in space or in time. Though this energy is all-pervading, man is not able to recognise its divine nature. As he cannot recognise it, he presumes that it does not exist. Electrical energy is present all the time (in the electrical installations). But its presence is recognized only when a bulb is switched on. Likewise, though God is omnipresent. His divine effulgence will shine only in those who adore Him with a pure heart.

Man today is unable to understand what is life, what is its goal, what is one's duty and what should be one's aim. Time is moving fast like a whirlwind. Man's allotted span of life is melting every moment like a block of ice. Man's life ends even before he is aware of his duty. What is his duty? Every individual has some aspirations, some ideals to be realised and some sacred paths to be trodden. He makes no effort to pursue these aims. What is the goal and purpose of one's life, what is its secret? Man hardly puts these questions to himself. He is content to devote himself to sensuous pleasures. This is not what he should do; it is not the aim of life.

Every individual should manifest a divine ideal in his life. This ideal should absorb his entire life and activities. Alas! man today does not follow this sacred path.

Everything is based on man's thoughts, which find expression in external forms--a reflection of his inner being. This can be illustrated by a simple example. When one wants to build a house, he plans in advance how the different rooms should be located. These ideals are later incorporated in blue prints. The thoughts come first and then they are given concrete forms. Similarly when you want to write a letter, you first think of what you should write and then commence to write.

Thoughts lead to action. There can be no action without *sankalpas* (firm thoughts). Hence, it is essential to entertain sacred thoughts. Everyone should realise that all the sorrows and miseries of modern man are due to his bad thoughts. Every man thinks that someone else is responsible for his troubles. This is not so. You alone are responsible for the good and evil that befalls you. You blame others because of your weakness.

Valmeeki's transformation

The Kenopanishath has proclaimed this truth beautifully. "*Brahmavith Brahmaiva Bhavathi*" (The knower of the Divine becomes Divine himself). Whatever you aspire for, whatever your yearning, that you become yourself. When Valmeeki wished to write the Raamaayana, he first meditated on all the qualities of Raama and then alone he could commence his epic. Because of

the constant repetition of the name of Raama and continuous meditation on the Raama Principle, he shone with the effulgence of Raama. It is one of the miracles of Raama that the highwayman Rathnaakara could become the author of a great epic.

When you meditate on the effulgence of anyone, a part of that effulgence enters into you. Such was the case with Prahlada. By constant chanting of the name of the lord, devoting all his thoughts to Naaraayana, he was filled with the power of the Divine and experienced ineffable bliss. He could face with utter equanimity all the ordeals which he was subjected to by the minions of his father. (Svami sang a poem from the Bhaagavatham in which Pothana describes how Prahlada chanted only the names of the Lord while the *raakshasas* were tormenting him). Prahlada had no sense of fear. The effulgence of Vishnu shone in his face.

Man is a spark of the Divine

Man today should reflect on his true nature. The Lord declares in the Geetha- "The individual on earth is a fragment of my Eternal Self." The import of this declaration is "Oh foolish man! Don't think you are only a composite of the five elements. You are an *Amsa* (fragment) of Myself."

A branch is a part of a tree. A child is a part of the mother. The branch cannot survive without the tree. The child cannot survive without the mother. Man is fragment of Maadhava (the Supreme Self). Hence man cannot exist without Maadhava. But, it may be asked, "Is not man surviving today? How is he doing that?" But what kind of life is he leading? Is he living as a human being? No. He is living as an animal. If he were aware that he is a spark of the Divine, why is he a prey to suffering? Does God have any worries or troubles? None at all. "He is in eternal bliss, the bestower of all happiness, the embodiment of all wisdom," says a Sanskrit sloka. If you are a fragment of that Divine, why should you be a prey to all this suffering? When you enquire in this manner you will realise that you are not behaving like a spark of the Divine. You must take a pledge from today to lead a godly life.

Consider also how this has been treated in other religions. In the Bible, God is described as omnipotent and all encompassing. Moses was always meditating on God and dedicated his entire life to God. Because of this, Moses acquired the effulgence of the Divine. Jesus Christ declared repeatedly: "I and You are one."

A very great scientist, Charles Darwin, was so much devoted to his teacher, Henslow, that he became the very image of his preceptor. Such feelings should arise in the hearts of every one. Today, people's feelings vary from moment to moment. The result is men lead mindless lives. Having taken birth as a human being, having realised that one is a spark of the Divine, one should lead a godly life.

Quest for perfection

There was a great (Italian) violin manufacturer by name Anthony (Stradivarius). He used to take a whole year to produce a single violin, perfect in every aspect. Once a friend asked him "Anthony, if you take one year to make a single violin, how can you make a living?" Anthony replied "Brother! God is the embodiment of perfection. In harmony with His perfection I must make a perfect violin. If I do not make a perfect violin, I shall be a traitor to God. God 'is fullness, total perfection. If you want to please God, your thoughts, words and actions must be entirely pure." That is perfect, and this must also be perfect. It is in this spirit that some of the great figures in the western world worshipped and served God.

God is all perfection. Hence, in worshipping Him, the feeling should be total. God should not be worshipped in halves and fractions. The devotee should achieve total involvement with the Divine. Quantitatively there would be a difference between God, who is the ocean of love, and the devotee whose love is a drop in that ocean. But the quality of love is the same.

The gopikas' devotion

Whatever you do to please God must be in harmony with the perfection of the Divine. Your words should be absolute truth Your actions should be totally God-Oriented. All thoughts should be divinised. It should be realised that God is the Indweller in all beings. Because man has failed to realise this truth he leads a double life and is a prey to troubles and worries. Only by leading a godly life can man redeem himself.

The Gopikas (cowherd women) are perfect examples of total and pure devotion. They were totally absorbed in Krishna. They ignored the message brought to them by Uddhava. They told Uddhava that they were so totally immersed in the adoration of Krishna that they had no time or inclination to do anything else. They had totally identified themselves with Krishna.

Krishna was a six-year-old boy when he was sporting with the Gopikas. Even Bhaaratheeyas have wrong notions about Krishna's sports with the cowherdresses. His sports were those of a young child with his brothers and sisters. By his sports Krishna moved the hearts of the Gopikas. The Gopikas saw the image of Krishna in every creeper, every flower and ever plant. When Krishna was away from Gokulam, the Gopikas went to Brindavan and appealed to every creeper and flower to let them know where Krishna, who had stolen their hearts, was hiding himself. (Svaami sang the song of the Gopikas describing Krishna and appealing to the creepers to let them know that He was not hiding amongst them). The Gopikas had only one image before them, that of Krishna. They had only one vision, that of Krishna.

The nature of true love between the devotee and God cannot be understood by the unbelievers, the atheists. Only the loving devotee can experience the effulgence of the Divine. The man without love is lost in dialectical controversies, with the result that bitterness develops over arguments.

The human life is precious

The incarnation of Krishna proclaimed the doctrine of divine love, as manifested by the Gopikas. Man today is like an earthen pot filled with nectar. His body may be made of clay, but his spirit is eternal. The Divine has to be experienced through the body. Hence, human birth should not be treated as something trivial. Human life is worth living, it should be cherished as something precious.

But such a precious gift is being treated as dirt today. It is essential to realise the value of human existence. What is the goal of human life? It is to go back to the source from which we came. Our duty is to return to our primordial, original home.

All of you who are here have come from different parts of India and the world. After your stay here, you have to go back to your native places. Likewise human beings have come to the planet earth as pilgrims. They have to return to their original home. You have come from the *Aathma*. You have to go back to the *Aathma*. You have come from the *Brahman* (Supreme Self). You have to merge in the *Brahman*. You have incarnated as a spark of *Brahman*. You have to become the *Brahman*. In between there may be many impediments. You should ignore them. Have unshakable faith. That is true devotion.

Love is God's gift

Devotion does not consist merely in different forms of worship. It is dedicated offering of yourself to the Lord with unsullied love. You have come from the Divine with love. You have to base your life on that love. That love is a gift of the Divine. You must treat it as Divine property and not as your personal possession. As long as you entertain the sense of personal property, you can never understand the *Aathmik* principle.

The feeling of 'I' and 'mine' is the root cause of all man's troubles. Attachment and possessiveness cannot be totally eschewed. But there should be limits for them. Insatiable desires are the cause of the growth of peacelessness. The Gopikas and Gopalas lived a life of contentment. They had only one desire: the yearning for God.

People are often affected by the deluding power of *Maaya*. Even the Gopikas once doubted whether a little boy like Krishna would be able to lift the Govardhana mountain to give shelter to the denizens of Repalle from a heavy downpour. Devotees should not give way to doubts. Faith in God should be firm till 'your last breath.

The triple purity

Embodiments of love! You celebrate what are regarded as the birthdays of God coming as an *avathaar*. What is the secret of these birthday celebrations? Every *Avathaar* comes to uphold or testify to a certain ideal or purpose. *Avathaars* come for establishing *Dharma* in the world (as declared in the Geetha). What is *Dharma*? There are various *Dharmas* (Codes of conduct) relating to celibates, house holders, renunciants and others. These *Dharmas* are related to one's stage in life. True *Dharma* is that which sustains *one*--"*Dhaarayathi Ithi Dharmah* "Man is sustained by three factors: the body, the mind, and the tongue. The hands represent the body, thoughts represent the mind and speech represents the tongue. The acting in unison of the body, the mind and the tongue is *Dharma*. Thoughts, words and actions should be in harmony. That is the mark of a true human being. This basic truth is valid without regard to place, nationality, language or religion. It is applicable to people everywhere, at all times. Those who observe this triple purity are the redeemed. They are the salt of the earth. They are the upholders of righteousness. To such adherents of *Dharma*, God is a constant companion, keeping close to them at all times and places. Today, people have to cherish and uphold this *Dharma*. Instead, they are deluded by attachment to the body to sacrifice purity in thought, word and deed.

To illustrate how attachment to bodily relations affects one's judgment, I would relate the episodes in the Mahaabhaaratha which preceded the Kurukshetra battle and the conduct of Arjuna on the battle field. Arjuna had vigorously opposed Krishna's attempts to hold peace parleys with the Kauravas as a futile exercise. But when he saw his preceptors, cousins, and other kinsmen ranged against him on the battlefield, he was despondent and did not wish to fight. It was then that Krishna taught him that the Spirit is immortal and bodies are perishable and one should not give way to bodily attachments in the performance of one's duty. The body has to be taken care of, but not excessively. It should be dedicated to the service of God.

The delusion of separateness

One may claim to surrender all his wealth, kith and kin and power and position to God. But this is not real surrender. One must realise: "I am in You, You are in me." God is one. The sense of separation between God and the individual should go.

Even Yashodha, though she had experienced numerous examples of Krishna's divinity, could not realise the oneness of Godhead, because of attachment to the body (owing to the delusion caused by *Maaya*). She complained about the worry caused to her by Krishna, who refused to eat the butter given by the mother, but went out stealing butter from the Gopikas' houses. She tied Krishna to a tree to prevent him from going round houses. Episodes such as these are intended to teach lessons to devotees about the ways of God. The Divine is in every individual, but one's realisation depends on one's own efforts. The Divine shines according to the degree of one's spiritual awareness. To manifest the full effulgence of the Divine, one has to adhere to the path of Love. Only through Love can the Supreme Divine be attained - God cannot be got by hatred, anger or jealousy. It is because these three evil qualities are present in people that you see in their faces the marks of misery. On the contrary look at the faces of Dhruva, Prahlada and Naarada. You see extreme brilliance on their faces because they are filled with the love of God. There should be no mark of sadness on the face of one who has faith in God. This was the case with Valmiki. His face was full of radiance---a radiance derived from Rama, who is the embodiment of Love.

All of you should strive to promote your effulgence and bliss by seeking oneness with the Divine. This is the primary duty of man.

(Bhagavan sang two songs in which He bemoaned the plight of human beings who were more concerned about their food than about God and who mastered all the texts but did not sincerely worship God). This was the message which Aadhi Shankaraacharya wished to convey in his famous hymn, Bhaja. Govindham. Every one should realise the transitoriness of life and turn his thoughts towards God early enough in life. The challenges of life should be faced with fortitude and firm faith in God. That is the Supreme quality of humanness. Its grandeur and power should not be belittled. Faith in God should never be given up, whatever one's scholarship, position or power. That is the summum-bonum of life.

Universal message of the Geetha

Today people have forgotten the eternal verities and are immersed in selfishness. The true meaning of *Svaartha* is dedication to the Self and not petty selfishness.

This is the Supreme message of the Bhagavath Geetha. It is not a message intended for one individual or one nation. It is meant for all mankind. It is the word of God the Eternal Wisdom, the Cosmic Director, Playwright and Actor, all rolled into one. The unbreakable bond between the One and the Many should be properly understood.

Divinise every act

Whatever you do, remember the omnipresence of the Divine. Do every act to please God, out of love and not out of compulsion. Divinise every act. The Lord declares in the Geetha: "Having been born in this transient and unhappy world, worship Me."

Krishna called upon Arjuna to stand up and face the battle, reminding him of what was in store for the evil-minded Kauravas. He adjured Arjuna to have full faith in Him and do his duty. Then Arjuna declared' "*Karishye vachanam thava*" (I shall do as you bid me).

Then Krishna declared' "You have now become my true devotee." And He exhorted Arjuna to rise and fight the battle which would end in the complete destruction of the Kauravas and the wicked quartet, Dhuryodhana, Dushshasana, Karna and Shakuni.

The great teaching of the Geetha is: "Put your trust in God, carry on your duties, be helpful to everyone and sanctify your lives." Dedicate all actions to God. That is the way to experience oneness with God. God is in you. You are in God. This oneness is the basic truth. Chant the name of the Lord and render social service in a spirit of selflessness and devotion to God.

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