

25. Earn the esteem of society by service

EMBODIMENTS of Love! Human life is immensely precious. But this sacred life is haunted by troubles of various kinds of daily living. Life is like an ocean carrying waves of pleasures and pain. In his ordinary life man is driven by innumerable desires to seek worldly pleasures of various kinds. This precious life is rendered meaningless and worthless by the pursuit of these mundane desires.

The body is essential for living. Without it man cannot accomplish anything. Human life is a composite of body, mind, and spirit. But man today ignores the mind and spirit and wastes his life by preoccupation with the body alone.

The mind is the most important organ in the body. It is vital for doing anything. Man's life is based on the mind. The universe is filled with mental consciousness. The cosmos is rooted in the mind. The mind is a bundle of thoughts. Hence man has to purify the mind by sacred thoughts. Only when he has noble thoughts he can lead an ideal life. Out of thoughts are born the desires. Desires activate the mind. Hence it is necessary to keep desires under control.

Dharma can be achieved through the body alone

Society tends to look askance at persons with physical disabilities. But limbs are not so very important. What is more essential is a pure mind. If all one's limbs are perfect, but if one's mind is impure, of what use are the limbs?

However, man can achieve what he desires, only if all the limbs in the body are in good shape. Man should make good use of all his organs to lead an ideal life. Every living being has come into existence for a purpose. Hence everyone should strive to use his body for the purpose for which he has been endowed with it.

Through the body alone can *Dharma* be achieved, declares the scripture. The body is given to man to carry out his duties in life. Men today tend to use the body for eating and sleeping, without recognizing the duties they have to perform. Should men live like beasts and birds, with no higher aims than eating, mating and sleeping? There is in man an immortal spirit, whose presence should be realised.

People pursue various studies, engage themselves in various activities, but make no attempt to understand what is humanness. Of what use is knowledge, wealth and position if man ignores his essential eternal spiritual reality? Every man's life should be dedicated to the service of others.

Na thapaamsi na theerthani

Na thanthrani, japaanapi

Samsaara saagarathaare

Sajjana sevanam vinaa.

("Neither penance, nor baths in sacred waters, neither rituals nor chanting of the divine name will help one to cross the ocean of worldly life without service to good persons.")

Whatever pilgrimages one may perform, whatever *yaagas and japas* one may do, without using the body in the service of others, no one can achieve liberation. Every one should be prepared to

serve and be served. This body has been given so that one may do *seva* (serve others) and not for *Naayakathvam* (lord it over them).

Service is the supreme aim in life. Everyone should seek to redeem his life by service to his fellow-human beings. Render service to the extent of your capacity.

How can anyone be called human, if being born a human being and growing in a human society, he does not recognise human values? You must see that you don't harm any living being. "He alone is a redeemed being who causes no pain to others and avoids pain to himself," says a Telugu poem.

Advice to the handicapped

Those who are handicapped need not lament over their plight. They should develop good qualities. People today worry about their possessions, positions and associates, but not about their virtues. What is the value of riches, acquaintances and positions? There is need for a certain amount of material possessions. But excessive wealth is harmful. Of what use are fair-weather friends who surround you when you have money and position, but desert you when you lose them? God alone is an unfailing friend, who is with you at all times and protects you. When you cultivate such an attitude you can face any situation in life.

At birth all are pure and innocent. But as they grow, they develop arrogance, pride and ostentation. But this is not proper. People should cultivate humility and discipline, which are the hall-mark of humanness. Humanness means harmony in thought, word and deed. The absence of this harmony is degrading. Men should learn to respect one another. The divine is present in everyone. Strive to make others happy as far as possible.

Everyone should manifest his divine essence as a spark of the Divine. It is a fruit of many lives to be born as a human being. Man must lead an exemplary life. Education and wealth are good in themselves, but when they are misused they become harmful. The fault lies in the conduct of the persons concerned. Humanness-consists in leading a life free from egoism and acquisitiveness.

Every man should recognise what it is to be human. He should realise that his tongue, eyes, ears and other organs are given to him to glorify God, not to disparage or cause hurt to others. Jayadheva exhorted his tongue to revel in singing the greatness of the Lord. This is the task before every one. He should keep his tongue under control, serve society with dedication and lead a worthy life. Life is essentially transient. Hence while life lasts, one must earn the esteem and regard of one's fellowmen. One should not waste one's life. It must be filled with bliss. This is the true path for everyone.

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