

Virtues are the Foundation of Peace

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It is not good for you if your words are sweet but there is bitterness in your mind.

In fact, it is a blot on your character.

You will be appreciated in this world only when you lead your life devoid of such a blemish.

Listen, oh valiant sons of Bharat!

(Telugu poem)

Embodiments of divine Atma!

People today are leading a life beset with fear and unrest because there is no harmony between their thoughts and words. Everyone wants peace and spends time and energy to attain it. But nobody is making any enquiry as to what peace really means, where it is available, and what is the way to attain it.

One loses peace due to attachment and hatred

First of all, one has to question oneself whether one wants worldly peace or inner peace. Worldly peace is temporary and comes and goes. But one is deluded into thinking that it is real peace. One is unable to understand what is the nature of peace, what is its power, and how sublime it is.

The state of freedom from attachment (*raga*) and hatred (*dwesha*) is real peace. Where there is attachment and hatred, there can be no peace. What is *Prasanthi* (supreme peace)? '*Pra*' means to blossom. Therefore, the blos-

soming of inner peace in a state devoid of hatred and attachment is *Prasanthi*. It is, in fact, the manifestation of inner peace.

But is there anyone in this world who has experienced this *Prasanthi*? When you enquire this, you will realise that it is very difficult for ordinary mortals to experience supreme peace devoid of hatred and attachment. Peace cannot be acquired from outside, it has to be manifested from within.

How can you attain this supreme peace? You use another thorn to take out a thorn from your foot. Diamond can be cut only by diamond. Similarly, peace can be attained only through peace.

There are so many people in this world who have all the comforts and conveniences, yet they lack peace and have some fear or the other every moment. What is the reason? Can the external comforts and conveniences give peace to a person? Can one attain peace by wealth, gold, and other worldly possessions? If wealth and worldly possessions could give peace, then how is it that even rich men are in the grip of unrest?

In spite of all comforts and conveniences, people today are unable to experience peace because they are filled with evil thoughts. One will be filled with fear and anxiety when a snake enters one's house. Such being the case, how can one attain peace when the venomous snakes of attachment and hatred have entered the heart? It is impossible to attain

permanent peace as long as one does not give up attachment and hatred.

Many people have power, authority, and wealth. In spite of all this, they are unable to enjoy peace. They are subjected to unrest because they lack the will power and capacity to control their evil qualities. Therefore, first of all, one should see to it that evil qualities and evil thoughts do not enter one's heart.

There is a permanent spring of peace in the inner recesses of the heart. Water is flowing everywhere under the surface of earth. What should you do to bring this water out? You have to remove the soil that covers the water by digging the earth. The soil of attachment and hatred has covered the peace within you. You can attain that peace only when you remove this 'soil.'

Purify your mind to experience peace

Some people are under the mistaken notion that they can attain peace by performing some worship (*puja*) and rituals. They also think that the welfare of the world can be achieved by the performance of rituals and sacrifices (*yajnas* and *yagas*). Many perform rituals and sacrifices for world peace. I don't say it is wrong. It is good to perform them. However, world peace cannot be achieved by these external practices.

World peace can be achieved when you develop inner peace. Everything is the reflection of your inner being. You can have peace in your house when you yourself have peace.

How can you impart peace to others when you yourself lack it? It is foolishness to think that you can get peace or unrest from another individual. Your hunger is satiated only when you eat food. Your disease is cured only when you take the medicine. In the same way, every individual can attain peace by getting rid of their evil qualities.

Peace is not something that you can inherit from your parents. Peace is one entity that cannot be fragmented and distributed. Peace is everywhere, but one has to make efforts to experience it.

Your mental pollution caused by evil qualities and wicked thoughts is responsible for your disturbance and agitation. A person who is agitated cannot even have sound sleep. Then how can that person experience peace?

Peace is divine. To experience this divine quality, you have to purify your heart. It means that you should take care not to allow evil qualities to enter your heart. Develop the power to keep evil qualities under check under all circumstances. Whatever may be the difficulties, problems, and predicaments that you face, you should develop the power to block the evil qualities from entering your heart.

What is this power? That is love. When you develop this power of love, there will be no scope for bad thoughts to enter your mind.

There is every possibility of poisonous snakes entering a dark room full of luggage. Only such rooms that are full of luggage and darkness will become dwelling places for poisonous snakes. When the room is clean and illuminated, there is no possibility for snakes to enter it. Similarly, you should illuminate your heart with the light of love. Do not stuff it with the luggage of desires. That is why, it is said: *Less luggage more comfort*.

Peace is within you

Dear Students!

The word *santhi* (peace) in Telugu consists of only two letters, but it has great significance. You utter *santhi* three times after *bhajan* and prayer. Why should you utter it only three times, why not four times or two times? You utter *santhi* three times because you want

peace at all the three levels: physical, mental, and spiritual.

If you have peace only at the physical level, you may have unrest at the mental level. Similarly, if you have peace at the mental level and lack it at the physical level, you cannot experience total peace. The inner significance of uttering *santhi* three times is to pray for peace at all three levels.

You can attain peace only through peace. If you do not have peace, sit at a quiet place and keep repeating *santhi, santhi, santhi* ... like a mantra. You will certainly attain peace after some time. Similarly, as I have told you many times, when wicked thoughts enter your mind, remind yourself, "I am not an animal, I am human," repeatedly. Then your animal thoughts will vanish and noble thoughts will develop.

When you are in a fit of anger, remind yourself, "I am not a dog, I am human." Anger is the quality of a dog, not of humans. When you repeatedly remind yourself that you are not a dog, the quality of *dog* will run away from you.

Because of the fickle nature of the mind, sometimes you get unwanted thoughts. At that time, remind yourself, "I am not a monkey, I am a human" repeatedly. When you do so, the quality of a monkey will vanish from you. Anger, waywardness, etc. are animal qualities. Peace, compassion, love, forbearance, etc. are human qualities. When you develop human qualities, your animal qualities will automatically disappear.

All qualities are there in the human; they do not come from anywhere outside. Some people think bad company will give rise to bad thoughts. You will be influenced by bad company only if there are evil tendencies already in you.

Are there no good feelings and good thoughts outside? Why do they not enter your heart? They do not enter your heart because primari-

ly there are no good thoughts and good feelings in you. That is why, since ancient times, company of the good (*satsang*) has been given great importance. The good thoughts and feelings in you will develop when you associate yourself with good company.

Always cultivate sacred feelings. What is meant by sacred feelings and thoughts? Thoughts of God are sacred thoughts. It does not matter what name of God you contemplate upon. God is one. "The one God has many names (*Ek prabhu ke anek naam*)."

Fill your heart with any divine name. Then there will be no scope for other thoughts to enter it. Your heart is like a single chair. Once you enshrine divine love in it, no evil thought can enter it.

At a young age, students are obsessed with many types of thoughts. Bad company is not alone responsible for these evil thoughts. Your food and habits are also responsible for this. Your foolishness is also a cause for this. What is this foolishness? You yourself do not know what is good, but at the same time you do not listen if someone tells you what is good. This is the greatest foolishness of humanity.

Either try to know yourself or listen to the good counsel of others. If you lack both these, there can be no greater foolish person than you. If you do not know what is good, try to know it, or else go to the noble souls who can teach you what is good.

You will get peace only through such sacred practices. Peace is not something you acquire from outside; it is what you experience from within. There is water everywhere under the surface of earth. Have you poured it there? No. It is already there, naturally. You will get water from earth once you remove the soil that covers it. Similarly, peace is already present in your heart. You will experience it when you remove the soil of attachment and hatred that is covering it.

Peace is humanity's inner wealth

Attachment (*raga*) and hatred (*dwesha*) are responsible for the unrest and fear prevalent in the world today. No one is able to enjoy peace.

Where is the defect? The defect lies within you, not outside. You yourself are the cause of your unrest. Your evil thoughts are responsible for your lack of peace. Enquire within and get rid of bad thoughts and feelings. Then you are sure to experience peace.

Peace is the crown of noble souls. Where there is selfishness, peace runs away from there. If it sees a person full of attachment and hatred, it does not come near him at all. Just as you run away when you see a snake, likewise peace runs away when it finds a person filled with attachment and hatred.

Where there is sacredness, there peace manifests. Peace is the inner wealth of every man. When you have such great wealth in you, why should you run after any wealth outside? When you already have a lighted lamp in your house, why should you go to others' houses to light your lamp? When you already have a fire in your house, why should you go to your neighbour to borrow it? Your peace is within you; you need not go to anybody else in search of peace.

When you undertake activities that purify your mind, peace will become your property. All spiritual practices are meant to purify your mind. You will have peace only when your mind is pure. You may undertake any spiritual practice like repetition of the name, meditation, devotional singing, or contemplation on God. You may also associate with good company. All these spiritual practices are meant to drive away your evil qualities to some extent. What you get out of these temporary practices is only temporary peace, not permanent peace.

If you want permanent peace, you should rise to the level of the Divine by telling yourself,

“I am a human being, I should reach the level of the Divine. From animality, I have risen to the state of humanness. From humanness, I should reach the state of divinity.” Always look up; low aim is a crime.

Develop human qualities

If you lead all your life in duality (*dvaita*), then when will you reach the state of qualified non-dualism (*visishtadvaita*)? If you have not reached *visishtadvaita*, how will you reach the state of non-dualism (*advaita*)?

You are all students. Suppose you enter first standard this year, will you be happy to remain in first standard forever? No. Next year, you have to go to second standard, then to third standard, so on and so forth. In this manner, every year you have to go to a higher class. That is the proper system and true progress.

The same thing applies in spirituality also. Now you are at the level of duality, where you say, I am different from you. From this state of duality, you should reach the state of qualified non-dualism, where you realise that, though bodies are different, everyone is an aspect of the Divine. When you get rid of body attachment, you will become one with the Divine. That is non-dualism (*advaita*).

Bodies are like bulbs. But all the bulbs shine with the same current. This current is the principle of the *Atma*. You should realise this principle of oneness. That is non-dualism. Do not waste all your life by remaining in the state of non-dualism.

Acquire the degree of love

You may have desires, but they should be under a certain limit. What are desires meant for? They are meant for performing your duties. If you are a householder, you should fulfill your family responsibilities. If you are a student, your duty is to go to school, attend

your classes, listen to your teachers, and study well. When you follow this proper procedure, you will get good marks and get promoted to a higher class. Similarly, you should follow a proper procedure on the path of spirituality also.

“Spiritual education is true education (*Adhyatma vidya vidyanam*).” Various types of secular education are like small rivers. But ultimately all the rivers merge in the ocean. The ocean is the ultimate destination of all rivers. “The ocean is the goal of the rivers (*Nadinam sagaro gathi*).” You may have mastered music, literature, painting, and art. But the ultimate aim of all your learning is to attain the love of God, the ocean of divine grace.

You study many subjects, like physics, chemistry, mathematics, botany, English language, etc. The subjects may be different, but it is the same brain that grasps them. When I ask you what are you studying and what are your subjects, you say PCM (physics, chemistry, mathematics). You study various subjects to get a degree like B.A. or B.Sc. Similarly, you may undertake any spiritual practice, but what you have to ultimately get is the degree of love.

The nine paths of devotion are the sacred means of attaining peace. These are: listening (*sravanam*), singing (*kirtanam*), contemplating on Vishnu (*Vishnusmaranam*), serving His Lotus Feet (*Padasevanam*), salutation (*vandanam*), worship (*archanam*), servitude (*dasyam*), friendship (*sneham*), and self-surrender (*Atmanivedanam*).

You may follow any one of these paths. If possible, you can follow all of them. Only then will you attain peace.

Develop divine love. As you develop love, you will become free from worldly and physical unrest. Worldly feelings come and go like passing clouds. But the peace that comes from within is permanent. In fact, permanent peace

is real peace. Peace that comes and goes is not real. Therefore, try to attain permanent peace.

Truth is permanent. Therefore, in order to attain God, you have to follow this permanent principle of truth. If you follow that which is not permanent, you will reach nowhere. You should aim at that which is true and eternal. Only then will you attain true and eternal divinity.

Spirituality knows no fear

Dear Students!

Do not merely talk about truth, righteousness, peace, love, and nonviolence (*sathya, dharma, santhi, prema, and ahimsa*). Instead, awaken these values in your heart. “Arise, awake, go to noble men and learn from them the secret of attaining Divinity (*Uttishtha, Jagratha, Prapya Varannibodhata*).

You should awaken the values of truth, righteousness, and peace that are lying dormant in your heart. Why are they lying dormant? They are lying dormant because you are not putting them to any use. On the other hand, you are putting all your worldly feelings and tendencies into action. Since you are not putting these values to use, they are lying dormant. Put them to use. Then all your worldly tendencies will be subdued and the values will be awakened.

A lion has no fear and walks majestically without looking back. That is why it is called the king of animals. A spiritual giant is fearless, like a lion. One with worldly desires is like a sheep that is all the time fear-stricken. As you know, sheep follow one another blindly. If one sheep falls into a well, the rest will follow suit. You should be like a lion and not like a sheep.

Give no scope to fear. Develop courage and valour without giving scope to fear. Fearlessness (*dheeratvam*) is the hallmark of Divinity (*Daivatvam*). You should make efforts to rise

to the level of Divinity. You don't need to fear anything. Fear comes only when there is some defect in you.

Where there is righteousness, there is virtue,
Where there is virtue, there is discipline,
Where there is discipline, there is peace.

On the other hand, where there is fear and lack of virtues, there is unrest (*asanthi*).

Virtues are the foundation of peace. You should develop virtues. That is why Hanuman is extolled as one of peace, virtues, and valour (*Santudu, Gunavantudu, Balavantudu, Hanumantudu*). What is the basis of all the virtues that he possessed? Here is a small example.

Once upon a time, the mothers of Sage Agastya, Hanuman, and Lord Rama started talking about the greatness of their sons. First, the mother of Agastya said, "Do you know who my son is? He drank the entire ocean in one gulp. Such is his greatness." Hanuman's mother replied, "Your son might have drunk the entire ocean, but my son crossed the ocean in one leap and reached Lanka." Then Mother Kausalya intervened and said to the mother of Hanuman, "Your son could cross the ocean only with the power of the Name of my son."

From the conversations of these three mothers, it is clear that God is the greatest of all. Sage Agastya could drink the entire ocean due to the power of God. Similarly, it is the power of Rama's Name that enabled Hanuman to cross the ocean and reach Lanka. Therefore, first and foremost, chant the Name of God. There is nothing more powerful than the Divine Name.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajan*, "*Hari Hari Hari Hari Smarana Karo...*")

– From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 26 July 1996.