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***Atma* Is The Nameless, Formless Divinity**

Droupadi's father, Drupada, organised a *swayamvara* (ceremony to select a groom by the bride) to perform her marriage. Thousands of youths, princes and kings came to his court to win the hand of Droupadi in this *swayamvara*. Just as King Janaka had declared that he would give his daughter *Sita* in marriage to the prince who could string the bow of Lord *Siva*, King Drupada arranged a *matsyayantra* (a device with the replica of a fish). The condition of the contest was that whosoever was able to hit the eye of the fish that was revolving high above on a pole with an arrow by looking at its reflection in water below would be successful in winning the hand of his daughter.

Extraordinary Qualities Of Draupadi

Many valorous youths and princes who were confident of their victory tried their luck without any success. This was not an ordinary test that everyone could succeed. Many thought that it was easy, but in reality it was not so. When no one could succeed in the contest, the entire assembly fell into a stunning silence. The Pandavas were present incognito in this assembly. Lord Krishna, who was also present, looked at the Pandavas and smiled noticing that the Pandavas spoke to each other in whispers. Arjuna then walked majestically towards the *matsyayantra*, smiling all the way. He was totally calm and composed. Looking at the reflection of the fish in water, he shot an arrow. When it hit the target successfully, the entire assembly went into raptures. All the people looked at Arjuna in admiration with great delight. King Drupada then asked his daughter Droupadi to garland Arjuna.

At that time, the Pandavas were staying in the house of a potter. When they went back to that house along with the bride, their mother Kunti was inside. Even before entering their house, they announced to their mother that they had received a very valuable fruit. Their mother replied from inside the house that they should share the fruit equally between themselves. The Pandavas always obeyed the command of their mother and honoured every word that she uttered. They went inside and offered their salutations to their mother and vowed to follow her command religiously. In this way, Droupadi became the wife of all the five Pandavas. The Pandavas dutifully accepted the command of their mother. But, how could the world accept this? It is the duty of the children to obey the command of their parents, irrespective of the fact whether the world accepts it or not. People, however, accepted this in view of the intimate relationship that existed between the five brothers.

When can one consider a woman as one's wife? Not merely because one is married to her. One can call her as wife only when one considers her as half part of his body. Many people questioned Krishna how Droupadi could be called a *pativrata* (chaste wife) when she was the wife of five husbands. Krishna described her qualities that earned her this noble status.

She dutifully obeyed the command of her husbands.
 She would never say to any one of them that she had no time to serve him.
 She was satisfied with whatever She got in life.
 She was the supreme example of chastity, and none could match her in this respect.”

(Telugu poem)

She never asked for anything beyond the means of her husbands. A true chaste woman is one who conducts herself according to the condition of her husband. The husband should also recognise the qualities of his wife and have equal concern for her. Only then can both of them lead a virtuous and noble life.

Looking at her virtuous conduct and her power to control the five senses, Dharmaraja told Droupadi, “You do not merely belong to us; you are the embodiment of primal energy.” Her father Droupada had also held this view and considered her as the embodiment of divine energy. Only those who achieve control over the five senses and the five elements can know the reality of the world and conduct themselves in a righteous manner. One who has complete control over one’s senses can achieve the greatest heights in life.

Droupadi was endowed with great power of discrimination and she could discriminate between what was good and what was bad. Both good and bad are present in this world just like darkness and light. She encouraged all those who were virtuous and imparted sacred teachings to evil-minded people to transform them. Not only she had control over the five senses and five elements, she had thorough knowledge of *pancha kosas* (five sheaths of the soul) and *pancha pranas* (five life-breaths) also. She could differentiate between *atma* and *anatma* (Self and non-Self). Thus, she set an ideal to the world and earned a good name.

Droupadi taught that one should do one’s duty with dedication. She exhorted all to exercise control over their desires and discriminate between good and bad, imbibing all that was good and giving up all that was bad. One should never forget to perform good actions and discharge one’s duties, she advised. Everyone should discharge their duty with dedication and should not interfere in the duties of others, she counselled the people. “You may have wife and children. It is your duty to fulfil your responsibility towards them, but at the same time all your desires should be directed towards the path of goodness and righteousness”, she said. Thus, she became an ideal to the world and showed the path of truth to one and all. One can attain *Dharma* only by following the path of *Sathya*. *Sathyannasti paro dharma* (There is no *Dharma* greater than adherence to truth). There can be no *Dharma* without truth. It is the path of truth that leads one to God.

Follow The Path Of *Sathya* And *Dharma*

Everyone should perform their duty meticulously and adhere to *dharma*. Even an ant follows its *Dharma*. Wherever it finds food, it carries it to its place and consumes it. It does not harm anybody nor does it steal anything from anybody. All the birds and animals follow

their natural *dharma* and conduct themselves accordingly. The path of *Dharma* is the same for *cheema* (ant) and *Brahma*. The same principle of truth is present in both. This truth was propagated by Droupadi. She also taught that one should not become a victim of the six inner enemies, namely, *kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *Lobha* (greed) *moha* (attachment), *mada* (pride) and *matsarya* (jealousy).

Anger is the greatest enemy of man. One with anger cannot follow the path of *Dharma*. This is contrary to human nature. One should not unnecessarily show anger towards others.

One with anger will not be successful in any of his endeavours.

He will commit sins and will be Ridiculed by one and all.

His own people will abandon him; He will lose all wealth and respect.

His anger will ruin him completely. (Telugu poem)

Hatred is another great enemy of man. Whom should you hate? Should you hate those who oppose you or those who have harmed you or those who dislike you? No; none of these. You should hate only the evil qualities. You should extend your love and support to those who follow *Sathya* and *Dharma*. If you hate *Sathya* and *Dharma*, you are not a human being at all. Truth is the basis of all virtues. By following the path of truth, Droupadi could experience peace and love. She taught that one should refrain from violence. One should not indulge in violence through one's actions, words and even thoughts. By following the path of truth, Droupadi set the greatest ideal to the world.

As You Sow, So Shall You Reap

By exercising sense control, man can achieve great heights in life. Damayanti was a woman of great virtues like Droupadi. She earned this name as she was endowed with *dama* (sense control). The senses are wayward by nature, and it is difficult to control them. Man should, however, do his best to control them and put them to right use. Why has God given you ears? Is it to hear vain gossip? Never listen to anything that is bad. Listen to all that is good. Why has God given you tongue? It is not merely to satisfy your sense of taste. It has been given to sing the glory of God. Just as the tongue accepts all that is tasty and palatable and rejects all that is bad and unpalatable, man should accept all that is good and reject everything that is bad.

People think that it is God who is the cause of their happiness and sorrow. But it is not really so. Each one is responsible for his actions and reaps their consequences, good or bad. God is the eternal witness and does not interfere in this. He gives neither happiness nor sorrow. If you talk endearingly to someone, he will also speak to you in the same loving manner. But if you talk in an arrogant way, you will get a similar response. As is the action, so is the reaction. The reaction, reflection and resound are based on your own thoughts, words and actions; God is not responsible for them. If you stand before a mirror, you will see your own reflection. In whatever way you speak to others, you will have the resound in the same way. Whatever thoughts you have in your mind,

they will be reflected back to you. It is therefore essential for man to know whether his thoughts and actions are good or bad. Whatever good or bad you experience is the result of your thoughts, words and actions. When any bad thought comes into your mind, give it up immediately. If you conduct yourself in this manner, you will become a true devotee of God and achieve liberation.

Everyone has to face the consequences of their actions, whoever they may be.

No one can know what lies ahead in future.

But this much is sure: everybody has to reap the consequences of their actions.

Even the mighty Rama suffered the pain of separation from His consort Sita and cried like an ordinary person.” (Telugu song)

Young Men!

Good and bad coexist. It is not possible for anyone to separate them. When you cultivate more of goodness, the bad in you will become absolutely insignificant. There is no need to use any force to drive away all that is bad. When you forget bad, goodness will develop in you in full measure. This is the message I would like to give on this day. Do not think that the New Year will give you some new fruits. The fruits that you earn will be based on your qualities and actions. All that you think will be reflected back to you. Everything is the result of your thoughts.

World Is Reaction, Reflection And Resound

Once there was a cowherd who used to take cows for grazing to a place surrounded by three mountains. One day when the cows were grazing, he sat down under a tree and started singing a song in praise of God. As he sang the song, he heard its echo. He thought that someone was imitating his song to tease him. Therefore, he shouted in anger at the invisible intruder, and heard its resound in the same angry tone. In this state of anger, he went home and did not even take his food. His mother asked him why he was so upset. He narrated what had happened. Next day, his mother accompanied him and came to know that it was his own echo which was the cause of his trouble. In the same manner if you criticise or abuse anybody, all that will come back to you. The world is nothing but reaction, reflection and resound. Whatever you do will come back to you, and nothing else. This is the divine law. Those who are full of love will see love everywhere. Those who are full of hatred will see enemies all around. Therefore, love and hatred do not come from outside. They have their origin within you. The good and bad you experience arise out of your own feelings. God is not responsible for any of these. God is *nirguna*, *niranjana*, *sanathana* (attributeless, pure, eternal). It is only your feelings that change. God is changeless.

Students!

All your feelings are reflected back to you. Everything is within you. Whatever you experience is the reaction, reflection and resound of your thoughts and feelings. You see

somebody laughing and think that he is laughing at you. But how can you conclude in this manner? Once a famous wrestler was doing exercise on a road early in the morning. At that time, a woman was coming from a village to sell milk and curd. When he looked at her, he felt she was laughing at him. The wrestler became angry and said to the woman, “How dare you laugh at me? Do you know who am I? Are you aware of my strength?” The woman replied, “I am not laughing at you. You are so strong that you can stop a speeding car with one hand. What is the use of your physical strength if you lack forbearance?” All our notions are based upon our deluded feelings.

Be Good, Do Good, See Good

Students!

No doubt, your inner feelings are good. But they undergo change depending upon what you see and hear. It is the external impulses that are responsible for changes in your thoughts and feelings. Truly speaking, there is no human form. In fact, there is no form at all. It is because of your illusion that you see a form and give a name to it. It is a sign of foolishness to think so. You may think that you are highly educated and very intelligent. But how can you call yourself so if you are ignorant of your true Self? You can be called truly educated only when you know your real nature. If you do not know your own truth, how can you know the truth of others?

First of all, you should control your mind. Only then can your worship and prayer be fruitful. The mind is the root cause of the world. *Manah eva manushyanam karanam bandhamokshayo* (mind is the cause of bondage and liberation of man). It is comparatively easy to control the body, but not the mind. When Pramila, the ruler of women’s kingdom, captured the *Aswamedha* horse and defeated Arjuna in the battle, Arjuna told her that she could arrest his body but not his mind. It may be possible to capture the whole world with army, weapons and bombs, but it is not possible for anyone to capture the mind. When you gain control over your mind, everything else will come under your control. Therefore, you should make all efforts to control your mind. Then you are sure to become an ideal and great person. First and foremost, you should know your mistakes and try to rectify them. Only then can you aspire to become a *mumukshu* (spiritual aspirant). Knowingly or unknowingly, you may have committed some mistakes. Once you know your mistakes, you should have repentance. Repentance is true atonement. This is the royal path which leads to divinity. There is little use in performing *puja* (worship), *vratas* (rituals) and *yajnas* without repentance and atonement.

Jantunam nara janma durlabham (out of all living beings, human birth is the rarest). It is not easy to attain human form. Man is not a mere mortal. He is verily divine. *Daivam manusha rupena* (God is in the form of a human being). If you do or think something bad, you are not divine. First of all, you should become a good person. Be good, do good, see good. This is the way to God.

Develop The Qualities Exemplified

By Rama And Sita

Students!

First of all, you have to control your mind. Offer your mind to God. He can do everything for you. Have deep devotion to God with firm faith that He is everywhere.

Do not doubt that God is here and not There.

Wherever you search for Him, He is there.

(Telugu poem)

Where is God? *Sarvatah panipadam tat sarvathokshi siromukham, Sarvatah sruthimalloke sarvamavruthya tishthati* (with hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth and ears pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe). Many people are not able to recognise this truth. God is present in all beings, be it a small insect like an ant or a big animal like an elephant or a lion. He is present in a particle of sand and also in a particle of sugar.

Discharge your duty earnestly with devotion to God. Put your knowledge into practice and earn a good name. I never prevent anyone from pursuing his studies. But along with acquiring secular knowledge, you should acquire spiritual knowledge also. Proper enquiry of the mind and purity of heart are very essential.

Students!

You have completed the academic year, and you will now go home for vacation. You will be looking for your results and searching your roll number in the list of successful candidates. More than searching your roll number, search your heart. If you have really written well, you are sure to find your roll number. On the other hand, if you have not written your examination well, you should not be delighted even when you find your roll number in the list of successful candidates. It is not the number of marks that are important. What is important is that you should become number one man (loud applause).

This morning, our students sang the song conveying the message that one should have a son like Rama and a daughter like Sita. You may aspire to have a son like Rama and a daughter like Sita. But, how is it possible when you have the demonic qualities of Ravana and Surpanakha? If you want a son like Rama, you should follow *Dharma* like Him. If you aspire to have a daughter like Sita, you should have the virtues as exemplified by Sita. Whatever form you aspire for, you should cultivate the same type of qualities corresponding to that. Only then can you attain harmony, tolerance and peace. Where is peace? Peace lies in the control of the senses. If you are not able to control your senses, you cannot attain peace; you will get only pieces. If you want to be peaceful, you have to imbibe the qualities of quietude and composure. Let anybody criticise, abuse or hurt you; you should maintain your composure. When someone criticises you, do not take it to heart. Think that his tongue has produced some sound. You have nothing to do with it. If you receive the abuses hurled at you, you will be affected by them.

Otherwise, you will not be disturbed. Even if somebody beats you, think that he has beaten your body and not you. In fact, none can ever harm or hurt you, because you are not the body. If you have such a firm conviction, then you will not have anger or hatred towards even those who abuse or assault you. Therefore, firm conviction is most essential for peace.

Offer Your Heart To God In Prayer

Droupadi had deep devotion for Krishna. She prayed to Him, “Oh, Krishna! I worship You day and night. Oh, Lord! Be compassionate and protect me. If You are compassionate towards me, then I will not be bothered about any other thing in life.” Droupadi faced many challenges and ordeals in life, but her devotion towards Krishna remained unaffected. Thyagaraja said, “Oh, Lord! I have been praying to You incessantly. Why are You depriving me of Your love and compassion? What is that I have not offered to You?”

I have surrendered my wealth,
My family and everything to You.
Now, please come to my rescue.
I seek refuge only in You.

(Sanskrit *sloka*)

Mere words are not enough when you pray; you should offer your heart to God in prayer.

Man has a name and a form, but the *atma* transcends both. It has neither a name nor a form. People like some particular names and forms. One cannot have faith in many names and forms, but one can surely have faith in the formless principle of the *atma* which is present in all. *Na atma sakshi* (my *atma* is the witness) is a common saying in Telugu, which shows that people have faith in the *atma*. That is why *atma* is the common name for all. Some may pray to Rama, others may pray to Krishna. Names and forms are many, but Divinity is one. *Atma* is the nameless, formless divinity. When you worship such a formless and nameless divine principle, you will certainly attain Divinity.

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