

16. Worship your Parents

The honour of a nation depends upon the morality of that nation. A nation without morality will be doomed. Mere listening to and knowing about the nature of Indian culture will not be rewarding. It has to be reflected in one's conduct. The prestige of an individual depends upon the purity of the individual. When the individual reforms himself and undergoes the process of *samskara*, or purification, then only will he be able to truly recognise the greatness of our culture. Individuals make the society. A village depends upon the condition of the society, and the state depends upon several such villages. A country or a nation is an assembly of such states. The welfare of the nation thus depends ultimately upon the quality and nature of the individual. Therefore, reforming the individual is of primary importance. Reforming the individual has two aspects: first, weeding out evil thoughts and bad habits within him, and second, cultivation of good habits. Students must put into practice these two things: doing away with evil habits and cultivating good habits in their place.

The future of the country depends upon the conduct and character of the students. Students may be described as the very roots of the nation. Therefore we must pour the water of *Divyasakthi* or the divine force into the very roots. Students may also be compared to the creepers bearing flowers. If we allow these creepers to grow as they please, they grow in a wild and disorderly manner without beauty and symmetry. Therefore, we must prune each creeper so that its shape may be beautiful and it may not grow in a wild fashion without any beauty. The beauty of life depends upon our good habits. The period of student-days is sacred and most important in life. The students must be disciplined in their minds and habits and must fill their minds with pure thoughts and try to enforce and put into practice all those good thoughts in their day-to-day ac-

tivities. The intention of organising this summer course is not simply to transmit information that is given by the scholars who are delivering the lectures. More important than giving information is the transformation that we wish to bring about. If you are not transformed, all this will be just a waste of time and energy and nothing but trouble to elders. By cultivating a spiritual outlook right from this stage, it will be possible, when you grow old, that you will be able to spend your time and your life in a very calm, quiet, peaceful and happy manner. This is the right period when you should fill your mind with thoughts about your own future, about the future of the country and about the future of the race and that of the nation, and with things of such profound importance. If you do not attempt to move in the right direction now, even while your body is strong and your faculties and powers are good, it will not at all be possible for you to do so at a later stage when your body grows old and fatigued, when the mind has lost its alertness and all your powers have dried up and withered away.

The scholars and *pundits* who are delivering these lectures may be very learned, very experienced, very old but they can only point direction; they cannot do the walking for you. The walking must be done by you. You must proceed along the path that is indicated. These elders may be compared to guide posts. They can simply point out that if you go along a particular way, you will reach this destination, and that if you go along another way, you will reach another destination, and so on, but they cannot tread the path for you. If you look at the conditions today, the Government is not in a position to introduce reform in the lives of the people, because the kind of reform needed is not there in the rulers themselves, and the people are not in a position to infuse that kind of enthusiasm in the rulers.

I shall clarify to you the relationship that obtains between the people and the government with the help of a little analogy. A small snake has caught a big frog. The snake is trying its best to devour the frog and the frog is trying its best to escape from the snake. The frog cannot emancipate itself from the snake, and the snake is not in

a position to devour the frog. As a result of this struggle, the reward or the final achievement is only exhaustion for both. Either the Government must have the capacity to educate and reform the people or the people must have the capacity to educate the Government. Unfortunately, both the Government as well as the people are lacking this power, very badly. Both are getting exhausted. Therefore, you who are the future hope of this country, should give the needed leadership for the people as well as the Government.

The dignitaries, high officials and great scholars who have delivered these lectures, you must remember, were also students like you, at one time. Those who were students a few years ago have today become teachers and guides, and you who are the students of today also will become teachers and guides of tomorrow. Some of you who are students of today, may in future become even leaders and preachers. It is necessary today for every one of you to examine why you are getting educated. Is it for the sake of understanding the truth of life or is it simply to get some job and a salary? True education is that which enables you to stand on your feet. Therefore, try to develop self-confidence and try to improve your character through the processes of *samskara* or purification. You must develop culture that is moral, spiritual and ethical. You must cultivate an independent approach.

You must develop the habit of taking pains and undergoing any amount of trouble in order to discharge your duties satisfactorily and correctly. You must be ready to lay down your life for the welfare of the country and for the welfare of the nation. Today we find many individuals who exploit others for their own happiness. We rarely come across an individual who sacrifices himself for the sake of others' welfare. Therefore, one man must suffer in order that ten people may be happy. We should not cultivate the habit of subjecting ten people to unhappiness just for the benefit of a single individual.

We must consider here quantity versus quality. If the action is bad, you are not justified in suffering for the happiness of ten

people. If ten people are working for something noble, then there is every justification for you to sacrifice your own happiness and to support them with your endeavour. At times it becomes necessary to analyse matters deeper. Though there may be thousands of bad people, one good man would be able to control these thousands of bad people and this control is possible only through the power of love. We should never join the mob in a blind manner, without discrimination and reason. There is such a tendency among the students. If they feel that one student has been insulted, then they all support him in a blind way. They must consider whether that student really deserves support and whether he was right or wrong. If we are able to set right that one student when he is in the wrong, the institution would be benefited. On the other hand, if you blindly support one student, who is definitely in the wrong, then the prestige of the institution will be damaged.

We must help a good cause, and we must never support a bad cause. Sometimes you may want something good and reasonable. Then you may represent it to the officer in charge. When you approach a higher authority, you must always adopt an attitude of humility. When you make a proper representation, in the right spirit and with proper humility, the officer will be pleased to grant it. On the other hand, if you commit a blunder and show an attitude of defiance, naturally the man in power will be antagonistic toward you.

Therefore, every student must be a *vidyarthi* in the full sense; namely, one who seeks education and not one who seeks fulfilment of his desires. *Vidya* is enriched by *vinaya* or humility. True education is judged from the cultivation of good character and good conduct, and not merely from the acquisition of degrees. Education does not mean ignoring the sacrifices made by your parents at home. It does not mean at all that you should move about luxuriously dressed, displeasing your elders, disregarding all those who are more knowledgeable than you. That is not education at all. Your parents will always feel happy when they find you endowed with good character.

Several parents undergo many privations and sacrifices for the sake of the future of their children. Several fathers and mothers even starve themselves in order to provide education for their children. So, an education that does not teach the right attitude that a student should adopt toward his parents, who undergo so much suffering, is not education at all. One should even call it bad education. The words of Indian wisdom, “*Sathyam vada, dharmam chara* (Speak the truth, do the right thing)”, and the injunctions of our culture, “*Mathru Devo bhava, pithru Devo bhava* (worship your mother as God, worship your Father as God)”, deserve to be preserved in the caskets of our hearts like precious gems.

North Indians and people from Maharashtra are very familiar with the story of Pundalik. Pundalik was an ideal son who spent all his time in the service of his venerable parents. When the parents had fever or other discomfort, Pundalik used to serve them, attend on them, touch their feet and do all sorts of service for them. Today when the mother is laid up with high fever, the son, not caring for the condition of the mother, runs to film show. Mother is the goddess who has given us this blood, this body and this individuality and, therefore, she deserves all consideration and worship. By disregarding the mother, we shall never be able to prosper in life, and we shall never be able to become good in life.

When Pundalik was serving his mother, Panduranga came there. Pundalik was pressing the feet of his mother and he did not care to look at Panduranga. In the meantime Tukaram, his *guru*, also came there. Tukaram asked, “My dear Pundalik, do you know who has come? It is God Panduranga! You are not caring for Him. How is it?” when Pundalik replied, “The worship of two Gods is not important for me but the worship of *Ek Hara* or one God is important for me.” Tukaram said, “He is God.” Pundalik replied, “Yes, He is God; this is also God. The real God for me is my parent and not Panduranga. From the moment of my birth I have been seeing this form of my mother, who was responsible for the birth, growth, the nourishment and sustenance of my body. Therefore, I worship her.

The Goddess who has been right in front of me for the last eighteen years is more important than the God who appears for a few moments and vanishes. If Panduranga cares to grant me *darshan*, let Him wait until I complete the service of my mother.” So saying, he threw a brick as a sort of *Asana* or seat for Panduranga to sit and wait. Even God Panduranga waited until Pundalik completed the service to his mother and then granted *darshan* to him.

Even God would wait for you. You must discharge your duty to the best of your ability and to your utmost satisfaction. That must be your pledge.

Krishna is described as having *tilak* —*kasturi tilak* on His forehead, *kaustubha* on His chest, *navamouktika* on the tip of His nose, and *kankan* on His hand. *Kasturi tilak* is not the ordinary *tilak*. It is *jnana* or wisdom itself. So, He has the symbol of *jnana* or wisdom on his forehead. *Kaustubha* is not an external ornament but is the emotion of tenderness and love within the heart.

There is special significance for wearing a pearl under the tip of the nose. The *navamouktika*, or the pearl, is the indication that we should always focus our attention on the tip of our nose in order that we may have real wisdom. You may ask why our vision should be focused on the tip of our nose? When we sit down to worship God and keep our eyes wide open, then there is every possibility that our attention gets diverted and scattered. If we keep our eyes completely closed, then we may be induced to sleep. Therefore, we must keep our eyes half-closed and we must concentrate our vision on the tip of our nose, so that we do not sleep and also our attention does not get diverted.

Now coming to *kankana*, or the bracelet on the hand. Indians use the bracelet on two occasions. Once at the time of the marriage and a second time when they perform a *yagna* or *yaga*. The meaning of the *kankana* is that we have decided and determined to undertake some noble action. Then you may ask the question why Krishna should have *kankana* on His hand. Is He going to get married every day or is He going to perform a sacrifice every day? No, He has

taken some pledges and, therefore, He is wearing the *kankana*. The first pledge is to protect the right and the good and to protect *dharma* when *dharma* is in danger. The second pledge is to look after the welfare of those who devote themselves with single-mindedness to God, and who think only of Him and no one else. He said, “When you have abjured all *dharma* and have taken shelter at my feet, I shall liberate you from all the sins that you have committed.” Krishna has put on this *kankana* in order to carry out this pledge. Because we are not endeavouring to gain the grace of Krishna, the *kankana* is still there and continues to be there. We are not able to derive the benefit of the *kankana*, because we do not practise thinking of Him only and of none else. He said, “If you do think of Me only, and of none else and if you worship—if you do all these three, I shall take care of your welfare.” We do not undertake to do any one of these three duties and yet we ask the question, “Why is it Krishna is not taking care of me?”

Leadership requires that you should lead others in the right direction. What you want others to do, you must be the first to practise. Today leaders are experts in saying things, issuing orders and giving advice to others; but they do not follow their own advice. In every walk of life, whether it is political, economic, social, cultural or religious, they pose as great people and speak as if they are all great “Heroes”. When we look at their actions, they are only big “Zeros”. Therefore, the students of today must make it a point to endorse, in their daily action, what they learn from others. They must lead other people in the right direction. Today you criticise your leaders that they have gone wrong here and they have gone wrong there. Tomorrow when you become leaders, you must take care to see that you do not commit the same blunders and you should not let yourselves become the objects of the same criticism.

There are five fingers to the palm. We point, when we come across a bad man, with the index finger. When you point at others, only one finger points out at them and three fingers point back at you. So, when you point out one fault in others, you must be able to

examine three times whether there is a fault in you. There is a device for this. When you come across a big fault in others, you just consider it to be a very trivial one. Then you will not be critical. Suppose there is a small fault in you. You try to magnify it and you will feel you should never commit a similar fault again. By looking at it that way, you will not have occasion to be guilty of the same fault again. On the other hand, if you conceal your fault and try to point out the fault of others, it will not be good either for you or for the others. Do not always go forward in pointing out the faults of others. On the other hand, if any one points out any fault in you, you must prostrate before him because you, by yourself, will not be able to find out where you are in the wrong. Because your eyes are directed outward, you will not be able to find the fault in your own nature.

Here is a small story. During the summer season, in places round about Nagpur, water is very scarce. An orthodox old Brahmin lady, who was on a pilgrimage, felt very thirsty when she reached Nagpur. She turned on the water taps but not a drop of water came out of them. At the station, arrangements had been made for a supply of water in leather bags. When several people were drinking the water that was served from that bag of leather, the old lady was discussing in her mind whether the man who was serving the water belonged to a low caste, whether the bag was pure or might not have been cleaned well, and so on. She was hesitating to take that water. After much hesitation, she questioned the man who was serving the water. "My dear sir, is this bag pure? Is it clean?" The man who was serving the water was clever. He said, "The bag of leather from which water is being served is cleaner than the bag in which that water will be poured after service, namely, your body. This bag is cleaner than your interior."

Today we are cultivating this undesirable tendency of looking at the impurity of the bag but not caring to remove the impurity within our own body. First of all, we must try to purify what is within us and then only can we rectify what is external to us. This is

essential for the students to know. Because, tomorrow you may become high officers though you are students today.

Though many students have been attending this course for over twenty days, listening to several discourses on very important topics, some students are still not able to give up their previous bad habits. It will be a good augury for the future if you are able to shed the bad habits that you had before coming here. Here, in the morning and in the evening, the Name of the Lord is dancing on your lips. If the same tongue that is made sweet by the name of the Lord in the morning and in the evening is filled with the fire of the cigarette in the evening, then all the good effects are counteracted and wholly nullified. You must get rid of the bad habit of smoking. It spoils your health and damages your lungs, and doctors say that sometimes even cancer may be the result of smoking. Why should you continue this habit, which damages your beauty and also your health?

If you return home in the same bad condition in which you have come here, then your stay here will not be fruitful at all. On the other hand, when you return home, if your friends, your relations and your parents feel that you have returned from the summer course almost as a new personality and in a perfect condition, then we also feel happy that all our endeavour has not gone to waste and has been rewarded.

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