

15. Morality And Truth Constitute The Basis Of Our Culture

Divyatma Swarupas!

For the past several days, we have been listening to the verses composed by Bhagavatpada Sankaracharya in the series entitled *Bhaja Govindam*. We have been taking their essence, which is like the sacred honey. Sankara's verses help us to understand divinity. Mind is like a clear mirror, but it is made impure by our desires. The one hero by the name *Kama* (lust) pervades everything in the world. This hero, however, can not go near the kingdom of *Atma*. *Kama* or lust has a very close friend called *Krodha* or anger. Lust and anger are always together.

An individual who has anger and lust in him can undoubtedly be called a dead body or a living corpse, a *Sava Sakthi*. It is only people like Thyagaraja, who lead

a life of sacrifice and thereby entered the kingdom of *Atma*. Such people may be called the *Shiva Sakthi*. A disciple of Sankara stated that even a *Yogi* will have a downfall if he is unable to control his senses. In order that we may control our senses, we have to control our attachments or desires for material things.

Today, young people do not understand what is meant by going close to *Atma*. They are vitiated by material desires and due to lack of guidance at home they are unable to distinguish between good and bad. On account of bad company and by witnessing inconsistent stories which are portrayed in our cinemas, our young people are involved in developing blind lust, arrogance and greed. They are becoming proud of the little knowledge they acquire. They do not have humility, with the result that they are developing into undeserving citizens of this great country. Thus they are ruining themselves. You must dedicate your life to truth and promote prosperity of the world and thus spend your life in a fruitful manner.

The easiest way to control sensuous desires is to practise altruistic love. Love is of three types. The first one is based on gross selfishness, binding the ego-mind to a feeling of possession. Such an individual does not bother about the sufferings of others. To him, all that matters is his property and his wealth. This kind of love will not make anyone really happy and no one will develop any affection for such a person. He, in turn,

will not be concerned about his own respect, but will think only of fulfilling his basic desires.

The second type of love consists of pretending to love people who are wealthy, physically strong, and in positions of power with a view to derive some benefit from them. A large number of people exhibit only this kind of love. Status and wealth are not permanent, therefore this type of love is also not the right one as it is based on the self-interest of deriving benefits from others.

The highest type of love is bereft of any selfishness and of any pretension of love for people in authority and affluence. This type of love is based on the knowledge that the eternal and universal *Atma* pervades everyone and everywhere. If a person develops such equal-mindedness by regarding the entire world as one, then he will cultivate the highest type of love.

It is not matter, but the indwelling *Atma Thathwa* which is of perennial value. For example, we bring a fruit tree and plant it in our backyard with the intention of letting it grow. With love we water this fruit tree, give it manure, and look after it with care because we want it to grow into a big tree. For some reasons, if this plant begins to dry up day after day, we will not care for it. With our own hands, we will pluck it out and throw it away.

What is the meaning in your showing so much concern when the plant is green and negligence when it dries up. The presence of life, which is symbolic of

divinity, is what attracts us to the plant and we show great affection. The absence of life in this plant is what makes us neglect it and not even look at it.

With great affection, we buy and bring some fruits to the house. If for any reason, some of them get rotten, we throw them away. In the same way, if there is an individual in whom there is life, we look after him with great care. But the moment life, which is none other than divinity, goes away from that body, we show no affection to the body. We also keep away from that body and cremate it.

All the sacred stories of our mythology and culture contain the experiences of elders. Understanding their significance, we should put them into practice. The Pandavas regarded Krishna as the Lord at all times irrespective of whether they were in difficulties or not. Even when such mighty persons as the *devas* came to oppose him, Arjuna never shirked fighting them. Arjuna fought many wars with great courage. However, it is significant that when he was accompanying the women from Dwarka to Hastinapura after the war of *Mahabharatha*, he became weak and could not fight against even the cowherds. Arjuna understood that because earlier Krishna was present with him in his mortal form, he could fight so many battles with such courage, but now that Krishna was no longer in their midst, he was not able to fight. All the courage of Arjuna had disappeared even as Krishna left this world.

We should understand that where there is no God, there is no courage. All the human bodies will simply be reduced to mere leather bags in which there is no life at all if there is no contact with the divine. Out of such experiences, the Pandavas gave many ideas to the world and for this reason, the Pandavas acquired lasting reputation. They set an example worthy of emulation by the rest of the world. The *Mahabharatha* is simply the story of the Pandavas, and is often referred to as the fifth *Veda*.

With a view to use the sacred story of the Pandavas for some material purpose, the Taneshah of Delhi once invited to his court the eight renowned poets of Vijayanagar. These poets were asked to describe the distinctiveness of the *Mahabharatha*. They did so in a beautiful and attractive manner. After hearing the story, Taneshah wanted to write a fresh epic in which he would figure as Dharmaraja, the eldest of the Pandavas, all the ministers whom he liked would figure as the other Pandavas, and all his enemies would figure as the Kauravas. In other words, he asked them to write a *Taneshah Bharatam*.

Those poets were not inclined to produce an epic of this kind and were discussing among themselves how they could tackle the situation. Amongst them a clever poet by name Tenali Ramakrishna came forward and said that he would undertake preparing this book. He wanted to teach a good lesson to the Taneshah. The

Taneshah then asked him to prepare the text in a week's time. The week was coming to a close and Ramakrishna had not even started writing. The other poets were afraid that the Taneshah would punish them.

By the end of the agreed period, Ramakrishna took a few pieces of paper and went to the Taneshah who in turn had invited many friends to listen to this great text. Taneshah asked Ramakrishna if the *Bharatam* was completed. Ramakrishna said that it was nearly complete but that there were one or two minor doubts which required clarification from the Taneshah. Then the Taneshah asked him what these doubts were so that he could clarify them. Ramakrishna replied that he had some hesitation to raise these doubts in public, and he would wish to do so when both of them were alone. Taneshah and Ramakrishna went inside and Ramakrishna said that he had a doubt as to who would fit in the role of Droupadi.

Since Droupadi was wife to all the five Pandavas, the person in this role would have to be wife for the five Pandavas in the story. This means that Taneshah's wife would be a wife to the ministers as well. Ramakrishna asked Taneshah if he would agree to give this role to his wife. This was not at all liked by the Taneshah. He told Ramakrishna that there was no need to write such a *Bharatam* and asked him to clear out, after giving him suitable gifts.

Thus we see here that the Taneshah wanted to have the reputation of the Pandavas, but he did not want to accept the sacred terms under which the five Pandavas took Droupadi as their wife. Today, if we want to establish the nobility of our culture, we should realise and accept as a fact that the basis for it is respect for morality and truth. We should follow the path of morality and truth. If we want to have the reputation alone but not follow the path followed by our ancestors, we will only be doing what the Taneshah wanted to do. This will be leading an artificial life. We should not hanker after getting a name and cheap popularity. We should look to the fulfilment of life.