

## 23. The True Nature Of Dharma

*After committing a bad act, you cannot hope to get some good result. After having done something good, you need not be afraid that you will get bad results. If you plant the seeds of lemon, how can you get fruits different from lemons? All forms and all religions relate to Him. He is present in all the idols which we worship.*

### **Pavitratma Swarupas, students:**

**I**n this infinite world, there are manifold *Jivas*. Amongst all of them, man reigns supreme. While eating and sleeping are common to all living beings, man is distinguished by two qualities. One is *dharma* or right conduct and other is *jnana* or wisdom. If this *jnana* and *dharma* are not present in man, he will also have to be grouped along with all other living beings.

We should first enquire as to what *dharma* means. *Dharma* ordains man to observe certain rules of behaviour for social and spiritual progress. The observance of such restrictions and disciplines can be called *dharmic*. *Dharma* is also capable of causing hurt to people who try to cause the decline of *dharma*. Similarly, *dharma* will protect those who will try to protect it. Another sacred quality of *dharma* is that wherever it is, there will be victory as well.

This sacred word *dharma* has been commented upon by many elders in this country. This country has been bound by the rope of *dharma* and therefore it acquires a distinctive feature and serves as an example to other countries. This word *dharma*, which is really bound up with an infinite variety of meanings, is being inadequately described by one word, duty, in the modern age. Duty is something which is connected with an individual, a predicament, or with a particular time or country.

On the other hand, *dharma* is eternal, the same for everyone everywhere. It expresses the significance of the inner *Atma*. The birth place of *dharma* is the heart. What emanates from the heart as a pure idea, when translated into action will be called *dharma*. If this is to be explained in a manner that all can understand, one can say, “Do unto others as you want them to do unto you”—that is *dharma*. *Dharma* consists in avoiding actions which would hurt others. If anyone causes

happiness to you, then you in turn should do such things that will cause happiness to others. When we recognise that what others do will cause difficulties and if we do the same things, that would be *adharma*.

Sometimes, and under some circumstances, an individual who commits a wrong has to be told in very clear terms that he has done something wrong, in order to improve him. Simply because one uses a knife sometimes, one cannot conclude that it is an evil thing or that the individual is a cruel person. For example, sometimes a doctor uses a knife and cuts open the heart while performing surgery. Will this be called cruelty or an act of helping?

If you do something which is connected with untruth, it could be called *adharma*. But whatever action you do with *prema* cannot be called *adharma*. Law is love, and the entire system of law is based on love. For instance, if a boy commits a mistake and if the mother beats the boy, would you call it cruelty or *adharma*? In this context, *dharma* has acquired many different meanings. There is *dharma* relating to time, relating to the world, relating to heart, relating to a sect, and so on. There are varieties of *dharma* which have come up in usage at the present time.

The sum total and essence of all these *dharmas* is *Sanathana Dharma*. It is in this context that we can say that all religions are His and all forms are His. No *dharma*

will ever teach you to be disrespectful to your parents or teachers. It never tells you to speak untruth. All religions have had much in common and that is the good in them. What we have been doing is to neglect what has been common to all religions. On the other hand, what has not been said by any of the religions is attracting our attention. That is the reason why we have taken to the path of *adharmā*.

If each one develops faith in his own religion and puts into practice whatever has been said in his own religion, then there will be no room for the difference of opinions which are flourishing now and for the uncultured way in which we often talk. While you profess faith in your religion and act in your daily life in a contrary manner, then one can understand what faith you have in any religion. If you have true faith in the religion which you profess, then there is no chance of your behaving in a manner contrary to the tenets of that religion. When precept is divorced from practice, then it appears like an external cloak. This itself is *adharmā*. All our devotion and faith today are in appearance only. They are not truly in you.

If we go to any place of pilgrimage or a place of worship, we show a great deal of devotion and faith; but when we come away from such places, all our devotion and faith are left behind. It is in this context that the *Bhagavad Gita* has said, “*Satatam Yoginaha*”. This means that you must be a *Yogi* and a devotee always and

at all times. Our good qualities are in the forefront only when we are doing *puja* or *japa*. The moment we come out of our *puja*, we shed such qualities. Good qualities are not to be tied down to a particular time and place. They should be observed in one’s entire life continuously.

One individual had to cover a distance of ten miles at night. He had a lantern in his hand and the light of this lantern was shining and lighting the way only for about four or five yards. He entered the forest, then he began to wonder how he can travel for ten miles with that lamp, which was giving light only for a few yards. At this time, a *sanyasi* was also going that way. The *sanyasi* asked him where he was going and why he was feeling so sorry. The man said that he had to travel ten miles. The light in his hand was showing only a few yards, and he was worried as to how he could travel such a long distance. The *sanyasi* said that if the person took the light with him, then it will show the way for all the distance.

In the same manner, our virtuous conduct will help us throughout our lives. You may doubt the omnipresence of God; but if you realise that your own body is the temple of God, your own heart is the seat of God and that the *Jiva* in you is simply a reflection of God, then your meditation room is your body itself and so He is present wherever you go. Therefore in all the deeds that you perform, in all the individuals that you meet and in all the thoughts that you entertain, you must see the Divine

and act accordingly. In order that you may have these qualities, you must develop faith and follow the paths indicated by the sacred texts like the *Bhagavatha*, *Mahabharatha*, *Ramayana*, Bible, Quoran and so on.

If we think of *Easwara*, we at once picture someone who has tied up his hair, who has a trident in his hand, who has three eyes and who wears a leopard skin. *Easwara* really means one who is the highest being like *Maheswara* and who possesses all types of prosperity. It is by the very thought or *sankalpa* of *Maheswara* that we believe that creation, maintenance and dissolution of the created world is taking place. It is usual to describe *Maheswara* as consisting of Siva, Vishnu and Rudra as three parts.

The name Siva signifies that he gives us happiness and prosperity. On the other hand, Siva is also one who shows us the correct path relating to wisdom, prosperity, and gives us various types of wealth and has, therefore, been also called Sankara. The word Sankara is to be understood as consisting of two parts “*San*” and “*Kara*”. The word *kara* means to hand in and the word *san* means all kinds of wealth. One who hands in all kinds of wealth and prosperity to us is Sankara.

It is in the context of these sacred meanings, that I told you earlier about the three kinds of *pragnas*—*Jiva pragna*, *Atma pragna* and *Easwara pragna*. I also mentioned that *Jiva pragna* binds oneself, while *Easwara pragna* binds others, and *Atma pragna* liberates all.

Some people have doubts in their minds as to how *Easwara pragna* can bind others. By using his wealth, one can make an attempt to bind others. Here the word wealth has a very wide meaning. We can bind others with wealth when it takes the shape of money. We can bind others with wealth when it takes the shape of intelligence. We bind others with wealth when it takes the shape of love. All these are different forms of wealth.

You can also bind others by wisdom. God is referred to as *Bhakta paradheena* and this implies that the devotee can bind God by his devotion. Therefore, this idea that the wealth, given by *Easwara* in so many different forms, can be used to bind one is something which is in the nature of neither truth nor untruth. It is a concept which is in between these two.

One who has acquired the wealth of wisdom and becomes identical with wisdom becomes very happy and is referred to as, “*Thath eva thwam*”. This means that this person is in great bliss and is one with the object of his wisdom. Sometimes this person who is having wisdom, while only looking at the object of his wisdom finds great happiness. This state is referred to as, “*Thwam eva thath*”. In these two statements, you will find that one place belongs to the *guru* and the other place belongs to the disciple. One who sits in the place of *Thath* and explains the significance of *Thwam* is the *guru*. One who sits in the place of *Thwam* and makes an enquiry about the nature

of *Thath* is the student. The *guru* stands in the place of *Sath*. The student also lives in close proximity to *Sath*. He has the opportunity of himself getting “*Sadbhava*” or good ideas. When you are in the proximity of a good thing, then you must yourself get the nature of that good thing. Under those circumstances, the student gets the opportunity of becoming one with the *guru* and moving into the *Nivritthi* state.

If I have to explain to you easily and clearly this concept, I have to draw your attention to the practice in our country of undertaking *Upavasa* (Fast—Being in the constant presence of God) in the name of God. To get at the significance of this, we have to understand the difference between *Upasana* and *Upavasa*. *Upavasa* is to live close by. *Upasana* is to sit close by. We do not feel the heat when we are sitting near an air-conditioner. Likewise in winter if we sit near a heater, we get the benefit of warmth. We do *Upavasa* because we want to go close to God and stay near Him.

What is the benefit of going close to God? The benefit is that the *sath-chith-ananda* of God will come to us and the bad qualities in us will go away. This is how we should understand the meaning of *Upavasa*. It is our attempt to go close to God but in practice we have reduced this to eating half a dozen chapathis, a dozen plantains and drinking a pint of milk after refraining from eating rice. Is there any meaning in this kind of *Upavasa*? Often, in this manner, we are not

comprehending the correct meaning of our sacred culture. To some extent, we are therefore disappointed at the results which our *sadhanas* and practices bring us.

### **Pavitratma Swarupas, students!**

You have come here for this summer course and staying here with the specific purpose of understanding the truth. You must take the truth about these things to your heart and also spread them amongst your friends when you go back home. You must see that the future of our country is rebuilt on such firm foundations. I bless you and bring this discourse to a close.