

4. Two Great Human Qualities Of Humility and Obedience Characterised The Krishna Avatar

Do you know why you have been given your vision and your eyes? Is it for seeing everything that is around you? No, certainly not. It has been given to you to help you to see the supreme one, the omnipotent Divinity.

Pavitratma Swarupas,

Today what our country requires is idealism. In the social and political sphere, we have to have a goal which will be our ideal which we have to aspire for. In any country and in each sphere, one particular individual may be an ideal. But an individual who in all spheres—in the social, political, spiritual, and economic—is able

to guide us is a very rare thing. When we take an overview of our ancient history, we find that there is one such individual who was able to give a lead and set an ideal example in all spheres of activity. Krishna was a rare individual. He could be regarded as an ideal for the entire world. But to be able to understand these aspects of Krishna, we have to make some attempts and effort. Truly, if we want to comprehend these ideal aspects of Krishna, we have to push aside, to some extent, the divinity present in him and concentrate on the human aspects of his life and work. So long as we concentrate on his divine aspects, the good human qualities in him will not come to our attention in the proper perspective. Also, if we remain in the position in which we now are, and if we want to experience the great human qualities which he exhibited, this is not possible.

We will have to make a journey backwards in time and move to the times in which he lived. It will be a difficult matter to make a comparison between the time and environment in which he lived and the time and environment in which we now live. Today, the citizens of this country are prepared to worship man; but they are not prepared to understand man. Understanding the kind of divine strength that is present in human beings is possible only if we attempt to do so through human nature.

Therefore, if today we want to understand and comprehend the human aspects of Krishna, we will have to make a journey into the times in which he lived. Many may not have understood this; but if we look at the legends around Sri Krishna, then it will become perfectly obvious to us that humility and obedience were two characteristic features of him. People of these times are likely to get some doubt whether humility and obedience are qualities which were, at all, really present in him. The reason for this doubt is that the kind of Krishna which we see depicted in the cinemas today, and the description of Krishna that we read in the texts of today, differ very much from facts, and hence we get this doubt. In that context, we are also likely to get a doubt as to whether there were such sacred ideas in those times, in Bharath.

Just for the sake of earning some money and for the sake of temporary pleasure, we have been distorting our own sacred history. In fact it has become common practice for us to misrepresent our sacred history. When we see these things, we get the picture that Krishna was always fighting with kings and removing them from their thrones. We also think that he was blindly worshipped by his devotees. These are the only two features that we notice. But if we carefully look at the contents of the *Mahabharatha*, written by Vyasa, we

get the unmistakable feeling that humility and obedience were present in Krishna in a large measure. In fact, we will see that they were present in excess of what a common man would accept.

There is one simple illustrative example for this. One day, the battle was raging in a terrible manner, and on that day, Karna was using his deadly weapons. Unable to withstand the fury of Karna, the Pandava army was running hither and thither and the Pandavas were very hurt. Dharmaraja hurried to his camp. When he returned to his camp, he found that Arjuna was engaged in another part of the battlefield and Dharmaraja had no help. Dharmaraja was suffering from his wounds, suppressed his excitement, and was waiting for Arjuna's return to camp. Arjuna returned to the camp after some time. Dharmaraja was, after all, a human being and was suffering a great deal from the physical injury that was caused by the weapons and could not bear it. In his excitement, he started blaming Arjuna and his Gandiva. Dharmaraja looked at Arjuna and said, "What is the use of your Gandiva and all your penance by which you acquired these sacred weapons? Karna has been causing havoc in our camp and you have not been able to retaliate." In this manner, when Dharmaraja showed excitement, Arjuna also showed excitement, and both of them were in an excited mood. Each one tried to

console the other. Arjuna went into such a fury that he could not contain himself and was about to hit Dharmaraja with the Gandiva.

At that critical moment, Krishna entered the camp and the humility which was shown by Krishna was such that the Pandavas could never forget it thereafter. Krishna held the hands of Arjuna and pleaded with him and said that in the excitement of war, he should not disobey his brother; and then he went to Dharmaraja and touched his feet and said that he will not let go of his feet till he has excused Arjuna with the fullness of his heart. He told Dharmaraja that the Five Pandavas are like the five *pranas* (vital airs). If among the five brothers, who are like the five *pranas*, such differences come up and if these differences be known to the world, what was going to happen to this world? He would not leave the camp until he was assured that Dharmaraja had excused Arjuna.

In that situation, when Dharmaraja found that Krishna was showing an unprecedented amount of humility and obedience, tears came out of the eyes of Dharmaraja. He said that the humility and obedience shown by Krishna were because of the great love which Krishna had for the Pandavas. Immediately he went up to Arjuna and asked him to forget about the quarrel and

apologise to him. We should ask ourselves why Krishna put himself in this situation where he had to go and touch the feet of Dharmaraja. We will then get the answer that this is because of the affection and love which Krishna had for the Pandavas.

As a result of his *prema* to his devotees, God will be willing to put himself in any objectionable position. Krishna is one who demonstrated that as a result of his *prema* to his devotees, he is willing to subject himself to any situation. Here, we should ask ourselves whether we should take the human qualities in Krishna and appreciate them or take the divine qualities in Krishna and take that as an example. In the later case, we will immediately get a doubt as to why he is submitting himself to these things if he is a divine personality. In the context of the society in which we are living, a society which is decrepit in many ways—we should take the human qualities of Krishna and study them. Such a study will benefit us.

He never modified what he wanted to say either to please others or displease others. He always uttered the truth, irrespective of whether it pleases or hurts others. On one occasion Dharmaraja wanted to perform a *Rajasuya yagna*.¹ He called all his brothers and told them that they should support him. The brothers

immediately accepted the orders of the eldest brother and said that he was the right person to perform such *yagna*, and they were ready to help him. The next day he called for various pundits and priests, and he mentioned to them his intention of performing the *yagna*. The pundits also praised the idea and said that Dharmaraja was the right person to do such a thing. They said many things to please him. Next day he also sent for Dhaumya and Vyasa and told them of his intention of performing the *Rajasuya Yagna* and sought their blessings.

However, Dharmaraja was not satisfied with the approval which he got from these quarters. He thought that Krishna was the very basis of all things and he asked Arjuna to go and bring him. When Krishna came, Dharmaraja touched his feet and told him of his intention of performing the *Rajasuya Yagna*. Krishna listened to all that Dharmaraja had to say, very quietly, and with a smile. Krishna was not prepared to approve the idea just to please Dharmaraja. For a moment he lifted his eyebrows and told Dharmaraja that he should give up the idea of performing the *Rajasuya Yagna* because he did not yet have the right to do so. So long as Dharmaraja was not the undisputed king of this country and so long as there were other kings like Sisupala, Dantavakra, and so on, who were equally

strong or stronger than him, he would not have the right to perform the *Rajasuya Yagna*. When he is able to conquer and subdue these other kings such as Sisupala, Dantavakra, and Jarasandha, he will acquire the right to perform the *Yagna*. The reason for this is that to perform any *Yagna*, a certain amount of right was required. To perform a certain *Yagna*, there has to be a lot of wealth and a lot of help coming from the other kings. At that time, Dharmaraja could not count on the support of many powerful kings. So long as there were kings who did not regard themselves as his subjects and were ready to help, there would, in fact, be a lot of trouble for the people.

Here, we should really enquire as to what the reason was for Krishna to tell Dharmaraja to go and conquer powerful kings like Sisupala, Dantavakra, and others. These kings were intensely selfish and would do anything in order to maintain themselves in the ruling position. In that process, they were doing a lot of harm to the people with the ultimate objective of selfishly retaining their possessions.

Krishna had the idea that if there are kings who do not have the welfare of the people in their minds, who are only selfish in their approach, there will not be any peace in the world. He thought that such rulers were

undesirable and felt that they should be removed. When the ruling power is in the hands of selfish people, knowing that the king will do things which will simply help him in his selfish ambitions, even at the cost of the interests of the people, Krishna told Dharmaraja that such rulers should be removed. Krishna felt that the people in a country are like the organs of a body of the ruler, and the ruler of the country is like the heart of the country so far as the people are concerned. The intimate relationships that exist between the heart and the body should be the kind of intimate relationship that should exist between the ruler and the ruled in a country.

The country and the body are like the object and the image. Just as an individual makes all attempts to escape from an injury that may be coming to his body, so also when there is some harm that is foreseen for the country, the people of the country should make all attempts to remove such danger. Without any personal motive, Krishna very clearly stated that so long as there are such selfish rulers in the country, the country is not going to have any peace and security. So, if Dharmaraja wanted to have the right to perform such a *Yagna*, he must first remove such kings.

Dharmaraja accepted the orders of Krishna. With the blessing of Krishna, he started to first conquer and

remove King Jarasandha. With the help from Arjuna and Bheema, it was possible for Dharmaraja to remove king Jarasandha from the kingdom. Having done this, Dharmaraja prepared for the *Rajasuya Yagna*. Krishna himself was ready to give all help to Dharmaraja in the conduct of the *Rajasuya Yagna*, and Krishna was helping him in every way.

Dharmaraja was entrusting each individual with a specific task. Vyasa was nominated as the chief priest. Arjuna was asked to attend to all the preparations for the *Yagna*. Sahadeva was entrusted with the task of receiving the guests. Kripacharya was given the task of giving gifts to various people. As each individual was being given tasks, Krishna was also standing with folded hands, and he said, “Dharmaraja, you are now the undisputed king of this country and I am one of your subjects, I stand before you and ask that I be given an appropriate task.”

Dharmaraja was somewhat hurt and said that all the territory and Kingdom of which he was the ruler and all the wealth which he was enjoying were all the result of the divine blessing of Krishna, and it was not right for him to ask to be entrusted with work. Then Krishna said that at that point of time, Dharmaraja should see only the human aspect of Krishna and forget

the divine aspect. He further said, “You should not look at me and regard me as one individual citizen amongst your people and you should not think of me in the aspect of the divine *atma*.” Dharmaraja then addressed Krishna and said that he should choose any work that he would like. Krishna said that he would like to serve everyone, and that he would like to wash the feet of all the guests and sprinkle the water on his head. He requested that this duty be given to him. He stated further to Dharmaraja that he was the leader while Krishna was the follower and that as a follower he would like to serve people.

Krishna was all-knowing and all-powerful and one should try to understand the meaning of Krishna offering to do such service and the humility that underlies such an offer. Truly, in the books that we read, or the cinemas that we see, or in the dramas that we see, when we look at Krishna, we come to the conclusion that all the aspects in which he is portrayed are indeed divine aspects and that there is nothing human in him. Krishna lived in the *Dwapara Yuga*; and for us who live in the *Kali Yuga*, it will be very difficult to understand the human qualities of Krishna. If we want to understand Krishna’s conduct, then the right thing for us to do is to go back to Krishna’s time and not bring Krishna to our time.

The young people who really want to understand and comprehend Krishna as an ideal human example must be prepared to travel back and look into the times when Krishna lived. He was the great individual who set up an example for ideal conduct in the social, political, and spiritual fields.

On one occasion, Arjuna was very despondent and he was preparing to commit suicide. Realising and feeling that if this was to be allowed, it would be a very shameful act and a blot on the entire family of the great Pandavas, Krishna went and entreated Arjuna to refrain from such an act, and convinced him that it should not be done. Under many circumstances and in many difficult situations, he was protecting the Pandavas as eyelids protect the eyes.

On one occasion when Krishna went as an Ambassador, Dhritharashtra insulted him and told him that the Pandavas and Kauravas were all brothers, and one set of brothers should not be looked at in any special and privileged manner. Even in that situation, Krishna was prepared to tell the truth to Dhritharashtra without fear or favour. He told Dhritharashtra that there can never be friendship between fire and water. He said that he was always on the side of Pandavas because the Pandavas were the embodiments of *dharma* and they

always protected *dharma*. On the other hand, the Kauravas were evil and bad people. While the evil and bad people were giving trouble to those who follow the *dharmic* way of life, Krishna could not remain a passive witness to such a situation. In the body, Dharmaraja was like the head, Arjuna was like the shoulders, Bheema was like the tummy, Nakula and Sahadeva were like the legs, and in that body composed of the Pandavas, Krishna was the heart. So the kind of close relationship that existed between the Pandavas and Krishna was like the relationship that exists between the various parts of the body and the heart. If the Pandavas that constitutes the body are not true, there is no heart called Krishna; and if there is no heart called Krishna, there is no body called the Pandavas. This kind of a relationship that exists between the Pandavas on the one hand and Krishna on the other was told without fear or favour in an assembly where evil people were sitting, with the intention of hurting Krishna and insulting Him. For this, we should take Krishna as an ideal example of a person who is willing to speak the truth, irrespective of the consequences.

This was not a one-way love. The Pandavas were also regarding Krishna as their very life. It is only as a consequence of the *prema* which the Pandavas had for Krishna that such a two-way relationship existed.

The kind of tree that sprouts will be determined by the nature of the seed. The smell which one gets when one has a belch will be determined by the kind of food which one eats. The kind of cake you will get will be determined by the kind of flour you will use in making the cake. When Krishna was sent to undertake peace negotiations, the amount of trouble and the hesitation which the Pandava brothers had is not easily understood by others. It is very well-known to Krishna. The Pandava brothers, particularly Nakula and Sahadeva, were worried that their elder brother was sending Krishna, the Paramatma, into a court filled with evil people. They were greatly worried about a possible harm these people might do to Krishna. Until Krishna returned safely after completing the negotiations, Nakula and Sahadeva did not even take a sip of water. They were living in fear and dread of getting bad news about Krishna and were constantly thinking of Krishna and his welfare.

When Krishna returned, the youngest of the Pandavas, namely Sahadeva, embraced Krishna and expressed himself in the following terms, "I was in great hesitation and doubt when Krishna, my brother-in-law, was being sent to negotiate peace. I was worried that harm would come to him. Indeed, I was wanting to ask them to drop the idea of sending him for the

negotiations; but I thought that if I gave rise to such an expression, it would have been considered a bad omen. So I kept quiet. However, I am glad that Krishna has now returned safely.” So saying, he embraced him and expressed great pleasure.

Because the Pandavas had such great faith and affection towards Krishna, Krishna in turn was also protecting them at all times. The kind of connection that exists between God and his devotees is always strengthened by the bonds of *prema*. Even Lakshmi could not bind Narayana to herself, but Narayana was bound down by the *prema* of Pahlada.

When we look at the *Avatar* of Narasimha,² we get a feeling of terror. When we look back at the story of Pahlada and Narasimha, we will realise that when Narasimha was giving *darshan* (Seeing the Lord) to Pahlada, he showed great kindness. But it looked as if Pahlada was standing in a corner full of fear. At that time, Narasimha looked at Pahlada and asked him if he was afraid of the fearsome figure which had come to punish his father; but Pahlada explained that he was not afraid of the Lord as it was the sweetest form one can comprehend. He said that he was indeed happy to be able to see the Lord. Narasimha then asked why Pahlada was afraid. To this Pahlada replied that he

was afraid because the divine vision which he was then having was likely to disappear in a few moments and he would soon be left alone. The fear which was troubling Pahlada was that God will leave him in this world and disappear. Pahlada wanted to ask God not to leave him. God’s divine vision and divine beauty are such that only his devotees can appreciate. Hiranyakasyapu went on saying that God does not exist anywhere. On the other hand, when Pahlada said that God will be found wherever we want, to him indeed, God was present wherever he sought him, and this is simply the result of *Yad Bhaavam tad Bhavathi* (The thoughts will determine the action). Whatever you have in mind will be reflected back to you as a reality.

Today, we are performing *Puja* (ritual worship) to God, and we are worshipping and wanting to follow him. For whose benefit are we doing all these? We are doing all this for our own benefit and not for the benefit of God. The reason why we do all this is that by thinking of the good qualities that are present in God, we will also get such good qualities.

There is a small example for this. When we have a thought in our mind about something which is exciting, then we find that our words show excitement and our actions also show excitement. On the other hand, if in

our mind there are thoughts which are sorrowful, then our external body will show the sorrow that our mind is experiencing. We need not go so far. If we think of a lime and think that we are cutting it, you will find that there is saliva on the tongue in your mouth. Actually, the lime juice has not come and touched your tongue. The thought of the lime juice makes your tongue water. If we think of some dirty matter while eating our food, there will be some disturbance in our mind. That is why it is our traditional practice that while people are eating their food, no one should go and talk to them of dirty matter. The reason for this is that the moment we think of something and a thought passes through our mind, our heart attunes itself to that kind of thought. When we are sitting here, if somebody shouts out that there is a scorpion which is seen, irrespective of whether there is a scorpion or not, the very word will make us all shudder and go away from here. Therefore, a particular thing which enters our mind will make us get attuned to that thought in all our actions. So it follows that if we keep on thinking of the divine qualities of God, there is a chance of ourselves developing those divine qualities in us.

It is in this context that it has been said *Brahma vid Brahmaiva Bhavati*. The knowledge of *Brahman* will turn you into *Brahman* himself. Therefore, we

should promote good ideas, good ideals, and good thoughts. The result of that is that good will be promoted in us. The real meaning of this is not that God is somewhere and listening to our prayer and that he will come all the way from somewhere to solve our difficulties. In a worldly plane, if someone goes near a person in a position of authority and praises him then he may do some good for the person who praises him, but God is not like this person who is in a position of authority. Even if you pray to God in your mind, His grace will help you. Therefore, prayers to God, singing the glory of God, and thinking of the divine qualities of God are being done by us for our own good and for the purpose of acquiring some of them for ourselves.

Students!

In many ways you are attempting to understand various sacred aspects like the *Mahabharatha*, *Gita*, etc.; but so long as you just listen to them and do not put them into practice, there will be no good at all. Will the Brinjals described in the *puranas* help you in any way? However hungry a tiger may be, will it eat a poori? There may be any kind of attraction, but a real devotee will never think of things which are worthless. Whatever obstacles may come in your way, provided you do not bend in the context of those obstacles and

have your faith firmly implanted in your mind, then we can build up a Krishna army.

You must all make up your minds to have an unwavering faith and a steadfast vision. This is an attempt which you should make. Whatever you have grasped in your hand, you have already got. Until your objective is achieved, do not let go the hold. Whatever you have desired for, you have expressed it; and until your desired objective is fulfilled, do not turn back. What you have asked, you have asked. Until what you have asked is granted to you, do not give up. Whatever you have in your mind, you have already thought of it. Never move away from that thought till it is fulfilled. Seeing your determination and devotion, God will yield and grant your desire and what you want, or it may be that you will be tired and you may collapse. Until then, do not change your mind. That is the right path, but to give up your determination is not the right path.

Students!

I am hoping that you will turn back a little into the history of Bharath and look at the ideal life and ideal example which Krishna has set before us. You should have that as your objective and develop yourselves as future citizens of this country. I bless you and bring this discourse to a close.