

## **14. DHARMA AND INDIAN CULTURE**

A true student does not seek pleasure; he is no student who seeks pleasure. The seeker of pleasure cannot be a seeker of knowledge. He should seek knowledge and never pleasure.

Fostering amongst people love for the Lord is his foremost duty,  
Living for others, not for himself, is his sublime ideal.  
In selflessly offering himself for the service of man lies his self-contentment.  
Nourishing love untainted in the heart,  
If you do not help fellow humans,  
Of what use is your learning, O Foolish One.

### **Students, Teachers and patrons of education,**

Of all the nations of the world, India is a nation that stands on the strongest foundation. Though there arose from time to time tremendous challenges and upheavals, there were men in India who faced these challenges with peace and patience and kept the grand mansion of India safe and sound.

The monarchs who ruled over India fall into three categories: the supporters, the denigrators and the middlings. The monarchs who favoured Indian culture, contributed substantially to her beauty and glory; the denigrators made tremendous efforts to destroy Indian culture and found themselves defeated in their endeavours, the middlings who adopted an attitude of complacency and indifference disappeared in the womb of time. These three categories of men existed then; they exist now; they will exist in the future as well. But thanks to the patience and forbearance of its

people, India made tryst with history, met the challenges of time and emerged grand and victorious.

The nations which appeared to have been built on unshakeable foundations have come crumbling down in front of our very eyes. Such is the fate of the nations who prided on their physical and mental prowess.

But India, on the other hand, though not endowed with the money and might of such nations, resisted the ravages of times and vicissitudes of history. Indian culture even today stands as an ideal to be emulated by other nations. The foreigners who investigated into the cause for India's untarnished culture found no answer. It is India's adherence to dharma and the dharmic life which her people led that has made India's culture an eternal culture.

There is no word which can successfully convey the depth and the amplitude of meaning contained in the word 'Dharma.' Words like 'Right action and righteous living' are only translations which do no justice to the original meaning. Only 'Dharma' is the equivalent of the word 'Dharma.' Many people have mistaken 'dharma' for religion. But 'religion' does not convey the infinitude of meaning latent in the word 'dharma.' Dharma is an ocean whereas religion is a lake. While the scope and significance of a religion is confined to a certain number of people following a certain creed, 'dharma' is universal in scope, transcending race and religion. Dharma belongs to all.

It is a belief common in the west that everybody has certain rights. But on the contrary, the Indian belief is everybody has certain 'dharma's' to perform. But rights and dharma are related. When the parents discharge their dharma, the rights of the children grow; when the children perform their dharma, the rights of the parents grow. Similarly when the teachers discharge their duties, the

rights of the students will grow. When the students discharge their duties properly, the rights of the teachers will grow.

#### **DHARMA OF A STUDENT:**

What is the essential dharma of a student? Self-respect, self-confidence, selflessness and self-support constitute the dharma of a student. The modern students of today lack all these four qualities. In the first instance students should acquire self-respect which in turn enables them to cultivate self-sacrifice. It is only the person who does self-sacrifice can acquire self-satisfaction. Since the students have lost all these four qualities, education, students and teachers too have lost their value. Man enjoys freedom and justice only when he has cultivated the qualities of harmony and adjustment and feeling of Atmic oneness. Universal love springs out of this Atmic oneness. This love is the basis of universal brotherhood. Man finds fulfilment by experiencing this nectarine love and sharing it with fellow humans. Thus by this love alone the divinity in you will shine, sathwic strength will arise, universal harmony will spring and Divine union will be possible.

#### **EDUCATION FOR LIFE:**

Why does a student seek admission in educational institutions today? They do so only to eke out their living. A student gives his energy and time to earn the degree so that he will be employed. What is the value of a degree if it does not enable him to serve society and nation? Today a student, as soon as he earns his degree, joins the queue at the employment office to register his name. He also tries to obtain a passport which will enable him to satisfy his greed for acquiring wealth. He is thus lured away to go abroad to make money. Students should realise the truth that education is for life not for a living. Birds and beasts do not go to

any university, yet they manage to live. We must seek education not for making money, but to understand the meaning of life.

Can the knowledge of reading and writing make  
one educated?

Can one become educated by earning degrees?

Can it be called education if it is devoid of  
wisdom and conduct?

Science has made tremendous progress. But along with it, like a shadow, even ignorance has also progressed.

Our vision today is defective, as we see only the outside, not the inside. To a person who sees only outside, the ocean appears to be a mass of turbulence; but it is all calm underneath. Hence man should not allow himself to be swayed by the externalities of things. We must develop broad vision in this broad world.

The knowledge that we obtain in the educational institutions today is only information oriented. It can be compared to the process of gathering raw materials. The information you acquire should enable you to bring out the products such as self-respect, self-support, self-confidence etc. It is our duty to supply these products to the nation. But the modern student, on the other hand, passes in some subjects the knowledge of which neither helps him nor his friends.

It is only when the students shed selfishness that the seedling of spirituality will sprout in them. The well being of all sciences depends on the study of moral and spiritual sciences. The excellence of all branches of learning depends upon 'Vidya' (education). Only good education can transform people and profession. It is said, "If the daughter-in-law is dark, generations

will become dark. Similarly if educational system becomes dark, all fields of activity will be dark. The darkness which marks the educational institutions today is the darkness of selfishness.

**TRUE EDUCATION:**

The education system today should radiate splendour. It is only spiritual and moral education which can foster harmony and unity and humanity. But spiritual and moral education has almost perished in the world. The want of spiritual education is the cause for the ferment and the agitation in the world today.

Today Indians are lured away by the concept of 'freedom,' the mark of western civilisation. Freedom is not licence. Freedom is restraint. Restraint of the mind and the senses is real freedom. Reckless abandonment to the things of the world is not freedom. India has won political freedom, but not economic, moral and spiritual freedom. People must have self-confidence. You should not be dependent on others. You should depend on yourselves. This is known as self-support. But today self-confidence has vanished; self-support has broken down; self-satisfaction has been blown away. All that the students have today is only bookish knowledge. They are totally devoid of practical knowledge. The modern student today:

Studies mathematics assiduously but ignores the science of  
arithmetic;  
Knows the route to America but ignores the route to the holy  
Kashi;  
Master of Algebra, he is ignorant of the area of his house.  
Everyday he takes exercises, but struggles to sit in padmasana.  
Master of botany, he doesn't know the uses of Tulasi leaf.

Hence mere theoretical knowledge, devoid of practical knowledge, does not lead you anywhere.

Students should be endowed with spiritual yearning. It is easy to acquire wealth and property, but wealth and property increase our ignorance. We are like those people who fence the thorny bushes with fruit-yielding trees. Our secular studies are like thorny bushes which should be used to guard the fruit bearing trees of spirituality.

Students, Love and respect others as you wish to be loved and respected. Unless you respect others, how can others respect you? Respect and courtesy are reciprocal, they are not one-way traffic.

Our boys chant the following Vedic utterance:

Nakarmana, Naprajaya,  
Tyage naike Amritatwa Manasuhu.

Our students do not have the spirit of sacrifice; if at all they sacrifice, they sacrifice their character. What is the good of living if you have forfeited your character? You can sacrifice anything, even your life, but never your character. It is said three-fourths of your life is character. In fact our real life is character.

The students of today acquire secular skills to enjoy worldly life and worldly happiness. Swayed by selfishness, these people think in terms of their family and themselves. Though they derive much benefit from society, they don't want to benefit the society in any way, ignoring the fact that the happiness of his family and his own happiness depend on the happiness of the society. Every educated student should plunge into the service of society. Then alone, you will acquire self-respect.

**WHOM TO BLAME:**

Our Vice-chancellor and our guest, Sri Rami Reddy have spoken to you about the existing educational system and about the number of educational institutions we have in the country. We have nearly two hundred recognised universities and thousands of colleges. What do these institutions do? Every year they turn out lakhs of graduates with a degree in their hands. Our educational institutions today have become factories for manufacturing graduates. These educational institutions add only to the existing number of five crore unemployed today. The government is keen on starting institution after institution. But it has not done much to cast the students and educational institutions in proper mould. In the absence of proper employment, unemployed youths have turned into naxalites, hijackers etc. It is not the students who are to be blamed, it is only the parents and government who are to be blamed. Carried away by their blind love for their children, they accept blindly whatever their children do without correcting them. These people have become the followers of Dhritharastra who never corrected the unrighteous deeds of his children. These parents, who follow the footprints of Dhritharastra, will share the same fate of Dhritharastra. At the end of his life, Dhritharastra found all his sons dead. Not even one was left to perform his last rites.

Today the parents give unlimited freedom to their children which is highly disastrous. If the children are not controlled at the tender age, they can never be controlled. This is the golden period of your life, do not fritter it away. Since no one cares to teach the excellence of Indian culture to the youth today, I have taken upon myself the task of teaching you the glory and splendour of Indian culture. Try to understand how sacred and how sublime is Indian

culture. Indian culture is the embodiment of all excellences. It is suffused with dharma.

Dharma is infinite and timeless. Unaware of the infinite meaning, contained in Dharma, people equate it with religion. Dharma is steady, eternal and changeless. The summer course in Indian culture and spirituality is organised to acquaint the students with the spirit of Dharma. What is this culture? What is this spirituality? These too are nothing but parts of Dharma. As a cloth is nothing but thread and cotton, similarly the thread and cotton of culture and spirituality form part of Dharma. Though since the beginning of history many foreign races like Persians, Greeks, Muslims, Portuguese, Dutch and English made inroads into India, they could never shake the foundations of Indian culture. Though the foundations of many cultures have tumbled down, the foundations of Indian culture stand strong, steady and secure.

We must seek education to cultivate noble virtues, but today we are sacrificing noble virtues for the sake of education. It is said:

Modern education has fostered only cleverness,  
It has not instilled even little virtue,  
Of what use is ten acres of barren land?  
It is enough to have a little of fertile land.

We must nourish noble qualities for the blossoming of human excellence. We must lead lives of exemplary idealism. People should appreciate your good conduct and virtuous character. Of what use is high learning without good character and conduct? Along with the cultivation of good character and conduct, you should also cultivate the four noble virtues of self-confidence, self-respect, self-support, self-sacrifice. Then alone you will find fulfilment as a human being.

Students, all these fifteen days you have learnt about different aspects of Indian culture. But mere knowledge is of no use without translating knowledge into practice. You must maintain the same discipline and good behaviour which you are maintaining now even after you go elsewhere.

Students work feverishly for marks; but at the same time, they must see that they earn no remarks. The value of your marks will be enhanced if you earn no remarks against you. We must give superlative importance for cultivating sublime virtues; and we must devote all our energy, all our strength and everything to nourish noble qualities. We must revere parents and elders; we must have firm faith in our culture. The more important thing is we must practise culture in real life.

We must understand the value of virtues by practising them, not by theorising them. But students today do not cultivate these qualities but allow themselves to be carried away by this greed which ultimately brings disaster in its wake. Greed is fraught with great danger. Wishing to obtain more milk, if you cut off the udder of a cow, you will be committing an act of foolishness. If you cut open the stomach of a golden goose that lays golden eggs, you will be losing golden eggs forever. Hence, it is highly dangerous to be carried away by greed. More desire brings greater danger, less desire brings more happiness.

**YOUR DUTY:**

You must try hard to earn respect for your country. This can be achieved by conscientious conduct on the part of students and teachers. We must ask ourselves in our conscience whether we are working in proportion to the remuneration we receive. We turn ourselves into traitors if we receive more salary and turn out little work. India has borrowed crores of rupees from other countries. How can we discharge this debt unless we work hard? We will

obtain self-satisfaction only when we work hard in proportion to the salary we receive. We must try hard to experience self-satisfaction, born of sincere work.

Students should realise that India is facing many political and economic conflicts. But students should remember that they should not enter politics while they are students. But it is nothing wrong to enter politics after you finish your education. There is nothing wrong if you work for the welfare and well being of the country. But if you touch politics when you are a student, you will touch thorns. But there are some selfish people who drag students into politics to serve their selfish ends.

You must all resolve yourselves to keep Indian culture intact. What is Bharatiya education? Bharatiya education consists in sacrificing oneself happily for the sake of others. Discharge your duties with divine feelings. You will be blessed. Lead spiritual lives.

What is spirituality? Spirituality is nothing but the blossoming of love. Whereas science is the split of love, spirituality is spirit of love. It is love alone that unites entire mankind into one. Then mankind will have no problems at all.

