

12. **KSHAMA, THE GRANDEST AND NOBLEST VIRTUE**

*Love being His Form,
He is present everywhere as Love;
Become bonded to this Love
And strengthen your spirit;
For this will lead you to
The Pure Bliss of non-duality.*

Embodiments of Love! Boys and Girls!

True and Selfless Love manifests as sacrifice. Such love knows no hatred. It envelops the entire universe, and is capable of drawing near even those who are seemingly far away. Love it is that transforms the human into the Divine. It can transform *pasu* (a bestial person) into *Pasupathi* (Divinity). In the phenomenal world, you come across many shades and derivatives of this primordial love. You love your father, mother, brother, sister, friends, and so on. In all such cases, there is always a tinge of selfishness somewhere or the other. Divine love, on the other hand, is totally free of even the slightest trace of selfishness. You

must surrender to such love, become completely submerged by it, and experience the bliss it confers.

Kshama is the breath of life

For acquiring such love, the quality of *kshama* or forbearance is a vital necessity. [*kshama* is a word rich in meaning. Besides forbearance, it also implies extreme patience and an enormous capacity to forget as also forgive. In view of this, the word *kshama* is directly used in most places in order not to dilute Bhagavan's emphasis.] Every individual must cultivate this noble quality. *Kshama* is not achieved by reading books or learnt from an instructor. Nor can it be received as a gift from someone else. This prime virtue *kshama* can be acquired solely by self-effort, by facing squarely diverse problems, difficulties of various sorts, anxieties, and suffering as well as sorrow. In the absence of *kshama*, man becomes susceptible to all kinds of evil tendencies. Hatred and jealousy easily take root in a person lacking this virtue.

Divinity is nothing but the combined manifestation of *prema* and *kshama*. At one stroke, *kshama* subsumes *sathya*, *dharma*, and the entire *Vedas*. It is the greatest among *tapas* (penance). It is the grandest and the noblest among virtues. It is all encompassing. The *Mahabharatha* and the *Srimad Bhagavatham* both contain many episodes that illustrate the disaster that befalls when *kshama* is lost. Jealousy is the first bad quality that makes its entry when *kshama* makes its exit. The *Mahabharatha* gives a graphic portrayal of how life that is otherwise smooth, can be totally shattered by jealousy. The Golden island Lanka was

like the very heavens but Ravana's jealousy reduced it to ruins. Whereas *kshama* can give complete protection, its absence can plunge one into distress and disaster. Impatience breeds selfishness and promotes jealousy, which together spur infighting and divisive tendencies of various kinds. The troubles the country is currently passing through are largely due to the absence of this noble quality of *kshama*. Impatience has ruined even very great spiritual aspirants. Likewise, kings have been reduced to beggars. Absence of *kshama* can make *yogulu* (yogis) into *rogulu* (sick persons). Without *kshama*, mankind becomes degraded and starts declining, but if it has this quality then it can progress by leaps and bounds. *Kshama* is thus the very breath of life.

Can there be smoke without fire?

Can a car move without a driver?

Can a traffic light flash without a bulb?

How then can there be Creation without a Creator?

Everything must have a basis. For spiritual progress and advancement, *kshama* is the real basis or foundation. When *kshama* disappears, disturbance sets in and there is a decline. Great countries have lost their glory, prestige, and reputation for this reason. Patience is therefore a vital virtue that must be assiduously cultivated, if one is to successfully face troubles and tribulations. Without patience and the capacity for forbearance, one becomes spiritually weak. Such weakness leads to bad feelings, undesirable thoughts, and unbecoming actions. When patience is gone, the greatest of men get reduced to utter fools.

The importance of *kshama* cannot be over-stressed. This virtue is best cultivated under adverse circumstances, and one must

therefore gladly welcome troubles instead of regarding them as unwelcome. Difficulties help one to nurse and build the capacity for patience, as the example of the Pandavas clearly shows. When they were in power and authority, the Pandavas were somewhat deficient in *kshama* but once they went into exile and had to face numerous hardships, *kshama* automatically began to develop in them. Thus, times of distress offer the ideal opportunity for the development of patience and forbearance. In fact, pain and *kshama* go together, because *kshama* grows best in an environment of sorrow and misery. However, because of mental weakness as well as ignorance, we invariably shun painful experiences and distress. You should not be weak; be brave and welcome troubles. Let them come, more the merrier. It is only with such a courageous attitude that you would be able to bring out the *kshama* hidden within you. Can you get promoted to a higher class without passing an examination? It is only when you secure the prescribed marks and pass the examination that you are declared eligible to advance to the next higher class. While preparing for the examination you have to face stress and many difficulties but how sweet is the promotion! So, welcome troubles as tests that prepare you for higher things. Some people may wonder, “If I develop *kshama* as Swami says and my life gets packed with troubles, how then will I survive?” Well, it all depends on what is meant by survival. *kshama* is the true breath of life. It is the greatest ornament that one can acquire. It is *kshama* that enables you to develop equanimity, and go beyond duality. Going beyond duality is the real purpose of life, and this cannot be done without *kshama*. You must therefore be happy when troubles descend on you because that is when *kshama* truly blossoms.

How doubts arise

Students! Often you are seized with doubts. You wonder, “We are happy here because we are close to Bhagavan and are able to have great devotion for Him. But the moment we leave from here, our devotion and love both diminish. Why?” This happens because one is deficient in *kshama*. Doubts arise frequently in an impatient person. Such a person has no tolerance, and intolerance is a fertile breeding ground for doubts. An impatient person is drowned in doubts about God. Devotees with great faith too are sometimes gripped by doubts. Why? Because of lack of *kshama*. It is therefore important to continuously assess the state of your patience and your capacity for forbearance. You must constantly ask yourself, “Is my *kshama* getting strong or weak?” You must then say, “Patience is my very life breath, and I cannot afford to let it slacken.”

Kshama is no ordinary thing. It is the consolidation of *sathya*, *dharma*, *ahimsa*, and all such values that the *Vedas* extol. It is the ultimate in happiness and also an incomparable treasure. It is the most valuable asset and property that one can acquire. When people abandon *kshama*, politics becomes degraded, criticisms and accusations are exchanged freely, and there can even be turmoil. This is what happens when forbearance gets eclipsed.

When kshama is absent, jealousy takes root

The moment *kshama* makes its exit, *asuya* (jealousy or envy) makes its entry. The opposite of *asuya* is *anasuya*. These two

qualities are like two sisters but with diametrically opposite tendencies. In the scriptures, there is the story of a woman named *Anasuya* who had three sons. They were no ordinary sons for they were none other than Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara. Swami has already told you that in the individual, Maheshwara represents a Pure Heart, Vishnu represents a Pure Mind, and Brahma represents Pure Speech. Thus, if a person's nature is *snasuya*, then that person will have a pure heart and a pure mind; moreover, the speech of the person will be pure and sweet. If *anasuya* has three sons, so has *asuya*; the three off-springs are: hatred, pomp, and anger. Why is there such a huge difference between the two sisters? Because one is courageous while the other is not. *Anasuya* is courageous; it is her courage that enables her to face all difficulties; and it is also her courage that is the fountainhead of *kshama*. One must always be courageous, for this is the only way to acquire *kshama*.

Remember how mighty Ravana was? He possessed enormous physical strength, worldly intelligence, and various related capabilities in an abundant measure. In spite of all this, because of the total absence of *kshama*, his heart became polluted with envy and hatred. Now, love has the extraordinary capacity to draw near even those who are far to start with. Hatred, on the other hand, drives away even those who are near. Ravana had no love. He lacked *kshama* but was rich in *asuya*; as a result, he eventually had to pay a very heavy price. Is it possible to have *kshama* if one's looks are bad, if one lends one's ear to foul words, and if one's actions are rooted in evil? No! Man today is seeing what he ought not to, hearing what he should not, and doing what is most

undesirable. How can there be peace in such a polluted heart? Ravana's heart was completely polluted which is why Hanuman, that great devotee of Rama, advised Ravana thus:

*O Ravana, I shall teach you a lesson!
Lanka is no longer yours, O evil one!
Listen carefully and waste not this opportunity.
Ignoring the intellect,
And becoming a slave to evil tendencies,
You have got yourself into the clutches of death!*

*Sita is the Mother of all beings;
She is your mother too.
By abducting her,
You have committed a terrible sin.
One arrow of Rama,
Will remove all your ten heads!*

*O sinner! I destroyed your minions holding Sita a prisoner,
And in retaliation you have set fire to my tail.
Now watch while I make Lanka burn,
Before putting off the fire in my tail.*

Hanuman said, "Ravana, your discrimination has been totally warped by jealousy."

Jealousy is the greatest enemy of man, and it takes root when *kshama* is absent. If you possess the virtue of *kshama*, then none of these enemies can come anywhere near you. If the hearts of

today's students are polluted, it is because of the absence of *kshama*. This is a quality that has to be painstakingly cultivated by self-effort and cannot be acquired as a gift from others; nor can it be obtained from books or even a teacher. It is only your own tenacity and firm determination that will help you cultivate this virtue. You must be resolute and ready to face any difficulty in the quest of your goal. Life is a challenge; meet it! In fact, it is a series of challenges and not just one or two. Face them squarely, resist the obstacles, and firmly march forward. Such determination alone would take you to your goal. If the Heart is devoid of *kshama*, it becomes vulnerable to doubts. Man today does not even know what to doubt and what not to doubt! Caught in the whirlpool of doubts, modern man sometimes sinks to depths much lower than that of animals. In fact, at times he makes animals look better! Animals behave within certain bounds, and the dictates of season and reason. Man, on the other hand, knows no such bounds; for him, there is neither reason nor season. Absence of *kshama* is responsible for all this. Cultivation of *kshama* must therefore be an important priority. No doubt you will face many difficulties on the path but they should not deter you. Knock them aside and bravely march on, taking courage from the fact that once you have *kshama* there is nothing that you cannot achieve.

Embodiments of Love! On occasions, you might fail in the class tests or in the examinations but that should not plunge you into depression. Realise that your failure is simply the result of lack of sufficient effort on your part. Tell yourself, "I did not work hard enough. Had I done so, I would certainly have passed. It is all my

fault entirely.” Own up your mistake, resolve to try again, and be determined to succeed next time. Instead, do not try to cover up your lapses by seeking imaginary excuses; such excuses serve no purpose. Your failure was simply the result of your neglect - that is all. With firm determination, you can achieve anything in life. When difficulties come, do not hide; confront them bravely and squarely. Difficulties are inevitable, and they will come in all shades – personal, financial, academic, professional, and even spiritual. Face them all.

Students sometimes start earnestly on meditation but after a while they lose their seriousness. As a result, whatever progress was made initially, gets wiped out. Whose fault is it? Can you blame God? No! You alone are responsible for whatever has befallen you. Instead of facing the impediments to your meditation, you become impatient; once you become impatient, you start having doubts about the utility and the efficacy of meditation; after that your interest starts slackening – all this because of the lack of patience. So, *kshama* is indispensable. *Kshama* is life itself and the very breath of life. Life bereft of *kshama*, is meaningless and one who lives so is no better than a corpse. Therefore, acquire and protect *kshama* at all costs.

Kshama must be cultivated when young

Students! The stage of life you presently are in is most important. This is when you can easily overcome all sorts of obstacles and tide over all difficulties. If you miss this chance to cultivate patience, when do you think you are going to do it? Is it after

becoming old? Habits must be formed when one is young. You cannot acquire the habit of thinking about God in your old age.

*When the messengers of death are at your doorstep,
When your relatives have given up hope
And are preparing for your last journey,
When your wife and children
Are lamenting about your imminent departure,
Is it possible to acquire in that last moment,
The habit of chanting God's Name?*

Impossible! Such a thing cannot be done. Good habits must be cultivated in the stage of life you are in now. This is when you should start stockpiling patience, and accumulate a lot of it! This is the stage when *kshama* becomes the principal weapon of your life. If bad thoughts arise in you, resist and say: "These thoughts are coming because I am deficient in *kshama*. Let me counter the deficiency." Bad thoughts cannot penetrate one who possesses *kshama*. If the doors are slammed shut, can anyone enter? For aspirants in the spiritual path, *kshama* is indispensable.

Be ever ready for the tests of God

In life, your capacity for forbearance would be constantly put to test, and you must therefore be very careful. In the class, you are expected to be ever ready for surprise tests. You cannot excuse yourself saying that you have not prepared and are not ready. The teacher will not accept that plea because you are always expected to be ready. You know what photographers do before snapping a group photo. Just before clicking they say, "Ready." The Divine

Cameraman, however, does not follow this practice. With Him, you have to be ever in readiness for no one can say when He will click the shutter. If you are not ready, the picture will not be good. So, in life you must always be ready for tests; achieving this preparedness is true *sadhana* (spiritual discipline). Do not imagine that *sadhana* is a drill performed according to a set timetable. Time is not beholden to you and will therefore not oblige you. Time will not follow you; rather, you must follow Time.

Determination a must, for acquiring kshama

The *Vedas* declare:

Uttisthata jagrata prapya varannibodhata.

Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached! Drowned in foolishness, you are sleeping soundly! Get up from this slumber of *ajnana* (ignorance), enter the realm of *prajnana* (consciousness), and experience *sujnana* (enlightenment). This really is the type of *sadhana* you ought to undertake. People do not understand this and simply declare that they are doing *sadhana*. Everyone is trying; trying, trying all the time! What is all this business about trying? Meek and puny efforts cannot be called *sadhana*. To qualify for that name, the effort must be strong and made with firm determination. You must be firmly resolved to achieve the goal.

In life, actions must be accompanied by firm resolves. God too is firmly determined about the things He chooses to do. In the *Gita* He says,

Paritranaya Sadhunam Vinasaya Ca Duskrta.
Dharmasamsthapanarthaya Sambhavami Yuge Yuge.

This is His first resolution. He says, “For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the re-establishment of *dharma*, I am born from age to age.” Next He says,

Ananyascintayantomam Ye Janah Paryupasate.
Tesam Nityabhiyuktanam Yogaksemam Vahamyaham.

“As for those who exclusively worship Me, who meditate on Me with no other thought and who are ever steadfast – I bear entirely the burden of their welfare”. If God Himself can make resolutions, why not you? What are the spiritual goals you have resolved to attain in life? If you have not set any such goals for yourself, then your life would be empty and meaningless. Life must have goals, and must be a brave journey involving the conquest of (spiritual) obstacles. Life’s journey is full of bumps and jumps; without resolve and determination, these bumps can produce confusion and depression. When confusion and depression march hand in hand, life would become a total waste.

Students! In everyone of your spiritual endeavour, you must make the resolution, “This I MUST achieve; this virtue I SHALL acquire.” This is the way to *prema* and *kshama*. If you proceed in this manner with unshakeable faith and idealism, then without any doubt, your life will be fully redeemed. All your actions and feelings must be dripping with *kshama*, *prema*, and *daya* (compassion). Love knows no hatred and is totally free from

desires. Thus God is said to be Love personified. *Kshama* will grow if you have unshakeable faith in God. Once you have learnt to be infinitely patient, Love will walk in almost immediately. *Prema* combined with *kshama* is the surest way to fulfilment. Therefore, when you worship God, make sure you repose total faith in Him. Without faith, what is the use of worship? Faith alone will take you beyond worries.

Kshama leads to bliss

Life is full of worries. They seem to come in an endless procession. What is it that does not cause anxiety?

*Birth is a worry, and so is existence itself;
Family life is a worry, death is a worry,
Childhood is a worry, old age is the same,
Living is a worry, working is a worry,
Pain causes worry, pleasure too causes worry,
Worry, worry, all the time!*

You are plagued by multiple worries all the time. In this world, troubles will come for sure but one must learn to rise above worry; this is possible only with *kshama*. Welcome troubles with a smile saying, “Come my friend, you are the bearer of joy!” Truly speaking, it is not friends but enemies who give one bliss. Do you know how? Enemies put you on your guard and help you to develop *kshama*. When one is filled with *kshama*, one cannot help being blissful. That is why Swami is stressing so much the acquisition of this incomparable virtue.

Embodiments of Love! Along with love, also cultivate *kshama*. What is normally professed as love is not real love because it invariably tends to be narrow, restricted, and tinged with selfishness. Do not mistake this distorted feeling to be love. This so-called love is based on selfishness and self-interest. Liberate this shackled love from the various clutches, purify it, and then direct it toward God. Once you have gone through this cleansing process, *kshama* will grow automatically.

The absence of *kshama* is responsible for most of the problems the world over, and the decline in the innate humanness of man. Where virtues and values are concerned, man is able to achieve hardly anything. When blades of grass stand all by themselves, they become a ready meal for cattle but when stranded and plaited into a rope, even a mad elephant can be tied down – that is the power of unity. Therefore, you should always be united. Unity promotes patience and strengthens it. What is the type of unity that Swami wants from you? Unity in matters relating to God and good activities. Such unity will develop purity, and once purity is attained, divinity becomes accessible.

Kshama develops courage

Students! In matters spiritual, make sure that you get a firm grip on whatever it is that you are seeking. No matter what the obstacles or troubles, do not ever be afraid. Your steps must always be forward and never backward. But that is not what one finds amongst students of today. During the Mohurrum festival, people dance chanting two words, Hassein and Hussein, taking first one step forward and then one step backward. In the process, they

end up being where they are! Similarly, you keep saying Sairam, Sairam, Sairam, but remain spiritually stagnant. When will you start moving ahead? Go forward, trampling over difficulties. To reach great heights, you must have courage. And how does one become courageous? When the heart is full of *kshama*, the spirit of courage will automatically makes its appearance.

Vibhishana provides the classic example. It was through *kshama* that he acquired the courage to defy Ravana and cross over to the side of Rama. He arrived in Rama's camp chanting 'Rama, Rama, Rama'. Seeing Vibhishana in the distance, Rama immediately raised His hand as a gesture of grace and protection. However, the people around Rama said, "Lord, that person is a *rakshasa*, a demon. He is the brother of your enemy. You must therefore not grant him protection." Meanwhile, Vibhishana kept on telling Rama, "I am Yours, I am Yours." Rama then said, "The moment a person tells Me 'I am Yours,' that person shall receive My protection, come what may." Such was Rama's determination; you too must have similar determination in every spiritual endeavour of yours.

One day during the Lanka War, there appeared a young man on the battlefield. Vibhishana drew the attention of Rama to this warrior saying, "Rama, this person is mighty, powerful, and valorous. He is stronger than most, and You must slay him without fail." In response, Rama despatched an arrow felling the *Rakshasa* warrior; the young man was dead. Vibhishana then went near the dead body and began weeping profusely. Rama gently lifted Vibhishana and said, "What is all this? Why are you crying over this man?" Vibhishana replied, "This is Neeludu my only son.

I urged You then to kill him since he was with the enemies but now, my emotion as a father is overwhelming me. I am unable to bear the sight of the death of my dear son right before my eyes. So, please grant me the power of patience and forbearance so that I can rise above such tragedies.” Notice how unique is Vibhishana’s prayer. He said to Rama, “*Kshama* is my *sathya* and *dharma*; it is also Rama for me! *Kshama* is my God and I cannot ever afford to forget it.” This episode reveals how even great men suffer pain if they lose their grip over *kshama*. On the other hand, with *kshama*, there are no limits to what can be achieved.

Kshama and bad company do not go together

These days, it is not uncommon to see evil doers [seemingly] get away with it while good people suffer. It appears as if someone commits the crime and someone else gets punished – this is how things are in the world. Here is an example. You are sleeping in your room at night but mosquitoes disturb you. So, next day, you use a mosquito net but it still does not help because a few mosquitoes have sneaked into the net. You now resort to a drastic remedy – you spray Flit all over. You cannot identify the specific mosquitoes that bit you but you are not bothered; you spray over all the mosquitoes you can see. Only one or two mosquitoes bit you but now hundreds are dying. Why is this so? Because of friendship. Even if you are innocent, you have to suffer if you keep the company of evil doers. It is to drive this home that Swami often says: “Tell Me your company and I shall tell who you are.” Once bad thoughts get in, they multiply rapidly and soon drive out *kshama*; and *kshama* once lost is not easily

regained. You must therefore protect this virtue at all costs and see that you never lose it, especially because with *kshama* you can achieve anything.

Embodiments of Love! Students! During the Summer Course, you will receive such advice from elders and from Swami. Treasure them in your hearts. However, it is not enough to merely place on record the advice heard; you must make every effort to put them into practice. It is no use locking it up all inside; their impact must be made manifest through good actions. A villager was once walking carrying a bundle of food on his head. After sometime, he found the bundle to be a burden. So he made his way to the bank of a river, sat down there, opened the bundle and ate the food in it. In a few minutes, the burden disappeared, and the food consumed gave him fresh energy. In the same way, it is only when you put into practice what you have learnt that you will gain experience and strength. In turn, this will lead you to success.

Embodiments of Love! Drive away bad thoughts and make room for good and noble ones. Through sacred thoughts, foster *kshama*. This will give you multiple capabilities, enabling you to transform your life into an ideal one. Study of books alone will not enhance your capability; they will merely provide you with superficial or bookish knowledge. This obviously is not enough. Real capability and strength come by tapping the Inner Power latent in you. All that is outside is artificial. Real truth and power are both inside, in your heart. It is the heart that must be strengthened, but, unaware of this fact, people become furiously active in the external world, only to get lost there.

There are many types of food catering to the needs of the gross body but what about food for the heart? That food can be obtained only when you turn your head toward God. You must understand the subtle linkages here – food, head, and God. Thus, along with the acquisition of worldly knowledge, you must also give importance to culture and refinement. Earlier, the Vice Chancellor spoke about the culture of Bharat. He crisply summarised the essence of many ancient texts. *Bharatiya* (Indian) culture is timeless, sacred, deep, profound, full of inner strength, and provides full protection. Today, we are losing our grip over such a great culture. Instead of ignoring and brushing it aside, we must do everything possible to nurse and foster it. Refinement accumulates and manifests as culture.

Here is a cloth [at this point, Swami showed His handkerchief]. It has been woven from yarn. Where did the yarn come from? From cotton. By processing cotton, one gets yarn. By further processing yarn, one gets cloth. Likewise, this table has come from wood that has itself come from a tree. Refinement comes about only through processing and shaping. Farmers grow paddy. Can you eat raw paddy? No; it has to be polished first and then cooked before it is eaten. In life too, refinement is necessary. And culture is nothing but accumulated refinement. *Bharatiya* culture is ideal in this respect, and worthy of being followed by everyone at all times.

Therefore, with God's Name on your lips, and unshakeable faith in your heart, acquire *kshama*, allowing it to manifest as *daya* or compassion.

At the conclusion of the divine discourse, Bhagavan sang the
bhajan, Rama, Rama, Rama, Sita,

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