

Chapter XIII. The Dharmic Person

Dharma has no prejudice or partiality; it is imbued with truth and justice. So, people have to adhere to *dharma*; they have to see that they never go against it. It is wrong to deviate from it. The path of *dharma* requires people to give up hatred against others and cultivate mutual concord and amity. Through concord and amity, the world will grow, day by day, into a place of happiness. If these are well established, the world will be free from disquiet, indiscipline, disorder, and injustice.

Whatever you are dealing with, you must first grasp its real meaning. Then, you have to cultivate it daily, for your benefit. By this means, wisdom grows and lasting joy is earned. The two basic things are *dharma* and action (*karma*). The wise, who are impartial and unprejudiced, who are confirmed in *dharma*, walk on the path of truth (*sathya*), as instructed in the *Vedas*. That is the path for all people today.

Three stages to knowledge of dharma

The knowledge of *dharma* is reached in three stages:

- (1) You must receive training under wise people (*vidwans*), who are also imbued with *dharma*.
- (2) You must aspire to attain self-purification (*Atmasuddhi*) and truth (*sathya*).
- (3) You must realize the value of knowledge of the *Vedas* (*Veda-vidya*), the voice of God (Parameswara).

When these three are completed, then one understands the truth and how that truth is to be separated from untruth. This enquiry into truth has to be done in amity and cooperation; all must be equally eager to discover it for the benefit of all. Everyone's opinion must be tested on the touchstone of *dharma*, of universal good (*sarvalokahitha*). The principles that pass this test have to be specially kept apart, used, and spread in the world for the advancement of human welfare. By this means, all will develop joy and happiness in equal measure. “

“All are the same (*samithih samaani*)”, says the scripture. All have the same claim for spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) and for the means of attaining it, like education. Therefore, all must do noble and pure deeds.

Keep mind and conscience on the path

The renouncing of evil deeds, the giving up of desire —these two are accomplished by the same instrument, the mind (*manas*). The objectives of human life (*purusharthas*) have to be gained only through that. As a result of persistent training, the mind will learn to obey your interests. On the other hand, the memory (*chittha*) presents past and present experience before you and invites you to see things in perspective, to judge them against that background. Equanimity has to be attained in and through this process, which goes on in the mind. That is to say, become single-minded.

Remember also that both of these —the mind and the conscience— have to be kept straight on the path of welfare of all mankind (*sarva-manava-sukha*). *Dharma* will shine and illumine only in the person who serves all and confers joy on all. Such a person will receive not only the grace of the Lord but also the unique privilege of merging in Him. Whenever you give anything to anyone or take anything from anyone, see that you do not transgress the boundaries of *dharma*. Do not go against its commands. Follow it at all times, believing this to be your

bounden duty. Fill every ounce of your energy with the essence of *dharmā* and endeavour to progress in that path, more and more, with every passing day.

The *dharmā* person will reveal decision and enthusiastic exultation in every act of theirs. Their adherence to *dharmā* must be of that order. An attitude of fear that the Lord is seeing everywhere and everything, an ever-present apprehension that one might slide into sin, a natural bent toward truth, a leaning toward right conduct—the mind (*manas*) is endowed with such virtues. Your task is to direct it and utilize it for the welfare of all mankind.

Dependence on *dharmā* will ensure happiness and increase it. It can remove the spite that one develops toward others. It will not allow you to swell with pride when another suffers or grieves. Can such wickedness confer happiness on you? Remember, you can be happy only when all are happy! Always love and follow only truth; falsehood is never beneficial.

People respect and disgrace, but you will find no one who honours falsehood, deceit, and injustice. All will respect truth, straightforwardness, and justice. The *dharmā* as prescribed in the *Vedas* is tested and capable of being tested. It is impartial and just. Faith in it grows with practice. The worship of the gods has to follow the rules prescribed in the *Vedas*; by this means, people will get strengthened in *dharmic* practice. This *dharmā* is the command of the Lord; it is the authentic voice of God, so it can well be followed by all. For who is a divine person (*devatha*)? It is just a name for a person who observes truth as their vow (*vratha*) in daily life.

Consider how much talent the Lord has given to people. With that endowment, seek the four goals (*purushārthas*) and move forward on the path to the Lord, adhering strictly to the demands of truth. That is the use to which the talent has to be put; that is the purpose of the gift. Only those gifted with eyesight can see things; the blind have no such luck. So too, only those gifted with truth, longing for the four goals and adherence to *dharmā*, can see the Lord; all others are blind. The Lord has also given people instruments for developing their intellect and discrimination. If they use them well and try to realize themselves, the Lord will add unto them fresh talent and new sources of power, for He is full of grace toward the struggling. When people seek to follow *dharmā*, the truth will also reveal itself to them.

The discipline of truth (*sāthyā*)

If you are careless about the discipline of truth, every duty laid on you by *dharmā* and every action prompted by *dharmā* will hang heavy as a burden. Search for the reality behind all these phenomena and that search will make all *dharmic* actions light and pleasant. The Lord has shaped people so that they are inclined toward God and is delighted at the expansion of their vision and happy when they are moral and virtuous. So, people must serve their best interests by adhering to their basic nature, by concentrating on Brahman, by cultivating truth, and by practising *dharmā*.

Truth has to be sought and tested by all the canons of reasoning. The discipline consists of:

- The heroism to observe *dharmā* rigorously (*ojas*).
- Fearless self-control (*tejas*).
- The discarding of all feelings of joy or sorrow at the ups and downs of life, with equanimity.
- Having unshakable faith in truth and *dharmā* (*sāhāna*).
- Mental and physical health of the most excellent kind, earned by discipline and celibacy (*bala*).

- The desire and ability to speak sweetly and straight, won by the practice of truth and love.
- Withdrawal of the five senses of wisdom (*jnanendriyas*) and the five senses of action (*karmendriyas*) from vice and sin and the sublimation of all the senses for the service of truth (*indriya-moha*).
- The winning of the overlordship of all the worlds by the self-won domination of the inner world.
- The destruction of one's prejudices and the pursuit of truth at all times (*dharma*).

The prayer one has to make is, "May all this be conferred on me" as found in the "*Chamaka* hymn".

Dharma brings good to all; it confers bliss (*ananda*) here and hereafter. It is essential that all humanity today see the glory of this universal *dharma*.

The traits of the castes

Brahmins are known by their significant traits: knowledge (*vidya*), virtue, action of the most exalted and beneficial kind, and the spread of virtue by example. One who promotes these and cultivates these and develops these is a *brahmin*, whoever one is. That is the qualification and the authority exercisable by the *brahmin*. Only the highly learned person and the person who conducts himself as befits that learning can deserve the status. Earning these qualifications is the effort to be made by those eager to justify that position.

Now for the signs of protectors (*kshatriyas*). They are efficient in all undertakings, have heroism, courage, adventure, and an eagerness to punish the wicked and protect the virtuous. Those endowed with such qualities are entitled to the status of warriorhood. They have to take up all tasks with that attitude and establish at home worthy rules for all.

Next the business people (*vaisyas*). They have to try to make the currents of commerce flow smooth and fast, to forge communication links that tie the nations into one commonwealth and make wealth multiply in the world. That is their task. They must ensure that the concord between peoples is unbroken and undiminished. They have to aspire for "the fame of great deeds and noble achievements" and "the splendour of having helped in the spread of education and health by the erection of schools, hospitals, and the like". They must devote their wealth to the promotion of all worthy causes. By this means, virtue and righteousness are fostered.

Now for the labourers (*sudras*) and their ideal characteristics: They have to produce and gather things of value, not deviating from the path of *dharma*. Always earnest to realize the objects of human existence and always striving for the same, they must intelligently store and protect things produced and try to produce more and more, for the common benefit. The things thus collected have to be liberally utilized for the spread of genuine knowledge (*vidya*) and for the sustenance and support of the virtuous.

In this way, by the cooperative effort of these four types of human endeavour, wealth will become much and manifold and mankind will be rendered happy. The four castes (*varnas*) have to feel that the social order has been designed with the overall aim of maintaining worldly *dharma* (*loka-dharma*). If each caste adheres to its duties, the welfare of the world will doubtless be assured; besides, each will be able to win what is even more important, the bliss of the *Atma*. On the other hand, if all feel that there is but one caste, one code of duties, and one set of rules for all, the welfare and security of the world will be endangered.

If all enter the field of trade, who will purchase and consume the goods offered? If all start teaching, who will learn and practise? If all command, who will obey? If all produce and grow, who will seek the products of

their toil?

It is to create the diversity that will contribute to unity, through the practice of truth and *dharma* in every individual and social act, that the Lord has ordained the way of living according to the duty of caste (*varna-dharma*).

It is believed that occupation (*vritti*) was based on the caste (*varna*). No, castes were so named on the basis of the occupations only. Today, there is neither caste nor occupation. One profession today, another tomorrow; a caste today, another tomorrow —this instability lies at the root of the disturbed atmosphere of the world, of the discontent that has spread.

Infuse every profession and occupation with inner morality, with constant attachment to truth, with the unperturbed equanimity of fortitude; then, follow the duties of the caste (*varna*) with its prescribed professions —that is the *summum bonum*, the supreme blessing. If you fail to do this, your lot will be misery and chronic poverty. The choice is between the first, the Sri Rama saviour (*raksha*), and the second, the worldly punishment (*lokasiksha*) of distress (*dhurbhiksha*). Your saviour from the punishment is to learn *dharma* (*dharma-sikshana*)!