



Noble Qualities Form The Path for The Aspirant

More than all the previous *Yugas* (ages), the Kali Yuga offers multifarious paths through which man can acquire discrimination or *viveka*. If it is education that is needed, there are as many schools and institutions as you need. If it is wealth that one is after, there are various avenues by which, with effort, it can be honourably earned. In spite of this, however, we do not find any increase in human happiness or peace. Indeed, there is much more misery than in previous ages!

What then is the reason? The reason lies in human behaviour, in man's way of living itself. Human life is undoubtedly the highest in evolution and to give it meaning, spiritual endeavour is essential, endeavour that is pure and holy. For this way of life, character is all important. Character makes life immortal, it survives even death. Some say,

knowledge is power, but it is not true. Character is Power. Even the acquisition of knowledge demands a good character. So everyone must yearn to attain flawless character, without any trace of evil.

Note that Buddha, Jesus Christ, Sankaracharya and Vivekananda, great Sages and Saints and Devotees of the Lord, all these are treasured in the memory of man even unto this day. What quality made them all memorable for all time? I say, it is the character of each one of them.

Without character, wealth, education, social status, all these are of no avail. It is the fragrance of the flower which gives it value and worth. Poets, painters, artists and scientists may be great, each in his own field; but without character, they can have no standing in Society.

Doubts will certainly arise whether all those who are now greeted with respect by society have the character which we consider essential to greatness. But I am speaking of a society and a character, which cling to certain unchanging values. Ordinarily, society attaches varying importance to certain qualities from day to day and fashions in character change with the vagaries of society. But the basic nature of a flawless character is eternal, it is the same, whatever the vicissitudes of society. In that sense, it is immortal, being associated with another immortal entity, the *Atman* (Self, soul).

Among the qualities that make up a flawless character, Love, Patience, Forbearance, Steadfastness, Charity—these are the highest, these have to be revered.

The hundred little deeds that we indulge in every day harden into habits. These habits shape the intelligence and mould our outlook and life. All that we weave in our imagination, seek in our ideals, yearn in our aspirations, leave an indelible imprint on the mind. Distorted by these, we form our knowledge, our picture of the world around us, and it is to this picture that we get attached.

Man's present is but the result of his past and the habits formed during that long period. Whatever be the nature of the character that he has come by, it can certainly be modified by modifying the accustomed process of thought and imagination.

The wickedness of no man is incorrigible. Was not Angulimala, the *dacoit* (thief), turned into a kind-hearted person by the Buddha? Did not the thief Ratnakara become Valmiki, the sage? By conscious effort, habits can be changed and character refined. Man has always, within him, within his reach, the capacity to challenge his evil propensities and to change his evil habits. By selfless service, by renunciation, by devotion, by prayer and by ratiocination, the old habits which bind men to earth can be discarded and new habits which take us along the divine path can be instilled into our lives.

To discuss the nature of this character, its ways and vagaries, and to inform about the process of reshaping it, this is the purpose of all spiritual literature, poems, epics, books and periodicals. The *Sanathana Sarathi* has just this aim in view, it does not seek either the exhibition of erudition or the acquisition of name and fame.

But it has to be said, that the mere reading of a book or a journal will not vouchsafe viveka or discrimination. That which is seen, heard or read must be put into practice in actual life. Without this, reading is mere waste of time. If anything is read to pass time, it passes the time and nothing remains.