

7. Be Yourself

He who has visualised the Atma principle that animates all can never condemn the religion of anyone. He will never enter any religious squabble or conflict. He will never talk lightly or demeaningly of another's faith. He will never disturb or despise the faith held by another. Only the ignorant with no spiritual experience, only those who do not know the depths of truth, will embark upon the condemnation of the faith of others. It is very unbecoming of man to indulge in or encourage religious conflicts, to ridicule the rites and ceremonies through which others adore God, and to label the religious practices of other people as "superstitions." For, each one has accepted the practice and holds on to it, since it confers Ananda on him!

The ONE is spoken of, by those who know, as MANY. The same thing is seen and experienced in different ways

by different people, according to the angle of vision and the level of intelligence and awareness. Different persons describe the same thing or experience differently. How can anyone declare that they should not do so? Or that what they describe is wrong? No one has the right to disparage or deny.

Only those who strive to transcend the here and now and become aware of the Transcendent Principle of Godhead deserve the name Hindu. Those who revel in hurting others do not justify that name.

The inner core of Bharathiya culture is this realisation of the Unity of Atma principle that fills each heart with Universal Love. Those who are aware of this Unity and are well-established in it, are kith and kin of Bharathiyas, whichever country they may live in, whatever language is native to their tongues. Many human communities have, as the basis of their beliefs, the theory that man is a bundle of matter, and that this matter is subject to the laws of physics and chemistry. In the languages of the West, death is denoted as "the act of giving up life or Jiva," whereas in the language of Bharath, it is "giving up the body or the *Deha*." This is due to the faith of the Westerners that he is the body and the faith of the Bharathiya that he is not the body. The Bharathiyas assert and know that they have Atma as their Reality and that the Atma is enclosed in a body. The two views are widely disparate. A civilisation that is built on the shifting sand of worldly pleasure can last only for a little while. It

will disappear from the surface of the earth. On the other hand, the civilisation of Bharath and of the countries that value and follow the civilisation of Bharath have survived for centuries and are vital even today. They show new and refreshing signs of more creative life. This fact has to be kept in mind by those Bharathiyas who have dedicated their lives to the imitation of other civilisations and cultures.

Imitation cannot build a stable culture. It can never become “civilisation.” It is a sign of cowardice, not a quality that can ensure progress. It is the royal road to downfall. How can man draw inspiration for uplifting himself if he is engaged in hating himself and devaluing his achievements? The Bharathiya should feel no sense of shame when he brings back to memory his forefathers and the elders and teachers of the past who built the culture that nurtured him.

Instead, he ought to feel proud of his forefathers and the elders and teachers who shone among them. He must be proud that he has such persons as his ancestors, that his nation is of such holiness, and that his country is one that is endowed with such sacred characteristics. The children of Bharath have to fill themselves with the proud consciousness that in their native land were born wise persons who had attained the heights of self-realisation, as well as many others who had risen to peak of perfection.

Manifest the power that lies in self-exertion! Do not resort to the weak stratagem of imitating others. Instead

absorb the good qualities that others may possess. We plant a seed in the soil. Then we supply it with the ingredients it needs—water, air, manure. The seed sprouts. It grows into a sapling. It becomes at last a huge tree. You will notice that it does not become either soil or manure, or air or water. These it makes use of, but it sticks to its own nature and grows into a tree.

May you too live like that tree. Of course we have much to learn from others. There is no need to doubt this fact. Those who refuse to learn thus, declare themselves fools. Whatever can promote your spiritual advance, you can learn from others. Imbibe them to the full, according to the lines laid down for your own progress in your own moral path or Dharma. *You* must live as *you*, not as someone else. Do not allow anyone to divert you away from your innate nature. Be immersed in your God, in your own imaginings and feelings, in the bliss that springs from your own heart, and in the delight derived from your sadhana (spiritual practice). When others try to prevent you from doing this, whatever plans they weave and whatever contrivances they employ, resist them at the cost of your own lives. Do not deny yourself that Divine Awareness and that Divine Ecstasy. This is the exhortation that echoes through the *Sathya Sai Vahini* of the Bharathiyas. Pull down the barriers that stand in the way and obstruct the free flow of the culture of this land that confers such sweetness and strength. Clear the channels through which it flows and cleanse them. Then it can follow its course, unimpeded.

Sai has willed that this country, Bharath, has to take this sadhana. For too long a time the theistic Dharma of this land has stopped moving. Its characteristic has been for a long time, static. Now it has to be made dynamic. It must vitalise the daily life of every human being. It must enter and fructify the palatial *Rajbhavan* (Royal palace) and the lowly hutments of the poorest in the land.

It is the treasure of everyone. Everyone has the right to inherit it and benefit by it. Having been born as man, one has a valid claim to share it. For this reason, Bharathiyas have to take it before every door and welcome everyone in each home to share it. As the air we breathe is, in God's creation, available to all, the Dharma of the awareness of God and His Power and Mercy has to be available to all. Bharathiyas must hold on to this wide outlook and the Universality and Unity of this message, the conflicts between desperate faiths and beliefs will disappear of themselves and peace and love will be restored on earth.

Imagine a house full of darkness since centuries. You may enter the house and pray to the darkness to leave the premises; or, you may shower abuse on it for days together; or, frighten it by threatening force. The darkness will stay, it cannot be diminished at all. It will not yield to your tactics. It cannot be scared out. But light a lamp, and it will flee that instant. The lamp of wisdom can save man from age-long darkness. This truth has to be well-recognised by man and, once recognised, he has to shape his life accordingly.

Man has an immensity in him. This is the core of Bharathiya thought. It is really a mystery how man came to regard himself as one condemned to fall! A person might strike us as demonic or as divine; in both the Atma is the Reality, to the same extent. You cannot say the Atma in one is less and in the other, is more. When faults are found in anyone, you will have to conclude that there are deficiencies in behaviour, that is all. Do not conclude that there is no Divine Atma in him. As a result of the company he keeps or the inefficiency of the society in which he grew, faults have grown in him. They are not native to his nature, which is Atmic. You will have to provide him good company and beneficial surroundings and persuade him to enter them. You should on no account condemn him as a born incorrigible, and keep him apart.

The body is composed of cells, which are made up of atoms. The atoms are also physical phenomena. They are fundamentally *jada*, or composite or unfeeling. The *Vedanthins* speak of a subtle body, separate from this gross body. That too is physical. It is the centre of subtle skills and force. It is in this body that all the subtle mental feelings and agitations take place. Every force can work only through some medium or other which is physical. The same power that operates the gross body works through the subtle processes of thought. They are not two different entities. One is the subtle form of the other, that is all.

What is the source of these powers? If we delve deep, we will find that there are two things in nature, *Akasa* (Sky

element), and *Prana* (Life force). Akasa is the source of all the gross and subtle material one encounters; when Prana or Life-force contacts it, due to the impact, the Akasa principle transforms itself into either gross or subtle, in varying proportions. Prana too is omnipresent, like Akasa. It can also penetrate everywhere, and everything. Like the blocks of ice that water becomes and that float on water and that move about on water, the Prana acts on Akasa and bodies appear. Prana is the force that moulds the Akasa into various forms. The gross body is the vehicle of the Prana that it has shaped out of Akasa. The subtle body is of the form of thought, feeling, etc.

When the subtle body is transcended, the awareness of the Reality becomes manifest. Just as the nails on the fingers persist, however often we pare them, as part of our gross body, the subtle body too is an integral part of man's make-up.

