

CHAPTER XVII

The root cause of all anxieties and calamities of man is ENVY. We can find from the Bhagavad Gita that Krishna warns Arjuna off and on “Arjuna, you have to be envyleless. Do not get infected by envy.” Envy is invariably accompanied by hatred. These two are twin villains. They are poisonous pests. They attack the very roots of one’s personality.

A tree may be resplendent with flowers and fruits. But when the inimical worms set to work on the roots, imagine what happens to the splendour! Even as we look on admiringly at its beauty, the flowers fade, the fruits fall off and the leaves turn yellow and are scattered by the wind. At last, the tree itself dries up, it dies and falls. So too, when envy and hatred infect the heart and set to work, however intelligent and however highly educated the man, he falls. He is turned into an enemy of society. He becomes the target of ridicule because he is no longer human. He cannot

be counted as a member of the community. In the end, even his trusted friends desert him and become his foes. He loses the respect of his group and does not evoke even ordinary courtesies from others. He spends his days perpetually in misery.

No enemy can be so insidious as jealousy. When one sees a person more powerful, or more knowledgeable, or with greater reputation or more wealth or more beauty, or even wearing better clothing, one is afflicted with jealousy. One finds it difficult to acknowledge and accept the situation. One's mind seeks means to demean them and lower them in the estimation of people. Such propensities and evil tendencies should never strike root in the minds of students and the educated. These should not pollute their character.

Students must learn to be happy and filled with joy when others are acclaimed as good and are respected for their virtues and the ideals they hold dear. They have to cultivate breadth of outlook and purity of motives. They must be ever vigilant that the demon of envy does not possess them. That demon is certain to destroy all that is precious in them. It will ruin their health and damage their digestive system. It will rob them of sleep. It will sap their physical and mental stamina and reduce them to the state of chronic consumptives.

Students must resolve to emulate those who do better than themselves and earn equal appreciation. They should

strive to acquire knowledge and score marks as much as others. That is the proper ambition. Instead, if they wish for the downfall of others, leaving them as the only successful ones, they are revealing their brutish nature. It will lead them to perdition. It is a deadly virus.

Praising oneself and condemning others are also equally deadly. Attempting to hide one's meanness and wickedness and putting on the mask of goodness, justifying one's faults and exaggerating one's attainments—these are also poisonous traits. Equally poisonous is the habit of ignoring the good in others and assiduously seeking only their faults. Never speak words that demean anyone. When we are friendly with another and like him very much, whatever he does is certain to strike us as good. When the wind changes and the same person is disliked even the good he does strikes us as bad. Both these reactions are misconceived. They are not commendable at all. In the *Sumathi Sathaka*, there is a verse which teaches this lesson. “O *Sumathi!* (Person with good intelligence) Know that wrong is right and right is wrong, when friendship is strong and friendship is lost.”

The student has to transform himself into a *Sumathi*. He should avoid turning into a *Durmathi* (Person with perverted, polluted intelligence). A huge heap of fuel can be reduced to ashes by a tiny spark of fire. A drop of poison can render a pot of milk totally undrinkable. Envy and hatred are the sparks that destroy the cluster of virtues in man.

Students must exercise constant watchfulness over their feelings and reactions. They must keep out selfishness, envy, anger, greed and other such evil tendencies from entering their minds. These are nets which entrap the person. These vices overwhelm and subdue the holiness of man, so that it cannot influence him any longer. The person will forget himself and behave like another worse individual, an individual caught in frenzy. He will blabber as his tongue dictates, without regard to the effect—good or evil. He will engage his hands in work that the hands favour.

Envy does not stop with this string of mischief. It makes us revel in scandalising others. This evil is widespread among the youth. It comes naturally to them, for, it is a sign of ignorance. To get rid of this habit, one must devote some time, early in the day and before retiring for sleep, in exploring the mind and examining faults that have secured foothold therein. One must pray to God to save him from this tendency. When once we have won the Grace of God, we can rest assured that such absurdities will not deform our character. The discriminating student can be recognised by the good company he keeps, the good works he delights in and the good words he utters.

This is the reason why I am emphasising on many occasions, “Eyes that seek evil, ears that relish evil, tongue that craves evil, nose that enjoys the foul, and hands that delight in evil—these must be totally avoided.” Whoever has any of these must be avoided. Or else, one’s future is

bound to be disastrous. The wrongs of the five *Indriyas* (senses) will result in the destruction of the five *Pranas* (vital energies) and the killing of the five *Kosas* (sheaths). Of course, the senses yield momentary pleasure and joy but, as the saying goes, “senility lies in wait.” Sensual pleasures bring about great grief quite soon.

Students require faith in themselves, more than most other qualities. The absence of self-confidence marks the beginning of one’s decline. Today, the world is facing ruin and disaster because people have lost confidence in themselves. Self-confidence alone is capable of granting peace and prosperity to each person. He receives good, everywhere. He is honoured in all places. Whatever he touches becomes gold. When a person has no faith in himself, how can he place faith in others? Even when he has such faith, it cannot be sincere and firm. It is at best artificial and superficial. Such a person will not have faith in his mother, father, wife and children. He pretends to believe, that is all. So he behaves treacherously and might even injure the parents.

So self-confidence is a must for every student. Students must study books about persons who stuck to justice and led straight lives. They must cultivate faith in moral codes laid down in Dharma Sastras, instead of neglecting them. The Puranas provide foundational ideals for our welfare and progress.

Teachers reveal the direction and the goal. Students lay the road and journey into the future. The skill and strength, the status and stature of mankind are shaped and furthered in proportion to the quality and character of its teachers. Character is the hallmark of man. Teachers must dedicate their learning and wisdom to the great task of uplifting pupils to higher levels of knowledge and action. The virtues which they help to inculcate in their pupils are essential for the uplift of society also. When virtues are rooted in the heart, man shines in full glory. A life without good character is a shrine without light, a coin that is counterfeit, a kite with the string broken.