

17. Start Early, Drive Slowly And Reach Safely

To begin with, white ants appear little by little, and they grow slowly. However, in good time, the whole piece of wood will be completely eaten away. Similarly bad qualities start in a small way; in good time, they will destroy the individual completely.

Students:

It is very necessary that you control your mind. Man should give up comparing himself with others.

The hands of the clock keep on moving and we hear their ticking noise. This sound of the clock goes on continuously. Between one tick and another, there is an interval. Man's life is also like this interval. Through man's heart and through his blood vessels, his life stream is beating. This beat will come to an end at sometime. Truly birth is followed by death, and death again by birth, and so on. We should try and understand the secret of this life. As a man who is swimming and moving forward in a river, we should also forget the experiences through which we have gone in the past and swim forward. Only if the swimmer throws back the water which is ahead of him will he move forward. If he does not throw back the water that is ahead of him, he will stay where he is. As in this analogy, only if man attempts to throw back the experience which he has gone through, will he be able to move forward. If one follows such a path, one will find that in man's life there is no place for anger, no place for jealousy and his life will move on pleasantly. Because man wants to go

through the same experience which he has already experienced in the past, he enters the region of hatred, because he accumulates around him many attachments. If man really makes an attempt to understand his own nature and the comparison between the clock and his heart, it will be possible for him to experience truth. Even after experiencing so many things, if man does not understand his true nature, he will feel very unhappy. He wants always to be happy, but he does not ask the question whether one can get happiness in this world? Man has great faith in collecting, acquiring and amassing wealth; but he has not got the same faith in giving up and sacrificing. But he can make an attempt to develop faith in the act of giving and sacrificing. When man can develop faith and recognises the joy of giving away and of sharing things, he will enjoy his life. If man really wants peace and happiness, he must be prepared to sacrifice. The *Vedas* have told us that what cannot be acquired through hard work, through learning, through any other means, can only be acquired through sacrifice. We should also understand the inner meaning of sacrifice.

If the food that we eat is not excreted out and is not sacrificed, our health will be spoiled. If we do not exhale the air that we take in and send it out, our lungs will get spoiled. If the blood does not keep on moving but stays at one place, then there will be a boil at that place. It is very necessary for us to recognise the happiness that is contained in the spirit of sacrifice. But man always wants to have the same experience again and again everyday before he learns a lesson; and because of such bad desires, man has become so unfortunate that he cannot even have a peaceful death, not to talk of a peaceful life. If man wants to lead a peaceful life, he must realise the importance of sacrifice. The truth that is contained

in the statement, that immortality can be obtained through sacrifice alone, should be understood well.

In our daily life, we exhibit several bad qualities like anger, jealousy, and comparing ourselves with others. These bad qualities should be given up and sacrificed. Because Ravana had these qualities which go contrary to the *purusharthas*, he became a *rakshasa*. Ravana may have been a devotee, may have been a very learned person, but in spite of this, because he had these four bad qualities which are contrary to the *purusharthas*: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*, he became a sinner. To such people, whatever *dharma* you may preach, it will appear as if it is wrong.

Ravana was the son of Brahma, had many great qualities, was a great devotee, earned God's grace by his penance; and in spite of all that, he had no peace and he did not secure a good end for himself. He could invade the city of Kubera, defeat him and take away the *Pushpaka Vimana*. This shows that, in him, there was the quality of jealousy. He could not bear Kubera being greater than him. Not only this, he invaded the city of Mayura, his father-in-law, defeated him, took away all his attendants and annexed his city which was the principal city of Lanka. Here one should recognise that if there is room for such bad qualities to grow, even though they begin in a small way, in the end, like white ants, they will destroy the entire life. Sometimes, because of weakness, or in a state of excitement, one does things which one should not do and, in the end, he will have to repent.

Ravana, in the story of the *Ramayana*, is teaching a lesson to the world that no one should have such bad qualities as he had. Ravana was a wicked person and he adopted several trickeries. He spoke un-truth and told Rama that he brought the

head of Sita while he actually brought only an artificially-created head of Sita, a deceit. He told that he killed Sita and brought the head. Since Rama was all-knowing, he realised that this was a trick and told Ravana that it could not be the truth. Similarly, he did the trick of getting the head of Rama and showing it to Sita and telling her that he had killed Rama.

Ravana could not bear the happiness of other people. The normal human nature should be to become happy by looking at the happiness of others. There are many people in the world who, like Ravana, take a lot of interest in any happiness that may come in the way of other people and who cannot bear others being happy.

Yugas have gone by, worlds have changed, times have changed, but the ideas and the behaviour of individuals have not changed. Even if one idea and one thought change, we can accept the trend as a sacred trend. In the *Kali Yuga*, there are many *gurus*, many groups, many organisations, many ideals and many religions who are preaching the need for such a change. In spite of listening to all that and reading all that, if one's conduct and mind have not changed even an inch, it simply means that stagnation is the result of our *Janmantara Karma*. Ravana had a *guru* called Sankaracharya who taught him the conduct of a king. Ravana was one who acquired proficiency in all different kinds of action. His warriors and the leaders of his army were very strong and proficient in the art of warfare. His wife was a very good lady with good qualities. In spite of the fact that he had such good teaching from such a *guru*, and a good wife, and a strong army, he did not change his methods, and this simply means that it is a result of his own *Janmantara Karma*. He was living in utter foolishness. In his foolishness, he would not accept any advice from anyone else. This foolishness is something which is a great enemy of a

human being. We must also remove this aspect of foolishness in us. On certain occasions, Ravana used to appear as a good *sathwik* person and on other occasions, he used to appear as an innocent person. Sometimes, he would pretend and appear as a great devotee. In reality, there is no one greater than him in the matter of wickedness. He would not hesitate to harm even his own wife or son.

Vibhishana, his own brother, was a *sathwik* person. Yet he showed no kindness to him. He simply drove him away. The wife of Vibhishana touched the feet of Ravana and begged him in many ways to save Vibhishana. This lady, who was the wife of his own brother, should be like his daughter, yet he gave so much trouble to her. The significance of all these things is that we should not simply think that Ravana was just a person with that name. The bad qualities and the cruel ideas that are in us are symbolic of the aspect of Ravana. The good in us is symbolic of Rama. It is only when we can let these two aspects confront each other and get Rama to defeat Ravana, that we can imagine that the coronation of Rama within us is possible and has taken place.

We should not think that Ravana was a person or character only in the story of the *Ramayana*. Our whole life is a *Ramayana*. Our heart is a meeting place for the good and the bad. Without there being some bad, there cannot be good alone. By the presence of both bad and good, bad will try to suppress the good to some extent. We must make an effort to see that the good in us is not suppressed that way.

You are listening to so many good discourses everyday. Those who are giving you the discourses are doing so with a pure heart, and those of you who are receiving them are also receiving them with a good and tender heart. But what is the

result of all this? When we ask such a question, one does not find a good answer. During the period in which you listen to these discourses, they look very nice and attractive. But once you go out after listening to them, they do not appeal to you and you do not want to put them into practice. It is only when we can digest the food that we have taken on a particular day, can we again eat food the next day. If you eat something today and do not digest it till tomorrow, you will suffer from indigestion. Just as we should make an attempt to digest the food on the same day that we eat it, so, also, whatever ideas you listen to on a particular day should be absorbed and put into practice the same day. It is only when you take to such a path that you will be able to have a body and mind which are strong and sturdy.

Students:

In that context the story of the *Ramayana*, which you are listening to everyday and the ideal characters that appear in the story, offer you important examples and you should try to put those ideals into practice. Then, only, the purpose of your joining the Summer Classes for a whole month in Brindavan will be fulfilled. Whatever is heard and absorbed must be put into practice. Whatever is over and has become the past should be forgotten. You should not carry it with you. You should not bestow your thoughts and waste your time on things that have gone by. Only those which are ideals and which have to be remembered as ideals should be kept with you throughout your life.

The pains and sorrows that come during one's daily life must be forgotten, and you must leave them behind. Only when you make an attempt to lead such a life will it become fruitful. Our excitement and agitations should be suppressed in the very first instance. When your heart is free from such

agitations and excitement, the ideals that have been given to you can enter your heart. I have already mentioned to you that if your heart is full of various things, it will not be possible to put anything more into it. If the head is empty, then some good things can be put into that head. Similarly, if your heart is already full of ideas, how can any one provide you with ideals when there is no room in your heart? If bad ideas are in you and if your ears are constantly listening to bad things and if your mind is already full of bad thoughts, then *dharma* cannot come anywhere near such people. If you really want *dharma* and God to enter your heart, you must take care to see that your heart is not already filled with bad ideas. Where there is *dharma*, God will be present. Where there is no *dharma*, the devil will be present. We should not give room to the devil. We should become deserving of the grace of God. What we have learnt from the *Ramayana* and the ideal characters that we come across in the *Ramayana* should enable us to take to a *dharmic* path and to a life as an example to others. For all these things, devotion is essential. If you have no devotion, it will not be possible for you to achieve anything, nor will you have the right to achieve anything.

Whatever *Vedas* we may study, whatever *Sastras* and *Puranas* we may read, it is only when we can understand the aspect of *prema* that is contained in them that we will have the right to deserve the grace of God.

When Vibhishana came to the feet of Rama and asked to be permitted to surrender, Rama called the attention of those who were with Him, namely Sugriva, Angada and Jambavan. Vibhishana was coming from a distance, loudly proclaiming that he was coming with a view to surrender to Ramachandra. Rama told others that no matter who Vibhishana was and what his motives were, since he was coming to surrender, it was His

duty to protect him. Once you decide and say that you belong to the Lord, then what does it matter who you are or where you come from? It follows that the Lord is yours.

Then Sugriva asked, if Ravana himself came and asked for pardon would Rama do the same thing? Rama said that if Ravana did get such a good idea in him, He will surely protect him and make him the king of Ayodhya itself. For us, to think that this aspect of surrender is appropriate only to the older people, and that young students do not have to concern themselves with it, is totally wrong. This is the appropriate age when you should surrender to God. When you grow older, you will then be able to achieve great things with God's grace.

Here is a small story. The husband and wife in a family were doing their daily household duties in the normal way and fulfilling their obligations in this world. The wife was a very good devotee. She used to get up early morning, pray to the Lord, do her *puja* and in many ways served her husband by attending to whatever was needed by him. The husband was not given to such good habits. He used to get up late, he would not wash, he used to take his coffee without washing and used to go to his office, do his work and was always thinking that duty is God and that there was no need to do any *puja*. But the wife, during her prayer everyday, used to pray to the Lord, that somehow or other He should instil some devotion and faith in her husband and make him utter the name of the Lord, at least, occasionally.

One day, when her husband was in a happy mood, she went to him and she said that life was a very sacred thing, but they were living like animals. She asked if, at least once a day, they could not think of the Lord. She further told her husband that human life was not necessary only for earning a living.

She asked if the animals and birds, in order to earn a living and eat their food, are going to the universities and getting educated. She said that human birth is intended for promoting devotion and prayed that he change his way of life. He did not like all this and told his wife that she was an innocent woman. He said, "You think I have no devotion? I have great devotion to God, but while I am in service, I am not able to spare the time for the thought of God. After I retire, after the children get married and after they settle down, I will begin to think of God." She thought that there was no use arguing with such a foolish person, and she just thought of the Lord and kept quiet. After one week, there was some dangerous disease which took hold of her husband. She was taking all pains to call a doctor and give some medicine and get him cured of that disease. The disease became a little less virulent after a few days. On the third day, the doctor came and gave him a mixture and instructed that the mixture be given to him once in the night, once in the morning, and once in the afternoon as three different doses. The lady thought that this is the proper occasion to teach him a lesson. In the morning, even after breakfast, the wife did not give the dose of mixture to her husband. It was lunch time and even after lunch, the wife did not give the dose of mixture to her husband. Then the husband asked, "What is this? Two occasions have passed and you have not given me any medicine at all." Then the wife said, "Why worry about taking the medicine now? You can take all that medicine after you are cured of the disease." Then he asked, "Why should I take the medicine after being cured?" She then said that in the same manner, "When this human body is with you, and when you are still well, and when you are suffering from the disease of the worldly attractions, you should take the medicine in the form of devotion and faith in God. What is the use of taking the medicine when you become old and decrepit?"

When the messengers of Yama come and tell you that your time is over and that your end has come, that you have to die; when your wife and children are weeping that you are at your very end, is it then possible for you to think of the Lord? When you have entered your old age, after retirement when the hands are trembling and when you have become old, is it possible for you to sit in prayer and *dhyana*? In order to follow the spiritual path and to be able to get some proficiency in the *adhyatmic* way of life, this young age is the most appropriate age. It is in this context, it has been said, “Start early, drive slowly, reach safely.” Since this is the correct age, you should start from now and you should experience peace and happiness and put into practice slowly and steadily. If we begin sufficiently early without any agitation, we can peacefully move the boat of our body in the river of our life. We can also reach the destination very safely. On the contrary, if we start late and if we begin to move fast, there will be a danger in the journey.

There is one example for this: if we go early in the morning to a hotel and buy a ticket for our lunch, it does not matter when we go for lunch. Even if you go a little late, you will have your lunch ready. On the other hand, if you go to the hotel only when you feel hungry at 12 o'clock, it may so happen that there is no lunch for you. Thus, if from today, you begin to put into practice your devotion, you will be like a person who has purchased his lunch ticket in advance in the morning. In this age of yours, you should really book your ticket for the grace of the Lord.

Students:

This is the right age, you should make an attempt to see that the thoughts in you do not cause agitation and excitement. With the thought of God, you should lead a peaceful life. I am

hoping that you will drive the ship of your life in a peaceful manner.