

14. Man Always Becomes Good Or Bad By The Company He Keeps

Western education had a tremendous influence on our conduct and culture. Our people have become decadent. All our traditions have dried up completely. People have changed their dress and other habits. They are not happy to speak to their own mothers and wives. They think that it is wrong to respect the code of conduct of their elders. This has become a fearful situation. What shall I say about the condition of Bharath? Her citizens, like the elephant which does not know its own strength, do not know the strength of their culture.

Man's life is a bed full of bugs. It is a hot bed of all diseases that flourish in the world. To feel happy and to see happiness in one's life, one has to travel a long way. Students, Boys and Girls, our sacred country Bharath, is a beautiful country full of so many languages, traditions and excellent culture. The number and variety of languages and religions that flourish in Bharath is not to be found in any other country. In order to introduce changes and reform this great country, ancient saints and *rishis* have given us the sacred *Vedas*, *Ithihasas* and *Puranas*. The true background of this country and its culture are reflected in the stories of *Bhagavatha* and *Mahabharatha*. We have been listening to the story of *Bhagavatha* for the last fourteen days. In fact, we must realise that this is the story of our great culture. Vemana said that salt and camphor look alike but they taste so differently. Brass and Gold look alike when we look at them; but when we let them fall down, the sound they produce is very different. In the same manner, when the aspect of divinity takes a human form, we

find the actions of such a form and ordinary human beings are superficially the same. Yasoda, the mother, put Krishna to sleep, and while singing a lullaby, she was immersed in that ecstasy. She tried to put Krishna to sleep for a long time; but in spite of all her attempts, he would not sleep. She was wondering why Krishna was unable to sleep, and she was even praying to the Goddess of sleep to come to her help. All actions which are selfless and sacred can be regarded as *leelas* of the Lord. After some time, she found that Krishna was sleeping; but in fact, he was pretending to be asleep. She told the servants to remain quiet. She addressed Krishna and said, “You have the entire world encompassed in you and how can anyone build a mansion for you? You shine with the effulgence of a million suns and how can anyone show any light to you? How is it possible for us to know you when you yourself contain all the creation within you? However, Yasoda was the mother, and even if Krishna was *Paramatma*, the mother’s affection will still show up. No one can understand the effects of *maya*. Foolish human beings are born in *maya*, they grow up in *maya*, and they cannot understand the aspect of *maya*. All the lives are simply the result of *maya*, the birth and death are a result of *maya*. All attachments are results of *maya* and life is full of *maya*. One can wake up, in a moment, a person who is asleep; and one who is awake need not be woken up; but how can any one wake up one who is pretending to be asleep. In a similar manner, Yasoda was addressing Krishna and saying, “How can anyone wake you up, if you are pretending to be asleep. You must stop your pretence.” The *Devas* and *Devatas* were looking at this conversation and were telling themselves that Yasoda was the most fortunate person because she was able to play with the Lord.

On another occasion, when Krishna was just getting in the middle of his sleep, she came and sang a lullaby: “I have

made the four *Vedas* as the four corners of your cradle, and I have made the nine precious stones decorate your cradle. The King of cobras is guarding you, in your cradle. This is the cradle of *Om*, and in it I have made a bed for you in the form of *Thath thwam asi*. You symbolise all the seven worlds and they are united in you. In such a cradle, you should sleep soundly.” The mother knew very well that Krishna was God almighty, and yet she was often steeped in such *maya*. Gradually, Krishna was growing up in the house of Nanda, and he had learnt to move about the house and play. The mother was, at all times, attached to him and was looking after him. On one occasion, when some *gopikas* came to his mother to enquire about his welfare, Krishna went to a mirror and was pretending to feed butter to his own image in the mirror, as if he was very innocent. The mother was greatly surprised to see how innocent Krishna was. All actions of Krishna appeared as if they were being performed by a very young innocent person, but yet they caused a great deal of surprise. Krishna used to come and ask his mother why his hair was not growing as nicely as his brother’s hair. In order to satisfy him, his mother always used to tell him that his hair would also grow nicely, if he drank a lot of milk and ate plenty of butter. After some days, he came to his mother again and asked why his hair was not growing, although he was drinking plenty of milk and eating butter. The mother gave a somewhat harsh reply to this and said, “Your brother is drinking well-boiled milk and eating butter only if he is given, but he does not steal them. You are always impatient and you snatch away the milk as soon as I milk the cows, and even before the butter is ready, you cry for butter. Your brother is very patient and quiet while you are not!” She thus admonished Krishna. From that day, Krishna determined not to ask his mother for milk, and he used to go to the neighbouring houses and ask for milk. Because he did many unusual things like killing Rakshasi Puthana, he en-

deared himself to all the people in the village, and they all used to love him. He used to be freely welcomed in any house that he went to, and from that day, the thefts also increased. The *gopikas* used to complain to Yasoda. On one day, Yasoda caught Krishna and admonished him by saying, “You do not eat what is given to you but you go to the houses of the other *gopikas* and steal butter and milk. You are a small boy and yet your entire mouth is smelling of butter and the whole village has been complaining about you.” In this manner, the *gopikas* were always complaining about Krishna. We must understand the inner meaning of the actions of Krishna. The word *Nava Neeta* means a pure heart. Pure butter here is compared to a pure heart. *Ksheera Sagara* means ocean of milk, and the *Sam-sara* is sometimes described as an ocean. Here we should interpret Krishna’s actions by saying that he steals the pure and clean hearts of people who are steeped in the ocean of *Sam-sara*. In this manner, Krishna’s actions have a deep inner meaning. On one occasion, he came crying to his mother like an ordinary child. When the mother asked why he was crying, he replied that he was unhappy because his brother Balarama was always quarrelling, and not playing properly with him. There was some kind of disagreement between Krishna and Balarama. While playing, Balarama would always ask him if he was truly the son of Yasoda, and he used to humiliate him in the presence of other children by saying that he was actually purchased by Yasoda from some other mother and that he was not truly the son of Yasoda. This used to hurt Krishna and he would always assert that he was the son of Nanda and Yasoda. Balarama would then retort and ask why Krishna was dark if he was truly the son of Nanda and Yasoda, who were of fair complexion. He used to argue that if Krishna was really the son of Nanda and Yasoda, he should also be fair. Krishna used to bring such arguments before Mother Yasoda and start crying. At this, Yasoda was deeply moved and she told Krishna

that Balarama was always jealous and hence keeps on cooking up such stories. She asserted that she was, indeed, the mother and he was the son. Here, we must notice that she did not say Krishna was her son or that she was his mother. Here, Balarama was in doubt. Friends were taking the information from here and Yasoda was accepting the authority of affection. We should see that the essential evidence based on truth coming from *dharma* or the *Vedas* has not been used. Each one has been using his own *Pramana* as the case may be. However, the main authority should be based on *Pratyaksha Pramana* involving the experience of all the senses. Krishna demonstrated to the world that only *Pratyaksha Pramana* was reliable and important.

Man always becomes good or bad by the company he keeps. If, therefore, we get into sacred company, we will also acquire sacred qualities. There is a small example for this. If we look at a snake at any place, we regard it as harmful and we try to kill it. But if the same snake is in the company of *Easwara*, we begin to worship it and respect it because of the company it keeps. The *Upanishads* have taught us that both good and bad qualities really come out of the company that we keep. If we find a rat in some corner, we immediately try to trap it and kill it. But if the same rat is seen as the *Vahana* of Vinayaka (Ganesha), we make obeisance to it. We do so because of the company it keeps. Bad qualities are also like this. If we take a big pot full of milk and add even a few drops of liquor to it, the milk itself will become bad. In similar manner, fire, which is regarded as a sacred entity, gets hammered when it is in contact with a lump of iron. Thus, by bad company we get several troubles and sorrows, and by good company we get good results. If we take a piece of iron and throw it in the dust, it will get rusted and will lose all its value. However, if the same iron is put in fire, it loses its impurities and acquires a

bright shining colour. In this way, man changes because of the company that he keeps. If dust comes in contact with wind, it will go high up although it has no wings to fly. The same dust goes down to the lowest depths when it comes into contact with water. It has no legs to go down or wings to go up. Thus the company we keep determines whether we go up or down. As we know, good company results in a calm and peaceful life. That is why elders tell us that we should keep good company. Although Balarama and Krishna have both aspects of divinity in them, one follows the path of *Jnana* while the other follows the path of *Bhakthi* or devotion. Between Balarama and Krishna both paths are demonstrated to the world. That is why there is sometimes so much contradiction in their actions. The *Jnana Marga* relates to one's wisdom while the *Bhakthi Marga* is related to one's heart.

On one occasion, Krishna wanted to give Subhadra in marriage to Arjuna but Balarama did not agree to this. The actions of Krishna are such that he shows the harmony between one's thought, word and deed. It has been said that the proper study of mankind is man, and Krishna always establishes such a harmony. He has always been addressing Arjuna as his brother-in-law, and he felt that he should not go on calling Arjuna his brother-in-law without actually making him his brother-in-law by a marriage alliance. In that context, if you simply come on a platform and address everyone as brothers and sisters, it will be a very shallow statement and will not reflect the truth. Only when you really regard one and all as brothers and sisters should you address them as such. The feeling of anxiety that you will have when your own brothers and sisters are in trouble must be reflected when anyone gets into trouble. If an unrelated person looks at your sister with some bad intentions, it will cause you a great deal of pain and unhappiness. You should feel hurt in the same manner, when

these other brothers and sisters are humiliated or insulted. Therefore, the words we utter with our mouth must also be put into practice and we should experience the same in our thoughts. The students today should strive to promote such harmony between their thought, word and deed. The *leelas* of Krishna were such that he was putting his thoughts into practice. Krishna never had any impure ideas in him. He never had any worldly thoughts in him. He had no blemish in him at all. He always had pure thoughts. Krishna is an ideal example and we should end up by becoming one with him.