

Chapter 17. Shun Jealousy and Hatred

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 envy-less. Don’t 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 one is, one falls. One is turned into an enemy of society. One becomes the target of ridicule because one is no longer human. One cannot be counted as a member of the community. In the end, even trusted friends desert and become one’s foes. One loses the respect of one’s group, and one doesn’t evoke even ordinary courtesies from others. One spends the 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 any one.

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 that teaches this lesson. “O person with good intelligence (*sumathi*), Know that even if friendship is strong, when wrong becomes right and right becomes wrong then friendship disappears.”

The student has to transform themselves into a person with good intelligence (a *sumathi*) and avoid turning into a person with perverted, polluted intelligence (*durmathi*). 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 people.

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 that entrap the person. These vices overwhelm and subdue the holiness of people, so that the holiness cannot influence them any longer. Such people will forget themselves and behave like other wicked individuals, individuals caught in frenzy. Such people will blabber as their tongues dictate, without regard to the effect —good or evil. Such people will engage their hands in work that the hands favour.

Envy doesn't 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 one 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 kept, the good works performed, and the good words uttered.

This is why I emphasise 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 senses (*indriyas*) will result in the destruction of the five vital energies (*pranas*) and killing of the five sheaths (*kosas*). 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.

Gain self-confidence

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. Only self-confidence is capable of granting peace and prosperity to each person. A self-confident person receives good everywhere and is honoured in all places. Whatever they touch becomes gold.

When a person has no faith in themselves, how can they place faith in others? Even when they have such faith, it cannot be sincere and firm. It is at best artificial and superficial. Such a person will not have faith in their mother, father, spouse, and children. Such a person pretends to believe, that is all. So, the person behaves treacherously and might even injure the parents.

So, self-confidence is a must for every student. Students must study books about people 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* (ancient epics) provide foundational ideals for our welfare and progress.