

19. Render unto God what is His

Without Sathya, Dharma, Shaanthy and Prema

all knowledge is useless;

Without these four, all charity and righteous

acts are of no use;

Without these four, the value of

all good deeds is zero;

Without these four, the exercise

of power is profitless.

For the edifice of the Ancient Dharma

these four qualities are the main walls.

What else can I convey to you,

virtuous and noble minded students?

STUDENTS! Wherever you turn, you see in the world only unrest and disorder. There is little trace of unity, harmony and brotherliness.

Unrest and confusion prevail at every level from the individual to the nation as a whole. There is discord between man and man, from family to family, village to village, district to district and province to province. These conflicts are due to the craze for power, insatiable desires and intense selfishness. Moreover, the growth of unrest and chaos in society is also due to the weakness of government, the decline of truth and righteousness and the failure of people in the mass to discharge their respective duties.

Everyone talks about the presence of the Divine, who is the embodiment of Truth and Righteousness. People speak about the omnipresence and omniscience of God. But few care to understand what this means, to experience it and to live according to it. A few drops of nectar on the tongue will work wonders, but of what use are barrels of nectar which remain untouched?

To preach without practice is repugnant to spirituality

Many lectures are given today about the Divine as the embodiment of Truth and Righteousness. How many have direct experience of this? How many practise Righteousness? Have they tried to practise even a small fragment of this teaching? Have they made the slightest attempt to secure a vision of this Truth? To preach without practice is repugnant to spirituality.

Devotees like Potharaaju, Thyaagaraaju and Goparaaju (Raamdhas) experienced bliss by their spiritual austerities. They sought no positions of power. They were content to seek the grace of the Divine. Their sole objective was to earn the love of God.

Owing to the influence of the *Kali* age today, even spiritual seekers are eager to earn wealth and positions, forget the Divine and lead unworthy lives. People should not pray to God for any position. In the pursuit of pleasure men today spend any amount of money. But they hardly try to spend even a fraction of this money on charity, good deeds and service to the Divine. Many people grudge to give even small amounts of money to the women in the house for the

performance of worship with joss-sticks, flowers and fruits. They even question the usefulness of such offerings. It may well be asked what benefit such persons derive from their lavish expenditure on their pleasure and comforts. These sensual pleasures confer fleeting happiness. But acts of charity, goodness and sacrifice confer divine benefits.

Pleasure and pain contribute to the beauty of life

Man should learn to treat pain and pleasure alike because both contribute to the beauty of life like the variety of flowers in a garland. People should also learn not to sneer at the traditional practices of the common people who do many simple acts out of reverence for what they regard as sacred. A young man travelling in a train ridiculed the act of a simple village woman who piously offered a few coins to the Krishna river when the train was going over the bridge. The woman asked him of what use was the money he was spending on smoking, which was ruining his health. She said that the few coins she had thrown in the river was an offering to Krishna. It happened once in a way. "But how much are you wasting everyday on your smoking? What will you gain from it except lung cancer or T.B? Without realising the grievous mistake you are committing, you are ridiculing my simple action," she said.

Pothana's dedication to God

The life of Pothana, the immortal author of the Telugu Bhaagavatham, shows the difference between the God-oriented poet and a poet who seeks the favours of rulers and wealthy patrons.

Once, Pothana's brother-in-law, the poet Shreenaatha, told Pothana that if, instead of relying on Shree Raama, he dedicated his Bhaagavatham to a local chieftain, the latter would offer him gifts of land and properties which would relieve his poverty. Pothana declared: "Brother-in-law! You are making a serious mistake. Our real protector is Raama and not any *Raaja* (ruler). How many have been helped by these rulers and for how long?. I revere my mother Earth. My life will be redeemed by my trust in mother Earth and by my faith in Shree Raama." (Bhagavaan recited a poem of Pothana in which the poet firmly declared that he would prefer to live on what he got from the soil rather than offer his sacred work to unrighteous rulers for the sake of a mess of pottage). Pothana told Shreenaatha, "My poem is the very embodiment of the Goddess of Wisdom, Sarasvathi. Such a work should be offered to Brahma and none else. How can I offer such a sacred work to wicked rulers?"

Shreenaatha was displeased with Pothana's attitude. He conveyed Pothana's sentiments to the local ruler, who also felt slighted. In his bitterness, he sent his minions to set fire to Pothana's house. The entire house was burnt down except the shrine where Pothana worshipped Raama and kept his Bhaagavatham. While the flames were burning, Pothana prayed to Raama as the Lord of everything. When a person believes whole-heartedly, in God, he will not come to grief. With their interests primarily in worldly benefits and material gains, men pray to God with their lips and not their hearts. Rather than pray with lips, it is better to serve with the hands. This was the lesson which Hanumaan taught to Vibheeshana, when the latter was disappointed that he had no vision of Raama.

Men are engaged in the pursuit of wealth and position, but not in the quest of the Divine. They forget that lasting happiness and peace cannot be got by wealth, scholarship or position. Only good qualities can confer happiness because a good man finds a place in the Lord's heart.

Sacrifice is the essence of Raama Principle

The ancient sages and savants offered all their knowledge and scholarship as an offering to God. They did not regard knowledge as a means of acquiring wealth. In the days of Raama everyone was filled with a spirit of sacrifice. Raama set the example by His readiness to sacrifice the kingdom for life in the forest as an exile. Before leaving for the forest, Raama gave away all his personal possessions as gifts. Sacrifice is the essence of the Raama Principle. To develop the spirit of sacrifice the first requisite is firm faith in God.

Students should realise that their only true friend at all times is God. He will be with them wherever they go. No others will accompany them like God. Hence, they should cultivate love for God. There is nothing greater than that love.

Discourse in the Sai Ramesh Mandap on 30-5-1996.

There is no living being without the spark of love; even a mad man loves something or somebody intensely. But, you must recognise this love as but a reflection of the Prema Svaruupa (the Embodiment of Love), that is your reality, of the God who is residing in your heart. Without that spring of Love that bubbles in your heart, you will not be prompted to love at all. Recognise that spring, rely on it more and more, develop its possibilities, try to irrigate the whole world with it, discard all touch of self from it, do not seek anything in return for it from those to whom you extend it.

Baba