

3. Have firm faith in God

Like the moon that illumines the night,

The sun that illumines the day, and

Dharma that illumines the three worlds,

A good son sheds light on his entire lineage. (Sanskrit poem)

THIS vast world needs light for its existence. A man of wisdom is more powerful than a physically strong man, just as a puny mahout is able to control an elephant. It is not enough for people to rely on physical strength alone.

Man depends on four sources of light for dispelling darkness. The moon dispels darkness at night. No one except thieves loves darkness. Good people, well-intentioned persons have no liking for darkness. Darkness also signifies ignorance.

During the day the sun is the natural source of light. Human life will be impossible without the light of the sun. The sun is the cause for rains, which enable crops to grow and sustain human life. Sun is also the source of health and of happiness.

Dharma (right conduct) illumines the entire world. The word *Dharma* means that which "upholds". It is *Dharma* which teaches the right relationship between man and man, man and society and society and society. *Dharma* reveals to man through his heart what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false. It is *Dharma* which promotes the welfare of society. *Dharma* protects its protector. The world cannot exist without *Dharma*.

A good son is one who sets an example by his conduct: One who pursues selfish ends cannot be a good son. A good son is one who reveres and serves his parents, who honours his preceptor, who is humble and respectful towards elders and who earns a good name by his service to society. It is because such sons have become rare that the country is today bedevilled by wickedness and evil practices.

Your foremost duty is to revere your parents

Boys and Girls! Your foremost duty is to revere your parents. The mother gave birth to you. The father protected you. You have to esteem the preceptor as divine because he imparts knowledge to you. Without reverence for these three, all your other achievements in life will be worthless. The mother, the father and the preceptor represent the Divine Trinity--Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshvara as creator, sustainer and remover of ignorance respectively. But above all of them is the one God who is in all beings. Develop love for God and there by show your reverence for all. Moreover, faith in God will ensure you what no one else can give.

Maarkandeya was allotted only a life-span of sixteen years. The mother looked after him all those sixteen years as the apple of her eye. The father protected him from all dangers from any quarter. The teacher took care of his education. But none of them had any control over his life-span. The lad realised this truth. Hence he placed his reliance on God regarding his destiny. A few days before he was to complete his sixteenth year, he went to the Shiva temple and prayed: "Oh Lord! My parents have protected my body. The teacher looked after my education. But God alone can protect my life. Hence, make me one with you." Placing his head on the Shivalinga, hugging the *linga*, with both his arms, he declared: "Eeshvara! You are my sole refuge!" Saying so he closed his eyes.

How Lord Shiva protected Maarkandeya

When the sixteen years were over, the Lord of Death arrived and cast his noose to take the life of Maarkandeya. The noose did not cover Maarkandeya alone. The Shivalinga was also caught in the noose because Maarkandeya was embracing the *linga*. When the Lord of Death started drawing the noose, Shiva emerged from the *linga*. Shiva asked the Lord of Death: "How dare you cast your noose on the one who had become one with Me and also cast Me in the noose?" Shiva chastised the Lord of Death saying that he would be entitled to take the life of Maarkandeya if he had been alone, but not when he had become one with Him. "No one is entitled to touch a person who has united himself with Me," said Shiva.

Shiva chastised Yama and protected Maarkandeya with immortality. With the grace of the Divine, Maarkandeya got the blessings of all--his parents and preceptor.

Students should not only revere parents and teachers but also strive to earn God's grace. A young student who had spoken earlier had said that truth is the ornament for speech. Students should always speak the truth. There should be harmony between thought, word and *deed*.

Students! Apart from your studies, you should try to earn the grace of God by making your heart pure. You must remember the example of Raama who sacrificed the kingdom for honouring the words of his father. Dhasharatha yearned for Raama to administer water to him in his last moments. Unfortunately he did not get it. But Raama performed the last rites for the eagle Jataayu, when he cried "Raama! Raama!" in his last moments. Jataayu secured the ministration which even Dhasharatha could not get.

For receiving God's grace there is no distinction such as an animal, a bird or any other creature. Wherever there is devotion, there God's presence can be experienced.

Give up all senses of "I" and "mine"

Students! You must acquit yourselves well and earn a good name even after you leave the Institute. You must bring a good name to the Institute among all the people you meet. Together with your academic knowledge, you must develop good conduct. In this troubled world, deem God as your sole pro-rector and guide.

True devotion consists not in merely chanting the name of Raama but in rendering help to the society and offering help to the needy. Only then can you become worthy of God's grace. Hanumaan exemplified the ideal of implicit obedience to God's injunctions. The true devotee should give no room for doubt. He must act with full faith in God. He must realize that everything belongs to God. He should give up all senses of "I" and "mine". This was the lesson which Raama taught to Kaikeyi when she sought his forgiveness for all the wrong things she had done to Raama.

There is a basic difference between the attitude of the Gopikas to Krishna and that of Yaadhavas in Dvaaraka. The Gopikas felt: "Krishna ! We are yours" The Yaadhavas felt: "Krishna! You are ours." Their attitude was based on *Ahamkaara* (sense of possession). That was responsible for their ultimate destruction.

You should all realize that God is present equally in all beings. The spiritual, oneness of all was taught to Shankara by Shiva in the form of an untouchable, when Shankara bade the "untouchable" not to approach him. Shankara immediately prostrated before the untouchable as a

preceptor who had taught him *Samathvam* (spiritual equality). Bodies and temperaments may differ from individual to individual, but the Divine is one and the same in all.

Students! Cherish faith in God as your life-breath. The faith will sustain you at all times and in all situations.

Once Eeshvar Chanudhra Vidhyaasaagar happened to travel by train in a compartment with some English men. He sat between two of them. One of them asked: "Who is this donkey?" The other one asked: "Who is this pig?" A third English man asked: "Who are you?" Eeshvar Chandhra coolly replied: "I am a human being sitting between a donkey and a pig." The two English men felt ashamed of themselves. They felt even more ashamed when they saw a large crowd of persons with garlands waiting to receive Eeshvar Chandhra when he got down from the train. The English men then realised that though Indians might appear simple they were inherently noble and gentle.

Students! You should maintain the highest standards of Bhaaratheeya culture.

Discourse in the Assembly Hall of the Primary School on 23-1-1997