

39. Offer the vessel bright

Sinking and rising, struggling in the Sea

Of tasteless, futile, birth-death waves?

Do you not see the Bhakthi Boat that the Lord

In His compassion, has brought to rescue you?

Life is a precious gift, sustained by breath. But there are victories to be won during life, sometimes at the cost of life itself. However many successes man wins, he pictures before his mind many more and advances from one venture into another. He has no *santhrupti* (satisfaction) in spite of all his achievements. He relishes new and newer wants and never reaches fulfilment.

Combined effort is the natural mode of living. Co-operation among individuals grouped as a society guarantees security and stability. It is as the sages call it, Shri Raama *Raksha* (protection), the mark of Divine Grace. The surest sign of man's awareness of his Divine Nature is the recognition by him of the bond of kinship with other men.

The bond of kinship has now snapped, and, as a result, life has been rendered meaningless. The evil spirits of greed and pride, of envy and hatred, are executing their demonic dance in the hearts of mankind. Men are not able to appreciate the value of the air they breathe, of the sun's rays that illumine the world, the drops of rain that sustain life, and the subtle power that underlies every object in nature. Humans have become low-minded and people who have dedicated their lives to high ideals are nowhere to be seen. What needs to be done today is "fostering men who are determined to stand and suffer, even risking their lives, for realising the holy goals of peace and prosperity for the entire world."

Learn from Mother Earth the lesson of service

The phrase "our country" denotes not the dumb ground but the living beings thereon with whom you are involved. You must grasp this fact. You are ignoring this truth today. Each one must regard the prosperity and joy of others in the community as one's own. Then only will India or any other country deserve that prosperity and joy. One's happiness is bound up with the happiness of Society. One's physical, mental and intellectual strength and skills have to be dedicated, not merely to one's progress, but equally to the progress of society. Members of the Units of the Sathya Sai Organisation must try to benefit themselves and the society through such service. Use the strength, skills, and spirit of service for such work. A machine gets rested if it is not put to use; the human machine too gets rusted if it is not put to constant meaningful work. The pulse is not the correct indicator of your being alive; work, activity that is the evidence and the value of real living.

Krishna declares in the Bhagavad Geetha, "There is nothing in the three worlds that I am obliged to do, nothing unaccomplished that I have to accomplish, but I am still engaged in *karma* (activity)." For, if God is inactive, the Cosmos will grind to a halt. Man's role is to translate his strength into activity along the path of duty. The young follow the lead of elders. So, elders must consistently hold on to ideals and work towards their realisation so that mankind can attain prosperity and peace.

Character is power more than knowledge

What or who is God? When the answer to this question is sought, one discovers that God is the Glory immanent in Nature. Nature must indeed be laughing at the sterile frenzies, the endless pursuits, the countless miseries to which man submits himself to, in his search for achieving the unachievable! Man must search in Nature for the sacred lessons it holds for him; then, he can understand how deep, how everlasting is the Truth it can convey. The earth rotates on its axis at a speed of thousand miles an hour. Consequently we have alternations of day and night, which helps us to live on this globe. Besides, it moves around the sun at the rate of 66,000 miles an hour, causing the seasons which bring rains for crops and vegetation which sustain human life. The earth does not profit in the least by these rotations but man exists and prospers on account of them. Mother Earth teaches her children this lesson of service and sacrifice.

Good conduct has to be the main key to the life of man. It is the 'way of living,' the path of virtue, that keeps one in the memory of people long after death. If it is not the virtuous way, the person is as good as dead. It is often declared that knowledge is power. No. No. Character is power. Nothing can be more powerful on earth than character, Riches, scholarship, status, authority are all frail and flimsy before it. A strong virtuous character cannot be earned from guide books; it is earned only through intimate involvement with society.

There is no dearth of books today; nor is there lack of gurus. Educational institutions spread knowledge all around, To all appearances, the Sun of Knowledge (*Jnaana Bhaaskara*), is showering His rays in plenty. But, one can hardly notice those who have imbibed the nectarine wisdom thus offered and dwell in the ecstasy it can confer. The thick binding, encasing the books, seems to prevent wisdom from emerging. The mountain range with lust, anger, hatred, envy and pride as the peaks, shuts out the splendour of the Sun. Charity, compassion, fortitude, sympathy, and sacrifice, arise from the higher levels of consciousness while opposite tendencies breed in the lower levels. The latter cannot confer *aanandha*; they can only plunge us in grief.

See Nature as a Divine loving entity

No one with the higher qualities or virtues or expressions of love is evident today. So, it has become impossible to discover 'man' among the inhabitants of the world. Man, Man, Man! What are the characteristics of God made Man? No man knows what they are, no man demonstrates them in life. Is anger a human quality? Or, pride? Or, self centredness? No. They reveal the animal, though people infected with these faults gain currency as 'men.' Man must reveal by his conduct that he has evolved higher; he should not inflict pain nor should he be affected by pain.

Man is not merely flesh and bone. A gramophone record is not merely a circular plate with grooves on. Each groove looks like another groove, lines all over! In every groove are hidden voices, words, songs. In man, too, there is latent the possibility of all types of *karma*. Every object, event or experience of ours since childhood lies dormant in us. The rivers, mountains and stars we have looked at are all in us. We have in us the past, the present and even the future. We are all that was, is, and will be.

Man sees Nature as cruel, because his mind is cruel. Clear the eye, purify the mind and you can see that Nature is a Divine loving entity. Do not seek faults and vices. Seek the right, the correct and the good. Develop sympathy and compassion. Cultivate *vairagya*, the attitude of detachment.

You may doubt whether there are any who have achieved *vairaagya* (renunciation). Let me tell you there are not only a few, but many. They have no sense of I and Mine; they dedicate all acts to God and free themselves from attachment. To feel there are none is self-deception. Out of ten evil persons there will surely be at least one who can be guided into the good path and out of ten such, at least one will accept God and out of ten such, at least one will be eager to live in accordance with Divine Law.

Offer your body to God as pure as He gave you

In fact, the Cosmos is activated by one single *Chaithanya* (Consciousness, Intelligence). It is the *Suuthradhaari* (Director). Man has only a role to play (*paathradhaari*). That intelligence, the omniwill, urges all men to play roles decided on by it, and to think and work as it directs.

The scriptures declare that the Body is the Temple and the I is the God installed therein. Or, you may take it that the body is a vessel for cooking food, given on loan to us for use, while hosting a festival. Can we return it to God, who has loaned it, in a worse condition? Should we not scrub it and clean it and return it bright and free from rust and dust? When the festival of life began and we received the body from Him, it was innocent of evil. It was pure, fresh and bright. Using it we have inflicted dents, leaks and other signs of damage, through lust, greed, hatred, anger and envy. Only the lowest would offer it back in that condition. Offer it as pure as He gave it; you can then be most worthy of Grace.

Remember always the high purpose for which you have come into this world, equipped with potentialities to acquire and utilise all levels of knowledge. Have faith in Divine Grace, the grace of *Gopaal* on the *go* (cow), of *Pashupathi* on *pashu* (bound animal). Wear the Garland of Devotion Gems round your neck and saturate your thought, word and deed with Divine Love.

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The mind must become bhakthimaya (saturated with devotion);

the intelligence must be transformed into jnaana-deepthi (the splendour of universal wisdom), or jnaana (divine knowledge);

the body must be a willing and efficient instrument for sad dharmacharana (the practice of righteousness).

Such a life is indeed the crown and glory of humanity. The rest are contaminated, contained, caged lives!

Sathya Sai Baaba