

2. Eschew envy : Uphold truth

THE scriptures have declared that it is difficult to acquire a human body. Human life is the highest among all living beings in creation. With all these endowments if man lacks *jnana* (wisdom) he is no better than an animal. It is *jnana* that distinguishes man from other animals. In spite of possessing a human body, with its sacred capacities, man pursues wrong paths and indulges in misdeeds, thereby degrading his precious heritage. One who ought to dedicate himself to the pursuit of the *Divine--Nivrithi marga* (the Inward Path)--and experience bliss, makes himself a slave of his senses and wastes his life in the pursuit of the *external--Pravrithi marga*. All his efforts are directed towards the cultivation of sensual pleasures instead of aiming at realisation of the power of the Spirit within him. Of what avail is the human form if one's actions and thoughts are not conducive to the realisation of his inherent divinity? By concerning himself only with the demands of the body, man today is forgetting his divine essence and is immersed in material pursuits. It is this preoccupation with the mundane that is at the root of all the insecurity and unhappiness experienced by man. He is perennially filled with discontent and dissatisfaction. Discontentment affects man in two ways: One is lack of peace of mind. The other is unhappiness resulting from lack of peace.

How to banish envy

What is the root cause of discontentment? It is envy. This has been the besetting vice of man from the beginning of time. Only when envy is eradicated from the human heart will man have self-satisfaction. The contented man enjoys peace. How does envy arise? When one compares himself with those who are better off, or who hold higher offices, or score higher marks, or are more handsome and suffers from a consciousness of his own inferiority, envy arises. Discontent over what he lacks gives birth to envy.

To get rid of this evil quality one has to look at those who are worse off than himself. For instance, when you look at those who have got lower marks, you can derive comfort from the fact that you have done better than others. Likewise, when one views the state of those holding lower jobs, he can feel satisfied with his own position. Thus, if envy has to be got rid of this sort of comparison with those who are worse off has to be undertaken. In due course one develops a sense of equal-mindedness both towards those who are better off and those who are worse. Such equal-mindedness is a Divine quality. There is nothing wrong in aspiring for higher positions. But one should not feel envious about those who are in such positions. It is a crime to entertain such feelings.

The need for triple purity

Students should bear in mind that for achieving anything worthwhile in life a healthy body and a healthy mind are necessary. To realise such a doubly healthy state, purity in thought, word and deed is essential. In *Vedantic* parlance this is described as "*Trikarana suddhi*" (purity of the three instruments of mind, speech and hands).

The *Vedas* are divided into three *Kandas* (sections): the *Karma Kanda*, the *Upasana Kanda* and the *Jnana Kanda*. These are associated with three types of *yoga*: *Karma yoga* (the *yoga* of Action), *Bhakti yoga* (the *yoga of Devotion*) and *Jnana yoga* (the *yoga of Knowledge or Wisdom*).

First there is *Karma yoga*. For performing any action you need hands. All the actions you do with your hands should be sacred, pure, helpful to others and purposeful. The hands become sanctified with such actions. Hence, the first step is to make the hands pure and holy.

By pure actions the mind also gets purified. But mere purity of mind is not enough. The mind has to develop concentration. For cultivating concentration, *Bhakti* (devotion) is of great value. *Bhakti* means getting rid of the separation from Bhagavan. There must be the realisation that the Divine is omnipresent and that you cannot separate yourself from God. To remember the omnipresent Divine, to chant His glories and adore Him, you need the tongue (the power of speech). Jayadeva hailed the tongue as the God-given instrument for glorifying the Lord. This sacred instrument should not be misused in any way for speaking ill of others or causing unhappiness to them. As enjoined in the Gita, you should avoid unpleasant speech and use only words that are true, comforting and good. Harshness in speech should be avoided. Only when the tongue is used in this way can it become pure and sacred. When your speech is sanctified your life itself becomes sanctified.

Uphold promise at any cost

There is no *Dharma* higher than Truth. "Truth alone triumphs." The Emperor Bali asked: "Is there a greater sin than going back on your word?" Once you have given a promise, you should not go back on it in any circumstance. This was the truth demonstrated by Bali. When you take a pledge or give a promise, you uphold it even at the cost of your life. Once you give your word, you must make every effort to fulfil it. Nowadays there is little respect for the plighted word. Promises are made freely and broken freely. Pledges are made and buried from moment to moment. Such persons are no better than living corpses.

Truth is the life-breath of speech

An army is the life-breath of a fort

Justice is the life-breath of society

The signature is the life-breath of a pronote.

You must remember that once you begin to treat your promises lightly, it will become a life-long habit. Harishchandra gave up his kingdom, his wife and son and even became a pitiable watchman in a cremation ground for the sake of upholding his plighted word. His supreme example as the votary of Truth shines like a beacon-light across the millennia of human history.

If you wish to earn a name for truthfulness, you have to adhere to truth steadfastly. Among the attributes of God, Truth is foremost. God is hailed as *Sathya-vaakpaalakaaya Namah* (the Protector of Truth), the Propagator of Truth, the Embodiment of Truth. "Truth is God" goes the saying. Purity in speech is the second purity that has to be ensured.

Students! This is a crucial period in your lives. It is the stage in which your divinity can blossom forth. It is the right time for you to strive to sublimate your speech and learn to honour your word. Most people are content to use words to suit the needs of the moment. They attach no lasting value to what they say and therefore do not live up to their words.

Lord protects those who are devoted to Him

In the Bhagvad Gita, the Lord gave a promise that He would take care *of the yogakshemam* of all those who are devoted to Him exclusively and without any other thought. What is this *yoga*?

You can see for yourself what a sacred privilege you are enjoying, what extraordinary opportunities you are getting here. Every day innumerable persons are coming here from many remote countries, spending thousands of rupees. They wait for long periods just to hear one word from Swami, which is enough to fill them with bliss. There are lakhs of such devotees. Here you are receiving the blessing of Swami's company without any expenditure on your part, with no effort at all and without spending any time. How indifferent are you to this great opportunity? You are taking it all for granted and are unmindful of its infinite value. You have got this blessing thanks to merit earned in some previous lives. This itself you should regard as *yoga*. It is not the fruit of this birth. This is *yoga* and when you try to protect it you have *yogakshemam*. *Kshemam* means protection of what you have. Bhakta Mira prayed: "Oh Lord! I dived into the depths of the ocean and found a pearl, will you let me lose hold of it?" Mira and Sakkubai secured God's grace through many ordeals and difficulties and they prayed to the Lord to see that grace was not taken away.

A golden opportunity to ensure your well-being

It is by the stroke of supreme good fortune that you have come to the Lord. You must not let slip this opportunity. This is your chance for you to ensure your physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Not realising this, you are wasting a golden opportunity. It is easy to lose a precious thing. You are not aware of what is ahead of you, what the future holds for you. What pains Swami is the thought of the difficulties you will have to face in the future, of which Swami alone is aware. You may imagine that you can make whatever promises you like while you are here and pursue whatever courses you choose after going out from the Institute. This is a grievous mistake. Sooner or later you will have to reap the fruits of your decisions. You must see that these consequences are not untoward. What you regard today as a laughing matter may prove tragic later.

Keep a strict watch over what you say. If the foot slips, you may suffer from a fall and sustain a temporary injury. But a slip of the tongue may cause lasting harm. Never go about criticising others. When you point to the mote in another's eye, you are forgetting the beam in your own eye. With plenty of faults in yourself, you have no right to point out the faults in others. It is a grievous sin to indulge in fault-finding. He alone is wise who is conscious of his defects. The one who is looking out for faults in others will acquire those faults himself by a process of reflex action.

Churchill--the effective public speaker

You have to learn from the example of Churchill, who though he did not fare well at school, through sheer self-confidence and self-education, became the Prime Minister of England. He enlisted in the army at a young age. When he later entered politics, he trained himself to become an effective public speaker. Before going to a meeting, he would practise before a mirror how he would address the meeting and what kind of impression would he make on the audience by his gestures and movements. By correcting himself in this way, he developed great self-confidence and acquired an impressive public personality. He became a master in the art of repartee.

At an election meeting he was railing out the opposition without mincing words. A woman in the audience who was greatly provoked by Churchill's attack, got up and shouted: "Shut up." She remarked: "If I had been your wife I would have administered poison to put an end to your life." Churchill coolly replied: "If I had been your husband I would thrust the poison down your throat." The woman was put to shame and remained silent thereafter.

On another occasion, an opposition MP was replying to Churchill's speech. Seeing that Churchill was keeping his eyes closed during the speech and appeared not to be listening to him, the Opposition member complained that Churchill was asleep while he was replying to Churchill's speech. He said that this was unparliamentary. Churchill immediately got up and said: "I would have been immensely happy if I had gone to sleep. It was because I could not get sleep, I had to endure the member's speech." That reply plunged the House in laughter. You have to practise the art of silencing criticism by humorous replies.

After the hands and the tongue, you have to learn how to purify the mind. The mind is said to be constantly wavering and getting out of control. But when it is directed in the right way, it will be in the proper state. The rectification of the mind is *Jnana Yoga*.

You have to aim at achieving the *Trikarana suddhi* (triple purity). This will enable you to get rid of all evil qualities and make you unselfish. Today you seem to be self-centered even with regard to simple matters like looking at a group photo or seeing the examination results. You are concerned only with locating your picture in the group or your number in the results. You must develop a broader outlook and derive joy from the successes of others instead of being concerned only with your result. Our Institute students must learn to transcend such narrow attitudes and develop a wider outlook.

Address to the students of Sri Sathya Sai Hostel, Prashanthi Nilayam on 19-1-1989.