

13. The four qualities

IN BHARATIYA culture, the four goals of human existence--- *Purusharthas*--have been declared to be: *Dharma* (Righteousness), *Artha* (earning of wealth), *Kama* (fulfilment of desires) and *Moksha* (Liberation). It: may not be possible for all human beings to achieve these four goals.

There are four qualities which man has to develop if he is to pursue properly the four *Purusharthas*. These are very necessary for students today. It is the failure to understand these four requisites properly that has been the cause of many grave consequences. These four are: *Maitri*, *Karuna*, *Muditha* and *Upeksha*. These are four important qualities required by everyone.

The characteristics of each of these qualities have not been rightly understood or explained. For instance, *Maitri* (friendship) is regarded as mere friendliness. What is friendship? Whom should you befriend? How is one to be friendly? These aspects have to be understood. One should not cultivate friendship with all and sundry. Friendship should be cultivated only towards those who are one's equals in age, status, culture, etc. Friendship with those above or below one should be avoided. This is the true meaning of friendship. When you try to befriend those above you in status etc., they may try to patronise you. When you do not like to be lorded over, the friendship will break. When you develop friendship with those below you, you may attempt to boss over them. When they do not acquiesce in this, the friendship will break up. Therefore friendship will be enduring only when it is as between equals in age, wealth, status, etc.

Karuna, Muditha and Upeksha

Karuna (kindness or compassion) Kindness should be shown towards those who are in a lower position than ourselves in respect; of age, wealth, health, status, education, and the like. Only then compassion becomes meaningful and valuable. Kindness justifies itself in such cases.

Muditha (appreciation) This quality relates 'to the attitude to be shown towards those who are better off than you. You should feel happy when you see such persons. They may look wealthier than you or better placed than you in position and possessions. You should feel happy on seeing them. You should rejoice at the sight of persons holding higher positions or scoring higher marks. *Muditha* means freedom from envy and feeling happy over the better fortunes of others.

Upeksha: There are two terms *Apeksha* (liking) and *Upeksha* (dislike or disinterestedness). We should have no liking for those who indulge in bad deeds or entertain bad thoughts. They should be kept at arm's length. Keep away from all those who are filled with bad thoughts, indulge in bad talk and bad actions. This is *Upeksha*.

If you cultivate these four qualities, you do not need any other goals in life. Friendship with equals, compassion towards the lowly, rejoicing in the good fortune of those who are better off and keeping away from the wicked--these are the true objectives to be pursued in life. It is because of the failure to observe these directives that the quality of life has deteriorated.

Maintain two-fold purity

Everyone has to observe purity in body, dress and manners. This is external purity. This is not enough. The mind also has to be kept pure. The thoughts should be clean. It is necessary to maintain both external and internal cleanliness. How is internal purity to be achieved? It is easy to maintain external cleanliness by washing and removing the dirt. How is one to recognise

internal impurity and try to remove it? There is only one way. That is to recognise that in all beings, from the smallest insect to the highest, there is God. This awareness will make the mind pure. You must have the conviction that the Divine permeates everything and is present everywhere. The infinite, universal Spirit is omnipresent. No one can determine what is good and what is bad in this all-pervading Cosmic spirit, because it is one without a second. Only a person with body consciousness can make such distinctions out of ignorance. For Divinity there are no such distinctions and no one can attribute such qualities to the Divine.

The containers and the contained

Here is an example: There are a number of pots made of clay, wood, copper, brass, silver and gold. They are filled with water. The reflections of the sun can be seen in the water in all the pots. Is it possible to say that the reflection of the sun in one pot is good and that in another is bad? The value of the pots may vary. But can any value be given to the sun's reflection in each of them? The pots are products of nature. The sun is transcendental. The pots can vary in quality. But the sun is incomparably pure. He symbolises the Infinite Spirit. Every living being is an image of the Supreme. Without a vessel, water cannot be contained. Without water the sun's image cannot be seen.

In a human being, the mind represents water. The body is the container (Vessel). The *Atma* (Spirit:) that dwells in the body corresponds to the reflection of the sun. The *Atma* that is present in all beings is one and the same. The differences between them relate to the bodies (the containers). Enquiring in this way, it will be found that defects in quality relate to the bodies and the mind and not to the Spirit. The water in one vessel may be muddy, in another it may be turbulent and in yet another it may be pure and still. The reflection in the water in the first may be regarded as *Tamasic*, that in the second as *Rajasic* and the one in the third as *Satwic*.

What, then, is it that has to be kept pure? It is the mind, which has to be purified by the removal of *Tamasic* and *Rajasic* qualities. How is this to be done? By getting rid of two bad tendencies. One, trying to cover up one's faults; two, searching for the faults in others. The mind can become pure only if these two traits are got rid of. Only those who are conscious of their own defects and who seek to recognise the good in others can make their mind pure and steady.

Students should realise that the relations between Swami and the students will depend on the intensity and sincerity of the students devotion. Here is an example. As you go along a road, you find on one side a tree rich in foliage and in full bloom. Across the road, on the other side, you notice a paddy field in which the crop is withering. What is the reason for this difference? In the case of the tree, the roots have gone deep in the ground and they can supply water to sustain the tree. In the case of the paddy crop, the field has not been watered for two days and the crop has withered because the roots have not gone deep and have not received any water.

The one who is filled with deep devotion for God will experience great bliss. The one whose devotion is surface-deep will have no contentment. Each of you should examine how deep and sincere is your devotion to Swami.

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