

17. Cultivate Character: Lead an ideal life

JUST as there is oil in the sesame seed, butter in milk, fragrance in the flower, tasty juice in the fruit, fire in wood, there is Divinity in this vast Universe. The Divine is all pervasive and is present in every being. It is the Divine Power inside that makes it possible for the eyes to see and ears to hear. The entire creation is the expression of the Will Power of God. *Prakrithi* (Nature) is a manifestation of the *Paramaathma* (Supreme Divine). Man is born to manifest and reflect Divinity. All constituents of Nature reflect their inherent qualities. Man also has to do so but is not reflecting his innate human quality.

Every one should consider devotion and discipline as of the utmost importance---duty comes only next to these two. You, the youth (both male and female) are intrinsically very good. But you lack in discipline. You should observe good discipline. You should not waste time which is precious and sacred.

How should you utilise the time usefully? You have to follow the ideal path reflecting sacred human values. Nor only that, but you should also inspire and encourage others to follow a disciplined life. Today, people do not understand discipline. They sit in a meeting and go on cheering and clapping when a speaker tells something to please them. This is sheer waste of time and energy. Every second is valuable and should be used well. Character is the most important life principle to be imbibed. This is the golden period in your life span and if you spoil this fine opportunity in careless living, your future will be ruined.

The sapling has to be tended very carefully, so that it could grow into a mighty tree in the right manner and serve the people well. To whatever country you may belong, cultivation of character is essential at any point of time. There is no such thing as American character, Russian character and so on. Character is common to the entire humanity. There is only one caste, the caste of Humanity; one language, the language of Heart; one Religion, the Religion of Love. Whatever country you may hail from, whatever language you speak and whichever faith you follow, you should maintain sterling human character.

Control of senses is the hallmark of character

In ancient times the youth maintained good character. If you maintain good character, the future generation will prosper. Individual sacredness and purity ensure sacredness of society and country. When all countries are filled with such noble people the world will be blooming with peace and prosperity.

If you say that the world is not a bed of roses but is a place of misery, the fault lies in you, the inhabitants. It is Character that marks the life of a good individual. If you go through history you will find that in the ancient days people were noted for their control of senses. Take the example of Janaka, the great ruler and father of Seetha, offering his daughter in marriage to Raama immediately after the latter broke the Shiva Dhanush (the formidable bow of Shiva), in terms of the proclamation made by him. When Janaka repeatedly asked Raama to look at Seetha and take her hand, Raama looked in a different direction because he should not look at a woman till he tied the wedding knot around her neck. This is the ideal propagated by the great *Avathaar* Raama.

Exemplary behaviour of Lakshmana

Later on, when Lakshmana followed Raama and Seetha to the forest and stayed with them for fourteen long years he never once looked at the face of Seetha who was just an eighteen year old damsel. Abundant testimony to this exemplary behaviour of Lakshmana is borne by the episode when Raama and Lakshmana acquitted the friendship of the monkey-king Sugreeva. Sugreeva bade the monkeys to bring the bundle of jewels dropped by Seetha when she was being abducted by Raavana. When Raama saw this he was overwhelmed and asked Lakshmana to identify whether they belonged to Seetha. But Lakshmana respectfully said, "I can only identify the anklets worn by mother Seetha as I used to worship her feet every day. I cannot identify the bangles or necklace worn by her as I have never looked .up at her face." Because of such worthy and laudable behaviour, they are remembered even today, though thousands of years have passed. Youth should protect Character in that way. Both men and women should consider character as their very life breath.

You may go to villages for doing *Seva* (service). Doing selfless service is the best way to cross the ocean of *Samsaara* (transmigratory life). The *Vedhas* declare, "Not by penance, not by undertaking pilgrimages to holy places, but by rendering service to humanity you can achieve the goal of liberation." Ego is eliminated by the spirit of Service and thus it is linked to progress in spirituality

When the great Sage Vaalmeeki completed composing the epic Raamaayana, he was contemplating as to who could propagate this great Epic to the world at large. The two boys Lava and Kusha came before him. When questioned by them as to what he was contemplating on, Vaalmeeki said that he wanted the story of Raamaayana which he had composed in poem be taught to the people and the Divine Glory of Raama should be spread far and wide. The boys with folded hands submitted to the sage who was also their preceptor, "We are ready to even sacrifice our life for your *Seva*. Command us and we shall follow."

Vaalmeeki was moved to tears at the spirit of service exhibited by the young boys. He said, "Go out and spread this epic story without delay" Vaalmeeki had taught them the scriptures and moulded their character too. The nectar like contents of an earthen pot are far better than poison kept in a golden jar. The human body is only a mud pot. God exists in this mud pot as *Amrith* (nectar). We do not want a golden vessel with poison. The world is tempting like a golden vessel but is full of poison of worldly pleasures and pains.

Spread the message of Divinity

God resides in the heart of persons and not in shrines like Thirupathi, Badhrinath or Prashaanthi Nilayam. He is essentially *Hridhayanivaasi* (Indweller of the heart). Vaalmeeki told the boys-"Go and spread the message of Raamaayana with the spirit of selfless sacrifice for the welfare of the world." The boys wore garlands of beads and holding musical instruments in their hands, started on their sacred journey. It is Vaalmeeki's inspiration that made them pursue this noble task with utmost zeal.

Nowadays youth are reluctant to wear *Vibhuuthi* on their foreheads and participate in *Nagarasankeerthan*. They go forward quite willingly and openly for indulging in wicked deeds but feel shy to participate in singing the glory of God. They revel in singing cinema songs of low taste while they fight shy to sing the Divine Names. To spend life in such unholy pursuits is a wasteful exercise and will not bring credit. Morality is the backbone of the community and a

society of people bereft of moral values is worse than the jungle infested by wild animals. Even beasts have sense and reason while man has lost both.

Service to people in rural areas

You are all embodiments of God. It is proclaimed in the Geetha that all beings are sparks of Divinity. You should not feel shy to speak the truth when you are going to pilgrim shrines such as Thirupathi or Parthi. You should not also fight shy of engaging yourselves in service especially in rural areas, as the villages lack amenities and hygienic conditions. They need your attention more. You may not be able to visit the villages frequently when you are employed in any job due to difficulties of getting leave. When you go to a village, collect a few young persons of the village and teach them health and hygiene and impress on them the necessity to maintain environmental cleanliness. You need not spend much money for travelling to distant places. Select the villages close by and reach the villagers principles of health, hygiene and living in clean surroundings. You can take doctors to give them treatment and health check-up. You should inspire the villagers by your attitude of service and humility.

Serve with humility as Hanumaan

You know the greatness of Hanumaan who was the symbol of selfless service. He was endowed with mighty power, valour, strength and he was hailed as a great scholar of impeccable character. Yet when the demons in Sri Lanka, questioned him who he was, he never hesitated to reply that he was the servant of Shri Raamachandhra,

You will have to feel honoured to call yourself as a servant of God and humanity. If you start serving with the attitude that service to man is service to God you will find God there. The same thing you cannot experience in *japa* or *dhyaana*. You have to "shut your mind and open your heart," which happens while doing *Seva*.

Some may ask, "While you are God why worship God?" Even as you realise you are Divine, you have to do certain things as part of your duty. According to the tradition of Bharath, you have to do things to please God or in other words transform work into worship. When you practise this, it becomes easier to realise God. Everything you learn by practice only. Walking, talking, eating, singing and serving need practice. Practise service dedicating all activities to God.

A boy prayed to God to give him strength. What for? It is not for watching T.V. or movies but for serving God through service to mankind. You say diamond and gold are highly valuable. If you enquire deeply, man is more valuable than all the wealth of the world. Men alone decide the value of gold and diamond, and other materials. Man should have faith in himself. Every one should chant the name of God and engage in service in accordance with the advice given by Hanumaan to Vibheeshana. He said, "Mere chanting Raama's name won't do. You should also engage yourself in Raama's work." Vibheeshana went on chanting the name but failed to make any effort to alleviate the suffering of Seetha and Raama on their separation while Hanumaan engaged himself in the service of Raama.

Light the lamp of the world with Divine Love

You should use your will power to engage in such sacred tasks. A common example can be seen in an electric light. *Dharma* (virtue) is the wire which carries the current, *Shaanthi* (peace) is the bulb and *Prema* (love) is the light. Light the lamp of the world with Divine Love.

Divine Love lights the lamp of life, which you are not able to perceive. None can regulate Divine Love. Worldly love is fraught with conditions and expectations in return. Divine Love does not expect anything in return.

Some say they are searching for Truth. This is meaningless because you are yourself the embodiment of Truth which is nothing but God. Because you are not aware of this, you indulge in wrong pursuits. In a co-educational institution, what happens is that a boy and girl in the impressionable age when there is no self-control, first look at each other exchanging glances; then it goes on developing into friendship by smiling, talking, exchanging letters and finally leads to coming together. You should control your vision initially. Many saints have prayed to God to give them the correct vision only to see good, cars to hear songs of Divine glory and hands to engage in worship. Jayadeva in a song appeals to the tongue not to indulge in untruth, not to speak ill of others and avoid excessive talk.

Nagara Sankeerthan (community singing of spiritual songs) has been arranged as part of the programme of the Sathya Sai Organisation to still the mind in the cool hours of early morning and purify the atmosphere and make the singer and the listeners peaceful and happy with thought of the Divine.

You must make it a practice to observe silence for at least one hour daily. It saves your cosmic energy and ensures peace of mind. You should develop also the discipline of simple living and high thinking. You should avoid gaudy dress. Your white dress reflects the inner purity of your heart. Dress should be simple but clean.

You have to enquire "who am I" instead of asking everyone else "who are you?" You must uncover your reality which is hidden by the outer coats of ego and attachment. You have to remove them to see your bare chest. These represent, the three qualities of *Sathva*, *Rajas* and *Thamas* (goodness, passion and inertia) covering your innate Reality. You have to transcend them to realise your inner Self.

Good character is of primary importance

Embodiments Of Love! Young men and women! Character is the basis for all your behaviour, quality and actions. None can be perfect but you can make an effort to develop excellent character.

When you go to villages, you should create a good impression in them by your behaviour. You should reflect peaceful and happy demeanour. You should be careful not to disturb their work. They should, not mistake you for a gang of rowdies. You must behave with humility and start working sincerely. Avoid talking too much.

Learn to turn over a new leaf even if you have not lived an ideal life in the past. Do not brood over the past and worry about the future. Concentrate on the present. Take everything as the gift of God; discard worry. You cannot demand *sweet* medicine for your illness from the doctor. You must take whatever is prescribed. Do not give room in the heart for anything else but God. The world outside is reflection of the Inner Being. Be happy within and joyful outside and have enthusiasm for service. Do not bother about others heckling you as you are engaged in Service to God.

Shed only tears of devotion for God

If some are questioning your faith in God, tell them that He is in your heart and the others have no business to question your belief. Have strong and-unshakable faith. Be fearless and avoid "crying". You have to shed only tears of devotion to God. Such tears have spiritual meaning, because *Naara* means water and *Nayana* means 'eyes'. Both together make Naaraayana. Difficulties are like passing clouds. There are no permanent clouds at all.

Even though there are millions of youth in the world, only those of you who have come here are lucky to experience this unique chance. Wherever you go for service, Svaami will always be with you. Whatever happens I shall protect you. Do not be carried away by profit or loss. Think of God ceaselessly. Even the great saint composer Thyaagaraaja doubted for a moment-the *Shakthi* (power) of Raama but immediately repented and said the fault was his to have doubted, but, God was all powerful. Never give room for doubt.

The inner current of all the nine types of devotion is *Prema--Love* for God.

The teachings you have heard here during the four days should follow you like a shadow wherever you go. The cow constructs plenty of grass wherever it sees a green patch but goes to its shed and slowly chews the cud. Similarly, you should go to your places and recapitulate all that you learnt here and follow them scrupulously. You should stick to the principles of faith in God, and Unity in Diversity Svaami is prepared to do anything for you if you follow the path explained to you and become good and useful to the society This is my only desire. You must spread the message to others, each one instructing hundreds of persons in your places.

While you render service in the village, the villagers should be inspired and encouraged to do the work themselves. When you go out for service, do not fail to take permission of your parents. If they object, tell them softly that this body is given only for doing service and not for wasting in eating, drinking, sleeping and idling. They will not object once they are convinced that you are going for genuine service. You must behave in an exemplary manner.

Worthy son makes father proud

Usually, a father distributes sweets when a son is born. But a father will be really happy only when the society respects his son. True happiness is derived only when you earn a good name. Be good. See good. Do good deeds. This is the ideal Svaami wants you to imbibe. All of you have been behaving well during these four days of your stay here. Continue this even when you go to your places. Because of emotion you may sometimes lose self-control. You should avoid getting emotionally charged and upset. You must control emotion, reduce your talk and practise Truth. Make your life blissful. Worldly pleasure is only temporary. Permanent bliss can be had only in association with the Divine. It is "heart to heart and love to love connection." You have Svaami's Blessings in abundance.

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