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Promotion of unity: Students' duty

*Before desiring anything, a person must make
themselves worthy.*

*Charity (or generosity) qualifies someone for a
good name.*

*Adherence to Truth qualifies them to attain
Heaven.*

Character makes them fit to enjoy happiness.

To do anything in the world, one must have competence (*yogyatha*). For the practice of righteousness (*dharma*), one must have competence. According to his fitness, man embarks on righteous action. To achieve fame man must qualify himself to deserve it. It is by generosity (*danam*) that one achieves a good name. Heaven is realised by Truth alone. Character is the root cause of all happiness for man. Hence, to get happiness, or

go to Heaven or earn a good name, one must acquire the requisite worthiness.

The significance of Sankranthi

This festive day has been celebrated from ancient times as a day of fulfillment and joy. Every festival is a social occasion, arising in society, flourishing in society, and promoting the well being of society. Every festival has been designed to promote the welfare of society. With social changes, festivals also have undergone changes.

Today's festival is an extremely important one for *Bharatiyas* (Indians). It is a festival to celebrate the glory of the Sun God. The Sun moves every month from one sign of Zodiac to the next.

Sankranthi, meaning "sacred change", occurs every month as the Sun moves from one house of the Zodiac to another. But special sacredness attaches to the movement of the Sun to Capricorn (Makara-Sankranthi).

The Sun appears cool
 The day is shortened
 And is made pleasant by chill wind
 On fields lit by moonlight
 The crows caw over the grain heaps
 While farmers sing in joy
 Over the golden harvest
 The flowers express their joy
 By putting forth their petals
 While in every home, filled with grain,
 The people welcome the advent of *Sankranthi*
 (Telugu Poem)

On *Sankranthi* day, the farmers rejoice over the fullness with the newly harvested crop of the granaries in their homes.

When the Sun enters the sign of Capricorn, it begins its northward motion. The sun shines in every human body, illuminating the six *chakras* (spiritual centres in the body). Of these *chakras*, two are most important: the *hridaya* (heart) *chakra* and the *sahasrara chakra*.

The *hridaya chakra* has eight petals. God is the Lord of the eight-petaled *hridaya chakra*. These eight petals are regarded as eight consorts of the Lord. In this context, the Lord is adored in the form of the Sun. The world cannot survive without the Sun. The solar system is derived from the Sun. Hence, the Sun is worshipped as divine.

Sahasrara Chakra represents sixteen thousand gopikas

The ancient sages adored the eight-petaled divine centre in the heart and thereby reached the *sahasrara chakra* and enjoyed supreme bliss.

The *sahasrara chakra* has a thousand petals. Each petal carries sixteen phases (*kalas*). Thus the *sahasrara chakra* is said to represent 16,000 cowherd maidens (*gopikas*), while the eight petals of the *hridaya chakra* are adored as the eight consorts of Krishna.

The syllable *go* in the word *gopikas* (cowherd maidens) has four meanings: The *Veda*, the cow, the earth, and the faculty of speech (*vak*). The *gopikas* derive their different attributes from these different meanings. They chant the *Vedas*, protect the cows, nourish the earth, and proclaim the glories of the Divine by their speech.

In making an offering to Krishna, the mantra that is used is *Kleem Krishnaya Govindaya Gopijanavallabhaya Swaha*. It is interesting to explore the full significance of this *mantra*. *Kleem* means the earth. It is the first element. *Krishnaya* signifies water. *Govindaya* signifies fire (*agni*). *Gopijanavallabhaya* signifies air (*vayu*). *Swaha* signifies space (*akasa*). Thus,

the *mantra* represents all five elements in the cosmos as manifestations of the Divine.

The cosmos cannot exist without these five elements. They are all-pervading. It follows that there is no place in the cosmos where God is not immanent. The cowherd maidens, through this *mantra*, taught the world that God should be adored as the omnipresent Divine everywhere in the cosmos. Hence, in every atom, all the time, in every particle, the Divine is present.

The spiritual goal of the ancient sages

The ancient sages reached the thousand petaled *Sahasrara* through the adoration of the Lord in the eight-petaled lotus of the heart. They used all their God-given intelligence for this spiritual goal. But modern man uses his intelligence only for worldly ends. The sages considered cultivation of virtues, good qualities, and righteous conduct as true education.

What do the eight petals of the heart represent? They are: love (*prema*), truth (*sathyam*), forbearance (*sahanam*), sacrifice (*thyaga*), compassion (*daya*), beauty (*sundaram*), bliss (*ananda*) and peace (*santhi*). To realize the bliss of the Divine, all the other qualities have to be fostered. God is the embodiment of all these eight attributes. Sacrifice is the most important of them.

The chakora bird is an example for man in the pursuit of purity. It will not drink any water except what rains from a cloud in the sky. It sees in a dark rain-bearing cloud the divine form of the Lord. Man should seek to see and experience the Divine in every object and every being. Students should experience the Divine in all their studies and sports. It has been said: Life is a game, Play it!

Life must be permeated with love. Through love, truth can be realized and a righteous life can be lived.

The ancients attached the highest value to good character. They considered that if character was lost, all was lost. Today, people consider that if wealth is lost all is lost. They attach no value to character.

Men should strive to lead virtuous lives. The cowherd maids (*gopikas*) provide the supreme example of how to lead a life dedicated to the Divine. The episode of Uddhava's mission to the cowherd maids and their reaction to it as described in the *Bhagavatam* shows what true and one-pointed devotion to Krishna meant for the cowherd maids. They had totally surrendered their minds and hearts to Krishna.

The sacredness of Uttarayana

This day marks the entry of the Sun into the sign of Capricorn in his northward journey (*Uttarayana*). Bhishmacharya, lying on a bed of arrows after he fell wounded, waited for the commencement of *Uttarayana* to give up his spirit to the Lord. He lay on the bed of arrows for 56 days. This signifies the sacredness of this day. This is the moment to fill one's heart with divine feelings.

There is no need to seek God in a temple, mosque, or church. He is enshrined in every human heart. Unfortunately people go on expensive pilgrimages to all sorts of places, forgetting that God is the dweller in their hearts.

Why should Indian students go abroad for studies or jobs? It is better to earn ten rupees within India than ten thousand rupees abroad. This craze for going abroad is utterly meaningless. It is better to lead a good life within India than to pursue the mirage of careers abroad.

In this context, it is good to remember the teachings of the sage Narada on devotion. Narada is misrepresented as one who reveled in promoting discord. This is totally wrong. He expounded the highest truths about devotion (*bhakti*) and taught

how man should realize oneness with God through intense devotion.

Integral relationship between society and nature

What people need today is yearning for unity in diversity. Human beings are like limbs of the body of society. They are integral parts of society. Society is a part of nature, and nature is a limb of God. Hence, the integral and organic relationship between the individual and God through society and nature should be properly understood.

The body is important in the spiritual process. The *Gita* has declared that the body (*kshetra*) and the indwelling knower (*kshetrajna*) are one. Hence, men should engage themselves in sacred actions that will promote the welfare of society and uphold its reputation.

To transform society, the first requisite is individual transformation. Purify your heart. Then society will also become pure. You should adhere to truth, like Harishchandra did, prepared to face any ordeal. Never go back on your plighted word.

Students! You have participated in many games. Prizes are awarded to winners in sports. But do not aspire for prizes given by others. Seek the reward of self-satisfaction. You must have the feeling, "I did my duty". Duty is God; work is worship.

Today, the wardens approached me and said that Swami should distribute prizes to the winners in the sports events. At the outset, I did not agree to distribute. A prize is called *bahumathi*. The meaning of *bahumathi* is "multi-minded". When a single mind can play so many monkey tricks, what is the result of bestowing many minds? There is a saying that a bachelor is equal to a hundred monkeys. I do not like to confer prizes that unsettle the minds of the students.

What is the prize that should be awarded to the students? You are good! You are good! That is the award that you should

earn from Swami. Many prize-winning students look forward to getting prostration at Swami's feet (*padanamaskar*) when they receive prizes from Swami. Yesterday, I allowed all students to offer *padanamaskar* because they were willing to forgo receiving the prizes. It is their spirit of sacrifice that has enabled them to get this benediction from Bhagavan.

From self-confidence to self-realization

A spiritual edifice is built on the foundation of self-confidence. The walls are made up of self-satisfaction. Self-sacrifice is the roof. Self-Realization is fulfillment in life.

Students! Fill your minds and hearts with these sacred spiritual truths and go out into the world to spread the spiritual message in every street and every alley.

The world today is in utter confusion. Unrest and fear stalk the world. To eliminate this disorder and fear, you have to instill devotion among the people.

Today, the world lacks righteousness and spirituality. People are immersed in materialism and worldliness. They are after power and pelf. This is utterly wrong. Money comes and goes. Morality comes and grows. You may carry on your vocational duties. But along with it, render social service. See the divine in the people whom you serve.

Even an agnostic occasionally invokes the name of God. For instance, on one occasion, Jawaharlal Nehru was visiting the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai. During the worship of the Goddess, Nehru noticed a large emerald adorning the idol. He asked about the value of the emerald. He was interested in the value of the gem. But the devotees in the sanctum were meditating on the divine form of the Goddess. They were concerned about Divinity. Nehru looked at the idol from a worldly point of view. When he was informed that the ornament was worth several lakhs, spontaneously he exclaimed: "My God!" What

made him think of God? Because God is in everyone. When expressing surprise at something one exclaims: "Oh! My God!" In this manner, people give expression to the Divinity within them unconsciously.

A lesson to the Pandavas

Doubts about God may sometimes arise even among staunch believers. This may be illustrated from an incident in the Mahabharata. Once, while the Pandavas were in exile in the forest, Krishna visited them. Krishna was told that the five brothers took turns during the night to keep a vigil over the activities of evil spirits and demons. One night, an evil spirit appeared before the Pandava brothers, and they had great difficulty in fighting it. In view of this, Dharmaja, the eldest of the Pandavas, tried to dissuade Krishna from participating in sentry duty. Krishna, however, insisted on taking his share.

During that period no evil spirit appeared. Then came Arjuna's turn, and Krishna watched the scene from a distance. To Arjuna's surprise, no evil spirit appeared while Krishna was there. Krishna then explained to Arjuna that evil spirits were only a reflection of one's hatred and fear, and when one is free from these, no evil spirit would appear or do any harm. Krishna revealed that the Divine existed even in so-called evil spirits and that if a person gets rid of the evil qualities within him, the evil spirits can do no harm. One's anger assumes the form of a demon. If you develop love, everything you confront will have the form of love. This was the lesson Krishna taught the Pandavas.

Students should eschew bad qualities like anger, hatred, and envy. By manifesting love, they will enjoy bliss.

"Follow your dharma"

The essential message of the *Gita* is: Follow your *dharma*. Do your duty without expectation of its fruits. If you are a householder, perform your duties as a householder. Whatever your stage in life, act according to the duties appropriate to that stage. If everyone does his duty, there is nothing greater in life.

But there is one duty that is common to all stages: the duty dictated by the heart (*hridaya-dharma*). Fill your hearts with love. Through this you can accomplish anything. Start the day with Love, Fill the day with Love, End the day with Love —this is the way to God.

I am presenting a silver cup to each campus of the Institute. Accept it as my love offering to every student individually. Everyone should develop a sense of oneness with all. The world today suffers from divisiveness. Students should go out into the world and promote the sense of human unity. That will be the offering you can make to Me.

You are all my property. And I am yours. Let us share each other's love. That is the true path of devotion. Ritualistic worship is not the true mark of devotion. The essence of devotion is the feeling of identification with God.

During the recent Unity Cup Cricket Match, a cricketer of repute observed, "I don't do any work on my own. Whatever I do, I regard as Swami's work. Because I did Swami's work, my work was taken care of by Swami. I did not attend to my work. After coming here, I received a telegram to the effect: "Your task has been accomplished successfully." He then announced that, "while I attended to Swami's work, Swami carried out my work."

Likewise, if you do Swami's work, your work will be taken care of by Me. Dedicate every action to the Divine. The response will be equally divine. This has been described as "di-

vine vibration”. That vibration will sustain and support your life.

Take up social service in the villages after you go back to your homes. That is the way to make use of your studies and put Swami’s teachings into practice. Instill in the villages devotion to God. Practise what you preach. This is true service.

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A mirror, though clean, may not reflect your image if there is no mercury coating behind it. So also the heart may be pure, but there should be a coating of love behind it to facilitate reflection of God.

—Baba