

15. The Perishable and the Imperishable

It is difficult to understand properly and fully the multifaceted Indian culture which, in some ways, is the source of all the religions of the world. Many people have tried to explain the uniqueness of Indian culture, but they were able to explain or express only what little they could comprehend with their limited knowledge. They were not able to portray satisfactorily and fully the spirit of Indian culture. Indian culture is born of intuitive wisdom. It is not connected with futile things such as the objects of the material world. Indian culture can be compared to the *kalpa vriksha*, the tree that gives all one wants. Approaching it with reverence, and in the spirit of earnest enquiry alone, will enable you to comprehend it.

It will be deplorable if we, having been born as Indians, calling ourselves Indians and esteemed by others as sons of India, are not able to understand the inner meaning and the real significance of Indian culture. Just as the elephant does not know its own strength, so we Indians today have become unaware of our own strength. Indians have become weak by imitation and by running after wrong traditions. They are not able to follow and tread the true path. When we have gold in our Indian scriptures, why hanker after other base materials and superficial values? What is found in the *Mahabharatha* may be found in all other religions and scriptures, but what is not found in the *Mahabharatha* cannot be found anywhere else. We generally find the cheap preparations of our neighbours much more tasteful than the rich delicacies made in our own homes. This trend is more prevalent among modern students. We must try to revitalise and resuscitate Indian culture, Indian *dharma* and Indian religion. The present educational system is not at all giving the right and proper direction. This is the main reason for the decadence among students. Students should not be content with reading only their textbooks. They should also read books written by great men of

wisdom. Reading such scriptures whenever they get time is also a kind of *sadhana*. This is wanting among the students, primarily because of lack of acquaintance with our sacred scriptures like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharatha*, and the *Bhagavatha*.

There was a good Queen by name Meenavati. She had a son by name Gopichand. When Gopichand was a boy of ten years, the maids were giving him an oil bath scented with perfumes, making him sit on a stool and telling him various worldly things. Meenavati saw this through the doors of her apartments. Seeing them whiling away time in futile talks and pleasantries, she felt sorry. She came to the place where Gopichand was being bathed and stood there with tears flowing from her eyes. The son asked, “Mother, why are you crying?” She was silent. The son again asked for the reason. The mother said, “The only thing left of your grandfather, forefathers, and your father, who enjoyed all these physical pleasures, is one handful of ash; we do not see them any more; at least you should be wise and try to enjoy the eternal bliss of the *jiva* instead of enjoying these worldly pleasures connected with the body. The great Harishchandra who always spoke the truth—did he not die and leave this world? Could Nala, who ruled the entire earth, take a portion of the earth with him? Did Mandhata, who was a gem among kings, take away treasures with him? Does Rama, who built the *sethu* or bridge across the ocean, remain on the earth now? No one has taken these earthly treasures or achievements with him. Do you hope to take this kingdom and pleasures with you? We must experience only the eternal bliss with the *jiva* and not the worldly things. We must perform good actions with the body and must have good promptings by the mind. It is only such things that please God and draw forth His Grace.”

Whatever things we do with this body, we are leading to a rebirth of this body. Any actions, good or bad, can be compared to seeds. In order not to sow such seeds, we should do all actions without desire. All actions should be done, in and only for the pleasure of God. If you sweep a place, think that you are doing that for

cleaning the heart, the shrine of God. When you help or harm others, think that you are doing it to yourselves. Then you will never let yourself harm anyone else.

Students must forget two things. Firstly, you must forget whatever help you have done to others. Secondly, you must forget whatever harm others have done to you. Because, when you remember the harm done by others to you, you always plan to take revenge. When you do not remember this, you will not do any harm. If you remember the help rendered by you to someone, you will be looking forward to the reward. On the contrary, there are two things that you must always remember. One is that God is One, and the other that death is One. In whatever manner you may look at them, these two are the eternal truths. If you do not want to go to a marriage, you can cancel the engagement. Similarly, if you do not want to go to a cinema, you can postpone it for the next day. But the last journey, the journey to your death, can neither be cancelled nor postponed. We make preparations when we want to go for a marriage or a cinema. What preparations are we making for the final journey?

There are three friends for us in this world. You may yourself determine who is important of the three. The Kauravas thought they had the support of great warriors like Karna and great teachers like Drona. They never depended on themselves. Depending on the strength of these people, they harassed the Pandavas. In the same way, thinking that we have these three friends with us, we behave in a reckless manner. On account of this recklessness, we are doing many improper and wrong things. When we do something we are not supposed to do, we are liable to punishment. Sometimes we are dragged to the court to receive the punishment. Generally, we go to the first friend to win the court case. We ask him to be a witness. He says, "I will sit at home and give evidence but I will not come to the court." Thinking that this friend is not the right one, we go to the second friend and ask him to be a witness and help. This friend says, "I will come up to the court, but not inside." Then we go to the third friend and that friend says, "I will come wherever you want me to

come. Even if you go to jail, I will come along with you.” Of these three, the true friend, of course, is only the third one.

We have kept two friends for this life. The first one is wealth and the second one is the relative. Meritorious deeds that we perform constitute the third friend. When we die and ask our friends to accompany us, the first friend, namely, wealth, will say, “No, I will stay at home, I am not going to come with you.” When the dead body is taken to the burial ground, the wealth stocked does not follow the body. The second friend, the relative, says, “I will come only up to the court—only up to the burial ground. From there you should go on your own.” But the good deeds that you do go with you. They go with you inside the court to bear witness. They accompany you beyond the cremation ground. Therefore, the good deeds alone that you do with a pure heart will be your true escort and not your wealth or your relatives. The reason why great men preach that we perform good deeds and lead a pure life is because the good deeds alone will be our ultimate succour. They are the only things that protect us, even as the eyelids protect the eyes.

King Harischandra, who gave his life for truth, became a guard at the burial ground. He saw the body of a wealthy man being brought in a big decorated carriage to the cremation ground. They put the body on the pyre, lit the fire, and went away. The only person left was Harischandra. He watched it for a while. While the body was burning, when the fire touched the *sushumna nadi*, the body started rising up. To prevent this happening, usually a heavy wooden piece is put on the stomach. When life in the *sushumna nadi* evaporates and leaves the body, the body again falls back. Harischandra began musing on the rising and sinking back of the body. He wondered whether the corpse got up to see if any of his beloved relatives are around and seeing that no one was there, slept again.

Imagining that this world, which is full of *maya*, is paramount and permanent, we develop attachments to wife and son. But finally, neither wife nor son will follow us. As long as there is life in the body, we feel every one and every thing is ours. When life has

ebbed out of the body, we cast it into fire without any consideration whatsoever. What sort of relationship we have with this body is to be thought over and enquired into; wealth is so dear to us that we worry lest we lose it or part with it. After putting the body in fire, the relatives think only of the insurance policies he had and whether he had left enough property for them or not. Therefore, there is no relationship between this body of yours and any one else. Whatever deeds you do with the body relate to the body only and not to the *jiva*.

Here is a small example to illustrate the relationship between the body and the *jiva*. When we go on a good tar road, our shadow falls on dirt that is in the side drain. Even if you go on a beautiful road, the shadow may fall on dirty things. But the dirt does not cling to the shadow. You must try to tread the right path, but should not fall in the dirt along with the shadow. You must learn to do good things with the body; you should contemplate about good things with your mind. Cultivate good thoughts and perform good deeds. Sometimes, people ask: Yes, we should learn to love everyone, but what should be done if the other party hates us in spite of our loving them so much? Why should you be bothered whether others reciprocate your love or not? Your duty is to see that you do not swerve from the right path. If you also hate, how can you claim that you are still good? You must also endeavour to see that others act in the same manner. If you want to delve deep and experience true love, you leave all bodily considerations, cultivate the *Atma drishti*. Then you will have the right vision. The same *Atma* exists in all. You should see everyone with *Atma drishti*, but not differentiate them by looking at attributes such as height, weight, and status. I will give an example with myself as the basis: I love everyone—I love even those who do not love me. I do not ask whether they are loving me or not. We must see whether our love is pure or not. Hatred has no place at all in me. People who do not want me also come to me when need arises and bend before me.

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