

17. Seek Work, Worship And Wisdom, Avoid Wealth, Wine And Woman

ఠెత్త మనశ్శల భావయ నిర్లం
శాసితే సుఖతొకః సత్తం
ప్రతిభాపి నన బాలాం బాతః
సర్వత్రైయా ఏహి వా శాతః.

ననమి కీదమ కావశా నత్రమ
త్రాదు శాన సుఖతొకమ సత్తమ
కాదుకుకైన స్వయా సజు శా? భవకుమ
నడ తొదికె యొల్లకల కెప్పుడు.

Wealth must always be regarded as potentially harmful. That you can never derive even a little happiness from it, is an unquestionable truth. A wealthy person sometimes becomes afraid, even of his own

son. This is what always happens in this world.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

Man is respected because of his good qualities and not because of his material possessions. It is in this context that Samuthi, the youngest disciple of Sankara, gave this particular verse. Normally man gets so entangled with the world that he mistakenly hopes to derive peace from it. He forgets that he has to pay attention to the four *Purusharthas* namely *Dharma*, *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire) and *Moksha* (liberation). *Artha* and *Kama* will attain their correct significance if we regard *Dharma* as our primary basis and *Moksha* as our final destination. These days we forget the basis and the destination and retain only that which is in the middle and all our life is spent in thinking of *Artha* and *Kama*. By neglecting the foundation, that is *Dharma* and the goal, that is *Moksha*, we are concentrating only on *Artha* and *Kama*. In fact, we should put *Dharma* and *Artha* together and *Kama* and *Moksha* together. By doing so, we shall use wealth for good purposes and desire only to attain *Moksha*.

This country depends on four *mathas* or mothers. They are the *Bhoo Matha* or the earth, the *Veda Matha* or the *Vedas*, the *Deha Matha* or the people, the *Go Matha* or the cow. These four *mathas* are like the four

pillars of our country. These four pillars can also be referred to as *sathya* (truth), *dharma*, *shanthi* (peace) and *prema* (love). These four cardinal principles are such that with *sathya* or truth, you have to safeguard the world; with *dharma*, you have to safeguard the Vedas; with *santhi* or peace, you have to look after the *Go Matha* or the cow; with *prema* or love, you have to look after the people or your fellow human beings. We should regard truth and right conduct as the two eyes of our country. It is only when our motherland, our great mother, has these two eyes, *sathya* and *dharma*, she can look after the country and care for her children. If however, by our behaviour we make her blind and remove these two eyes, how can she look after her children?

What is being referred to as righteousness must be promoted in our country with a full mind. We should also help people to put it into practice. When we look at poor, helpless, or weak people, we should be prepared to give them help with all our strength and effort. The reason for adopting such an attitude is that all human beings are brothers and are children of one mother—the universal Divine mother. Therefore, we must develop this feeling of brotherhood and try to help everyone.

As a result of wealth, man is changing into a demon. Possession of money makes one very proud. When one has wealth, he is not inclined to follow the righteous path. He will also lose his capacity to distinguish right from wrong. This has been described by poet

Vemana by saying that if your wealth increases, then you will be arrogant; and when your arrogance increases, your bad qualities will increase. He goes on further to say that if your wealth diminishes, your arrogance also diminishes and along with this, your bad qualities will also disappear. This does not apply to all people.

We know, as a matter of common knowledge that there are wealthy people who with their wealth do many good things. In our country, there are many sacred places. There are places of pilgrimage where people go and have a holy bath. There are places where there are temples. There are places where poor people are fed. Many of these have been established by rich people. In this country which has acquired such a sacred reputation, everyone should make good use of his wealth. Such was the clarion call given by the disciples of Sankara in the verse which I am explaining to you today.

Before realising the need for equal-mindedness, Ramakrishna Paramahansa was attaching importance to things like wealth and position. On one occasion, with a view to test Ramakrishna, a disciple by name Narendra or Vivekananda kept gold coins under the bed of Ramakrishna. Immediately Ramakrishna got up because he felt as if his body was burning. The inner meaning of this story is that Ramakrishna was still seeing the distinction between gold on the one hand and mud on the other and so on. It means that he had not got over these differences. At that moment he was still

distinguishing one thing from another, but later Ramakrishna held mud in one hand and gold in the other and kept on exchanging them until he lost the sense of distinction between them. He had then realised the equality or the oneness in them.

While it is quite possible for such realised people to make no distinction between things of value and no value, for other common people who have to carry on their daily lives and who have responsibilities of the family, there has to be a distinction between gold and mud. They cannot treat them alike in daily life. But, the inner meaning is that in one's mind, there should not be any distinction. By the possession of wealth, some people will develop some crooked ideas in their mind.

Those of you who are students of history will understand this. Queen Victoria was ruling over the British Empire for a long time. She had a son who was rather impatient at the long period of rule by his mother as he, himself, wanted to sit on the throne. In an open meeting, he went and asked the queen when she would die so that he might occupy the throne. She at once found that this man was very ambitious and ordered that he be put in prison. Even if he is a son, the desire for money and position made him greedy and as a result, he had no respect for his mother.

There is a small story in our *Upanishads* which tells us how the possession of wealth will change the

qualities of some people. A mother, who had a lot of money, had only one son. The boy had lost his father early in life. As the boy grew older and older, he developed bad habits because of his wealth. He got into bad company and did things which he should not have done. In fact, he looked like a mad fellow. He was wasting his life. The world is such that if there is a large quantity of water in a tank, many frogs come and gather in that tank. But once the tank is dried up, all the frogs will disappear and they will not even tell you where they are going. In the same manner, many friends will gather round you as long as you have wealth; and the moment this wealth disappears, the friends will also disappear without telling you. In this manner, the son of that wealthy person gathered a large number of bad friends and in course of time this had crossed all acceptable limits. Many people, as some of you know, spend their time in this manner and waste it without any purpose.

The son used to come to the mother, day after day and demand large sums of money, with the result that the mother's affection towards the boy began diminishing and she developed a positive hatred towards the boy. The mother was feeling sorry; and as days went on, the respect for the mother in the boy also completely disappeared. The boy lost all attachment to the mother. She thought that it is much better that such a son who brings down the honour and reputation of the parents dies rather than lives, and therefore she worked out a plan one day. At the same

time, the son had his own plan as he thought the mother was coming in his way of fulfilling his desires and using the wealth. He therefore thought that it is better that such a mother dies rather than lives.

One day the son was to kill his mother with an iron rod as the mother came to serve him food. On the same day the mother decided to kill the son by poisoning his food. When the mother came to serve him food, the son hit her with the iron rod and killed her. A few minutes later, the boy also died after eating the poisoned food. So, both mother and son died and this is what their wealth had done to them. Because of the wealth, the mother had lost affection for the son and the son had lost affection for the mother. Is wealth intended to bring such bad results?

We should never regard wealth as the most important thing in our life. We should regard *dharma* as the most important thing in our life. We should thereby earn the grace of God. You should have money which is enough to meet your essential requirements. Anything more than that should be used for charity and such other good things.

Today, we do see many situations amongst the students by which they get spoilt by possessing excess of money. In the first instance, it may look very difficult to get on with minimum amount of money; but if they can control their desire for money, they will be very happy and peaceful thereafter. When students are really

in need of ten rupees, they prepare themselves to ask for twenty rupees. In that context, when the children ask for twenty rupees, the parents should give only ten rupees. This is very essential. The son may feel hurt if he gets only ten rupees when he asks for twenty rupees. Even though he feels hurt momentarily, he will get strength later on. If he is given twenty rupees when he actually needs only ten, he will get bad friends and spend that money on them.

There is a small story which is significant in this context. On a Saturday, a father was engaged in worshipping the Lord and he called his son and told him to get some plantains for one rupee. This son was a good boy and he went and purchased the plantains, but on the way he saw a mother and son standing on the road; they were very hungry. When the hungry boy saw the plantains, he ran towards them. The hungry mother, who saw the boy running, ran after him and caught him; but both of them collapsed of hunger. When this young man found these people suffering so much from hunger, he thought that it was much better to feed these hungry people than take the bananas home. He gave the bananas to this mother and son and later brought water and gave it to them. These people were so relieved of their hunger and thirst that they expressed their gratitude in many different ways and shed tears of joy.

This young student went home empty handed. When the father asked him if he had brought the bananas,

he replied in the affirmative. When asked where the bananas were, the son replied that the bananas which he brought were sacred, will not rot, and cannot be seen. The son explained that he fed two hungry souls with the bananas; and the fruits which he brought home are only the sacred fruits of action.

The father then felt that his son was worthy of him and felt that all his prayers had been answered that day. He thought that his life was very sacred as he had such a good son. The father developed great affection for the son from that day and they came much closer to each other. Such a closeness between father and son is very rare today. If you can develop such a feeling, you can develop your country into a *Thyaga Bhoomi* and a *Yoga Bhoomi* and build up great traditions.

If we ask ourselves what kind of relationship should exist between children and parents in our country, I have to tell you another story. A mother, father and son had been coming by foot from a long distance. On the way, the father died as he did not have sufficient food. The mother, along with the eight-year-old son, started earning her food by begging from door to door in one of the big cities. On the day when she got sufficient food, she used to give food first to her eight-year-old son. If something was left, she ate. Otherwise she denied herself food and remained hungry. In this manner, as time went on, she was not getting sufficient food, and what she could gather was sufficient only for the son. She was

herself starving and because of this, she developed an incurable disease. In this process she became so weak that she could not even get up and walk. The eight-year-old son touched her feet and requested permission to go and beg for food, so that he may collect food for both of them. In our country, no mother will permit her son to go and beg for food. That is the heart of an Indian mother. But when this boy came and asked for permission to go and beg, it was inescapable and she reluctantly agreed that the boy may go and beg for food. The boy used to first feed the mother and if anything was left, he used to eat. If nothing was left, he used to tell a lie to his mother that he had already eaten his food. In this manner, he was spending the days. As time went on, the boy became very weak and sick.

One day he went to the house of an officer for begging. The officer was sitting in his veranda and reading a newspaper. The boy's voice was very feeble, and with a feeble voice he asked for alms. The officer found that the boy was very weak and hungry and offered to serve him food in a leaf rather than give him alms, and the officer went inside. By the time he came out with food on a leaf, the boy had collapsed and was murmuring feebly that the food may be sent to his mother. So saying, he gave up his life. Our country, which had experienced such affection between mother and son—an affection running through our blood—is today witnessing a sorrowful situation. Things have

become so bad that one dare not think of what the situation actually is.

Divyatma Swarupas!

We have the saying “*Mathru devo bhava, Pithru devo bhava.*” You must remember that the mother and father are divine and each of them is like the God. You must put these sacred ideas into practice in your life. In India, the most sacred thing is respect for one's mother and father, who have not only given their blood in giving birth to us but also starved themselves on many occasions to give us what we need. If you respect your parents today, your children will respect you in future. If in future, you want to enjoy happiness, pleasure and bliss, even now you must be good, do good and see good. This is the way to God. Do not forget God and do not fear death. You should, in this manner be a heroic son of your country. Our wealth is the wealth of righteousness, knowledge and wisdom. That is the reason why Arjuna was called Dhananjaya. This name does not refer to ordinary wealth. This simply means that he had the wealth of wisdom in an abundant measure. Arjuna had several other titles which described his great qualities.

There are three words of which we have to take note. All the three words begin with the letter “W.” They are work, worship and wisdom. Work here stands for sacred work which one should do for promoting the

prosperity of the country. You should always do good work. You should worship with a pure mind. Wisdom is superior knowledge and you should aspire to acquire knowledge with wisdom. These are the three things which will enable you to lead a proper life. There are three other words, all of which also begin with the letter “W” and you must avoid them. They are wealth, women and wine. They will, if one is after them, take you to the barbarous depths of human living. You should avoid them.

Students!

Some of you must take to this sacred path. Like the disciples of Sankara who had proclaimed the importance of truth, those of you who follow this path will be able to resurrect Indian culture and will enjoy bliss and happiness. I bless that you may realise such a state of bliss.