

21. Dharma Will Always Protect Those Who Adhere To Dharma

With empty words, one can never experience bliss and happiness. Without planting the seed, no one can reap a harvest from land.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

The universe, willed by Easwara, is the embodiment of *Ananda*. *Prakruthi* or Nature, Easwara and *Brahman* appear to be different, but their oneness can be recognised by the *rasa* (sweetness) prevalent in all of them. These have been divided up for the purpose of understanding. They have been given the names *Mukti Dhama*, *Vaikunta Dhama*, and *Goloka Dhama*. These three correspond respectively to *Moksha*

or liberation, *Bhakthi* or devotion and *Jnana* or wisdom.

Mukti Dhama is the name given to the path wherein one enquires about the various forms and names visible in creation, which being impermanent, leads one to realise that *Sath-chith-ananda*, that is, *Nirakara* or the God without name or form, is the essence of Reality. In this way, one reaches the aspect of *yoga* and through *yoga* one attains *mukti*. This path is, therefore, called the Mukti Dhama.

On the other hand, when one surrenders one's ego to the Lord, thinks of Him and Him alone at all times, he would be following the path of devotion and this is named Vaikunta Dhama.

If one develops noble ideas in all the three states, namely the gross, the subtle and the causal, and enjoys continued bliss recognising the oneness of everything and developing fully the feeling of his identity with the *Brahman*, he will be following the path named Goloka Dhama.

Man's nature is such that it keeps on changing from moment to moment. The changing mind veils the true nature of his own self. Due to this ignorance, he sees duality in this world, and begins to relish change. For example, even if one is a good singer, if he goes on singing the same song with the same tone all the time, it will cease to be attractive. A song, though not visible to the eye, consists of several different pleasing sounds. Each tune has a particular form and name. Man always desires

to enjoy different tunes in their different forms and names.

Although the world is only one, because it is mixed with various qualities or *gunas*, it exhibits itself through different sensory perceptions such as sound, touch, sight, taste and smell. In the same manner, although the *jiva* is only one, because of its previous *Samskaras* or accumulated impressions, it unknowingly dons various names and forms.

We mistakenly believe that what is seen is truth and what is not seen is untruth. The unseen aspect, in fact, constitutes the basis for what we see. For example, there are fruits, leaves and branches in a big tree that we see. The basis for all these has been the seed and the roots that we do not see. All the mansions that we see have for their base the foundations under the ground which are invisible to us. For man's happiness and good appearance or for his misery and ugliness, the mind and its behaviour are responsible.

What we see outwardly as a man and all the qualities he exhibits depend ultimately on what we do not see and that is his mind. If a horse, which is intended to pull a carriage, is made to sit in the carriage, can it pull the carriage? Just as this horse cannot pull the carriage if it sits in the carriage, so also the Divine principle in our body, which is intended to pull the body along the path of life, cannot do so if it does not disengage itself from the body. Just because one sits in

a car, he does not himself become the car. He can at best become one who drives the car. The self that is in the human body cannot lead the body, so long as it is under the illusion that it is identical with the body. It is only by throwing away this illusory feeling and becoming disengaged from the body that the self can gain control over the situation.

In order to enable you to disengage yourself from these bodily aspects and lead you along the right path, the *Bhagavad Gita* has given us several lessons. I have been asked a question today, by a young student amongst you, in regard to what Krishna had said in the *Gita* about human beings giving up their bodies and taking up new bodies as they are reborn, in the same manner as one would abandon an old and torn shirt and take up a new and good shirt when it becomes necessary. He stated that to him, this seems appropriate in the case of aged persons who have developed several bodily infirmities and asked how we can reconcile this in respect of young people whose bodies are still quite fresh and able.

Students!

God's sayings are very difficult to understand, their meaning can be perceived only with wisdom. Only such individuals who have deep faith in God and who are knowledgeable about the ways of God can unravel these matters. What is like an old shirt or a new shirt can be understood only if we look at it in the proper perspective. I wish to explain this to you in some detail.

You go to Kashmir in summer and find that woollen cloth is available there at a low price. You buy it, bring it with you, leave it in your box and forget about it. After four or five years you find it in your box while rearranging things. You are reminded about it, call a tailor, and get a suit made out of it. Wearing that suit, you attend a marriage function. While sitting for a meal, the trouser gets torn and you ask yourself in amazement how a new trouser could get torn so soon. No doubt it is a new trouser, but the cloth is quite old. In the same manner, your body may be young, but the nature and age of the *jiva* may be quite old.

Another student asked a question relating to the propriety of what Dharmaraja had done when he announced that Aswathama had died. While doing so, Dharmaraja added in a low tone that an elephant of that name had died. No doubt Dharmaraja created the impression that young Aswathama had died, and to that extent he misled the listeners. Was this right and justifiable? In this case, we have to remember that in actual fact, on that day, an elephant bearing the name Aswathama had died; and this had been pronounced by Dharmaraja in a low tone. It is also true that Lord Krishna had prompted Dharmaraja to make the announcement in that manner with the intention of weakening the warrior Dronacharya by playing on his attachment to his son, Aswathama. Krishna convinced Dharmaraja that he would not be speaking an untruth if he announced the death of the elephant, in a low tone. Dharmaraja as

such merely obeyed the Lord. If Dronacharya could not hear the word elephant, it was his fault and not that of Dharmaraja.

The war was over. They were all resting in a tent. Dharmaraja who was feeling sorry, went and begged of Krishna to let him know why He ordered him to conduct himself in a manner not consistent with his name and reputation. Krishna said that He never does anything which is not just and which is not right nor will He ask His devotees to do so. Whatever He does has some meaning and reason.

To explain this, He gave a good example. If a thief enters your house during night and steals some valuable things and escapes along a narrow path which may be thorny and if you want to catch him, you have to pursue him along the same narrow path. You cannot hope to catch the thief by going on the royal road because it is wider and free from thorns. To catch a thief, you have to follow the path which he, himself, takes for his escape. In the same manner, Dronacharya, a Brahmin, a *guru* who is well versed in all the *Sastras* and the principles of right conduct, and whose right place is where learning is imparted, has, in violation of all traditional duties, comes to the battlefield. This is the first wrong committed by him. Moreover, he has undertaken to fight with Pandavas who are his own disciples. This is the second wrong committed by him. I have come to this world to re-establish *dharma*. In order

to triumph over *adharma*, I had to chase Dronacharya in the same path which he himself had chosen for breaking the rules of *dharma*.

You may get another doubt in this situation. Having described the conduct of Dronacharya, who has undertaken to fight with his own disciples as wrong, should we not regard the decision of the Pandavas to fight against their own teacher, Dronacharya, as wrong? This cannot be the fault of the Pandavas. From the very beginning the Pandavas were following the dictates of the Lord. They were sticking to the path of *dharma*. Even after the armies on both sides ranged themselves on the field in a battle array and while each one was sounding his appropriate battle cry, Dharmaraja set aside his battle dress, his weapons and walked bare footed to his *guru*. As he was thus walking up, the Kauravas thought that he was coming to surrender and were exulting in the feeling that the Pandavas were defeated. Not only that, Dharmaraja's brothers too were very upset. However, knowing the promptings of Dharmaraja, Krishna suggested that all the brothers should follow the eldest brother, as they had done all their life. While they were surprised at this conduct of their brother, they did not wish to disobey the Lord. They also set aside their armour and weapons and accompanied Dharmaraja, bare footed.

They all first walked up to Bhishma and addressed him thus: "You are our grandfather and have been our father ever since our father died. You brought us up with

great affection. We have to fight against you. Please grant the permission.” Bhishma was so moved by the *Dharmic* conduct of Dharmaraja that he readily blessed them, granting them the permission they sought.

Thereafter, they walked up to their *guru*, Dronacharya and addressed him thus: “You have been our *guru*. While Aswathama is a son born to you, we have also been your sons, as we have been brought up by you. However, due to circumstances, we have to fight against you. Please grant us the permission.” The *guru*’s heart melted immediately. He embraced Dharmaraja and said, “Whoever protects *dharma* will in turn be protected by *dharma*. So, I bless you. Victory shall be yours because of your observing *dharmic* rules in so meticulous a manner.” The Pandavas’ observance of the principles of correct behaviour, just before the war was to commence, was a highly commendable feature of their lives. Therefore, it is abundantly clear that the Pandavas did not deliberately mislead Dronacharya.

Students!

The stories that you read in the *Puranas* may occasionally raise doubts in your mind. Do not get confused, be sure that there is no act of God which has no purpose. You must have the faith that these stories and incidents in our sacred texts like the *Bhagavatha* and the *Bhagavad Gita* are intended to establish and uphold *dharma*. Even God, while doing work relating

to the good of man, has to adopt at times plans not easily understood by us. His desire to protect the devotees on one hand, to uphold truth and right conduct on the other, drive Him to do things which seem confusing to us on an apparent assessment.

There is another example where God had done something, seemingly un-understandable, to protect His devotees. It was the last day of the war of Mahabharatha. All the Kauravas had perished. The only exception was Duryodhana. Even as he was approaching his end, he asked his friend, Aswathama, to do something that will give him courage and solace. Aswathama assured him and took the vow that before the day dawns, he would kill all the Pandavas and bring that news to Duryodhana, thus causing him mental satisfaction. Aswathama went to the temple of Kali and prayed to her for strength. Kali, with an unseen voice, told Aswathama that Pandavas being *dharmic* people, their own right conduct will protect them and that no one can kill them. Nevertheless Aswathama insisted on pursuing his determination and extracted the blessing of Kali only in general terms and set out on his task.

Knowing about the promise given by Aswathama to Duryodhana, Krishna decided to save the Pandavas and went to Durvasa. The sage Durvasa welcomed Lord Krishna. Krishna said that he had some work to be done and said that Durvasa was to undertake the task.

Durvasa was overjoyed, and readily agreed to do what the Lord would ask him to do with one condition, namely, that he would not tell an untruth. Krishna said that He will never ask him to tell an untruth. He will only ask him to tell the truth but follow his guidance.

Krishna conveyed the vow of Aswathama to Durvasa and asked him to protect the Pandavas for the night. He was to dig a pit, make the Pandavas sit in the pit, put a plank over it, and himself be seated over the plank. If Aswathama came, as he would in a few hours time, and enquire about the whereabouts of the Pandavas, Durvasa was to state the truth but with emphasis on certain words. Durvasa agreed. Aswathama searched all over for Pandavas, could not find them and came along to Durvasa in the hope that this great saint, who knows everything, would be able to tell him where the Pandavas were. He praised Durvasa for his divine knowledge and asked him where the Pandavas were hiding. Durvasa remembered what Krishna had told him, pretended anger and shouted “Pandavas! They are hiding under my feet!” Aswathama was afraid of Durvasa getting into further rage and took his remark as expressing only his disgust and walked away. Thus the Lord could protect His devotees and Durvasa did not have to tell an untruth.

With a view to strengthen your faith in our *Puranas* and *Sastras*, I have given you the answers today to two chosen questions. Until you are able to develop such faith and gain the necessary strength with which

you can unravel the inner meanings of the many stories that are contained in our sacred texts, you should follow your elders. That will put you on the right path. I will bring this discourse to a close and take up further questions in the following days.