

3. Dharma Never Declines. It Is The Practice Of Dharma That Declines

Do you know why this life has been given to you? It is not for searching for food all through nor for eking out a livelihood, but it is to enable you to search and search for God.

Pavitratma Swarupas,

The moment we hear the word Bharath, the name of our country, the Himalayas come to our mind. For centuries in the past, the essential and the great principles of Hinduism were symbolised in truth and *ahimsa*. These two great principles of truth and *ahimsa* are also symbolised in the silvery mountains of the Himalayas. These lofty mountains are the places where great men and great saints have performed their *thapas* (austerities

and sense control). Those mountains appear to us as the symbols of purity attained through truth and through *dharma*. When we look at those mountains, we get the feeling that those silvery mountains are lost in the meditation of Madhava. In those mountains, where the *rishis* (sages) had performed their *thapas*, lies the origin of Ganges, the sacred river. Ganges is the flowing symbol of Hinduism. Ganges also symbolises what flows through the blood vessels of our country from its spiritual heart. We have to compare the blood vessels and the arteries of Bharath and of its citizens to the flow of the sacred Ganges. The moment we hear the name of Ganges, we are reminded of the two banks thereof on which are the centres of pilgrimage, and on which lie the great places of learning. We visualise, when we think of Ganges, the great spiritual centres like Benares, Prayag, Rishikesh, and Hardwar.

In the same manner, as in this analogy of Ganges, we should also recognise the great pilgrim centres of our mind which lie on either side of the blood vessels. Our own intelligence and *Anthahkarana* (inner consciousness) are the great pilgrim centres of our body. It is customary that in these sacred places of pilgrimage, sacred tasks are performed; and as a consequence thereof, sacred ideas are generated. In the inner body, alongside the life flow of blood, our mind,

our *Chitta* (mind), our *Anthahkarana*, etc., can all be recognised as places where good ideas can be generated.

The fact that Ganges flows in our country has itself got a spiritual significance. The moment we hear about the name of our country, Bharath, we are reminded of the great epic the *Mahabharatha*. The hero of this epic is Lord Krishna. However, the great deeds of Lord Krishna are being pictured in a distorted fashion, and one gets the feeling that we are forgetting the true nature and true character of Lord Krishna. Krishna is one who had mixed with the *gopis* (cowherd maids) and *gopikas* (cowherds) as water mixes with milk. He moved intimately with *gopis* and *gopikas*.

In order to recognise the sacred truth behind the actions of Krishna, we should realise that in the great battle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, he took Arjuna to the centre of the battlefield and has taught the philosophy of *Karma* or the path of work to Arjuna and to us in the world at large, through the ears of Arjuna. It is said in this context that Dhritharashtra asked a question and described the battlefield as *Dharmakshetra* (Field of virtue)—*Kurukshetra* (Field of action.) Dhritharashtra asked a question according to which he wondered about the name Kurukshetra. We should understand the hidden meaning and significance

of this question. The question says “*Mamaka*”—that is, those people to whom I am bound down by attachment and Pandavas who are known for their *sathwic* (pure) qualities—what is it that these two groups are doing in the battlefield of Dharmakshetra? We have to understand here that Dhritharashtra, in his ignorance, asked a question which really means, from an inner significance point of view, what are the *thamo* (slothful) and *rajo* (passionate) *gunas* (qualities), represented by the Kauravas, doing in the battlefield with the Pandavas who represent *sathwic gunas*. His ignorance was about what these *thamo* and *rajo gunas* were doing in the battlefield of his heart along with the *sathwic gunas*.

In this context, to limit this battle between these qualities to a period of eighteen days is not correct. This battle between the *thamo* and *rajo gunas* on the one hand and the *sathwic gunas* on the other hand, is continually being waged, for all time, in the body which is the Dharmakshetra, in Kurukshetra which symbolises the sensory organs. This continuous battle is always going on and when the battle is on, Lord Krishna in the form of *atma* or the witnessing consciousness is a witness of this battle all the time. Krishna here should be understood as the very essence of *Mahabharatha* come in the human form. This Krishna symbolises the inner consciousness, the unseen *atma* of Hinduism.

With a view to propound this aspect of the cult of Krishna in an ordinarily understood language to the people of the world, to the people in the political, in the cultural, and social spheres, Krishna, the Lord, has come in the ordinary human form.

When we think of the situation in the world today, we see that it is a very diverse and a complicated situation. We are trying to create a new society in the name of socialism wanting to make all human beings come to the same level and wanting all human beings to be exactly the same in regard to their food, requirements, wealth, etc. We are regarding this as socialism, but truly this aspect cannot be called socialism. There is no support in our history or in our traditions to call this socialism. Today, we may be ready and in a position to distribute the wealth and property and to distribute the houses equally among all human beings, but we are not in a position to distribute the totality of desires of all humanity equally between all human beings.

Only when all the human beings have the same desires, can we say this. In fact, all the material wealth, earthly possessions, etc., will be distributed automatically if the desires of all human beings are the same. The process of equitable distribution between all

people from the worker to the agriculturist, really started with the French revolution. With this original concept as the starting point, the feeling has arisen that, with every individual, there must be a position of authority. It has given rise to desires, and the feeling grew that authority and power should not be concentrated in the hands of a few people, but that it should be distributed equally among all men. Gradually this concept underwent several changes; and when it took a distorted form, it acquired the name of Communism.

During both these revolutions, the ideas that gave birth to them are indeed good and sacred and are worth accepting; but in practice, the original concept and the ideals got distorted. As a result of this, the revolutions were unsatisfactory.

These basic ideas of giving equal opportunity and of distributing wealth equally amongst all human beings are being regarded as something new and novel, but this is not correct. Fifty centuries ago, Krishna, in fact, did these very same things and started these ideals. This historic figure, whom we call Krishna, really established the root of what we, today, call the new society of Bharath. This great figure in our history brought the worker, the agriculturist, and the educated person to the same level and exposed the political

hypocrisy which the rulers of the country showed even at that time; and brought them to understand these concepts well. He ruled like an uncrowned king. From ancient times, we have had the sacred idea of referring to Krishna as Gopala. In the word *Gopala*, we have traditionally come to regard *Go* as representing a cow or an animal. This is not correct. In the historic times, everything that gave us prosperity and happiness we regarded as *Go*. We now regard *Go* as meaning an animal; but in reality whoever looks after the happiness of humanity and provides for the prosperity of humanity should be regarded as Gopala.

In those days, Krishna propagated the view that what gives prosperity to the world is the Cow. Man, today, is ignorant and is unable to recognise what is true wealth and what gives true prosperity to humanity. We are now in an unfortunate position of looking at currency notes and thinking that they constitute prosperity or wealth. Krishna pushed aside the foolish concept that these artificial printed notes constituted wealth. This is not wealth; and he regarded the cow which gives us milk as wealth, and this wealth was distributed equally among the people. Not only do we get milk, ghee, butter, curds, and other food material from the cow, but from the cow emanate the cattle; and we use these for purposes of agriculture. We generate

all the food that we need from the cow and the cattle. When we talk about the harvest and the milk and the curds, these are in two different categories. The requirements of humanity are essentially of two kinds. One is the milk and related products and the other is the agricultural harvest. These were distributed between the two brothers. Gopala looked after the milk and other related products and the cows; and Balarama, symbolised by the plough, looked after the agriculture and the various products that come through agriculture. Truly the prosperity of the human race depends on the harvest and the milk and milk products. These requirements of the people do not drop from the sky nor do they generate out of the earth of their own accord. They must come through the cattle and the land.

Balarama and Krishna were examples who showed that they do not care about their own physical strength and that they would sacrifice everything. They were willing to do hard work and showed through hard work that prosperity can be achieved by sincere hard work. The Lord Krishna was all-knowing, all-powerful, and divinity incarnate, and yet he worked as a charioteer for Arjuna. Krishna was one who recognised the importance of service to the community; and by his own practice and by setting an example to others, he

showed that service to others was important. After the battle of *Mahabharatha*, these were the people who took the horses to the river, washed them and tended their wounds and applied medicines. They thereby demonstrated that hard work and compassion to all living beings constitute the duty of all human beings. These two people set such an example in those days.

If we hear of Krishna or Balarama, we immediately think that they were just ordinary sons of either Yasoda or Devaki. This kind of feeling is on an ordinary human level. But if we look at the root meaning of the name Krishna, we understand that “One who is an object of attraction to everyone is Krishna.” There is another meaning for this and we can say *Karshayateethi Krishna*. According to this, Krishna is one who ploughs the field. Of course, we must realise that the field that Krishna ploughs is the field of your heart. By this ploughing of your heart, he produces the fruits of peace and distributes them amongst the human beings. Krishna symbolises the great person who planted the seeds of peace in the hearts of the people, and he distributed the fruits of peace among human beings. Such is the ideal picture of Krishna which we should form in our mind. He used to talk to great people and tell them that this represents the thinking of the great sages of this country, Bharath. There is another aspect to this. He made a

sacred determination that he would bring peace and happiness to all human beings by setting an example. He was unmindful of the obstacles that came his way and was always showing a happy and blissful life. Such was the life of Krishna.

He had the nature by which he radiated happiness, irrespective of whether he was in a battlefield, or a cremation ground, or in a peaceful place. This was a great quality of his. This is the reason why even in the midst of a battlefield, he taught the *Gita* to Arjuna. *Gita* means and stands for a song. We sing only in our happy moments, but Krishna was singing even in a battlefield and was radiating happiness. He was permanently in bliss and he was permanently happy. This is the reason why he was also called *Sath-chith-ananda* (Being awareness bliss).

As a human being, the divine power that was present in him can be seen more in the *Mahabharatha* than in the *Bhagavatha*. In a story of *Bhagavatha*, he was simply showing some childlike *leelas* (Divine sport), but in the *Mahabharatha* he exhibited a unique combination of human nature and divine nature. In order to proclaim and establish *dharma* from time to time, he himself stated in the *Gita* that he will come again and again. It has been said that he will appear

and reappear every time that *dharma* declines. He appears in order to save the good people and punish the bad people and re-establish declining *dharma*.

Here we should understand what *dharma* is. If *dharma* is destructible, then why should the embodiment of *dharma*, God, reappear to establish *dharma*. If *dharma* can disappear like all other destructible things, then it will not be *dharma* at all. *Dharma* is not something which can be destroyed or weakened. If *dharma* is not destructible, then where is the question of *dharma sthapana* (establishment of *dharma*)? We should interpret this as the establishment of the practice of *dharma* and not the establishment of *dharma* itself. What is declining is the practice of *dharma*, but not *dharma*. When we look in the traditional way, we see that *dharma* in the earliest times, in the *Kritha Yuga*, was on all four legs, and we believe that later in the *Thretha Yuga*, *dharma* was standing only on the three legs. Still later in the *Dwapara Yuga*, it was only on two legs; and it is believed that in the *Kali Yuga* it is standing only on one leg.

We are also learning from our *Puranas* and sacred texts that *dharma* was declining in the *Kritha Yuga* and that Rama came to save *dharma* and re-establish *dharma* in the *Thretha Yuga*. But if Rama re-established *dharma*

in the *Thretha Yuga*, what is the meaning of saying that *dharma* had only three legs in *Thretha Yuga*? Once again, as *dharma* was declining, we believe that Krishna came in the *Dwapara Yuga* to re-establish *dharma*, and yet we believe that in *Dwapara Yuga*, *dharma* stood on two legs only. What is the meaning in saying that one leg has disappeared in the *Dwapara Yuga* in spite of Krishna coming to save it. Krishna came in the *Dwapara Yuga* and came for the purpose of re-establishing *dharma* and yet we say that in the *Kali Yuga*, *dharma* has only one leg. If this is so, what is the great thing that Krishna has done in *Dwapara Yuga* for the protection of *dharma*? These legs have to be interpreted as relating to the practice of *dharma*.

These *Avatars* never come to re-establish *dharma*—*dharma* was never destroyed—but the practice of *dharma* went on decline. In the *Kali Yuga*, only one way of practising *dharma* remained and that is *Namasmarana* (Remembering God through the Name), and hence we say that there is only one leg in the *Kali Yuga*. When man is born, he is born on two legs. After a few months he walks on four legs. After a few more months he gets back to the use of two legs. When he gets old, he walks on three legs as he uses a stick. All these legs cannot be called legs. They are simply supports to enable him to move his body in the daily

life and do his duty. They are instruments which enable him to fulfil his life. So also, as *Yugas* went on, in order that *dharma* might be practised by people, various methods have been introduced, and these methods have, from time to time, been described as legs which enable him to carry on in his life.

The basis for *dharma* is truth and truth is something which is permanent and so *dharma* is also something which is unchangeable. Today some people give a meaning to *dharma* which is different from the original meaning. But at the time when Krishna lived, he was explaining the meaning of *dharma* in a different way. Today we want to interpret *dharma* by saying that such and such a person is entitled to be happy, and such and such a person is entitled to all comforts. Today's question is why should a wealthy person alone enjoy life? Why should a rich man alone enjoy the pleasures of life? Why should not a poor man also be given wealth? The wealth should be distributed equally between the poor and the rich people. These questions constitute what we call socialism of today.

In today's socialism, we find a hidden and concealed intent of wanting to provide prosperity to only a certain kind of people, and not wanting the same prosperity for another category of people. But the

embodiment of *dharma* in the human form of Krishna was one who desired the well-being of the entire humanity. The true interpretation of *dharma* is to ask for the well-being of the entire human community in the universe. In this context, you may begin to argue that Krishna himself behaved as if he wanted to like some people and favour some people and dislike other people. But the situations were such that Krishna, who was all-knowing, had to make the determination of taking a certain line of action. We should look back and see what Krishna said when Arjuna, in a state of great despondency, refused to go to battle against his own kinsmen, kill them, see their blood and yet become a ruler. Krishna told Arjuna, "I am giving the future of Dhritharashtra and his family. Listen to it. He has one hundred sons but they are all selfish. There is no place for selfishness in this world, and all these must be killed. Even though Dhritharashtra had one hundred sons, there will not be even a single son left to perform the obsequies for him when he dies. Good or bad, *punya* or *papa* are not something which others will give you. These are simply direct results of whatever actions we perform." What Krishna said and agreed to was that under such circumstances, to fight a battle was the right kind of *dharma*. The reason for this is that these people were born to destroy such a nice family. For this process of destruction, the one, who is born of

a slave, has become the help. And in order to add fuel to this fire, there was Sakuni. The battle that was going to come up, the fire that was about to rage was something that cannot be stopped. If you want to save the world and the destruction thereof by this fire, battle cannot be avoided. You have to accept the power of the battle and of the arrows. The fire of *adharma* has spread and taken possession so much that if you want to remove this fire, the only way that can be done is to have a heavy rain and not just ordinary drops of shower. Also this rain must be the rain of arrows. Krishna believed that the battle and this shower of arrows was necessary to stop the fire of *adharma* engulfing the whole world.

The youth of today may get a doubt. Krishna wanted the peace of this world and yet he encouraged this big battle in which forty lakhs of people were killed. Is this called *himsa* (violence) or *ahimsa* (non-violence)? Even then, Krishna gave an appropriate answer to this. He said, “Arjuna! Let us take the case of a cancerous growth on the body. This cancerous growth gives pain to the whole human body, although the growth itself is confined to a localised area. In that cancer, you have so many small germs present in the wound. When the doctor performs an operation on this cancerous growth, he will no doubt kill millions of

germs. He will not think that he is going to kill a million germs and therefore stop the operation. If he does not perform the operation, the germs will be saved but the patient will suffer. He will surely kill the disease-causing germs and save the patient.” Krishna further said, “In this body of the world this is the situation now. The cancer has come in the form of the Kauravas who are ruling. The whole world has got upset, and a state of anarchy is prevailing in the world now. There is also a decline of *dharma*. All families who are living peacefully are being broken up. Therefore, I will be the doctor, with Arjuna as the compounder. I will perform the operation of cancer in the form of the battle of *Mahabharatha*. In this battle or the operation, 40,00,000 (four million) of disease-causing germs will be killed for the benefit of the world. Is this bad or is this good for the world?”

We can also look at this from another angle and we will see that all kinds of attachments and relationships are only bodily relationships. God is present in everyone and some people suffer because of their past actions while the others will not suffer because of the good actions done by them. In this context, we cannot decide what is right and what is wrong. Right and wrong depend on the actions. One body gets relationships with another body because of the bodily

relationship, but there is no such relationship between one *atma* and another *atma*. There is only one *atma* in every human body.

In our body there are several organs. Although the body is composed of so many organs, if one of the organs gets sick and has to be separated, we will be prepared to cut it away and remove it. In the same way, if we recognise that the very ancient *jiva* (individual soul) who has entered this body, taking it as a temporary residence; and if a portion gets diseased, there is nothing wrong in cutting away and removing the diseased part of the body. Here Krishna is only demonstrating his authority.

It is a very difficult matter to recognise and accept authority. There is a small example for this. In a hospital you may find a very proficient and capable doctor. He may be a very reputed person in his field. He comes to a decision that for a particular person an operation has to be performed at a particular time the next morning. This will be notified in the notice board and all concerned relatives will be informed. There is no secret about this. Everybody will know about this and the patient will be carried into the operation room. The doctor takes him into the operation room and performs the operation; but due to some misfortune, the patient

dies. As a result of this, the police will not come and arrest the doctor. In the same context, if two people enter into a quarrel and one of them inflicts a small wound on the other man with a razor blade, the police will immediately come and register a case and arrest the man who has caused the injury. In the second example, the person does not have the authority to inflict a wound with a razor blade while in the first case, the doctor has the right to perform the operation, even in public.

Sometimes we interpret and call one of these as a help or a good deed while the other one is called a harm. We take the case of a diabetic patient with a wound on his hand. The wound may not heal and may spread to the whole body in the form of gangrene. The doctor will have to come and say that to prevent further spreading of this, the hand will have to be removed. He will then amputate the whole hand, and this is a good deed done to the body.

In another case, if there is a lady who is wearing bangles on her hand, a thief may come and decide to take away the bangles by cutting the hand and taking away the hand with the bangles. While the thief and the doctor have both done the same thing, what the thief has done is harm and what the doctor has done is good.

When there is a young child who unknowingly sets fire to a house, we think that he has done great harm and we begin to punish him. However, when Hanuman burnt down the whole of Lanka, which was as prosperous as heaven itself, we not only did not punish him but we regard him as a sacred person. The reason for this is that in the first case something good was burnt down while in the second case what Hanuman burnt down was the sin itself. He caused injury to the demons and the Rakshasas while the small boy caused injury to good people.

Thus, in order to remove or promote the demoniac qualities in us, we have the complete right and power. It is in the context of recognising these various conflicting situations, in order to preach the inner meaning of these conflicting situations, Krishna gives various instances which will proclaim to us what good things are. Krishna was a selfless person, and he always desired the well-being of the human community. In that context, whatever he may have done, was always good, and there was never anything bad in what he did. He himself conquered many kingdoms, but he never became a king of any of these kingdoms. He gave those kingdoms to several people. Whatever he may have done, there was always an inner meaning. All his actions were directed towards preaching an inner meaning.

To take another instance, the battle went on for eighteen days, the Kauravas were defeated and the Pandavas were victorious. In the victory, Krishna was the charioteer and Arjuna was in the chariot. After the victory, they came back to their mansion. Arjuna was in the nature of a human being and there was a little remnant of ego in him. As is the common practice even today, the driver of a car is expected to come and open the door of the car when the owner will get down from the car. In the same way, on that day also, when the chariot came and stood in front of his house, he insisted on Krishna getting down first and opening the door. Krishna did not agree to this; and, in fact, in somewhat strong language, he admonished Arjuna, asked him to get down first and go inside. Not recognising the inner significance of what has been given to him as a command, Arjuna still indulged in an argument with Krishna. Arjuna thought that in the battle, victory was on their side because of Krishna; and he was afraid that some danger might come to him if he enters into an argument with Krishna; and so somewhat reluctantly, he finally accepted what Krishna has said. As soon as Arjuna got out and no sooner did Arjuna go inside, Krishna, in one leap, jumped out of the chariot. As soon as Krishna jumped out, the entire chariot was in flames. All the Pandavas who were witnessing this were surprised and asked Krishna why the chariot had

burnt away like that. Then Krishna explained that during the battle, very powerful weapons were sent by heroes like Karna, Bhishma, and others and all these weapons were subdued and kept under his feet. If he had not got down first, the weapons would have exploded, killing Arjuna and the others. Krishna explained that this was the reason for asking Arjuna to jump out first and his jumping out later.

In order to save his devotees, God plans so many different actions in several different ways. Devotees, not being able to recognise and understand the inner meaning of such actions, misunderstand and think that God is giving them unnecessary difficulties. Man has only external vision. God has inner vision. *Paramatma* is always caring for the well-being and good of his people. Whatever he does, he does it for the well-being of his devotees. Even if a son, who has been brought up very carefully by the mother, makes a mistake, the mother will punish the son by giving a slap. When we see this, we feel that a mother who has brought up the son with such care, love, and tenderness is harsh in beating the child; but the mother who beats the child does so with affection. In the same manner—God, the universal father, will punish his devotees, when need be with *prema* and with love. Just as a consequence of that, we should not get the idea that God is wanting to

punish people. God is always full of grace. He never gets angry. However, at times He uses words which are harsh, but He is not harsh. It is only the words that are harsh, His heart is soft like *Amritha* (Divine nectar).

We must first acquire competence to understand the kind of love and tenderness which God entertains towards His devotees. Pleasure comes out of pain. We should recognise that all pain will ultimately end in pleasure. Because the Pandavas were in the jungles for twelve years and were hiding themselves unrecognised for another year, the people had an opportunity to see their divine qualities.

Because of the many obstacles and troubles that came to Prahlada, and because of the punishments that were given to him, it was possible for the rest of the world to know how great Prahlada's devotion was. Prahlada never had tears in his eyes and he never exhibited any pain when the Rakshasas were harming him. He was only uttering the name of the Lord and was asking the Lord to come to him. Because of such a situation, he was able to promote devotion and show others what real faith and devotion can do. On the other hand, had Prahlada been looked after by his father with care and tenderness and if he took him in his lap, how would Prahlada's devotion and faith be known to the rest of the world?

So all the pains and difficulties that we get will ultimately turn out as means of getting happiness and pleasure. Even a quality diamond does not get its value unless we cut the facets on it. Even pure gold will not be turned into a beautiful ornament unless it is repeatedly beaten hard and put into fire. In all pains and troubles, we should recognise only paths for getting ultimate happiness. So we should be prepared to accept pain. To seek pleasure alone and not to welcome pain is not right. This sacred content of the *Mahabharatha* and the sacred teachings of Krishna regarding the conduct of devotees and other aspects will be given to you from tomorrow. I hope that the students will listen, understand, and benefit by this story of the *Mahabharatha*. I will bring this discourse to a close now.