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“Sraddhavan Labhate Jnanam”

You might have read many books. You might have studied all the Sastras in their entirety. You might have mastered the most difficult subjects. You will naturally feel proud of your profound knowledge of all the branches of learning. Bu, all your immense erudition will be useless if you do not bring your palms together to worship Paramatma. Your learning will be of no use if you have no devotion. O man! Your worldly education is an exercise in total futility.

Embodiments of Love!

A *dhyatmika dharma*, or the *dharma* of spirituality, has become static and stagnant. It should be revived, galvanised, and given a new

dynamism. Our young students should play a pivotal role in the renaissance of the perennial philosophy of spirituality.

From the point of view of Indian spirituality, we do not go from falsehood to truth or from unreality to reality. Truth cannot be derived or deduced from falsehood. Spirituality is the hierarchy of reality. We have to ascend from a lower level of reality to a higher level of reality. Absolute truth is the highest level of spiritual reality.

Indians have inherited the *dharma* of spirituality from times immemorial. But it is not confined to our country only. It is universal, eclectic, and catholic. All human beings have the right to imbibe from this fountain of spirituality. It is our misfortune that we have not recognised our own spiritual heritage. Spirituality is not the monopoly of any particular country. It is like the wind which cannot be confined to a particular place. Let the winds of spirituality blow all over the world.

The common man is enslaved by his *gunas* or attributes. He should transcend the *gunas* and transform himself into a divine being. He should undergo a spiritual metamorphosis, as it were. The spiritualisation or divinisation of man is the ultimate goal of the *Gita*. We can revive and revitalise the eternal verities and values of our ancient culture by establishing a completely sanctified society. Human society has always been a conglomeration of various classes. The word

“society” has become a misnomer. A true society is a community of selfless individuals. An ideal society must have a scale of values and a code of morality which should be applicable to all individuals. There is no scope for the efflorescence of *dharma* in a society dominated by absolute selfishness and predatory competition. A society contaminated by *adharma* or immorality will corrupt the entire country.

Man is not an island unto himself. A gregarious creature, he lives as an integral part of society. He cannot also exist without *Easwara*. A spiritualised world and a divinised society should be established for the transformation of man into a divine being.

Krishna exhorted Arjuna to strive for the establishment of a theocentric world. “People have different aims and aspirations. They follow different paths for winning My Grace. I guide them along their chosen paths and fulfil their wishes and lead them to their different goals in life”, said Krishna revealing His Divinity to Arjuna.

There are three words which connote obeisance in varying degrees, namely, *paata*, *nipaata*, and *pranipaata*. *Paata* means falling down. *Nipaata* means a slight fall. *Pranipaata* means a total fall. In other words, *paata* signifies the paying of obeisance by bowing down, *nipaata* indicates the touching of the Lotus Feet of the Lord with one’s head, and *pranipaata* connotes complete prostration at the Lord’s Feet—

Sashtanga namaskaram. This is symbolic ritual exemplifying *saranagati thathwa*, the essence of total self-surrender. This indicates the annihilation of the ego. Obliteration of all traces of egoism is the aim of *pranipaata*.

The vision of the inner *Atma* will not be revealed to the spiritual aspirant as long as his ego continues to exist. It is only when egoism is given up that the inner significance of *dharma* will be comprehended in its totality.

Sraddha is earnestness, perseverance, determination, and steadfastness. *Sraddha* alone is not enough. *Sraddha* should be strengthened by *nissamsaya* or absence of doubt or scepticism. *Sraddha* and *nissamsaya* are the two banks of the stream of life. In other words, spiritual advancement cannot be achieved without persistence and faith.

Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswathi are the three sacred rivers of our country. They have their source in the Himalayas and flow down to join the vast ocean. They are swift-flowing rivers with strong embankments. If they have no embankments, they will devastate the entire country. A river must have banks to restrict its flowing water. A man’s life is like a stream, whose two banks are *Sraddha* and *Nissamsaya*. Flowing between these two banks of *sraddha* and *nissamsaya*, a man’s life stream mingles with the vast ocean of *anugraha* or Divine Grace. Perseverance and faith constitute the life-breath of man. Humanity cannot exist even for a moment

without perseverance and faith. They are the two wheels of the chariot of a man's life which should proceed towards the unfathomable ocean of God's Boundless Grace.

God is worshipped by four kinds of devotees; *aartha*, *artharthi*, *jijnasu*, and *jnani*. God loves all of them. He grants them boons appropriate to their thoughts and attributes.

An *aartha* prays to God in times of distress. He prays for relief from the difficulties, troubles, trials and tribulations of the world. God gives him mundane happiness by removing his sorrow and sickness. With the cessation of his sadness, the relation between the *aartha* and God also comes to an end.

An *artharthi* is a devotee who prays to God for power, pelf, and prosperity. He becomes an egoist as soon as his wishes are fulfilled. If his ambitions are not fulfilled, he blames God for His indifference to the welfare of mankind. When an *artharthi*'s prayers are not answered, he becomes an angry agnostic.

A *jijnasu* wants to understand the enigma of God and to solve the riddle of the universe. He is an enquirer, an explorer and an investigator. His aim is to unravel the mystery of existence with the aid of his limited intellect. This is a painful intellectual endeavour foredoomed to failure. When all his efforts fail he also becomes a disinterested man filled with indifference and

apathy. But if a *jijnasu* remains undaunted by failures and persists in his enquiries with a single-track mind, he will also win God's Boundless Grace.

A *jnani* is the only individual who has reached the summit of spirituality. He has attained the acme of wisdom. He alone can reach and know God. It does not, however, mean that the others cannot know God. They, too, can realise God if they dedicate all their actions to God in a spirit of self-abnegation. Killing of the lower self is more important than memorising all the scriptures.

This is the easiest path to God-realisation. Every act should be treated as a sacrament. Meditation, yoga, and rites and rituals are no longer essential to the *jnani*. His life and his actions are dedicated to God in complete self-surrender. He remains unattached to the fruits of his actions.

A *guru* is a spiritual preceptor. He transmits wisdom to his disciple. His duty ends here. It is the disciple's duty to receive and respond to his master's spiritual wisdom. He must put into practice what he has learnt. A *guru* is like a guidepost on the highway. He shows the path to the disciple. A signpost indicates the road to be followed but does not indicate anything about the ups and downs and the pitfalls on the road. It is the traveller's duty to beware of all pitfalls and obstacles on the road. Similarly, a *guru* is only a guide. The disciple has to find for himself all the obstacles on the

mountain path of spirituality. He must personally experience all the vicissitudes of the spiritual life.

Failure to experience the inner self is the main reason for not understanding the true significance of the *Gita* and its relevance to everyday life. There are very few people who have had a really authentic experience. The *pancha bhuthas*, or the five elements, the *pancha kosas*, or the five sheaths, and the *pancha pranas*, or the five life-breaths should be regarded as sacred manifestations of God.

“*Nimitta maatram bhava savyasachi*. Arjuna, you are only instrumental in the propagation of My Message. You are just an instrument in My Hands,” proclaimed Krishna to Arjuna.

Even *swadharma* is tainted with the *gunas*. Man’s life is motivated by the instinct of self-satisfaction. But self-satisfaction is a concomitant of spiritual dissatisfaction. Man always thinks of his selfish interests in whatever he does. This self-satisfaction involves the embodied soul or the ego. That is why it is necessary to transcend or kill the lower self.

The four *varnas* or castes are based on the *gunas* or the primordial attributes of *prakruthi* or nature. In the human body, the head, the shoulders, the thighs and the feet depend on one another. The head stands for the *brahmin*, the shoulders for the *kshatriya*, the thighs for the *vaisya*, and the feet for the *sudra*.

A *Vedic* pundit has three sons. The first son is a farmer, the second son a soldier, and third son a merchant. Thus, in the same family, the vocations of the father and his three sons are determined by their attributes and actions. All of them belong to the *Vedic* scholar’s family. They live together and depend on one another. In the same manner, people of all castes must live together harmoniously discharging their respective duties. They must all work together for the welfare and prosperity of the country. The essence of the message of the *Gita* is the coexistence of all castes in a spirit of harmony and mutual welfare.

Why do you touch the feet of elders? You do not do *namaskar* to their face or shoulders. It is obvious that the feet are very sacred. By touching the feet of holy men, you can attain *Paramatma*. It is a mistake to extol the head and denigrate the feet.

The human mind is activated into a dynamic equilibrium by the three *gunas* of *sathwa*, *rajas*, and *thamas* (equanimity, energy, and inertia). These *gunas* are the motivating forces whose source is *Easwara* who is not only transcendental but also immanent and ubiquitous.