

31

“Sathyam Vada Dharmam Chara”

The trees give shelter to all, irrespective of caste and creed, and proclaim that all men are equal. The plants teach us not to be overfond of the body; and the birds, that are content with the food they get for the day, tell us not to worry about the morrow. In their death, too, the birds give us a lesson about the transience of the world. Mother Nature exhorts us to discard attachment to ourselves and our earthly possessions. Verily, Nature is the school where man, taught by the greatest sadguru, God, can acquire divine wisdom.

Embodiments of Love!

Economic and social welfare programmes promote material well-being and are no doubt necessary in this world. For the spiritual well-being and divinization of man, however, character and

morality are of paramount importance. Spirituality is the life-breath for all human beings. Indian culture has been based on spirituality and ethical values. To recognise the great significance of our ancient culture and hoary traditions and adapt them to meet the needs of the present age, is our primary duty. Indian culture and traditions have stood the test of time. These time-honoured traditions bring great felicity in our practical life.

A system of education that does not take into cognizance the high ideals of spirituality and our ancient culture cannot really promote social harmony. It is precisely because of the conspicuous absence of spiritual and moral values in our present-day education that we are witness to social turmoil and the degeneration of the human personality. Modern man has mastered science and technology, but has thereby become the servant of mammon. He gloats over his apparent success in harnessing nuclear energy, yet, he lives as a moral dwarf.

Culture is the life-blood of a community. It is the backbone of a country. The *rishis* of yore, who attained freedom from selfishness and rose above worldly desires, illuminating society with the lambent light of their spirituality, bear testimony to the sanctity of our culture. Our culture has been giving us sacred norms of behaviour that are best honoured by being put into practice in our daily lives.

The sacred relationship between the *guru* (teacher) and the *sishya* (pupil) has been idealised in Bharath as in no other country. It has come down to us over the aeons as a cherished tradition. The words of the preceptor, at the time the pupils left the *gurukulam* (school in which *sishyas* live with their *guru*, serving him and learning from him) for their homes, were vibrant with meaning. “Worship your mother and father as God. Regard your teacher as God and receive your guest as God Himself”, (*Mathru Devo bhavah, Pithru Devo bhavah, Acharya Devo bhavah, Athithi Devo bhavah*), the *guru* would say.

“*Sathyam vada, Dharmam chara*” (speak the truth and practise *dharmam*). This is also one of the important aphorisms enunciated by the ancient *gurus* of India. It emphasises the importance of *sathya* and *dharmam*. *Sathya* is the eternal, absolute and unchanging truth. *Dharmam* is often translated as righteousness, but it is much more than that. *Dharmam* is a power-packed term epitomising an entire philosophy and a way of life. It is the *summum bonum* of Indian ethics. A *sishya* or disciple, is one who has grasped the content of *sathya* and *dharmam* by constant *sadhana* or spiritual practice. *Sathya* and *dharmam* sum up the code of conduct and scale of values explicated in the immortal scriptures of India.

If you want to grow paddy, you have to take a good deal of trouble. You have to plough the land and enrich it with manure and fertilisers. You have to use

good seeds for sowing. You must put up a fence around your land to protect the plants from men and cattle. You should also remove the weeds periodically and irrigate the land properly. You must take all these steps to grow paddy. But, for growing grass you need not make any special effort. Harmful weeds grow by themselves. In a similar manner, *adharma* or unrighteousness grows like poisonous weeds without any special effort. But the delicate plant of *dharma* or righteousness should be carefully tended and looked after for its survival among the wild and poisonous weeds of *adharma* or unrighteousness.

Special *sadhana* and concentrated efforts are essential for the establishment and protection of *dharma*. We should constantly remind ourselves of the sacred statement: “*Dharmo rakshati rakshitah*” (*Dharma* protects those who protect *dharma*). We should, however, also bear in mind a corollary of the foregoing statement: “*Dharma eva hatohanti*” (*Dharma* destroys those who try to destroy *dharma*). Thus, *dharma* is not only a metaphysical concept, but also a powerful moral force to be reckoned with. One who deviates from the path of *dharma* will have to pay a price for it in the long run.

Dharma protects the world (*Dharayateeti dharmaha*). *Dharma* is permanent and everlasting. The sun rises and sets causing day and night, we say. But in reality, the sun neither rises nor sets. The sun is always there, eternally effulgent. Similarly, *dharma* is eternal,

immutable and imperishable. In the *sloka* “*Yada yadahi dharmasya glanir bhavati Bharata..*”, the word *glani* is used in relation to *dharma*. *Glani* means attenuation, atrophy and decline. *Dharma* is never really subject to *glani* or decline. It is only the practice of *dharma* that suffers from *glani*. Bhagavan emerges as an *Avatar* for the revival of the practice of *dharma* and not for the protection, because it is eternal and absolute. It is only the practice of *dharma* that needs a renaissance.

The *Ramayana* proclaims, “*Ramo vigrahavan dharmah*” (Rama is the embodiment of *dharma*). As God Himself is *dharma*, the dereliction of *dharma* is tantamount to the neglect of God. We often worship God through a picture or an idol. Some may worship a tree as God. There are, however, some atheists, agnostics, rationalists and humanists, who adore *dharma* itself and treat it on a par with God. Such people cannot be regarded as atheists for their apparent atheism is really theism in disguise. *Dharma* is their God, and they worship *dharma* as God, who, in fact, is an embodiment of *dharma*. This deification of *dharma* is itself theism. On the other hand, there are many who pray to God but ignore *dharma* in practice. Such people are not really God-fearing theists.

There are many people in this world who profess to be theists, devotees, *yogis* and ascetics. But, it is doubtful how many of them have really understood the fact that *dharma* is the essence of divinity. A large

number of pious people go on a pilgrimage to visit sacred places and bathe in holy rivers. There is no use of going on pilgrimages, however, if character does not improve. Instead of wasting time and money in visiting holy places, people should try and purify their minds and apprehend the divinity that exists in humanity. The youth should also constantly remember that physical strength, money and popularity do not last forever. Strength of character is always superior to the power of self which is the most ephemeral thing in the world.

Vishwamitra did penance and acquired stupendous powers. Blinded by the powers of his austerities, Vishwamitra challenged Vasishta and suffered defeat and humiliation. The Kauravas who were terribly proud of their power and wealth, waged a war against the righteous Pandavas but were annihilated completely. Their dynasty came to an ignominious end, because they followed the path of *adharma* and fought against the virtuous Pandavas. Ravana also had acquired prodigious powers by doing penance. He, however, became tyrannical and immoral and ultimately destroyed himself. The *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharatha*, and the *Bhagavatha* contain stories of great heroes who died in tragic circumstances on account of their immoral behaviour and unrighteous conduct.

That is why every individual must grasp the meaning of *dharma* and follow the path of *dharma*. During youth, when a person is physically strong and

mentally alert, he should conquer the six vices of *kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (avarice), *moha* (attachment), *mada* (pride) and *matsarya* (envy). Above all, a young person should acquire self-confidence. Faith creates love. Love creates tolerance and compassion, and God reveals Himself to those with tolerance and compassion. Thus, faith in yourself is of primary importance. Students should be full of love and compassion, and thereby acquire great moral and spiritual strength.

The ideal of *dharma* should inspire students to participate in social service activities. They should become the harbingers of the renaissance of *dharma* in the modern world. They should put an end to the unrest in society and re-establish the *dharmic* order. This tremendous programme of moral rearmament should be regarded as a *Yajna*. It is a crusade against evil and injustice.

Young students who have assembled here are like cars damaged in the accidents of life. During this month these damaged cars have been properly serviced and fitted with suitable spare parts. They have also been newly painted. They will now go back to their places invigorated with noble ideals and sacred ideas. They should be guided in all their future activities by the three D's of "Devotion, Duty, and Discipline".

The cataract in a person's eyes does not come from the outside. It is a growth from the inside. A red-hot piece of burning wood or coal is covered by a layer of

embers. This layer of ashes does not come from the outside. The embers are produced by the burning wood itself. The moss growing in water covers the surface. The sun changes the water on earth into water vapour, which rises up into the sky forming clouds. Thus, the clouds formed by the sun cover the sun. Likewise, the ignorance which arises in man's mind clouds his discrimination and leads him to grief. The cataract in the eyes will have to be removed by a surgical operation. Wisdom is the surgical instrument that removes the malignant growth of ignorance. The weapon of wisdom enables the *sadhaka* to conquer ignorance and attain enlightenment. The attainment of spiritual enlightenment by the instrument of wisdom is known as *Vibhaga Yoga*, which is facilitated by constant practice and ceremonial ritual. Students should try and put into practice at least a few of the immortal aphorisms of the *Bhagavad Gita*, though they may not be able to follow the elaborate ritualism of the scriptures.

Selfishness is like a balloon filled with air. If you puncture the balloon, the air inside will combine with the air outside. When the ego is deflated, altruistic love takes its place. Love all and cultivate universal compassion. Love of oneself should evolve into divine love, which is the highest form of love. We should ascend from a lower state of love to a higher state of love, just as we ascend from a lower level of truth to a higher level of truth. It is only through altruism that you

can achieve divinity.

The help rendered by us to others as well as the harm done to us by others should be completely forgotten. Do not brood over the injuries inflicted on you. At the same time, do not expect either recognition or reward for services rendered by you. If you expect good results for your actions, you will have to be prepared for bad results also.

Clay and water are created by God. A potter uses clay and water for making pots. You are of divine origin and have inherited your personality, the totality of your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual characteristics from your father and mother. They are responsible for your birth and nurture. Therefore, adore them, make them happy and implicitly carry out their wishes. They love you regardless of your successes and failures in life. They love you in spite of your faults and foibles. Parental love is the purest and the most unselfish form of love. There is sanctity and purity in the love lavished by parents on their children.

Students should follow the example of a fish in water. A fish purifies water by removing all the impurities in it. Students should be active in society. They should not escape from social duties or civic obligations and should become responsible citizens. They must purge society of all its evils and become the architects of a new social order.

Young people should co-operate with one another in all noble endeavours. They should form associations for the promotion of social justice. You have lived together and taken part in social service programmes for nearly thirty days. This assembly of youngsters must strengthen these personal relations and renew them periodically. This congregation is not a fortuitous concourse of students. They have gathered here as a result of the merit acquired during their past lives. It is their great fortune that they should all have come together to take part in this Summer Course. With the hope that they will put into practice at least a few of the ideals they have been taught here, I bless them all for their material and spiritual well-being.