

PRACTICE AND PRECEPT

Dear Students!

The world in which we live is impermanent. Youth comes in the middle and goes in the middle. It is not a sign of the educated to gloat over their impetuous and turbulent youth. As for wealth, it is as momentary as the lightning. Wife and children join you midstream and leave you midstream in the river of life. Before marriage, who was the wife and who was the husband? So also, before birth, who was the mother and who was the child? Wife, children and other relatives are like the travellers who meet and depart overnight from a caravanserai. All these are transient. What then is permanent? Only two things: *dharma* (righteousness) and *keerthi* (fame). As the scriptures have declared: “*Yat drisyam tat nasyam* (whatever is visible is perishable). The entire manifested universe will be washed away by the river of time. The eye that sees and the world that is seen—both are short-lived.

Without developing the *jnana chakshu* (the eye of wisdom), if a man is content with the *charma chakshu* (the physical eye) only, he is no better than the birds and beasts. Human life is invaluable, purposeful, and worth experiencing and enjoying. For the fulfillment of such a precious and sacred human life, the acquisition of *Atma jnana* (Self-knowledge) is highly indispensable. The scriptures proclaim, on the one hand, that among all beings in the animal kingdom, it is a rare privilege to be born as a human being. They also declare on the other hand, that a man devoid of *jnana* is equal to a brute. The physical eyes of man can see only the gross external world but not the inner divinity, which is highly subtle. As a matter of fact, the physical eyes cannot even see all the gross things; for example, the eyes cannot see themselves without the aid of a mirror; they cannot see some parts of the very body to which they belong, for example the head and the back. So, when these physical eyes are incapable of seeing even the entire gross body to which they belong, how can they see the subtle mind? When they cannot see even the subtle mind, how can they see the *Atma*, which is the subtlest of all? Therefore, the physical eyes are helpful to man, only for carrying his mundane activities in the phenomenal world.

The eye of wisdom is highly essential to every man. *Jnana netram* (the eye of wisdom), *divya netram* (the divine eye), *Atma netram* (the eye of the Self), *Brahma netram* (the eye of Brahman) —all these names are synonymous. Only when you have the firm faith that all is Brahman (*Sarvam Brahman*), you will see the entire universe as Brahman. That is why the scriptures have exhorted: fill your vision (*dhristi*), with *jnana* (wisdom), and you will see the *srishti* (creation), filled with Brahman (The Supreme Absolute). The colour of the entire *Prakruthi* (Nature) depends upon the colour of the glasses through which the physical eyes look at it.

All things that are visible are subject to change. However, the substratum of all this changing phenomena is the changeless Divine Principle (Brahman), just as the stationary road supports the movement of the fast running buses and cars. Only if you recognise the changeless Divine Principle that supports the changing universe can you easily understand the entire secret of the universe. Your mind is the cause of your inability to understand the real nature of this world. The characteristic of the mind is *pravritthi*—external orientation. Man is wasting his life, night and day, for acquiring external things like houses, lands, vehicles, wealth and other so-called “properties” which, in fact, are not

“proper ties”. Is it for the sake of these trifles that man is born? No. No. No. To realise God is his foremost task in life. Man must realise God, feel God, see God and talk to God. This is realisation. This is religion. It serves no purpose if one knows everything else but does not know God.

A few minutes earlier, Anil Kumar spoke to you about botany. The flowers and fruits that we want from the tree and that are seen on the tree top depends on the unseen roots below the ground for their growth and development. So, in order to get a good harvest of flowers and fruits, we need to apply water and manure not to the visible flowers and fruit, but to the invisible roots, which alone can give them nourishment. Likewise it is the Divine Principle (*Atma Thathwa*) that serves as the root for the tree of this world. It is mentioned in the *Gita* that God is the seed of all beings. What is the significance of this statement? When you plant a seed in the soil, it germinates and in due course of time it grows into a big tree with several branches. Each branch puts forth many flowers, which develop into so many fruits. Each of these fruits will have a seed in it similar to the seed that gave rise to the tree. Thus from one seed, you have got hundreds of seeds of the same type.

Now, according to the *Gita*, God is the seed that has given rise to the tree of this vast universe. Each country is a branch of this tree. In each branch there are a number of fruits, namely, various kinds of living beings, each of which carries within it the seed of Divinity. It means that in every being, God is there in the form of the spirit or *Atma*. Students of today are not making effort to recognise this subtle truth behind the gross universe. They spend all their time for specialising in one of the subjects like physics, chemistry, zoology, botany, mathematics, commerce, etc. so that they may earn their livelihood, never giving any thought to the goal of life, which is more important than making a living.

According to one of the most important *mantras* in the *Veda*, immortality can be obtained only by *thyaga* (renunciation) but not by good action, progeny, or wealth. etc. But what exactly is renunciation? It does not mean giving up one's wife and children, or house and other properties. What actually is your bondage? It is the delusion of your identification with the body. You must give up the false idea that you are the body and imbibe the truth that you are the *Atma*. Only then *alone* can you achieve liberation (*moksha*). *Deha virakthi* (detachment from body consciousness) will free you from the grief of bondage, and *Daiva asakthi* (attachment of God) will give you the bliss of *moksha* and merger with God. How to get rid of *deha bhranthi* (body-consciousness)? Not by giving up food and drink, reducing the body to a skeleton, and courting death but by asserting with faith that “I am not the body. The body, the senses, the mind, and the intellect are all my instruments (*upadhis*).” You must give up your body consciousness, just as you remove your soiled clothes.

In the debate that took place the day before yesterday, it was argued that one has the freedom to eat when hungry and drink water when thirsty. But how can you call this freedom? You are forced to eat food to appease your hunger and drink water to quench your thirst. Here you are simply following the law of nature. There is no question of freedom in this. It is only bliss that is connected with freedom. How can you have that bliss? Can you get it from the body or the mind? Not at all. The bliss that you may derive through the body and mind is but momentary. You have not been born just for this kind of transient and trivial joys. You have yourself put on this human body to enjoy everlasting bliss.

All things happen according to the divine will (*Daiva sankalpam*). By your own effort you cannot achieve anything. The day before yesterday, I told you how, in several instances, men could not achieve things in spite of all their efforts and how success came seeking those who had not tried for it. It is only due to *ahamkara* that you wrongly appropriate to yourself both doership and enjoyership (*kartritwa* and *bhoktritwa*). You are the very embodiment of bliss. Bliss is your very nature. But it is a tragedy that you are unable to recognise it and experience it. This bliss is veiled by likes and dislikes, the sense of “I” and “mine”, hesitation and doubt, pleasure and displeasure etc. *Raga* and *dwesha* (attachment and hatred) are the thick clothes that shroud the bliss in you. When you get rid of attachment and hatred, you can discover your own real nature. How strange and foolish it is that despite yourself being the very embodiment of bliss, you are searching for bliss elsewhere! Although everything is within you, you are unfortunately running after petty desires and silly sensual pleasures in the phenomenal world. What is the reason for this mad race? Ignorance of the truth that you are yourself the source of all bliss.

Students! You know that the gigantic elephant with a giant’s strength meekly submits to the control of the puny driver holding the spur. Why? Because the elephant is ignorant of its own strength. Similarly, the black bumble bee can burrow holes into a very hard wooden beam, and go in and out of it. But the same bee enters into a tender and soft lotus flower, gets entrapped, and dies because it knows not its own strength. Likewise, man does not try to recognise his innate divinity, sacredness, and bliss. Leave alone his failure to try, what is still worse, he refuses to believe even when told about it. Students! If you put forth the required effort, you will definitely experience the truth of your own divinity and bliss. The musk-deer, not knowing that the musky fragrance emanates from its own navel, roams about restlessly all over the forest, in search of the source of that smell. At last it becomes very tired and lies down in the shade of a tree for taking rest. While lying down, it keeps its nose near its navel, and then recognises that the fragrance is coming out of its own navel. And now it says to itself, “Alas! what a great fool am I! Not knowing that I myself am the source of the fragrance, I was searching in vain all through the forest, putting myself to unnecessary trouble!” This is the nature of ignorance. This exactly is the plight of man too. *Nityanandam* (eternal Bliss), *Brahmanandam* (infinite Bliss), and *Adwaitanandam* (non-dual bliss) are the very nature and form of man. But, lured by the momentary sensuous worldly pleasures, man is unable to seek, to understand and to enjoy this supreme divine bliss. Unlike the so-called bliss derived from material things, the bliss of the *Atma* is never tainted by sorrow. If you fill up a vessel with *payasam*, a sweet made by boiling a cereal in milk with sugar, and then make several holes in the vessel, what comes out of any or all of these holes will be only the sweet *payasam*. Similar is the case with *Atmananda* (the bliss of the *Atma*), which manifests itself in various ways. That is why the sages have named the *Atma* as *Ananda* and described it variously as eternal bliss, supreme bliss, absolute bliss, bliss of wisdom, bliss transcending all the pairs of opposites, pure bliss, unshakeable bliss, bliss that is beyond the grasp of the mind, bliss which transcends the three *gunas*, and so on. When such priceless treasure of bliss is readily available within you, why should you foolishly run after this phenomenal world, which brings you trials and tribulations, sufferings and sorrow?

The treasuries and banks that contain huge sums of money are provided with the required safety and security measures—strong iron gates, steel chests, and huge locks, besides night and day watch by fully-armed watchmen. Likewise, the invaluable treasury of bliss is being constantly guarded by the highly poisonous serpent called *ahamkara*. But

what is the cause of this *ahamkara*? Is it wealth, strength, position, power, or learning? No, none of these. The root cause of *ahamkara* is *deha bhranthi* (mistaken identification of oneself with his body). As for the other things like wealth, position, power, etc., it must be clear to you that all the past history and the present happenings in the world, as well as the teachings of the *Gita* and scriptures, reveal that all these are highly transient. They do not follow you even up to the grave, not to speak of beyond the grave. What accompanies you even after death is the good or the bad done by you during your lifetime.

Students! Don't forget that "as you sow, so you reap." This is the inviolable Law of *Karma*, in which Indians have firm belief. Before entering into action, ask yourself thus: "I am the embodiment of the divine *Atma*; is it proper for me to engage myself in this mean, despicable action?" If you practise such self-restraint and self-discipline, you will be able to keep yourself away from evil and move closer and closer to the *Atma*. Make use of your talents and resources for the welfare of the world rather than for making quick money by resorting to treachery and corruption in pursuit of self-interest.

Patriotism—love for the land of one's birth—is extremely important. Once when Subhas Chandra Bose was a student of the Calcutta University, a British Lecturer spoke disparagingly about India and Indians. Young Subhas Chandra was upset by this but restrained himself from retaliation for quite some time. However, when he found the Lecturer exceeding the limits of decency and decorum, he could not contain himself any longer. He sprang to his feet, swiftly jumped across the benches and pouncing upon the Lecturer, thrashed him with his shoe. In a few minutes the news spread like wild fire throughout the University Campus. The authorities held an emergency meeting and passed orders debarring Subhas from the University for a period of five years. Thus Subhas sacrificed his education for the sake of upholding the honour of his motherland. Consequently his father sent Subhas to London for his higher studies. There, too, Subhas evinced his sense of patriotism. He had distinguished himself in his studies there and hence ever had good opportunities to stay back in London, had he been interested in his self-advancement. But prodded by his patriotic fervour, Subhas returned to India after passing I.C.S. (Indian Civil Service) examination with a high rank and entered politics instead of Government service. Students should follow his example and sacrifice their "*swartha*" (selfish interest) for *parartha* (the welfare of others) and attain *Paramartha* (the supreme goal of life).

Remember that *Bhagavad Gita*, *Bible*, *Koran*, *Granth Sahib*, and other holy scriptures are not intended for "*parayana*" (mere recitation). They are meant for *acharana* (practice). It is not a sign of *Bhakthi* (devotion) to memorise all the 700 verses of the *Gita* or give learned commentaries thereon. It is only a proof of ostentation.

Today, what the world needs are men of action (*aachara manavas*), and not men of words in human form (*aakara manavas*). By your intellectual acumen, you may aspire for such titles of honour like Padma Sri and Padma Bhushan, but you cannot hope to win the title of Amrita Putra (children of immortality) the title that the *Veda* proclaims as the birthright of man. There can be no other title equal to, or higher than this title of Amrita Putra. And it is for this title that you must all strive. You should develop *desabhimanam*, *Daivabhimanam*, and *dharma-bhimanam* (love of country, love of God, and love of *dharma*). There is no *Dharma* higher than *sathya*, and no *sathya* higher than *dharma*. *Sathya* and *dharma* are inseparable and interdependent. Try to practise them to some extent, at least, and spread the benefits to the society at large. Only then will you understand what bliss is. Bliss is the goal for which you undertake any activity—mundane or spiri-

tual. Bliss is the goal of all religions. The paths may be many but the goal is one just as jewels are many, but gold is one, and cows are many, but milk is one. Therefore you should never criticise any religion. Along with your education, try to develop equal-mindedness, and universal love, so that you can experience the unity in diversity.