

14. Dharma and Indian Spirituality

In the most sacred land of *Bharat*,
Patience is the greatest virtue.
Among all disciplines, the shining jewel of
Truth is the highest penance.
The sweet feeling pervading our land
Is the mother's love.
Honour is more important than life itself.

But these ideals of India have been destroyed by
The adoption of foreign values.
Unbridled freedom is a dangerous sword.
Alas! What has happened to India?
As an elephant is unaware of its own strength,
Such is the state of our countrymen today.

Performing charity and sacrifices ceaselessly,
Acquiring knowledge and power,
Harnessing crops, ruling over lands —
Such actions are merely for filling the stomach.

Why suffer in so many ways?
Don't worms, birds and beasts live for the stomach
as well?
Knowing that satisfaction can be got without world-
ly joys,
If man does not strive to reach the goal,
He is only inferior to other living beings.
How can he be superior?

Students!

The essence of all sciences and education is Indian culture and spirituality. Every country is proficient in its own ways, in its particular branches of knowledge. Morality, ethics, truth, sacrifice, and forbearance are present in all these types of education.

True Indian (*Bharatiya*) education comprises five limbs: behaviour (*aachaaram*), culture (*saampradayaam*), religion (*matam*), art (*kala*), and knowledge. Such all-encompassing education has been forgotten today. The true measure of education is righteousness. When righteousness flourishes, true education will follow. The welfare and security of the country rests on *dharma* and education.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata

The exalted sages Vyasa and Valmiki crystallised the Lord into words and conveyed it to posterity as epics. The texts they authored are very ancient. For this

reason, the epics are called *Puraanas*¹. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* propagate faultless behaviour not just to Indians but to the entire world.

Indian culture has ensured peace and stability for the world since time immemorial. The divine *mantra*, the guiding light of the noble Aryan culture, has always been good wishes for everyone, even for those we do not know: May all the worlds be happy (*Lokaah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu*). Without yielding to the conditions of place, time, and situation, Indian culture has sought the underlying unity in the apparent diversity by renouncing the narrow feelings of “I” and “mine”.

Duryodhana² had great physical strength, intellect, valour, power and wealth —all forms of prosperity. What is the significance in Vyasa treating Duryodhana and Dussasana with scorn and instead, giving the highest value to Dharmaja³? It is because our sages considered *dharma* above everything. They recognized that the cosmos exists only on the power of *dharma*, that all beneficial acts emerge from *dharma*.

The *Ramayana*, teaching lofty ideals of morality to the whole world, is dearer than life to every home in India. How must brothers behave with each other? How must children conduct themselves with parents and obey their wishes? What tolerance and self-control must exist in a husband-wife relationship? All such questions are beautifully answered in the *Ramayana*. This epic demonstrates the fame and prosperity of a family in which brothers are united, where love pervades.

Sage Valmiki composed the *Ramayana*. Ravana was a king with all possible achievements to his credit. He never lacked in pleasure, comfort, or victories. He had no equal. He was an adept in the sixty-four types of knowledge. His city, Lanka, rivaled Heaven itself in opulence. But Valmiki paid no respect to Ravana and instead heaped adoration upon Rama —who renounced kingship to walk barefoot in forests, wore bark and leaves, and lead a life of austerity despite his royalty. Why? Because every action of Rama was *dharma*. Every word He uttered was truth (*sathya*). Valmiki, therefore, asserted, Rama is the embodiment of *dharma* (*Ramo Vighrahaan Dharmah*).

¹From the Sanskrit word *puraatana*, which means “ancient”

²Wicked protagonist of the epic *Mahabharata*

³The righteous Pandava prince in the same epic

Dharma is paramount

Our sages gave no weight to money, fame, pleasures, power, physical or intellectual prowess but only to *dharma*. Why? To them, *dharma* alone is the life-force of the world. Four goals (*purusharthas*) of human life are prescribed by the scriptures: righteousness, wealth, desire, and liberation (*dharma, artha, kama, and moksha*). The first is *dharma*. Wealth and desire come after *dharma*. Meaning: unless wealth and desire are experienced in accordance with *dharma*, they cause grief. Earn wealth with *dharma*. Entertain only *dharmaic* desires. Only thus can we attain liberation. This is the lesson of the four goals.

Unfortunately, Indians have renounced the foundation of *dharma*, which is the like the feet supporting the structure of human life. They have chopped off the head of liberation. They live with the headless and footless body of wealth and desire! Thus, India has lost Her splendour of righteousness. We must take a pledge to restore *dharma*, to foster education promoting *dharma*, to revive the glory of India.

The first stanza of the *Bhagavad Gita* begins, *Dharma kshetre kurukshetre* (Field of *dharma*, field of battle). Many want to know the essence of the *Gita*. Scholars give various answers — *karma yoga, bhakthi yoga, jnana yoga*, and so on. If we want to visualise someone, the head and feet are most important! The first word of the first stanza of the *Gita* is *Dharma*. The last verse of the *Gita* is:

Wherever there is Krishna, the Lord of *Yoga*,
Wherever there is Partha⁴, the archer,
There are prosperity, success, expansion,
And firm morality —that is my conviction.

Yatra Yogeshvarah Krishno
Yatra Partho Dhanurdharah
Tatra Sreer Vijayo Bhootir-
Dhruvaa Neetir Matir Mama

The last word of the last verse of the last chapter is *mama* (my). Joining the first and last words, we get: *mama dharma*, or my duty! This is the message of the *Gita*. Recognise your own *dharma* and perform it. A householder should fulfill their responsibilities, likewise, a hermit, a renunciant, and a student should act as per their stage in life. Each has their *dharma*, which cannot be exchanged.

Manu's code of right action

For everything, the basis is *Manu Dharma* (*Manu's Code of Right Action*). You may search the whole

⁴ Another name for Arjuna. Means “son of Pritha”, Pritha being Kunti.

world, but an exposition of *dharma* surpassing *Manu Dharma* does not exist. Once upon a time, a German scholar called Nietzsche wrote a book on will power. Fortunately for him, he stumbled upon *Manu Dharma* during this process. The bliss he derived by delving into it was indescribable. He stopped writing his book. “What I attempt to write is candlelight compared to the blazing Sun of *Manu Dharma* shining in the sky of Indian intellect,” he felt. He asserted that no book could equal *Manu Dharma*.

When such sacred texts, scriptures, and epics exist at home, why do Indians follow foreign ways? Although we possess sacred and invaluable traditions, we are attracted by external allurements. There is a proverb in Telugu: Despite a delicious five-course meal at home, stale lentils in the neighbour's house are more appealing! *Intilo vanta chesina pancha bhaksha paravaanamum kante, prakkintilo paachipoyina pappu chaala ruchi*).

We have incomparable teachings in our country. How foolish it is to pursue tasteless education elsewhere! Yes, every country has its own expertise, systems of logic and philosophy (*pramaanaas*), and system of education. Surely, no one should criticise others. As per the time, place, and situation, unique *dharma*s, ways of living, and regulations have become important in each part of the world. But recognise that all systems of logic and philosophy are only for the purification of the mind. And in this regard, Indian culture sets towering ideals for human welfare here and hereafter.

It is not enough to learn bookish knowledge by heart and forget about the welfare of mankind. Demonstrate your learning in action. Only then will knowledge lead to bliss. Without practice, all studies are useless. Even a million forms of knowledge devoid of virtue are worthless and unproductive.

Character is paramount! For this reason, Indians have always stressed character, character, character. No science from any part of the world has the right to criticise Indian philosophy and *Vedanta*⁵. Science is such that today's truths are dismissed by tomorrow's experiments. How can science, which changes day to day, have the authority to comment about Indian spirituality and *Nyaya Shastra*, which elaborate on true and eternal principles? Analyse all the logical and philosophical systems of the world —from Kant to Spencer. They are mere drizzles in comparison to the torrential downpours of nonduality, qualified non-duality, and duality (*advaita, visishtha-advaita*, and *dwaita* expounded by the *Vedas*).

⁵ Literally, “the end of *Vedas*”. The section of the *Vedas* dealing with *advaita* (non-dual) philosophy, primarily, the *Upanishads*.

Conquer body consciousness

Even today's scientific achievements are nothing compared to the feats of Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha in the *Kritha Yuga* (first in a cycle of four eras; we are in the fourth). Hiranyakasipu brought the five elements under his control and investigated the realms of earth, sky, and water. He gloated over his supremacy over the physical world. This pride blinded him to such an extent that he tortured his own son!

What was the fruit of all his investigations? Only ego, which made him forget himself and blurred even ordinary human feelings. Such a man is ready to destroy anyone who stands in the way of his ambitions, even his own family! Finally, only his son could teach him the truth.

Prahlada, Hiranyakasipu's son, was dear to Lord Hari. Hiranyakasipu hated Hari. They could not co-exist. In the same way, it appears that science and spirituality cannot co-exist today! But sooner or later, spirituality is bound to open the eyes of science.

Hiranyakasipu asked Prahlada, "Where is your Hari?"

Prahlada replied, "Don't fall into doubt that He is here but not there. He is everywhere."

"Is He in this pillar, then?" thundered Hiranya.

"Yes," said Prahlada, bowing down.

When Hiranyakasipu broke the pillar, divine Power emerged from within. What is the meaning? As long as one identifies with the body, one is far away from God. The day one renounces body-consciousness and cultivates love for God, one comes face to face with Divinity. Hiranyakasipu broke the pillar of body-consciousness and Divinity emerged from inside.

Therefore, physical science is definitely necessary. But why develop pride on account of such studies? Be humble. There is much you need to understand. Students! You are future leaders. The nation's progress depends on your actions. When you are good, the country will be safe. When you go astray, the country will go to ruin.

Students learn a tinge of English—the size of a mustard seed—and develop a huge ego, the size of a pumpkin! This is harmful. There is a lot for you to teach the world, but not by giving "tons" of speeches. Practise an "ounce"—that is enough. Teach by example. Therefore, Indian culture is the essence of all scriptures, the goal of all education, and the road to a divine life.

Name and form

Everything in the cosmos has two concepts: name and form. Nothing in the world can exist without name and form. Name is sound. Sound contains the whole creation. Sound is speech. Speech emerges from feeling, and feelings are based on desires. Desires are fruits of ignorance, which, in turn, is born in Divinity. So, there is an intimate relation between speech and Divinity. Without sound, without speech, no truth can be recognised. People did not create sound. In fact, all creation, including humanity, emerged from sound.

Since antiquity, every sound has its own meaning. These meanings have not been allotted by scientists! Here is a plate. A goldsmith might have made it, but he did not name it. It is called "plate" since the beginning of time. This is a tumbler. Its unique form is the reason for its existence. Therefore, the form is the proof of the name, and the name is the proof of the form. They are inextricably intertwined.

Every word has its form. "Sorrow" is a word. The troubles we undergo are the form associated with this word. Another word is "joy". Our experience of happiness is the form of joy. We are all inside a "hall". This concrete building itself is its evidence, its form. In this manner, every word has a corresponding form. But modern scientists pay no attention to this truth.

Consider a dictionary. It has numerous words. People implicitly believe in all the meanings provided by the dictionary. The same dictionary also has the word "God"! If the word exists, it must have a form, should it not? If the word "God" had no form, how could it be included in the dictionary? Why do you believe everything else and reject this one word? This indicates your personal bias, not the universal Truth.

Name and form—only these two exist. *Vedanta* teaches that we must attain the Form of God by repeating His Name. It is difficult to attain the goal based solely on the form. Why? For example, suppose you want to identify a man wearing a certain shirt, a certain pants, and of a certain height. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find him among the thousands assembled here. However, if you know his name and announce it over the microphone, the person will rise and approach you—even in a crowd of a hundred thousand!

It is easy to attain the form with the name. Contemplation on the Name is the means to swim across the ocean of birth and death (*Smarane taranopaayam*).

Dharma—the identifying quality

Students! Indian culture and spirituality is pregnant with incredible potency. What cannot be found here is non-existent. Unfortunately, you are not persistent in

practising the precepts of our culture. Therefore, its power slips through your grasp. Dive deep and practise the teachings—you will attain bliss without a doubt.

Indian culture and spirituality is full of *dharma*. *Dharma* is the guiding light, our life-breath. What is *dharma*? That which bears its own qualities is *dharma* (*Dharayathe ithi dharmah*). This statement is not elaborate enough. In every object, there is a life force, an identifying quality. Consider fire. What does fire bear? Fire bears heat and light. We can identify fire only when it has heat and light. Without these qualities, it may be charcoal but not fire! So what is the *dharma* of fire? Heat and light. Take ice. What is its nature? You may say it is white in colour. But fully burned coal is white also! Ice is cold. Next, take sugar. What is the *dharma* of sugar? Sweetness. Without sweetness, it could be salt!

The *dharma* of fire is heat and light. The *dharma* of ice is cold. The *dharma* of sugar is sweetness. In the same way, what is the *dharma* of humanity? It is sacrifice born out of truth and morality. How must it be practised and demonstrated? Through unity and purity in thought, word, and deed (*trikarana suddhi*). Human qualities flourish when the thoughts you entertain, the words you speak, and the deeds you do are in harmony.

Without such unity, *dharma* is absent, education has lost its value, and the prosperity of the nation is in jeopardy. There is no security or justice.

Dishonest money cannot last

Everything is based on money, money, money. Money has undermined morality. The wealth earned by trodding upon morality is no more valuable than mud! Such wealth cannot endure or grant happiness. Does hoarded money give you happiness? No, no. Bees gather honey from numerous flowers and store them in a hive. The beekeeper kills the bees with smoke or hot water and confiscates the honey. Similarly, wealth earned through unrighteous means slips through our grasp.

There are four thieves after your money. The first is the government. On some pretext or other, they tax you or raid your house. The second thief is fire. Accidents of fire consume money earned through unrighteous means. The third is burglars. The moment you become wealthy, you invite the attention of burglars. The burglar makes intricate plans to lighten your burden of treasure! The fourth is disease. When unjust wealth is destined to be lost, disease appears in the body. The miser who is reluctant to bestow a single coin to a beggar willingly donates millions to doctors who promise health. Unrighteous wealth leaks away in one of these ways.

Devotion protects the world

Students! Future saviours of India! Keep these truths in mind and stay away from dishonesty. Follow justice and honesty. Let your chariot be equipped with the wheels of truth and morality. Revive *dharma*. Only then will India become as glorious as in the past. The stream of truth and *dharma* born in *Bharat* (India) and propagated from here is immune to depletion.

For everything, devotion (*bhakti*) is the basis. Nothing can be achieved without devotion. Students! Money, tanks, bombs, or governments do not protect the world, only God's Grace does. It is essential for you to aspire for the welfare of the world and pray to God for it. To quell the storms in the world, God's Grace is the only way. The strength and capacities of today's students will determine peace and security in the future.

Untruth, injustice, and cruelty are rampant in India, the birthplace of spirituality. At such a time, the natural tendencies of truth, love, and righteousness must be used as weapons by students because only these are capable of fixing the situation. Such students must arise at every place in India.

Prahlada changed his father. Similarly, all of you should transform your parents, if necessary, and set examples with your conduct. Follow Prahlada—he was of your age. His teachers inculcated only demonic ideals. But Prahlada transformed even his *gurus*.

The *gurus* went to Hiranyakasipu and pleaded, “O King! Your son has immeasurable power. When your men torture him, he only smiles bewitchingly and calls on Narayana. There is no trace of anger or fear on his face.”

Can an ordinary boy face such tortures fearlessly? But Prahlada was not ordinary. Even when thrown into fire, he continued to repeat Narayana's name in bliss! When submerged in the ocean, he repeated the Name. He forgot the body (*deham*) and focused only on the Indweller (*dehi*). Even one such son is sufficient.

Cultivate virtues in youth

Hence, students must adhere to truth while living in this world of scientific and technological advancements. Anil Kumar explained earlier that education is not merely familiarity with books. Just as lightning is immanent in rain-bearing clouds, wisdom (*jnana*) must underlie education (*vidya*). When the dark clouds of vices veil the sky of our hearts, the lightning of Divine contemplation must be used to restore radiance.

Our heart is the sky. Our feelings are clouds. The mind is the moon. The intellect is the sun. Thick, dark clouds cover this sky, especially in adolescence. The mind and the intellect are hidden. These clouds are

“passing clouds”. Be patient —your enthusiasm and virtues will grow and shine forth. Then you will be able to visualise your true nature.

Cultivate peace. Students get agitated in an instant. Passion is responsible for agitations across the country. It is typical at your age. But do not accept it as natural. Youth is the time to develop your divine capacities and to control your senses. Is it possible to control your senses if you wait till old age?

Some say, "Why bother with meditation now? I will focus on my job and family. After retirement, I'll sit on my bed and repeat 'Rama, Rama' at leisure." There is really nothing called retirement. After retirement, they take-up another job to get “re-tired”! They do not relinquish the desire for money till the last breath. When will they ever find time for spirituality?

When agents of death pull at your noose and hurry you,
When relatives take your body outside and give up hope⁶,
When your wife and children cry with grief,
Is it possible to bring Hari's Name to your lips?

Can you hope to chant, "Hari, Hari" on your death-bed? It is impossible! Impossible! Cultivate the habit from this tender age. “Start early, drive slowly, reach safely.” If you don't replenish your water tanks in the rainy season, what can you enjoy during the summer? Fill the tanks of your hearts with Divinity now. Then you can taste the fruits in old age, like “pension”. Make efforts for spiritual progress. No matter who says what, follow spirituality with worldly education.

Balance worldly and spiritual pursuits

Can a bicycle travel on one wheel? Can a bird fly with one wing? Therefore, it is said, “Alchemy to grant joys now, spiritual education for joys hereafter (*Ihamu nosagimpa hemataaraka vidya, paramu nosagimpa Brahma vidya*). Meaning, lead life on the dual support of worldly and spiritual education.

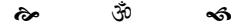
Students! Don't waste all your time on worldly concerns. Use some time for contemplation on the principle that transcends physical existence. When such students abound in the world, India will regain its lost glory and laughter of pure joy will resound everywhere. God's Power alone protects the individual, the country, and the world. No other power has this capacity. Cultivate Divine Power.

Divine Power does not grow within you, nor is it obtained from outside. It is natural to you. It is your true state. Hence, the *Vedas* proclaim, “The One exists in all beings (*Ekovasi sarva bhoota antaraatma*).” First, get rid of your ego and develop humility. Listen peacefully and patiently to the words of elders, reflect upon them, and put them into practice. Do not allow ego to sprout because ego blinds.

Students! Of all the teachings you have heard during the past fourteen days, I hope you put at least a fraction into practice. With blessings, I bring My discourse to a close.

[Swami concluded with “*Hari Bhajana Bina Sukha Shanti Nahin*”.]

2 June 1991



⁶It is customary in some parts of India to lay a dying person's body on the floor or outside the house.