

8. THE QUEST FOR PEACE

When they are young and tender,
Steadiness of mind, youth should acquire.
If steadiness of mind is not secured,
They suffer and life is wasted too.

Students, The Embodiments of Divine Atma,

Peace is another name for the steadiness of mind. Peace is a sacred virtue; it is the embodiment of the Self. It is an ornament to man; the heart of the selfless one is its abode. Losing this sacred ornament of peace, which is eternal and everlasting, man falls prey to agitation and unrest.

The Universe, with all its visual phenomena is created, sustained and dissolved by the three attributes (Trigunas). These attributes are the very life breath of this illusory world, and activate the workings of the Universe. Influenced by these three attributes, man loses the Divine jewel of peace.

Man should strive not to come under the spell of evil company. It is said:

Tyaja Durjana Samsargam.
Bhaja Sadhu Samagamam.
Kuru Punyamahorathram.
Smara Nithyamanithyam.

Give up evil company; desire noble company; do meritorious deeds day and night; think of the eternal and the transient.

THE INFLUENCE OF EVIL COMPANY:

Evil company results in evil feelings, wrecks your human quality and devalues your life. It is this loss of value which leaves a man as a man only in form, but not as a man in action. Evil company is like a venomous worm, which instantaneously preys on the noble virtues of man and kills them in the end.

Evil company acts on the very mind of a man, in all its manifold forms, causing manifold mental aberrations. It enters into the very core of the human heart and destroys the human quality in him. The words of the evil one sound sweet; but his mind is saturated with venom. The evil man is the very opposite of the true man. It is said: **“He is a real man who observes the harmony of thought, word and deed. The proper study of mankind is man.”**

Young people like you should cultivate Divine feelings and qualities, participate in sacred activities and lead a life of exemplary excellence.

It is not mere association with evil people that constitutes the evil company. The cultivation of evil qualities is also evil company. Students should not give scope for vices like ego, envy, falsehood, pomposity etc. to worm into their hearts, since they are the worst enemies of man. Humans shine in their full splendour once they totally exterminate their enemy. The scriptures have declared that disease, debt, foe and fire should be quelled completely without leaving any trace.

The Vedic injunction is, “It is disastrous if ‘**Shatrusesha**,’ ‘**Agnishesha**,’ ‘**Runasesha**’ and ‘**Roga-sesha**’ (the trace of foe, fire, debt and disease) is left.” If the debts are not discharged completely, the undischarged debt grows by leaps and bounds and assumes its

original figure due to the interest charged. Similarly, if a patient is discharged from the hospital without being completely cured, the traces of the disease left in him may relapse and prove disastrous to him.

In the same, way if a fire is not extinguished totally, the remnants of it may blaze into a conflagration. If the enemy is not quelled completely, that too, in the course of time, will prove detrimental to man. It is only the complete extinction of the enemy which earns peace to man.

What is peace? When does it arise in the human heart? Peace arises in man when the three attributes of **'Satwa,' 'Rajas'** and **'Tamas'** (serene, passionate and dull temperaments) are totally routed. You must make earnest efforts to develop **'Virakthi,' 'Upeksha'** and **'Anasakthi'** (detachment, apathy and disinterest) towards the three attributes. Everything is fraught with fear in the world, and it is detachment (Vairagya) alone which can bestow **'Abhaya'** (fearlessness). A man who suffers from **'Raga'** (attachment) is a prey to fear; a man who has cultivated detachment is free from fear. If **'Raga'** is allowed to grow, it ultimately ends up as **'Roga'** (disease). If the waves of **'Kama'** and **'Krodha'** (lust and anger) are not nipped in the bud they assume great proportions. **"If a plant does not bend while it is a sapling, can it ever bend when it is a tree?"** says the proverb. If a plant is not controlled as a sapling, it grows uncontrolled when it is a mighty tree. That is why youth is the most appropriate period to cultivate the control of the mind.

THE PURITY OF THE MIND:

The true education is the training of the mind. Life is a futile exercise if the restraint of the mind is not achieved, in spite of one's high intelligence and status. So it is said:

Of what use is worship, without the purity of the mind?
 Of what use is cooking, without the purity of the vessel?
 Of what use is spiritual practice, without the purity of the Self?

You cannot rest in peace in a room where venomous worms crawl; the worm should be either caught or killed. We should root out this worm from the **chitta**. There will be no peace for man until the worm is caught and killed.

The youth today do not know what are '**Chitta**,' (memory) '**Hridaya**' (heart) and '**Manas**' (mind). Man is made of mind and mind is nothing but a conglomeration of thoughts. Since thoughts determine our conduct, we should cultivate noble thoughts. Though the heart is the seat of purity, evil company infects the heart and vices arise as a consequence. If a piece of charcoal and a burning ember are brought into contact, the former loses its blackness and glows with intensity, as the heat and the fire of the latter enter into it. The charcoal turns into a totally burning ember when it is fanned. The charcoal glows as an ember to the extent it allows itself to be consumed by fire.

This is the miracle of transformation wrought by noble company. The company of a burning ember transforms a black charcoal into another ember. Hence it is said, "**Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi**" (the one who knows the Brahman becomes the Brahman). It is not enough if you are '**Near**' noble company. You should become '**Dear**' too, endearing yourself to it. For example: When we carry a flower in the hand, the fragrance of the flower spreads to our hands and dress. If a foul smelling flower is carried in the hand, it befouls our dress and body. Hence, good and evil are endowed with equal potency to exercise benevolent and malevolent influences respectively. You are what your company is. That is why Einstein said, "Tell me your company and I shall tell

you what you are.” It is the company one keeps which makes or unmakes him.

Though endowed with the physical prowess and prowess of the intellect,

Without the prowess of God, you will be a slave for sure.

What happened to the mighty Karna at the end?

Never, never forget this noble word.

Though Karna was endowed with physical and intellectual prowess, he was destroyed by associating himself with the evil company of Duryodhana and Dusshasana. In the end, he became one of the evil four (Dushta Chatustayam) and was far removed from the Grace of God. It is only the power of God and the power of righteousness that can make all powers to rally around you. But the students of today, bereft of noble thoughts and noble conduct, are deprived of the immense strength that comes as a consequence of God’s grace. Man is befouled today instead of blooming into excellence.

Man’s excellence lies in radiating Divine illumination. Man’s speciality lies in the acquisition of peace, but when can man acquire this peace? People shout slogans saying, “I want peace, I want peace.” How can you secure peace while keeping atom bombs in your hands? You can never acquire peace even if you land on the moon. If you keep the bombs of evil conduct and evil feelings ever in your hands, peace remains a far cry. Peace is obtained only when evil feelings are destroyed. First and foremost, there must be individual peace, which in its turn contributes to family peace; family peace, in its turn, contributes to peace of the village. Peace of the village leads to peace of the state: Peace in the state, in its turn, secures national peace. National peace contributes to international peace. This is how individual peace contributes to world peace. Similarly Ashanti in a person has the potentiality to affect peace all

over. Students and educational authorities disseminate only unrest and agitation without making any contribution to peace of humanity.

RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY:

The students of today are the architects of India's future. Poverty and prosperity of India hinges on the behaviour of our students today. The Dharma of a student is his duty. But the students of today fight for right without any responsibility. Without responsibility there is no right. Duty is so important to a student that it is a yoga (spiritual practice) to him. So it is said, **“Karthavyam Yogamuchyate.”** By disregarding one's duty and assuming authority, people today are destroying the very meaning of humanity. If you discharge your duty sincerely, authority comes automatically to you. Right and responsibility are like the two wings of a bird, the two wheels of a chariot. But people today have axed the wing of responsibility and have utterly disregarded duty. The fight for rights is an unrighteous fight, for you have no right to fight, unless you have performed your duty.

What is your duty? Your duty lies in striving for the upliftment of the society, not in selfish striving for the upliftment of your own family. Once we have uplifted society, we should work for the well-being of the nation. Then alone you will accomplish self-fulfilment. It is said **“Shareera Madhyam Kalu Dharma Sadhakam”** (Body is given for ensuring righteousness). God has gifted the body to man for performing good deeds. That is why, the Buddha laid down **“Buddham Sharanam Gacchami, Dharmam Sharanam Gacchami, Sangham Sharanam Gacchami.”** This is how you should at first surrender yourself to Buddhi. It is by transforming and sanctifying Buddhi, you become Buddhimata (The noble intellectual). After sanctifying your Buddhi, you must use it in the service of society (Sangham Sharanam

Gacchami). After serving the society you must infuse Dharma (Dharmam Sharanam Gacchami) into society. This is how man should travel from Buddhi (intellect) to Sangha (society) and from Sangha to Dharma (righteousness).

THE LAST JOURNEY:

The Upanishads gave supreme importance to Karma (action). What is the significance of this? The significance is that righteousness should shape and mould our Karma. The Brahma Sutras said, “**Athatho Brahma Jignasa.**” What do we need for the cultivation of ‘Brahma Jignasa’ (enquiry into God)? We need fine dresses and beautiful ornaments for attending a marriage; we need money for seeing a cinema; we need a walking-stick and slippers for walking, but all these activities are left to your choice for, you are free to cancel them or postpone them. But you have no choice in regard to the last journey. You can never postpone it. People make enough preparations for performing small activities like walking, reading, writing etc., but what preparation do they make for a serious and significant activity like the journey beyond death? We spend lavishly on paltry activities; we sacrifice ourselves for the sake of trifles and trivialities. We sacrifice our body, wealth and time for temporary and transient things. What do we sacrifice for securing the Vision Divine? Our minds are not steady even for two minutes during Bhajan. It is said, “The thought that I bestow on my kith and kin, on property and wealth will surely not save me from Lord Yama at the time of death. It is my loving contemplation of the Lotus Feet of the Lord which will enable me to launch on this journey beyond death. Hence, Oh Lord! Bless me with the desire to meditate on Your Feet every moment of life.” We must follow the spirit of this prayer and elevate ourselves.

Students! Our body is transient like a water-bubble, but life is a long journey. In this long journey, we change our bodies many a

time, as we change our dress. In fact, death is nothing but change of dress—“Death is a dress of life.” We change our dresses but can we change the journey of our life? In this long journey of life, it benefits us well to carry less luggage. It is said, “Less luggage, more comfort, makes travel a pleasure.” The less luggage that we should carry in our life is nothing but the desires that we entertain. There is nothing wrong in entertaining desires; but it is seriously wrong to entertain excessive desires, as excessive desires cause unrest and agitation. Our desire should remain as a limited desire and should not assume the proportion of greed. That’s why Adi Shankara said,

Not for you, not for you,
 Oh man, the thirst for wealth.
 Wealth is a consequence of action.
 Contain your desires and be content.
 Chant, O foolish one, ‘Hari Govinda,’
 ‘Hari Govinda.’

Shankara once found an old grammarian who was religiously repeating Panini’s grammatical formula, ‘Dukrin Karana.’ Adi Shankara went to him and said:

Bhaja Govindam Bhaja Govindam Govindam Bhaja Mooda
 Mate.
 Samprapte Sannihite Kale Nahinahi Rakshati Dukrin Karane.

(Oh foolish man, Chant the name of Govinda. When the hour of death comes, it is only Govinda who will save you and not your grammar.)

Hence man should wholeheartedly chant God’s name for he may be saved in the hour of death.

The knowledge that you acquire in the educational institution is not the true knowledge; the secular education in which

you are trained is no education at all. It is only spiritual education which is true education. Secular education educates only the mind and leaves the heart and the spirit untouched. What arises from the head is the '**Pravrithi**' (materialistic) and what springs from the heart is '**Nivrithi**' (spiritual). Human life is interwoven with 'Pravrithi' and 'Nivrithi.' The six vices of desire, anger, greed, pride, infatuation and jealousy lead us on 'Pravrithi' marga whereas Love, Truth, Patience, Sacrifice and Compassion lead us on 'Nivrithi' marga.

NEED FOR LOVE AND FAITH:

We can succeed in the secular world if we place ourselves firmly in the spiritual world. That is why it is said,

For enjoyment in this world, you must
learn 'Taraka Vidya' (science of Alchemy)
For enjoyment in the other world, you must
learn 'Brahma Vidya' (spiritual science).

We should obtain success in secular as well as spiritual learning. But do we make any sincere endeavours for our success?

Learning and learning, a learned man forgets himself.
The mean man never gives up his meanness, in spite of high learning.
Such learning fosters only argumentation and the fullness of knowledge remains unobtained.
What is the use of all learning, if it does not confer immortality?

All our knowledge today is only secular knowledge and not immortal knowledge. What is immortal knowledge? The true and immortal knowledge is the knowledge of "**So-Ham.**" It signifies the oneness of man and God. The "So-Ham" mantra is repeated with

every breath, for man says ‘So’ with every inhalation and ‘Ham’ with every exhalation. Our breath itself teaches the unity of man and God, but we are not prepared to master this knowledge. Our bookish knowledge fosters only argumentative skills. But what we require is practical knowledge. We need the knowledge that enables us to experience Ananda in our daily life. Mind is the seat of all secular knowledge whereas the **“Spiritual Heart”** is the seat of all Atmic knowledge. It is by Love alone that the science of spirit can be known.

Where there is Love, there is no hatred; where there is no hatred there is peace. We should propagate peace all over the world, and it can be done only through love.

What is love? Oneness of feeling is love. If you foster the feeling that the same Atma resides in all, you will be able to love all. That is why the Upanishads say, **“Sarva Jiva Namaskaram Keshavam Prathi Gachathi”** (your salutations to living beings reach keshava). If you salute the living beings, you are saluting the Lord Himself as the Lord is the resident of all beings. While saluting a person you must feel that you are saluting the Lord in the temple of heart, for the body is a moving temple. Instead of worshipping the Lord in a physical temple made of brick and stone, worship the Lord in the living temple of the human body.

National feelings have declined in the students of today. We must cultivate the feeling that we are children of the sacred land of Bharath and that we are all equal in the eyes of God. We must show gratitude to the country in which we are born. We must be actuated by the feeling that our fellow beings are embodiments of God. We must be actuated by the feeling that our irreverence to fellow humans is tantamount to irreverence towards God. **“Sarva Jiva Tiraskaram Kesavam Pratigachathi.”** The Bhagavad Geetha exhorts us to make the river of our life flow between the two bunds of **“Shraddhavan Labhathe Gnanam”** (knowledge is obtained by

diligence) and “**Samsayathma Vinashyathe**” (Doubts destroy us). The river of our life, while flowing towards the ocean of grace, would do well to flow between the bunds of the two sacred ‘**Ashtakshari Mantras**’ (eight lettered mantras). The observance of the exhortation sounded by the Geetha saves us from dangers and enables us to reach the destination of Divine grace.

Man is one who has faith. We cannot live even a moment without it. Unless you have the faith that you are going to return home with vegetable in hand, you will not go to market for buying vegetables. Every trivial act of yours is prompted by faith. But man does not nourish such faith in the existence of God. This want of faith is our worst weakness. We don't bring ourselves to believe in the presence of God who saturates and suffuses the Universe. There is none other than you in this universe as you are the Self. Your virtues make you a God and your vices make you a demon. You have the choice to become either Divine or demoniac. Your virtues testify to your Divinity, whereas your vices testify to your devilishness. Meditate on the Lord at all times and at all places, for the Lord is the Source. Love God, love all.

