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Discourses by

BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA

on the

Srimad Bhagavatham

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1. Mother and Motherland Are Greater Than Heaven

*Vidyanaama Narasya Roopamadhikam Pracchanna
Guptam Dhanam,
Vidya Bhogakari Yashah Sukhakari, Vidya Gurunaam
Guru,
Vidya Bandhujano Videsha Gamane, Vidya Paraa Lo-
chanam,
Vidya Raajasu Poojyate Na Hi Dhanam, Vidya Vi-
heenah Pasuh.*

Education is a third eye, a secret treasure,
Bestower of fame and enjoyment, the teacher of teach-
ers,
A friend in foreign lands, the supreme guide, and
Honored by kings more than wealth.
One without education is a beast.

Patrons Of Education, Teachers and Students!

Just as a child recognizes its mother and father at birth, students must recognize the history and culture of the land of their birth. The country is like a mother, and the culture like a father. One who does not recognize their culture can never understand their motherland.

India's glorious heritage

The culture of Bharath¹ is the noblest. *Bharathiyas* (Indians) are truthful and righteous. Justice and fairness are their life-breath. When the Eternal, Indestructible, Formless Truth is given a form, that is Indian Culture.

Students need to uphold only *sathya* and *dharma*, which, in turn, will protect the country. Victory weds only truth and righteousness, not wealth or position. No matter how educated, intelligent, or influential you are, you must foster human values. It is only because human values are disregarded in Bharath today that man has lost value.

What is meant by education? It is not just bookish knowledge. Can all those who know how to read and write be called educated? Does earning degrees make one educated? Will education achieve its purpose without moral and spiritual training? If education is just for a living, are not birds and beasts living as well? Thus, living is not sufficient. Ideals in life are important.

Today the ancient, noble truths are misinterpreted. Nature, pure and sacred, is being driven far from society. Compassion, righteousness, and discipline are shunned. Knowledge of the ancient Vedas is on the decline while all kinds of harmful sciences are flourishing.

Since ancient times, Bharath has granted peace and comfort to the entire world by virtue of Her spiritual treasure. *Lokaah Samastaah Sukhino Bhavantu*—may all worlds be happy. This has been the ideal of Indians from time immemo-

rial. What is the reason for destructive tendencies in today's education despite such a noble heritage?

Parents at home, teachers at school, and leaders in society are not setting the right example. They say one thing and act otherwise. Students are observant and intelligent. They think, "When experienced elders behave in that manner, why can't we?" When the cow herself goes to graze in the field, will you find the calf at home? Elders are the root cause of moral decline in our land.

First of all, parents at home are responsible. Parents desire only degrees, job, wealth, and position for their children. No parent hopes that the child becomes devoted and noble. Parents should definitely love their children but it should not be the love of Dhritarashtra.² Do not support every action of your children. Mistakes must be punished and good actions appreciated. Only with such training at home, will students maintain their values when they enter society.

True comfort and true freedom

Today every student desires comfort. What is comfort? They do not understand what comfort is, and yet, they desire it! In their opinion, eating, sleeping, and leading life forgetful of time is comfort. But to live without regard for time is not a human quality. Birds and animals live that way. Why be born as a human when you want to live like an animal? No, no. *Jantoonam Nara Janma Durlabham*—among all species, a human

birth is most difficult to obtain. It is indeed very valuable and sacred. If students live like animals, they stain not just themselves but humanity itself. What is true comfort? It is control of the senses and ceiling on desires. Then we become eligible for peace and joy. This is true freedom.

What is *svatantram*, freedom? Freedom is not going where you please and acting as you like. *Sva* means that which emerges from the heart. To follow the teachings and prompting of the *Atma*³ emanating from the heart is true freedom. The four stages of *saalokyam*, *saaroopyam*, *saameepyam* and *saa-yujyam*⁴ are possible only by following the directives of the *Atma*. *Sveccha* or free will means following the *Atma*. *Sveccha* = *sva* (Self) + *iccha* (desire). Knowledge of the *Atma*, inquiry into the *Atma*, and the bliss of the *Atma*—these constitute freedom.

Unity—today's dire need

India has won freedom from foreign rule, but, sadly, we have not won unity. Students! Unity is most essential. What cannot be achieved by individuals can be easily achieved collectively. The *Vedas* say:

Kalasi Melasi Tirugudaam, Kalasi Melasi Perugudaam

Kalasi Melasi Telusukunna, Telivini Poshinchudaam

Kalasi Melasi Kalata Leka, Chelimito Jeevinchudaam

Let us move together, let us grow together,

Let us foster the knowledge that we have earned together.

Let us live together in harmony.

Bharath has always produced excellent people in abundance—intelligent, courageous, valorous, devoted, strong, and virtuous. Yet we were conquered by foreigners. Why? Only because there was no unity. For this reason, Bharath had to endure slavery and untold injustice at the hands of invaders. Students must cultivate unity. The reputation and future prosperity of the nation are hinged on the behavior of students. Ensure that your conduct is proper. All the future leaders of Bharath are among today's students. "Start early, drive slowly, reach safely." Imprint the nation's welfare as the primary goal in your heart, starting in your student days.

Students should enter society as men of action. You should win victory in selfless endeavors with self-confidence. This is what Mother India needs desperately. Today people advocate new forms of society based on various criteria. We do not need a new social order or a model society. Virtuous boys and girls alone are enough. The nation can progress only through virtuous youth. Establishing various social norms and then breaking them is only a waste of time.

There is only one society, the human society. All of humanity is one. If all stand as one and work in unity, truly what a glorious nation Bharath will become! Bharath has ninety crores⁵ people. If all act united as "plus, plus, plus, plus, plus," their abilities will add and the country will stand strong as one body.

Uproot selfishness and hatred

There are many aspects of Bharath's ancient culture that you are yet to understand. You must ponder what grand values were present in ancient India.

*In the supremely sacred land of Bharath
Forbearance is the sign of beauty.
Of all disciplines,
Adherence to truth is the greatest penance.
The sweet feeling pervading this land is the
Motherly feeling.
Character is more precious than life itself.
But, alas! Like an elephant unaware of its own strength,
Bharathiyas imitate foreign values today,
Forgetting their own greatness.*

What strength! What sacrifice! What adherence to dharma and justice! Such a Bharath is ignorant of its own glory. What is the reason? Selfishness and hatred are growing. We can attain peace on the day we destroy selfishness and hatred, not before that.

First of all, we need to nurture human values. What is the true mark of a human? Words, heart, and hands must work in unity. "The proper study of mankind is man." There must be unity in thoughts, words, and actions. Today this pure human quality of unity is absent. Education is not just familiarity with books. Today's education system must be changed totally.

*Today's education
Teaches cleverness and guile
But not even a fraction of virtuous behavior.
What is the value of even a
Million different kinds of education
Devoid of virtue?*

What good are ten acres of barren land? A tiny plot of fertile land is better. Even a small amount of education is meaningful when coupled with virtue. Without virtue, Ph.D. upon Ph.D. are of no avail. They are totally useless Ph.D.s! We must learn at least one skill that is useful. What is this “usefulness” we must look for? Ensure that education keeps you, as well as society, happy. You should be happy and peaceful. And you should deliver that happiness to society as well. We are all members of society. We cannot live separated from society even for a moment. Being members of society, we must desire its welfare before our own. Students! Pursue education while keeping society's welfare in view.

Janani Janmabhoomischa Svargaadapi Gariyasi—the mother and motherland are worth more than heaven itself. We were born in Bharath, we grew up in Bharath, we breathe the air of Bharath, and we eat the food of Bharath. But we are unable to render desperately needed service to Bharath.

Students! *Bharatha Maata* yearns day and night for Her children to become virtuous. You must become good citizens, blossom into exemplary students, and earn honor in society and peace of mind for yourself. This is what *Bharatha Maata*

desires for you. Whatever country you belong to, uphold the respect of your nation.

There is only one caste—the caste of humanity.

There is only one family—the spiritual family.

There is only one language—the language of the heart.

The Indweller—source of all power

Names may differ, but the substance is one. Rings are many, but gold is one. Nationalities are many, but birth is one. Flowers are many, but worship is one. Similarly, God is one. *Ekovasi Sarva Bhoota Antaraatma*—the One Indweller is in all. That is power; that is electricity. This electricity is present in every human being. It is this power which sustains life.

Students! You know how scientists are inventing wonderful and complex machines today. But they don't recognize the one machine that creates all other machines! They develop machines to travel into the depths of the earth, to soar toward the Moon, to harness solar power and so on. They have invented atom bombs, hydrogen bombs, nuclear power, and many other applications of these energies.

But there is one machine that is more valuable and more powerful than all of man's inventions—the human body. But no one attempts to understand its secrets today. As for external phenomena, yes, scientists actively investigate and experiment them. But what about yourself? Examine yourself first!

Your power is in the universe and the powers of the universe are in you. Students must recognize this truth. You may consider someone else as a great person. But there is no one greater than you! All power and potentiality is present in you. The power of attraction and magnetic energy is in you. Electricity, light, and fire are also inherent to you. X-ray power is also inside you. In effect, everyone is a computer, a generator, a light source, a radio station ... all in one. All the “news” is in us.

Instead of discovering the “news” within ourselves, we absorb “nuisance” from outside. No, no. What we want is good, pure news. What is this NEWS? N—North, E—East, W—West, S—South. The Divinity that is present equally everywhere, we must absorb into ourselves. Even among today’s scientists we do not find this concept of North, East, South and West. Living in the physical world, we use these terms without much thought. We say that the Sun rises in the East and sets in the West. This is completely wrong! How, you may ask. The Sun neither rises nor sets. We revolve around the Sun and perceive the illusion of East and West.

Divinity is described as:

Nirgunam Niranjanam Sanaatanam

Nitya Niketanam Suddha Buddha Mukta

Nirmala Svaroopinam

Attributeless, stainless, eternal, the final abode,

Pure, aware, free, embodiment of sacredness.

Through such education, we must experience the same peace that our ancients enjoyed. Never relax your efforts to reach Divinity. In ancient times everyone was peaceful. Now, everybody has tension—from the tiny tot to the old man! This tension causes temper. Tension and temper are ruining human qualities. Then how can we expect peace? With an atom bomb in one hand, we ask for peace. How is it possible? We will get only fear, fear, fear.

Man has traveled to the Moon. The Moon is cool and peaceful. Even after traveling to such a cool Moon, the heat of our hearts is ever on the increase. So, peace is not external to you. You are the embodiment of truth, love, and peace. Instead of trying to experience this glorious truth, students pursue this subject, that subject... In this craze for subjects they have forgotten the object!

Subject and object—both are necessary. Consider a locomotive engine. It is huge, complex and worth millions. Yet, without electric current it is just scrap metal. The body is valuable only with the current of Divinity. You can secure whatever power you desire when these two join. All power is within us. But we misuse the body because we are unable to recognize its potential.

Practice

So don't misuse anything. Time is most crucial. Once lost, it cannot be regained. Embark in service activities without wasting a moment. All your studies must be applied in service to society. Only then will your knowledge improve. What good

are bookish knowledge, superficial knowledge, and general knowledge? All these are useless. Why? Because they do not have practical application. What we need today is practical knowledge. You say the words *mysore pak*, *gulab jamun*, *jilebi*, *barfi*.⁶ But can you experience their taste merely by saying the names? Instead, eat a small piece and you get immediate, direct experience.

So plunge into Divinity. What good is it to say “God” over and over again? Today many people memorize the entire *Bhagavad Gita*. They know every verse (*sloka*) but they see no end to their sorrow (*soka*). Why? If you practice just one verse, that is enough. There are fifty matches in a match-box. But you need only one match stick to build a fire of any size. You don’t need all the fifty sticks.

Similarly, you have the five human values in you—*Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Shanthi*, *Prema* and *Ahimsa*. Practice one of them. That is enough. *Prema* is the basis. Speak with Love—that is Truth. Perform actions with Love—they are *Dharma*. Think with Love—you experience peace. Inquire with Love—it is transformed into *Ahimsa*.

There is no place for hatred where Love is present. Darkness has no place where light is present. Students! We pray: *Tamaso Maa Jyotirgamayaa*—lead me from darkness to light. Light these virtues in yourselves and drive away the darkness of ignorance.

Obedience and humility

Mainly, don't develop pride and ego on account of your youth. This stage of youth is like a passing cloud. It comes and goes in a flash. The period of youth must be made meaningful while it lasts. Respect parents and elders. Develop obedience and humility. Without humility, all education is a waste. But today's students have no idea what humility means. They behave as they please.

One with good BEHAVIOR is a BOY.

One with good MANNERS is a MAN.

One with good DISCIPLINE is a DEVOTEE.

You call yourself a boy, but you don't have behavior. This behavior must start early, when you are a boy. "Start early, drive slowly, reach safely." Do not compare your studies with your behavior. Human values are human values. Do not compare them with anything because they are permeated with Divinity.

So think of spiritual matters at a young age. "Who is God? How can I see Him? How can I live like a true human being? In what manner can I serve society?" All these issues can be understood in this Summer Course. This course is not meant to teach you some new subject. The subject is Human Values. The name is "Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality." What is culture? It is sometimes defined as a "way of life". But Indian Culture cannot be understood easily—it has numerous meanings. Life itself is culture. Our behavior, moment to moment, is culture.

The grief of the motherland

Students! Born in this sacred land, you must conduct yourself so as to increase peace in the country. Today *Bharatha Maata* is continuously shedding tears, wondering in what ways Her children will hurt Her next and bring Her disrepute! Not just students, but all four stages of life—*Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa*⁷—are causing grief to *Bharatha Maata*. No section of society is giving satisfaction to the country. What a pity that even in spirituality, Bharath is shedding tears!

Today, only the outer forms of men are changing but not their minds. Their dresses change but not their qualities. Where are these people headed? Is there anyone today who is able to recognize and understand the truth about *Bharath Maata*? The Motherland is worrying, “My own children are not able to recognize Me!”

WHAT KIND OF CHILDREN ARE THEY WHO DO NOT RECOGNIZE THEIR OWN MOTHER? You must first recognize your mother. Then understand the nature of your father. The country is the mother and the culture, the father. First of all, protect your motherland and its culture. Patriotism and nationalistic feelings are totally absent in today’s youth. What is meant by a nation? Students think that land, trees and rivers constitute a nation. No, no.

Students should understand the principle of their motherland. “This is my motherland, this is my mother tongue,” you should declare with pride. If you cannot, you are only a dead body! We should be ready to sacrifice even our lives for

the sake of the country! “What do I care if the country or world goes to ruin? I should be happy.”—This is the attitude of students today. This is gross ignorance. It is only when the country is happy that the society can be happy. And you can be happy only when the society is happy. Students! Consider the nation first, above everything else. What is our country called? We are called Hindus. What does that mean?

Humility + Individuality + Nationality +
Divinity + Unity = HINDU.

Only when you have these qualities, are you a true Hindu. Of these, humility is most essential. Pride drives away the other four virtues. Without humility, there is no individual, much less, individuality! Humility, humility, humility —this is of utmost importance. Only then can unity result.

Work for the motherland

The next ten days in the Summer Course are valuable. Consider each moment as an era and use this time carefully. Don't waste life just listening. You must practice what you have learned. Translation into action should be the chief quality of our students.

The Chief Minister and Education Minister of Karnataka State are here to give you advice. You must recognize their expectations of you. Live up to the high hopes of these guests and make them happy by demonstrating your exemplary behavior. The CM has been exerting much for the welfare of the

people. He wants to do lasting good to the country. But good people always face hurdles. A pleasure is an interval between two pains. It is natural for good people to experience more obstacles because no one even cares to look at worthless people. A beautiful diamond receives more cuts. Gold is burnt in the furnace. But the more it is burnt, the purer it becomes. The cuts of a diamond only enhance its beauty. Likewise, troubles only increase the worth of good people. So we must face troubles bravely.

Life is a challenge, meet it.

Life is a dream, realize it.

Life is a game, play it.

Life is love, enjoy it.

Life is Awareness. *Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornaat Poornam Udachyate*—This is Full, that is Full, from the Full emerges the Full. Everything is *poornam*, full. Your mind must also be full, not narrow. Practice expansion of love. I conclude My discourse by hoping and blessing that you understand your Motherland, work for Her welfare and become ideal examples.

(Bhagavan asked all to rise. Upon His instruction, the national anthem of India, “Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka Jaya He,” was sung.)

¹. Sanskrit name for India. (related terms: Bharat Maata=Mother India, Bharathiya=Indian.)

². Indulgent father of the wicked Duryodhana in the epic *Mahabharatha*.

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- .. Soul. Related terms: Paramatma=God, Jivatma=Individual Soul.
 4. Saalokyam=Absorption in thoughts of God, Saamepyam=Nearness to God, Saaroopyam=Vision of God, Saayujyam=Merger with God.
 5. 900 million.
 6. Indian Sweets.
 7. Brahmacharya=celibate (till age 25). Grihasta=householder (25-50 years), Vanaprastha=forest dweller (50-75 years), Sanyasa=renunciate (over 75 years).

2. Science and Spirituality

Svabhode Naanyabodhe Cha

Bodha Roopa Atmanah

Sva Deepenya Deepe Cha

Yadaasvaatma Prakaashate

To search for a flame,

Another light is not required.

To know the omnipresent, effulgent *Atma*

Another type of knowledge is not required.

Students!

You do not need a flame to find another flame. In the same way, it is ignorance and foolishness to search for the self-effulgent, omnipresent *Atma* using other forms of knowledge. No one tries to search for himself in the world outside. In the same way, when you are the *Atma*, is it not plain ignorance to look for the *Atma* elsewhere? Such pure teachings on the *Atma* have been propagated by Bharath since ancient times, era after era.

Bharath—the birthplace of spirituality

Bharath is the birthplace of spirituality and *dharma*. Peace and nonviolence also took birth in Bharath. The search for Truth done in Bharath has not been done anywhere else. This land is the birthplace of the *Sapta Rishis*.¹ This is the country in which the first poet, Valmiki,² and the classifier of the *Vedas*, Vyasa³, took birth. This is the supremely sacred land of *dharma* in which Krishna taught the *Bhagavad Gita*. This is Rama's kingdom. This is the soil on which Buddha was born. Bharath has always been replete with minds inquiring into the Truth, hands engaged in *dharma*, and hearts immersed in the Lord.

Devotion has no distinctions of caste, age, and language. It is easy for everyone to contemplate on God. God is as essential for the mind as food is for the body. In the devotion of *Bharathiyas* we sometimes find situations bordering on the absurd. But spiritual feelings and love are the undercurrents even in this seemingly senseless behavior. A student prays to God to do well in exams. A man prays to God to win a court case. Why go that far? People pray even to secure a seat in a bus! In this way, *Bharathiyas* depend on God from the smallest to the biggest things. This may be called divine madness. Some call it foolishness. Whatever anyone may say, each is entitled to their own hunger, their own faith, their own kind of madness. No one has the right to deny another's faith.

But certain foundations are necessary even for faith. The presence of the groom doesn't mean that the marriage is done. Having money does not imply that you can run a business. Some additional know-how is required. You cannot be considered a writer by knowing the alphabet. Only one who understands meanings of words can be an author. Similarly, you cannot recognize God with worldly knowledge. Spiritual knowledge is essential. To acquire it, inquire into the Truth.

Scientific investigations into the truth

Everyone must understand the universe and the nature of the individual souls living in it. Those who recognize the secrets of the Cosmos and of the beings living in it can understand the nature of Divinity. Since ancient times, men of wisdom have investigated into Nature. The astronomer Galileo discovered many facts about the universe. The Earth revolves at a

speed of 18,500 miles per second. It circles the Sun once a year. “Who is turning the Earth? Why does it revolve? What is the basis for its revolution?” asked Galileo. He found that the parabola is the basis of motion.

If there is such a basis for even small objects, there must be a significance to the Earth’s movement as well. Once upon a time the Earth was hot. Then it took millions of years to cool down. Why should the burning planet revolve? Galileo pondered the answer to this question. Rotation causes day and night, which provide opportunities for men to undertake action. Revolution produces seasons, which are responsible for rain, harvest, and food. Every act of God, big or small, is for the good for mankind. There is a hidden power running everything. Galileo recognized it and called it God. Therefore, a natural scientist recognized this unchanging power.

That which is present always is Truth. Within this Truth we find both worldly and spiritual knowledge. It is not possible for anyone to know this power through any means. To know the unchanging power behind Nature is to know God. This is what Galileo finally concluded.

Einstein, the father of modern science, talked about the interchangeability of matter and energy. He said that these could neither be created nor destroyed. But energy may change forms. How? Magnetic energy can be turned into electricity, electricity into atomic power, atomic power into light and light into heat. Students should recognize a small fact. You can create water by combining hydrogen and oxygen. But who created hydrogen and oxygen? Water is the effect, hydrogen and oxy-

gen are the causes. Nothing can exist without a cause. The effect gradually changes. That which changes is science. The changeless cause is spirituality.

Live human values

We say “culture and spirituality”. We came to know this morning that culture is a “way of life”. It means heritage. Spirituality is necessary for transformation. What is spirituality? We consider only worship and good actions to be spirituality. But in truth:

Spirituality = Spirit of Love.

Science = Split of Love.

“Split of Love” changes but the “Spirit of Love” is permanent. Culture has love as its basis. No love means no culture. Culture and spirituality really mean the power of love. This changeless power cannot be destroyed. This power could be God, said Einstein, adding that nothing may be spoken of with equal certainty.

People asked Buddha if he understood Divinity. Buddha was silent on the existence of God. He said, “It is a waste of time to argue about an unknowable subject like Divinity, which is beyond the mind.” *Yatho Vaacho Nivartante Apraapya Manasaa Saha*—From where words and thoughts return, unable to grasp anything, That is Divinity. “For me, *Sathya*, *Dharma*, and *Ahimsa* are equivalent to Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva,” he said.

Truth and *dharma* are the highest. Follow them and practice ahimsa in your life. This is true spiritual effort, Buddha said. There is no God higher than Truth. For this reason, *Vedas* say, *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara*—speak the truth and uphold righteousness. God is present wherever these are upheld. Vashishta said, “*Ramo Vighrahavaan Dharmah*”—Rama is the very embodiment of *dharma*—because Rama never spoke a lie and always stuck to the path of *dharma*. He walked barefoot in forests and sacrificed everything for the sake of righteousness. To uphold a promise given by His father, He took great burdens upon Himself. Without ever faltering, Rama adhered unflinchingly to *sathya* and *dharma*. That is why He is the embodiment of Divinity.

Even in this *Kali Yuga* people went to Ramakrishna Paramahansa and asked him if he had seen God. Yes, he replied. In what form, they asked. Ramakrishna said, “Just as I see you, I have seen God.” When asked how it was possible, he explained, “With yearning. You strive for wealth and family. You cry for small and big things. Have you ever cried for God?”

*Yaa Chintaa Bhuvi Putra Mitra Bharanau Vyaapaara
Sambhaashane*

*Yaa Chintaa Dhana Dhaanya Bhoga Yashase Laabhe Sa-
daa Jaayate*

*Saa Chintaa Bhuvi Nanda Nandana Pada Dvand-
vaaravinde Kshane*

*Kaa Chintaa Yamaraaja Bhima Sadana Dvaara Prayaani
Prabho.*

You cry for wife, children, friends,

Wealth, business, pleasures, name and fame.
 But if you yearn for Krishna's Lotus Feet even for a moment,
 You can easily cross the terrible doors of Death.

If you desire God, work for Him. Then God will easily come within your grasp. You struggle for worldly benefits but expect God's Vision. With such hypocrisy you can never acquire God."

Invisible causes and visible manifestations

These days scientists, atheists and argumentative people demand direct perception of God. "I must see with my eyes, touch with my hands, and taste with my tongue to believe. How can I believe in something I cannot see, touch or taste?" they question. With such arguments scientists deride devotees as fools. Truly, no one is more foolish than these scientists.

Why? An example: You see a man who is 5'6" tall, weighs 63kg, and is bald. These are all direct perceptions. Are they true? Definitely. But they are truths only for the external vision. The man also has qualities like sacrifice, kindness, and determination that cannot be touched or measured. Even if you cut the man into pieces, these qualities are not visible! So do you deny their existence? In fact, the man exists only due to these qualities. The invisible qualities are the basis for the visible attributes.

You say only what is seen is true, nothing else. You have accumulated past *karma*, which makes you suffer, but can

you see it? It is foolishness to deny what is not visible or tangible. You see a tree with branches. Scientists see the fruits, branches, and leaves, which are readily visible. But spirituality perceives the unseen roots. Without roots how can you have branches? Which are more important, branches or roots? In the same way, an invisible force is the foundation for the visible universe. We see and experience this world only by the power of that force.

A few more examples. Love and fragrance have no form, but we experience them. Can they be denied because they are invisible or intangible? So why do we believe in them? It is because even invisible entities have visible or tangible manifestations.

Love has no form, but the Mother, who gives Love, has a form. Fragrance has no form, but the fragrant flower has a form. Bliss has no form, but God, whose Nature is Bliss, has a form!

***Bhaava Roopam*—the Form of God**

What is this form of God? It is unattainable, beyond comprehension. It can be anything. For example, what is the form of wind or water? You can see water and feel wind but they have no forms. When do they acquire forms? When you fill air in a balloon, it assumes the corresponding form. Water acquires the form of its container.

In the same way, the formless God assumes the form cherished by the devotee. The devotee's feeling itself is the form of God. This has been called *bhaava-roopam*⁴ in our

scriptures. To know this form of God, meditation is recommended. God appears as the embodiment of whatever feelings the devotee meditates upon. If we think of God as benevolent, He appears so. If we think of Him as destructive, that is how He appears. So, all forms of God are dependent on your feeling. It is not possible to limit Divinity as being “this” or “that.”

Sarvatah Paani Paadam, Thath Sarvatokshi

Siro Mukham

Sarvatah Srutimal Loke, Sarvamaavritya

*Tishtati*⁵

With hands, feet, eyes, heads, mouth,
And ears pervading everything,
He permeates all worlds.

God is everywhere as energy. This is what scientists call atomic energy. But even the atom can be subdivided. There is nothing in this world without a form. Even Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh⁶ have forms, seen in a map. That is why ancient Hindus worshipped Mother Earth as a manifestation of Divinity. But modern scientists ridicule this practice.

Scientists question: Earth is just soil and rock. Why pray to it?

Our ancients explain: Soil gives us food. The Sun causes rain, day and night. All these are necessary for life. It is our culture to worship those whose benevolence sustains us. Nothing can exist without the five. Elements —earth, water, sky, fire and ether. So what is wrong in praying to them?

Scientists say: Fine, the five elements are okay. But why pray to a stone idol? How can it be God?

The ancients reply: God is everywhere! Why not worship Him in the rock?

Scientists argue: But the rock has no awareness.

Here students should realize an important point. On the 15th of August⁷, we raise our national flag aloft. We salute it. Why? It is just a piece of cloth, composed of threads. It has no qualities or awareness. It flutters with the wind and lies limp in still air. What virtues of the flag make it worthy of respect? It is a symbol of independence won after arduous struggle. Similarly, although divine Consciousness is everywhere, we need signs and symbols to remind us of it.

Atheism simply cannot exist when we inquire in this manner. *Dhanamoolam Idam Jagat*—Today the world revolves around money. Sometimes when you drop a currency note on the ground by mistake, you touch it to your eyes as a mark of respect. Why? The currency is only bamboo and grass pulp, isn't it? What awareness or individuality does it have? None. Then why do you honor it? Not just devotees, atheists also worship money! Do atheists say, "No, thank you, I do not want money"? No, atheists also desire it! They honor the seal of the Reserve Bank, which makes the paper valuable. Similarly you display your grandfather's photo and garland it when he passes away. Does your grandfather still exist in the

photo? No, the photo is only paper pulp. So why do you respect it? It is his symbol.

Yes, this is rock. But the rock is a symbol of the omnipresent God. The *bhaava-roopam* of the devotee is concentrated in the rock! Thus, Hindus worship not rocks, but God in rocks, in the Earth and in idols. You may ignore some practices if you wish, but no one has the right to condemn or weaken another's faith. Each one is entitled to his own faith. Just as one person's breathing (*shvaasam*) cannot be substituted for another person, one's faith (*vishvaasam*) is personal also.

Absolute truth, relative truth, and untruth

Such search for the Truth is described in the *Vedas*. What does it mean to search for the Truth? The Truth is everywhere, so it is meaningless to search for it, some argue. An example. You see your mother, daughter, sister, wife, and mother-in-law with your eyes. The eyes that see are the same. Now, the feeling used in each case is the "search." Having eyes is not enough. You must ask yourself, "How do I look at my mother?" The answer: With motherly feeling. This is the "search for the Truth". Just because the eyes are one and the same, can you look upon everyone with the same outlook?

The vision is the same but the underlying feelings are different. In the same way, all our senses are one but each has its own faculties and limits. The search for the Truth means discriminating between what is *sathyam* (Truth), *nijam* (relative truth or fact), and *asathyam* (untruth).

What is the difference between a relative truth and the Truth? There is a vast difference. Students, you know the Earth is a globe. But the ground near your house is flat. The flatness is relative truth. That is how you see it. But when you search for the Truth, it turns out to be a globe. So, a relative truth is really an untruth perceived to be the Truth. You see a man wearing a suit. That is today's truth. Tomorrow he might wear a *dhoti*.⁸ What is present today but absent tomorrow is relative truth. The unchanging Truth is ever true. That is Divinity.

Untruth is opposed to both Truth and relative truth. What is untruth? To see something and say otherwise is falsehood. In darkness you see a rope and call it a snake. That is delusion born of improper discrimination. You jumped to a conclusion. Shine a torch and you will realize it is a rope. To consider the rope as a snake is illusion.

In this manner, spirituality conceals many subtle secrets. This has been called *sathya-rahasyam*—Secret of Truth. Why should the Truth be called “secret”? Because it is veiled to the unripe intellect and must be churned from effort. Thus, *Vedas* say, *Ekam Sath, Vipraah Bahudaa Vadant i*—Truth is one, but sages interpret it in many ways. *Vedas* also say, *Ekam Eva Adviteeyam Brahma*—God is One, not many. The *Vedas* prove these truths in a beautiful manner.

See God through love

Scientists have also come across divine Power in their experiments. They acknowledge the existence of a changeless power without calling it “God”. Whatever name they may use,

they cannot change the substance. There is water in this tumbler. The Telugu man calls it *neeru*, the Tamil man says *tanni*, the Hindi man calls it *paani*, and the Englishman, water. The names change, not the water. People also worship God in countless names and forms depending on their personal attitudes. But only One God exists.

The world cannot exist without God. You say that this cloth is a collection of threads, which, in turn, are nothing but cotton. But the cloth, threads, and cotton are one and the same. Apply such logic in spiritual inquiry as well.

But to believe blindly without inquiry is also great devotion because it is born of total faith. The infant places unquestionable faith in the mother and believes whatever the mother says. This cannot be called foolishness. Even Jesus said, "How happy I would be if I could be an innocent child for a moment every day!" Meaning, we must have the innocence of infants. We shouldn't nurture manipulation, deceit, and secrecy. With straightforwardness, we achieve purity, and Truth is present within purity. But today, staying aloof from such purity, we trust that polluted conduct pays.

Students! Do not entertain frivolous talk and shallow opinions in matters concerning Divinity. What scientists know today is close to nothing. You must understand this well. Knowledge is small but the exhibition is gargantuan. Those who know the Truth are calm and silent. The pot full of water is steady while the half-full pot rocks back and forth noisily. Those who argue are half-full pots.

To be a scientist, first control your senses and grow in Love. “God is Love, Love is God, Live in Love.” Love cannot be bought or sold. No company manufactures and supplies Love. The only machine that generates Love is within us—the heart. Heart is called *hridaya*. That which is full of compassion (*daya*) alone is a *hridaya*. But modern hearts are stones, with no traces of kindness. Such hearts cannot be called human hearts. No, no. God is the resident of the heart. A heart with compassion is the temple of God. Develop compassion and you will perceive God in your heart. If we look only outside, we are confused. What we see outside must be seen inside as well. The *Vedas* say, *Antar Bahischatat-sarva Vyaapya Narayana Sthitah*—Narayana is present inside, outside ... everywhere.

Creation speaks of the Creator

Divinity is everywhere. In every step, in every breath, there is God. In every syllable you utter, God is present. That is Divinity in the form of speech. Therefore, God is described as *Sabda Brahma Mayi, Charaachara Mayi*—Manifestation of sound, pervading sentient and non-sentient things.

A small example. Someone is singing in a radio station in Delhi. When we power the radio here, we hear that song. So is it present everywhere or not? Radio waves are present everywhere. They are manifestations of divine Power, as are magnetic energy, atomic energy, light, and heat.

Following such inquiry, we realize that God’s creation has endless secrets. In Bharath alone there are 900 million people. The world has 5.8 billion people. It was 5 billion sometime

ago but now it has grown by 800 million. With growth in population, there is growth in sin as well. Now, among these millions, are any two persons identical? Who can understand such mysteries? Even among twins there are differences. They are not made from a mold. Only God could create such a wonderful cosmos.

The *Bhagavatham* says that the stories and deeds of God are beyond comprehension. No one can understand His sports, but listening to them generates Bliss in the heart and grants immortality. Such is the nature of Divinity.

Consider radio waves transmitted from Delhi, Bangalore, Madras, Calcutta, Sri Lanka, even America. No two waves mingle. What a mystery! There is no confusion between the millions of waves in the air. When does the confusion arise? Only when we do not tune into the correct station. This “tuning” is meditation. Tune your mind with concentration to receive the “news,” namely, divine Vision. When the mind is divergent, the reception is unclear or meaningless.

The Sun shines over a pond. The water has ripples due to wind. The Sun appears unsteady in the pond. But in reality, only the image wavers, not the Sun. The waves in your mind make you perceive Divinity in various moods, names, forms. But Divinity is One. It is not Divinity but only your feelings that change with time. Meditation is the process of uniting the mind’s scattered thoughts.

Everyone can see diversity in unity. We must see unity in diversity, the underlying principle, the *Atma*. How? Here are a plate, a tumbler and a spoon. Names and forms are different.

The value of each object is also different. But the value of silver is the same, whether in the plate, tumbler or spoon. Divinity has assumed the name and form of every single entity in creation. You may respect and value one person and ridicule another. These are attitudes based on the behavior of those persons. But the *Atma* Principle is One.

Do your duty

Mud is found all over, so it has no value. But gold has great value. Why? It is difficult to obtain. In the same way, a man with a pure heart is given great respect. His actions carry weight. A happy life and good reputation depend on your actions, nothing else. To scale the heights of greatness, one must engage in sacred deeds. Human life is indeed very valuable. The first student speaker today told you: "Men are more valuable than all the wealth of the world." Who gives value to gold and diamonds? Man alone. Why do you pay huge amount of money for a tiny plot of land in the city? Only because that's the value given to it by man. Unfortunately, the man who values everything does not value himself today! This is because human values are disregarded.

Realize that the body has no value. Everyone has a body composed of the five elements. The body becomes meaningful only when sanctified with noble actions and ideals. For example, a glass jar can preserve savories and pickles for many months. But if you eat these pickles, they cannot be preserved by the body even for a few hours! So the glass jar is much better than this body!

Remember: Your respect in society depends not on looks, personality, or wealth but only on behavior. If you adhere to virtue, you are automatically honored. You do not need to ask for respect. Therefore:

Adugakuve O Manasa!
Adugu Koladi Adi Adugunu Padunani
Adugakunna Pani Vadigaanagunani
Adugani Sabarini Aadarinchade!

Do not ask, O Mind!

The more you ask, the lower it is placed.

Without asking, the task proceeds quickly.

Sabari, who never asked, was showered with Grace!

An example: Dasharatha, the father of Rama, cried for Rama repeatedly and begged Him to stay near. But poor Dasharatha died a broken-hearted man, separated from Rama. On the other hand, Jatayu did not beg Rama for favors. He did his duty, to the extent that he sacrificed his life trying to save Sita Devi. Even in his last moments, Jatayu worried only about Rama's troubles. As a result, Rama rested Jatayu on His thigh and performed his funeral rites like a son.

Many sages begged Rama for favors and waited for Him in their hermitages. Instead of rewarding them, Rama chose to go to Sabari. Sabari didn't ask Him anything directly but only through her heart. God knows what to give to whom, when, where, and how. Therefore, do your duty and God's Grace will overflow, unasked.

We must pose five questions to everything: who, where, why, when and how. If you simply overwhelm God in your flood of desires without asking yourself these questions, do you think God will fulfill your wishes? You should know when, where, how, and what to ask of God. Cultivate the intellect to recognize the right time and situation for the fulfillment of desires. This discrimination is called Constant Integrated Awareness or *Prajnaanam Brahma*.

You and God are One

The Vedas consist of great declarations: *Prajnaanam Brahma. Aham Brahmaasmi. Ayam Atma Brahma*. What is meant by *Ayam Atma Brahma*? Simply, “I am *Atma*, I am *Brahma*.” Scholars give elaborate interpretations but the meaning is simply, “I am *Atma*.” You and *Atma* are not different, but are one and the same.

When you speak, you must weigh each word carefully. What you say, demonstrate in action. Have faith in the concept first, then practice it.

Some time ago, Swami asked a college boy, “Who are you?” The boy recollected that Swami teaches *Ayam Atma Brahma*. He replied, “I and You are One, Swami.” Swami said, “It seems your intellect has really blossomed today! Are you really the same as Swami?” He said, “Yes, Swami, You and I are the same.” “Then go outside and give *darshan* to the devotees,” I said! Who would look at him if he went to give *darshan*? [laughter] But if faith is deep, God will definitely appear through you as well. People only talk without practicing. “The proper study of mankind is man.” To give credence to your

words, put them into action. Practice grants experience. Only then will you realize the Truth.

The *Bhagavatham*

Students! Your Vice-chancellor requested today that I explain the *Bhagavatham* to you. It is necessary for students to understand this scripture, its secrets, and the nature of the child Krishna. *Bhagavatham* rhymes with *baagavutam*, which means, “we will improve.”⁹ By listening to it, we will become better persons, permeated with devotion and wisdom. The *Bhagavatham* contains the fruits of all spiritual practices.

The word *Bhagavatamu*¹⁰ has five syllables:

BHA	stands for	<i>Bhakti</i> (Devotion)
GA		<i>Gnannam</i> (Wisdom)
VA		<i>Vairagyam</i> (Detachment)
TA		<i>Tatwam</i> (Nature)
MU		<i>Mukti</i> (Liberation)

Therefore, the *Bhagavatham* is the gist of all scriptures and texts, the goal of all paths, the essence of all fruits.

From tomorrow I have decided to dole out to you all, cool helpings of the *Bhagavatham*. Don’t just listen to it. Is your hunger satisfied by listening to the names of foods? No, eating alone fills the stomach.

Therefore, I do not ask you to listen to *Bhagavatham*, but to eat it. You are future citizens of this country. Your virtue alone will guarantee progress in the nation.

Help ever, hurt never

Embodiments of Love! Make your hearts pure with selfless actions and serve society. Don't indulge in wasteful deeds and pollute your mind. First understand what it means to be human and then progress towards Divinity. I told you in the morning how scientists are developing many complex machines. They don't recognize the one machine that invents all machines: the human body. They ask, "Who are you?" but never, "Who am I?" They spend all their time discussing others instead of themselves. Self-inquiry is very essential. It makes everything else easy to understand.

Embodiments of Love! In these ten days you will listen to the words of elders. It is not possible to remember everything that you hear here. Vyasa wrote eighteen *Puranas*, which were elaborate texts. They were so voluminous that they could possibly be placed under the head as pillows but not inside the head! Vyasa pondered the solution to this problem. He finally concluded and propagated that all *Puranas* could be condensed into two teachings: "Help Ever, Hurt Never."

Of all that you hear in this Summer Course, practice one or two teachings. Do not hurt anyone. If you cannot help, stay away—that itself is a great help. Remember God always. Consider yourself as a form of God, and you will gradually realize your Divinity.

[Bhagavan concluded with the *bhajan* "*Hari Bhajana Bina Sukha Shanthi Nahi*".]

¹. Seven Eternal Sages.

². Author of the epic *Ramayana*.

³. He classified ancient Indian spiritual knowledge into the four *Vedas*. He was also the author of the Puranas, and the epics *Mahabharatha* and *Bhagavatham*.

⁴. Form born of feeling. (*Bhaava*=Feeling, *Roopam*=Form).

⁵. Bhagavad Gita (XIII:13).

⁶. States in Southern India.

⁷. Independence Day of India.

⁸. Traditional Indian dress for men.

⁹. In Telugu.

¹⁰. As pronounced in Telugu.

3. Birth Of Sri Krishna

Tyaja Durjana Samsargam

Bhaja Sadhu Samaagamam

Kuru Punyam Ahoraatram

Smara Nityam Anityataam

Renounce the company of the wicked.

Seek the company of the pious.

Perform good actions day and night.

Discriminate between the temporary and the permanent.

Students!

To understand the nature of God requires eligibility. *Bhaagavatah Idam Bhagavatham* —*Bhagavatham* speaks of God and His Divine sports. It is also said, *Bhaagavataanaam Idam Bhagavatham* —*Bhagavatham* describes the lives of devotees. Scholars have interpreted this scripture based on their individual outlooks. Truly, the *Bhagavatham* illustrates the intimate relation between God and His devotees. It is the bridge between the Lord and devotees. Four requisites are absolutely essential to understand and practice the message of the *Bhagavatham*.

Tyaja Durjana Samsargam

First, give up bad company. Bad company is not just bad people. Bad thoughts must also be abandoned. Feelings acquire form as actions. There should be no hesitation in renouncing bad company. Why? Bad company can cause even a devotee to become an atheist and a renunciant to become attached. “Tell me your company and I shall tell you what you are.” The *Bhagavatham* states that a poisonous snake is much more desirable than bad company! Why? A snake bites once and leaves; but a wicked person bites repeatedly, day and

night. The joy of malicious people lies in violence, in making others cry. They cannot even sleep peacefully without criticizing or harming someone! The human mind is impressionable and assumes the attitudes of one's associates. In the *Mahabharatha*, the characters Duryodhana, Dussashana, Sakuni, and Karna are called *dushta chatushtayam*—four wicked ones. Karna was inherently noble but was corrupted by the other three. Hence, the sooner we distance ourselves from negative people, the sooner we will perceive Divinity within our hearts.

Bhaja Sadhu Samaagamam

It is not enough to merely leave bad company. The company of the wise and pious is necessary. We must cultivate friendship with people of compassion and integrity and follow their example to realize the value of human life. But even these two are not enough.

Kuru Punyam Ahoraatram

Third, perform sacred deeds day and night, ceaselessly. Vyasa said, *Paropakarah Punyaya Paapaaya Parapedanam*—helping others is merit, harming others is sin. What is paropakaram? People take it to mean *para* (others) + *upakaram* (favor) = helping others. But this limited, worldly meaning is not what Vyasa had in mind. *Para* (principle beyond the world) + *upa* (near) + *kara* (to go) = *Paropakara*. Therefore, true merit is to be in proximity to the *Atma*. To develop nearness to the *Bhagavatham*, to devotees, and to the Lord is the highest merit. This must be followed day and night.

Smara Nityam Anityaam

Discriminate between the ephemeral and the eternal. Discrimination is essential in every action. “Is it good or bad, right or wrong?” Such inquiry must be exercised to the limit of our intellectual capacity. First discriminate, then follow what is good. What is meant by “good”? Good means eternal. Give up the transient.

It is only when we cultivate these four attributes that we can understand the significance and secrets of the *Bhagavatham*.

Devaki and Vasudeva

Soora was the Lord of the Yadava dynasty. The term “Yadava” is derived from Yadu, the son of King Yayati, who was Soora’s ancestor. “Yadava” means “descendant of Yadu.” Soora divided his kingdom into two parts: Mathura and Soorasena. His older son, Ugrasena, ruled Mathura. Kamsa was Ugrasena’s son. Soora’s second son, Devaka, ruled Soorasena. Devaki was his daughter.

Kamsa did not have any siblings, so he considered Devaki as his own little sister. Kamsa’s affection for Devaki was truly boundless. To him, she was his second life. In due course, the marriage of Devaki was finalized with Vasudeva, the son of Soora. Kamsa took active part in the marriage arrangements and offered many ornaments, horses and elephants to the couple with love.

This affectionate Kamsa later turned into a cruel hater. Why? Only due to selfishness. There are such demons even today who would harm their own mother, father, brother, or

friend for the fulfillment of their desires! If possible, we should teach wisdom to such people. We should dissociate from such sinners who hold self-interest highest.

Kamsa placed the couple in a chariot and started guiding it towards the village of Vasudeva. It was a long and joyous procession. Suddenly they heard a voice from the sky: “Kamsa, you fool! The woman in your chariot will cause your death! Her eighth son will be your destroyer.” Kamsa immediately jumped down, caught hold of Devaki’s hair, and dragged her down. He lifted his sword with his right hand. Everyone was terrified. Vasudeva intervened, “Kamsa, you have taken birth in a great dynasty. You will stain its glory by this ignoble act. You will incur the heinous sin of killing a woman. How can you do this to your dearest sister who you loved more than yourself? Calm down. Inquire. Death follows birth like night follows day. Everyone is bound to die one day or the other. Not even an hour has passed since our marriage! Why kill this pure lady for what is inevitable?”

Kamsa was harsh, “My life is in danger due to her. She cannot go free!” Vasudeva quickly thought of a strategy to save Devaki till the birth of her children. He said, “Devaki herself poses no danger to you, it is only her eighth child. I will deliver every child to you as it is born. Leave her alone.” Kamsa considered the proposal and was satisfied. He let go of Devaki and walked back to his palace.

The newly-weds, who were supposed to reach home in joy, were drowned in tears. From the very first day of their marriage they were immersed in grief! Why? It was the direct

result of associating with bad company in the form of Kamsa. Evil in a person is not always visible. It is seen only when it manifests in actions.

Kamsa's cruelty

In due course the first child, a girl, was born. Noble and virtuous souls never break their promises, no matter what the price. They alone qualify to be called true humans. Kamsa was a demon. People of his category must be avoided. And true men like Vasudeva should be befriended. Only vile people make promises in time of need and conveniently forget them later. There is no sin greater than reneging on your word. This is what Emperor Bali also told his guru, Sukracharya.¹ The one who forgets promises is a great sinner.

Vasudeva was definitely not such a person. To him truth was the highest penance. He carried his child to Kamsa. He upheld his word. Kamsa was struck by Vasudeva's nobility. He thought, "My brother-in-law kept his word even in such an extreme situation. Such purity and adherence to truth are absent in me." Vasudeva's integrity changed the cruel mind of Kamsa. He told Vasudeva, "Your truthfulness will always protect you" and returned the baby. Why? Kamsa knew that his enemy was the eighth child, not the first. Vasudeva retraced his steps with the child in his arms.

Then Sage Narada, the son of Brahma, arrived at Kamsa's palace. He asked Kamsa, "How are you, your subjects, and kingdom?" as per formality. Then he began talking about the issue at hand. "Kamsa! Don't you know the reality of the Yadavas? They are divine beings born on Earth to herald

the Avatar. The Lord is destined to be your killer. You returned the first child to Vasudeva without grasping the situation in its entirety. No one can fathom the intentions of God. What is meant by the eighth child? The first becomes the eighth if you count backward starting at eight! If counting begins with two, the second becomes the eighth. In this manner, all eight births can qualify as the eighth! This is a Divine mystery.”

After sowing this doubt in Kamsa’s mind, Narada calmly departed. The spark ignited by Narada grew into a raging fire in Kamsa’s heart. His eyes crimson with fury, Kamsa ran to Vasudeva’s house. Devaki was feeding her child. Kamsa wrenched the baby away by its leg and beheaded it with his sword.

There is no limit to the wretchedness of demonic people! They have no trace of compassion! They cultivate all inhuman traits and display them in cruelty. Six children were done away with in this manner. Devaki and Vasudeva witnessed these horrific crimes and suffered terribly. But so did Kamsa. Ever since Kamsa paid heed to Narada’s words, he lost interest in food and sleep. He became weaker and weaker.

In this situation, Jarasandha, the King of Magadha, came to Mathura and gave his daughters in marriage to Kamsa. After his marriage, Kamsa grew stronger owing to the support of Jarasandha and his allies. He used his new-found strength in acts of greater cruelty. Narada had said that the Yadavas were heavenly beings in human form. Kamsa began harassing the Yadavas. Not able to bear his crimes, people fled to neighboring

kingdoms as refugees. Some people continued to stay and act as per Kamsa's wishes, having no other option.

We must try to understand the nature of Divinity. God always assumes human forms. Why? Only for the upliftment of mankind. Only then can men feel intimate kinship with Him. Therefore, an *Avatar* has both Divine and Human traits. When in human form, the Divine sometimes behaves like an ordinary man and acts as if He knows nothing. Devotees get misled by His acting and think, "He seems quite plain. How can He be God?" People concentrate on His human qualities and forget His Divinity. "He eats with us, walks with us, talks with us. What is special about Him?" they say. That is why they are surprised by miracles. This happens in the case of every *Avatar*.

Many sages of the forest worshipped Rama as Lord Narayana and welcomed him to their hermitages. But Rama always feigned ignorance by saying, "Am I Narayana? I did not know that. I am only Rama, the son of Dasharatha. I am an ordinary man. Please don't embarrass me." Even great sages were deceived by His pretense! No one can comprehend God's nature.

Sri Krishna Avatar

As time passed God summoned *Maya Shakthi*.² Devaki had conceived her seventh child. God ensured that everything was progressing according to His master plan. Vasudeva had a wife, Rohini, prior to Devaki. She was at Nanda's place temporarily, for fear of Kamsa. The Lord instructed Maya to transfer Devaki's seventh child into the womb of Rohini. And Maya

Herself entered into the womb of Yasoda, the wife of Nanda. This seventh child, the incarnation of Adishesha,³ was named Balarama. That is why Balarama is also called *Sankarshana*, meaning “transferred”. The Lord told Maya, “I will Myself enter Devaki’s womb as her eighth child.”

Whenever cruelty and unrighteousness reach intolerable proportions, God incarnates on Earth and destroys wrongdoers. God Himself steps into the world. Why? Couldn’t He send His deputies to complete the task? If two people are quarreling on the road, a constable is enough to separate them. When the crowd builds, the sub-inspector arrives. But if a major riot begins, the inspector-general himself is required to control it. The remedy must suit the severity of the situation. Today the world is boiling in gross unrighteousness. People suffered likewise under Kamsa’s policies. Everyone felt as if he was in the midst of a fire. “What will happen next? Will I live to see tomorrow?” Such were the constant fears in people’s minds.

God decided to incarnate to destroy the cruel and selfish Kamsa. Every *Avatar* has two causes: prayers of devotees and atrocities of wicked people. The unity of these two is essential for an *Avatar*. An example. Prahlada remembered the name of Hari without interruption. But Hiranya Kashyapa, his father, was a hater of Hari. Prahlada’s love and Hiranya Kashyapa’s hatred combined to result in *Narasimha Avatar*. As long as Prahlada chanted *Om Namo Narayanaya*, the Lord protected him. In what situations was he protected? When he could not endure the atrocities of his father. Thus, Hiranya’s crimes became Prahlada’s protection! Hiranya’s hatred made it

possible for Prahlada to acquire proximity to the Lord. These two factors must be present for every *Avatar's* advent: wickedness and devotion. In this way, Divine plans conceal subtle secrets.

The *Avatar* manifested. The Divine effulgence of the child illuminated the surroundings. Vasudeva and Devaki bowed to the child. How did they know? They were told earlier that God would incarnate as their son. The Lord had appeared to them in a dream the previous night and said, "I will take birth from your womb at dawn." They knew He was God. Yet they worried for His safety if Kamsa stormed in! This is Maya, delusion! If the baby was God, does His protection lie in their hands? They were God's parents and yet, full of fear. See, the games which Maya plays on people's minds!

They were in a jail. Their hands and feet were shackled with chains. The doors to the jail were made of heavy iron. The guards were ferocious demons. The Lord had instructed Vasudeva to take Him out. How was this to be done? Vasudeva placed the Lord in a small basket and wondered how to fulfill the command. In a trice, the chains came loose. The doors flew open. It was three o'clock in the morning. The gatekeepers were fast asleep. No one else was around. Vasudeva quietly walked out of the dungeon. As he proceeded, there was a tremendous downpour of rain—a sign of the intense joy and purity of the occasion. Even the clouds were ecstatic at the Divine Advent.

Balancing the basket on his head, Vasudeva walked in the direction of Gokula. But River Yamuna flowed across his

path. When God Himself walks, what can obstruct Him? Adishesha also came there and the river parted for them to proceed. At that moment Maya was born to Yasoda. Everyone was asleep at Gokula also. Vasudeva switched the babies and returned. It was all done according to Divine instructions. But nobody believes this today. Nobody can understand God's plans. The sports of God are beyond all comprehension.

Even the *gopikas*⁴ tried to fathom Krishna in various ways, only to meet with failure. Then they told Him, "Krishna! You are smaller than an atom, vaster than the universe. You are present as the witness in all 8,400,000 species of living beings. How, then, can it be possible to know You?" There is nothing God's Will cannot accomplish. He can turn mud into diamonds and diamonds into mud, earth into sky and sky into Earth. We must place full trust in Divine power. To those with such faith, God reveals the Truth about Himself.

In keeping with God's command, Vasudeva placed the Lord next to Yashoda's sleeping form and returned to Mathura with the girl. God's ways are so mysterious! Only after Vasudeva returned and placed the girl in Devaki's arms did the jail guards wake up. The baby girl cried out loudly. Kamsa was informed of the EIGHTH BIRTH! Kamsa was not sleeping, anyway. He was in constant torment, eager for news from the jail. Sinners always suffer for their actions in this manner. Kamsa stormed in and, as usual, attempted to behead the baby girl. But the baby slipped out of his grasp and flew upward, transformed and shone in Her full glory as Yoga Maya. She exclaimed, "Fool! You don't know God's Will! Your vanquisher survives elsewhere. It is impossible to harm Him. Recognize

this truth. *Vinaasha Kaale Vipareeta Buddhi*—a contorted intellect is a sign of approaching doom. You cannot escape your destiny. God is an embodiment of *kaarya-kaarana* —cause and effect. You haven't understood the laws of cause and effect." So saying, Yoga Maya disappeared.

Thence began Kamsa's obsessive search for the Divine child. Unable to limit his feelings of "I" and "Mine", Kamsa initiated a massacre of all infants in his kingdom. Thousands of people were treated with immeasurable cruelty. You may ask, why should innocent children be slaughtered? What sins have these babies done? Why should God treat them so heartlessly? Such doubts may arise. Firstly, it was the basis for the destruction of demonic persons. Secondly, it is only the body that dies, not the *Atma*. You cannot escape death. Thirdly, the Lord created them and destroyed them, both as acts of His Will. It is not easy to comprehend God's Will.

Sri Krishna's childhood

Gradually, Kamsa trained his eyes on Gokula. He sent many demons there, all of whom were destroyed by the child Krishna. Not even one miscreant returned alive. At this time, Yasoda worried intensely about Krishna's safety, although she perceived Divine signs in Him. Then came Putana, an ogress. She took the form of a beautiful lady and approached Yasoda, "Sister, I heard that you gave birth to a son after many years. I am surprised and delighted. May I see him?" There was nothing untoward in this request. In fact, people often came in this manner. Yasoda took Putana inside unsuspectingly, since Putana had assumed the form of one of her friends. Then Putana insisted that she be allowed to nurse the baby. An argument

ensued between the two of them, at which time Krishna began drinking Putana's milk. Not just her milk, but her life-force was also sucked out. Putana fell down dead. Everyone in Gokula was astounded at the infant's superhuman powers.

Krishna showed many *leelas* in this manner. In every *Avatar's* life the first sixteen years are *leelas*, sports. From sixteen to thirty-five years of age are *mahatmyas*, miracles. From thirty-five to seventy-five years is the period of teaching. Every *Avatar* passes through these three stages. Till His sixteenth year, Krishna showed many *leelas* to the world. It is impossible to limit these *leelas*. He displayed innumerable *leelas* to the *gopikas* and *gopalas*. But they could not grasp them.

Once, Balarama and Krishna were playing. Krishna starting eating mud. Balarama complained to Yasoda, who came running. People in Gokula were in constant dread of Kamsa. Yasoda imagined that the mud may also be poisoned by Kamsa! She asked, "So, you ate mud, did you?" By His replies Krishna gave her glimpses into His reality. "Mother! Am I a small boy to eat mud? Am I mad? No, no. It is not even hunger. I am not a boy." What did Krishna mean? By denying what He wasn't, Krishna meant "I am God." But bound in the feelings of motherly affection related to the body, Yasoda could not recognize Krishna's Divinity. She said sternly, "Open your mouth! I want to look inside." Krishna complied. Yasoda saw the entire universe inside His mouth! "Is it a dream, an illusion... what is happening? Am I Yasoda?" she wondered. She was totally confused. In this way Krishna gave glimpses of His Divinity to His parents and friends.

Balarama was very mischievous. He used to ridicule Krishna or rather, make a pretense of it, so that Krishna's miracles may be known to all. He told Krishna, "Hey Krishna! You are not the son of mother Yasoda! Mother and father are fair in complexion but you are dark! How can you explain that?" This was the truth—Krishna wasn't their son! Krishna ran to Yasoda and asked most innocently, "Mother! They say I'm not your son because I'm dark. Please tell me the truth." He insisted and did not let go. Yasoda didn't know the truth and said, "My dear son! You are really my son, my own son," and hugged Him tightly. Then Krishna ate his food and went away. Krishna lived as an ordinary boy, behaved as if He knew nothing, displayed endless powers, and gave hints about His Divinity constantly.

The name Krishna is much sweeter than names like Hari, Narayana and Vishnu. Similarly, Radha is sweeter than Lakshmi, Durga, Saraswati, Sathyabhama, and Rukmini. What words are easiest to say and sweetest as well? Krishna-Radha! Who are Krishna and Radha? Krishna is Purusha, God. Radha is Prakruthi, Nature. Everyone loves Nature and worships it. Nature is God's base or *dhara*, which is the same as Radha. The *Bhagavatham* was written to reveal these divine concepts.

A stalk of sugarcane is sweet, no doubt, but it also has hard joints in between. Can you demand that a sugarcane be sweet through and through? Similarly, when speaking of God we experience unpleasantness also. You find bad inside good. The actions of God are the combination of good and bad. Happiness has no value without sorrow. For this reason, the advent of an Avatar is preceded by loss, misery and hardship in the

world. These apply not just to God but to humans also. Every person has good and bad in his life. Even a millionaire has some woes stealing his peace of mind.

Mystery of Avatars

Why, even renunciants have worries! Vashishta was a divine sage. He was the epitome of greatness, master of all divine powers. Even this divine sage sometimes failed to recognize Divinity. He knew that Rama was the incarnation of Lord Narayana. Once upon a time he told Dasharatha, “King Dasharatha! I do not desire anything from you. I really have no need to come to your kingdom and stay here as your Royal Priest. But I know that Lord Narayana will incarnate in your house. I want to see Him, serve Him. That is the only desire that makes me stay here. I have not come for fame, respect, wealth or comfort.” Vashishta himself was competent to acquire all worldly prosperity by mere willing. Such a great sage later taught Sri Rama the collection of teachings known as *Yoga Vashishtam*! Why did Vashishta fall into delusion? It was because Rama behaved like a normal man, showing His Divinity only occasionally.

The outer form donned by *Avatars* misleads everyone. Another example. Scholars determine *mahurtas*, or auspicious moments, for important occasions such as marriages and inaugurations of projects. Vashishta made a *mahurta* for Sri Rama’s coronation. After much study and meditation, Vashishta decided that 7:00 a.m. on a particular day would be most appropriate to install Rama as King. This *mahurta* was meant for coronation but resulted in exile! So what was its efficacy? Remember, this was no ordinary *mahurta* set by some ordinary

Brahmin. Vashishta was a *Brahmarishi*.⁵ A *mahurta* set by him cannot be invalid. Yet, did the coronation take place? No. Not just that, but Rama was exiled to the forest! How did this happen? The reason is that NOTHING CAN STOP DIVINE WILL, not even the will of a *Brahmarishi*. Rama planned these events to show His Divinity to the world.

Remember: Only God's Will succeeds, no one else's. God is *sarva sanga parityagi*—One who has renounced all attachment. But there is one bond that God cannot renounce: the bond of pure love between Him and His devotee. God changes His Own Will such that the will of His devotee may be upheld. Markandeya was born by Lord Shiva's blessing and was allotted only sixteen years of life. He told himself, "I have only sixteen years. These years should not be wasted. I will offer every moment to God. Let me acquire a good reputation for myself and my parents." He contemplated on the Lord incessantly. Pleased by Markandeya's purity and Love, the Lord mollified His own condition by blessing him to stay sixteen years old forever! God is *Bhakta paraadheena* —One who submits to His devotees. Such is the mighty efficacy of devotion! None can limit the power of devotees.

But modern devotees are part-time devotees. One moment they are devotees (*bhakta*) and the next moment, seekers of worldly pleasures (*bhuktas*). They are devious and cunning. They display piety and humility in Swami's physical presence but become different persons when they are away. This cannot be called devotion. It is hypocrisy. You are cheating only yourself, no one else, much less, God! Who can cheat Me? *Yat Bhavam Thath Bhavati*—as you act, so is the reflection and re-

sound. I am not harmed by anyone. I do not hate anyone. Devotees might imagine that I dislike certain persons. That is your hatred, not Mine.

There is no blemish of any sort in Divinity. It is immaculate, sacred and supremely pure. Your hearts must become that pure also. But that is not the case with devotees today. Devotees should concentrate on the *Avatar*'s Divinity. Do not be misled by His vesture. You think "He is human" one moment and "He is God" the next moment. This humanness of the *Avatar* is false. This is *maya*.

What is *maya*? To see what is not real is *maya*. To forget what really exists is *maya*. You forget what you see and understand and instead, harbor unknown doubts! Concentrate on the true essence of the *Avatar*, which is present in you also. That is what Sanjay Sahni said earlier: When you question, "Swami, are you God?" the answer is, "Yes, I am God, and you are, too." Everybody is a form of God. However, there is a difference. Here [in Swami] the Divinity appears without obstruction but in you, it is hidden.

Before the Mahabharatha war, Krishna questioned Arjuna, "Why are you so dejected?" Arjuna replied, "Lord! A colossal war is imminent. Scores of my friends and relatives may perish." Krishna said, "Foolish fellow! These people are not here for the first time. They have undergone countless births and deaths like us, since time immemorial. You are not the killer and they cannot be killed. Your attachment is veiling the Truth from you. You can neither kill them nor grant them life." Arjuna asked, "Lord, why is it that You know this truth

and I do not? I know only the present but not the distant past
You speak of. What is the reason?"

Then Krishna said, "Listen carefully to Me. How old
are you?"

"84 years," Arjuna said.

Krishna continued, "You were alive ten years ago,
weren't you?"

"Obviously, my Lord, because I am alive now!"

"Fine. And when did you get married?"

Arjuna gave the exact date, which was sixty years ear-
lier.

"When were you born?" was the next question.

"84 years ago on such-and-such day," replied Arjuna.

"Fine. Now, tell me what you were doing three years
ago on the full moon day of *Karthika*?"⁶

"I cannot recollect."

"But were you not alive then?"

"Of course I was alive, Lord. But I cannot remember
the details."

"Take note, Arjuna! You remember your marriage from
sixty years ago. But you have forgotten what hap-
pened only three years ago. Why? Because the for-
mer is important to you."

In the same way, people forget Divinity because it is
not important to them. You remember worldly details of your
life because that is important to you. Your goal is the world
and hence, you build worldly bonds. You do not aim for Di-
vinity, so you cannot recognize it, although it is your true na-
ture. It is confusing to understand the *Avatar*'s Divinity which

is clouded by His humanness. Is His humanness true or His superhuman power? Both are false! Ignore the covering and focus on the Divinity—that is true.

Another example. King Janaka⁷ was resting after supper one day. His queen was by his side. Janaka felt sleepy. The queen dismissed the attendants. Janaka had a vivid dream in which neighboring kings had invaded his kingdom and driven him into the forest. He was wandering as a destitute in the forest. He was overwhelmed with dejection and hunger. He began shouting, “I am hungry! I am hungry!” Some tribals were nearby, eating rice. He ran to them. The tribals gave him a leaf as a plate and shared their rice with him. All of a sudden an eagle swooped down upon the leaf and scattered the rice on the ground. Janaka screamed in anguish.

At this point Janaka really started screaming in his sleep. His queen shook him, “Lord, why are you shouting?” Janaka woke up and saw his queen, his soft bed and the opulent surroundings. But in his dream, he was exhausted, hungry, and forlorn. He saw this, he saw that. Which was true—this or that? Janaka started questioning aloud, “Is this true or that true?” The queen was baffled, “My Lord, what strange words are these?” But Janaka repeated the question many times—“Is this true or that true?”

The queen panicked, fearing Janaka had gone insane. She sent for Sage Vashishta. Janaka was oblivious to Vashishta’s entry and continued to ask, “Is this true or that true?” Vashishta grasped the situation with his divine vision. He told Janaka, “O King, neither this is true nor that. You alone are

true. You are present in the waking state and in the dream state. This is a daydream, and that was a night-dream. Neither of them is present in the other, but you are present in both. You are the Truth.”

Likewise, devotees perceive the *Avatar*'s Divinity and humanness and then doubt, “Is Divinity true or is that humanness true?” The divinity that you think you see is not true; neither is the humanness. Underlying both is the sanctity of the *Avatar*. When your vision is pure, you perceive the *Avatar*'s sanctity. Divinity attracts sacredness.

Body-consciousness causes attachment

All the *gopikas* came to Yasoda and complained. “Mother! Your son Krishna comes stealthily into our houses, breaks our pots and steals butter and milk.” This was a daily occurrence! Yasoda caught Krishna and scolded, “You don't eat what I serve. You go to other houses and steal. You are ruining our reputation. Why don't you eat the butter I give? Is the butter in our house not tasty?”

What is the inner significance of this incident? The mother serves with motherly affection. But the *gopikas* served the same food with pure love, divine feelings! It was not the butter that attracted Krishna but the purity of their hearts. Butter symbolizes the hearts of the *gopikas*, which were filled with purity, one-pointedness, and selflessness. Yashoda's butter was attachment, while the *gopikas*' was *prema*. This is the difference between love and attachment.

Attachment is born of body-consciousness. That which is related to the heart is Love. *Gopikas* were full of love. Whether their mother-in-laws screamed or their husbands shouted, they wouldn't answer back or fight. They never had any fear. The form of Krishna was imprinted in their hearts like words on paper. It is not possible to separate letters from the paper, is it? This is the principle of divine love, which we must make a sincere attempt to recognize. True love only gives and gives, never receives. Worldly love involves giving and receiving. This is the difference between worldly and divine Love. God never desires or receives anything, only gives, like one-way traffic. But you give and receive, come and go. That is why Sankaracharya said,

*Punarapi Jananam, Punarapi Maranam,
Punarapi Janani Jathare Shayanam.*
You are born again, you die again,
And you lie in the mother's womb, yet again.

*Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam
Govindam Bhaja, Moodha Mate.
Sampraapte Sannihite Kaale
Nahi Nahi Rakshati Dukrunkarane.*
Sing the glory of Govinda.
Sing His glory, O fool!
When your death approaches,
The rules of grammar will not save you.

Sing the glory of God without interruption. Don't limit yourself to "rules of grammar," meaning identification with the body. That is true worship, true faith. If the body is your goal

but you merely repeat “God, God” like a parrot, you will achieve only the body, not Divinity. There are many “confusions” of this sort in the *Avatar* principle. In no *Avatar*’s time were there persons who had unbroken vision of His Reality. Even the *Sapta Rishis* were no exception! They recognized Rama, but fell into doubts from time to time. Why? After all, they had some traces of body-identification also.

Identification with the body is the root cause of delusion. Forget the body and look inward. Why did our ancient sages shun cities and choose to live alone in forests? Because they followed *Tyaja Durjana Samsargam*—the first qualification for understanding *Bhagavatham*. They went away from people who were steeped in identification with the body. Devotion is the same whether living in your house or in the forest. But bad company is definitely avoidable in the forest. With this pure objective, our sages went away to forests.

To reach Divinity, renounce bad company. Then cultivate good company. Perform good acts day and night. Lastly, discriminate between the evanescent and the eternal. If students keep these four injunctions in mind, they can accomplish whatever they want!

The *Bhagavatham* is not just an account of the Krishna Avatar. The deeds of sacred devotees such as Dhruva and Prahlada stand out as glorious examples in this scripture. If we pay attention to these devotees, we will come to know everything there is to know. These devotees had absolute faith in God. In those ancient times, their unwavering faith earned them glorious experiences with God. We don’t have such faith today;

and if we do, it is not steadfast. We should quell the wavering of the mind and remain steady under all circumstances.

Vasudeva is a shining example of steadfastness. He surrendered his first child to Kamsa, just to uphold his word! Will any father do that today? Never! Harischandra worked in a cremation ground and even sold his wife just to uphold truth. His son died and he lost his kingdom. Still he did not yield to untruth. *Sathyam Naasti Paro Dharmah*—there is no dharma higher than truth. Never go back on your word. All worship, meditation and sacrifice are a waste if you renege on your word. God does not go by your external actions but only by your heart. God is *Bhaava Priya*. He delights in the internal feeling. You are *Baahya Priya*. You crave for the external.

Origin of Bhagavatham

Students! Youth is a period characterized by unsteadiness. Youth can become prey to various kinds of confusion. But it is also the golden period of life. It is a sacred stage of life. You must achieve steadiness right now. Develop unwavering faith in God and remove the restlessness of your mind. Then life will have been well spent. There is nothing permanent in this world. This world is called *Jagat*. Why? *Ja* (going) + *Gat* (coming) is the nature of the world—birth and rebirth, creation and destruction, joy and sorrow. But Divinity neither comes nor goes. This divine principle was given a written form by Vyasa in this scripture, the *Bhagavatham*.

Vyasa composed both the *Mahabharatha* and the *Bhagavatham*. For his greatness he is called *sloka daata*—giver of divine verses. God is *Loka Daata*—Giver of the world itself. In

spite of writing so many slokas, Vyasa's *soka* (sorrow) did not come to an end. Why? When he wrote the *Mahabharatha*, he described the fight between good and bad forces. As you think, so you become. In visualizing Duryodhana and Dussashana, Vyasa himself became tainted. Whatever "actor" you contemplate on, his action enters your mind. That is why Narada advised Vyasa, "Till now you wrote the *Mahabharatha*. You composed this epic but sullied your heart in the process. You thought about both good and bad characters. Now write only good."

The Vedas say, *Thath Thwam Asi* (You are That). *Yat bhavam Thath bhavati*. (You become whatever you think). When you constantly think of others' faults, that bad enters you. How? When you have a camera in your hand, whichever direction you turn and click, that is the picture you will capture. Your body is like a camera. Your vision is the lens, your heart is the film and your thoughts form the scene. Your intellect is the shutter. With your intellect, absorb only those impressions into your heart, which are spiritual. If you think bad, it imprints on your heart. So do not encourage bad thoughts.

Narada continued, "As long you talked of the Kauravas' bad deeds, how they troubled and cheated the Pandavas. Let go of the Kauravas' sin. Let go of the Pandavas' virtue as well. *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati*—think of the Lord and you will become Him. When you wrote the *Mahabharatha*, you thought of *Prakruthi* (Nature, Creation) and not *Purusha* (God). So the restlessness of God's Creation entered you. From tomorrow, describe only the Lord, His sports and

His qualities. You will achieve tranquility without a doubt.” Thus, the *Bhagavatham* came to be written.

We must experience at least a fraction of Vyasa’s pure feelings. Purification of the mind must come first. A pure mind results in God’s vision easily. The *Bhagavatham* is an account of devotees’ experiences, their bliss and the close relations they had with the Lord—all of which we must absorb.

What relation should we desire with God? What attitude results in what relation? What spiritual effort yields what goal? Inquire into these issues. You will repent later if such questions are not answered now. Make an effort to know everything. Awareness is life. You must know what is good and what is bad. Then take the good to heart and renounce the bad.

¹. The Lord took the Vamana (dwarf) *Avatar* to destroy Bali, the king of demons. Bali was doing mass charity as part of a *Vedic* ritual. Vamana approached him and asked for land measuring 3 lengths of His Feet. Bali laughed at this request and told Vamana that He could have a whole continent if He wanted. But when Vamana stuck to His strange demand, Bali promised to grant it. Meanwhile Bali’s guru recognized Vamana to be Lord Vishnu and advised Bali to save himself by retracting the promise. Bali refused to go back on his word. Vamana grew to gargantuan proportions and with His Feet, enveloped all of Creation, thereby ridding Bali of his kingdom as well as his ego. For his truthfulness, the Lord blessed the now-reformed Bali with future kingship of heaven as well as proximity to Himself.

². The Lord’s power of delusion, also known as *Yoga Maya* or simply, *Maya*.

³. The thousand-hooded serpent on which Lord Vishnu reclines.

⁴. Cowherd women of Brindavanam, considered the greatest devotees of Lord Krishna.

⁵. “One established in Brahman (Self)” - A sage of the highest caliber.

⁶. Eighth month of the Hindu calendar.

⁷. King of ancient India who became a Jivan-Mukta (liberated while alive) by performing his royal duties with detachment. He was also the father-in-law of Lord Rama.

4. Nabhaka, Naabhaka, and Ambarisha

Pradoshe Deepakaschandrah

Prabhaate Deepako Ravihi

Trailoke Deepako Dharmah

Suputrah Kula Deepakah

The Moon is the source of light at night.

During the day, the Sun gives light.

Dharma illumines the three world.

A good son is the light of the family.

There are two kinds of night: full moon and new moon. Darkness is not generally desired. But there are some people, like thieves and wicked people, who revel in it. Darkness aides bad thoughts and facilitates sinful behavior. Hence it is called *Raakshasa Kaalam*—demonic period of time. Night is characterized by *thamo guna*. Therefore, peaceful and virtuous people do not desire darkness.

Pradoshe Deepakaschandrah

The full moon is bright and beautiful. Everyone awaits the full moon. Poets are inspired to compose poems looking at it and children play joyously in its cool light. The moon is called *chandamama*—Uncle Moon. He is an uncle to children, to parents, to grandparents...to everyone. He is the same to everyone. Therefore, light has a lot of significance. It aids sacred thoughts.

Prabhaate Deepako Ravihi

The Sun and the Moon sustain the world. Without the Sun there cannot be life. The Sun gives us light, seasons, rain and food. Many diseases are cured by the Sun's benevolent rays. Even electricity can be generated from sunlight.

Trailoke Deepako Dharmah

The third is *dharma*: *Dharma* means “that which binds.” *Dharma* binds us within limits, helping us tread the right path and discharge our duty. *Dharma* establishes norms of behavior between two persons, between a person and society and so on. It helps human values flourish. When *dharma* declines, human values suffer and this, in turn, spells the ruin of life. A country without *dharma* is a country of demons. *Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah*—*Dharma* protects those who protect it. Therefore, adherence to truth and *dharma* are most important for students today. The *Vedas* say, *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara*—speak the truth and follow righteousness. These are the great legacy from our ancient heritage. The true treasures of Bharathiyas are only *sathya* and *dharma*.

Suputrah Kula Deepakah

Now, the fourth. A virtuous child brightens the whole family. Even a single virtuous person brings a good name to the family. One jasmine creeper lends an enchanting smell to the entire forest. If every house had even a single virtuous member, the world will glow with effulgence. Any number of children without virtue are useless. The *Mahabharatha* also teaches this truth. Dhritharashtra had a hundred sons but they did not benefit him or his kingdom. Sage Suka had no children and yet, he was ever blissful! Therefore, it is foolish to rejoice at the birth of a son. The father doesn't feel happy merely at the birth of a son. Parents experience joy only when children demonstrate piety and earn unsullied reputations. Among today's students we need *suputras*—good sons. Who is a “good son”? Is he one with a good nose, good eyes, and a good body? No. Only one

with pure qualities is a good son. No matter how handsome a boy may be, without virtue he is only ugly.

The story of Naabhaka

The *Bhagavatham* contains the narrative of an emperor called Nabhaka. He had many sons, one of whom was Naabhaka.

Naabhaka was a great scholar. He entered a *gurukula*¹ to learn different kinds of knowledge. He was an ideal student. He dedicated his time and his body to the acquisition of education. To this end he even forgot his parents! He considered education to be the jewel of life. He realized the tremendous power of true knowledge and decided to spend his life acquiring it.

Naabhaka came to spend most of his time in the Gurukula. In due course his father, Nabhaka, grew old and resolved to divide his wealth among his sons. He gave wealth to all his sons but forgot Naabhaka because Naabhaka was away in the pursuit of education. After completing his studies, Naabhaka returned home. He saw his brothers ruling the kingdom. He asked them, “Brothers, where is my share of the inheritance?” They replied, “Father did not leave you a share. But we are yet to decide what to do with father himself. Hence, you can have father as your share.”

Naabhaka was highly educated. He recognized the respect due to a father and said, “Father is enough for me.” As per the sacred culture of India—*Maatru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava*—mother and father are equal to God. Sri Rama

offered his entire life to uphold his father's word. Similarly, Naabhaka said, "My father is my true wealth" and went to his father. He told Naabhaka, "Dear father, as my brothers have told me, you are my real wealth."

His father replied, "Dear son, I have no property. But I will teach you a way to earn wealth. Sage Angirasa is performing a *Yagna*. No one else in the world is competent to perform this Yagna. Two mantras are required for successful completion of this Yagna. Rithwiks² have been conducting this Yagna for a long time because they do not know how to complete it. These two mantras are your real wealth. I will teach them to you. Go there and recite them."

Ever obedient, Naabhaka went to the Yagna. He approached Sage Angirasa and said, "I can recite the mantras that will complete your Yagna." He did so and the Yagna was completed successfully. Angirasa acknowledged Naabhaka's contribution and said, "Dear child, I'm leaving for *Vaikunta*³ now. Enjoy all the wealth collected for this ceremony."

After everyone departed, Naabhaka began gathering the wealth. A dark man approached and claimed authority over it. He said, "I'm Rudra.⁴ It is the Divine command that wealth left over from all yagnas belongs to me." Naabhaka said respectfully, "You have your right and I have mine. Let us find a third person to resolve our dispute."

They went to Nabhaka, who was a master of all scriptures. Nabhaka pondered the matter and judged not in favor of his son, but in Rudra's favor. Naabhaka fell at Rudra's feet and

sought pardon for his mistaken claim. Rudra admired Naabhaka's sense of justice, truthfulness and devotion to his father. Bestowing all the wealth on Naabhaka, Rudra said, "Son, the whole world is illumined by your virtues. I'm pleased with your ideal qualities. I have never met a student like you." Rudra blessed him that he would rule the kingdom for a long time and also gave him the most permanent wealth—*Atma Vidya*. Naabhaka was filled with Bliss. He went on to become the richest among kings of the Ikshvaku⁵ dynasty.

The story of Ambarisha

In due course, Naabhaka had a son called Ambarisha. The story of Ambarisha in the *Bhagavatham* is very sacred. Ambarisha was highly educated. He showered happiness on his subjects, considering them his children. To him, his subjects were parts of his body and the Lord was his heart. A king and his subjects are related to each other as the head is to the body, he believed.

Worldly experiences are dreams. Nothing is permanent. *Anityam Asukham Lokam*—the world is temporary and sorrowful.

*Maata Naasti, Pita Naasti, Naasti Bandhu Sahodarah
Artham Naasti, Griham Naasti, Tasmaat Jaagrata Jaagrata*
Mother, father, brother, relatives, wealth, home
—all are unreal. Therefore, beware, beware!

All relations are to do with the body. They are based on attachment, not on love. Attachment is bondage. Knowing this all too well, we still desire them and descend into bondage.

Ambarisha realized this very early in life. He decided that he wanted only the treasure of God's proximity and not worldly attachment.

Sages Vashishta and Gautama once instructed King Ambarisha to perform the *Aswamedha Yaga*.⁶ Many kings had performed the same yaga successfully but no one in any age had done it like Ambarisha. He conducted it magnificently, giving away cows, land, gold and other articles in charity, articles that people had never seen or heard of before. During the *Yagna*, Ambarisha forgot his kingdom and even his body. He concentrated only on Lord Narayana. At the end of the *Yagna*, Lord Narayana appeared and presented His personal weapon, *Sudarsana Chakra*, to Ambarisha.

What is meant by *Sudarsana*? In a worldly sense, it means a disc endowed with power. Spiritually, *Sudarsana* means "good sight"—the ability to see everything in its true light. Armed with this blessing of *Sudarsana*, Ambarisha was able to enjoy the world and surmount all difficulties in his life. He had no worries, sorrow or desires. He concentrated wholeheartedly on the Lord.

Sometime later, instructed by Sage Vashishta, Ambarisha performed the *Dvaadasi Vrata*, twelve-month vow. After observing certain disciplines for twelve months, Ambarisha was to fast on the day prior to the completion of the one year period. The fast was to be broken at a particular time the next day, just before the end of the year. And after partaking food himself, he was to feed his subjects as well. These were the stipulations of the vow.

Ambarisha was getting ready to break his fast on the last day. Sage Durvasa arrived unexpectedly. Ambarisha honored him. Durvasa said, "O King, no one has performed such a vow in the world. You will achieve great fame. Your kingdom will always experience peace and abundance." Ambarisha pleaded, "Swami, you must accept my hospitality today." Durvasa said, "With pleasure. But give me some time. I will go to the river, bathe and complete my daily prayers." So saying, Durvasa left for the river with his entourage.

Ambarisha started getting worried when Durvasa did not return even after a long time. Why? On the one hand, the etiquette of a host demanded that he could not eat before offering food to his guest. On the other hand, rules of the *Dvadasi Vrata* dictated that Ambarisha had to eat before the auspicious moment of the completion of one year, which had arrived. Ambarisha was as worried now, as he was peaceful during the vow. Vashishta suggested that he touch a few drops of Tulasi⁷ water to his lips to break his fast, assuring him that no fault would accrue to him by this act. Ambarisha obeyed Vashishta.

Durvasa returned after the auspicious moment. He divined Ambarisha's action. He said, "Ambarisha, you are blind with pride!" Ambarisha asked, "Honorable Sage, what is my fault?" Durvasa said, "How dare you act innocent! You invite me as a guest and then eat before you serve me! Is this not a violation of the principles of hospitality? I am a *Maharshi*,⁸ not an ordinary guest! To insult me is not expected of you!" Ambarisha claimed innocence, humbly but fearlessly. But Durvasa was adamant. He plucked one hair from his head and em-

powered it with a mantra. A terrible demoness appeared and lifted her sword to kill Ambarisha. In a flash, the *Sudarsana Chakra* appeared and put an end to the demoness. The Lord's weapon then turned on Sage Durvasa.

Durvasa fled. Sudarsana Chakra followed him through forests, rivers, deserts, plains, cities... everywhere. Durvasa ran and ran. Finally, he sought refuge in *Brahma Loka*, Lord Brahma's abode. Brahma told him, "I'm helpless. I cannot challenge Lord Narayana's power. I am the Lord's servant. You will gain nothing from me."

Durvasa then fled to *Kailasa*, Lord Shiva's home. Lord Sankara spoke similar words, "I have no right to oppose Narayana's Will. I cannot help you." Durvasa then ran to Lord Narayana Himself. The Lord said, "O Sage! Do you not see My helplessness? I may be all-powerful, but I cannot break one bond: The bond with devotees who have renounced everything for Me. I will always submit to My devotees. Ambarisha is one such devotee. He has renounced everything and he seeks Me alone. I cannot deny such surrender. The power of love (*prema shakthi*) of My devotees is greater than My own will power (*iccha shakthi*)! I cannot help you in the least. But I will suggest a solution. Seek the pardon of Ambarisha."

As advised by Lord Vishnu, Durvasa retraced his steps and fell at Ambarisha's feet. Durvasa's penance and powers were unsurpassed. Imagine, such a great sage falling at a king's feet! Ambarisha was surprised and embarrassed. He said, "O great sage! You are rich in penance and wisdom. Please do not fall at the feet of an ordinary man like me." Durvasa replied,

“In my pride I spoke harsh words to you. I made you suffer without recognizing your sincere devotion. Pardon me.” Ambarisha then prayed on Durvasa’s behalf, “O Lord Vishnu, You are the embodiment of Love and Compassion. You are all-knowing and omnipotent. Please forgive the sage’s faults.” Only then the *Sudarsana Chakra* stopped pursuing the sage.

The Lord is a servant

What is the inner significance of this story? The Lord is a servant of His devotees. He is the final authority everywhere, except in the presence of His devotee! The Lord’s powers are benign to His devotees and devastating to wicked people. Hanuman’s life signified the same idea. Hanuman was humble in front of Rama but bold and terrible to Ravana. Virtue, faultless behavior, renunciation—all these are merely facets of devotion.

Ambarisha was an emperor not just of his kingdom, but in the kingdom of devotion as well. Even Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva had to bow to his devotion! The efficacy of devotion is *Avaang Maanasa Gocharam*—beyond thought and word. In this Kali age, people do not understand devotion. They think devotion is limited to worship, *bhajans*, and vows. God’s Form should be imprinted in your heart like words on paper! There should be no separation, no distinction between you and God. Such intense faith is rare today. Ambarisha’s eyes only saw Narayana, his ears heard only the Lord’s Name, his feet approached only the Lord and his hands were ever engaged in worship. Divine brilliance flowed through all his senses.

Nabhaka, Naabhaka, and Ambarisha—grandfather, father and son—all three were highly educated. What education

did they have? Not worldly education, but *Atma Vidya!*⁹ Krishna said: *Aadhyatmika Vidya Vidyaanaam*—true knowledge is knowledge of the Self. The different kinds of worldly knowledge are small trickles which merge into the ocean of *Atma Vidya. Nadeenaam Saagaro Gatih*—all rivers are destined for the ocean. It is only because he pursued spiritual knowledge hand-in-hand with worldly knowledge that Ambarisha became worthy of the Lord’s protection. He was able to subdue the curse of a sage. A curse given by a sage is normally irrevocable. But Ambarisha was able to humble even a sage of Durvasa’s stature!

Nothing in the world comes close to the power of devotion. But fools are blind to it. Truly, one who recognizes the potency of devotion cannot stay aloof from the path even for a moment. Even nectar may have traces of bitterness but the principle of devotion is sweetness, sweetness, sweetness. *Premaamritam*—the nectar of devotion—is the limit of sweetness. Such *premaamritam* is present only between God and devotees. All other relations are based on attachment. Love and attachment are poles apart. People tell Swami, “I love you, I love you, I love you.” What is love? They don’t know.

Service

Chatterji just spoke about “help.” Students have no idea even what “help” means. They just repeat phrases like “Help Ever, Hurt Never.” Help means to render assistance. But what kind of help, where, to whom and how? We must understand this well. That is why the *Bhagavatham* says: Charity must be based on eligibility. Do not help anyone, anytime,

anywhere. Before acting you must assess, “To whom am I rendering help and how? What would be the result of my action?” You can’t give a knife to a wicked man, or a gold cup to a child. There must be deservedness in help. Otherwise, help can turn into harm. When should you help? When you watch someone suffering, feel it in your heart. Feel their pain and serve when your heart melts. Meaning, offer help to that cause which melts your heart. When many people can be benefited, you may definitely help. Help is not just to individuals. It should be related to society and even to the world.

This morning, Ashok Singhal talked about the importance of service. What is service? People say it means doing “good work.” Do not think of *seva* as “good work”. Even the attitude “I am doing good to others” is not positive. The right attitude is to see it as “God’s work”! True *seva* is to consider all your actions as God’s work.

Na Tapaamsi Na Teerthaanaam.

Na Saastra Na Japaanahi.

Samsaara Saagaroddhaare.

Sajjanam Sevanam Vina.

Not by penance or pilgrimage,

Nor by study of scriptures or repetition of God’s
name,

But the ocean of birth and death can be crossed only by
Serving the pious and the needy.

Help pious and needy people alone. If a man is beating another man, will you help him in that act? Always discriminate before jumping to help. Someone asks you for money.

You must ask him why he wants money. If he says he is hungry, give him food, not money. His real need is food. If he insists on money, such a person should not be helped. If he is cold, give warm clothes. If he is ill, give medicine. But don't give money. Why? He will spend it on liquor, go home and drown himself and his family in misery. By giving money you have not helped him, but hurt him! So, always inquire whom you should help, when, where and how. This is true seva.

People think, "I am the giver, he is the recipient." This is not seva. Once upon a time a man resolved to perform seva. He told himself, "I am a servant. That is why I serve." The Divinity present in servitude is not present in authority. He prayed:

Daasaanudaasudanu Kaavalenu Ra,

Daasulaku Sevane Cheyavale Ra.

O Lord! Let me be the servant of Your servant.

Let me be busy serving Your servants.

What is the meaning? The goal of service is to subdue egoism. The egoist can never serve and the real servant is egoless. Proceed into service with such an outlook. There is nothing greater than service. We should develop humility. Authority and power do not stay forever. Wealth can vanish any moment. But virtues are permanent.

When Hanuman entered Lanka, all the demons were intrigued by his appearance. They had never seen a monkey before. Why? Recall that Lanka was surrounded by the sea on all sides, and what monkey can cross the ocean? While they gaped

at Hanuman with surprise, he laughed and played impish pranks. Then a demon questioned, “Hey, who are you?” The answer came: “*Daasoham Kosa-lendrasya*”—“You ask who I am? I am the servant of Rama.” Hanuman did not say, “I am the virtuous, strong and devoted son of the Wind God” and so on. It is because of his humility that Hanuman always succeeded in the tasks allotted to him by Rama. To fulfill God’s commands, first we must render our ego powerless. We should express humility. Not merely express it, but practice it.

People think, “I am so educated, so intelligent, so influential.” How long do authority and power last? With retirement, your influence vanishes like snow on a summer day! The world has seen kings and rulers, each greater than the other. Many emperors ruled over India. Where are they today? Wealth and authority are transient, but virtues are lasting. It has been eons since Ambarisha died. But the glories of his character are sung the world over till this day. Therefore, we become worthy of immortal fame when we shine in virtue. Worldly joys are “passing clouds”. Ambarisha recognized this truth. Nothing in this world grants happiness or peace. Happiness and peace are unique to God’s proximity alone. The King of Tanjavur wanted to present wealth to Thyagaraja. Thyagaraja sang:

Nidhi chaala sukhamaa, Isvara sannidhi chaala sukhamama? Nijamuga Telupumu Manasa!

O mind, what grants happiness—wealth (*nidhi*) or proximity to God (*Isvara sannidhi*)?

As long as worldly joys are around, you may experience them. It is not possible to renounce them entirely. But for God we should be ready to give up everything! “Less luggage, more comfort.” Reduce responsibilities and desires gradually. Desires are the greatest thieves and cheats. Desires are the root cause of restlessness. Sacrifice is the basis for peace. Every man must encourage pure feelings and sacrifice in his heart if he desires Divinity. Even if you have no devotion, that is okay. Your pure feelings are your devotion.

There are many meanings given to the word “help”. We should not use this word carelessly. True help should include the society and permeate your thoughts, words, sight, hearing and hands. Help rendered with unity of thought, word and deed (*trikarana suddhi*) is true service. Help means love and compassion guiding your hands.

There was an old woman full of sacrifice and kindness. During the rainy season, the cool breeze made nights very cold. In the evenings she would go along the streets with a bundle of blankets. Many homeless people slept on the footpath. She would cover each of them with a blanket. Gradually the townsfolk came to know of this daily ritual. “What humility and sacrifice she has! Is there anyone in the world doing more service than her?” they thought. When everybody praised her in this manner, she used to veil her head and walk away.

One boy asked her, “Grandma! Why don’t you hold your head high for this wonderful *seva*?” She said, “Son, I’m not helping anyone.” The boy said, “But aren’t you donating blankets to the shivering street people every day?” She said,

“Son, God has given us two hands. Compared to what He does, all our work is trivial. And I’m using only one hand to distribute the blankets. I feel ashamed for not using the other hand. I can hold my head high only when God blesses me with opportunities to serve with both my hands.”

There are many fools in the world who do not sacrifice despite being rich. They go to the market with loose change in their pockets, not currency notes. They give a few coins to each beggar they encounter. Another example. I went to Bombay a few days ago. From Bombay, we had to drive to a nearby town. On the way we stopped at a red light. Many beggars surrounded the car. I noticed one woman carrying a baby and felt very pained. But I do not even have a pocket, what to talk of money! I told Indulal Shah, “You give her something.” He gave one rupee from his pocket. Do you know what that lady did? She tossed it back into the car saying, “You cannot get anything with one rupee today, Sir. You can keep it!”

Even five rupees are not much to beggars today. In such a situation, will a few coins do any good? Some people are so stingy that even the coins they donate are counterfeit! No, no. Where did you get all your money? We see big industrialists, rich beyond the common man’s imagination. How did they get rich? The money was earned with the assistance of the middle class, the laborers, the officers. When you know that everyone is responsible for your prosperity, you must sacrifice for their sake. In the Kali Yuga, riches only increase pride instead of evoking sacrifice in people. *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Tyaagenaike Amritatvamaanashu*—not by rituals, children, or

wealth, but only by sacrifice is immortality attained. Keep what you need and share the rest.

Hastasya Bhooshanam Daanam.

Sathyam Kanttasya Bhooshanam.

Charity is the ornament for the hand.

Truth is the ornament for the throat.

What ornaments do you desire? Gold? Diamonds? No, no. What other decorations do we need besides charity, truth and the Lord's Name? This is true sacrifice.

Desire God alone

Therefore, all of you should promote unity based on the *Atma*, contemplate on Divinity and do actions beneficial to the common good. How can you call yourself a human without following human values? Today's dire need are human values, human values.

How can we make human values grow? A seed grows into a plant when embedded in fertile soil. Will it germinate in a tin? No. Similarly, the seed of human values can grow only in the soil of spirituality. Without this fertile and enduring soil of spirituality, humanness cannot be strengthened. The heart filled with Love for God is like nutritious soil. Sow your seed in such a heart.

Look at Ambarisha. Despite his vast knowledge, wealth and powers, he renounced worldly joys: "I want only God, nothing else. He alone is my goal." Keep God as your goal. Today's students change their ambitions a hundred times a day!

No, no. Till your last breath your goal should not change. Even if you encounter a hundred troubles, face and overcome them. Do not let them deter you. That is the quality of a true human. Look how Ambarisha suffered. Durvasa's curse caused him much hardship. But his one-pointed mind and steady vision bore him through everything.

A one-pointed mind and steady vision—these two are the touchstones of devotion that every devotee must acquire. Our vision must focus only on the Lord. Our mind must meditate only on God. The sole motivation for all our actions must be to earn God's Love (*Bhagavat preetyartham*).

Seek knowledge in student years

Students! Fill your hearts with such pure feelings. Yes, you are filling yourselves. But with what? With absurd novels, TV, radio and videos. It is not even enough to fill your hearts. Translate into action! That is the mark of a true student. Seekers of knowledge (*vidyarthi*) should not turn into seekers of worldly joy (*vishayarthi*).

Desire only knowledge as long as you are a student. After completing education, you may desire money. Ambarisha did not care for anything as long as he pursued knowledge. He entered the kingdom only after completing his education. That is how he was able to serve his subjects. He initiated projects of public welfare, won his people's love and even attained the Vision of God.

All work is God work

Ambarisha achieved Divinity, the Grace of God. Students! You may not win or be eligible for anything, but earn Divine Grace. That is enough. Earn God's Grace first and you can achieve whatever you wish. Thyagaraja sang, "Rama, all I need is your grace (*anugraha*). Then the nine celestial powers (*nava grahas*) will submit to me." You may study great subjects, get coveted jobs and earn wealth, but nothing is of value unless you earn God's Grace.

A student in Varanasi had no job. He approached the municipality. They told him, "Son! Jobs are scarce today. But there is nobody to light the oil lamps on the streets. You can do that if you wish." The poor boy said, "I am ready for any job, Sir." So he would clean each lamp at dusk, fill it with oil and light it. He did everything as an act of service. As he cleaned each glass frame he thought, "Rama, this is my service to You." He visualized that He was cleaning Rama's Feet with each rub. As a result, his lamps were immaculate and glowed brighter than all others. The municipal officers recognized this and summoned him, "Son! Your lights are burning as brightly as your pure, sacred heart." The boy did not care for recognition. He did it out of his enthusiasm, for his own satisfaction.

Today's service is pomp. They take a broom in their hands and call the photographer, "Hey, take a photo of me doing service!" This is for others, not for yourself, not for the *Atma*. That which gives you unalloyed happiness and increases your enthusiasm is true service. Service makes you forget yourself.

Students! The *Bhagavatham* has many examples of devotees with full hearts. Recognize their characters, hold them as ideals in your mind and emulate them. This is the *Kali Yuga*. A more suitable name is *Kalaha Yuga*, Era of quarrels! There are fights even for small matters. In the midst of conflict, develop hearts of purity and serve your country. Recognize that you are serving only yourself, not anyone else. The same God is in everyone. Your ego will recede as your attitude of service strengthens. When you engage in service with such divine feelings, our country will shine brightly with purity and prosperity.

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1. Ancient Indian hermitage-school, where students of all back-grounds lived as equals with a guru and acquired secular and spiritual education.
 2. Chanters of *Vedic* mantras.
 3. Abode of Lord Vishnu.
 4. A form of Lord Shiva.
 5. A dynasty of great kings of ancient India.
 6. "Horse Sacrifice." *Vedic* ceremony performed by kings seeking to establish supremacy over other kings. In a spiritual sense, Swami says, the body of a horse constantly twitches—symbolic of restlessness of the mind. This rite is to attain steadiness of mind.
 7. Basil plant, sacred to Hindus.

5. Dhruva

Jihvaagre Vartate Lakshmi.

Jihvaagre Mitra Baandhavaha.

Jihvaagre Bandhana Praapti.

Jihvaagre Maranam Dhruvam.

Lakshmi,¹ resides on the tip of the tongue.

By the tongue are determined friends and relatives.

The tongue can be the cause of bondage.

The tongue can also lead to death.

Students!

With one's speech, one can win kingdoms, wealth, and friends. One can develop relationships and even invite death with one's speech. Words are crucial for profit and loss, repute and disrepute, joy and sorrow. When words are good, the result is good. Bad words produce bad results. Every man should discriminate between good and bad words, control his speech and use only appropriate words.

Dharma and justice are the foundations of the universe. *Dharma Eva Yato Moolam, Dharma Eva Mahaatgunam*—there is no foundation or virtue greater than dharma. The one who defined, practiced, and propagated dharma for the good of humanity was Emperor Manu. He had two sons. The first was Uttaanapaada and the second, Priyavrata. Uttaanapaada had two wives—Suniti and Suruchi. Suniti's son was Dhruva and Uttama was Suruchi's son.

These stories are very important for today's students. When students listen to inspiring accounts of pure souls, their tender hearts can be transformed. There are many changes in the world today. Human life itself is a series of changes—from infancy to adolescence, then to middle-age and senility. An egg

becomes a bird. A seed grows into a tree. These are all effects of change. Change is necessary not just in Nature but in humans also, especially, in youth. What kind of change? Ideal transformation. To pride yourself on changing from a boy into an educated man is not ideal change. Ego is not a sign of true transformation. Education must result in the blossoming of humility and obedience. Humility is the jewel of students. Unfortunately, it cannot be found nowadays. In the days of the *Bhagavatham*, students developed human values, contemplated on Divinity and earned the Vision of God.

The story of Prince Dhruva

Dhruva was five years old and Uttama, four-and-a-half. Once both were playing in the garden. Their father, Uttaanapaada, was watching them indulgently and enjoying himself. After some time Uttama became tired. He ran and sat in his father's lap. Uttaanapaada was extremely fond of Suruchi, the mother of Uttama. Suniti's son, Dhruva, also ran forward to do the same.

Suddenly Suruchi ran forward and flung Dhruva away from his father. As if that wasn't enough, she hurt his tender heart with harsh words: "Dhruva! You may be the King's son, but not mine. Only a son born of me has the right to sit on the King's lap. If you want to sit on your father's lap, the only way is for you to take another birth as my son! This is your fate for being Suniti's son. In this manner, Suruchi unleashed arrow-like words at Dhruva.

Dhruva walked back to his mother's palace. He entered and sat down silently in a corner. Tears were coursing down his

cheeks. Some maids noticed his condition and informed Suniti. Even when asked by his mother, Dhruva sat quietly with a tear-stained face. Suniti came to know of the incident from her maids. She lamented her plight, “Dhruva, you had the misfortune of being born to me. I am treated like a maid by everyone in the palace because the King favors the other queen. So how can my son get any respect?” She told Dhruva, “My son, pray to God and be born to Suruchi.”

Immediately Dhruva replied, “I have no more interest in life after this insult.” He blamed his stepmother for her selfishness. Suniti went close to him and stopped him, “My son, we should not criticize or blame others. Why? Because the result of that blame accrues to us also. Your stepmother’s words, despite being harsh, will result only in your good. Whatever anyone may say is for your good. Do not blame your stepmother. She has shown you the path of your destiny.” Will any mother advise likewise today? But Suniti was different. Her name was Suniti, meaning “embodiment of virtue (*niti*)”. She passed on those morals to her son also.

Dhruva said, “So what do you want me to do, mother?” Suniti replied, “Son! No one can really help another. It is God alone who is the sole refuge of everyone. He alone can fulfill all your wishes. Go to the forest and seek Lord Narayana to achieve your desires.” Are there such mothers today, who send their five-year-old sons to the forest for penance? She placed her hand on Dhruva’s head as blessing and said, “Whether you are in the forest, city, village, mountains, or sea, God is the only refuge of the forlorn. Instead of suffering in the palace, it is much better to delight in thoughts of God in the forest.

Wherever you may be, I am not in a position to help you. God will take care of you. Don't think of the forest as a forest but as God's abode. Go and seek Him, my son."

Dhruva accepted his mother's words as command, prostrated at her feet and left immediately. A mere five-year-old boy! He did not know what a forest was, the way leading there, how to pray, what pleases God...nothing! Yet, he didn't pause to worry about these issues. "I must follow my mother's command. I must undertake penance. I must achieve the Lord's Vision." There was no thought in his mind besides his goal.

By the power of Suniti's blessing, the Divine sage Narada met Dhruva midway. Narada divined Dhruva's intentions. He asked the lad, "Where are you going, young Dhruva? Are you going to play?" Dhruva said, "Yes, O Divine Sage, I am going to play with God." Narada asked, "Where is God?" Dhruva answered, "My mother told me to go to the forest and seek Him."

Narada exclaimed, "O foolhardy child! Don't you know that most renunciates and knowers of scriptures cannot attain the Lord even after centuries of penance? You are a child. You have no worldly experience. You don't know about God. How can an innocent, ignorant child like you achieve God? It is impossible!" Dhruva replied, "Narada, age is not important to the Lord. My mother's blessing and my determination will take me to the goal."

Narada tried to dissuade Dhruva by talking of discomfort, fear and failure. “There are many animals in the forest. Dangerous snakes will pursue you everywhere. Ghosts and evil spirits abound as well. You are accustomed to royal comforts, having no experience in the ways of the world. No, what you have determined is too much.” But Dhruva was firm. “I will never return to the palace. My resolve is a divine one, not a wicked one. God dwells in a pure heart. A decision that emerges from my heart is, therefore, a Divine decision! I will never give it up.”

Today’s students have a glorious lesson to be learnt from Dhruva. **STRONG DETERMINATION**—this is necessary for every achievement in life.

Dhruva did not give heed to Narada’s words. “It is my mother’s command. I should follow it even at the cost of my life and prove the value of a mother’s word. I must, and will, succeed. As soldiers are the life of a fort, as a signature is the life of a promissory note, similarly Truth is life to our faculty of speech. I will never give up Truth. *Sathyam Naasti Paro Dharmah*—there is no *dharma* higher than Truth. I am the grandson of Manu, who was a great proponent of *dharma*. I must be the embodiment of *sathya* and *dharma*.” These were the lofty thoughts chasing each other in Dhruva’s mind.

Narada finally admitted defeat. He admired Dhruva’s resolve and felt pity for him. He said, “Son! Your determination and purity have deeply affected me. I will come with you for a while.” They went to the banks of River Yamuna. There, Narada instructed Dhruva, “Dear child, if one chants the Name

of the Lord with a purified mind, the Lord appears soon.” They had a bath in Yamuna and Narada whispered into the ear of Dhruva, the great *dvaadasi* (twelve-syllable) mantra: ***Om Namō Bhagavate Vaasu-devaaya.***

After Narada left, Dhruva found a shady part in the forest, fixed his seat and began chanting the mantra. He chanted *Om Namō Bhagavate Vaasudevaaya* without interruption. He forgot his body. However, because of his tender age, he felt hungry and thirsty at times. During the first month, he ate fruits fallen on the ground. In the second month, he ate only tubers and leaves. In the third month, he subsisted on water. In the fourth month, he survived on air. His body was reduced to a skeleton. That is natural for the body. The body is born of food. It is called *annamaya kosa*—sheath of food.

Within this physical sheath are *praanamaya kosa* (sheath of life), *manomaya kosa* (sheath of mind), *vi-jnaanamaya kosa* (sheath of knowledge) and finally, *anandamaya kosa* (sheath of bliss). Dhruva neglected only the *annamaya kosa*. He merged the name of the Lord with his *pranamaya kosa*. With inhalation and exhalation, he repeated *Om Namō Bhagavate Vaasudevaaya.*

Next, *manomaya kosa*. Dhruva clearly pictured in his mind the form of the Lord as described by Narada, which was imprinted in his heart. What is the inner meaning? He recited the Lord’s Name while picturing His Form. And he pictured the Lord’s Form while reciting His Name. Name and Form—this became Dhruva’s penance.

Name + Form = penance (*tapas*)

The whole forest became hot due to Dhruva's one-pointedness. Sages dwelling there could not bear it. They were astonished that a five-year-old boy could sustain such iron control over the mind. They tried to obstruct his concentration in manifold ways. They created snakes, which circled his body. They sent wild animals and evil spirits to trouble Dhruva. But nothing could disturb him, much less harm him. Dhruva thought, "My mother said that God is the refuge of the helpless. So the Lord will take care. I need not worry!" What deep faith he had! When nothing could even distract Dhruva, the Gods in heaven went to Narayana to intervene on Dhruva's behalf.

Dhruva's eyes were closed. He didn't even want to look at the world. "I do not desire anything belonging to this world," he had decided at the outset. "This body is composed of the five elements. It is bound to collapse one day. But the Indweller has neither birth nor death. That Indweller is God. I have assumed this body for the sole purpose of seeing that Indweller." Gradually, he became so weak that his voice was no longer audible. He repeated *Om Namō Bhagavate Vaasudevaaya* in his mind. Finally, the Lord responded. Lord Narayana appeared in front of Dhruva.

As the Lord came closer and closer, His effulgence intermingled with Dhruva's aura and Dhruva shone brighter and brighter. Suddenly, finding his heart empty of the Lord's Form, Dhruva opened his eyes. He saw the Lord standing in front of him. Smiling, Dhruva said, "O Lord, as long You were in my

heart. Now You are outside me. Are You trying to leave me? I won't allow it."

Dhruva had recognized that what we see outside is a reflection of our own hearts. If you feel that someone is bad, that bad is not in him, but only a reflection of your heart. Your own thoughts, both good and bad, appear to you outside as reflection, reaction, resound.

Even Lord Narayana was taken aback at Dhruva's ideal qualities! The Lord mused, "How surprising that these eternal feelings have entered this young boy! He is enjoying the benefits of many past lives spent in the divine Quest." Thinking thus, the Lord laughed within Himself. Dhruva had lost his voice but still, he started extolling the Lord. He described all the ten *Avatars* of the Lord and His exploits. He gazed upon the Lord continuously, without blinking. He held the Lord's Lotus Feet tightly. The Lord asked him, "Child, what do you want?" Dhruva could not produce any sound. He appealed to the Lord mentally. The Lord touched his cheeks with His Conch and fresh energy coursed through his body, restoring his speech. Then the Lord stood back, clenching His Hands together.

Dhruva approached the Lord, closer and closer. The Lord asked him again, "Dhruva, tell Me what you desire." Dhruva was so enraptured that the Lord had to repeat the question many times. Finally Dhruva said, "My Lord! Why do You insist on drowning me in *maya*? You knew where I was, what I was doing and who I was praying to. Otherwise You could not have come here. Knowing all this, don't You know what I desire? Of course, You do!"

Dhruva was talking high philosophy! But God had read two books more on spirituality than Dhruva! Lord Narayana replied, “Child! The thought that prompted your penance was the desire to sit in your father’s lap. You put this thought into action by performing this penance. But it remains to be seen what your word will be.”

Students should recognize clearly what God was looking for. *Manasekam Vachasyekam Karmanyekam Mahaatmanam*—unity in thought, word, and deed is the mark of a great soul. “You resolved upon a goal. You acted as per your resolve. Now, I want to hear from your lips: What do you seek?” the Lord clarified.

Dhruva replied, “Dear Lord, in ignorance I desired my father’s affection. Unable to bear an ordinary insult, I sought to sit in my father’s lap and enjoy my rightful privileges as his son. I acted upon that resolve. Now that I’ve seen You, touched You and talked to You, I want only You. I craved a drop of water and found Divine Nectar itself. I desired a piece of glass and found a diamond.”

The Lord smiled. “Dhruva, by thought and deed you desired your father’s proximity. But by word, you desire only Me. Your thought, word, and deed are not in harmony. However, note that the majority lies toward your initial desire. Hence, it is My command that you return to your father’s kingdom and make your mother happy.”

Do you see, how subtle, mysterious, and impeccable are the Lord's ways? The Lord did appear. He showered grace on the boy in manifold ways. But Dhruva's thought, word, and deed were not in harmony. For such a small fault, poor Dhruva lost to the Lord! Finally Dhruva said, "I offer everything to You," and left the decision to Narayana. The Lord said, "Son, obey My command. Till now, you followed your mother's command. Now, I am your father, mother and everything. There is no lasting happiness in the world.

*Janma Dukham, Jaraa Dukham, Jaaya Dukham Punah
Punah Antya Kaale Mahaa Dukham, Tasmaat
Jaagrata Jaagrata!*

Birth, old age and death are full of sorrow.
The final moments are most pathetic.
So beware, beware!

I am sending you back so that you fulfill your initial resolution. You must return without hesitation," said the Lord. Having said this, the Lord waited for Dhruva's response.

Dhruva said, "It is Your command and I will obey it. No matter what I may experience by leaving You and returning, no matter how disappointing, I will follow Your command." Only after he made this promise, the Lord came forward and took Dhruva in His embrace. Holding him close, the Lord spoke endearingly to the young lad. "Dhruva! For God to be earned by such a young boy as you—this has never happened in the world."

There is an acute need for such boys and girls in the world today—truthful, obedient to parents and devoted to God. There is no meaning in devising new social orders and principles. Is it enough to merely change societies in this manner? No, thoughts must change! Divine, novel, elevating feelings must be encouraged by students.

The Lord continued, “Dhruva! You have to teach much to the world about the glory of the Divine Name. Now I will enter you.” A light emerged from the Lord and entered Dhruva. The boy who was so frail for the past few months was filled with energy and brightness. He jumped up and touched the Lord’s Feet. The Lord disappeared.

The Lord’s ethereal voice continued speaking to Dhruva. “Dearest child! You must rule the world as an ideal emperor for many years yet. Your father is repentant. He looks forward to your return, moment to moment. He has given up food and sleep and wants only you. Go back, go back, go back. After you complete the task of ruling the kingdom, I have set aside an exalted position for you. The Polaris Star situated in the midst of the *Sapta Rishis*, the Sun and the Moon shall henceforth be called Dhruva Star. All celestial bodies circle the Dhruva Star. Even Polaris itself may change but you will be eternal. You are an embodiment of immortality. Your life will be an expression of Bliss.” The Lord also promised that Dhruva would reach Him at the end of his life span.

Just look at how much Grace overflowed to Dhruva when he agreed to follow the Lord’s command! Dhruva obtained immortal fame, the Lord’s constant presence within

himself and the Lord's love. Much, much more than what he originally desired. That is why it is not necessary to ask God for your desires. Just follow the Lord's commands and His Grace will overflow, unasked.

The sanctity of the *Bhagavatham*

In this manner, the *Bhagavatham* is full of devotion. But there is no one today with even a thousandth part of Dhruva's devotion and virtue. The sanctity of *Bhagavatham* is unsurpassed because it contains the lives of such exalted souls. But people neglect this scripture and even cast wrong accusations on it. *Bhagavatham* is nothing but God's Love, from start to finish. But all cannot understand Divine Love. Some scholars' interpretations of Krishna's leelas are atrocious!

At what age did Krishna play with the *gopikas*? Krishna was a five-year old boy! At that age is it possible to interact with *gopikas* as commonly portrayed? Krishna went to Mathura when He was five years and one month old. He never returned to Gokula. Did you not play with your sisters when you were five years old? Can this be perceived as immoral? When Pareekshit asked Suka about Krishna's behavior, Suka explained it to him in the same way. Suka was a celibate. A perfect celibate delighted in Krishna's sports with the *gopikas*. Isn't this surprising? Suka said, "Pareekshit! Do you see Krishna as God or as a man? If you consider Him God, you cannot entertain such low feelings. These defects are really in you. You see your own faults outside you as reflection, reaction, and resound. Even if dirt approaches God, it will turn into purity."

Brahmaanandam Parama Sukhadam, Kevalam Jnaana Moortim, Dvandvaateetam Gagana Sa-drisham, Thath Thwam Asyaadi Lakshyam, Ekam Nityam Vimalam Achalam, Sarvaadhi Saakshi Bhootam, Bhaavaateetam Triguna Rahitam....

“Ever blissful, granting happiness, embodiment of wisdom, beyond duality, infinite as the sky, primordial, final goal, One, eternal, stainless, immovable, omnipresent witness, beyond feeling, devoid of the three *gunas*”—such is God.

God is an ocean. The feelings and desires of devotees are streams. When both merge, the ocean remains the same but the streams get purified. The ocean is never disturbed. Another example. If you mix one cup of milk in ten cups of water, you decrease the value of milk. But when one cup of water is mixed with ten cups of milk, the worthless water acquires the value of milk. Thus, when two entities merge, the purer and greater one lends its qualities to the other.

God is beyond the three *gunas*. Will He behave like one trapped in *gunas*? Whatever thoughts anyone entertained towards Krishna, He was totally pure and unattached. It is true that the *gopikas* related to the body of Krishna but even that was not in any immoral sense. The *gopikas* were pure and unsullied. The meaningless interpretations of scholars have stained people’s perceptions of the *Bhagavatham*. God is ever pure and selfless. These scholars cheat people when they look upon God as anything less than Purity itself.

The return of Dhruva

The tender heart of Dhruva set an example for everyone. Dhruva started back toward his father's kingdom. Uttaanapaada was informed. In great excitement, Uttaanapaada sat in a palanquin with Suniti, Suruchi, and Uttama and set out to welcome Dhruva. As Dhruva walked through the forest he looked like a luminous star. He had so much brightness! He was only five years old. Skipping and jumping, he laughed in pure joy as he ran home.

Uttaanapaada jumped down from his chariot and ran forward to embrace Dhruva. He lifted Dhruva in his arms and said, "Forgive my faults, son. To me you are Narayana Himself. Falling prey to attachment, I was unfair with you. I made your mother suffer in many ways." Dhruva replied, "Who am I? Who are you? You are not the father, I am not the son. I am Narayana, you are Narayana, everything is Narayana. Where is the question of pardon?" Speaking of unity of the *Atma*, Dhruva melted his father's heart. He taught *Atma Vidya* even to his father!

Uttaanapaada said, "Enough time has been wasted already. Come now." He sat in the palanquin and took Dhruva on one thigh and Uttama on the other. In this manner they reached the kingdom full of joy and excitement. Suniti witnessed this scene. She had been away from her husband, and her son was in the forest. She had endured a lot of pain. She had spent the many months wondering, "I don't know what sins have brought upon me this suffering—the pain of separation from my husband and my son. Which woman can live in this manner?" This Suniti, who had been submerged in despair,

could not contain her joy and excitement on this day. She also took Dhruva in her arms and played with him joyously.

Dhruva's penance had lasted five months. He came home when he was five years and five months old. And he was crowned as the emperor when he was only six years old! Uttanapaada rightly realized that for one who had realized God, it was not a big task to rule over a kingdom. During the coronation, Uttama held the royal umbrella over Dhruva's head while Uttanapaada and his wives sat on either side of him. The parents felt, "If our son, so tender and young, could achieve God's Grace, why should we waste our time? Human life is not for enjoying wealth and comfort, but to reach God."

Only then did Uttanapaada recognize the true meaning of the term *manuja* (man). Manuja = *Manu* + *Ja* (born of), meaning, child of Manu. All humans should behave like children of Manu, embodying his characteristics. Manu always followed dharma. He defined justice for the good of humanity. The law followed in every court today is based on Manu's exposition. Thus, it is our duty to practice dharma as laid down by Manu. After Dhruva's coronation, that very day, his father and mothers left for Skanda Ashrama to spend the remainder of their lives in solitude and meditation.

Dhruva ruled for many years and won the love of his subjects by ensuring their happiness. He waited patiently for his merger with the Lord, recalling the Lord's promise. During his last moments a chariot came from the Lord to take him. Dhruva told the charioteer, "Where do I need to go? Why do I need to go, when God is everywhere?" He taught the Supreme

Truth even to the charioteer sent by God! “You expect me to go to God in this chariot. That is meaningless. God is here, as He is everywhere. I will merge into Him now,” he said. He sat down in the chariot and chanted *Om Namō Bhagavate Vaasudevaaya*. The light in him merged into the Lord.

The power of devotion

Such sweet, blissful and dharmic stories are found nowhere except in the *Bhagavatham*. You heard the Lord telling Sage Durvasa yesterday that even God’s Will pales before the power of devotion. God says, “I will gladly accept defeat but never let a devotee down. I am a servant of My devotees. I wait day and night as a watchman in the prayer room of My devotee! Do you know why? My devotee could express any desire at any time. I want to be present to fulfill his slightest wish. I am the final authority everywhere—except with my devotee. My devotee alone has the final say.”

Through His actions, God has always demonstrated that there is no force greater than the power of devotion. What is *bhakti*, devotion? *Bhagavad anurakti* (attachment to God) is *bhakti*. Within *bhakti* are contained *bhukti* (food), *rakti* (desires), *yukti* (cleverness), *anurakti* (attachment, love), *virakti* (detachment), and *mukti* (liberation).

Where did the word *bhakti* originate? Man’s primary need is food, *bhukti*. *Sareera Maadhyam Khalu Dharma Sandhanam*—the body is a means for observing dharma and it needs food. Next, man needs *rakti*, desire. The third is *yukti*, worldly intelligence. It is necessary to know how to live in this world. Next comes *anurakti*—we must love all without distinction.

These are followed by *virakti* and *mukti*. In all these words, the common syllable is “*kṭi*”, “*Bha*” from Bhagavan (God), and “*kṭi*” from these words combine to form *bhakti*.

Therefore, He who grants you *bhakti*, *rakti*, *yukti*, *anurakti*, *virakti*, and *mukti* is God. Bhakti is not limited to performing worship, doing *aarati* and so on. We must offer ourselves to God! We must hold on to *Prema* in all situations. This is *bhakti*.

Dhruva attained victory in every test. He was only five years old. Boys of that age enter our Primary School in the 1st Standard. Meaning, this 1st Standard boy showed such great dedication. Where did Dhruva obtain such strength? He achieved everything with DETERMINATION. We must achieve with determination also—achieve not worldly victories, but God Himself. We should not fear troubles and give up. Only then our devotion will be blessed with strength from God. For everything, pure Love is the basis.

A devotee approached Ramakrishna Paramahansa and asked, “Master, how can I see God?” Ramakrishna replied, “O madman, you cry for wife, children, and wealth. All your grief is wasted. Cry for God instead. Then you will achieve His Vision, without a doubt.” Therefore, we should not cry for worldly ends. “*Naara*” is water, and “*Nayana*” means eyes. The *naara* flowing from your *nayana* must be offered to none other than Narayana! These are tears of joy.

Only tears of joy (*Ananda*), not tears of misery, can transport us into the *Anandamaya Kosa*—the sheath of Bliss.

Everyone must go beyond the *annamaya kosa*, *pranamaya kosa*, *manomaya kosa*, and *vijnaanamaya kosa* and reach the *anandamaya kosa*. You must try in all possible ways to achieve Bliss. For everything, God's Grace is the foundation. Become worthy of His Grace.

¹. Goddess of Prosperity.

6. Priyavrata and Jada Bharata

Sukhaarthi Tyajate Vidya.

Vidyarthi Tyajate Sukham.

Sukhaarthinah Kuto Vidyaa.

Kutah Kuto Vidyarthinah Sukham.

One who craves pleasure is not able to pursue education.

A true student renounces worldly pleasures.

One who desires comfort cannot obtain true education.

And comfort is not necessary to acquire education.

The human body is given for a purpose, not for the enjoyment of worldly joys. Craving for worldly joys is an animal quality. Priyavrata was a man who understood these truths. Every human life has a purpose, a meaning. Recognize the purpose of your life and achieve it. A life without a goal is an animal's life, a foolish life.

Prince Priyavrata

Priyavrata felt strongly, "Having taken a human birth, it is improper of me to desire physical comforts." Priyavrata was the second son of Manu. Yesterday you understood the nature of Dhruva, the son of Uttaanapaada. Today, grasp the character of Priyavrata, the younger brother of Uttaanapaada.

Physical pleasures are like dreams. They are ephemeral and unreal. All dream experiences are non-existent in the waking state. Similarly, all the joys of this world cannot confer happiness on the Atma. Recognizing this, Priyavrata sacrificed all comforts, left his kingdom and departed for the forest. At what age? At the age of nineteen years. Today, no one of that age even attempts to sacrifice worldly comforts. They believe

that youth is the time to indulge in physical pleasures to the full extent.

Not so with Priyavrata. He entered the forest to sanctify his time in Divine contemplation, to dedicate his life to the search for God. He ceaselessly meditated on God, picturing the Lord's form in his mind to the exclusion of all other thoughts.

Students of ancient India

Worldly people are bound in the ideas of "I" and "Mine." Thus, they invite sorrow and waste their valuable lifetimes. Man is trapped because he does not recognize the correct approach to deal with the feelings of "I" and "Mine". He considers "I" to be the body and "Mine" to be his physical possessions. This misinterpretation leads him astray. "I" is the *Atma*. "Mine" refers to the body. The correct attitude is: "I (*Atma*) must use my possession (body) for knowing myself. I should dedicate actions to myself (*Atma*) and not to my possession (body)." "Mine" refers to *kshetra* while "I" is the *Kshetrajna*.¹ The *kshetra* is only a tool to know the *Kshetrajna*. Priyavrata realized that the body was given to know the Indweller, not to enjoy the world. This is the difference between the students of today and students of ancient India.

Today, students set their aspirations on the physical world. They believe worldly joys to be true and lasting. They dedicate their time, body and actions to the pursuit of temporary happiness. But ancient students trusted that the *Atma* alone is permanent. They understood that the body was given to realize the *Atma* and exerted their utmost to experience inner bliss after renouncing external joys. For many years, Priyavrata

ate only roots and tubers, drank only water and underwent great austerities to secure knowledge of the *Atma*. He sat alone in caves and purified his mind. Purity of the mind is most important for the vision of the *Atma*.

What causes impurity of the mind? Attachment to worldly objects through the senses. We should not allow the senses to follow objects and pleasures. These ephemeral objects attract man in a variety of ways. Falling prey to attraction, man is cheated of Bliss. Objects are alluring, no doubt, but they bind and trap. The seriousness of the bondage is not apparent initially. Priyavrata realized the supreme importance of sense control. The same idea was taught by Kapila Muni² when he said, *Yogah Chitta Vritti Nirodhakah*—sense control is the greatest yoga. *Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam*—yoga is also skill in action, which sense control bestows.

Narada teaches Priyavrata

Priyavrata determined to achieve nothing less than perfection in yoga. He didn't go home for many years. Manu went in search of him, pleaded and even ordered him to return, but without success. "I have no interest in the kingdom. I don't even know myself. How can I understand the people and give them satisfaction? I'm sorry. This task of administration is beyond me," Priyavrata told Manu flatly. With no alternative, Manu continued to rule the world.

One day Narada saw Emperor Manu in the throes of depression and inquired, "O Emperor! There is no dearth of anything in your kingdom. Why this dejection?" It was usual for Narada to probe into others' affairs to ensure their welfare!

Manu said, “My son Priyavrata does not agree with me. I want him to rule this kingdom. Please help me convince him.” What other work does Narada have, anyway? He went to Priyavrata’s cave and taught him at length: “O foolish boy! God has given us a body for a task. You can experience Divinity by using the body in worldly duties while keeping the mind focused on the Lord.” Priyavrata asked, “How is that possible?”

Narada explained, “Your prime duty is to obey God’s command. God bestowed this body on you for certain duties. Will God give you a body for no reason? Each individual body has its responsibility. Each responsibility has a goal. You are a prince. Your dharma lies in administering your kingdom. Return home, initiate projects for public welfare and make your subjects happy. Redeem your life in this manner.

You have seen how a farmer controls his bulls by ropes. When he tugs at the rope tied to the left horn, the bull turns left. He pulls the rope on the right side to make the bull turn right. When both ropes are pulled, the bull moves straight ahead. Similarly, human life is controlled by the ropes of duty. God pulls these ropes to steer people along the path of their individual responsibilities. Thus, performing your duty is obeying God. Do not stand in the way of God’s decisions. Do not be a traitor to your true Self. Obey the divine command.”

Priyavrata could not disobey Narada or the Lord. He took Narada’s teaching to heart and returned to the kingdom. Manu established both his sons as kings and retired to the forest of Saunikaaranya. In deference to Narada and Manu, Priyavrata ruled the kingdom for a few years. But he could not

continue for long. He felt joyous only in solitude. He recognized that true spiritual practice is difficult, if not impossible, in the midst of people, objects and worldly activities.

Human attachment vs. divine attachment

More human attachment means less divine attachment. The more we yield to the attraction of worldly joys, the more our one-pointedness declines. The root causes of all sorrow are (1) attraction to worldly objects and (2) attachment arising from human relationships.

Priyavrata realized that each person has come to this world for himself, not for anyone else. There is no lasting bond between people. A traveler reaches an inn. He meets other travelers there. The next day, each one departs to their own destination. Scores of birds collect on a tree at sunset. At dawn, they fly away in their individual directions. Devotees should not lose focus of why they are here and where they are headed. Your journey is eternal—cultivate eternal qualities, not attachment. Today we behave like animals by giving too much importance to the body. We should progress from animal to human, then from human to Divine. For these reasons, Priyavrata longed for solitude and left his kingdom eventually.

Rushika succeeded Priyavrata as King. Rushika was also a seeker of the *Atma*. But he did not consider it necessary to renounce the kingdom to perform spiritual effort. He spent his days ruling efficiently, purifying his mind and performing spiritual inquiry. He maintained a harmonious balance between worldly and spiritual duties. Rushika's son was the famed Bharata.

The story of Jada Bharata

Bharata was truthful and honest. He took excellent care of his subjects. He performed actions only after thinking of God. He never did even the smallest action, like drinking water, without offering it to God. At all times, in all situations, Bharata never forgot God. It is said that Bharath (India) is named after him. After many years as monarch, Bharata handed over the kingdom to his son and went to Rishikesh³ where he built a hermitage for himself. Having severed all worldly attachments, he passed his days meditating on the Lord.

One day, Bharata was sitting on the banks of the Ganga and watching the waves of the river. He reflected about the ups and downs of the waves being like the joys and sorrows in life. To him, the waves had consciousness. He felt that everything in Creation had awareness and was a form of God. While he contemplated in this manner, he heard a loud roar—the roar of a lion. Meanwhile, a doe had come there to drink water. She also heard the roar, panicked and jumped into the river. She was in the final stages of pregnancy. The fear and physical stress of the situation caused her baby deer to be delivered immediately. The doe was swept away in the river's current but Bharata was able to reach out and save the baby deer.

Bharata cleaned the deer, took it back to his hermitage and began tending it with parental affection. Now all his time was occupied in attending to this deer. If the deer wasn't in his sight, it was in his mind. Feeding it milk, collecting grass for it, cleaning it—He wasted all his time in such activities. Bharata's attachment for the deer kept increasing and consequently,

thoughts of God decreased. He thought of the deer constantly. A few years passed in this manner. When Bharata's death came unexpectedly, he took his last breath while thinking fondly of the deer and calling it by name.

Practice remembrance of God

What is the inner meaning of this story? Bharata left his body at a time when he was incapable of entertaining elevating thoughts. His final thought was about the deer and so, he was born as a deer in his next life. But he was able to remember his past life and the needless attachment. "My mind, which delighted in thoughts of God, fell prey to attachment for an animal. How foolish! What a pitiable life I am leading now," he regretted. Such are the disastrous consequences of uncontrolled attachment.

That is why when *Bharathiyas* go on pilgrimage to Kasi,⁴ we find dying people repeating the name of God continuously. No one can tell if the Divine Name will come to one's lips at the final moment. So, these bedridden people have someone whispering into their ears, the mantra:

Sri Rama Rama Rameti, Rame Raame Manorame

Sahasra Naama Tattulyam, Rama Naama Varaanane.

The repetition of the name "Rama" once is equal to repeating the entire *Vishnu Sahasra nama* (thousand names of Vishnu).

Whatever thought you entertain last, you will achieve that form in your next birth. The contemplation (*smarana*) done during your lifetime becomes your sole ornament (*aabha-*

rana) after death. If you remember the Lord's name throughout your life, it will be easy to recall it in your last moments.

Some people do not agree. They say, "If we must practice japa in youth, when are we to enjoy the world? When I have nothing to do after retirement, I will begin japa." This is foolishness. Suppose a man joins the army. If he is given a gun on his first day and asked to go to battle, he will be confused! He must undergo rigorous training in a variety of martial skills. With diligent practice over many years, he will become a good soldier. For this reason, Krishna talked about the importance of practice in the Gita.

Practice (*abhyasa*) is very essential. Even mundane activities like walking, talking, speaking, reading, writing are based on practice. We must prepare for death also by constantly remembering the Lord's Name and Form. Only then is it possible to recollect Him in our final moments. Therefore, practice, practice, practice, from a tender age. This is the main significance of the story of Bharata.

Rebirth as "Jada" Bharata

After his life as a deer, Bharata was born as a *brahmin*. Recalling his past mistake, he resolved not to cultivate attachment to anyone. He decided that this would be his repentance, although his mistake was done unknowingly. So he behaved like a vegetable. If anyone called him, he did not respond. Whatever anyone said to him, he didn't pay attention. People thought he was deaf and dumb, but Jada⁵ Bharata was unmoved.

He stuck to the faith that he was not the body. Memories of valuable time wasted in previous births disturbed him to no end. He left the city and went into the forest. He spent many years living under trees. Thoughts of God were foremost in his mind.

In the forest lived a gang of robbers. The leader of the gang had no children. Someone advised him that if he sacrificed a human being to Goddess Kali, he would obtain a son. So the leader commanded his henchmen to catch a healthy man for this purpose. The robbers spread out in the forest and began searching. Jada Bharata was seated under a tree. The robbers found him and carried him to their leader. Bharata hadn't had a bath for a long time. He was dirty. They took him to a river and forcibly bathed him. They applied sandalwood paste on his body and decorated him like a sacrificial offering. Bharata was not mindful of their actions or the reasons for those actions. The robbers took him to the temple of Kali. They asked him to sit down and he complied. They lifted a sword to behead him.

As the sword was about to strike, Goddess Kali appeared. She came walking from the inner enclosure of the temple and slew the entire gang of thieves. Then the Mother Goddess blessed Bharata with words of advice: "I am very pleased with your devotion and perseverance. Continue in this manner, and establish yourself in the Self. Don't worry what the world thinks of you. Be unaffected by praise and blame. Be fearless. Think of the Lord all the time." But Jada Bharata did not even hear Her! He was engrossed in the *Atma*, without interruption.

Then Mother Kali disappeared. Bharata walked out of the temple, still engrossed in the *Atma*.

On another occasion, Rahuguna, King of Sindhu-Sauvari, was passing by in a palanquin. Bharata was seated under a tree. The palanquin-bearers found the palanquin very heavy and accosted Bharata to lend them a hand. They dragged him from his spot and placed the palanquin on his shoulders. Bharata quietly obeyed. But before taking every step, he would make sure he wasn't stepping on any insect, since he perceived the *Atma* in every being. *Sarva Bhoota Antaraatma Paramaatma*—God is the Indweller in all beings. This truth was recognized by Bharata. The feeling of unity—that no being should be harmed—was steadfast in him. Bharata's caution caused the palanquin to be slow and jerky. The king got angry, "Hey, men! Why are you walking so strangely?" The bearers said, "O King! This new man is responsible," pointing to Bharata.

The king turned to Bharata and abused him at length, calling him a "walking corpse". Then Bharata opened his mouth, "O King! Not only this body but all bodies are walking corpses. Yes, the body is walking, but it is only a *sava* (dead body). The One making all bodies walk, the only One alive, is Shiva. Bodies are inert. The inner consciousness is God." The king heard these words and commanded the palanquin to be lowered.

Rahuguna was actually on his way to see Sage Kapila to learn about the *Atma*. He stepped down in humility and said, "Kapila himself has appeared to me here." He sat with Bharata and clarified his understanding of the *Atma*. Jada Bharata taught

him *Atma Vidya* in a clear, lucid manner. Rahuguna was overwhelmed by Bharata's teachings and fell at his feet.

Vasanas—remnants of desires

Jada Bharata's wisdom spread all over India. His main teachings for eradication of worldly attachments were (1) control of the senses and (2) ceiling on desires. We should not let desires grow without limit. Desires alone are responsible for our joy and sorrow. One who desires is not a devotee. The one who works with an expectation in mind is not a devotee. You must work for others, for God.

You may chant the *Vedas* morning to night, know all the scripture, undertake various sadhanas or perform yagnas—God will not be achieved by any of these activities. This was the truth taught by Jada Bharata. These acts are only for mental satisfaction. How far is their reach, how permanent is their effect? This body composed of desires can never achieve God—Bharata recognized this truth.

An example. A camphor box has the smell of camphor even after all the camphor is removed. The body is a container smelling of sensual pleasures. Even after desires are curbed, vasanas (remnants of desire) exist. As long as the slightest tinge of desire exists, vasanas will prevail. As long as vasanas exist, one cannot reach God. So, patiently maintain self-effort with determination till the final trace of desire is erased. This is *Atma Bodha*—Teaching of the *Atma*.

Pray to God for God

Man has not taken birth to cultivate and satisfy desires. A life based on desires is narrow. Human life is meant to be as sacred and infinite as our innate Divinity. Do not pray to God with desires. “Lord, if I pass this exam, I’ll break two coconuts for You.” Is God short of coconuts? Will He satisfy your desires in fond anticipation of your coconuts? People go to Tirupathi and pray, “O Venkateswara!⁶ Fulfill my desire and I will give you every hair on my head.” What good is your hair to the Lord? You entertain rotten desires and hold your rotten hair as ransom! No, no. This is not true prayer. It is only begging, with selfishness as the motive.

A servant works hard all day. But in the evening, he comes to the master and demands wages. One who demands compensation is an outsider, a paid servant. The wife and children also work hard at home. But does the wife demand wages at the end of the day? No. She is an owner, not a servant. The wife and children work out of a sense of duty. Those who realize that their primary duty is to dedicate their lives to God qualify as “owners.”

Therefore, do not pray to God with desires. You should be able to assert, “I pray to You for You! I do not want anything else.” This truth was propagated by Jada Bharata. With such sublime teachings, Bharata succeeded in destroying the false pride and excessive desire in many kings of his time.

Karma is inescapable

Why was Bharata able to teach the kings of his time? Because he had experienced and overcome these obstacles himself. At one time, he used to delight in thoughts of God. Then

he fell to the status of an animal. He toiled to regain his original state of detachment and devotion. Thus, Bharata preached—*Karma* cannot be escaped at any time, in any place. Good for good, bad for bad, you are bound to reap what you sow.

*Karma daata vasamaa, narudaa, karma daata
vasamaa?*

Ghana paathambulu chadivina kaanee,

Kula devatalanu kolachina kaanee,

Kaaradavulake poyina kaanee,

Kathina tapassule chesina kaanee,

*Karma daata vasamaa, narudaa, karma daata
vasamaa?*

Is it possible to evade *karma*, O man, is it possible?

You may have studied all the scriptures,

Pleased your family deities,

Departed into forests,

Performed austere penance,

But, is it possible to evade *karma*, O man, is it possible?

Chinna chelimilo munchina kaanee,

Enni samudramul ninchina kaanee,

Kadavento ra, Neerante ra,

Kaavaalannanu ekkuva raadu ra,

*Karma daata vasamaa, narudua, karma daata
vasamaa?*

Whether you dip it in a small pond,

Or in a mighty ocean,

As is the container, so is the amount of water you collect.

You cannot get more, even if you want.

Is it possible to evade *karma*, O man, is it possible?

Your experiences and your destiny are only as grand as the size of your heart. To gain more peace and bliss, expand your heart. Many millionaires have become paupers and paupers have become rich. These are consequences of God's grace, not results of your desires. Jada Bharata told the kings, "You do not get joy by desiring it. Joys and sorrows come by themselves, as they please. They may come alone or even together! So, increase the size of your heart."

Limit your desires to acquire a pure mind. More desires mean more pollution of your mind. A dirty mind can never contemplate on God.

Uplift yourself by practice

All your *sadhana* must be directed to achieving God alone. You must uplift yourself. No one else will do it for you. *Uddharet Atmanaatmaanam.*⁷ Raise yourself by your own efforts. Consider a guidepost on the road. It points to Chikbalapuram in one direction, to Belathuru in another direction and so on. Destinations are indicated, but walking is still required! And the one who should walk is yourself. In the same way, reading scriptures and undertaking different *sadhanas* are of no avail till you contemplate on Divinity with a pure heart.

Today men read sacred texts but without faith. A student requested his teacher, "*Guru Ji!* I've been reading the

Bhagavad Gita for twenty years. I know all 700 verses by heart. But I haven't acquired any good fruits from this effort. Please prescribe a mantra by which I can get results." The teacher exclaimed, "Get out, you madman! You have been reading the *Gita*—instructions of the Lord Himself. You have no faith in the Lord's words, and you profess faith in some obscure mantra? If you followed the *Gita* sincerely, why would you need a mantra? What good is a mantra to one who has no faith in the Lord?" People today also do not follow teachings. As a result, their mantras, *japa*, *yagnas*, pilgrimages ... all are a waste.

When we put teachings into practice, the unity of thought, word and deed must be present. While reciting a mantra, we must demonstrate its meaning in action. Only then can we win the fruit of the mantra.

One student learnt about the nature of Divinity. He heard his teacher often speaking of the mantra *Shivoham*, which means, "I am Shiva." So he began reciting it all day. A passer-by was intrigued.

He asked the boy, "Son, where did you learn this mantra?" The boy replied, "From a great teacher." "What does *Shivoham* mean?" "It means—I am Shiva." "Indeed, you are Shiva. So how is Goddess Parvathi related to you?" "How sinful, how sinful," the student exclaimed.

If the boy considered himself Shiva, then Parvathi would be his wife, wouldn't she? However, with faith, the student would have realized that Parvathi and all of Creation are

Shiva as well! We must recognize that all powers reside within us. Merely reciting mantras without experiencing their significance is a waste of time.

Students, you have seen that the descendants of Manu were seekers of *Atma Jnana*. They attained and delighted in *Atma Jnana*. Not just Manu's family, but all characters of the *Bhagavatham* were pure. Unfortunately, scholars misinterpret *Bhagavatham* and disparage God. The great devotees of the *Bhagavatham* considered their bodies as God's property and the Indweller as Divine. They rightly recognized the body to be like a bulb and the inherent Divinity to be like the current.

Balance worldly studies and Atma Vidya

Therefore, students should not pursue education with only worldly happiness in mind. Students constantly ask, "What job will this study equip me for? How much will I earn? What lifestyle could I sustain?" They are busy planning their future, but not bothering to understand the meaning of education. They expect to become highly-paid executives after securing MBA degrees. They think, "I will command a monthly salary of Rs. 5000, 10000, even 20000." But they have no motivation to apply their skills towards social welfare.

It is wrong to think, "What can I get from society?" With proliferation of useless education, security is absent in Bharath. Why? Because educated people are like thieves, feeding off society for their costly lifestyles. It is only uneducated people who are trying to render service to society as per their capacity. With worldly studies, pursue *Atma Vidya* as well.

Then you will find ways to deliver peace and security to society, thus lending meaning to your life.

I do not ask that you earn high positions or wealth. Authority comes and goes. Become ideal men and women—this is what I desire for you. The characters in the *Bhagavatham* are immortal for their glorious deeds. You heard the stories of nineteen-year-old Priyavrata and Dhruva, a mere five-year-old boy! Their virtues are sung thousands of years after their times. Imagine, how sacred and pure they must have been, for their names to be taken with reverence in this Kali Yuga!

We also hear of Einstein and Newton—great scientists. They have come and gone. But where are their names? Einstein is mentioned in scientific discussions, no doubt. But when we talk of other subjects, like art, Einstein is nowhere. However, exalted beings like Dhruva and Jada Bharata shine constantly in the hearts of young and old, paupers and millionaires alike.

I do not say that you should neglect or renounce your studies. No. But do not consider them as the main purpose of life. Education without contemplation on God is useless. Cultivate Divine Love like these great devotees and make your lives meaningful. In ancient India, even young boys had great renunciation. Not just boys, girls were exemplary also. So, boys and girls, follow the ideals of *Atma Vidya*, fulfill your own lives and set ideal examples to society. Blessing you with this expectation, I conclude My discourse.

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- ¹. *Kshetra* (field) and *Kshetrajna* (“Knower of the field”) are terms used in *Bhagavad Gita* (Ch. XIII) to represent the body and the Indwelling *Atma*, respectively. Swami explains that a field is symbolic of sowing and reaping. With the body, man sows good/bad actions and reaps corresponding results.
 - ². An *Avatar* of Lord Vishnu also mentioned in *Bhagavatham*.
 - ³. Holy city on the banks of River Ganga.
 - ⁴. The city of Varanasi, holy to Hindus.
 - ⁵. *Jada* = dumb, inert, non-living.
 - ⁶. The form of Lord Vishnu worshipped at the temple of Tirupati in southern India.
 - ⁷. *Bhagavad Gita* (VI:5).

7. Vishwamitra

Naasti Lobha Samo Vyaadhih

Naasti Krodha Samo Ripuh.

Naasti Daaridryavat Dukham

Naasti Jnaana Samo Sukham.

There is no disease like greed,

No enemy like anger,

No sorrow greater than poverty,

No happiness equal to wisdom.

Everyone strives to acquire happiness and to remove misery, but is unsuccessful. Creation is vast and endless. Man is just a tiny part of the Cosmos and therefore, should lead his life in keeping with the welfare of all. Instead, man believes that Creation is meant for his own enjoyment, and exploits it. Just as a child draws milk from its mother and a bee draws nectar from a flower, man can also draw necessary resources from Nature.

The importance of limits

These days we see Nature revolting by way of disasters because man ignores all limits in exploiting its resources. Torrential rain, drought, earthquakes, floods—such are the repercussions of man's greed. On account of scientific progress, scientists have grown selfish without regard for the world's welfare. They provoke Nature to retaliation.

The *Bhagavatham* says, *Durlabho Maanusha Janmah*—a human birth is difficult to acquire. *Viveka Choodamani* says, *Jantoonaam Nara Janma Durlabham*—A human birth is rarest among all beings. The *Puranas* teach that among the 8,400,000 species of beings in the world, humans are the most

evolved. When we ponder over these scriptural statements, we realize how pure, valuable and sacred human life is. Today we have forgotten that a human birth is priceless, potentially Divine and full of Bliss. Thus we invite sorrow upon ourselves.

For happiness and sorrow, your behavior alone is responsible, not anyone else. People are unable to believe this fact. With pure conduct, you can acquire all the happiness and comfort you desire. Your desires also must be within limits if you want peace of mind. Men are going mad since they do not limit unreasonable desires.

The story of King Trisanku

In the *Chandravamsha*¹ there was an emperor called Trisanku. He was a great King in every way. He was truthful, an embodiment of *dharma*, and he treated his subjects as if they were his own children. His heart was full of compassion. In spite of his excellent qualities, Trisanku could not limit one peculiar desire that found a way into his heart: He yearned to dwell in heaven in his physical body.

To this end, Trisanku went to his family guru, Sage Vashishta. He said, “Respected Guru, please help me achieve this desire and bring fulfillment into my life.” Vashishta remarked, “Shame on you! Your desire is unnatural. This body is dirty. It is the home of mucus, waste matter, and disease. To take this ephemeral body to the heavenly realms is like dragging a corpse along with you. People earn heaven after good actions and yagnas done over many lifetimes. It is impossible to take the physical body there. It is against God’s rules for Creation to even attempt it. This thought is not worthy of you. I cannot

help you. If you are adamant, you may approach another sage.”

Trisanku went home dejected. After some time he journeyed northward. He went to meet the bright, austere, powerful and highly esteemed sons of Vashishta. The sons of Vashishta had surpassed even their father! No one was greater than them in wisdom, fame, and austerity. Trisanku told them his problem as well as Vashishta’s words. They said, “Trisanku! Our father is your personal guru and the guru of your dynasty. By coming to us, you have disobeyed him, insulted him. Why would we overrule our father? Do you want us to go against our father like you did? There is no place among us for a disciple who doesn’t value his guru’s words. Go away!”

Trisanku had nowhere to go. So he went to Kausika.² This Kausika was also a King originally. But his kingly pride took a fall when he opposed Vashishta’s spiritual power. So, at that time, he was engaged in arduous penance for spiritual powers. Kausika decided to satisfy Trisanku at any cost, only because Vashishta had refused to do so. Why? Kausika hated and envied Vashishta intensely. Vashishta was a *Brahmarishi*³ while he was only a *Rajarishi*.⁴

Kausika had exerted tremendously to achieve the status of a *Brahmarishi*, but had failed till then. What was the reason? His hatred, anger, and jealousy prevented him from advancing beyond the stage of *Rajarishi*. One who harbors anger and jealousy can never prosper. He can never achieve his goals. There is no enemy greater than anger. There is no disease greater than envy. There is a medicine for every disease but none for jeal-

ousy. And Trisanku sought help from Kausika, in whom so many bad qualities were present.

Kausika assured him, "I will send you to heaven in your physical body without fail!" He began planning a *yagna* and summoned many *rithwiks*.⁵ None of them approved of this *yagna*, but they still came, fearing Kausika's wrath. Kausika was anger personified. The *rithwiks* did not want to be burnt in the fire of his anger. They told themselves, "Let us just go there quietly and do our job."

The *yagna* to send Trisanku to heaven began. No *Devas*⁶ were seen approaching to accept the offerings of the *yagna*. Kausika understood that the *Devas* disapproved of Trisanku's motive. He decided to send Trisanku to heaven solely by the power of his penance. He poured all his spiritual powers into a wooden staff. Then, holding the staff aloft, he announced, "Trisanku! I command you to ascend to heaven." Trisanku began rising in the air and soon, he went out of sight. Everyone was speechless at this incredible event. After some time, they heard shouts, "*Guru Ji! Guru Ji!*" When they looked up, they saw Trisanku falling down shouting, "*Guru Ji! Indra*⁷ did not permit me to enter heaven. What should I do? I await your command."

Kausika was incensed at the audacity of the *Devas* who had refused admission to his supplicant. He said, "You stay there, don't come down." With Trisanku as the central point, Kausika began creating a second universe by the strength of his spiritual power! He created new Sun, Moon, planets, stars,

heaven, and so on. But the *Devas* looked upon these creations as artificial and ignored them.

The story of Sunassepha

While Trisanku was in that state, his son Harischandra ruled the kingdom. This was not Sathya Harischandra, who is famous for his truthfulness! His name was Harischandra, that's all! This Harischandra prayed to Lord Varuna⁸ for a son. He promised that he would surrender the son to Varuna soon after he was born. Varuna heard his prayer and a son was born in a few months. The son was named Rohita. Harischandra could not bring himself to give Rohita away to Varuna. He reneged on his promise. Rohita came to know of his father's mistake. He thought, "I wonder what calamities might beset me in this kingdom," and ran away to the forest. He spent many years wandering aimlessly, subsisting on roots and tubers. Meanwhile, as a consequence of breaking his promise, Harischandra was afflicted with a chronic disease.

What is the inner meaning of these stories? The father, Trisanku, nursed a desire that went against the Laws of Nature. The son, Harischandra, did not keep his word. These stories are told to illustrate the sorrow that ensues from these two actions—breaking one's word and going against the Divine Law. Everyone, without distinction, must necessarily follow the rules and disciplines of Nature. No one has the authority to oppose these rules, which represent the Divine Law. To break such laws is to invite great calamity. This is an important teaching of the *Bhagavatham*.

Rohita came to know of his father's disease. He attempted to return home many times. But Indra appeared to him and dissuaded him every time. Rohita considered himself responsible for his father's condition. He continuously searched for a solution to this dilemma. He thought about his father's promise to Varuna—One living being had to be offered to Varuna in a *yagna*.

The father can have love for his sons, no doubt. But it should be within limits. It should be neither excessive like Dhritarashtra's love, nor deficient like Hiranya Kashyapa's love. Years roll by and old age arrives, but man's attachment only grows and grows! This is the reason why today's man experiences hell. Why? Attachment and possessiveness alone are responsible for misery. Attachment must have limits. Without limits, man forgets his Divine nature, behaves like an animal and loses respect in society.

Rohita resolved to return and put an end to his father's suffering. On the way, he met a couple and their three sons. Rohita told them, "I will give you untold wealth and cows and land in exchange for one of your sons. I need a boy for a *yagna*. Will you give me your oldest son?" The man said, "I love my oldest son immensely. I cannot live without him." Rohita persisted, "How about your youngest son, then?" The wife interjected, "He is the darling of my heart. I cannot part with him." The middle son was not as much loved as the other two. The father said, "You can have our second son."

The second son told himself, "How unfortunate I am! I couldn't become worthy of my parents' affection. It is much better to offer my life in a *yagna* than to live such a life." He

went with Rohita of his own volition. This boy was Sunassepha. They walked for a long distance and felt tired. They felt hungry but could see no human habitation nearby. They noticed a hermitage at a distance and ran into it. The hermitage was the abode of the noble Sage Vishwamitra.

Sunassepha spoke his heart to Vishwamitra. “O Great Sage! This is my pitiable situation. Please protect me somehow and make me your disciple,” he pleaded. Vishwamitra assured him, “Don’t worry, I will definitely save you.” Immediately he sent for his three sons and instructed, “One of you must agree to go to the *yagna* instead of this boy. Harischandra is performing a *yagna* in which one being must be offered to Varuna. *Paropakaaraartham Idam Sareeram*—Our bodies are meant to be of service to others. We must be ever ready to give our life to protect another’s.” Vishwamitra’s sons burst out laughing. “Father, you are ready to sacrifice your own sons for the sake of some unknown boy? Is this what you are supposed to teach us?” None of them agreed to renounce his life. Then Vishwamitra called Sunassepha near and said, “Son, two mantras are required for this *yagna* to be completed. I will teach them to you now. Recite them in the *yagna*.”

Sunassepha learnt the two mantras by heart and proceeded with Rohita. Harischandra’s *yagna* began. Harischandra felt guilty that he was ready to sacrifice someone else’s son to Varuna. He recognized his acute selfishness. Rohita also suffered terribly with feelings of guilt. But he could not go against his father’s order for Sunassepha to be sacrificed.

As the *yagna* neared conclusion, Sunassepha recited his mantras loudly. In that peaceful atmosphere, those mantras

illuminated the surroundings. Varuna noticed the brilliance of the mantras and descended to the site Himself. Varuna said, “Harischandra! You promised me something and did something else. Your disease is nothing but the fruit of this sinful act. The given word must be upheld. No one is exempt from this injunction. Even at the cost of one’s life, do not go back on your promise. *Sathyam Naasti Paro Dharmah*—There is no *dharma* higher than truth. This whole universe has emerged from sathya, and it merges into sathya ultimately. There is no place in the world without Truth. Instead of protecting and experiencing Truth, you opposed it and invited misery. However, your son Rohita prayed that Sunassepha should be saved at any cost. Yielding to Rohita’s *sraddha*⁹ and pure feelings, I have come Myself.” Paying money to buy someone else’s son and sacrifice him? This is a great sin. The parents also offered the son by yielding to greed.

We must realize the inner meaning here. Who was the root cause of all this suffering? It was Trisanku. He went against the Natural Law. He wanted a second creation to be made just for himself! This is against the Will of God. These traits also appeared in his son to a certain extent. One who opposes God’s Will cannot survive in this world. To disobey the Will of God is *bhagavat-droham* and *guru-droham*, treachery towards God and guru. Trisanku suffered because he was a traitor to God and to his guru. One should be ever obedient to one’s father also. Devotion and obedience to God, father, and guru: these are the hallmarks of Indian Culture. Trisanku was one who disregarded the sanctity of these three relations.

The story of Kausika

Trisanku was only a king. But look at the Sage Kausika! He had immense wisdom and tremendous penance to his credit. Yet, he stooped to the level of helping Trisanku in his questionable desire. Kausika would not have helped Trisanku under normal circumstances, but his hatred for Vashishta made him take that step. Hatred clouds discrimination. What is the use of arduous penance, yagnas and many kinds of education? Kausika was a master of all scriptures, possessed boundless spiritual power and was an embodiment of *dharmā*. But he allowed hatred into his heart and laid all these virtues to waste. He performed a task that even ordinary people would have recognized as wrong!

For this reason Kausika's respect gradually diminished. Only his penance and powers sustained his waning reputation. Kausika's penance had jealousy as its foundation. He was jealous that Vashishta had earned the title of Brahmarishi. Despite his penance, Kausika could not curb his anger. Even after Brahma appeared to him and honored him with the title of Rajarishi, his anger did not subside. Brahma knew that Kausika was full of *Rajo Guna* and hence, gave him the title of Rajarishi. One with *rajas* is a Rajarishi. The one who recognizes the nature of Brahman and acts according to the prompting of the Atma is a Brahmarishi.

Kausika was originally a king. Many, many years ago, he went to the forest for a hunt. He was exhausted after a full day of hunting. He came across a hermitage—Sage Vashishta's hermitage. He paid his respects to Vashishta. Enthralled by the serenity and natural beauty of the hermitage, Kausika tarried there, conversing with Vashishta. After some time, he re-

requested Vashishta's permission to return to his city. Vashishta said, "You are the emperor of this land. Under your rule, we ascetics are able to live peacefully in the forest. Through your administrative policies, you are ever attentive to the protection and care of sages. It is our duty to honor our King as a special guest. You must accept my hospitality."

Kausika said humbly, "Swami! I am not here alone. Thousands of soldiers are with me. If you give me a glass of water or milk, that is sufficient. Please don't trouble yourself." Vashishta said, "O King! There is no dearth of anything in this hermitage. Where God's Grace showers, all-round abundance follows. I am capable of providing hospitality to any number of your soldiers." Kausika was surprised. He wondered, "How is this sage planning to provide my entire army with food?" Kausika's arrogance rose and he thought, "Let me test this sage." He agreed to Vashishta's request.

Vashishta called out lovingly, "Sabali, Sabali!" A cow came there. Vashishta told the cow, "Look here, Sabali. The king is our guest today. Please arrange for his comfort and that of his soldiers." In the twinkling of an eye, everything appeared! Sabali was a *kamadhenu*, a wish-fulfilling cow gifted by Lord Brahma. There was food even for Kausika's elephants and horses, what to talk of his soldiers and himself! Kausika was an emperor. But even his royal kitchens had never produced such delicious food. Arrogance and greed entered Kausika's heart. He thought, "This miraculous cow must reside with a King, not with a recluse in a forest."

Kausika finished eating. Then he told Vashishta, "O Sage! I have a small request. Please give me Sabali." Vashishta

said, "That is impossible. Sabali is meant to be with me." Kausika tried to convince him in many ways but Vashishta wouldn't yield. Kausika lost his patience, turned to his soldiers and said, "Drag this cow to our city." The soldiers began dragging Sabali away and she cried out to Vashishta, "*Guru Ji!* What fault have I done? Why do you let them drag me away?"

Vashishta told her, "Here is a king who is proud of his physical and intellectual strength, but he has no strength of virtue. How can I reason with a king devoid of virtue?" He tried advising Kausika, but to no avail. Now, Kausika's army consisted of hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Who could defy such a force? Knowing Sabali's strength, Vashishta told her, "I permit you to deal with them as you wish."

All of a sudden, Sabali created a divine army of millions out of nowhere, which fell upon Kausika's army. Kausika's men were annihilated in a matter of minutes. Not a single soldier survived. Even the sons of Kausika were not spared! The only one left alive was Kausika himself, who returned home humiliated. Since then, his hatred for Vashishta grew into a raging fire.

Kausika's anger and hatred were a curse to him. Vashishta was ever peaceful, even during this incident. Vashishta cautioned him, "The angry man cannot succeed. He commits sins and loses his respect. He distances himself from his near and dear ones and is despised by all. This dire enemy, anger, destroys every happiness of man. Your enemy is within you, not outside." But Vashishta's peaceful demeanor and advice would cause Kausika's anger to increase even more!

The true meaning of sacrifice

What is the reason for anger and loss of discrimination? It is only attachment! Why should a prosperous emperor desire this cow? He has all comforts in his kingdom. This cow belonged to the sage and was a Divine blessing for feeding the denizens of the forest. Why not let the cow dwell where its services were most needed? Craving for objects that he shouldn't desire is the reason for man's ruin. *Bhagavatham* is replete with ideals: (1) Keep your word. (2) Never lie. (3) Limit desires and attachment.

Yes, you may have attachment for your wife and children. But keep it within limits. Not only must you limit your attachment but limit its duration also. Your householder life is only till fifty years of age. By sixty years, you must enter *Vanaprastha*. You should snap ties with wife and children and be free of all responsibilities. The age of seventy years is the time for complete renunciation (*sanyasa*).

Instead of cultivating such sacrifice, men today refuse to renounce attachments till death. Only hell can result to such people. Help your family and others to the extent possible. Discharge your duties towards everyone. And remember that every person is independent, governed by his individual *karma*. Everyone is responsible for himself. Don't cultivate attachment, which is the root cause of sorrow.

In this modern age, 99 out of 100 people spend their lives in attachment. Even those with perfect renunciation in ancient Bharath could not escape sorrow! Then how can mod-

ern man, submerged in attachment, expect to live happily? Remember, each one is responsible for oneself. Develop such feelings of sacrifice. For this reason the *Vedas* advise:

*Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena
Tyaagenaike Amritatvamaanashu.*

Not by good deeds, children or wealth but only by sacrifice is immortality attained.

What is the meaning of “sacrifice”? Attachment (*raga*) and hatred (*dvesha*) must be sacrificed. People talk about the *nava grahas*¹⁰ who must be appeased so that our lives are free of misfortunes. Really, there are not nine, but only two *grahas* that we must be mindful of: attachment and hatred! These two put us through suffering. Renounce attachment and hatred. This alone is true sacrifice, true renunciation:

Cultivate thoughts of God and think of everyone’s welfare. *Lokaah Samastaah Sukhino Bhavantu*—May all the worlds be happy. You must pray in this manner every day. Do not limit yourself to your family, friends, and relatives. Everyone must be happy. With such prayer, victory and peace will fill you!

So, gradually strengthen your spirit of sacrifice. What is sacrifice? You must sacrifice attachment and hatred. These feelings lie at the root of all possessiveness. If you only give up money, clothes, property and possessions—that is not sacrifice.

Decrease attachment to the body

Students! Develop this correct outlook from a tender age. Get rid of bodily attachment gradually, to the extent possible. Use the body merely as a tool to perform your duties. The body has been given for performing actions but it is not everlasting. Do not develop attachment or pride on its account. The body is like a glass tumbler. It might break at any moment.

Body is a water bubble.
Mind is a mad monkey.
Don't follow the body.
Don't follow the mind.
Follow the conscience.

Don't cultivate attachment to the body beyond limits. That is why our ancient sages went into solitude to overcome bodily attachment. They took care of their bodies but at the same time, decreased their physical attachment. Those who aspire for Divinity must necessarily embark on this path. However, if you don't want God, you can remain preoccupied with the body for as long as you wish, because that will give you the temporary happiness you seek.

One small example: Once, for a mistake, Narada was cursed by Lord Narayana and took birth as a pig. He wallowed in mud all day and it seemed to be Vaikunta¹¹ to him! Then he married a she-pig and became a father to nine piglets. This pig-Narada was so happy wading through filth along with his wife and children. For him, that filth was Vaikunta, his pig-wife was Kailasa¹² and his children were heaven! From time to time, Devas would pass-by and remonstrate with him, "What is this pitiable state, Narada? Shed this attachment to a pig's body.

We are on our way to meet Lord Narayana. Realize your true identity and come with us.”

Then the pig-Narada would reply, “No, no, no! I don’t want your tasteless world. See how happy I am here! My wife is so beautiful! I have nine children, as glorious as the nine planets. And the enjoyment of wading in this mud is not available to me even in heaven! How can I simply leave these joys and come away?”

What is the lesson here? Who was overcome by attachment? None other than Narada, a mentally created son of Brahma! So, you may definitely have attachment and desires. But limit them. With limited desires, attain the limitless Divinity—This is the easy path. If you fail to put a ceiling on desires, you distance yourself from God.

Students, plan your life along idealistic lines from a young age and demonstrate it to society. You definitely have the freedom and the right to desire the necessities of life. But don’t cultivate too many desires. Cut your ego and limit attachment, thereby letting Divine feelings flourish. This is what *Vedanta*¹³ and the *Bhagavatham* advise.

The *Bhagavatham* is “His Story”

There are many stories, some strange, in *Bhagavatham*. You might find them long or cumbersome. No, no. They are all “histories”. “History” means “His Story”—stories of God. Unfortunately we are unable to appreciate the *Bhagavatham*. Hence, we violate its teachings. Truly, every verse of this scripture is a pearl, a diamond. *Bhagavatham* was written for the very purpose of teaching the secrets of attaining God. Oth-

erwise, why would Vyasa sit dispiritedly on the banks of River Saraswati after composing the eighteen Puranas, and why would Narada go there and advise him to compose *Bhagavatham*?

Narada told Vyasa, “You wrote the *Puranas* and the *Mahabharatha* and earned the name *sloka daata*—giver of divine verses. But your *slokas* (divine verses) could not dispel your *soka* (sorrow). You inquired into the intentions of the wicked Kauravas and described their characters in the *Mahabharatha*. Thus your mind was sullied. To cleanse yourself, now describe the stories of the Lord. Write the *Bhagavatham*.” There is no text greater than the *Bhagavatham*. Why? The *Bhagavatham* alone explains the nature of God in entirety.

Give up kama to attain Rama

There was a being who was able to assume different forms. Assuming the form of a monkey, he went around telling people, “You fools! Look at me. I am a monkey. I dwell inside you as your mind. I am responsible for your fickleness. Even monkeys served Rama despite their unsteadiness. But you men follow *kama*¹⁴ instead of Rama.”

Do you see? Even monkeys were intelligent to serve Rama. But men run after *kama*. They are more foolish than monkeys! Desires, desires, desires... How can Rama grant His Vision to one drowned in desires? Decrease your desires gradually. Like the horns of a bull, which grow with age, your desires are ever-increasing! This is not proper. Human values will degenerate into animal qualities if this trend persists.

Students! As much as possible, decrease your desires. Desires are the prime cause of sorrow. The less our desires, the more our bliss. While performing worldly duties, do virtuous actions and think of spiritual matters. Our country is full of miserable situations. Students should arm themselves with skills and capacity and rectify these situations.

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1. The “Lunar Dynasty” - A lineage of great kings in ancient India.
 2. Kausika and Vishwamitra are the same person. Originally angry and proud as Kausika, he undertook arduous penance and conquered his ego. Then he came to be known as Sage Vishwamitra. In this discourse, the name Kausika is used when he was a King or an “unripe” sage. The name Vishwamitra is used after he became a perfect sage or *Brahmarishi*.
 3. “Sage established in *Brahman* (Self)”- Highest class of sages.
 4. “King among Sages” - A title granted to eminent sages.
 5. Chanters of *Vedic* mantras.
 6. Divine beings, denizens of heaven.
 7. King of Heavens.
 8. Lord of the Water Element.
 9. Faith, dedication.
 10. *Nava* (nine) *Grahas* (celestial powers) in Hindu astrology - Aditya, Soma, Mangala, Budha, Guru, Sukra, Sani, Rahu and Ketu.
 11. Abode of Lord Vishnu.
 12. Abode of Lord Shiva.
 13. Branch of Hindu philosophy expounded in the Upanishads, elaborating on the nonduality of Creation based on the One Atma.
 14. Desire.

8. Prahlada

Punya Phalamu Cheta Puttenu Manujudai

Dushta Vaanchala Cheta Dushtudai

Jnaana Maargamu Maanavatvamu Veede

Intakanna Raakshasatvamedi Kaladu?

One is born a human by the fruit of meritorious deeds.

By cultivating unholy desire, one becomes wicked,

And abandons the path of wisdom and human values.

Indeed, what else is demonic behavior?

Embodiments of divine love!

Lord Vishnu assumed the *Varaha* (Boar) *Avatar* to destroy the demon Hiranyaksha. Hiranya Kashyapa, the brother of Hiranyaksha, witnessed his brother's death at the hands of the Lord. As a result, he developed anger and hatred toward the Lord. He considered Narayana not as God but as a man, and decided to destroy Him by any means.

Hiranya Kashyapa, hater of the Lord

Hiranya Kashyapa ordered all devotees and *Vedic* priests to be killed. He destroyed *Brahmins* on sight. The kingdom fell into chaos. Not able to bear the separation from his brother, Hiranya developed many weaknesses. He gave up food, drink and sleep and questioned all the time, "Where is this Narayana?" The Lord exists for one who accepts Him but not for atheists. Yet, He is present in everyone equally. The believer is like a blooming flower while the atheist is a bud. The bud of today is the flower of tomorrow. But if an insect destroys the bud, it cannot become a flower.

Hiranya desired immortality. To this end, he left his kingdom and began performing arduous penance on Mount

Mandara. He had three sons: Samhridaya, Nayahridaya and Hridaya. When he left his kingdom, his fourth son was in the womb of his wife, Queen Leelavati. Taking advantage of Hiranya's absence, the Gods attacked his kingdom. They wanted to eradicate demons in the interest of world peace and the establishment of human values. At this point, Sage Narada came and took Leelavati to the safety of his hermitage.

Narada taught Leelavati at length about Lord Narayana. Leelavati pretended to listen to Narada by nodding her head, but inwardly she was worried about her husband's welfare and constantly thought of him. However, Leelavati's child absorbed Narada's teachings and began to repeat *Om Namō Narayanaya*, even inside the womb! At birth, this child, Prahlada, had great effulgence and a cheerful smile.

Soon Hiranya returned from Mandara after propitiating Lord Brahma. He had obtained a boon whereby he couldn't be killed by any man or animal, on earth or in the sky, by anything living or non-living during the day or the night. Hiranya believed that he had tricked Brahma into granting him immortality by the peculiar conditions of the boon. He began considering himself God and forced everyone to adore him by chanting *Om Namō Hiranya Kashyapa Namah!*

Prahlada's education

Prahlada was old enough to be sent to school. Chanda and Amarka were the gurus assigned to teach him. They taught him that only *artha* (wealth) and *kama* (desire) were important, not *dharma* (righteousness) and *moksha* (liberation).¹ They also taught that Hiranya was God. Collecting many other

children of demons in their school, Chanda and Amarka taught them demonic qualities. Day and night, they rained upon them teachings opposed to Lord Narayana.

Empty brains can be filled with anything. But Prahlada's heart was full of contemplation on Narayana. He did not imbibe any demonic teachings. Still, he pretended to listen, and that made the gurus happy. After a few days, the gurus took Prahlada to his father.

Taking Prahlada in his lap with affection, Hiranya asked while patting his head, "Son, what did the gurus teach you?"

Prahlada said, "Father, I have learnt teachings from the scriptures. I know the nine kinds of devotion:² *sravanam, keerthanam, Vishnu smaranam, padasevanam, vandanam, archanam, dasyam, sakhyam, Atma nivedanam.*"

Hiranya said, "Indeed, you may reach me by any of these paths." "Not you, father. These are meant for reaching Lord Narayana," replied Prahlada.

Hiding his displeasure, Hiranya asked again, "Let me hear you summarize the essence of all scriptures in one sentence."

"*Om Namo Narayanaya,*" said Prahlada.

Hiranya Kashyapa became silent. He turned and glared at the gurus, who looked at each other in bafflement. They thought, "This boy is a big danger to us," and felt afraid for

their lives. Hiranya roared, “Take him away and teach him demonic qualities!” This was the first time that he didn’t show anger toward Prahlada directly.

But the gurus were not able to change Prahlada. After a few months, they brought him to the King again. As before, Prahlada repeated, “*Om Namo Narayanaya*” in answer to his father’s questions. Hiranya Kashyapa became furious and threw Prahlada aside.

Hiranya Kashyapa was the greatest scientist. He had explored Nature, seasons and the solar system. He once noticed that the Earth’s axis was tilted at 23.5 degrees. With his *yogic* powers, he changed the tilt out of curiosity. He returned it to normal when large-scale destruction resulted. With his will power, he had control over the orbits of the Sun and the Moon as well. That is why he thought of himself as Divine.

He thought, “School is not doing any good to my son. I shall teach him.” He said, “Son, no Narayana or any other imaginary being has my powers. The five elements are under my control, as are the orbits of the Sun and the Moon. I am the undisputed Master.”

Prahlada burst out laughing, “Father, you have conquered everything, but not your senses! One who bows to inner enemies can never subdue external ones. First of all, reduce your ego and cultivate Love for God. Then your kingdom will grow, and you will prosper.”

Flying into a rage, Hiranya caught Prahlada by his neck and held him down. “You are teaching ME?” he roared. Despite the best efforts of gurus, no one could change Prahlada. Teachings learnt later in life or from others’ experiences can be changed. But the Lord’s Name was imprinted in Prahlada’s heart at a tender age—it was impossible to erase it. Realizing that such a boy would pose danger to his authority in the future, Hiranya decided to kill his own son!

Prahlada’s travails

Hiranya Kashyapa summoned his men and had them stab Prahlada with their swords. But Prahlada was unshaken by this torture. “What is this body worth, composed of the five elements? You are punishing only my body. I’m not related to it. It is only a garment, to which I have no attachment. Father! You have body-consciousness, which is the root cause of ‘I’ and ‘mine.’ You trust the perishable body to be permanent and forget the eternal Atma.” Leelavati could not watch the atrocities. She fell at her husband’s feet and prayed for him to stop. Not able to assuage her grief, Hiranya Kashyapa instructed his men to take Prahlada away and kill him elsewhere.

Even the demons did not have the heart to harm the innocent child. But the King’s command had to be followed. The boy was taken outside and tied to the ground. Elephants were made to walk over him. Why would one without attachment to his body experience any pain? Moreover, Prahlada believed in Narayana and hence, there was no question of suffering for him. He remained unharmed.

Then poisonous serpents were brought and let loose on him. The only words he uttered incessantly were, *Om Namō Narayanaya*. Nothing happened to him. They threw him off a cliff, in vain. The demons, along with Chanda and Amarka, returned to the king and reported the miraculous events. “O King! When we attack your son, he only called on Narayana. He has no trace of fear, anger or hatred. With a charming smile, he repeats, *Om Namō Narayanaya*. His face shows no pain or sorrow. There is some unknown Power protecting him. To harm Prahlada is a task beyond us.”

Hiranya Kashyapa now doubted if the demons were carrying out his orders or lying to him. He decided that the boy be put to death in front of his eyes! He had a bowl of deadly poison brought, called Prahlada near and instructed him to drink it. Smiling all the while and chanting *Om Namō Narayanaya*, Prahlada calmly quaffed it. Hiranya Kashyapa glared at him, expecting him to collapse. All the demons watched with bated breath. But Prahlada didn't die. Hiranya thought, “Chanda and Amarka were right. Maybe there is some spirit or ghost in Prahlada. It cannot be Divine power because only my power is Divine”! Then he called for experts in mantras and other sciences to rid Prahlada of the “evil spirit”. Nothing seemed to work. Frustrated and dispirited, Hiranya Kashyapa addressed Prahlada, “You say ‘Narayana, Narayana’ all the time. Where is this Narayana?”

Prahlada advises his father

Today's scientists, after many experiments, proclaim that the atom is the basic element in creation. The atom is the basis for the cosmos. It is present everywhere in the Universe.

It took scientists over a thousand years to discover and understand this concept. But Prahlada discovered this principle long before them. He said that God is present everywhere, as scientists talk about the atom. “Do not fall into doubt that He is here but not there. Wherever you look, you will find Him,” he said. Hiranya Kashyapa said, “Really? Is God present everywhere? Fine, show Him to me.”

Prahlada replied, “Father! Steeped in slavery to the senses and in body-consciousness, you want to see God. It is impossible. You struggle hard to earn fame and worldly security but you do not yearn for God. God grants whatever you want. You desire that your power and fame increase. You live under the dominance of ego and attachment. As long as the feelings of ‘I’ and ‘Mine’ prevail, it is impossible for you to grasp the *Atma* principle.”

Even today, men search for God while identifying with the body and reinforcing their feelings of “I” and “Mine”. They will not find God, no matter how long they try. The principle of the non-dual *Atma* must first be understood. You must offer yourself to God! Meaning what? All actions must be performed with divine feelings. In the food he ate, the water he drank, and the difficulties he underwent, in everything, Prahlada saw only Narayana, Narayana, Narayana. This divine principle is unchanging. If you put sugar in coffee, in tea, in water, in anything, it lends sweetness. In the same way, Prahlada introduced the sweetness of Narayana into all his actions.

Sweeter than sugar,
Tastier than curd,

More relishing than honey,
Exuding nectarine taste upon repetition,
Such is the Name of the Lord.

“Father! You are mistaking sugar for nectar. But really, even nectar is tasteless when compared to the sweetness of God’s Name. This sweetness is not present in anything else. Instead of repeating such a sweet Name, you spend life feeding your ego. You are committing crimes against society based on the strength of Brahma’s boons. Your ego will ruin you completely. You need humility to attain God. Father! Education without character, worship without sacrifice, wealth without effort, politics without principles —these sins are the basis for all the misery in the world.”

What are the sins of society? Education without character is one. Wealth without effort is another. We must make effort! Without effort how can you expect anything in return? Next, worship without sacrifice. Yes, you are all praying. But it is prayer without sacrifice. Sacrifice alone grants bliss in worship. Politics without principles and science without human values are on the increase. If science had principles, how would bombs and other means of unrest come about? Human values have become zero in science.

“Father, you are a great scientist, but without human values. Your demonic tendencies show no signs of abating. First, bring your senses under control. Without control over your senses you can never perceive the omnipresent Lord.” Prahlada advised his father in many ways. But no matter how bright a bulb is held in front of a blind man, he cannot see the brightness. Prahlada continued, “You do not have the eyes of

divine love. You are blind in wisdom. How do you expect to see God? Your body is filled with the six enemies: lust, anger, greed, hatred, jealousy and pride.”

As is the color of the eyeglasses, so is the vision. Prahlada said, “When your heart is full of anger, lust, jealousy, attachment and ego, how do you expect to see God? Wherever I look I see Narayana. Inside, outside, above, below... He is present everywhere!

“Father! The whole world is like an iron ball being burnt in fire. Where does this fire reside? The heat is within the ball, outside it, everywhere. *Antar Bahisya Sarvavyaapya Narayanah Sthitah*—Narayana is present inside, outside, everywhere. This world is similarly engulfed in the fire of *jnana*. Father, heat is experienced only by touching. Unless you experience something, you cannot understand it. Your ignorance is the root cause of all this confusion. Listen to my words. God is present wherever you look.”

But this foolish man didn’t leave his stubborn stand. “Is God really present everywhere? Is He present in this pillar?” he asked, pointing to a pillar. “Yes,” said Prahlada. “But I cannot see Him. I’m going to destroy this pillar!” thundered Hiranya. He took a heavy mace and smashed the pillar with force. The pillar broke into two pieces.

Narasimha Avatar

Out emerged a most terrifying form: Narasimha (Man-Lion) *Avatar*. It wasn’t human, it wasn’t animal. The head was a lion’s but the body, human. Hiranya immediately recalled

Brahma's boon—"neither by man or by animal." He told himself that his death seemed imminent. After fighting with him for some time, Narasimha pulled Hiranya Kashyapa by his hand and laid him across His thighs.

Hiranya recalled, "I wanted to be killed neither on earth nor in the sky. Now I am on the thighs of this being, above the ground and below the sky. I asked for immunity against the living and the non-living. The nails on this being's claws are neither living nor non-living. It is the hour of twilight, neither day nor night." Hiranya did not have the sense to remember the name of Narayana in his last moments. He only kept remembering Brahma's boon and how all the conditions had been satisfied. The tendencies cultivated through our lifetime predominate during our final moments and form the basis for our next birth. Not having repeated Narayana's name during his lifetime, Hiranya Kashyapa wasn't able to do it at death. Narasimha *Avatar* completed His task.

Prahlada with the Lord

All were terrified by Narasimha's ferocious form. They shivered with fright. Prahlada alone gazed at Him with unblinking eyes, full of tears of joy. Narasimha asked him, "Child, doesn't My form frighten you?" Prahlada said, "Lord Narayana, *Yat Bhaavam Thath Bhavati*—As is one's thought, so is Your Form. Those who think of You as terrible see you as such. To me, You are the very form of Love and Bliss. Why should I be afraid? All forms are Yours. I am not looking at this particular name and form. I am looking at Your Divine Form and repeating your Divine Name. So I have no fear."

Hiranya Kashyapa's body was laid on the floor. Prahlada went close to the body and paid his respects. "For birth and death our own actions are responsible, not God. Each person reaps his own happiness and sorrow. My father brought this death upon himself. This is not God's doing," thought Prahlada. No one can escape the consequences of one's actions. You cannot tell what you might experience and when. So be ever ready. No one is exempt from this vigilance. Even Hiranya's invincibility was won because of past good deeds. But he could not enjoy God's boons because of his wicked actions. In the end, he was destroyed by the destiny he had carved for himself. Prahlada prayed for a good afterlife for his father.

After Prahlada's prayer many gods began arriving there and discussing the events. Before terminating His *Avatar* as Narasimha, the Lord asked Prahlada what he wanted. Prahlada said, "O Lord, I want nothing but You. I should never be distant from You, although You are everywhere. I must live in You, You must live in me, and I must experience this unity. I do not have any other desires. It is meaningless if I waste this life by desiring petty things." Then the Lord appeared in His full glory as Narayana and said, "Prahlada, My child! Children like you are examples to this world. Now take charge of your father's kingdom. Teach human values to these demons and ensure that they come closer to Me."

The distinction between a human and a demon arises only from qualities. Demons do not have any peculiar physical traits as portrayed in cinemas and books. They are humans also. It is only by qualities that a human becomes a demon. In the *Bhagavatham* there is a nice example. Krishna was God

Himself. His parents, Devaki and Vasudeva, were true humans. And Devaki's brother, Kamsa, was a demon. Thus, all three categories—divine, human and demon—can exist even within the same family! Kamsa was a demon because of his anger and cruelty. Devaki and Vasudeva were humans for their kindness and compassion. Possessing Divine traits, which are beyond all attributes, Krishna was God.

The Lord told Prahlada, "I'm keeping you here so that you transform these demons into humans and enable them to recognize Divinity." Prahlada said, "Lord, please don't give me this responsibility. I want only You, nothing else. All these tasks are Yours." He fell at the Lord's feet and pleaded repeatedly. But we must act as per the time, place and situation in which God places us. It is impossible for anyone to disobey God.

The Lord called Prahlada near and took him on His lap. Holding him close, He said, "Child! Do you want more than THIS? This is the highest blessing—**There is nothing greater than seeing Me, touching Me, talking to Me.** These are the means to liberation. Think of these moments ceaselessly and rule the world. Follow the divine command," instructed the Lord as He disappeared.

The Lord departed quickly, lest Prahlada ask more desires! No one has the "knack" that God has! He acts in a very guarded and cautious manner. He takes the middle path—He doesn't hurt anyone nor inconvenience Himself! If the Lord remained there longer, Prahlada might have asked Him something else. Without giving that chance, the Lord disappeared

promptly! Prahlada ruled the kingdom, all the while chanting *Om Namō Narayanaya*.

Everything is divine Will

In this manner the son was a highly purified soul even though the father was a demon. Although born to a demonic father, Prahlada had an element of Divinity. But what about his children? Prahlada's children inherited his father's qualities. Prahlada's son, Virochana, was a hater of God, like Hiranya Kashyapa. Recognize these connections between father and son. These relations are based not on chance, but on qualities. This is Divine Will. Everything is Divine Will.

Good, bad, everything is God's Will. We should not differentiate between good and bad. People believe that good events are God's Will and unfortunate ones are not. In this world no one eats only sweet food or only bitter food. Everyone eats both sweet and bitter food. In other words, everyone experiences both good and bad. If we inquire, bitter experiences are necessary! Only then can we appreciate the value of peace, contentment and bliss. Difficulties and joy go together. No one can separate them. Happiness doesn't exist alone anywhere. Happiness results when difficulties are transcended.

A baby gradually becomes a grandparent. But the two are not different. Similarly, the good in us can turn bad and the bad can become good. We should experience the unity of both. That which makes us understand this unity is our Divinity. When we distance ourselves from Divinity, we deteriorate to demonic and animal states.

Attachment causes animal qualities

To keep demonic and animal tendencies at bay we must limit attachment and pride. More attachment means more animal qualities. What is animal nature? The loss of discrimination. Even mistakes are perceived as good deeds when one is blinded by attachment. This was the case with Dhritharashtra. He knew that Duryodhana's actions were sins. But his fatherly attachment repeatedly forgave those sins. As a result, his entire family perished.

No doubt, attachment is necessary, but only within limits. Yes, you may have attachment in certain relations. You may look after your wife and children with care. But while engaged in such duties, the easiest path is to perceive everything as belonging to God. All your actions must be done with this feeling of Divinity. Then your actions will become pleasing to God and earn His love.

The Divine Name

Proceeding on the Divine path in this manner, become like Prahlada and strive for the welfare of your family, country, and the whole world. Even if you do not have Prahlada's ideal qualities, at least never forget God's Name. Whatever difficulties you may encounter, remember God's name ceaselessly. No matter how foolish or demonic a person, it is easy to bring the Lord's name to one's lips during difficulties.

When you see something strange or fearful, you exclaim, "O My God!" This is a reflex action, done without premeditation. You don't say "God" but "My God". This spiritual feeling is present even in a foolish or wicked person. He

may appear to be an atheist, but still he refers to God as “My God”! He admits the truth!

So follow the natural discipline of chanting the Lord’s Name. No matter what difficulties you encounter, even if ridiculed, never forget God’s Name. Prahlada respected his father but disputed with him about the Truth when necessary. You may also explain your faith to your parents, but never yield to pressure from anyone and change your attitude. Faith in God is our life-breath. The *Bhagavatham* lays special emphasis on the constant remembrance of the Name of the Lord.

[Swami sang “*Hari Bhajana Bina Sukha Shanti Nahi*”.]

¹. *Dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha* are the four *purusharthas* (goals) of human life.

². *Sravanam* = listening to the glories of the Lord, *keertanam* = singing His glories, *vishnu smaranam* = remembering the Lord, *padasevanam* = massaging His Feet, *vandanam* = saluting Him, *archanam* = worshipping Him, *dasyam* = serving Him, *sakhyam* = befriending Him, *Atma nivedanam* = total surrender.

9. Gopikas and Gopalas

*Etti Vidyalu Jagatini Eruganatti Pakshi Jaatulu Pashu-
vulu*

*Pramamaina Niyamamunu Booni Jeevincha Nerchi-
yunda,*

Telivi Galigina Manujunaku Ee Telivi Lede!

Although devoid of knowledge or education, birds and
beasts

Learn to live in accordance with the Divine Law.

But man, despite his intelligence, does not have this
sense!

Students!

To take care of the body is our prime responsibility. An unhealthy body is a burden. A healthy body promotes healthy thoughts. An unsound mind cannot entertain sacred and elevating thoughts. Thus ancient people considered health as wealth and paid attention to the upkeep of the body. Even in the modern age, people have evolved various systems to ensure good health. The Romans and Greeks saw the body as a representation of the cosmos and worshipped it.

The body and the Indweller

The organs of the body cannot work or even exist, independently. Their unity alone allows the body to be complete and to perform useful functions. When we understand this unity, we can know the Indweller of the body. The *Vedas* say, *Deho Devaalayam Jeevo Devo Sanaatanah*—The body is a temple and the Indweller is the Eternal God. Ancient Indians recognized this truth and demonstrated it in their day-to-day lives. But the youth of today are preoccupied with the body and neglect the Indweller. Water does not need fish, but fish

need water. In the same way, the body cannot survive without the Indweller.

The body is a chariot. We must maintain it well and use it to tread the right path. Today man concerns himself only with decorating and painting this chariot. People do not make efforts to recognize the wonderful Charioteer. Keep the indwelling Divinity in view and engage the body in righteous actions.

The forest fire

As per their daily routine, Balarama and Krishna went to the forest with the *gopals*¹ and cows. After walking some distance, Krishna played His flute and the boys started singing, dancing and playing in the fields. The *gopals* enjoyed themselves immensely in Krishna's company every day, forgetting their bodies, losing themselves in the melodious notes of His flute. This day they were so engrossed in His music that they forgot the cows and calves. When they came to their senses, the animals were nowhere to be seen.

Each *gopala* ran in a different direction. All the surroundings were searched but the cows were not found. In panic, they ran deep into the forest. Finally they saw the cows grazing at a distance, surrounded by a huge forest fire. Smoke belled out of everywhere and nothing was visible clearly. The *gopals* shouted, "Krishna! Krishna! Krishna!" Balarama and Krishna ran there. By then the fire had engulfed them all. The *gopals* were afraid for their lives. They couldn't tell what might happen the very next moment. Krishna called out to the cows by their names, one by one. The cows heard His voice

and responded, “Ambaa, Ambaa.” These cows had recognized *Sabda Brahman*.² The cows had no knowledge or education. But identifying Krishna’s voice as the sound of Divinity, they bolted in His direction.

The *gopalas* were troubled by the fear of death. Krishna and Balarama went to them and said, “Do not fear. Why fear when we are here? You have walked long distances in search of the cows. You left familiar territory behind and ventured into the dense forest. You are tired. Close your eyes. Do not open them till we tell you.” The fire was very near them and the *gopalas* could feel the hot draft. But placing complete faith in Krishna, they closed their eyes. This was not new to *gopalas*. Their greatest virtue was to obey Krishna always. Not even once did the *gopalas* ever question or disobey Krishna. If Krishna said “do,” they did. If He said “go,” they went. No questions, no hesitation. That is why they lived in Krishna’s permanent protection.

After a few moments Krishna asked them to open their eyes. The *gopalas* felt a cool, refreshing breeze. “Where did the fire go?” they wondered. They saw their cows around them, safe and sound. They were back in the fields where they were last playing, singing and dancing. They thought deeply about this undeniable miracle. Unable to fathom the mystery, they said to Krishna, “O Lord Narayana! Beginning-less and Endless One! Protector of the helpless! You are the Supreme Lord. We are fortunate to experience Your *leelas* and wondrous powers.” Saying so, they fell at Krishna’s Feet.

But for how long? Only for a few minutes. Then they forgot the miracles. They asked their “dear friend” to join them in games! They stopped addressing Him as “Lord”. Notice, how bodily attachment is ready to spring on us every moment. When people see miracles, they think, “He is powerful.” The next minute, yielding to body attachment, they say, “He is an ordinary man.” In every *Avatar*’s life, people alternate between human and divine perceptions of Him. Why? Men spend their lives in body-consciousness. Their goal is worldly life and they are incapable of understanding the Divinity that transcends their mundane existence. The *gopals* also used to appreciate Krishna’s strength and intellect, but not His Divinity.

Krishna teaches Atma Vidya

As they passed days in this manner, Krishna decided to teach *Atma Vidya* to the *gopals*. “Their thoughts are limited to the world. They are not able to recognize Me as beyond the body, mind and intellect,” thought Krishna. The rainy season has just begun. The blue sky was dark, laden with clouds. In some time, thunder and lightning began. Krishna looked at this scene and said, “You can see the unity of three *gunas* in Nature today. O *Gopals*! God is omnipresent like the infinite, blue sky. This Divinity (sky) is covered by the dark clouds of your ignorance (*Thamo Guna*). Thunder (*Rajo Guna*) and the brilliant lightning (*Sathwa Guna*) accompany this ignorance. This is the inner meaning of the rainy season. You cannot perceive Divinity since it is concealed by these three *gunas*. The winds which brought the dark clouds will also scatter them in due time. Similarly, when your ignorance (*ajnana*) turns into wisdom (*prajnana*), your darkness will be dispelled.”

*As lightning lies behind the screen of dark clouds,
Wisdom (jnaana) must underlie education.*

“Therefore, recognize the meanings of natural phenomena. Nature is your best teacher. As you observe Nature, realize that your body is also a part of it. Your vision is limited to the physical body but not the Divinity dwelling in it. The body is only the effect. Atma is the cause. Don’t be blinded by the effect. See the cause.”

You look at this tumbler, the effect. But you don’t inquire into its material, the cause. How can the tumbler exist without silver? The world is the effect and God is the cause.

“As is your sight, as is your aim, so the world will appear to you. Creation (*srishti*) is based on your vision (*drishti*). None can change creation. That is why I ask you to change your vision. Meaning, as long as you consider yourself to be the body, you cannot perceive My reality. You call me ‘*Gopala, Gopala*’ and experience Me as your dear friend. But the body is only an instrument. Understand the Divinity within the body.” The *gopalas* went back and shared their miraculous experiences and Krishna’s words of wisdom with everyone. In this manner, they experienced boundless bliss in Krishna’s company daily.

The priests and their wives

One day the boys went very deep into the forest, searching for fresh, green pastures for their cows. At midday, they weren’t able to walk any more. The *gopalas* cried, “We’re hungry, Krishna, really hungry! Please arrange for some food.”

Krishna smiled, “Foolish boys! When you have the All-Powerful Lord following your every step, why are you worried about hunger? Balarama and I are with you, don’t fear. Some priests are performing a *Yaga* nearby. Go there and tell them I sent you. Tell them you are hungry and they will feed you.”

The *gopalas* went to the priests and pleaded for food. The *brahmins* said, “How can we feed you before completion of the *yaga*? After the *yaga*, we will eat. Then we will feed all those who helped us in the ceremony. Only then, we can give you the leftovers. You must wait till then.” The *gopalas* waited for a long time and couldn’t bear their hunger any more. They grew weak and couldn’t walk. Dragging themselves, they somehow returned to Balarama and Krishna. They said, “Krishna! We told them that even You and Balarama were hungry, but they ignored us.”

Krishna laughed and asked them, “Friends, who did you ask?” They replied, “We asked the priests.” Krishna said, “O innocent ones! It is the mother who knows the hunger of her child, not the father. There is no use pleading with the priests. They are busy in *karma yoga*,³ without *bhakti yoga*.⁴ They only care about mantras and their meanings. They overlook God who is the embodiment of all mantras. Go to the wives of these *brahmins*, who are cooking food for the *yaga* right now.”

The *gopalas* said, “Impossible, Krishna! We have no energy to walk even a step.” Krishna replied, “You must go back. Get up, and I will give you the strength to walk.” The *gopalas* never disobeyed Krishna in anything, anyway. If He said “walk,” they walked. Owing to such total submission,

they never experienced sorrow in their lives and obtained the bliss of Krishna's daily company.

The gopalas went to the wives of the priests. These pure ladies had heard much of Balarama and Krishna, but had never seen the brothers.

The *brahmins* used to ridicule Krishna as a "cowherd" and never allowed their wives to visit Brindavan. The priests were limited to rituals, but their wives had great devotion. The gopalas said, "Mothers! We are *gopalas*, sent by Rama and Krishna."

The ladies were ecstatic, "The Lord Himself is here! Where are the divine Balarama and Krishna?" The *gopalas* said, "They are at some distance from here. They are tired and hungry, like us. They told us to ask you for food." As soon as they heard this, the ladies collected all their pots and filled them with food. They carried some vessels and handed some to the *gopalas*, and hurried toward the pastures. They didn't think of the *yaga* or their husbands' anger... nothing!

They came to Balarama and Krishna. They saw Him reclining and playing on the flute. The notes of the flute wafted into their hearts and awakened devotion. They forgot themselves and walked forward unmindful of their bodies. As they drank the divine darshan of Balarama and Krishna, their minds overflowed with bliss. The only word they uttered was "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna." They made everyone sit down and served food. Even the cows were served!

Meanwhile the priests completed the *yaga* and noticed the absence of their wives—and the food! The priests were hungry also. They ran in search of their wives. They came upon the *gopals* eating food along with Balarama and Krishna. And they saw their own wives gazing at Balarama and Krishna with unblinking eyes. The *brahmins* rushed there and started slapping and pulling at their wives. But the ladies were oblivious to their husbands. They did not feel any physical pain. They were totally immersed in the Bliss of the Lord’s company.

Soon Balarama and Krishna let their divine effulgence shine on the priests also. The priests recognized the brothers’ Reality and fell at their feet: “For whose Grace we initiated this *yagna*, the goal of this *yagna*, that Divine Lord is in front of us in human form! *Yagnovaih Vishnuh*—You are the Vishnu who is the fruit of all *yagnas*. But we are indeed the greatest sinners. We performed this *yagna* for You but we were not able to dedicate it to You.”

Every action must first be offered to God. Therefore, we chant *Brahmaarpanam Brahmahavir Brahmaagnau Brahmanaahutam*⁵ before meals.

“Even during normal meals, we offer food to You. But today, in a sacred *yagna*, we attempted to eat after refusing You! We are the most abject sinners, the most unfortunate people. Krishna and Balarama consoled the *brahmins* and blessed them and their wives profusely. Then, while the *gopals* stood watching, Krishna gave *darshan* to the *brahmins* and their wives as Lord Narayana.

Conquer attachment

It is difficult for worldly people to recognize God in human form. Of what use are education, scholarship in *Vedas* or the merit of *yagnas*? Those who do not grasp the truth, behave foolishly in spite of learning. We should find ways to purify our minds. When does the mind become pure? When attachment (*abhimaana*) and ego (*ahamkaara*) are uprooted. How can we give up attachment and ego? Attachment presents never-ending attraction towards objects. But it is very easy to renounce! Simply think: "Everything belongs to God. Nothing is mine." This is the way to transcend attachment.

A small example. In your science courses you go to the laboratory. After conducting experiments, both students and teachers return home. You don't say, "I work in this lab, so this equipment is mine." You know that everything belongs to the school. But no one would object if you used the equipment. The world is like a laboratory. You may use and experience. But you have no right over anything.

A manager in a bank is the highest authority over millions in the bank. But can he take even a single coin home? The money is in his control, but it belongs to others and to the Government.

We can experience sensory objects and joys. But how? With what attitude should we acquire material objects? Realize this one point and you become worthy of all worldly accomplishments. You may enjoy, but without feeling "This is mine."

Another example. The principal is the highest authority in a school. He has the keys to cupboards, which have valuable equipment. He may feel, "I am in charge, all this belongs to me." But if he is transferred to another school, all he can take with him are the clothes he is wearing! Why? He can only use the objects, not own them. Why not? The school really belongs to the Government.

Yes, you can say, "My home, my land, my wife, my child, my wealth, my cattle, my cars" and so on, but keep in mind: They are for use only, not for ownership. They are God's property. You must part with everything at death. That is why the *Gita* says: Responsibility is yours, not the right. People forget responsibilities and fight for rights. No one has a right in this world. When you do your duty, rights follow automatically. So, gradually decrease the idea of "mine."

Yes, you say "mine." What is yours? Nothing. What you perceive to be yours can change the next moment. A man held a currency note and thought, "This is mine." The note laughed at him: "Yes, now I'm in your hands. But by evening I will have changed over ten hands! How am I yours, you mad-man?" Worldly objects change from moment to moment. How can you claim ownership over such temporary articles?

"Everything belongs to God." With this attitude, yes, you may experience the world. There is nothing wrong with that. But while experiencing, you must inquire: "Everything belongs to God. How should the property of God be used by me?" Experience the world with your power of discrimination.

If you use objects as you please, you could misuse God's property. Use the world to engage in constructive actions, to walk the path of Truth. God's command (*bhagavat vaakya*) is that God's property should not be misused.

Today we misuse everything, deluded by the ideas of "I" and "Mine". Misuse and wastage causes sorrow. What is the cause of sorrow? The idea of "mine". God does not cause either joy or sorrow to you, nor does anyone else. You alone are responsible. To blame someone else for your suffering is a sin. Students should promote such expansive feelings in their hearts.

The devotion of gopikas

Krishna was always surrounded in Brindavan by the *gopikas* and the *gopalas*. Of these, the *gopikas* were slightly mad! What kind of madness? Divine madness! But people attribute wrong intentions to their love and distort the meaning of the *Bhagavatham*. When Krishna left Brindavan for good, He was five years old. Some say that Krishna and the *gopikas* engaged in amorous sports. Is it possible for such meaningless stories to be true? The *gopikas* said: "O Krishna! Your flute is most enchanting. Your words are life to us. Sing for us, talk to us!"

Paata Paadu Maa Krishna!

Paluku Teneloluku Natula

Maatalaadu Maa Mukunda

Manasu Teeraga!

Sing for us, our Krishna!

With your words sweet as honey.

Talk to us, our Mukund,
Till our hearts are full!

*Veda Saaramanta Teerchi,
Nada Brahmamuganu Maarchi,
Venuvandu Tirugabosi,
Gaanaroopamuganu Maarchi.
Paata Paadu Maa Krishna!*

Take the essence of the Vedas,
Change it into Sabda-Brahman,
Fill your flute with this sound,
And convey it to our hearts as music.
Sing for us, our Krishna!

What Divine feelings! Is this worldly? No, no. *Anantovai Vedah*—The *Vedas* are infinite. The *gopikas* prayed: “How can we read the *Vedas*? We are women and illiterate, at that. Give us the essence of the *Vedas* through your music.” Now, in this Summer Course, after the guest lecturers speak in the morning, the students summarize those speeches in the evening. In the same way, the *gopikas* wanted a summary of the *Vedas* from Krishna!

Why song and sound? God is described as: *Sabda Brahma Mayi, Charaachara Mayi, Jyotir Mayi, Vaang Mayi, Nityananda Mayi, Paroatpara Mayi, Maaya Mayi, Srimayi.*

Therefore, Brahman is the very form of *sabda* (sound).

The *gopikas* pined for Krishna for many years, for their entire lives. Krishna knew their pain of separation, their yearning. He sent Uddhava⁶ to convey His message of consola-

tion to them. All the *gopikas* collected around Uddhava to listen to Krishna's message. "What does Krishna say? When is He coming to give us His *darshan*?" they asked.

Uddhava said, "Mothers! Krishna has sent a letter for you." Students should clearly understand the pure and divine feelings of the *gopikas*. "Here is the letter sent by Krishna. One of you please read it aloud to the others," said Uddhava. *Gopikas* had no education. In those days women were not sent to school. Only one of them knew a little bit of reading. When asked to read it, she declined. When students listen to her reply, they can imagine her sacred devotion.

She said, "Uddhava! I cannot read that letter. Our bodies and minds are burning in the fire of separation. If I touch that letter, it might catch fire. It is not proper for us to burn the words written by God." Another *gopika* said, "We have been crying endlessly. When I set eyes on the words written by our dear Krishna, all our agony will emerge as tears. The tears will fall on the paper and smear the words. So I cannot read it, either."

What intense devotion they had! Uddhava himself read Krishna's letter aloud. "O *gopikas*! Don't feel sad. I am in you, with you, around you all the time. I am not separate from you. I am not an outsider, I am your *Hridayavaasi*—Resident of your heart. I am your very own. My messenger Uddhava will tell you about *jnana* and yoga. Listen to Uddhava and practice his teachings."

The *gopikas* heard Uddhava's teachings and said, "We do not need your *yoga*. We need merger (*samyoga*) with Krishna! Your *yoga* will not quench our thirst of separation (*viyoga*)! We cannot absorb your words. We have only one mind, not multiple minds like clever people. Our mind followed Krishna to Mathura." Uddhava recognized their one-pointedness.

When Uddhava got ready to depart from Brindavan, each *gopika* came to him and gave heart-rending messages for Krishna:

"All of Brindavan is parched dry! Come back and make the flowers bloom again!

"The sky of our hearts is dark, clouded by separation. Scatter these clouds and let us bask in Your company!

"Our life is like a garland bereft of flowers. Come back, collect us as flowers and wear us around Your neck!"

If scholars paid attention to the sanctity and depth of *gopikas'* feelings, they would not relegate them to a worldly level. *Gopikas* were actually perfected rishis. They had attained absolute control over the senses and purity of mind in past births. To accuse them of bad character is nothing short of a crime. The hearts of students are polluted by cheap movies. No, do not allow such impressions to form. The hearts of the *gopikas* and *gopalas* were immaculate. They did not desire anything worldly at all! Uddhava recognized this truth. When he returned, he extolled their virtues to Krishna without end.

*Attalu Mottukunna, Mari Bhartalu Kattulu
Nooruchunna Norettaru Kopagincharu Etakegaru,
Bheetilaboru Gopikal Pottamulandu Chittaruvula
Reeti Vaarilonunde Krishnudu*

Their mother-in-laws may scream, husbands may threaten,

They do not answer back, get angry, go away or become afraid.

Like a portrait on paper,

Krishna is imprinted in their hearts.

Uddhava said, “Krishna, You are imprinted in the consciousness of the *gopikas*. It is not possible for anyone to separate You from their hearts. I have not seen devotees like them anywhere in the world. I went to teach them wisdom but instead, they taught me devotion! Krishna, all of us are deluded by Your physical form, but it is the *gopikas* alone who have realized Your Divinity.”

Once upon a time, Narada went to the *gopikas* and *gopalas* and said, “How fortunate you all are! You obtained Lord Narayana, who is beyond the reach of *yogis* and sages. The sacred proximity that you enjoyed is unattainable even after countless *yagnas* and good deeds. You played with Him and sang with Him as friends for many years and earned His Grace. Truly, you are blessed! You are not ordinary souls. You are *Devas*—Do not forget this truth.

Do not lose Sai

When God assumes a human form, He does not become limited or lower in any sense. Do not be deluded by such doubts. Think about the golden opportunity at hand and make all possible efforts to earn His Grace and Blessings. This chance will never come again.

*Chikkina Sai Ni Vakkaleyaka Chakka Chesukondi,
Poyina Chikkadu ee Partheesuni Paada Seva Yandi,
Bhaktini Icchi Sakti Lo Munchi Mukti Jerchunandi,
Eka Manasu To Nammi Sai Ni Enchi Koluvabondi,
Itarula Maatalanimpuga Nammi Kompa Teeya-kandi.*

You have found Sai. Now bring Him near, do not neglect Him.

Once lost, the chance to serve the Feet of the Lord of Parthi will never come again.

He bestows devotion, immerses you in strength and takes you to Liberation.

With a one-pointed mind, have faith in Sai and worship Him.

Do not ruin your destiny by giving ear to others' words.

You obtained this rare opportunity. Now use it well. Follow the path prescribed by God, engage in actions that are dear to God. God seeks unwavering, pure and unselfish Love alone. In return, He will grant anything and go to any extent to please you.

But you should not love with any expectation in mind. Prayer with expectation is like a business deal. Do not pray with conditions: "Lord, I will break two coconuts for You if

You fulfill my wish!” Strive to experience at least one-thousandth of the devotion of the *gopikas* and *gopalas*.

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1. Cowherd boys.
 2. Sound as a manifestation of God.
 3. The path of action.
 4. The path of devotion.
 5. *Bhagavad Gita* (IV:24).
 6. A cousin and great devotee of Krishna.

10. Krishna and Balarama In Mathura

Prema Roopambu Brahmambu Prema Mayamu

Premanu Prema To Sandhimpā Neemamagunu

Kaana Prema Nu Poortiga Kaligiyunna

Adviteeyamu Pondaga Arhudagunu

Brahman is full of Love, the embodiment of Love.

To merge that Love with your Love is the right approach.

One who cultivates such selfless, divine Love

Becomes worthy of the state of non-duality
(*Adwaita*).

Students! Embodiments of love!

Every being, without exception, is a storehouse of Prema. But there is not even one who has recognized this principle of Prema! It appears as though everyone expresses Prema. Many in the world declare their love for other people, for material objects, for wealth, for sensual pleasures. But if we ask, "For whose sake is this love?" There is no satisfactory answer.

Worldly love is selfish

It appears as if the mother loves the child and the child loves the mother. It seems as though the husband and wife love each other. It even appears that today's devotees love God. But for whose sake do these people cultivate love? Who is loving whom? There are no right answers forthcoming to these questions. Why?

Everyone loves for his own sake. No one loves for another's sake. The reason: selfishness. Man loves objects in his own interest, not for the sake of those objects. He loves money

for his own enjoyment, not for money's sake. People also love God for their own petty ends, not for God. Truly, if we search the world over, there is no person who loves God for God's sake. There is only selfishness, selfishness, selfishness.

Sva + artham = svaartham, selfishness. *Sva* means self. *artham* means "for the sake of". That which is in one's own interest is *svaartham*. Selfish love has three states: love in the waking state, love in the dream state, and love in the deep sleep state. While awake, one lives in the world and loves with one's mind and senses. One is able to love only with the combination of mind and senses. Second, the dream state. In this state, senses are forgotten and everything is created by the mind alone. Objects, people, joys and sorrows are all conceived by his mind. He creates even himself by his mind. Next, in deep sleep, one experiences bliss by merging in oneself. If we inquire along the path of *jnana*, none of these three states provides perception of the *Atma*.

Today we undertake many spiritual practices. But we are not able to progress by even a "millimeter." Why? Selfishness. Where is selfishness born? Man is the combination of mind and senses. Without the mind and senses, humanness cannot exist. Humanness is characterized by the three gunas: *sathwa*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. *Tamas* is characterized by the rule of the mind and senses, which gives birth to ego and attachment and leads to the joys and sorrows in human life. Next, experiencing and observing the mind and senses and making every effort to limit attachment and ego—this is *rajas*. Ignoring the prompting of the mind and the senses, with no expectation of the fruits of one's actions, engaging in activity with the spirit

of sacrifice and duty, considering all as God's work, doing everything with the view to earning God's Love—these are *sathwic* traits.

Akrura comes to Brindavan

Such a *sathwic* person was Akrura. Akrura had persevered for countless lives to achieve Divinity. He had waited patiently for the right time and the right place to meet God. He knew that Narayana had incarnated in Brindavan and was playing there as a cowherd boy. But for every desired objective, the factors of time, cause, and *karma* must unite. It takes time for a fruit to ripen and detach from its branch. Akrura was a man of great wisdom and looked forward to the right moment to meet Lord Narayana.

Meanwhile, Narada went to meet Balarama and Krishna in Brindavan. “*Narayana, Adishesha!* I’ve waited long for Your *darshan*. *Vinaasa Kaale Vipareeta Buddhih*—A contorted intellect heralds the doom of man. With a view to destroying You, Your maternal uncle Kamsa devised various plans. But all his efforts have proved futile. Now his end is imminent.”

This is also total selfishness. The idea of taking another person's life in order to protect one's own life is a sign of an unripe intellect. One who lets selfishness grow within invites such demonic tendencies.

Narada said, “Kamsa's death is near. You are all-knowing, all-powerful. You are Narayana, which I recognized long ago. Still, some facts must be protected without being expressed. Men are not able to recognize You. This depends on

the *karma* and deservedness of each person. With whatever attitude people think of You, You assume that form for them. This is a truth not known to everyone. You fulfill whatever they desire of You. As is a person's mind, so is the result they experience. So Lord, give me leave now. Tomorrow, Your magnificent power will be known the world over. I will see You again during the coronation of your grandfather, Ugrasena." With beautiful smiles, Balarama and Krishna bid Narada farewell.

The very next day, Akrura proceeded to Brindavan in his chariot. Akrura was a great devotee. "No matter how demonic Kamsa may be, he granted me this chance of meeting the Divine Krishna. I am grateful to Kamsa," thought Akrura to himself. Akrura entertained pure feelings even toward demons. He reached Brindavan at dusk. His chariot came to a halt in front of Nanda's house. He went inside but found that Balarama and Krishna were not home. They had gone to the forest with their cows.

Balarama and Krishna returned in a few minutes. Akrura's eyes rested on them. He was spellbound. This was his first time seeing them. He was mesmerized by their brilliance, lotus eyes, and bewitching smiles. He felt an instant attraction to them. He contemplated on Narayana within himself and couldn't find words to greet Krishna. Krishna, the all-knowing One, asked him many times, "Akrura, O Akrura! For what reason have you come?"

Akrura said, "Krishna! Kamsa has initiated a *yaga* called *Dhanur Yaga*. He has sent me to fetch You. This is the

partial truth. To speak the whole truth in front of God is my bounden duty. *Dhanur Yaga* is an excuse for Kamsa to summon You to Mathura. Kamsa plans to kill You there and rule undisputed forever after. Each person has a different feeling toward You.”

The saint Annamacharya sang, *Enta Maatramuna Evaru Talachira Anta Maatrame Neevu*—Whatever form and attitude You are pictured with, You assume that form.

“If people think of You as a man, You behave as a man. If they consider You divine, You appear as God. This multiplicity is not in You but in human attitudes. Krishna, get ready to go to Mathura.” Then Akrura turned to Nanda and invited him also. Kamsa had invited Nanda and other village chiefs for the *Dhanur Yaga* also.

Some texts say that Nanda and Yasoda were fearful about sending Krishna to Mathura. This is not true. Nanda and Yasoda had witnessed countless instances of Krishna’s Divinity. They had seen Krishna destroy Kamsa’s mighty demons. They were present when He danced on the hood of the serpent Kaliya and subdued it. They knew that Balarama and Krishna could never face danger. All victories wed only God, and they knew Krishna was God.

Nanda had an announcement made in Brindavan that evening: “King Kamsa is conducting a *Dhanur Yaga* in Mathura. Those who wish to witness the festivities may accompany me.” Many families got ready with chariots, horses

and carts, as per their capacity. It was a joyous occasion for everyone—everyone except the *gopikas*.

The grief of *gopikas* and *gopalas*

Of course, no one can harm Krishna, the Lord Himself. This wasn't the concern of the *gopikas*. Their worry was: Will Krishna return to Brindavan once He leaves? All the *gopikas* and *gopalas* convened a meeting to prevent Krishna from leaving! They made a human chain circling Nanda's house. Nanda, and Yasoda pleaded with them not to obstruct the plans, but the *gopikas* and *gopalas* could only cry piteously in justification. "Krishna! Rama! You cannot go to Mathura! What will become of us? Brindavan will become a barren wasteland. Everyone here will become lifeless. The green beauty of Brindavan will be lost forever. Don't leave!"

This was also selfishness! In the interest of keeping Krishna's company, they did not mind foiling Krishna's plans! Balarama and Krishna smiled and told them, "We also have some selfishness of our own! Our Will must be fulfilled. The objective for which we assumed human forms must be attained, O *gopikas* and *gopalas*! It is every man's duty to fulfill the purpose for which the body is given. We must go to Mathura. There is no other way." The *gopikas* and *gopalas* were drowned in sorrow. They had to admit that keeping Krishna in Brindavan was an act of selfishness on their part.

The *gopikas* said, "We do not desire any worldly ends. We want You for our mental satisfaction. People desire various things from You. We pray to You for You." Then Krishna began to teach them *jnana*. "You say 'my' satisfaction. Who is

this 'I' ? Are you the body? Or the mind? No, no. You are neither the body nor the mind. The body is inert, a collection of the five elements. The mind is fickle. The Indweller, *Atma*, makes the body and mind function.

A director pulls on the strings of puppets. He makes the puppets play together for a while and then separates them. Who are these puppets? Mind and senses. The mind and senses function together. Then the mind leaves the senses, and the senses leave the mind. And finally, both of them leave the body. What is that which never leaves, never perishes? The *Atma* alone. That is the real 'I'. Man is able to say 'I' by the prompting of the *Atma*, but he identifies it with the body. This submerges him in ego and attachment. Therefore, the One who exists in you is 'I'. The One in me is 'I' also. *Ekovasi Sarva Bhoota Antar-aatma*—The One God exists in all beings. So, do not feel sad. Recognize these truths about the *Atma*, which will reveal all secrets.

In this world, results of past actions must be experienced. The body may collapse at any moment. But it is man's duty to strive for well-being when disease attacks the body. Similarly, the world is plunged in disease today. Men's bad thoughts and actions are the cause. To destroy this pervasive unrighteousness, we must go to Mathura."

Explaining to the *gopikas* and *gopalas* in this manner, Krishna and Balarama entered their house. They collected their luggage for the journey and came out. They had packed all their articles the previous day. Akrura sat behind the horses, holding the reins of the chariot. Despite the *jnana* they had just heard,

gopikas and *gopalas* could not transcend their ego and attachment. They blocked the path to the chariot. Akrura was their elder and elders should not be disrespected. The *gopikas* and *gopalas* knew that. But their love for Krishna overpowered such formalities.

They saw Krishna and Balarama emerge from the house with luggage. They panicked and cried loudly, “Please don’t leave! How can we live? Take us with You!” They pleaded in many ways, even using harsh words on Akrura. Balarama and Krishna did not want to prolong their agony. They walked slowly to the chariot, smiling, blessing and consoling all the time. This incident caused a few hours of delay. They could not reach Mathura at the intended time.

Akrura experiences Krishna’s omnipresence

By dusk they reached the banks of River Yamuna. Akrura had to perform *Sandhya Vandanam*.¹ He instructed Balarama and Krishna to wait in the chariot and went to the river. While praying, when Akrura dipped his head into the water, he saw a vision of Lord Narayana reclining on Adishesha. He perceived the forms of Krishna and Balarama as Narayana and Adishesha. He was confused and lifted his head out of the water. Krishna and Balarama were in the chariot, conversing animatedly. Akrura told himself, “What a fool I am! How can I limit the Lord? Is He not everywhere?” This was the Grace earned by him. Until the devotee reaches a lofty state, he cannot appreciate God’s omnipresence.

Akrura silently returned to the chariot and took his place. Krishna asked him most unassumingly, “Akrura, your

face is so radiant! What happened? Did you see or experience anything extraordinary? Tell us!” Akrura said, “Krishna, My Lord, don’t You know? I saw You.” Krishna casually responded, “I see, you have recognized Me at least now,” and instructed that the chariot proceed to Mathura.

On the streets of Mathura

They reached Mathura at night. Balarama and Krishna told Akrura, “Tomorrow is the *Dhanur Yaga*. So we will not come to your house tonight.” Akrura pleaded, “Where else will you spend the night, Swami? Please be gracious enough to accept my invitation.” Krishna said, “It is not right for us to come now. You are the messenger of Kamsa today. It is not proper for Me to accept the hospitality of a messenger. This is contrary to the guidelines of diplomacy.”

By that time, all the Brindavan people had gathered in Mathura with Krishna and Balarama. They wanted to visit the poor couple, Devaki and Vasudeva, who were still in jail. Krishna and Balarama could have gone to see them. But they did not. They had to set an example to the world and teach the ideal: *Maatru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava*—Mother and father are equal to God. This is God’s primary teaching in all ages. People might wonder: Why did Krishna not go to see His parents soon after arriving in Mathura? No. Balarama and Krishna had resolved to kill Kamsa and only then see their parents—not just see them, but free them from prison. Krishna spent the night in the same house where Nanda and others camped.

At dawn, Krishna and Balarama roamed around Mathura. They looked like lion cubs—beautiful and majestic. The entire city came to know of their presence in a matter of moments. As the two brothers walked the streets of Mathura, men, women and children drank their *darshan* from rooftops, windows—everywhere. Everybody thought, “Our lives are redeemed. What more can we ask for? Since long we desired to behold Balarama and Krishna. We are indebted to Kamsa.” Krishna and Balarama did not even go home till evening.

The washerman and the perfume woman

Krishna and Balarama reached the main gate of Kamsa’s palace. The *yaga* was to begin the following day. A washerman was about to enter the gate. He had a load of Kamsa’s best silks, cleaned specially for the function. Balarama asked him, “Hey, what is that bundle you have?” Krishna said, “Why ask? Go see for yourself.” The washerman said, “These are the King’s costly silks. You seem to be villagers. You are not fit to even touch these clothes! Be gone!” Krishna heard this and gave a tight-fisted blow to the washerman. Both the washerman and his bundle fell down. Krishna opened the bundle and collected clothes for Himself and for His elder brother. The soldiers at the gate witnessed this scene and informed Kamsa.

Meanwhile, as Balarama and Krishna were about to proceed after adorning themselves in these silks, a lady approached the gate. Her name was Kubja. Her face was beautiful but her body was crooked in three places. She was carrying perfumes and pastes. She raised her head and saw the brothers. She thought, “Are these the sons of Devaki and Vasudeva? They appear to be *Avatars* of Lord Narayana. Truly, that de-

mon Kamsa is not worthy of my perfumes. How nice it would be if these children accepted them!”

With a full heart, she humbly went to Krishna, “Son, here are my perfumes and rose water, prepared with care. No one knows the secrets of these preparations besides me. There are many people selling perfumes in Mathura but the King accepts only mine. Please accept these perfumes.” Krishna dipped His hand into her boxes and dabbed His clothes here and there, only for Kubja’s satisfaction. Kubja said, “For having lived this long, for having taken up this profession, my life is redeemed today. All these years I offered my perfumes to the demon Kamsa. Today I served the Lord.” Shedding copious tears, Kubja expressed gratitude to them. Then she stepped aside with the intention of going her way. Krishna stopped her. “You have granted us these perfumes. In return, I am bound to give you something. I never take anything from anyone without reason. But whatever I take, I return a thousand-fold.”

Offer something to God

God never asks anything from anyone. But when people give to Him with a full heart, He returns a thousand-fold. You know the story of Kuchela. For the gift of a fistful of dry rice, Krishna granted him lifelong prosperity.² Rukmini Devi was able to win Krishna for herself by offering Him just a single tulasi leaf.³ So, whenever God accepts anything from anyone, He grants unending bounty in return.

That is why it is said, *Patram Pushpam Phalam Toyam*⁴—a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or some water. At least these must be offered to God. Why? Only when we offer, we be-

come eligible to receive. If you go to a bank and simply ask for your money, they will not give it to you although you have every right over it. You need to fill a withdrawal slip and sign it. Only then can you claim your money. So, you must give something first, in order to receive. This is Divine Law. Even if it is tiny or insignificant, it must be offered to God.

So Krishna said, "O Kubja! Wait, wait. For your perfumes gifted to us with a pure heart, I must return the favor." Krishna went close to her and she could not fathom His intentions. Krishna pressed Kubja's feet with His tiny Feet. He put His hand under her chin and lifted her. The bends in her body became straight! Kubja thought, "He has granted me a beautiful body in keeping with my beautiful face. He is Lord Narayana!" She offered all her perfumes to Krishna and said, "Lord, please come to my house and let me serve Your Lotus Feet." Krishna gave His word, "After I fulfill My task in Mathura, I shall certainly visit your house."

The end of Kamsa

The next day, these two lions strode along the streets. As they approached the *Dhanur Yaga*, the grandeur of the cosmos seemed to be reflected in their faces. Whoever set their eyes on them could not stop looking at them. People forgot themselves, gazing at the beautiful forms of Krishna and Balarama.

Balarama and Krishna reached the main gate. A mad elephant was stationed there, specially to stop them. All watched with bated breath. They were anxious that the ele-

phant might trample upon the boys any moment. Trumpeting ferociously, the elephant charged at Balarama and Krishna. It lifted its huge feet off the ground and attempted to crush them. Krishna and Balarama were tiny, only five years old! They ran between the elephant's legs and confused it. Then Balarama caught one leg and Krishna, another. They whirled the elephant around and dashed it against the ground, much like a washerman beats clothes on a rock. The elephant gave up its life. Kamsa was informed that his most ferocious elephant had failed to stop Krishna. His fear increased from moment to moment.

As Krishna and Balarama proceeded into the grounds, two men accosted them. They were Chanura and Mushtika, Kamsa's prize wrestlers, under orders to do away with the two boys. Krishna and Balarama looked at them and said, "Are YOU going to fight us? O foolish men, you are like mosquitoes desiring combat with an elephant! Mosquitoes!" Chanura and Mushtika could not bear this insult. They jumped upon the tiny boys in fury. Krishna and Balarama gave them just one blow with their fists and the wrestlers were rendered lifeless. However, they recognized the brothers as divine and had Lord Narayana's *darshan* just before they died.

Krishna and Rama proceeded forward. The *Dhanur Yaga* was in progress. Many kings, chiefs, and citizens had gathered to witness it. Kamsa was seated on a vast, raised platform built especially for him. Balarama and Krishna walked to the center of the grounds fearlessly, with the gait of lions. Kamsa appeared strong outwardly but his heart became weaker as Krishna got closer. Kamsa's body began shivering and

shaking. Many people thought, “Look at the King! He is so angry that his body shakes in fury!” In reality, Kamsa’s body was shaking not out of anger but out of fear! *Yat Bhavam Thath Bhavati*—as is the feeling, so is the result. Kamsa’s wickedness alone made him experience fear now. This is also called “guilty conscience”.

Kamsa’s entire army was arrayed around him to guard him against Krishna’s approach. But Balarama and Krishna ignored Kamsa. They walked straight towards the *Dhanus*—the Divine Bow—kept at the center of the enclosure. No one could budge the Bow, what to talk of lifting it. Krishna casually held it with his left hand and lifted it as if it was a feather. As He bent the bow to tie its string, the bow snapped in His arms. The sound was deafening, like a bomb. All were terrified.

At that time, Nanda was approaching Kamsa to pay taxes collected from Brindavan. Other village chiefs were doing the same. Nanda’s eyes followed Krishna’s every action. He looked forward to more of His exploits. He was not worried because he knew that the brothers were divine. The divine Bow, the focus of the *yaga*, was broken. Kamsa rose from his throne, and the whole assembly rose with him. Kamsa ordered his army to destroy Krishna and Balarama.

Kamsa was heavily built. Krishna and Balarama were tiny and agile. Like baby deer, they ran between the legs of the intervening soldiers! Reaching the dais, both of them jumped upon Kamsa. They caught hold of Kamsa’s hair, pulled him to the ground and put an end to him. It was all over in moments. Everyone was stunned speechless. Of course, the heavenly

prophecy was bound to come true. They recognized Krishna as Narayana and bowed down with folded hands.

The reunion with parents

Without wasting any time, Krishna and Balarama hurried to Kamsa's dungeons. They fell at the feet of Devaki and Vasudeva. They freed them from shackles and brought them out into the open. Then they went to the cell where Ugrasena had been imprisoned by Kamsa. They freed him also and brought him to the *yaga* hall. With his son's dead body lying there, Ugrasena was crowned as King of Mathura.

After the coronation, Yasoda, Nanda, Devaki, Vasudeva, and Rohini—all hugged Balarama and Krishna. All three mothers were there. All of Brindavan was there, except the gopikas. There was no limit to their happiness and excitement. Devaki took Krishna and Balarama into the palace and said, "Sons, I could not witness Your childhood, but only hear of Your exploits and pranks from others. How unfortunate I am! I could not see You kill the demoness Putana. When Yasoda wanted to tie You to a rock, no length of rope was enough to go around Your stomach—so I have heard. I gave You birth, but all the fun and frolic with You belonged to Yasoda. You are called 'son of Yasoda'. How blessed she is! Though I have children, I am as good as childless."

Balarama and Krishna consoled their parents and granted them unlimited happiness through loving words. "Past is past. Do not grieve. From now, we are always with you. You will experience all possible bliss in our company. You

know we are not ordinary boys. We will bring the whole world within our control. I gave you *darshan* soon after My birth—Preserve that vision in your heart. Visualize it outside you also. *Antar Bahischa Thath Sarva Vyaapya Narayana Sthitah*—God is inside, outside, everywhere. Decrease your attachment to the body. Strengthen your bond to the *Atma*. Attachment is the root cause of sorrow. You suffered in prison because you were attached to your sons. Understand that we are not ordinary, that we are God. Recognize the reality of your sons.” In this manner, Krishna and Balarama consoled their mother tenderly and taught her the Truth.

Akrura’s devotion

After Kamsa’s death, Krishna went to Akrura’s house. He had given His word. The Lord never goes back on His promise. Akrura told Krishna, “Swami! I doubted if You had pity on me. You killed Kamsa without any leniency, although he was Your uncle. You have no trace of attachment. We are attached to You, but You are attached to no one. All are equal to You, all are Your relatives. I have recognized this truth about You today.

You killed Tataki,⁵ although she was a woman. You asked King Bali⁶ for alms. He surrendered everything to You. And look what You did. You pressed him into the nether worlds with Your Feet! My mind was confused. How could such a strict Lord ever feel kindness and pity toward me? After all, who am I?”

In this manner, Akrura ran to Krishna and embraced Him tightly as soon as He entered his house. Akrura was a

highly purified soul. He was completely sathwic in character. Kamsa also knew this truth. That is why Kamsa hand-picked Akrura for the task of inviting Krishna to Mathura. Kamsa realized that Krishna and Balarama would never come to Mathura if they were invited by anyone besides Akrura. Akrura's heart was so pure that God could never refuse him anything.

People who are not familiar with the *Bhagavatham* consider Akrura to be an ordinary man, or a cruel man. No, no. Akrura was the embodiment of purity. He had no bodily attachment. He considered everything as God's property and acted as per the Divine command. He had no trace of attachment, even to his wife and children. He contemplated incessantly on Lord Narayana. Understand the character of such pure devotees and acquire their qualities.

[Bhagavan concluded with the *bhajan* "Govinda Krishna Jai, Gopala Krishna Jai, Gopala Bala Bala Radha Krishna Jai!"]

1. Daily prayers done at sunrise, noon and sunset.

2. Kuchela (or Sudama) was Krishna's friend at school. Years later, as a householder, Kuchela was very poor. He visited Krishna and took a fistful of dry rice, recalling His childhood liking for it. However, awed by Krishna's royal stature, Kuchela hid his humble gift. Krishna, the All-knowing, grabbed the soiled bundle and ate the plain rice with relish. When Kuchela returned home, he found that his hut had become a palace, and his family was living in abundance.

3. Sathyabhama, a wife of Krishna, wanted to "buy" Him for herself with her wealth. However, no matter how much gold she heaped on one pan of a

weighing balance, Lord Krishna, sitting in the other pan, proved heavier. Then, Rukmini, Krishna's first wife, put a single tulasi leaf on one side of the balance, with devotion. The leaf balanced Krishna's weight, thereby humbling Sathyabhama's pride.

4. *Bhagavad Gita* (IX:26).

5. A demoness killed by Rama *Avatar*.

6. The King of demons, humbled by Vamana *Avatar*.

11. Krishna and Balarama As Students

*Sadayam Hridayam,
Yasya Bhaashitam Sathya Bhooshitam,
Kaaya Para Hiteyasyaam*
A heart full of compassion,
Speech full of truth,
A body dedicated to service,
These three are essential for human life.

Embodiments of divine love!

A steady mind, truthful speech and a body dedicated to service—these are the three most important requisites for life. In *Vedanta*, this is called *Trikarana Suddhi*—Purity of the three instruments. The Upanishads define *manava* (man) to mean “one who trusts and can be trusted”. Every person lives only on the basis of this trust or faith. From dawn to dusk, all our activities are made possible only by faith.

Education must promote faith in God

To what ends do people use faith? Do they use it to perform daily tasks, to be blissful, or in service to others? Do men use faith in the right direction? We have faith in everything. It is only with faith that we go to the market or travel in a car. We promise to fulfill tasks in the future, fully expecting to be alive the next day. All actions are initiated only by faith. But humans, who have faith in everything, do not have faith in the existence and omnipotence of God.

What is the reason? Worldly objects are related to the senses. The power beyond the senses, although omnipresent, is invisible. For this reason, man is not able to believe in it. But does man believe only what he sees and reject everything that

is unseen? Can he see his mind? Is his happiness visible to him? Although they are invisible, he knows they exist. But due to weakness, he trusts only the visible. So he doesn't trust his own mind, his Self. Our ancient culture urges us to pursue education in order to cultivate strong, immovable faith in the Reality. What kind of education? Not worldly education. Worldly education caters only to your selfishness.

*From the time you wake up, till you sleep again,
You struggle constantly only to fill the stomach.
Earning worldly education by forgetting the Lotus-Eyed
Lord,
What great happiness do you enjoy, tell me truly, O
man?*

What happiness is man able to enjoy from worldly education? People only think that they get happiness from such education, but it is temporary. Lasting bliss is obtained only in spiritual education. Man enters school early in childhood and perseveres for years, learning many subjects, only to fulfill ambitions for wealth and reputation. He feels proud of his learning and degrees. But this education is not something you should be proud of.

*Pustakamul Pathinchitini, Poortiga Joochiti Sarva
Saastramul,
Nistulamaina Vidyalanu Nerchitinanchunu Garva-mela
Nee
Hastayugambu Modchi Paramaatmuni Bhakti To Kol-
valeni*

*Ee Prastuta Vidyalanniyunu Dhaatri Nirartha-kambu
Kada, O Manava?*

“I have read texts, looked at all sciences”
Why pride yourself so, on useless learning?
If you cannot join your palms and express devotion to
God,
Aren't all your studies a total waste, O man?

Worldly studies, diplomas, and degrees cannot be called “education”. These studies gradually destroy even human qualities. Peace is obtained only when human qualities are merged with our Divinity.

Sandipani's hermitage

After Kamsa's death, Devaki and Vasudeva arranged for the schooling of Krishna and Balarama. Till then, the boys had not even learned the alphabet. Why? Nanda and Yasoda were afraid that if they admitted Krishna into any *gurukula*, Kamsa might send demons there and endanger the lives of many other children.

In the interest of true education, it was the practice in ancient India to send children away from home to a *gurukula* where everyone, whether sons of emperors or ordinary people, stayed as equals in the guru's house. You heard Prahlada's story. Although he was a prince, he stayed in the house of his *gurus*, Chanda and Amarka. He did not stay at home like “day-scholars” of today.

So, Krishna and Balarama were sent to the hermitage of Guru Sandipani. Sandipani's ashram was neither in Mathura

nor in Brindavan. It was in the holy city of Kasi. Leaving Krishna and Balarama in Kasi, their parents lived fearlessly in Mathura. The students of those days excelled in physical prowess and intellectual acumen. Still, they were ever humble and obedient and tread the path of *sathya* and *dharma* under the *guru*'s guidance.

Although Krishna and Balarama had destroyed many demons in infancy and earned universal fame, they performed household chores in Sandipani's house, lived their *guru*'s commands and acquired true education. They would go into the forest daily and fetch firewood for the kitchen. Only by following the disciplines of the *gurakulas* in humility, students of those days transformed themselves into ideal men and set glorious examples for posterity.

Sandipani had only one son, who died young. Sandipani and his wife bore this burden of sorrow with great effort. In those days, there was a practice called *guru dakshina*. After completing their education, before departing to become householders, students would make a token offering of gratitude to their guru. This offering was *guru dakshina*. Balarama and Krishna also went to Sandipani. Standing humbly with folded hands, they prayed, "Guru Deva! It is time for us to return home. Kindly tell us what we may offer to you as guru dakshina."

Sandipani said, "My dear sons! It was my greatest good fortune to be guru to ideal students like you. Your prowess and divine attributes are known the world over. During your stay here, your behavior was exemplary, not requiring a

single corrective remark from me. What can I ask of divine personages like you?” Thinking for awhile, Sandipani said, “Balarama, Krishna! You are all-knowing and all-powerful. Once you resolve upon a task, you achieve it under all circumstances. I have cherished a desire for long. My son died many years ago. I want you to resurrect him and bring him back to me.”

Balarama and Krishna set out. With their superhuman abilities, after much exertion, they were able to bring the boy back to life. In this manner, they exemplified how students should spend time in a *gurukula*, display humility and self-confidence, honor the *guru*, and enhance the reputation of their parents.

The establishment of dharma

Meanwhile, the King of Magadha, Jarasandha, along with his allies, attacked Mathura. Jarasandha was Kamsa’s father-in-law. He hated Krishna and wanted to avenge Kamsa’s death. Jarasandha attacked not once or twice but seventeen times! Hearing this news, Balarama and Krishna hurried to Mathura from Sandipani’s hermitage. The brothers thought, “Why have we taken *Avatars*? To free the world from sinners, to strengthen the forces of good.”

By killing Jarasandha, his gargantuan armies would not be depleted. So they decided to eradicate his army and spare him. Whenever Jarasandha attacked, Krishna and Balarama annihilated his army and sent him back unharmed. Jarasandha would return with another army, go back defeated again and so

on. Thus, he invited humiliation upon himself seventeen times. Finally, Krishna eliminated Jarasandha also.

All the kings who professed friendship with Jarasandha formed a clique. Name a king, and he was a hater of Krishna. These kings began harassing Yadavas. Krishna gave this matter much thought. He wanted to provide sanctuary to Yadavas in a secure place. He summoned the architect of the heavens, Vishvakarma, and told him to build a city in the middle of the sea. Vishvakarma could construct any structure by mere willing. He obeyed Krishna and built Dwaraka. overnight, Krishna transported all Yadavas to this miraculous city.

The world still abounded in tyrants and demons, and Balarama and Krishna evolved strategies to destroy them. Dwaraka was the most beautiful city in the world. Dwaraka's beauty spoke of its heavenly origin, in contrast to man-made cities, which were plain. Yadavas were able to lead secure and happy lives in Dwaraka. Students should recognize the difference between Yadavas and *gopikas*.

Humility and obedience

Yadavas thought, "Krishna is our relative, our friend." They related to Krishna with attachment based on pride. This wrong kind of attachment fed their ego constantly, bringing about their destruction many years later. But the *gopikas* were different. Instead of telling Krishna, "You are ours," they said, "We are Yours." This surrender earned them security and divine Love all their lives. Humility and obedience poured out of the *gopalas* and *gopikas*. Humility and obedience are very essential for everyone, especially for students.

Education teaches humility.

Humility grants deservedness.

Deservedness bestows wealth.

Wealth facilitates acts of dharma.

Dharma Grants Fulfillment Here and Hereafter.

The student stage is a peculiar period. It comes and goes as a flash across the screen of life. It is in youth that man ruins his future years. Young people run after fleeting joys and jeopardize the rest of their life. Human life itself is temporary. And this period of youth is still more temporary! Students today enter into unnecessary gossip, indulge in unrighteous acts, pursue destructive goals and cause insecurity to the nation. This is not what students should be doing.

Expand your heart

Students are meant to establish peace and security in the nation and the world. They should serve fellowmen and aspire for the welfare of all. This should be their chief aim. But sadly, they follow the opposite path. Modern students have no respect for gurus, no love or respect for parents. Who else will they respect? What good is their schooling if such is their behavior? Prahlada said, "Father! I have learnt the essence of all education." What is this essence? It is only the expansion of the heart, blossoming of discrimination.

But the students of today have extremely narrow hearts. Their love is "contracted". Therefore, students need to practice "expansion of love". You must renounce the distinctions of "I" and "they". Just as you amass wealth by working

diligently over years, you must amass peace and contentment by entertaining divine feelings. Humanness can be transformed into Divinity only when peace and contentment are allowed to flourish.

One who knows swimming (*eeta*) does not worry about the depth of the water. Similarly, one who knows *Gita* is not worried about the unrest in the world. He just follows the divine command, lends peace to the society and crosses this ocean of birth and death.

Therefore, we must practice God's words in every situation. Not just practice, but derive bliss therefrom and share it with others. Instead of selfishness (*svaartham*), share your joy with others in the spirit of spirituality (*paraartham*). Only then can society become ideal.

Students! You were born in society, brought-up in society and you are living in society. If you are not sensitive to the needs of society, for how long do you expect society to nourish you? Through your education, you must ensure peace and security for all. We should not lead a life of isolation like a drop of oil on a leaf. You should live in harmony, in unity with all. Understand the suffering and pain of others and make efforts to relieve them, thereby increasing your own purity. Only then will your life be meaningful.

Students are future leaders. The ones on whom the future will place such responsibility should promote righteousness. If we have only God's Grace, we need not fear wherever we go. Exert your utmost to become worthy of such Grace. The one who buys a ticket can sit anywhere in a train. He is

not worried about anyone asking him to leave. But the ticketless passenger mistakes every uniformed official for the ticket collector! He is in constant fear. Likewise, the one who acquires the ticket of divine Grace can go anywhere without worry. He will not bend in any situation.

Faith in yourself is faith in God

Today, we experience frustration, worry and fear every moment. What is the reason? We have no faith. Faith is absolutely essential. Lack of faith makes man susceptible to imaginary fears. What is faith? You must believe in yourself! That is self-confidence. Self-confidence is the strong foundation of our lives. On this foundation build the wall of self-satisfaction. Lay the roof of self-sacrifice on this wall. Then you will earn the bliss of Self-realization.

First develop self-confidence, without which you will experience many troubles. Self-confidence is faith in God. One with such faith has no problems. Lack of self-confidence is also the reason for not doing well at studies. Students say, “I study, but I don’t remember my lessons.” One without self-confidence lacks memory power. With self-confidence comes memory power. Hence, develop confidence and stand out as examples.

Students! First believe in yourselves! **Faith in yourself and faith in God—this is the secret of greatness.** Life will have no value if you do not have faith in yourself. You and God are not separate. Faith in yourself is the same as faith in God.

Swami wants students to be ideal. With ideal students, Bharath will become an ideal nation. Mainly, students should not entertain differences of community, caste, religion, color, and nationality. All are children of God. “Brotherhood of Man. Fatherhood of God.” People of all nations are humans. There is only the caste of humanity. All are brothers, brothers, brothers.

But there is one feeling higher than the feeling of brotherhood. That is the sense of unity on the basis of the One *Atma*. Sometimes there is animosity even between brothers. So, the unity of the *Atma* is better than brotherhood. It is not easy to develop, but do not give up, saying it is not possible.

You can achieve WHATEVER you desire! Students should cultivate such determination. Without determination, you cannot achieve anything. Don’t say, “I will try.” Say, “I must do!” Don’t even use the word “try.” If you say “try”, it will be “dry”! So say, “I must do.”

Observe Limits

Students are not at fault. Parents and teachers lead them astray. How? They consider worldly life to be permanent. Yes, we need worldly life. But there is something beyond. An example: Consider a game of football [soccer] with six players on each team. There are goal posts at either end. If the ball passes between the posts, a goal is scored. The two goal posts are worldly and spiritual knowledge. Our life is the ball. The six evil qualities (lust, anger, greed, envy, pride, attachment) are one team. *Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema, Ahimsa, and Prak-ruthi Dharma* (worldly responsibility) form the other team. The ball of life is kicked by both teams. The ball should pass

between the two boundary posts to score a goal. Beyond the boundary posts, it is only “out,” not a goal.

Today, you are kicking the ball beyond the boundaries. Hence you are not succeeding. Act within limits, and you will be victorious. *Nah Sreyoh Niyainam Vinah*—Lasting happiness cannot be gained without limits and rules. Without limits, life is meaningless. For example, body temperature has a limit of 98.4°F. 99°F is considered a fever. Blood pressure is normal at 120/80. If it touches 90, it signals trouble.

Similarly, our eyes can see only a limited brightness. Too much brightness burns the retina. Life is a “limited company”. Do not cultivate ego. Earn respect by observing limits.

You will ruin your minds with unlimited desire. It is normal to have ambitions, but ensure that your ideals are pure. Note the difference between desires (*aasa*) and ideals (*aasaya*). It does not matter if desires are not realized, but take care that ideals are never violated. Students should be disciplined. Without discipline, life becomes an animal’s existence. Cultivate discipline in your daily lives and become ideal men and women.

12. The Essence Of Education

*Na Tvevaaham Jaatu Naasam
Na Thwam Neme Janaadhipaah
Na Chaiva Na Bhavishyaamah,
Sarve Vayamatah Param.*

There was never a time when I,
Or you, or any of these ruling Kings did not exist.
And we shall exist in the future,
For all time hereafter.¹

The universe is full of many powers. An omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent power pervades all of Creation. This divine Force is immanent in every atom, like sugar in syrup. The *Upanishads* call this *Raso Vai Sah* or all-pervading sweetness. God is an embodiment of sweetness. Although this sweetness is everywhere, it is not possible to recognize its omnipresence. However, it is possible for all to observe the existence of Divinity.

The existence of Divinity

Sweetness in sugarcane, bitterness in *neem*² leaves, burning in chili, acerbity in lemon and fire in wood—all these are direct proofs of God's existence. A plant germinates from a seed. A bird emerges from an egg. The newborn infant becomes a mother one day. These are all living proofs of the existence of Divinity. Man experiences exhilaration upon seeing majestic peaks, gurgling rivers, the deep ocean, lush forests and colorful gardens. What is the basis of these phenomena? It is God's existence alone.

It is not given to everyone to grasp the omnipresence of God, but all have the capacity to identify His presence. *Jnaanaanaam Jnaanam Agram, Jnaanaanaam Jnaanam Utta-*

mam—Of all kinds of knowledge, *Atma Jnana* is the foremost and the best. We find various forms of knowledge in the world—music, literature, painting, sculpture, dance, materials and so on. *Atma Jnana* is paramount. Worldly knowledge might endow you with scholarship, fame, honor and titles. But, *Atmaanaam Atmam Uttamam*—The title higher than all worldly titles is that you are the *Atma*. The *Vedas* say that man is *Amritaputra*—a child of immortality. This is the highest title.

Qualities for earning wisdom

All worldly knowledge changes with time and deludes your intellect. For this reason, our ancient sages dedicated their lives to the acquisition of *Atma Jnana*, which is changeless and illumines the intellect. Some qualities are necessary for earning such wisdom.

1. *Sarve Loka Hito Ratah*

Desire the welfare of all beings by engaging in actions that benefit others. We should cultivate readiness to serve. Your education should equip you better to render service. Then you will evoke true respect from others.

2. *Sarve Jnaana Sampannah*

Students should excel in all forms of knowledge. This is also called “awareness.” You should understand and experience all the angles of a situation. Worldly subjects grant you competence within a narrow scope. You perceive situations with a limited outlook. If I ask you what this [handkerchief] is, you say, “a piece of cloth”. This answer shows your restricted, worldly knowledge. With broader vision, you identify it as a handkerchief.

Spiritual knowledge is complete and enables one to grasp all fields of knowledge. This is “total awareness”.

3. *Sarve Samuditha Gunaihi*

The student must embody every virtue or *guna*. What is meant by *guna*? Traditionally, the three qualities of creation (*sathwa*, *rajas*, and *tamas*) are called *gunas*. Indeed, virtue is the union and balance of these three *gunas*. In practice, it is very important to disregard the faults of others and to express your own Divinity. This is true *guna*. This trait is crucial for students and it is the source of all virtues. That which inculcates such virtue alone can be called education. Modern educational systems impart information but not virtues.

*Present-day education teaches only information,
But not even an iota of virtue.
What beneficial fruit can emerge from
A million forms of education, devoid of values?*

Nonviolence

Without human values you cannot deliver the fruits of your learning to society. Therefore, human values must be cultivated. Of these, *sathya* is the most important. Truth is God. Some people went to Buddha and argued about the existence of God. Buddha told them, “All these disputes are a waste of time. *Sathya*, *dharma*, and *ahimsa* are the same as God. Therefore, worship God as the form of Truth first. Speak the truth. Practice *dharma*. Observe nonviolence.”

Now, what is meant by nonviolence? People consider only hurting and harming others as violence. No, no. Harming yourself is also violence. Talking unnecessarily, eating immoderately, and working too much—these are violence. Meaning, one should lead a life of moderation and balance. Anything done beyond limits is violence. Even writing excessively is violence. Why is it bad to transgress limits? Because it wastes energy. By talking more than necessary, we deplete our intellect.

Therefore, nonviolence can be defined as the regulation of human life along moderate and beneficial paths. The *Vedas* say, *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara*—Speak the truth and follow *dharma*. Truth is God. Right action is God. That is why the *Vedas* advise us to adhere to *sathya* and *dharma*. This is true virtue.

Individual soul and All-pervading Soul

Nowadays, people make many attempts to reach Divinity. But they go around in circles because some spiritual concepts have been left inadequately explained for a long time. These are: *jeeva* and *Deva* (individual soul and God), *Atma* and *Paramatma* (limited soul and all-pervading soul), *Anu* and *Brahmaanu* (atom and universe), *sthoolam* and *sookshmam* (gross and subtle). No one is able to interpret these concepts correctly today.

Vedanta discovered such profound concepts which science has never been able to fathom. On the other hand, science has gathered facts that *Vedanta* considered unessential. But in spite of investigations by both scientists and Vedantins, these

basic truths are not understood properly by the common man. How should we describe Divinity? What is the distinction between *Atma* and *Paramatma*, between *Anu* and *Brahmaanu*?

If we reflect, the atom and the universe are one and the same! This tumbler has water from River Godavari. Suppose we bring Godavari water in a huge pot. And then again, in a big tanker. All of them are the same water. They differ only in quantity. Quality is one.

In the same way, when we study the atom we come across microcosmic phenomena. In the flame of a lamp, we find heat and light. Upon closer examination, a flame has the same innate qualities as an atom. The water in this tumbler has the same taste, color and form as that in River Godavari. This is That, That is This. When we grasp this one principle, we grasp everything.

God is described in our scriptures as *Anoraneeyaan Mahato Maheeyaan*—smaller than the smallest, bigger than the biggest. The universe is really a reflection of the same forces present in an atom. Without the combination of atoms, the universe cannot exist. The principle that is present in all is Divinity alone.

This is what Sage Uddalaka taught his son.³ “Son, God is everywhere. Observe the relation between an atom and the cosmos and you will understand *Atma* and *Paramatma*. Go into the house and bring some sugar and some water.” His son obeyed. Uddalaka said, “Observe the sugar carefully.” The boy looked at it and felt it. Then he mixed it in water. Then Udda-

laka asked him to find the sugar. But the sugar could not be collected with the hand because it had dissolved. Still, its presence could be proved by tasting a drop of the sweet water. Where was the sugar? It cannot be said to be “here” or “there”. It was everywhere in the water.

In the same way, the sugar that can be seen and touched is *Atma*. It is limited. The sugar that is dissolved, which is beyond touch and sight, beyond name and form, beyond spatial limitations, is *Paramatma*. The *Atma* present in your body also pervades the universe as *Paramatma*. *Paramatma* is called Consciousness. The *Atma* in the body is called Conscience. That Consciousness is present in your Conscience and your Conscience is a part of the Consciousness.

A seed contains roots, branches, leaves, fruits, flower—everything. Krishna said, *Beejam Maam Sarva Bhootaanaam*⁴—I am the seed of all beings. This seed is present in the mighty tree and the entire tree is present within the seed. *Anoraneeyaan*—smaller than the smallest—that is the seed. *Mahatomaheeyaan*—bigger than the biggest—this is the tree. There is no difference between the seed and the tree. The difference is only in vision. Meaning, the extroverted vision sees multiple forms but the inner eye perceives unity in diversity.

Know yourself

Therefore, it is not possible for anyone to recognize this all-pervasive Divinity. But that is not required! If you recognize the divine spark present in yourself, you become the

knower of the omnipresent Divinity also! That is why *Vedanta* urges man, “Know Thyself.”

If you ask a person, “Who are you?” he answers, “I am the son of...” Or he may say he is a doctor or a lawyer. Or he may say, “American,” “Indian,” “Italian.” None of these is correct. When you base your identity on your father, you speak out of body-consciousness. Doctor or lawyer is your profession. The third response is your country of birth. These answers are like artificial dialogue heard in a cinema. Your true nature is *Atma*. No one can change the conscience in each person. You may change countries and behavior, but not the conscience.

The principle present in everyone is the *Atma*. Modern people do not perform such subtle investigations and so, do not believe these truths. They dedicate their time, body and actions to this temporary, physical existence. Hence, they give only worldly responses. *Jnaanaanaam Jnaanam Uttamam*—*Atma Jnana* is the best kind of knowledge. Once you have *Atma Jnana*, you may blend other sciences in it. *Atma Jnana* is the ocean, worldly sciences are rivers. *Nadeenaam Saagaro Gatih*—all rivers merge into the ocean.

A small example. Rice is your staple food. But you do not eat rice by itself. You mix vegetables and curries in it. With such side dishes you can enjoy a tasty meal. Take the rice of *Atma Vidya* and mix into it the dishes of worldly knowledge. This will lend taste to your physical life. In any situation, *Atma Vidya* must never be renounced.

Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswara

The principles that teach and nourish *Atma Vidya*, sustain its awareness and protect it are known as Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswara. These are only names. Today, there is no one who has seen these Beings. Yes, we see them in cinemas and books, but no one has seen them directly. As per *jnana* philosophy, this is delusion also!

Truly, who is this Brahma and where is He? Brahma is the Creator. The subtle secrets of the Creator are present in every mother and father. The parents who bestow this physical body on you have all the qualities of Brahma. Make every effort to understand the sacred principles in your parents. Your mother is the basis of your birth. She sustained you and brought you into this world. The one who created you is none other than your mother. The mother fosters her child in hundreds of ways, like Brahma. Therefore, when you respect your mother and worship her, you worship Brahma. That is why our ancients said, *Maatru Devo Bhava*—The mother is equal to God.

Birth is not enough. The means to live must be provided to the child. When the child ventures into the world, it must be taught right behavior. The ways for earning respect in society must be inculcated. Education and a home must be furnished. All these are responsibilities of the father. Lord Vishnu sustains and protects the souls created by Brahma. That same Vishnu is the father. When you worship and honor your father, you truly worship Vishnu.

Next, Maheswara. He is described as *bhola* (innocent) by devotees. He is known for granting every desire, without hesitation, even if the boons might result in trouble to Him! He is *sulabha priya*—easily pleased. You know the story of the demon Bhasmaasura. Maheswara gave him the boon of burning anything with his palm. Then He Himself ran to escape the demon's palm! What does this mean? Sankara grants desires without prejudice or hesitation. A *guru* teaches all without preference. To one who wants proficiency in mathematics, the teacher teaches math. If another desires physics, that is taught. The *guru* teaches whatever one wishes to learn, to anyone who comes with the desire. When the student's desires are not elevating, he advises him accordingly. No student turns back from a *guru* empty-handed. Thus, the *guru* is equal to Maheswara. When you respect your *guru*, you really worship Maheswara.

Pillars of Indian culture

Therefore, Hindus consider mother, father, and teacher as being equal to God. The *Vedas* propagate these glorious values by saying:

Maatru Devo Bhava.

Pitru Devo Bhava.

Acharya Devo Bhava.

Treat the mother as God.

Treat the father as God.

Treat the teacher as God.

This is Indian Culture. This is the first pillar of Indian culture: devotion and obedience to mother, father, and guru.

Next, in what manner must a child born of such parents conduct himself in society? Speak the truth, he is advised. Never yield to falsehood out of selfishness. Never follow unrighteousness for self-interest. To uphold our respect in society, we should speak the truth and follow *dharma*. Indian Culture says:

Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara
Speak the truth, Follow *dharma*.

This is the second identifying feature of Indian Culture.

Not just this. If we want to experience unsullied reputation, we must strengthen the faith that Divinity is immanent in everyone. These days, scientists claim that a microcosmic power pervades the universe. They conduct complex experiments to convince the world of their findings. There are only two components present in this world: matter and energy. One cannot exist without the other. Science investigates into the interactions of matter and energy, into the physical world accessible to the senses.

Spirituality teaches the same concept: People may be different. Names and forms may differ, cultures may differ, but the force within everyone is the One *Atma*. Scientists took thousands of years to discover this truth. Since when? Not just in the modern era. The first scientist, the greatest scientist, was Hiranya Kashyapa, who existed thousands of years ago. Hiranya Kashyapa investigated into the five elements that constitute creation. He even brought the elements under his control!

But despite his towering accomplishments in the physical realm, Hiranya Kashyapa could not limit his own bad qualities.

For this reason, what did our ancients teach? Science is preoccupied with describing the forces within an atom. Our ancient *Vedanta* says, “O foolish scientists! First of all, everything is in You!” The external world has been described by scientists. The inner cosmos is the subject of *Vedanta*. Scientists are reluctant to develop inner vision. And *Vedanta* has neglected the external world. But which of these is more important?

Students should recognize one fact. You can see the branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits of a tree. But the bases for their existence are the unseen roots. Which are more important, roots or branches? Without roots, branches cannot exist. However, you may chop off the branches and the roots will make them grow again. Those who are content understanding the branches, venturing no further, are scientists. The ones who go to the roots are *Vedantins*.

Scientists describe the branches, the effects, not the cause. Therefore, the *moolaadhaara*—Primal Cause—is very important. Once we find the Primal Cause behind everything, we can build a foundation upon it and live in the world as we please.

Students know that two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen produce water. Scientists pride themselves on this discovery. Yes, you can produce water. But if we ask, “Who created hydrogen and oxygen?” there is no answer. When confronted by such questions, scientists evade them by saying,

“Law of Nature”. Fine. From where did Nature emerge? Who is its basis? When we inquire in this fashion, the *moolaadhaara* is God alone. No one can grasp Divinity. We can only attempt to describe it as a power that is changeless, indestructible, omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient.

The study that reveals to us our innate Divinity has been termed *vidya* (education). Worldly studies do not measure up to this qualification. However, worldly studies have got their importance. Today man studies, gets a job, goes overseas, accepts positions of authority—all for money alone. *Dhana Moolam Idam Jagat*—Money is the basis for the world. Money is the basis for worldly existence. But *Vedanta* does not give it such importance.

Dharma moolam idam jagat

Dharma is the basis for the world. This is the declaration of *Vedanta*. This is Indian Culture.

You find planets revolving around the Sun, stars in distant galaxies shining brightly, the Moon orbiting the Earth, rivers flowing into the ocean, the sea rising and ebbing with tides, and so on. All these phenomena occur within the limits of *dharma*. When *dharma* is transgressed, all is destroyed. All these activities are possible only by adherence to *dharma*. These are proofs of God’s existence.

Yearn for true knowledge

To discover the existence of God is within everyone’s capability. You do not need degrees, education, skills, or proficiencies for this achievement. All that is required is an effort to

understand the secrets of Creation. Look at this world. It is so vast, so full of wonders. From where has it emerged? There are 5,700 million people in the world. Are any two identical? Are there no distinctions even between identical twins? Every individual is unique. Who designed such a wondrous creation? This act of creation is not possible for anyone. The mind cannot gauge its wonders.

Thus, the unseen Divinity underlies the visible world. Some people think, “I have attained this,” “I have made this discovery through my experiments.” They gloat over the smallest of achievements. What the man of today knows is close to nothing. But the pomp is huge. One who knows does not indulge in publicity. The vessel full of water remains steady. The half-full vessel rocks back and forth noisily. Those who yield to self-praise have half understanding.

Inquire, inquire, inquire. Make a determined attempt. Don't relax your spiritual efforts in any way. What we need to recognize is the *moolaadhaara* principle. This principle is not visible through a telescope and cannot be captured through a camera. You only need yearning in your heart, which gets transformed into spiritual inquiry. Without yearning, the search for God cannot be sustained. Every student should cultivate yearning, “I should know, I should know.” Then you will realize the fruits of your search for God, sooner or later.

Desires vs. ideals

Develop good thoughts. Your desires may or may not be fulfilled. Students! You are living for desires (*aasa*) today. This is not the right approach. Live for ideals (*aasaya*). Even if

your desires are satisfied today, what is the guarantee that tomorrow's desires will be granted? But if you uphold ideals, people will follow your example long after you die. Do not base your life on desires—you are bound to meet disappointment one day or the other. The only desire you should have is the desire to follow ideals!

Today man wishes for a long life. This is not important. A life permeated with divine feelings is more desirable. A divine life, even for a moment, brings lasting bliss and fame. What is the meaning in surviving for a thousand years if you live a crow's life? So, do not be satisfied with worldly education. While pursuing your studies, acquire *Atma Vidya* as well.

Unity of thought, word, and deed

Once, Adi Sankaracharya went with thirteen disciples to Kashi. With our extroverted intellect, we think that "sin" means inconveniencing or harming others. Students should recognize correctly what is meant by sin. Sankara was proceeding for a bath in River Ganga. He saw a boy, seated under a tree, learning by heart the rules of grammar (*dukrum-karane*). Sankaracharya stood for some time, observing the student recite his lessons aloud. Then Sankara approached him.

"My boy, why do you spend time learning grammar?" The student replied, "This will help me become a great scholar." "Good. What do you hope to achieve after becoming a scholar?" "I will go to the King's court and become the Royal Poet." "Fine, you will become famous. What will that fame give you?" "With fame, I will get as much wealth as I want." "What happiness can you enjoy with wealth?" "My family

will live in pleasure and comfort.” “How long will that comfort last?” “Till death.” “What will happen to you, your comforts and riches after death?” “I don’t know.”

Then Sankara said:

*Bhaja Govindam Bhaja Govindam
Govindam Bhaja Moodha Mate
Sampraapte Sannihite Kaale
Nahi Nahi Rakshati Dukrunkarane*
Sing the name of Govinda,
Sing Govinda’s name, O fool!
When your final moments approach,
The rules of grammar will not save you!

Think of God always. Worldly knowledge is helpful only as long as the body exists. You must leave the body one day or the other.

After giving this advice, Sankaracharya bathed in the River Ganga and proceeded to the temple for Lord Siva’s darshan. He stood in front of the altar and prayed: “Swami! I have come to You after committing three heinous sins. I pray to You in expiation of those sins.” Students should pay careful attention to his words.

“I have extolled and described You in many ways. However, I know that You are *Avaang Maanasa Gochara*—beyond word and thought. The *Vedas* say, *Yatho Vaacho Nivartante Apraapya Manasa Saha*—From where words and thoughts return, unable to comprehend anything. That is You. I

taught my students that You are beyond word and thought. At the same time, I dared to describe You. I preached something and practiced otherwise. This is my first sin.”

See, how subtle is the concept of sin! To say something and do something else is sin. “I taught to everyone, *Isvara Sarva Bhootaanaam, Isaavaasyam Idam Sarvam*—God is immanent in every being. You are present everywhere. But I have come to Kasi to see You as Viswesvara. Again, I acted contrary to my words. This is my second sin.

“*Ekovasi Sarva Bhoota Antaraatma*—God is present in everyone. In fact, God is manifest as all beings. I taught this truth. Now, am I not one of those beings? Is God not present in me? I have neglected the Divinity in myself. I have journeyed here to see myself! I considered myself different from You. This is my third sin.

“So, Lord, my words and actions are not in unity. Please free me from these faults.” Saying so, Sankaracharya closed His eyes and meditated intently on the Lord. In a few moments, He got the Lord’s vision along with His response. Visveswara told him, “Sankara! Past is past. Your repentance itself is atonement for your sins. Take care that you do not repeat these mistakes.”

Meaning what? We must repent for our mistakes. But today’s devotees have no sincere repentance. Whenever you commit a mistake, even unknowingly, resolve, “I shall not repeat it.” You must not go back on your promise to God. Keep your words and actions in unison. In the modern age it has been

said—The proper study of mankind is man. Meaning, the unity of thoughts, words, and actions.

Keeping these three in unity, love and respect your parents and teacher. Consider your mother, father, and teacher as Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswara and make every effort to secure their blessings. This is true worship. But we must not be content even with this. Do not stop there and waste the sacred time at our disposal. There is an unknown power pervading everything. This sacred power is within your mother, father and teachers. You must think, “I will worship, follow and attain that Divinity.” For this reason, *bhajans*, *japa*, meditation, and *sathsanga* are very essential.

Good company

Now the term *sathsanga* (good company) is frequently misunderstood. What is *sathsanga*? Getting together with devotees, singing *bhajans*, undertaking pilgrimages, listening to interpretations of scriptures—these are common conceptions of *sathsanga*. But this is only worldly *sathsanga*. In fact, these are not *sathsanga* at all! The devotees around you have many faults. Scholars also explain scriptures with some expectation in mind. So, none of these can be true *sathsanga*.

Sath is derived from *Sath-chith-ananda*—Being, Awareness, Bliss. *Sath* is Being. Not this temporary, worldly being, but the Being that remains changeless through past, present and future. *Sath* is devoid of name and form. The form of *Sath* is bliss (*Ananda*). *Sath* is God.

Cultivating thoughts of God is true *sathsanga*!

We must acquire the company of Godly thoughts, and thereby, the company of God Himself. Assimilate the principle of the *Atma*.

When we do this, *Chith* (Awareness) dawns. When we inquire into God, all knowledge, all awareness becomes part of us. That total awareness is *Chith*. Now, bliss (*Ananda*) is the natural consequence of *Sath* and *Chith* coming together.

So, the quality of *Sath* is changeless. When these concepts are taught with simple analogies, children absorb them easily. *Sath* is sugar. You may mix sugar in pudding, tea, coffee, water—its sweetness is constant. *Sath* is the sweetness. God is the embodiment of sweetness. *Madhuraadhipate Madhuram Madhuram*—God is sweetness, sweetness, sweetness. In one hand, take this sugar of *Sath*. In the other hand, take *Chith*—awareness of the *Atma*. Everyone may not be able to use *Sath*. For example, diabetic patients are barred from sugar! Atheists are like diabetics. They do not look at the sugar of *Sath*, although they have the desire to taste it! But their disease does not allow them to taste the sweetness.

However, *Chith*—total awareness—is essential for everyone. *Chith* is like water. No one can survive without water. Water is crucial for life. Therefore, water is a form of Divinity. All need water, be they millionaires or paupers, renunciants or hedonists. This water is *jnana*—knowledge, awareness. Mix sugar and water. The result is neither sugar nor water, but syrup. Unite *Sath* and *Chith*, and the syrup of *Ananda* (bliss) will flow in you.

Use education to serve society

So, students! Think of God on one hand. Pursue worldly education on the other hand. Experience the sweetness of life by the unity of these two. Life is meant to be of service to others. We must be careful never to cause suffering to others. Imbibe such skills and knowledge that will benefit you, society and the world. Do not learn just to fulfill your self-interest. If you want to fall to a selfish state, why take the trouble to be educated? You don't need scriptures and spiritual inquiry in order to become selfish! But to attain selflessness, you definitely need education.

In the past ten days, you have participated in this Summer Course on culture and spirituality. *Sathya* and *Dharma*—these are our culture. *Maatru Devo Bhava*, *Pitru Devo Bhava*, *Acharya Devo Bhava*—these constitute our culture. When you keep these three injunctions in view, when you experience Divinity in these three relations, only then will you experience the unity of culture and spirituality, or the unity of matter and energy.

Matter + Energy = God.

Observe limits

Offer worldly resources back to the world in useful forms. There is nothing useless anywhere. We see a twig on the ground and think it is useless. No, no. Even that is useful, for instance, as a toothpick! But today, man himself is useless and wasted. Why? Man does not know his own value. What is his value? Man wrongly bases his worth on position, fame, degrees and wealth. Yes, all these may be desired—but within limits.

When we cross limits, they become dangerous instead of lending enjoyment.

Suppose you are thirsty. Quench your thirst with a glass of water. But today's man says, "I am not satisfied with a glass. I want to drink the whole River Ganga!" If you try to drink Ganga, it will drown you. This is only danger, not enjoyment. Another example. You need air to live. Do you try to inhale all the air in the world? The five elements must be used within limits. The body needs heat to survive. But the body cannot function with excessive heat, like a 105°F temperature. Have limits, have limits, have limits.

Students! Pursue education, acquire positions and remove the unrest that plagues society. There are many agitations around us. All of you should establish peace and security in society and stand out as examples —blessing you with this wish, I bring My long discourse to a close.

¹. Sri Krishna to Arjuna, *Bhagavad Gita* (11:12).

². Indian margosa tree, known for its bitter leaves and medicinal properties.

³. In the *Chandogya Upanishad*.

⁴. *Bhagavad Gita* (VII:10).