

7. GOD IS THE ONLY TRUE FRIEND

*The Supreme Self is the same as the Individual Self,
The Individual Self is also divine.
He who realises this unity,
Is truly enlightened.*

Embodiments of Love!

There is only one divine principle

Students! Human life is hard to obtain. One may ask: “How can one assert that Divinity is latent in the human being?” The *Gita* is the authority. It declares:

Mamatma Sarvabhutantaratma.

(I the Universal Spirit am present in all beings). The Lord’s declaration is the proof, if any is needed. Krishna says, “I am present in all beings.” It means that the Universal Spirit or the Lord is present in all beings as the Prime Motivator. Man alone

has the capacity to recognise the latency of the Divine within; other beings do not have this capability. That is the reason why human life is regarded as a precious gift to be used carefully.

Man is enveloped by five *kosas* or sheaths. They are: *annamaya kosa* (food sheath), *praanamaya kosa* (life sheath), *manomaya kosa* (mind sheath), *vijnanamaya kosha* (sheath of wisdom), and *anandamaya kosa* (sheath of Bliss). Whereas other beings can at best reach out to three *kosas*, man can easily go to the fourth and even beyond, if he makes the effort. This is what makes man so superior. It is through wisdom that man can perceive the underlying unity between the individual Self and the Universal Self. If this capability is not an expression of the Divinity within, then what else is it?

All beings are subject to *moha* or attachment but man is capable of breaking away and attaining *moksha* or liberation. This capacity for the transition from *moha* to *moksha* is once again an expression of the divine force within. Although divine capability finds greater expression in man than in other beings, Divinity is actually latent in all things in the Universe. It is this Omnipresence that provides a powerful undercurrent of unity to the otherwise apparent and bewildering diversity. What the eyes see is superficial; that which is True lies beneath.

Maya or delusion arises on account of the three *gunas* (intrinsic tendencies), namely, the *satva guna* (gentleness), the *rajo guna* (aggression), and the *tamo guna* (torpor). *Maya* leads to *moha* or attachment, which is of three kinds – *dhaneshana* (attachment

to wealth), *dhaareshana* (attachment to wife), and *putreshana* (attachment to one's progeny). One who transcends the three *gunas*, is totally free from both delusion as well as attachment. Clearly, therefore, if you want to be rid of attachment, you have to go beyond the three *gunas*. So long as you are in the grip of the *gunas*, you cannot escape *maya* and *moha*. The *Gita* says:

Acalam Carameva Ca.

God is both mobile and immobile; these two aspects of mobility and immobility are present in all living creatures. When a pot is immersed in water, there is water in the pot as well as outside the pot. In the same way, God is not only in you but also above you, below you and behind you. That is why the Vedas declare:

Antarbahisca Tatsarvam Vyapya Narayanassthitah.

The Lord is present within, without, and everywhere. When an iron rod is placed in the fire, it gets hot. The heat is everywhere; it is present in the rod as well as the fire. In the same way, the same God is present in man as well as in the whole world surrounding him. There are not two Gods or two divine principles in action. There is only one God and only one divine principle. That which is latent within, is seen as a reflection without. That is why Swami often says that the world is merely a reflection of the Inner Being. If there is no reality within, how can there be a reflection outside? How can one say the world is real and deny the Indweller? Reality is within, and it is seen as a reflection outside. In the same manner, action originates from within while reaction

comes from outside. Total Reality is a composite of everything within and everything outside. *Rishis* of yore grasped this truth and proclaimed it to the entire world. It is such teachings of truth that helped ordinary people of those days to rise to exalted levels. Ancient teachings are full of inner significance. They are not commonplace instructions relating to the phenomenal but keys to Inner Wisdom.

You must yearn for liberation

A long time ago, the population of the world was just one billion, while today it is five to six billion. The population has swelled but the desire for liberation has sharply declined. In ancient times, most people pined for liberation; the percentage was as high as seventy-five but today, not even twenty percent want liberation. Why? Because the emphasis is on the quest for worldly-knowledge. Such knowledge drives people toward worldly pursuits and a million ways of making money. In one manner or the other, all of today's education is aimed at making a living rather than life itself, and the fundamental purpose of human existence. How can education that caters to the stomach produce in the Heart a yearning for liberation? Modern education promotes only *mohapeksha* (craving for worldly things) instead of *mokshapeksha* (desire for liberation). In olden times, students controlled their desires and reduced their worldly wants, increasing instead the desire for liberation. What is the meaning of worldly desires? It means craving for the supposedly good things that are available in the external world, the sort of things that the birds and the beasts go after. Is it for seeking these that one goes through school and college? Does one have to work so hard to attain

these? Our ancients recognised the futility of such pursuits and instead directed their attention to more purposeful goals. Modern educational system has totally inverted the priorities. What our ancients shunned, has now become priority number one. Such is the perversion of today's education!

Gratitude to the guru

In those days, there was gratitude to those who showed the right path. Students never failed to prostrate before their *guru*, and they gave expression to their gratitude in many ways. Whatever the *guru* wanted was given unhesitatingly and with much love. The preceptors sacrificed much for their disciples, and, for their part, the disciples were not far behind either, in the matter of sacrifice. What about the students of today?

They are ready to injure those who feed them.

They will ridicule those who teach them.

And they will not hesitate to harm those who help them.

Such are the fall-outs of modern education, which is supposed to be so advanced. Students of olden days were humble and obedient to their *gurus*. The tribal boy Ekalavya provides the classic example.

Ekalavya adopted the celebrated Dronacharya as his *guru*, even though the latter refused to accept Ekalavya as his pupil. Ekalavya never received any instructions in archery from his adopted *guru*; yet, there was never any doubt in his mind that Drona was his *guru*. He became an archer par excellence through self effort.

One day, Drona took his favourite disciple Arjuna into the forest. They took a hunting dog along with them. On spotting a wild animal, the dog started barking. All of a sudden, Arjuna found five-six arrows coming from somewhere and piercing the mouth of the dog. The person who shot the arrows was none other than Ekalavya. Though he could not see the dog, guided by the barking sound, he shot the arrows one after the other that found the target. They both were stunned. They then started searching for the archer and soon located Ekalavya. Arjuna asked the tribal boy, “Who is your *guru*?” Ekalavya pointed to Drona and said, “He is my *guru*.” Drona angrily said, “I am not your *guru*. I never taught you anything.” Ekalavya replied, “Sir, that may be, but in my mind I adopted you as my *guru*. For me, there is none other. My respect and devotion for you have enabled me to acquire all skills, even though you personally never taught me. I have learnt it all from within.”

In those days, there were no books and all instructions were by word of mouth. Word was therefore considered very sacred. In Sanskrit, *Aksharam* means word but it also means Imperishable, a term used for God. Thus, Word is God!

Dronacharya was unhappy to see another archer whose skill was greater than that of his favourite student Arjuna. Wanting to ensure that Arjuna was number one and that there was none to excel him, Drona told Ekalavya, “If I am your *guru*, then what about my *gurudakshina* (fees paid to the teacher)?” Ekalavya replied, “Master, what is it that you want?” Without the slightest trace of magnanimity, Drona angrily demanded, “I want your right thumb

as my payment.” Drona knew that without the thumb, Ekalavya’s career as an archer would be finished; and automatically, Arjuna would move to the number one position. On hearing Drona’s demand, Ekalavya pulled out his knife, cut his thumb off without any hesitation whatsoever, and offered it as *gurudakshina*.

*Giving up the vital thumb,
He ceased to be an archer.
Disabling himself as a mark of respect,
He surrendered his very skills as a token of gratitude.*

Such was the spirit of gratitude amongst disciples in those days. For the sake of their *gurus*, they were ready to sacrifice anything, including their lives. Just compare this with what is happening to day! Both the teacher and the student are found wanting. The teacher stretches his hand out for money even before the instruction is complete. The student is regarded as a source of income rather than as a responsibility. In olden times, things were different. The *guru* not merely had affection for his disciples but actually looked upon them as his own sons. Drona, however, was an exception to this noble tradition, having most disgracefully betrayed the trust placed in him by Ekalavya who was not even formally enrolled with him. Would Drona have done such a thing to his son?

Yad bhavam tad bhavati.

As the action, so is the consequence. In due course, Drona had to pay for his cruelty. As the action, so is the reaction. No one can escape the inexorable law of reflection, reaction, and resound.

The ideal friend

Students! You should not be immersed in books all the time; you must be virtuous and also do service to your teachers in such a manner that would please them. In every human relationship, there should be balance and parity. At one time, the brothers Vali and Sugriva were inseparable; but enmity developed and they parted company. While Vali remained in his place, Sugriva hid himself in the mountains to avoid Vali's wrath. Sugriva was all the time wondering how he could overcome his brother, now his enemy. Vali was very strong and powerful and could be defeated only by one who was more powerful than him. Sugriva consulted his companion Hanuman for advice and the latter suggested that Sugriva should be patient; time would show the way.

One day, while Sugriva and Hanuman were wandering in the hills, they spotted two people in the distance. There was an extra-ordinary radiance about them. It appeared as if they had descended from the very Heavens. Sugriva asked Hanuman to investigate and ascertain who those two were. He said, "Find out if these two are Vali's agents who have come in disguise." Clearly, Sugriva's observation was a reflection of his inner fear; otherwise, how could he have made such a statement, considering that the strangers had a distinct divine aura about them? Hanuman replied, "To me these two look divine. Anyway, I shall go and investigate."

Coming down from the mountain, Hanuman approached the two effulgent strangers, who were none other than Rama and

Lakshmana. Rama introduced Himself and said, “We are the sons of Emperor Dasaratha, presently in the forest in exile. Recently someone abducted My wife Sita, and we are wandering about in search of her.”

A king should always speak the truth, and Rama did what a king ought to.

Hastasya bhusanam danam.
Kanthasya bhusanam satyam.

Charity is the ornament for the hand. Truth is the ideal necklace. Listening to sacred words is the jewel that should adorn the ear. What more ornaments do you need? Every word uttered must be true. He is mighty, who always adheres to truth.

Hanuman told Rama, “Lord, I shall take you both to my King Sugriva who lives over there. Kindly tell him Your problem, and he might be able to help.” Carrying Rama and Lakshmana on his shoulders, Hanuman leapt over the hills and landed where Sugriva was. Seeing the two brothers, Sugriva forgot all his problems and became ecstatic. Beaming, he said to Rama, “Lord, You must be tired. Kindly rest here for a while, and partake of these fruits. There is also some cold and refreshing water for You to drink; have some of that also please.” But Rama and Lakshmana were not interested either in rest or in food.

Sugriva sensed the power latent in Rama and was eager to befriend Him. Now what sort of a friend should one have? Not the one who feigns loyalty but betrays with cunningness; not the one who speaks sweetly but never matches words with action. He alone

is fit to be called a friend who swears by truth. True friendship implies one breath though there are two bodies involved. Sugriva wanted such a friend so that with his help he could overcome Vali.

Sugriva wondered: “Is Rama strong enough to overcome Vali?” He decided to check up Rama’s power and capability. On the following day, Sugriva took Rama to a huge fig tree and said, “Rama do you know what tree this is? It is a jungle tree that grows to a big size and is very strong. There are six trees in a row here. Once my brother Vali shot an arrow that pierced through not just one but two trees. I am on the lookout for someone who can excel that feat.” Sugriva then requested Rama to despatch an arrow and the latter obliged. Rama’s arrow went through not just two trees but all the six of them and flew beyond to a great distance. Sugriva immediately prostrated at the feet of Rama and declared, “You are the friend I have been looking for all along.” Who was this friend that Sugriva had found? He was the very Lord Himself! The friendship between Rama and Sugriva was formally solemnised with fire as the sacred witness. Sugriva then said, “Rama, from today I am Your servant while You are my master and preceptor. Please relieve me of my sufferings, give me courage, and lead me to victory over my brother.” Rama kept His promise to Sugriva and killed Vali. This story teaches that if you are looking for a friend to help you, then that friend must be stronger than your adversaries. In life, obstacles are the main adversaries, and the only friend who can help you across is God; He is the only True Friend.

Lack of virtues leads to doubts

Doubts readily spring to the mind of the worldly wise. They may be clever and intelligent where worldly matters are concerned but pretty dumb where real discrimination is required. Sugriva was one such person. In his heart he felt that Rama was divine; yet, he had to test Rama's skill in archery – there were doubts in his mind; the mind and the heart were not in harmony. Hanuman provides a striking contrast to Sugriva in such matters. From the moment he first set eyes on Rama, there was never even an iota of doubt that Rama was God Himself. It is the so-called educated ones who become plagued with all sorts of doubts. This is what is happening today. Man is totally preoccupied with the acquisition of worldly skills and worldly knowledge, completely ignoring basic values and the necessity for the cultivation of virtues.

*Modern education may make you clever,
But it would never help develop character.*

Education that does not foster virtues leads to [spiritual] blindness. Can you afford to be blind? No! Without virtues and the Grace of God, you cannot really achieve anything. Karna was rich, strong, and powerful, but he distanced himself from *dharma* and Krishna. What is the use of wealth and skills if you do not have the Grace of God?

*Slave he becomes,
Who does not have the support of God.*

This mighty Karna, who had many good qualities, did not submit himself to God. He refused to become a servant of Krishna. If

you fail to serve God, all the intelligence you might possess is of no value. In fact, the intelligence then gets misused. Since Karna spurned Krishna, he eventually fell in battle despite his strength and physical prowess. One must always strive to earn the protection of *dharma* and the Grace of God. You become strong only when you harmonise your activities with divinity. When the goal and God go together, there victory is assured.

Students! Boys and girls! It is not enough if you just immerse yourselves in text books. Study of these books and the acquisition of secular knowledge are no doubt required. However, all such knowledge is totally useless without the support and the backing of devotion to God. Devotion is the foundation. All forms of worldly and physical power are useless if they are not based on devotion for God.

If character is gone, everything is gone

The story of Ekalavya illustrates how sacred and pure were students in ancient times. Pure and divine feelings must radiate from every heart, which is possible only when virtues and character are present. All of you are aware of Prahlada. He was a student just like you, in fact much younger in age. What extraordinary character he possessed, even at that age! Thanks to this blessing, in later life he was able to achieve much success and victory. He could even vanquish Indra, the chief of the *devas* or demi-gods. Indra became depressed by his defeat and began exploring all possibilities for regaining his kingdom.

One day, the preceptor of the *devas* summoned Indra and said, “Prahlada is presently performing the sacred ritual called

Viswajit. On such occasions, gifts are given as charity. You must present yourself before Prahlada, and ask for his character as a gift. You will then be able to regain your kingdom.” Indra got the hint. Disguising himself as a *brahmin*, Indra went to the court of Prahlada. The latter was impressed with the *brahmin* and asked, “Sir, what is it that you would like to have?” Indra [posing as a *brahmin*] replied, “O King! I want very little. Just give me your character.” A surprised Prahlada said, “That I can easily give but you should really ask for something more substantial. I am ready to give you anything you want. Why then are you prepared to settle for something so little?” The cunning Indra replied, “For me, this small thing is enough. I do not want much.” Prahlada said, “As you wish.” Immediately, Prahlada’s character peeled off and merged in Indra. Prahlada did not seem to be bothered. A little later, another entity emerged from Prahlada and left him. Prahlada was surprised and asked, “Who are you?” The entity replied, “I represent your kingdom and opulence. Once character goes, kingdom and opulence have to do likewise; therefore, I am leaving you!” In this manner, Prahlada lost everything. This story teaches that once character is lost, everything is lost.

A crestfallen Prahlada now realised what had happened to him. He prayed intensely and said, “Lord, I do not care anymore for kingdom, wealth, and all the rest of what I lost. I just want my character back. That is enough.” It was thus that Prahlada came to realise the very important role that character played in life. In fact, character is three-fourths of one’s life. Prahlada prayed to the Lord for the restoration of his character. At this point, pleased with Prahlada’s willingness to part with even his character in

order to keep the word he had given, Indra returned the gift he had received. This story teaches how fundamental and important are values and character in life. Character is supreme. Behaviour is born of character; if your character is good, so would be your behaviour. The welfare of a country depends on the character of its citizens. Men and women of character alone bring prosperity to a nation.

Embodiments of Love! Give the utmost importance to the development of character. Apart from the books that you normally study, there is one big book that you definitely ought to read; that is the book called the World! All that you want to know and need to know are contained in this extraordinary book. Besides books, you also need a teacher. Who is the best and the greatest of all teachers? Your heart! Not the physical heart but the spiritual heart. You also need a friend. Who is the best possible friend you could ever have? God! [Loud applause.] Taking God as your friend, your heart as the teacher, and the world as the Great Book, acquire all the knowledge you wish to. You should master this *pusthaka* (book) using your *masthaka* (head)! Books printed on paper are not so important as this book composed and written by God Himself. It is available everywhere, to everyone, at all times, and is absolutely free. So, even as you pore over your regular textbooks, remember your *guru* the Heart; and make sure you always have your true Friend God near you!

Sarvada sarvakalesu sarvatra Daiva cintanam.

(Think of God at all times, and at all places.) God is in you, with you, above you, below you, around you; and He will always take

care of you. Do you know why? Because He is your best Friend [loud applause]! Your so-called worldly friends are always selfish and have their own axes to grind but God is not like that. He is totally free from desires and expects nothing. He only helps, supports, and protects. And in return He only wants your love. He has absolutely no desires. His heart is filled with love and compassion for His devotees. Is this treasure of selfless love available anywhere else [except with God]?

All that happens is only for your good

Students! Right from today, develop sacred feelings, serve your parents, respect elders, and adopt God as your friend. With God as your friend, you are sure to find fulfilment in life. Cheerfully accept all tests He may subject you to, remembering that they all are meant for your own good. No matter how difficult or painful the test, always repeat to yourself: “This is good for me, this is good for me.” You must have full faith that everything that God does is only for your good and welfare. You have a disease and you undergo surgery. The doctor cuts you with a sharp knife; he does so not out of hatred for you but because he wants to cure you. In the same way, understand that God too is curing you out of love for you; there is thus no room for grumbling or complaints.

Students! Be aware that man has within himself all the powers that one can think of. Krishna said:

Mamatma Sarvabhutantaratma.

I am present in all beings. You should be charged with the feeling that the Divine Spark is present everywhere and in all beings.

If you sincerely cultivate this feeling, you would, without fail, be able to have access to the Divine Power within you in full measure. With such a feeling, man can penetrate through all the five *kosas* or sheaths surrounding him. That is why it is said,

Jantunam nara janma durlabham.

Among all the living forms, the human form is the most precious. When he can have the company of the divine within, why should man seek bad company without? Why does he have to become a slave to others? It is to God that one must become a slave. Not just that.

*Seek to serve the servant of the Lord,
And have the desire to help His devotee.*

*Serve God in this fashion,
And the entire world would serve you.
But if a slave you become to desires,
Then a slave you shall be to the whole world.
Keep desires under control,
And the world would become your slave.*

The only desire you must have is the desire for God. Then God will protect you at all times and eventually Liberate you.

Sanctify the period of youth

Students! Yours is a sacred and golden age. Do not defile it. Make

good use of the golden opportunity and sanctify your life. Do not waste a single moment. The time lost may appear to be just a moment but in that fleeting moment you may lose everything! Suppose you are spooling thread into a bundle. You wrap the thread one round at a time. If you accidentally let the ball drop, it would roll down the floor and unwind itself to a considerable extent. Thus a single moment of carelessness may cost a lot. Hence, always be very careful and hold on to the golden opportunity before you; then alone would you be successful.

Embodiments of Love! Study well. By all means acquire all the secular knowledge you want to. But let it not stop just at that. Remember:

*Secular knowledge is for making a living,
While spiritual knowledge is for life!*

Worldly knowledge is certainly required because one has to live in this world. But spiritual knowledge is transcendental. While secular knowledge is useful for daily life, spiritual knowledge is for the life hereafter. You cannot postpone the acquisition of spiritual knowledge; you have to do it now! Secular knowledge will fill your belly but spiritual knowledge will fill your heart. One is 'left' and the other is 'right'. While marching, both the left and right steps are needed — you march: left, right, left, right..... When the time comes to go, the 'left' has to be left behind! You can take with you only the 'right' or spiritual knowledge. 'Left' is weak but 'right' is strong and also right! So, keep to the right! It also earns you the right to reach God! In marching through life no

doubt both the ‘left’ and the ‘right’ steps are needed but recognise their relative merits and utility. This is how normal life must be blended with spirituality.

Embodiments of Love! Always think of God, constantly chant His Name, and sing, whenever possible, His Glory through *bhajans*. Propagate to the entire world the greatness and the glory of *bhajans*.

At the conclusion of the discourse, Bhagavan sang two *bhajans*: “*Govinda Krishna Vittale ...*” and “*Vahe Guru ...*”.

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