

Prema Vahini

Stream of Love

1. Good character is spiritual power

More than all previous eras (*yugas*), the present one (the *Kali-yuga*) offers multifarious paths through which people can acquire discrimination (*viveka*). If it is education that is needed, there are many schools and institutions, and if it is wealth that one is after, there are various avenues by which, with effort, it can be honourably earned. In spite of this, however, we don't find any increase in human happiness or peace. In fact, there is much more misery than in previous ages!

What is the reason? The reason lies in human behaviour, in the way people live. Human life is undoubtedly the highest in evolution, and to give it meaning, spiritual endeavour, endeavour that is pure and holy, is essential. For this way of life, character is all important. Character makes life immortal; it survives even death. Some say that knowledge is power, but it is not true. Character is power. Even the acquisition of knowledge demands a good character. So, everyone must yearn to attain flawless character, without any trace of evil.

Note that Buddha, Jesus Christ, Sankaracharya, and Vivekananda, as well as great sages and saints and devotees of the Lord—all these are treasured in the memory of people even to this day. What quality made them all memorable for all time? I say that it is the character of each.

Without character, wealth, education, and social status are of no avail. Character is the fragrance of the flower; it gives value and worth. Poets, painters, artists, and scientists may be great, each in their own field, but without character, they can have no standing in society.

Doubts will certainly arise whether those who are now greeted with respect by society have the character that we consider essential to greatness. But I am speaking of a society and a character that cling to certain unchanging values. Ordinarily, society attaches varying importance to certain qualities from day to day, and fashions in character change with the vagaries of society. But the basic nature of a flawless character is eternal; it is the same, whatever the vicissitudes of society. In this sense, it is immortal, being associated with another immortal entity, the *Atma*.