

## Chapter VII. Forty-six Maxims of Conduct

**D**evotee: Greetings, Swami.

**Swami:** Oh, you have come, is it? You didn't come for Dasara!

**Devotee:** The number of devotees would be large, I thought, so I was afraid I would not be able to speak to you to my heart's content. Hence, I came now, a few days prior to Your birthday, so that with Your blessings I could realise the ideal that You teach and have both devotion (*bhakthi*) and spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) born in my heart, on the auspicious day of the celebration of Your advent.

**Swami:** Good! Very good intention, indeed! But do you mean to say that devotion and spiritual wisdom will not be born in you on days other than my birthday? Is that your idea?

**Devotee:** No, no! That is not so! You come to this world on an auspicious day at a holy moment with an auspicious form, right? My idea is that at least on such a day I could establish Your holy words in my heart and make it pure. The day is holy; the moment auspicious.

**Swami:** Fine! What doubt do you have today?

Devotee: I came today determined to hear and put into practice Your Holy words, Swami. As the saying goes, "Even if you go to Kasi (Benares), you have Saturn by your side!" So I didn't bring the demon of doubt with me today. Nor did that demon accompany me! It is all due to Your grace.

**Swami:** Very good! Understand that when doubts do not come of themselves and are not entertained by you, then indeed the mind is pure. When these two happen, it can be called one-pointedness. When you have none, why should I remind you of doubts? Then tell me, what shall I speak to you about?

**Devotee:** Swami, tell me how we should, generally, conduct ourselves. What qualities should we possess? Which type of subjects should we try to understand? To receive divine grace and attain Your Holy Presence, what acts should we perform? Please tell me the more important of these, the essential things, the chosen jewels.

**Swami:** Oh! It seems, Parvathi asked Iswara once, "It is difficult to retain in memory the thousand names of God; it takes a long time to learn them and repeat them; so, please tell me one single name that is the essence of all the thousand." Similarly, you perhaps find it difficult to grasp all that I write and explain, so you are asking me to tell you about the most important, right? But you see, Names have their essence, and the subjects you ask about are different. Though their objective and final result are one, the practices, the paths of activity, cannot be one. They cannot all be summarised in one word! Still, I'll give you now some selected jewels, maxims of conduct, that are very important. Collect and treasure them well. Experience them well, put them into practice, and derive joy therefrom. Wear these jewels and beautify yourself.

**Devotee:** Exactly what I wanted! How lucky I am!

**Swami:** Then listen carefully, I shall tell you.

1. Divine love (*prema*) should be considered as the very breath of life.
2. The love (*prema*) that is manifest in all things equally —believe that that love is Supreme *Atma* (*Param-atma*).

3. The one Supreme *Atma* is in everyone, in the form of divine love.
4. More than all other forms of love, one's first effort should be to fix one's love on the Lord.
5. Such love directed toward God is devotion (*bhakti*); the fundamental test is the acquisition of devotion.
6. Those who seek the bliss of the *Atma* should not run after the joys of sense objects.
7. Truth (*sathya*) must be treated as life-giving as breathing itself.
8. Just as a body that has no breath is useless and begins to rot and stink within a few minutes, so life without truth is useless and becomes the stinking abode of strife and grief.
9. Believe that there is nothing greater than truth, nothing more precious, sweeter, more lasting.
10. Truth is the all-protecting God. There is no mightier guardian than truth.
11. The Lord, who is the embodiment of truth (*sathya*), grants His sight (*darshan*) to those of truthful speech and loving heart.
12. Have undiminished kindness toward all beings and also the spirit of self-sacrifice.
13. You must possess control of the senses, an unruffled character, and non-attachment.
14. Be always on the alert against the four sins that the tongue is prone to commit: (1) speaking falsehood, (2) speaking ill of others, (3) back-biting, and (4) talking too much. It is best to attempt to control these tendencies.
15. Try to prevent the five sins that the body commits: killing, adultery, theft, drinking intoxicants, and the eating of flesh. It is a great help for the highest life if these are kept as far away as possible.
16. Be always vigilant, without a moment's carelessness, against the eight sins that the mind perpetrates: craving (*kama*), anger (*krodha*), greed (*lobha*), attachment (*moha*), impatience, hatred, egotism, and pride. One's primary duty is to keep these things at a safe distance from oneself.
17. The mind speeds fast, pursuing wrong actions. Without letting it hurry like that, remember the name of the Lord at that time or attempt to do some good deed or other. Those who do thus will certainly become fit for the Lord's grace.
18. First give up the evil tendency to feel impatient at the prosperity of others and the desire to harm them. Be happy that others are happy. Sympathise with those who are in adversity and wish for their prosperity. That is the means of cultivating the love for God.
19. Patience is all the strength one needs.
20. Those anxious to live in joy must always be doing good.
21. It is easy to conquer anger through love, attachment through reasoning, falsehood through truth, bad through good, and greed through charity.
22. No reply should be given to the words of the wicked. For your own good, be at a great distance from them. Break off all relations with such people.
23. Seek the company of good men, even at the sacrifice of your honour and life. Pray to God to bless you with the discrimination needed to distinguish between the good men and the bad. You must also endeavour

to discriminate, using the intellect given to you.

24. Those who conquer states and earn fame in the world are hailed as heroes, no doubt, but those who have conquered the senses are heroes who must be acclaimed as the conquerors of the Universal.
25. Whatever acts a good or bad person may do, the fruits thereof follow them and will never stop pursuing them.
26. Greed yields only sorrow; contentment is best. There is no happiness greater than contentment.
27. The mischief-mongering tendency should be plucked out by the roots and thrown off. If allowed to exist, it will undermine life itself.
28. Bear both loss and grief with fortitude; try to find plans to achieve joy and gain.
29. When you are invaded by anger, practice silence or remember the name of the Lord. Do not remind yourself of things that will inflame the anger more. That will do incalculable harm.
30. From this moment, avoid all bad habits. Do not delay or postpone. They do not contribute the slightest joy.
31. Try, as far as possible within your means, to satisfy the needs of the poor, who are really God as poverty. Share with them whatever food you have and make them happy at least at that moment.
32. Whatever you feel should not be done to you by others, avoid doing such to others.
33. For faults and sins committed in ignorance, repent sincerely and try not to repeat them. Pray to God to bless you with the strength and courage needed to stick to the right path.
34. Don't allow anything to come near you that will destroy your eagerness and enthusiasm for God. Want of eagerness will cause the decay of the strength of people.
35. Don't yield to cowardice; don't give up bliss (*ananda*).
36. Don't get swelled up when people praise you; don't feel dejected when people blame you.
37. If anyone among your friends hates another and starts a quarrel, don't attempt to inflame them more and make them hate each other more; instead, try, with love and sympathy, to restore their former friendship.
38. Instead of searching for others' faults, search for your own, uproot them, and throw them off. It is enough if you search and discover one fault of yours—that is better than discovering tens of hundreds of faults in others.
39. Even if you can't or won't do any good deed, don't conceive or carry out any bad deed.
40. Whatever people may say about the faults that you know are not in you, don't feel for it. As for the faults that are in you, try to correct them yourself, even before others point them out to you. Don't harbour anger or bitterness against people who point out your faults; don't retort, pointing out their faults, but show your gratitude to them. Trying to discover their faults is a greater mistake on your part. It is good for you to know your faults; it is no good for you to know others' faults.
41. Whenever you get a little leisure, don't spend it in talking about all and sundry, but utilise it in meditating on God or in doing service to others.

42. The Lord is understood only by the devotee; the devotee is understood only by the Lord. Others cannot understand them. So don't discuss matters relating to the Lord with those who have no devotion. Such discussion will diminish your devotion.
43. If anyone speaks to you on any subject, having understood it wrongly, don't think of other wrong notions that will support that stand but grasp only the good and the sweet in what was said. True meaning is to be appreciated as desirable, not wrong meaning or many meanings, which give no meaning at all and cause only the hampering of bliss (*ananda*).
44. If you desire to cultivate one-pointedness, don't, when in a crowd or bazaar, scatter your vision to the four corners and on everything, but see only the road in front of you, just enough to avoid accidents to yourself. One-pointedness will become firmer if you move about without taking your attention off the road, if you avoiding dangers, and if you don't cast your eyes on others' forms.
45. Give up all doubts regarding the *guru* and God. If your worldly desires don't get fulfilled, don't blame it on your devotion, for there is no relationship between such desires and devotion to God. These worldly desires have to be given up some day; feelings of devotion (*bhakti*) have to be acquired some day. Be firmly convinced of this.
46. If your meditation (*dhyana*) or soft prayer (*japa*) doesn't progress properly or if the desires you have entertained don't come to fruition, don't get dispirited with God. It will dispirit you even more and you will lose the peace, however small or big, that you might have earned. During meditation and soft prayer, you should not be dispirited, desperate, or discouraged. When such feelings come, take it that it is the fault of your spiritual exercises and endeavour to do them correctly.

You can easily attain the divine principle only when you automatically behave and act in this manner and along these lines, in your daily conduct and in all actions. Therefore, hold on to these maxims firmly. Chew and digest these spoken sweets, which have been distributed on the birthday festival of your Swami, and be happy! Have you understood?

**Devotee:** Your words are like divine nectar, Swami. Yes! Divine nectar! In all these ordinary dealings of life, people does not know the road; they follow the wrong track; and there are no books to tell them the means of a happy journey. For all such strugglers like me, what you have said is the very breath! We are indeed blessed! Bless me, that these words get imprinted on my heart and are realised in practice every day. There is no good in simply listening to or reading them. It is only when Your grace accompanies them that we get strength. I shall take leave, Swami!

**Swami:** All right! Go and come for the birthday festival. There are just seven days more, right? Today is the 16th and the Birthday is on the 23rd, so there are seven days left. Till that time, let this sweetness fill and overflow your heart!