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23. Morals make the man and the Nation

THE DIVINE is present in the mountains, in all high places, and in the noble thoughts that inspire human beings. The Divine is present in forests, in the peace that prevails in quiet streets, in the cool breeze that blows and the pure air that you breathe. In every village where there is a sacred atmosphere and harmony prevails among the people, the Divine is present. In the cities, God is present in the beautiful edifices, in the amenities enjoyed by the citizens and in the enlightened lives led by the people. The omnipresence of the Divine was proclaimed by Mallamma in Karnataka in inspiring verses. She declared in one song: "The lotus lends beauty to the pond. Houses lend charm to villages. The waves confer beauty on the ocean. The moon beautifies the sky." Wherever there is beauty, the Divine is present. That is why the Upanishad described the Divine as *"Sathyam* (Truth), *Sivam* (Auspicious) and *Sundaram* (Beauty)." For human beings, it is humanness that confers beauty on them.

The most essential requisite in any society is *Maanavathvam* (humanness); whatever one's scholarship or scientific knowledge or position, he has to develop human qualities. To the extent these qualities are developed, to that extent the society, the state and the nation will progress. Where human qualities are absent the society ceases to be civilised. And the nation itself forfeits its place of honour.

Morality and integrity are two abodes of Divine

It is only morality and integrity which entitle human beings to be respected. Students have to cherish human qualities. Only by adhering to the spiritual path can human qualities be promoted. They will not flourish in other conditions. A seed will sprout and grow into a plant only if you sow it in proper soil and water it. It will not grow in a tin can; it will only rot.

Morality and integrity can grow only from the human mind. Morality is the basis for all human qualities. Good behaviour is based on one's 'morals. Morality elevates man to the highest stage. Bharat has been the teacher for all nations in upholding the greatness of morality based on spirituality. Morality and integrity are the true and enduring abodes of the Divine. What the nation needs today is morality. Morality must be regarded as a fundamental requisite at all places at all times. A great General said that whether in war or in any difficult situation, one should not give up moral principles. Gladstone, who was Prime Minister during Queen Victoria's reign, always adhered to morality in all situations. The people had more regard for him than even for the Queen.

Morality can be upheld only through control of the senses. Only the person who has self-control is competent to exercise authority over others. How can one who is too weak to control himself be able to control others? There must be unity in word and deed. Only then can one achieve great things.

World needs men who have sense-control

Today there is little accord between words and actions. Truth prevails when words are matched by deeds. The mind is in harmony when words and actions are in unison. Students should bear in mind the nation's honour, well-being and progress and lead exemplary lives. Students today have no conception of sense-control. In *Vedantic* parlance, control of the senses is termed *Samyama. Samyama* is a quality which is unique for man. By giving a free rein to the senses and leading a libertine's life, man is forfeiting his divinity. The Sanskrit term for sense-control is *Dama.* One

who has cultivated *Dama* is called a *Daanta.* The world needs today men who have control over their senses and not men who preach metaphysics. *All Vedanta* is now confined to words. Cleverness in speech and ostentation in behaviour have increased, while good conduct has been on the decline, with the result that men have lost the joy of living.

Every student must be become a *Daanta* (one who has control over his senses). Students have developed ostentatious habits even before embarking on their studies. They have no conception of humility. They are not aware of how they should conduct themselves before elders. For this they are not to blame. Their parents and teachers have not instilled and encouraged in them these qualities.

Students today are interested in small talk and trivial gossip. They treat spirituality with levity It is because these tendencies are continually growing that students have no idea of what is proper education. They should not regard education as only a means to earning a living. They should look upon education as the basis for the good life.

Education is not for acquiring wealth

It is doubtless necessary to seek a job for one's livelihood. But they should not regard jobs and earning of money as the be-all and end-all of life. Even in a job, one should try to uphold morality and integrity' and set an example to others. Looking at the world today, it would seem that education is for the purpose of practising fraud on the people, making money through bribes and other immoral and unrighteous ways without regard for truth. Certainly this is not the purpose of education. Its aim is the acquisition of knowledge. The true values of education have been lost owing to excessive concern for making money There is nothing wrong with money or education. Every thing depends on how it is acquired or utilised.

Students! You have to exhale as much as you breathe in. This is inescapable. If you do not exhale, the lungs will burst. Likewise, while you have to acquire education and earn wealth, you must utilise both in a righteous way. The education you have received must be given back to society for promoting public well-being. Equally what is earned should be given back to society. Unless this is done, your education and wealth are utterly worthless. What has been got from the community should be given back to the community. That is true *seva* (service). This kind of sacrificing spirit is rare among students. They are interested in acquiring more and more. Life is reduced to a one-way traffic. This is not proper. What is earned should be utilised properly and shared with others. This is the way to ennoble life.

In swimming, you have to push the water back so that you may move forward. Likewise, renouncing material things is the way to spiritual progress. But, what you have to renounce is not wealth alone. You have to get rid of all your bad qualities. That alone is true sacrifice. Giving up hearth and home is not a big sacrifice. It is the giving up of all vices that is true renunciation. That alone can result in the blossoming of the human personality.

Education is foundation for life

Students! For a man to behave like a human being is itself a great task. Nothing is so degrading as for a man to behave like an animal. Man is being battered today by the six notorious enemies' lust, anger, infatuation, greed, pride and envy. When all actions are dedicated to God, the Divine will protect you always.

It was in this spirit of complete dedication that the poet Pothana began the writing of his *Bhagavatham* (in Telugu). The *Bhagavatham* deals with the union of *Paramatma* (the Super Spirit) and *the Jivatma* (the individual spirit). Beginning with *Bhakti* (devotion to God), one gradually *acquires Jnana* (the Supreme Wisdom) and reaches the stage of *Vairagya* (complete detachment). The Truth is discovered only through detachment. And the Truth leads to *Mukti* (liberation).

The educational process is the foundation for life. Students are described as *Brahmacharis.* On the foundation of the life of a *Brahmachari* the walls of *Grihastha* (family life) are raised. Over the walls, there is the roof of *Vaanaprastha* (the life of a renunciant). Unless the foundation is well and firmly laid, the entire edifice will collapse. Hence, students (who are in the *Brahmachari* stage) must cultivate good qualities which will serve as protective shields in life. Without such qualities there will be no peace in life.

Give a back seat to the ego

People should realise that they are born in society, grow in society and live in society. Today most people are content to think only about themselves and their families and are indifferent to their obligations to society. As a result, they lose peace and happiness. Even devotees are more concerned about their personal interests and give secondary place to God. Consequently they are unable to experience real bliss. They lead purposeless and meaningless lives.

The Kauravas are an example of persons who sought worldly gains and power, forgetting God. Although they had immense wealth, what happened to them in the end? They had many valiant heros and preceptors fighting on their side. But all their material resources, their intellectual abilities and their armed might were of no avail.

The Pandavas relied on the strength of the Divine and the power of righteousness. The Bhagavad Gita has clearly explained that the Divine helps those who adhere to *Dharma.* The Pandavas relied on God for everything. Hence they were crowned with success. No doubt the Pandavas had to encounter many difficulties. But these did not overwhelm them. The Pandavas placed God first, the world next and the "I" last. Hence they were successful. The Kauravas placed "I" (the ego) first, the world next and God last. Hence, they lost everything! *Students!* Give a back seat to the ego. Our history is full of instances of persons who set an example in sacrificing the ego.

Humility is the insignia of true education

It may be natural for warm-blooded youth to be filled with egoistic pride. Students! Regard humility and discipline as the insignia of true education. There is a well known Telugu saying: “Education confers humility. Through humility one acquires competence. Competence gives the capacity to earn wealth. Through wealth God will be realised." You can see how humility leads you to God. If out of egoistic pride, you are indifferent to the Divine and *Dharma,* you will not have these sacred thoughts. Make the best use of the body, the time and the opportunities given to you. Study well and make use of your knowledge for the benefit of society. There is no value in the mere acquisition if degrees. Only arrogance grows with the increase in academic knowledge. There is a corresponding decline in your spiritual potential. If spirituality grows, egoism will decline. It is because men have forgotten their Divine heritage that they behave worse than wild beasts.

Material wealth is not the summum bonum of life. Power, pelf and position have no permanence. Egoism is man's worst enemy. It has no real foundation. It is because of this foolish pride that man is not realising his true identity.

There should be change within

Despite all the religious practices that many are wont to adopt, there is little change in their mental attitudes. Changes in external behaviour have little meaning. It is the mind that must change. Altering the apparel means nothing, Your *gunas* (qualities) must change. Students will be the leaders of tomorrow. If you reform yourselves, the nation can be changed. The future of the country depends on you. If you adhere to morality and integrity, the country will become an ideal to the world.

Bharat has been known from the earliest times for its glorious culture. You must all strive to restore Bharat's greatness as the cultural and spiritual leader of humanity. Bharat gave to the world the supreme message of its Upanishads and epics by its own example of harmonious and righteous living. Because these sacred ways of life have been neglected today, no one is able to recognise the greatness of Indian culture.

Students! Bear in mind three things: Bharatiyas have always been votaries of truth and righteousness. Justice has been their watchword. Students must ceaselessly endeavour to adhere to Truth, Righteousness, Morality and Integrity. Live up to the *Vedic* injunction: “Speak the Truth. Follow *Dharma."*

Try to put into practice the teachings you have learnt during these fifteen days and thereby make your lives meaningful. You must always love your Motherland. There is nothing wrong in anyone loving his country. But he should not have any antipathy towards any other country. "In the sacred land of Bharat, tolerance has been the most precious treasure. Of all forms of spiritual discipline, the most difficult penance is adherence to Truth and Right Conduct." This has been the basic credo of the sacred land of Bharat. Forgetting this blessed heritage, Bharatiyas are going after exotic practices and ways of living. *Students!* You have a supreme duty to protect and nourish the culture of Bharat. Pray for the welfare of all nations and people. Have a wide all-embracing vision. Give up all narrow ideas.

Above all, whatever anyone may say or do, you should not give up your devotion to God. Without the love of God, this cosmos is an empty void. Love is God, God is Love. Develop this Divine Love. Cherish it in your hearts at all times and in all situations. Do not give it up, whatever troubles or difficulties you may be faced with. That Love will be with you, in you and beside you and protect you.

Don't blame God if difficulties confront you. Regard even those difficulties as gifts from God intended for your good. Life is a succession of good and bad. If you take in your stride these ups and downs of life with firm faith in God, the Divine will take good care of you. Always remember the Lord's name.

Discourse at the Summer Course in Brindavan on 2-6-1990.