

*DEAR SOULS,
BECOME HUMANS FIRST !*

SWAMI BHoomANANDA TIRTHA

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Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha



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Preface

‘From manliness to Godliness’ is the usual call reaching us from all sides, as we try to walk along the path of saadhana.

And yet here comes a Sage, with a message breathtakingly fresh and profound, exhorting us to become human first before trying to become divine. Indeed, it is in a full and free human-hood alone, he says, that the climax and perfection of a true spiritual endeavour best expressed.

Religion or spirituality is born, not out of divine realms, but from the everyday world of man. As such, it has to be effective not only in the temples and puja-rooms but in the din and bustle of the market-place as well. Religion, in reality does not consist of all the usual rituals and worship that is done, either to seek boons from the All-mighty God or to appease his wrath. It has a much more human, and vital, purpose – that of understanding and then working upon the basic aspiration and urges of man, thereby leading him on towards progressively higher levels of lovingness, refinement, wisdom, and ultimately fulfillment. How all this can come about is indicated in the following pages.

‘Dear Souls, become Humans First’ is the initial volume of a series to follow, consisting of chosen articles of

abiding worth and value from the pages of 'Vicharasetu' – the English monthly brought out by Swamiji since last two decades from his **Narayanashrama Tapovanam** in Trichur, Kerala.

May these words of inspiration and supreme wisdom, flowing from the pen of an illumined Knower himself, spread far and wide, blessing, comforting and guiding as many seekers of Truth as possible.

Vijaya Dashami
12. 10.86

Brahma Vidya Centre
New Delhi

Purpose of Religion

What is the real value and purpose of religion or philosophy? Apart from its seemingly divine purpose, has it any human purpose to serve for the humans in their life and activity? Dear souls, a thought and reflection like this alone would prove practical and beneficial for your saadhana.

Where I go, devotees and seekers come to me with questions, doubts, and problems. In rare instances, the questions are philosophical in nature. Some are designed to exhibit the questioners own knowledge and skill. Some aim to eke out information on the subtle points of philosophy. All of them are equally welcome to me. I object to neither the question nor the questioners, but I do want to make it known to one and all that the vital purpose, for which religion or philosophy and the association with one like me are resorted to, should not be missed.

Religion and philosophy, Vedanta and spirituality, are not just an intellectual pursuit. If they were just that, then they would have lived within the four walls of a College or a University, vested with the teachers and professors. They would not have produced saints, sages,

and seers, making them overflow with love, wisdom and truth, by the sublime and inevitable effects of which they renounced their homes and relatives and became open lovers and benefactors of the entire mankind. There is something much more deep and sublime in religion and spirituality that one has to look for and reach at.

Vedantic wisdom is not a pastime. It is not a fleeting mirth or merriment. The ideas of true religion and spiritual life are far different, superior. Spiritual effort and saadhana are to make man a better man, both at home and at the work spot, within the community as also in the world around. Its benefits should manifest in the kitchen and in the dining room, in the temples as well as churches, in dealings with friends as well as with foes, in short in every action. No sphere of activity can be precluded from the orbit of true spiritual life. If you divide the human life into two compartments like material and spiritual you will be a Vedantic criminal. You are surely heading for a punishment, which your mind and heart will impose on you sooner or later.

Religion started from man, not from God. It is for man, not for God. It has therefore to end with man. For that it must conform to the practical needs of man's own life here and succeed in fulfilling his intrinsic aspirations and urges, whatever they are.

Everything has a connection with man's body or mind will therefore come up to be embraced by spiritual wisdom and comforted by it. I for one am here to speak of that religious or spiritual life, which will first of all accept man at his level with all his plus and minus qualities and then will proceed to handle and harness him for his own good, ensuring for him both prosperity and peace.

Prosperity, or *abhyudaya*, is a dire need for running your life upon earth. No one can deny it. Without money and resources, you cannot live at all. The efforts at economic welfare too come under religion. So too the efforts at social reformation. Never think that these are anti-religious or anti-philosophical. The religious and spiritual people may not normally talk about them, simply because the society does not allow these subjects to come under their purview.

Religion aims to make man a full man, a woman a full woman. Its aim is not to make one deficient, poor or weak in any walk of life whatsoever. Has this fact been understood at all by the majority of religionists and seekers?

Detachment as Bad as Attachment

I find religion is most misunderstood and mis-presented. There is, I hear, the cry of detachment everywhere, spoken of as the first means in the matter of seeking God and getting hold of Him. What do the people mean by

detachment or *Vairagya*? They have in their mind something like disgust for or separation from the worldly ties and obligations.

Attachment, every one says, is bad and ignoble. Side by side, they also picture detachment as the remedy for it. I am sorry that people are misled by both these words. They work against attachment and for detachment without realizing what these concepts really denote.

I agree attachment is bad. But equally bad, I should say, is detachment. One is pregnant with the guilt of over-taking to the things of the world. The other is tainted by the vice of hating the world, the people and things in it. Are not both woeful?

Need for Right Understanding

True human life is one given to wisdom, right understanding. In right understanding, there is no scope for either an excess or shortage. Moderation is its ideal. You should have everything necessary for your life, but only adequately, and to the extent you need it. Understanding is the solution for all the ills, for every kind of dejection and dismay.

As Yogavaasishta puts it:

शून्यमाकीर्णतामेति मृत्युरप्युत्सवायते ।

आपत्संपदिवाभाति विद्वज्जनसमागमे ॥

śūnyamākīrṇatāmeti mṛtyurapyutsavāyate |
āpatsaṃpadivābhāti vidvajjanasamāgame ||

Yogavaasishtha Ramayana (2.16.3)

The arrival of the Wise and the benefit of their association is like the rising of the full moon, immensely cooling and comforting. It relieves the affected and makes them illumined and peaceful.

On the arrival of the wise, broken hearts become full and fervent; the scene of bereavement puts on a note of felicity; an hour of danger shines as a sure event of blessing. All this happens, neither by the power of magic, nor the descent here from the heavens above. It happens by the touch of viveka in the hands of the wise.

This is an assurance full of nectarine meaning for the whole of mankind.

The incidents in the world, during the course of one's life, present a gloomy picture, not because either they are wrong, or their cause, the Creator, is angry, but because your understanding is shallow. The looker and his look are the blessed or the cursed. None else.

I have found this assurance coming true during the short life of mine and in the course of my movements with devotees and seekers. Many, I have found, shed tears but for nothing, when enquired into. Many sat blaming themselves for their plight, but for no reasons when

deeply thought. The shedding eyes have shone, the gloomy face has beamed, when the right wisdom and the deeper insight are imparted. I have seen this happen.

It implies a lot when the wise tell us of these benign truths. Our era is marked for its wisdom and strength of reason. But alas! when it comes to quenching the mind's thirst for peace and joy, we are worse than even stones and plants! Why should this be so? Can we not change this plight? If you ask me, we can and we should.

If you gain right understanding, you will begin to accept everything as it is or as it comes. The sense of contempt and revolt will vanish for you.

What is there to be hated? If you hate any one, or anything, in that very process, you are hating the Creator himself. Is not all created by Him? Can you report of anything in the world, which is not evolved out of His being or by His laws? Then, before you decide to hate, think deep and well.

Samatva is a word quite known to you. It means equalness of vision and disposition. This should be your ideal in all spheres, at all times. Krishna has said that Samatva is the means as well as the end of the entire yoga or spiritual pursuit.

Aim, therefore, at neither attachment nor detachment. Instead try to develop right understanding, a sure sense of wise acceptance of everything around you. In the

absence of acceptance, what will prevail is a clear-conflict, disharmony. That, by its very nature is painful, hard to bear.

I will say, learn, if at all, to love everything from the core of your heart. Be genuine. Do not give room for duplicity in your mind. Be not complacent. Do not fall a prey to pride or possessiveness. Never be given to deception on any score. Do not carry reservations unnecessarily with you.

Become Open and Free

Any reservation is a load, aching and uncomfortable. Tension is its sure outcome, sooner or later. Learn to confide heartily in your dear and near ones. The children have to confide in their parents. The married must confide between themselves. Parents must speak confidentially to their children. Friends must learn to rely upon each other. If anywhere anyone lacks a suitable source, then he should turn to God. Very soon he is sure to find a Great Soul, in whom he will find the fulfillment of his needs.

Confiding is a must for the human heart. Without confiding, community life is not only impossible, it is futile too. Do not remain distant with your family members. Heartiness is true humanness. Anything else is brutal. Having had a human birth, preserving or pretending to preserve it externally, how dare you carry a brutal inside? Is it not incongruous? It will only defeat

your human purpose, landing you in a pool of discontent and dismay.

Right sharing of one's mind with those with whom it should be shared will save a number of tragedies and misfortunes. Right understanding and nobility, when cultivated and preserved, will avert a number of wrongs.

An Illustration

See how the ignorant life works its own doom, without the benefit of clear thinking and sound counsel.

A boy and girl pick up premature affinity. They do not care to think rightly and in time. Very soon the affair develops into a strong attachment. It grows into passion, and by then alas, it has become uncontrollable. It leads both to misbehaviour, making them lose all sense of proportion. Impelled by their base urges, they even cavil at their own parents, who brought them up until then, enabling them to love and be loved. At one stroke, all the past and present are set aside and forgotten.

What a contrast, incongruity, incoherence!

It is strange that the same couple, after they get married and become parents themselves, begin to disagree and quarrel with each other. I should say it is natural. Until they married, both had one ideal, dear but distant. That made them pool their efforts and work for its realization.

Now the story is different. The ideal is no more there; it is already accomplished. What persist now, in its place, are a host of problems, challenges, needs and wants. What is there within them, the might and benediction of which would make them rise up to the occasion and preserve their harmony and peace? This becomes too big a question.

It is here that many fall and fall short in various ways. This is how the good and noble life gets tarnished and in the end goes waste. It is this, or a parallel story, that I hear everywhere.

I am first humanist, then alone anything else. Even Godness is truly a need of the human. The human knows only of the humanist God, not the brutalist one.

The religion or Vedanta I know and wish to tell you is one, by the grace of which, man must be able to avoid this woeful fate of his. He must be blessed with something far nobler and pleasant. Can it be achieved is the question. My answer is a clear yes. It can be. But will it be, in fact? For, it depends upon whether you need the blessing and in what way and how dearly? You have to first work at right understanding. Here again Vasishtha's words come to my mind:

उत्पन्नपश्चात्तापस्य बुद्धिर्भवति यादृशी ।
तादृशी यदि चेत्पूर्वं कस्य न स्यात् महोदयः ॥

utpannapaścāttāpasya buddhirbhavati yādṛśī |
tādṛśī yadi cetpūrvam kasya na syāt mahodayah ||
Yogavaasishtha Ramayana

Who indeed in this world will not have magnificent enlightenment if only his intellect is prepared to reason, right beforehand, in the same way in which it will when it repents after indulging in a wrong act?

True Knowledge Valuable Indeed

Knowledge is a valuable possession. As sage Bhartrihari has said, it is the best friend, the sure protector, the infallible guide and graceful confidant. No one should spare any efforts to improve his sense of understanding. Without healthy knowledge, life is boring and painful.

Look, therefore, at your lives with a new out-look, with a greater hope, a far deeper insight. A good deal depends upon how and when you make use of your intellect.

Try to improve your wisdom as early in life as possible. The improvement has to be wholesome, not partial, for then alone it will give you peace of mind and joy.

Normally people are governed solely by their emotions. But it is not correct. If the mind is allowed to do

whatever it likes, your plight is sure to be tragic. Do not fail, therefore, to recognize the role of the intellect. The intellect alone has power to wield over the mind and its desultoriness and harmful tendencies.

A Challenge for Householders.

I am one who always speaks for householders. The householder's life gives them the best of scope of **maturing** (this is a significant word, which denotes the gradual ripening and the ultimate attenuation or extinction) their unwelcome passions and prejudices.

You may have a wife, or a husband, not all the traits of whom good sense can approve. But the fact remains that the partner is yours. The story may be quite the same with the children too. They may be largely disobedient. Many of their traits will require correction and improvement. Yet, you have to live with all, preserving peace and harmony for yourself and for others as well.

Altogether, it becomes a great challenge. You have to accept it squarely and make your success. Herein lies the beauty and tussle of life.

Likes and dislikes, passions and prejudices, are a part of human nature. Every one is bound to have them in a greater or smaller measure. You will have your own chosen prejudices. While living with the others in the household, you have to inevitably mature them. It becomes almost a permanent, life-long effort.

But one need not fear or grumble. Become a lover of wisdom. Try to improve your understanding, regarding it as a distinct pursuit and saadhana. Think about passions and prejudices deeply. Try to examine them in a serious manner. You will find they are only superficial. When you go into them deeply, they will disappear into naught, giving rise to a pleasant and unique homogeneity. You will be able to find an unfailing treasure of peace within yourself. But you must be enquiring and seeking, probing and examining.

It is a subjective examination, no doubt. The life in the household, the dealings with your near and dear ones compel you to do this kind of examination, if only you have the readiness and will for it.

The householder-life is a wholesome one, meant to process the *jeeva* (human soul) and perfect it gradually. But whenever I ask the householders who come to me: "Are you happy with your wife, your husband?", often I miss a 'yes' answer. Some try to give a forced 'yes', but only to be followed immediately by more than one 'buts' and 'yets'.

Obviously, there is a lot of hypocrisy and foul-play. Why should it be so? Why should the sweet and gentle household be defiled in this manner? Is not man born in the household, bred and brought up there? The home, his source of origin, is a very sacred place. It has to do everything with his heart and mind, not merely with the

body. The life led there must be a very sublime one. But lo, what do we find?

What is the reason for this degeneration? Wherein lies the wrong?

In any matter, one must first have a right understanding. But this is what lacks deplorably. To most people, the sacred sphere of **human relations** is utterly blocked. There is a lot in it, to be studied and known by one and all. Normally, in the course of life, each one is expected to make his study and improve his wisdom to see that his as well as the others' lives are made peaceful.

Human beings are **human**, no doubt. You cannot treat them as items of merchandise, even though, they may be your own wife, husband or children. Each one is animated by a dynamic Spirit, called '**life**', which gives rise to several natural wants and ambitions. Unless these wants and ambitions are respected and attended to, you cannot hope to contribute peace and joy to another. This human sphere of knowledge and experience is quite unique and distinct from all the others. Your qualifications and experience in other walks of life will not work here. You have to get specially illumined in this sphere, by doing *vicara* and introspection.

Even the worst of situations you face in the hands of your own people in the household, you must be able to tackle and turn to the best. No failure can be allowed for

it will disturb your own peace, besides that of the others. Alas, how many are aware of this sublime truth!

Why should the households descend to the level of breeding stealth and corruption? What prevents the married people from exchanging and expressing what is in their hearts and minds, with full love, regard and affection for each other?

Family is the place where its members must express and share all their sentiments freely and lavishly. Only then will it become a healthy household. The very object of a house is to afford place of living where the inmates can have their freedom and choice.

In the matter of a joint and sharing life, parents must set an example for their children. Only when the parents are frank and affectionate to each other, the children born to them will make a better generation and society.

We find many women who say, “I still do not know what is in my husband’s mind. I do not dare approach him with confidence and tell him what is in my mind”. What is this plight? Many such husbands are devotees who chant Names and spend on religious charities. They wear all marks of piety. They tell beads regularly.

What is religion in truth?

True religion begins from sincerity and humility. It progresses through all good qualities and virtues of the

mind and heart. Gradually it enters the sphere of right understanding which reaches its culmination by gaining full wisdom and realization of the Truth.

You will always find that religious teachings warn us against hypocrisy and stealth. If hypocrisy and stealth are practised by one with one's partner and relatives, what can you say of one's devotion and religious faith?

A virtue of a quality is so only when it lives with you for all times. You cannot say that the life in the household is distinct from the rest and so the virtues of religious life need not be there. Personality is always one. Its features and virtues will therefore have to be uniform. The whole of your life must be a consistent march towards your religious goal. I don't want you to set any separate time, if you do not have it, for your devotion and piety. Gain the merit of piety through your hourly thoughts, deeds and behaviour. In this the life and movements in your house have a great part to play.

In the growth of the young ones, the unreserved love and affection displayed by the parents have a lot to do. Besides contributing to the growth of the children, they also soften the hearts and minds of the elders. I know of an instance where a father was a tyrant to his children. He had no mood any time to show affection to them. He believed in the old theory of bossing and rebuking.

The children were good. Quite to his expectations, they grew up well and became prosperous and successful.

The father was inwardly happy to see his children become exemplary models for many. But the story did not end there. Age fell upon the father and the time for leaving his body was fast approaching.

Now arose a deep, invisible tussle in the heart and mind. His innocent nature began to express itself. Those very children whom he chastised and frowned upon, hissing and biting his teeth, now became inseparable to him. His mind was filled with inexpressible love and affection. But alas, he had become a misfit by then to give vent to his heart's feelings. The conflict and the resultant agony he was suffering from were very prominent.

There are many fathers (and mothers too) in our midst. I am sure, who are either suffering already from a similar plight or heading for it surely. Their education and reading may have made them big and influential in many ways. But the cardinals of human-hood, their brains are incapable of grasping, or may be they deliberately ignore to learn and practise them.

Children are child-like indeed. They are meant for petting and tending as well. Look at the plants, particularly some of them. They seem to be wanting the presence of their master every day. If the master of the house or the farm makes a regular visit to where they stand, spends some time watching their growth and features, they relish it beyond measure. It may be still better if he talks to them. In our Ashram here, there are a few coconut trees and plants. Those of them which are

near our dwelling and by the side of which we happen to pass by everyday, exhibit a greater growth and charm.

If the speechless plants are so sensitive and responsive to the human touch and association, think what should be the order of speechful, sentimental human creatures!

The trouble and tragedy is that men and women, in spite of their intelligence and wisdom, are neither able to rise to this kind of heartiness and innocence during their dealings with others nor are they sufficiently illumined, in proper time, to cultivate these virtues as a science and devoted practice.

They read religious texts, hold philosophical discourses, listen to gospels and sermons. But the basic human virtues do not enter their minds. It is primarily due to a delusion working in them.

You have been told mostly of the wrong religion and the ill-conceived Vedanta and philosophy. The bundle of wrong ideas has been inherited by you right at birth.

Truth is true indeed. To be true, it has to be sweet, pleasing and nourishing. If Truth were to be painful and hard, then how would the human mind, which always wants softness and comfort, opt for it? So think well and come to a conclusion about the nature of truth.



Ideal of True Love

How to Love

I will always urge upon every one to raise oneself as a human being. Become human first, before you can aspire to become divine. Humanness does not consist in hatefulness, jealousy and pride. Love yourself first. Life is endearing by its very nature. If innate endearingness is not there with the life in our body, then most of the living humans would be compelled to destroy their life some time or the other. Despite the hardest circumstances we meet at times, the most painful fate that befalls our lot, every one somehow still wishes to live and preserve his most beloved possession, called life.

This is why I say that to love the lovable life in oneself is the first part in becoming a true human. Once **selfishness**, or the love for your self is properly understood, if you are able to understand the lovable nature of life, you will not only love your own life but the life in every one else as well. The object of your love is 'life'. Wherever you are able to find that object,

immediately it becomes a source for your liking and preservation.

One who loves himself really, will equally love his parents too. He will also be led to loving all those born of them.

Normally, there are two kinds of relations for man. One is born of blood and the other of matrimony. In both is the expansion and pursuit of love. First of all you begin with the recognition of the endearing life in your blood relatives. And then it grows into the non-blood group, but through the institution called matrimony. Once you grow with these two sets of relatives, those of blood and those of matrimony – you can easily grow further and beyond endlessly.

The Working of Love

One ‘retired’ husband wrote the other day that ‘to love into a ripe old age’ was the true ideal. The love indulged in and pursued during the first phases of married life was not, he contended, of a true and hearty order. Its origin was just the surface, the outer shell, and its needs too superficial. At best, he added it belonged to the flesh and would fulfill the urges of only the flesh.

A sublime truth, no doubt. I am very happy that here is a good, introspecting soul, whose mind wishes to rise higher into the sweeter and finer realms of human relations – and this indeed is the diving realm – to delve

deeper into the hidden treasures of the precious life of man on earth. I compliment him, saying 'blessed is he'. May there be many like him so that the country and the nation, the world and the human society as a whole, be led to a better fate.

Take it for certain, dear men and women, there is no instance where love, true and sublime, has worked a havoc or breathed the least note of corruption to the human mind and nature. Genuine love knows only to soften man's nature, purify his body and flesh, refine his mind, ennoble his heart and edify his intellect. The more and more you love the things and beings around you, the nobler and better in every respect does your being, every cell that constitutes it, grows. The play of love on the personality of man is like the action of magnetism on an iron piece. Love is the most auspicious and edifying psychic current, which is given to man alone to employ and harness.

But alas, having gained a human birth, possessing the quality of reason and rationality, equipped with the power to do and know almost everything that we want, many of us are not able to understand this sublime basic truth and pursue it properly in actual life and practice. It is not that no one wants. It is not that no one can. It is simply that no one sets about the task earnestly. Some strange delusion, a lack of timely recognition is at work in every one right from the beginning.

Not all are born with equal nicety and goodness of nature. Heredity and environment favour only a few. For them beginning is pleasant. For the others such a favour is absent. But can that be any ground for excuse? What for is man gifted with reason? What for is his will?

Reason is to enable him to understand matters properly. Will is to pursue one's understanding in actual action. Even if heredity and environment are lacking, one can choose one's way and walk through it gallantly, provided one is prepared to be guided by reason and will. Reason, like physical health is to be cultured. Will can also be enhanced by systematic pursuit. Physical culture and its pursuit are external, whereas the culture of reason and will is internal. This is all their difference.

What Is Love

At Jamshedpur, during one of my visits, I was one day speaking about the basic virtues which should find place in every human life. I was referring to love, sympathy and sacrifice, saying that every man and woman, boy and girl, should take trouble to cultivate them in ample measure.

The next morning an ardent seeker came to me and asked: "Swamiji, you spoke yesterday about love, sympathy and sacrifice. Will you tell me what is love? I am not able to understand it". The nature of love that existed between himself and the others, either relatives or nonrelatives, he said, was either a kind of duty or

responsibility, or just accidental, occasioned by factors like like-mindedness, mutual help, advantage etc. In short, he was not satisfied with all these forms of love. At the same time, he was unable to understand the concept properly.

He was one whom I certainly loved, and who I am sure, loved me too. Nonetheless, the concept hung ambiguously around his intellect. The enquiry made is very significant. When one born in a good family, living with his wife and children, brothers and sisters, has asked such a question, it should be an eye-opener to many of you.

I am reminded of a conversation which transpired in days of yore between Sri Krishna and the group of Vraja women, who were devoted to him whole-heartedly, when the latter enquired of him about the different kinds of love which guide the working of human minds. To those who doubt the veracity of such anecdotes, I will say that the story as such may be true or false. But the story-writer certainly is a fact. What he has said is worthy for the truth it contains and reveals. I am speaking through his mouth, not because he has spoken but because I too want to speak.

As a rule, people love one another because they find it mutually advantageous. In so loving, each is furthering his own interests. No feeling or genuine goodwill or virtue operates in their minds. Their act is actuated by a purely selfish outlook and interest. The motive is one's

own improvement and promotion, not another's. This is the common instance of love found in men and women.

Another kind is the one where one loves the others and the latter do not reciprocate. Even if they hate and curse him, he will not withhold his love. Despite whatever unfavourable outcome it fetches, he will persist in his love and continue its pursuit. Such a love is occasioned purely by the thought of the others' goodness, welfare and promotion. In a way, this kind of love is akin to that of the parents towards their children. It is actuated by pure sublime feelings of sympathy and the like.

Those who do not give vent to these two forms of love can be either of the two kinds: utter dullards who are incapable of appreciating what others do for them. They are selfish and wicked and can only be ungrateful. People of this category are not rare in the world. Or, they can be highly elevated and illumined Seers of Truth, who by dint of their wisdom, constantly revel in their own self, and hence are unable to devote themselves to any external interests and formalities. Excluding all other considerations, they betake themselves to their inner communion, as does one in deep sleep. The sleeping mother is not aware of her child or its movements. Only when she wakes up, she becomes awake to him and begins to attend to his needs.

In everything, dear souls, there is a science and a philosophy. Generally there is a tendency in many to regard philosophy as unrelated to the world and the life

in it. This notion should vanish from the minds of our people. Philosophy is a must for our life. Every one needs it first and last.

There is a science in regard to everything in our life and pursuits. In the matter of loving too, it is so.

A good soul from Madras told: 'I have done a lot of help and service to several people. But all those benefited in my hands have given me only trouble in the end. I could never find gratefulness on their part.' I said 'it is quite in order. It helps your evolution and awakening'.

Evidently he who helps others and serves them freely is a virtuous soul. But to be virtuous is different from being awakened and illumined.

Help, service or charity done to others has to be judged on the basis of how it is done, what attitude of mind accompanies the act. The attitude which motivates an act, even when the act is noble, is very important. It will edify as well as vilify what you do. If you think 'I have enough, let me give to the other and thereby gloat over my riches and charitableness, impressing upon him my goodness and kind-heartedness', then the whole action loses its nobility and tarnishes the doer. The mind, instead of getting ennobled by it will degrade. Not that the act itself, viewed externally is bad, but the doer of the act has made it bad due to his wrong attitude.

So, if you propose to practise goodness and thereby prosper in your pursuit, it is necessary you have occasions when those whom you help forget what you have done and behave ungratefully. It is an opportunity for you to examine your own mind and see how far it is pure and noble. If you have done a noble act, simply because good sense and goodwill warrant it, then in having done the act must lie your fulfillment, not in getting an open acclamation for what you have done or in winning a reciprocal favour.

The lessons on human virtues are much deeper than what they may look to be. They are too deep and at times even abstruse. Nevertheless, all those who mean to live well must make a deliberate effort to know them well and follow in their actions and behaviour what little they have known.

There is no wonder in the Jamshedpur enquirer having enquired of me what 'love' really meant. Every one seems to be missing that which is vital in their life, that which the human personality and every part of it need most, that by the prevalence and blessing of which alone will every one be led to peace, contentment and fulfillment.

The mind and heart in us, not the body, are the mirror to reflect Truth. Therefore, make them pure and fine, more and more so every day. For that, they should be nourished and treated properly. Nothing other than

pure love, which flows from the heart spontaneously, will help you to this end.

Do not be poor in the matter of loving. Love, love and love. That is all. Do not ask questions and wait until you get full answers. Begin the pursuit and you will find it progresses and fulfills itself in time. A mind which can not take to love, radiate and manifest it amply, is virtually a stone.

Look at so many devotees of God. Think of their devotion. What is it characterized by? Mostly all of them fear God. Or else they have an abiding sense of respect and regard.

I don't say to fear God is bad or wrong. It is good, but to a small extent. To respect Him is even better. But that too is not adequate. It is not up to the mark. Even with respect, you will find you are quite away from your ideal. You have respect for your parents. In the case of parents, you can see them. But with God, it is not so. You and He, both will remain far remote from each other.

Become earnest and impatient and narrow the gap between you and your ideal. Reduce the distance between the place you stand on and the destination you want to reach.

It is here that the magical turn takes place. Love God. That is what you should do, if least possible. In loving

someone or someone is the delight and fulfillment of a true lover. Love is a mystic and inmost sentiment of ours, the very display of which brings delight and exhilaration for us. When you love a thing, if your love is genuine, the very sight, thought, remembrance of the thing you love will generate waves of joy and comfort for you.

True love does not always wait for reason and its sanction. It is an irresistible feeling welling up in one's heart. Even the unreasoning and foolish man has a heart. He too can love. Is not god equal? Is He not in all? Can you say he is only in the intelligent and the accomplished? So to foster love, which is possible for all alike, is the best approach to the omnipresent Lord, who is Himself all-loving and all-comprehending. Once you do so, your task becomes easy.

Love Different From Lust

It is needless to say that love and lust have nothing in common. They are poles apart. One drives you out with ugliness. The other holds you within beautifully. Lust is an offshoot of the body. It originates from the body. Its basic sphere of expression is also the body. Love has its root much deeper. It springs from the innocent mind and heart. It is a need of the deeper faculties in man. By its pursuit, the deeper being gets satisfied and fulfilled.

One destroys reason. The other promotes it. One weakens. The other strengthens. One works upon difference. The other knows no difference at all.

The children love heartily. Don't they? The old ones too. Good and intimate friends have enough of love for each other. Will these imply the least trace of lust? To distinguish love from lust is therefore, very easy.

Love does not dawn merely by the fact of marrying or by dint of any lustful indulgence. The married will have to beget love separately, as a distinct item of pursuit. The lustful may also beget love, not as a part of their lustful interests, but independently, by opting for goodness and virtues.

Lover, the Only Source of Love

To love is a noble pursuit. To persist in loving despite all odds and opposition is the best ideal a human can rise to. It is a practice and a culture which purifies man and fulfils him completely. If you take to '**loving**' regarding it as a fruitful moral pursuit, as a valuable culture, then the act of '**loving**' becomes more important than the unpleasantness of the '**loved**', the thing or person to whom the loving is directed. Love always proceeds from you, the lover, not from the other, the loved.

You may revolt when I say this. But this is the supreme truth. You may ask: How can one love in the absence of an object which can evoke love from one's mind? I don't

say that in the context of loving, the object does not come in. If there are no objects, there is no question of any one loving at all. However, to identify love and loving with the object or person to whom it is directed is basically wrong. It will only defeat your purpose, landing you in utter mental and moral poverty. How can love be identified with the object and not with the subject namely the 'lover' himself?

If you say the object is the source of love. I will ask you: Does the same object or all the objects or persons occasion love from every one? As long as the same object does not evoke love from one and all alike, love cannot be identified with the 'loved'. In actual practice, each loves only a few objects or persons. The things loved by one are generally different from those loved by another. The same thing or person that evokes love from you often turns your fate and you suddenly stop loving it. If love totally depended upon the object, then such a fate of changefulness cannot be.

The Science of Love

If there is a real science about love and loving, it must be able to show us a way whereby we shall be able to preserve our love despite whatever outcome it begets. To adopt such a way will be to promote our own welfare and to gain our end, in spite of all the defeats and obstacles. Suppose you are able to love the entire world and all the objects which it holds within it, will there be any scope for a recession or failure for your love? The

sight, talk or thought of anything and everything will but strengthen and improve your love and loving. In such a state, when reached, do you not think you will only stand to benefit immensely? In fact, is not the aim of all religions and spiritual science to bring man to this lofty level? The object of a discriminating soul must always be to make the best, to become the heir to the highest.

If you agree that 'loving' rests more with you, the lover, than with the other, the loved, then can you not realize that this is so and then make your love and loving depend upon your own sound sense rather than the criss-cross thoughts of those to whom your love flows? As long as the things and persons which become your loved are all right, there is naturally no trouble. But I am speaking of the opposite fate and trying to safeguard your mind against it.

Whether the person to whom you direct your love reciprocates or not, you should persist in what you have chosen as your wont or ideal. I don't say you should go out of the way in order to express your love to him or her, where such expression is not possible or will be resented. But as far as your mind is concerned, never lose hold of the turbulent, even triumphant, invaluable possession of love.

To take to love and then to fall from it, let it be on any ground whatsoever, is nothing less than a 'prostitution'. I know this is a hard word, but this is the one to describe

the fate. In Geeta you will find Sri Krishna characterizing devotion (*bhakti*) as wholesome and unprostitutional (*avyabhichaarinee*). How can you rise to the level of *avyabhichaarinee bhakti* if you are not able to avoid the instance of mental and moral prostitution at the much lower levels, in your dealings within your own household? The entire life is lived in the world, with men and women, both relations and non-relations, with the so many co-travelers living nearby. You make life or mar it right there, nowhere else. If you mar it here, you are not going to make it anywhere else, neither in the heavens nor in the still higher regions. If any one thinks that the callous and scornful treatment meted out to the people around him will be looked after by the pious offerings he makes at the altar, he is a fool.

To be loving, to love one and all, as we have already said, is but one's own nature. Say it is the very nature of the life and soul that is in our body. What you should do is to recognize this basic truth and then give a free expression to it. All that is needed is the lifting of all bans and hurdles. Allow the life within your body to manifest itself freely without any let or hindrance.

Is Love A Duty?

I often hear people say: 'it is my duty to do this, to do that, etc.' Some also speak in the same strain when those about whom they speak are their own dear and near ones. I am very sorry for this kind of a treachery of human relations.

What is there to be termed as duty when life's basic and natural traits and impulses are concerned? No one speaks of a duty in the matter of breathing, of evacuating, of eating and drinking. The existence of the body necessitates all these functions. In the same manner, the existence of mind and the inner being of ours bring in their wake a number of similar needs and urges. To love her son is not 'a duty' of the mother. To be devoted and loving towards the husband or wife is much less duty. Equally so to be regarding one's own parents and the elders in general cannot be termed 'a duty'. A normal human mind, which thinks and acts with a right sense, cannot but express all this. It is as natural and irresistible a process of the mind as is eating, drinking, evacuating, etc. of the body. If the concept of 'duty' has to be courted in order to give vent to these natural, primary and irresistible expressions, it is too bad and deplorable.

What is meant by duty, of which we often make mention? You begin to think of duty only when what you propose to do, does not have an innate and ready acceptance in your mind, when your being is not heartily out to do it. Any thought of duty implies, in other words, the working of two distinct factors, which are opposite to each other. First comes the basic resistance or unwillingness which the mind raises. In order to overcome this resistance, you then try to bring in the concept of duty, holding it as a worthy ideal to be pursued. Thinking of the ideal, you then proceed to act

with a view to realize it, not anything else. It is therefore, more a sense of compulsion, of obligation, that makes you do what you do, and not the natural outpouring of your own free and innocent nature. If you ask me, this is far from what is good, pleasant, desirable and what is really expected of a wise man.

The child is always a complete answer to every question of ours. Look at the child and see how it acts. It does not have any sense of duty or compulsion. Its mind is incapable of it. Yet it does manifest love to the mother, to the father, to the others dear and near, known to him in one way or another. In so loving, the child is quite lavish. He does so with all freedom and fullness. Despite your growth, maturity and wisdom, if you are not able to do what even a little child in his state of rudimentariness does consistently, what a great travesty!

Life Truly an Unfoldment

The whole of our life is a consistent Unfoldment. Rather than enfolding, we really get unfolded everyday, every stage, every year. Generally every one tends to prevent, may be unknowingly, this Unfoldment because of incorrect notions and the consequent blockades which the mind creates. These blockades emerge in abundance solely due to the lack of proper knowledge and attentiveness. A discriminating man must try to keep them away and for that he should constantly be seeking true knowledge and wisdom.

Sita - An Exemplary Lover

The instance of Sita, the consort of Sri Rama who is yet the most known king of the Raghu dynasty, comes to my mind.

At the behest of Sage Vishwaamitra, Rama proved his mettle by breaking the bow and thereby deserved the hand of Sita. After the exemplary wedding, both Sita and Rama lived the best of married life. Though beset in between with a host of hardships and the most severe pangs of separation, their bond of love grew steadily and only got strengthened at every stage. Neither had any grumble or complaint against the other. They were that matchless couple whom even the heavens might have envied. When everything was thus going on peacefully well, the queen became pregnant. Nursed by the added timely affection of the husband, her pregnancy was advancing.

It was a custom with the husband to enquire of any special desires or likes which the expectant mother had in her mind and then try to fulfil them readily. In the case of Sita, the desire was to spend a few days peacefully in the hermitage of a venerable Saint, serving him and listening to his words of wisdom, so that the embryo in her womb would grow better imbibing best of virtues and valour.

It was then the stroke of mishap suddenly befell them once again, and for ever. It came through the feeble

scandal unleashed by a washerman during a fit of temper he had with his wife. He claimed he was unlike the king of Ayodhya, who accepted Sita even after she had lived in the Raakshasa's (Ravana's) place for a good length of time.

Clearly it was already a proven case. There was nothing in it to cause any concern once again. But the unwary human mouth knows no licence. It can descend or ascend to any level, when swept by a fit of temper. However, for the celebrated King Sri Rama, it was too much to bear. He accused himself stating that he has become the cause of an indelible stain to the otherwise spotless Raghu dynasty. The only way open to him was to redeem himself and thereby protect his lineage.

And so he called Lakshmana, his younger brother. Telling him of the entire plight, he commanded him to take Sita to the forest and on reaching there leave her for good and come back. Lakshmana was no doubt, wounded to the core. But knowing never to flout the words of his brother, he embarked upon the heart-rending mission. Placing his sister-in-law in the chariot, he drove straight to the forest on the plea that he was taking her to fulfill her own wishes.

On reaching the spot, both of them alighted. He fell at the blessed feet of his sister-in-law and drenching them with the warm stream of his tears, he blurt forth what his brother had commanded him to do.

The immaculate queen was struck to the core. Absolute loyalty, unflinching exclusiveness, in every bit and piece of her conduct and behaviour was not a thing she needed to be taught or admonished about. She knew well her place and position. When on the day of her wedding, the prince took her hand, she had accepted him as the only Lord once and for ever. Neither earlier nor later did she know of any one second. There was no question at all of her mind thinking differently during her exile in the place of Ravana. To be unswerving in her devotion to her Lord in deeds, words and thoughts alike, nay even in the deepest level of the Soul, was but natural to her.

However, for a moment she condescended to the pull of her basic humanness and nearly lost the ultimate sense of proportion. She first complimented Lakshmana for the implicit loyalty which he always bore to his elder brother. Telling him to convey her respects and regards to the mothers-in-law in their due order, she at last added "carry this message of mine to your elder brother, the King of Ayodhya."

The verses which Kalidasa, the great poet of Truth and Realism, wrote, depicting the tense sentimental scene of the lone forest, where the softest woman was pitted against the hardest fate, come to my mind. I have delighted and reveled in the marvelous produce of his infallible pen – the most touching and splendid manner in which he has displayed the most superb human

sentiments and simultaneously dealt with the auspicious ways in which they are to be gallantly led to the even triumphant path of goodness, virtue and self-redemption:

वाच्यस्त्वया मद्वचनात्स राजा
वह्नौ विशुद्धामपि यत्समक्षम् ।
मां लोकवादश्रवणादहासीः
श्रुतस्य किं तत्सदृशं कुलस्य ॥

vācyastvayā madvacanātsa rājā
vahnau viśuddhāmapi yatsamakṣam |
mām lokavādaśravaṇādahāsīḥ
śrutasya kiṁ tatsadr̥śam kulasya ||
Yogavasīshta Ramayana (14.61)

Let the King, O Lakshmana, be told by you of these, my wants: "Does it tally either with his scholarship and wisdom or with the noble lineage to which he belongs, to abandon me like this without himself telling me what he is going to do? Myself who had already once proved my chastity and character in public by dipping the body in the blazing fire and emerging unhurt! Nothing else than the most feeble scandal spoken by one stray subject of his Alas!"

The human being is an amazing mixture of sentiments and reason. The Mind is the progenitor of sentiments,

and intelligence, the originator of reason. Man has been gifted both with the mind and the intelligence, so that he may play with and rejoice over both. In playing the game of life well and in full lies the merit of human dignity. Life in the world, through media of the mind and intelligence, is not always as one is apt to imagine it. Some times, it is abstruse, troublesome, perplexing and what not. Even then you can play your part well and achieve success and fulfillment, provided you improve your wisdom right early and be constantly guided by it.

One cannot live without the mind. Equally so, none should be without his intellect either. The former, all easily understand and accept, but not the latter. That is why many human lives strike a pathetic note and end up in failure and chaos.

Look at Sita, the way she reacts to what her brother-in-law said as commanded by his brother, her Lord. Sentiments and emotions are not to be suppressed. If you suppress them, there will be many adverse effects. You should allow them to express freely, as much as is possible. But during the course of their expression, you should not be swept off. Your real nature and values should not be carried away by them. Express your love, when you feel moved by it. Equally so, whenever resentment grips you, give vent to it. But do not make either the extremity of love or the severity of resentment guide your decisions or ultimate values.

Sri Rama had ample freedom with Sita, his wife. That is why he took the freedom of abandoning her, with the help of Lakshmana, without telling her of his design. In the same way, his wife too had enough of freedom, to share her innermost feelings with her husband. And that is what she does in this message. True love knows no hatred. It can never imply it. If at all, from the lover's mouth some notes of resentment, question, disagreement and the like spring forth at times, it is not because of the fault of love but because of the strange composition of his or her human nature. For instance, as I said, we cannot live without the complex and sentimental mind. And this means the mind will have its own natural compulsions and urges.

So the daughter of Janaka, who though, had reposed all her confidence on a single Lord, Sri Rama, now suddenly gets pricked and the weak moment is exploited by her sentimental mind. She had taken Sri Rama to be her life-long consort. Her mind had no reservations at all in the matter. But now suddenly the fate had come to be different. What can she do? What is she expected to?

Her question is very legitimate: wedlock is not a superficial or flimsy affair. As the entry of life in the body, so is the bond of marriage. It has to be once and for all, normally. At least for a woman like Sita it was so. Being so, why this fickleness and unthoughtfulness on the part of her husband, particularly for one like Sri

Rama, who has both the blessings of lofty wisdom and faultless lineage. Sita's agitated mind finds disharmony between Sri Rama's treatment to her and the wisdom heredity he possesses in himself.

However, this is only a temporary outpouring of her mind, in the inevitable mood of agitation and dismay. But are matters such as this to be governed totally by moods and fancies? She therefore restrains herself and begins to reason deeper. And then comes to the following conclusion. The words of Kalidasa are superb in describing the reasoning of the matchless question:

"No, no, dear son, I have been too hasty in speaking out what I did. My thoughts were unwary, knowing no rhyme or reason. Let me get composed.

*No doubt, your brother is a magnificent Soul. Truly his acts are guided by the best of royal reason. At no time can any one impute wrong motives to his actions. He is a **kalyaana buddhi** (one with a benevolent intelligence), and hence no one can receive any harm in his hands. This being so, I cannot tend to think that he has acted selfishly in my case. Surely the sins committed by me in my own past lives have become ripe and they are bursting out in a tumult making me unable to bear them.*

It is thus that Sita looks at the whole development, putting it to her reason thereby rising above the flare of sentiments and reactions. There is an inexorable law governing life and ultimate nature of incidents that surround it. It is that each one is governed by his own intrinsic nature, needs and values. Of course, there is a kind of net spread round which puts everyone in link with others like relatives, friends, etc. Nevertheless, each one's life is single and is determined in the end by his own singular causes. Why did Sita get Rama as her husband? Why did she insist, much against the warnings of her Lord, upon accompanying Rama to the forest? Why did she fall in love with the golden deer? Where was her reason lurking at that time? Why did she force her brother-in-law, Lakshmana, charging him in the most painful manner with deception and evil designs, to leave her and run to her husband's help, much against the specific command of the husband himself? So there is a deep and strong thread which passes through anything and everything that surrounds each one in this world. Unable to discern its course, we begin to fight and misunderstand, rather than appreciate and understand precisely. In ripe understanding is the secret of all peace and harmony.

However, quite admirably, Sita comes to her sounder sense and strikes a note of definiteness, promise and reconciliation, determined to foster her own unflinching love to Sri Rama despite whatever consequences it might throw her open to.

She tells Lakshmana: The right course for me now, deserted as I am wantonly by my Lord, is to relinquish my embodied life and there escape my agony and torture. May be to join the Lord's bosom, after getting release from the body. But alas, on reflection, I find I should not resort to such a step. Within my womb has been deposited an embryo, which is my Lord's, and which it is my duty to protect. Should I destroy the body, with that I will also have destroyed my own Lord's *tejas* (brilliance in the form of *jeeva*, spirit in the body). Surely that cannot be. My heart does not approve of such a rash, merciless step. Nor will it be proper on any ground of morality.

Therefore, let me bear my life, despite the pain and suffering, it imposes on me every minute, until the seed in my womb matures and I am delivered of the child in due time. Once the child is born, I become free to adopt my own chosen course of action.

In the words of Kalidasa, Sita's determination is:

साहं तपः सूर्यनिविष्टदृष्टि

रुध्वं प्रसूतेश्चरितुं यतिष्ये ।

भूयो यथा मे जननान्तरेऽपि

त्वमेव भर्ता न च विप्रयोगः ॥

sāham tapaḥ sūryaniviṣṭadr̥ṣṭi
rurdhvaṁ prasūteścaritum yatiṣye |
bhūyo yathā me jananāntare'pi
tvameva bhartā na ca viprayogaḥ ||

Raghuvamsa (14.66)

*After the birth of the child, this is my resolve:
Heaping fire on all the four sides, I will stand
right in the centre. Standing there erect I will do
tapas gazing at the sun without winking my
eyes. Thus is the most arduous form of
austerity, by which I can wash off all my sins
and also accomplish my most cherished object.
What for is the tapas? It is not to escape from
the company of my beloved Lord, nor to bring a
curse on any one or anything. I want to be with
my Lord forever. Even if I am to be born several
times in this world, I must be born a woman
and that same Lord, must marry me. You will
again be my Lord, and the lot of separation will
not befall us anymore.*

Here is the beauty, charm and all-round benedictoriness of right human life, my dear souls. We miss the best and most proper in life, because of our short-sightedness, because of our resistance to think progressively until we reach the happy phase of perfect human relation. Why should your object of love ever turn to be one of hatred? By making it turn so, more than the hated, you the hater is affected and pained. Love your object even when

hatred grips it. Then the quality of your love increases abundantly, it becomes militant, tumultuous, invincible and hence graceful. Even without the object, it will one day begin to thrill you profusely. The hater will suffer at the other end, but you his lover will be floating and dancing in love-revelry, in the rapture of bliss and its sweet and benumbing effect.

Sita's instance is an adequate eye-opener, revealer to all people. Life in the world is never an easy process, even for the most blessed ones, even for the so called incarnations of God. There is no point in just dismissing all this saying that the God Sri Rama and Goddess Sita imitated the ways of mankind. It is no imitation, but reality itself. What is true of any human body and mind was true of Sita as well. She too had a body, consisting of flesh and blood, in the same way as any one of us. Within that body was a mind, which was the seat of all the usual emotions and reactions like the mind of any other person. But there was something higher and more in her which perhaps lacks in several of us. With all the vicissitudes which the body and mind imposed upon her, she held on to her ideals and clear insight. Reason and propriety she held first and last. Everything else of the life and world she held only as the second and next.

Sri Rama might have had his own reasons – either sentimental or rational for having abandoned his wife without having a talk with her on the issue. Every individual is guided by his own sequence of thinking.

He may have his own reason for supporting his step. It is not correct to impute this motive or that to anyone on any account whatsoever. Better sense demands that we be forgiving and accommodating. When everything is looked at in a comprehensive manner, you will be able to find out the hidden harmony passing through one and all.

So Sita looked for reason and decided to pursue the right course approved by it. The first task before her was to bring forth the embryo in her womb in the proper time. Once this was fulfilled, she was free to follow what she thought was best.

Her decision was to undertake the most torturous penance standing amidst fire on all four sides and looking without winking at the hot sun. What? Not to rise to the heavens after dropping the body, nor to get another husband, more loving and loyal, but to join the same Lord Sri Rama in the next life as well, with a fate of non-separation throughout. The words of the poet “that you will again become my husband in the next life and the fate of separation shall not assail us” are the most pregnant, robbing and assuring.

Dear souls, here comes to you the monumental example of supreme devotion, exclusive loyalty, unflinching, acceptance of the mind and heart towards what it looks to as the life’s ideal and resort. For a true lover, what if the beloved falsifies himself or herself? What if a bad fate befalls him or her? Love is your property, and the

preserver or destroyer of it is none else than yourself. If you think that the loved, the object of love, has an ultimate determining role, then indeed you have not understood what true love is. However much an object may be desirable or lovable, unless you agree to foster love towards it, its lovability does not mean anything to you. It is not lovability of a thing, but your lovingness towards it that becomes a cause of delight. And, if you believe in reason, then culture your lovingness in such a thorough way, to such an extent, that even if the loved falsifies himself knowingly or unknowingly, your love will prevail untarnished, giving you all the delight, rejoicing and fulfillment that you want.

Here stands Sita telling us that Sri Rama, even after having abandoned her in an obviously questionable manner, is still extremely beloved to her heart. She is not satisfied with his company and adorning the role of his queen. She still waits for the chance of becoming his wife again and again. For that end, she is prepared to undergo any extent of difficulties, restraints and troubles. Nothing she finds an excess to persist in her own unflinchingness and absoluteness.

Is this not idealism, dear men and women? If human life does not seek to know this kind of lofty living and pursuits, I refuse to call it a human life at all. At best it is an animal life in a human garb. The human must be 'humane' and must have all the attendant qualities. If any one is found to be lacking in qualities, it should be

his constant endeavour to cultivate them, paying any price for it.

We hear so much of quarrel, misunderstanding, maladjustment, and what not? A lot of these will disappear and dissolve if only we have the human preparedness to know what is the right course of living for us and then to pursue the knowledge through our day-to-day actions and thoughts.

Dimensions of True Love

True love is highly noble. To give oneself to it and to try to preserve it is the best. It is the ideal, no doubt. But the practice is not so simple. It will surely call for a number of sacrifices and risks. What the Upanishads say about seeking Truth is true here as well: It is like walking on a razor's edge. Any time you may fall or get hurt. To walk means to be cut. To fall means to be all the more so.

In true love is implied the presence of all relevant qualities and virtues, which help to promote and fulfil the love. The lovers must have all the necessary restraints. But these restraints must be self-born and self-imposed. The moment they have to be forced by another, they lose their sublimity and even usefulness. A true artist will himself know the nicety of his art. The job he is doing must be well within his knowledge. It does not have to be taught and then he be made to do it.

The concern for the lover will always be to preserve the dignity and grace of the person he or she loves, and to this end any extent of suffering, restraints and sacrifices is welcome for him. He finds delight in it. This is so with the loved as well, who is the lover from his side. Both are loved, and both are lovers as well. What is true of one is inevitably true of the other.

In love must be the display of all freedom. Freedom must be as absolute as possible. Restraints, if there are, must come from within oneself. But for such restraints, there must be freedom, ample freedom. Each should exchange the feelings he has with the other, and other should equally do so as well. All misunderstandings, doubts, fears and anxieties must be cleared away in such a frank exchange. The one sure trait of life is that it wants to express itself. Feelings and emotions constantly well up within us, and these in turn are waiting to be expressed. In welling up and then in being expressed, lies the fulfillment of our life. The water in a dam is first collected and the water so collected is let off according to convenience to serve various purposes. Again the reservoir builds up level, and then again letting off follows. Everything in the world and in our life is first a rise and then a fall, first a growth and then a decline. There is an element of repetition no doubt. But we have to make this repetition an 'art', a piece of intelligent activity, a source of joy and comfort.

Rama's feelings towards Sita were very strong. Equally strong were his feelings to the others. He had to bring in a reconciliation between the two. This he could do only in his own way, taking into account the structure of his personality, its nature and intention.

Sita had all the love for Rama. She always wanted to uphold his greatness. But this was only one part. The other part was also to be counted. She had her other emotions. There is no mind which has only one sentiment or emotion. For a mind to be healthy, it should contain all the different traits, at least to the minimum extent. That is why she chose to give vent to her normal, human feelings on finding her Lord's rather sudden decision.

This should not, however, cut the root of her basic love towards Sri Rama. Moreover, it is a very basic truth that to take the freedom to express whatever one feels and wishes in respect of another whom one loves is not wrong. It is necessary, I should say.

The one purpose of loving another wholeheartedly is to be able to express all that one wishes with that person. Life in the world can never be uniform for any one. The rush of water in a river erodes its banks. It overflows and in the process damages the banks and the adjacent areas. The river has no control in preventing excess water. In everything there is the chance for abnormality, unevenness. In the case of the human mind and life, which is of course the most complex specimen of

Nature, the natural unevenness will be all the more. As the sun rises gradually and then sets, so is the course of our mind and its vagaries.

How can one be always the same in one's mood and temperament? Love is a positive and auspicious emotion or attitude. If this be so, dislike etc., the opposite emotions and attitudes will also be there. There is nothing like a positive attitude alone for all times. Dislikes, disagreements, etc., will therefore have to be expressed and avoided. Whatever becomes necessary in the matter of expressing and thereby avoiding these things out, must also be provided for. Thus to quarrel for a time over something or the other, does not mean not to be loving.

One can quarrel with only those one loves and has the freedom with. You cannot certainly scold or quarrel with a stranger. Only when a deep and inseparable relationship is first established, you can think of expressing your sentiments and the like. This is what I meant by saying that the quarrel is not anti-love. If you love someone then quarrel is not anti-love. If you love someone then you should by that very reason give him the chance to clear his own mind and heart and be pure and fulfilled. This is the struggle.

Another feature of pure love is that the lover will have no enmity with any one. His purpose is to love everyone. Though he does so, there may be those around him who consider him to be their enemy. But

that is their wont, and the lover has nothing to do with this. The real lover will give freedom to others for even hating him. Even then, his love to them will prevail. If at all he keeps away from some, it is not because he dislikes them, but because the others dislike him and he recognizes this fact. This is what Krishna says in his Geeta:

"My mind to equal to one and all, and hence I have no friend and no foe. Yet I live in those who regard me and worship me with love."

If our love becomes any ground for seeking an access to any and everybody, without regarding whether the latter so seek and want, then it will be wrong. So the true lover will think and say: "That man considers me an enemy. He has his own reason for it. Yet, I love him. As an enemy, he wants to avoid me, to think ill of me, and I in my mind give him the freedom to do so. That is all. Yet I have the same love for him and the thought for his welfare as I have for those who treat me with love and kindness!"

Not all in the world need love and do loving alone. If some like love, some like hatred. Both are equally in Nature. Look at some of the animals and creatures. Do they not have even prenatal currents of love and hatred? The lion and elephant, the mongoose and snake, the eagle and snake, all these are born with mutual hatred. To breed enmity is as much the privilege of any one as to breed love. The real lover has no right to interfere with

the freedom of the others by force. Of course, by virtue of his love and benignness, he can always appeal to the good sense of the others and even this will work only when the others are disposed to goodness and its lessons.

True Love Cannot Hate

Love to anyone or even universal love should not be a cause of breeding hatred to another. This is very important. Often the mind will try to delude the lover and make him do several things undesirable. Discrimination should be used to avoid such pitfalls. Real love must be constantly delightful, it should delight him who loves and equally those who look for real love.

To hate any one is bad not so much in respect of those hated but in respect of the 'hater' himself. To hate is itself hatable. If by love our mind is going to be edified and ornamented, then be sure that by hate it will be lacerated and made ugly.

Not to have hatable or blameworthy qualities or traits in oneself is the first attainment: this attainment is useless unless it is instantly followed by the next quality of not blaming the others. Discrimination between good and bad qualities is no doubt inevitable for the growth of any one. But this discrimination is to help you correct yourself. The correction of others can at best be in the form of a suggestion or advice, and that too only for those who seek your advice, not otherwise. Even when

you find blameworthiness in others, the best attitude to be invoked will be sympathy towards them. It is due to lack of viveka that any one chooses to be wrong or blameworthy. Viveka when dawns in him, will change his behaviour. To strike at viveka, at best you can only help, only when such help is possible.

He is blameworthy, all right. But aren't you, who tries to hate him on the ground of his undesirable traits, even more blameworthy? You have chosen the path of goodness and you are already good. For such a one, is not the furtherance of goodness even more imperative than for those who are bad to become good in the first instance?

Look at the other side. He is wrong in that he has hatable qualities. But hatableness does not stop in and with one level alone. As he is hatable, you too will be. His hatableness consists of having hatable features in his conduct, thoughts or words. Well, that is because he is not yet illumined in regard to what is desirable and what is undesirable. The qualities he has with him have not yet become a subject of enquiry and correction for him. Well, we can understand his position. Many people are there around us who do not devote themselves to the pursuit of pure wisdom. Mankind believes more in doing than in thinking calmly and finding out what kind of doing is correct and helpful. This kind of poverty of wisdom and judgement is a rampant epidemic amongst people. So we have enough ground to be consoled.

But what about you, in whom evidently discrimination is already working. It is due to your discrimination that you recognize what is good and what is bad, what is hatable and what is not. If at all you regard one as undesirable, it is clearly because of your discrimination of this nature. Well, can the process of discrimination be terminated after finding him hatable? Your discrimination should be applied to yourself as to the other. If you do so, what conclusion in turn can you draw? As love is auspicious, hate is inauspicious. The most hatable quality is hating itself, hating another. The entire pursuit of love and goodness will be falsified, vitiated, if in its wake you come to hate anyone, no matter how bad the other is. Between the two, the one whom you hate, and yourself, definitely you are more guilty and hence condemnable. What the other does foolishly, lacking the human sense of discrimination, you will be doing, claiming for yourself more wisdom! Is this not a delusion a great incongruity?

You should examine your own heart and mind clearly and rise above such pitfalls and wrongs. Of course, it is too much of a challenge. It is too fine a process of correction. But in human relationship nothing will be an excess. In refining the human mind, no effort can be too much or out of place.

If only everyone is prepared to examine his own conduct and behaviour every time, how blessed the community life of man will be?

Antagonisms Persist in Love

Another point that strikes me is the quarrel and fights that occur even at the most intimate levels between two people, members of the same family, even when they are quite in love and appreciation for each other. If one is a fool and the other intelligent, there will be no trouble or disharmony at all, for the former can always follow the latter. But if both are reasonably of the same order and kind, having good measure of qualities and steadfastness, then the path is not found to be smooth.

Suppose one picks up a quarrel, may be for a right cause or not so much right a cause, the quarrel provokes the other and once provoked, the latter goes on arguing and reasoning vehemently. To quarrel is easy, but to prove or disprove a point with enough of reason to back the effort is not so easy. Sometimes, these occasions become grave and often the feelings and sentiments get hurt.

I have heard of the historic king Bhoja and the famous poet Kalidasa. Bhoja was very wise but obstinate. Kalidasa, on his part, though a poet of honour in the King's place, too was equally inimitable for his fecund behaviour and ideas. The king had so much of love for the poet that he would feel miserable without seeing Kalidasa for a few days at a stretch. But when Kalidasa was there to befriend the king, the king used to prove intolerable. On some issue or other they would take

opposite stands with equal strength, principles and obstinacy, and as a result the king would order the poet to leave the palace. However after his order materializes, he would begin feel miserable at heart and through scholarly and matchless wisdom testing means, he would succeed in getting back his Kalidasa.

This happens between two people, when they are both equally fired with obstinacy, wisdom and qualities. The best will be for both to let the game go on, without getting affected by whatever takes place. Even when the worst argument or vilification takes place, each should take it only as an occasion for sublimating one's finest sentiments and find his or her delight in that there is someone for him to give an intellectual battle to. No one has improved his goodness through smiles and laughter, through praises and patting alone. The best levels of goodness are reached only after passing through the worst of criticisms and challenges. Truly, the path of achievement is one wherein every time your attainment is found to be yet short of what is really optimum and you are put to a greater and greater challenge. It is like putting the winning team of a tournament to play with another equally strong or stronger team. The selection at every stage of advancement is more and more touchy and fine.

Whenever you have any such friendly adversary by your side, may be your husband, wife, brother, sister or what not, you should only be happy, instead of feeling

hurt or taking your vanity to be hit hard, you should find a special note of fulfillment. The criticism that comes from the strangers or outsiders can only be shallow. Their observation on you cannot be more than external or superficial. To that extent their criticism if there be any, will also be incomplete. Whereas the remarks coming from one who is close to you, who has access to your personality from various angles and deeply, are truer. Moreover such a one is the first to participate in your failures or successes. So, their concern will be quite well-based and geared for the best of your success.

But there is this word of caution. In offering criticism or in receiving it, you should not go out of all proportions. Human mind, however qualitative it may be, is after all delicate. Not many are there who can take caustic remarks on par with praiseful ones, though we know that even-mindedness is the ideal to be achieved and practised! So estrangement and any confrontation of such nature should be avoided. The fact of friendship and intimacy should be clearly borne in mind always. Even if one happens to unknowingly wound the fine feelings of the other, the latter should excuse it, thinking and reassuring himself that after all the other party is one dear and near to him. Self-examination and self-correction is the best for all times. Rather than blaming others, let us blame ourselves for not achieving the perfection by virtue of which we shall be able to get along with any provocation. To part is easy. To avoid it

is the hard way. But knowing and endeavouring as we are, our object is not to resort to the former, but to accomplish the latter. Let there be always in our life a yet higher point to reach. Let not the full stop come, for that will rob us our life and the need for sound endeavour.



Need for Tolerance

As you improve in your qualities and virtues, you will find the need for cultivating more and more tolerance. There can be no limit for our tolerance. Especially, for the intelligent people, tolerance can never be an excess. Intelligence, keenness, smartness and other qualities are invariably found to bring in their wake sometimes greater and greater impatience and intolerance, though this should not be the case. The body and external things cannot move as fast as the mind and intelligence. To translate into action whatever you think in your brain, will take a lot of time. The difficulty is more when you need the help and assistance of others and they may have their own speed and other defects. Naturally there is bound to be a grave disharmony, if you think of the matter deeply, impatience and intolerance are the inevitable offshoots.

After all, none can forcefully improve the others. At best each can improve himself or herself. The improvement in others has to come by dint of their own personal efforts. You can only help the others around you with sound and patient advice, caution, sometimes with

appeal and similar methods, and that too if and when possible. An overbearing attitude will never work.

I have found husbands and wives, who have already lived twenty or thirty years with enough of understanding, love and regard for each other, picking up quarrels simply for the lack of a little timely tolerance. Often the misunderstanding and fight start with a few words spoken or the manner in which the person conducts himself or herself. The other party is displeased beyond proportion. The feeling is that other is, after all his or her partner, and there is nothing in being tolerant or forbearing. The retort and explosion soon develops: 'why did you speak that way at that time in front of so many others? Did you not slight me? Where is my prestige gone now? Haven't I been made useless? etc.' Each begins to talk to the other in this way, I have seen this happen several times. Some times the quarrel and heaviness of mind will continue for days together..... for what, for a few words improperly spoken!

I feel like laughing over the whole fate. One person charges the other of impropriety. Well, is not the other as well behaving with impropriety, because he is intolerant of the mistake done by the other? Human life is no doubt meant for mistakes and errors, as well as for the opposites. In the absence of a 'wrong', how can the thought of 'right', its opposite arise? The rule or law of 'wrongs' is as true as of 'friction' in relation to 'motion'.

We speak of watchfulness, care, caution, wisdom, etc. All these become relevant only in the context of wrongs and errors and the ample possibility for them during our life and activities. So let no one be afraid to provide in the thinking for the possibility of committing wrongs and errors, no matter who the other party is. Even the most wise man is liable to have many holes and hollows in his wisdom. There is no act in this world which can be absolutely right or wrong. That is why the pursuit of human life becomes so very complex and debatable.

Are not the old values changing? What was considered fashion in one time has become, in the wake of modern thinking, primitive. What was primitive once, has on the other hand become modern and fashionable. Again, the fashions of yesterday are no more so today. Today's may not be tomorrow.

That apart, one should have the discernment to put up with the slips and errors of the other, more so of those around one. Simply because of one mistake or another, one's friend or relative does not become otherwise. To accept an all-correct person, one does not need any great virtue or wisdom. To accept, on the other hand, one in whom there are mistakes side by side with virtues, is the real goodness. Human behaviour should be turned to this end.

Moreover, what is there to be so much afraid of or be shy about human behaviour? Is not this case with any man or woman, his or her family, the society at large?

You should not think that slips and errors, or call it humiliation, in the hands of your friend or partner, are an exception only for you. In every family this drama is enacted, this fate forces itself. Why should you be timid or apprehensive? Have the wisdom and strength to claim your partner as yours, in spite of whatever mistake he or she does. In that lies your honourability.

Think of the others around. Suppose your wife or husband behaves in a less desirable way before you and the others. May be a word or two are spoken out thoughtlessly. If you feel hurt and show symptoms of bitter reaction or intolerance, then the feeling of disgust and displeasure in the minds of the onlookers will be more towards you than about your partner. To blurt forth is not so bad as to see one become intolerant and abusive about it. If you remain composed and patient, then all those present will feel very happy. More than the mistake of the mistaker, the patience of the patient, namely yourself, will be more in their minds. And that way both you and your partner become more acceptable to them.

This is the truth. But often I find that it is not recognized at all. A lot of discussion and debate becomes necessary before one comes to accept this basic truth.

If you are patient, then the other party will certainly think of your patience with respect and honour. Likewise, he will review his own mistake. And thus the way for correction becomes easy and smooth. On the

other hand, if you begin to fight and quarrel, then the other party will be tempted to take stand on prestige and many other such issues and there will be bitter arguments from both sides. The relationship will become very strained and each will not even like to see the other's face. Everything done by the person who is disliked, appears to be gravely wrong and it gives rise to further quarrels.

Many couples live all right in the first few years of their lives. But later, when they become parents and grandparents, obviously their problems and concerns grow in abundance. Naturally, the deeper human layers in them have to come to the forefront and express themselves out. Many points become issues and they are not able to see eye to eye with each other. In fact, with the passage of time, with growth in age and experience, knowledge also must grow, and with that qualities like adjustment, accommodation, etc. But this is not generally what we find among people. Introspection, the right pursuit of wisdom and restraint are lacking, and this is the only reason why human relationship degenerates.

My greatest pity on the account is because people do not understand that spiritual improvement and refinement is truly the improvement and refinement of the mind and behaviour. It is the mind that brings peace or anti-peace. As the stomach and intestines are relevant in the context of hunger and its appeasement the mind and

intelligence are the factors relevant in achieving peace and contentment. So every expression of the mind is important in the consideration of peace. People generally develop a flare for religion and religious routines, and so too for spiritual or yogic pursuits. And they are indifferent to the day-to-day behaviour and behavioural expressions. You will find several people who flare up with anger during the pooja they perform or the worship they offer. Often the quarrels will be with their own wife, family members, etc.

Spiritual perfection, as any other branch of improvement, rests solely upon mind and its expressions. If at all we discuss anything like God or the Soul as an item of knowledge, it is purely with the object of using the services of the intelligence – a faculty superior to the mind and its functions. For bringing the necessary correction and refinement in the mind and what it does. To use intelligence over mind is like using a steel tool to sharpen an iron instrument. Both are similar substances, or the same material, but one is superior in quality to the other.

One takes to meditation considering that it is the inevitable step in spiritual pursuits. One also reads scriptures. All this can be appreciated. But whether you meditate or not, you have ultimately to refine and season your mind and its outward expressions. *Meditation is no meditation unless it is able to bring a welcome influence on the mind and its working during non-meditation hours.*

Take the spiritual science and even the scriptures themselves and see what they say. When it comes to discussing the highest and final truths, they clearly say that the ability is really of holding one's peace despite whatever takes place around. It is to keep the mind and perception in such a way that the mind is able to preserve its peace under all circumstances. This is the true spiritual state. How can such a state be had unless we cultivate the right attitude in receiving and accepting the behaviour and conduct of the others around us, in the family or in office, at the market place or at the bus stand!

I am held to be a sannyasin or a saint. I do not deny this fact. But to the ordinary people, who are confused about spirituality and religion. I say I am more a 'humanist' than otherwise. If you come to the Ashram where I live, you will find me doing no formal worship or any other religious routine. It is not because I deny the need for all these. They are necessary and a help for a certain group of people and for a particular stage. Incidentally there is a Pooja Mandir in the Ashram and daily worship conducted there. But it is done and supervised by Mataji here, and other Ashram inmates and assistants. I personally like it very much. It is a need of our society as well as of an Ashram.

My point is not that. Even in highest spiritual life and practice, one is said to acquire Self or Truth knowledge. And this knowledge, a property or a becoming of the

mind and intelligence, one tries to preserve always. This kind of preservation and the attempt at it, is purely an internal process, which will be going on almost twenty-four hours of the day.

Probe into it well and deeply. What is that process? It is the constant watch and observation of the mind and its workings. Attitudes, qualities like adjustment, reconciliation with others etc. all come within the sphere of the mind and its expressions. They are all different shades of what the mind does from time to time.

When Geeta speaks so much about dvandvas (pair of opposites) and the need for following the path of nir-dvandvata (free from the pairs of opposites), it stresses nothing other than the sublimation and refinement of the mind's superficial and the so-called natural propensities.

'Na abhinandati na dveshti' means neither praise too much nor hate too much. *Veeta-raaga-bhaya-krodha* - always transcending (this will mean trying to transcend) the mind's natural forces of attraction, repulsion and fear. These are the oft-repeated statements of Geeta. Sri Krishna describes these as the sure traits of the wise and the illumined. Are not these the ways of handling and sublimating our mind and its propensities? If these are the qualities to be developed is not every bit of thinking and action, done throughout the day, whether it is within household in the manner of talking to and reacting to the relatives, assistants, servants or bosses to

be regarded as a peace of saadhana, the spiritual refinement process?



Effort at Harmony

Likes and dislikes, preferences and prejudices, *ishta* and *anishta*, in fact the various hosts of *dvandvas* (parts of opposites), are the constantly agitating and confusing factors for our mind. Whether it is in the religious sphere, in the secular sphere or any other, this itself is basically at work in man.

For the religious seeker, it takes a very long time to recognize that real saadhana – religious or spiritual effort – is to understand that this is so and then treat his own mind and intelligence with a view to harmonize these dvandvas. In the ultimate phase, even the thought of God as opposed to the thought of non-God is a kind of dvandva and that will be as much confusing and agitating to the devotee's mind as any other set of dvandvas. That is why the devotee is told that everything is God, God alone is all, thereby giving him no room to think of a non-God at all.

Look at the ritualistic fights and confusions. A life after death is posited first of all. Then two alternatives are set for it, one in the heavens and the other in the hells. Heaven is pictured beautiful, to the tastes and charms of the human mind. Hell is pictured as ugly and painful, to

the repulsion of one and all. By this means, the seed of a strong set of dvandvas is laid. That seed is made to sprout and grow. Life there and life here, these are the first set of dvandvas. The life there is then again divided as heavenly and hell-ly. Another dvandva set. That life and the one to come after, namely re-birth, are the next set of dvandvas. This life thus matched with the life that existed before it becomes another dvandva set.

In the household and the other dealings, the same dvandva fights go on for anything and everything. When someone disagrees with you, you instantly begin to dislike him. Why? No real reason can be adduced. Let me ask, why should the other always agree with you. To agree is as much as to disagree. One need not be preferred to the other. Reasons can be there for both. Suppose you develop a dislike towards some one. Then the mind starts feeling a strong contempt for everything he does and speaks.

Why should it be so? I do agree that this is the case with the mind of man, with people in general. But when we think about the ways of wisdom, of propriety and goodness, we cannot simply approve of it. If something is incorrect, let it be recognized as such.

The Actual Problem

You may now ask, if this be so, how can we conduct ourselves in our life, within the household, outside in the office etc.? Well this is the actual problem, the one

problem of life. Truly viewed, there is no other problem at all for any one, anywhere, any time, for any reason whatever.

For those who are able to understand this is the real problem, the way of the Wise will be great and ideal. To find out what exactly the way is not so easy. I do agree. But if you want it, you will have to think and search and ultimately find it. I am reminded of something I read in Sreemad Bhaagavatam, where a sage speaks to another about Sri Krishna in this manner:

The intelligence of even the wisest people finds it difficult to understand properly the contradictory nature of your life and actions. You say you have no desire to work, yet you are born and are acting variously. Devoid of Samsaara as your nature, yet you are born with a body in a very troublesome manner. Fearless and being the soul of even the God of Death, yet you are found to be running from your enemies. You say you are sporting in your own Self and you need nothing besides your Self for your joy and delight. Yet at the same time, you are living with thousands of women. All these are mutually opposite features, so much so that one gets utterly confused to conclude what you are in truth and what plays at the back of all that you say and do.

All this I said by the way. The main subject we are trying to understand is the existence of *ishta* and *anishta* and the

place they have in the mind of the illumined one. In other words, what is meant by sublimation of *ishta-anishta* (preferences-prejudices)? Where mind is, there likes and dislikes will also be. For in their absence, neither the so-called 'mind', or *vyavahaara* (worldly activities) will be possible. This is a fundamental law, a basic truth.

This is where the whole mystery comes in. Way for Truth and Freedom is the way above *ishta-anishtas*. But when the meaning of the whole process is studied, it becomes elusive.

Look at what Sri Krishna says to Arjuna in the Geeta. Krishna explained him from several points of view that to escape from war was not correct, not true, not good, not fruitful by any standard. That means the aspects of correctness, of truth, of goodness, of fruitfulness or profitability, all these, were exposed to Arjuna. He even went on to say that even if Arjuna made a mental effort to withdraw from the proposed war, it would only be at best a step in contemplation. In actual fact, it cannot be implemented in the physical level of things. One may desire or want to do a thing. But when he really makes an attempt to actualize that desire, he may not be able to succeed. Until an act is done externally as well, it cannot be considered to have been done. Therefore, the choice was left to Arjuna.

When thus everything is said and done, Sri Krishna concludes: "Arjuna, I have now told you all that needs to

be told. I have clarified all that which need be clarified. The whole knowledge about what is to be done, where and how, also what is not to be done is available to you. Reflecting over the Truths thus heard from me, come to your conclusion and whatever you feel like doing, do that to your heart's content. On my part, I shall be quite happy with it. Also I shall be at your front, as am I now, either to fight the war or to retreat from it."

Dear seekers, this is the mysterious way of the mind's sublimation. In sublimating the mind or its traits, there is no killing of the present normal traits. Its normal venues of wisdom are not annihilated. They should not be too. In addition to what the mind has now, it is given a new insight, perception. The new insight is that the likes and dislikes are not to be fought against and justified, especially the conflicting ones. On the other hand, they should be kept under check to provide for any situation for whatever reason it may arise.

Bhishma Shows the Ultimate Harmony

A typical situation comes to my mind. I always hold the grand father of the Pandavas and Kauravas, namely Bhishma, in high esteem. He was much respected by the people around, including Sri Krishna for his great wisdom, penance, sacrifice and boldness. Throughout his life he exemplified the magnificent display of human nature in the background of true wisdom.

He was the grandfather of not merely the Pandava brothers but also the Duryodhana brothers. His association with their dynasty began much prior to the birth of even Yudhishtira and Duryodhana. Somehow, the two sets of brothers quarrelled and a time came when Yudhishtira and the rest had to go in exile. The forest and incognito life of thirteen years over, a moral war ensued between them. Mind you, Bhishma was all along with Dhritaraashtra, the father of Duryodhana, in his palace.

Duryodhana's mind was filled with greed, intolerance and jealousy towards the Pandava brothers. He was being ill-advised by his close associates. As such he had no moral grounds at all in fighting the war. Yet Bhishma was on his side, because he had been along with that family and there was no special dislike or fear for the sake of which he should leave Duryodhana camp. Nevertheless, Duryodhana's intentions and ways he found to be clearly wrong. There were occasions when he also told the grandson about the wrongness of his pursuits. At the same time, he was prepared to fight the war physically on the side of Duryodhana. Don't you find a great contradiction in this? Or shall I say, this is the ultimate harmonious way of displaying the best human nature?

The actual fight began. The first few days were over. Some days marked the limelight of the Pandava camp, while on other days it was the other way round. Bloom

and doom were swinging on both sides. Duryodhana got disheartened. On the one hand his mind swelled with anger towards his opponents. On the other hand, diffidence and fear were harping on it. He went to the grandfather Bhishma. His was always the way of pain, of disrespect and challenge. Modesty was never his lot. So he spoke angrily, "My dear grandfather, it is my misfortune, my sorrowful plight that I have got my grandfather in a person like you. You are peerless in the three worlds. There is none to vanquish you in battle. Having such a one to command for me, why is my army slaughtered to death every day? I know you are on my side only physically. Your mind is for the Pandavas. Fie upon this double standard! If only you wish, the Pandava army will fall like moth on fire this very moment."

Bhishma was stung to hear these disloyal words. He replied firmly: "My dear boy, did I not tell you at the very beginning, your cause is vicious and as such you cannot have victory in this war? Besides, Lord Krishna is on the side of Pandavas. Where Krishna is, there success also is. He will be there only where morality and piety are. I have all the fighting skill, but with all that the Pandava brothers, with Sri Krishna to protect them cannot be exterminated.

However, I shall fight for you as I have always done. At this late hour, what is the point in blaming you again? I shall use sharper arrows, more so now that you have

poured fuel into my burning mind. You may see what transpires”.

What do you say about these words, this attitude of Sage Bhishma? My dear souls, to understand the intricate human nature, more so the queer course of goodness and devotion, you will need a very keen insight, an extremely sharp intelligence. Things are not so easy and shallow. When I hear people speak, make remarks, claim and swear for several things, on many occasions, it looks funny. He is a seeker who is humble and wise enough to seek and search. Let us always be open to probe into the hidden layers of our mind and nature and unearth the one great centre within it from where both good and bad have sprung, to which both good and bad point, on reaching which the good as well as the bad dissolve and disappear forever, revealing thereby the wonderful stretch of reality, rhythm and harmony.

The Process of Harmony

Truly speaking, when you near the exact subject and the actual way to practise it, ‘control’ is a very wrong word while speaking about the mind and his harmonization. To control means to apply pressure. Pressure can be applied only to a material act or thing. Matter alone would receive pressure and yield to it. But will the mind and intelligence, which are absolutely non-material-mark this expression - do so? Be careful the. Do not use the word ‘control’ and ‘pressure’ in the matter of

handling the psychic elements and features like mind and emotions – *ishta, anishta*, (likes, dislikes), etc.

Sublimation may be a far better word. Harmonizing or evenising may be another. The intention is that you should understand the difference between the two words and the process denoted by them.

Any one, as I said earlier, if he looks into himself, will find a set of likes and dislikes within him. Without them he cannot exist. He cannot be acting and living. The trouble is that though the likes and dislikes are indispensable they are conflicting with those of the others around. In the family which you live, you will find these conflicts. In the society in which you are, the same conflicts will again be there. In the country and in the world as well, the same will continue. Naturally the conflicts pose the highest problem. How will you resolve them? The solution is not in avoiding or annihilating the *ishta-anishtaas* in toto, but in understanding them properly and then making use of them in the most non-conflicting manner as possible.

Whatever and wherever you may be, at times you will not be getting or having to do what you like. Again, at other times, you will have to get or do what you dislike. In other words, neither your likes nor your dislikes can be honoured and complied with times in your life. What are you to do then?

Mind's harmony, Its Mysterious Course

Let me cite an instance. I have already told you, the way in which Sri Krishna gave the Geeta gospel to Arjuna and the manner in which he concluded. Here is another instance. Somehow instances like these become very dear to me. My mind always looked for them alone. Many others would have told you many other things about Krishna. They would have made a God of him and spoken in that strain always. That is the popular way. It is good too. But the right thinker and the enquirer will not be satisfied just by that. To praise anything good and anyone great is always good. That first of all marks your humility. Only where humility and piety are found, evolution and right understanding can be.

I too praise Krishna at times. I have always liked him. My liking was natural, even now it is so. But the way in which I have thought about him, when my mind picked up the mood of enquiry years back, has been rather typical. I always quote his own words in which he says: 'whoever understands me like this gets redemption from the binding world and life'.

इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न स बध्यते

iti mām yo'bhijānāti karmabhirna sa badhyate

I tried to understand him and his way, I have always been acting the way he did, and quite naturally the same

peace and clarity, or very nearly that, reigns in me too. Thanks to him, thanks to his heritage, thanks to the supreme wisdom of the land and people.

Everything was getting ready for the Mahabharata war, which brought the two sets of cousins into unimaginable opposition, which also made their elders take sides in a most mysterious manner.

However, Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandava brothers, the Dharmaputra, given always to softness and composure, found it still hard and painful to go ahead with the war. His heart even at that late hour yearned for co-existence and love. So he began to talk about his mind and feelings to Krishna, who was more a friend, confidant and guide to him than otherwise. His words:

“Krishna, my mind is still in utter anguish, thinking about the fight and consequent slaughter. Ah, how can I bear this outcome. My heart yearns to see the war avoided somehow. Will you, my dear Krishna, tell me how this can be accomplished? Shall I send some one to talk to Duryodhana and bring about a truce with him? How can I find one competent to fulfil this important mission? I feel you alone can undertake the task. I want you to go to Duryodhana and carry my message to him. Your object, Krishna, must be to somehow gain peace and avoid blood-shed. You should use all diplomatic words and with a diction which will surely yield the result we have in view!”

Krishna heard Yudhishtira patiently, pondered a while and then with a smile answered: “Respected Sir, I have all love for you. I always look to your welfare and am ready to ensure it at all times. If it is your desire to send me as your ambassador to Duryodhana, I shall indeed undertake the mission. But let me, however, tell you what I know to be the sure outcome. Duryodhana is one who has no concern either for the people around or for piety and righteousness. Regardless of any consideration, he is out to do harm and wrong to you. Little does he care for propriety or goodness in his ways. The irony is that his mind never repents for what he does, and so there is no misery too for him on account of what he does. So there is no chance for him to heed my words or your message for peace. He will not be content with anything short of actual battle and slaughter. However, I shall obey you and proceed as you say. Yes, I shall speak to him very selected words, and showing all humility and earnestness try to impress upon him the need and our request for peace. You may, however be sure of the outcome. I am out to please you and see that your mind begets peace. So let no stone remain unturned in our efforts for peace....”

See, what does Krishna say about his own feeling in the matter and at the same time promise Yudhishtira that he will do the way the latter wishes! Is not here Krishna giving vent to what he likes and knows, and immediately thereupon expressing his full readiness to do just the opposite? Both his own like and the like of

another, thus you find closely blending in what he speaks and does.

This is the way true harmony works in the thoughts and actions of a knowing man.

You may now ask: "If Sri Krishna did not consider truce mission to be necessary, why did he take it up? Why should a wise man proceed with an act, which he clearly knows is fruitless or bad." Well, this is the question which I want every one of you to enquire into and find a clear answer for.

As I have often said, evolution is for the mind and understanding of man. As long as the mind moves in a set pattern, no really serious problem or enquiry is taken up by it. The real enquiry will commence only when the mind is put to a conflict.

You should understand that for any human to live in the world there is the inevitable question of a community or group. Everyone is born of two persons – the father and the mother. The father and the mother have their respective relations, and thus the circle of the community grows. There is also the society around consisting of similar groups, children, parents, brothers, sisters, etc.

Thus any individual is closely knit to a group. This group may be his family, parental or matrimonial. It may as well be that of friends, co-workers, etc. Whatever

the kind and nature be, such a group or community is always there for every one.

Every one in such a group, to which one has one's moorings, associations and even dependence, has a mind which has its own background and influences. The individuality of man cannot be so easily altered or overcome. This is a basic truth.

As you cannot be indifferent to your own mind. So too you cannot afford to be negligent of others' minds. Also you cannot disregard your loyalties to any person or group. Loyalties come to be developed and established for one reason or another. Whatever the reason be, once they have gained ground, they need to be considered and treated, not utterly disposed of and disregarded. This is another must of one's life.

In case of Krishna, Yudhishtira was always dear and near to him. The dearness and nearness might have been for one reason or another. We are not to think of how one becomes dear to another, but only think of the fact of dearness. The dearness had become part of Krishna's mind. It is therefore natural that Sri Krishna pursues the dearness when Yudhishtira wanted to do something which was not useful and which he did not quite approve of.

The propriety of an act is one matter. It has to be considered and judged by our intelligence in its own setting and standards. Besides the propriety of an act,

one may want to do it, may feel compelled to do it. In this case, Yudhishtira always had a large catholic and accommodating heart. His heart would never allow him to do any harm to another so easily. Even when the best and the worst sacrifices on his part were called for, he would undertake the sacrifices rather than proceed to harm another. This was one important instance where the ultimate consequence would be a direct battle with his own cousins and the other relations. Could he ever think of such a battle? Even when pressed to fight, his mind brought forth the last notes of sympathy, consideration and sacrifice.

Well, that is not bad, on any ground. The only objection can be that it will not work in all cases, as in this case with Duryodhana. Nevertheless, there was the full need for Yudhishtira's mind to give vent to his sympathies. You should know that no urge of the mind will subside except through a process of expression. We can make the expression careful, cautious and even restrained if so needed. But suppression is bad in any way.

Sri Krishna first of all meted out a correct appraisal of the proposed step with enough of reason and judgement. That is correct and useful. The mind thinks and feels in its own ways. Not necessarily is it governed by any definite norms and ideals. Norms and ideals come from another sphere or level in us. That level is what we call as the **intelligence**. So if at all you want to bridle the mind and check its vagaries, the only royal

method will be to seek the intellect's assistance and then make the intellect tuition the mind in its own effective manner – Krishna here does it first. By doing so, Yudhishtira, if at all he had not himself done so, gets an opportunity to appraise his mind about the futility of the entire venture. Even after hearing Krishna's words, Yudhishtira was not appeased. The agitation in his mind continued and naturally he had to allay it by a process of actual expression, not withdrawal or restraint.

Side by side with this urge of Yudhishtira's mind was Krishna's love for him. As a lover, Sri Krishna would readily want to see Yudhishtira in peace, even when that would mean doing something which would ultimately be useless. Here more than the uselessness of the venture so far as its effect on Duryodhana goes, its usefulness to Yudhishtira's mind is the point that concerned Krishna. He did not go to Duryodhana to advise him and bring him the way Yudhishtira wished (for that was not possible), but he did so simply to bring consolation and satisfaction to Yudhishtira's mind. Is this not correct? Is this not the way any man of good feelings, love and sympathy would do?

When you view the ultimate purpose of any act that any one does at any time, you find it to be serving more himself than the others concerned. Everything is truly more subjective than objective.

The need for harmony and for that sake the need for gaining spiritual or philosophical wisdom arises only

because we have to get along with our life in the world. That is to say, we have to live with so many others similarly living around us, some of whom are closely linked to us and some remotely. So it is not enough if one's own life and its needs are cared and provided for. As you care for your own mind you have to care for the others' too. This is what makes life interesting. Equally it makes life exacting and problematic too.

The real moral or spiritual crisis arises when in a particular situation you are not able to strike a harmony between your likes, aspirations and ideals on the one hand and the compulsions or duties on the other. He is a Knower, a man of harmony, who can handle such situations, the conflicts of the mind and intellect, and act preserving his peace, wisdom and harmony. Let me cite another more complex and much debated instance of the Mahabharata War.

Think of Bhishma the great, Bhishma is one of the best Knowers of Truth. Even Sri Krishna had great regard for him. At the end of the war when Yudhishtira's mind got into uncontrollable grief thinking about the cruelty of having fought with his elders, more particularly with his elder brother, Karna, he got terribly afflicted. The thought that his own mother did not disclose to him the fact of Karna being his elder brother agitated him beyond measure, so much so he pronounced a curse – "let the women of the world be not able to keep a secret to themselves". Such was his agony and dismay. All his

brothers tried to assuage Yudhishtira's pain, but none succeeded. Sri Krishna, who at the beginning of the war advised Arjuna and set his mind right, also tried to give gospels to Yudhishtira, but poor Yudhishtira could not be consoled and enlightened. Sri Krishna, true to his honesty and greatness, admitted his failure and then straightway took Yudhishtira to the presence of Bhishma, who was then lying in the battlefield on a bed of arrows. It was Bhishma who then began an elaborate treatise of advice to the son of Pandu, on listening to which he felt peaceful and illumined. Such was the greatness and wisdom of Bhishma. That is why I take his instance for our illustration.

Why did the moral, ethical and the knowing Bhishma choose to fight on the side of Duryodhana, knowing and saying all the time that the person and his cause were wicked and hence would not triumph? This question is even today raised everywhere, and as I understand it, the correct answer and the truth implied are not explained, or even when explained, not understood properly.

Bhishma's association with the Kuru dynasty, in a way his relationship with the forefathers of both the Pandavas and Kauravas started long before the Mahabharata War. That is why he remained with King Dhritaraashtra. Virtually he was the real wielder of power. He was living and eating in the palace, which was in fact his 'family'. Now you have to consider the

instance of Mahabharata war and all that it brought in its wake, taking your stand in this background. The issue of war and the association of the different persons in it, either with Duryodhana or with Yudhishtira, everything has to be viewed and judged on the basis of this setting.

The brothers decided to fight with each other not at the instance of Bhishma, or at the instance of Drona, the common teacher of both the groups, or even at the instance of several other elders. In a way, even the father of Duryodhana, namely Dhritaraashtra, was against the venture of war.

The war was motivated by Duryodhana's own greed and wickedness, if we can use these terms to convey their purport. Every one advised Duryodhana on the impropriety and unnecessary nature of the proposed war. Several gospels were administered to him. But all these fell on deaf ears to produce no effect whatsoever. If at all, everything tended to aggravate his rivalry and enmity towards the sons of Pandu, so much so that with every word of advice his heart and senses began to burn, and he blurt forth most wounding words and remarks towards those who spoke to him, including Bhishma.

What was Bhishma to do then? This is the most crucial question. Normally man's nature – the nature of the unthinking and the unilluminated – is to revolt against those who refuse to listen to him, get irritated in spirit and purpose at them and then in protest leave their

presence either for an interim period or never to return again. This is what several brothers, sisters and even parents do in the world and the society. To do things which one likes and not to do those that one dislikes, is the common wont of any human. To be doing so one need not acquire any special wisdom or become spiritually illumined. Mark this fundamental truth.

Several brothers have parted forever on this basis. Parents have sometimes deserted their children. Children have abandoned their parents. Friends have separated forever on an issue of differences of opinions. To give vent to dislike and on that ground abandon the place where you have been living, abandon the very dear and near people with whom you have been, who gave you food, shelter and the other primary and secondary needs of life and thereby made what you are worthy of now, to do all this it needs no special knowledge, choice and attainment. Our instincts, our human corruption, will make us do so.

But here is the instance of a Great Soul, a Master Knower, one who transcends the ordinary swinging habits of the human mind, deluding arena of the unillumined intellect, whose thoughts and actions will naturally be, owing to his enlightenment and elevatedness of insight, far superior to and different from those of the ordinary run of mankind. Not for him to leave the place, persons and surroundings simply because one of his grandchildren (Duryodhana) chose to


be wicked and disastrous in his ways. Duryodhana would not have retreated from his wickedness if Bhishma had left the place, in any way. And what would Bhishma himself have gained by so doing?

This is one moral question – was it really necessary for the enlightened Bhishma to leave the palace and associations with which he lived until then? There is equally present another question – the place which sheltered him and the people who fed him until then, were they to be deserted or abandoned, due to the misconduct of just one person like Duryodhana? Where would his loyalty and goodness be? Is not the normal humanness, which enables one to grow and to achieve even the spiritual heights and glories, also to be considered? Is not such consideration part of the big moral complex? To consider one aspect of the morality, another should not be butchered.

So the real tussle is to preserve one's humanness, even when such preservation proves difficult, hard and painful. The way I understand Truth and Spiritual Wisdom tells me that a true seeker seeks and begets enlightenment in order to sustain his life even against the worst of odds, challenges and persecutions. Again, the enlightened one will be able to preserve his own state of freedom under any circumstances. The wicked designs and pursuits of Duryodhana should not be able to tarnish the mind or spiritual glories of Bhishma.

So, Bhishma chose to be where he was naturally. Unlike Vibheeshana the younger brother of the demon King Ravana, he did not consider it wise or necessary to leave the Duryodhana camp in order to beget the peace and preserve his own glory. Glory is glory indeed. It is bound to shine wherever it is, whatever encircles it. Maybe the process is more difficult and strenuous. But that should only prove to be a pleasure.

So the birth, associations and loyalties of Bhishma naturally kept him where he was until then. At the same time he did not say or feel the least at any time that Duryodhana's cause was correct or that he would win in the end. On the other hand, he was constantly advising Duryodhana about the wrongness of his pursuits and the sure defeat and doom it would drive itself to. And even when such advice was being given, he always assured Duryodhana that he would put his best in the battle. Doing a thing with all the sincerity and zeal, although its fate is clearly known to be a failure, is this not the best way of doing and acting for the Knower?



Deeper Notes of Wisdom and Harmony

Amazing Humility

Here is a strange story from the Mahabharata. The war between Kauravas and Pandavas had almost begun. Duryodhana's army with the grandfather Bhishma and teacher Drona at its head was standing in full readiness to fight Yudhishtira and his brothers. The whole scene unnerved Arjuna, as all of you know. An array of doubts, confusion and suffering assailed his mind. Unable to bear it himself, he looked to Krishna for instruction and help.

Sri Krishna rose to the occasion and imparted to him the right insight and illumination. Arjuna was surprised to find that even in the worst of crisis like this, there was still a clear course of action, safe and redeeming, which fulfilled the demands of propriety, of human sentiments and ideals. Arjuna's confusion was cleared, his mind steadied and his boldness recovered. Everything looked well and luminous to him now.

He was ready to begin the war and fight it to the end. Both the armies became impatient to unleash the ceaseless discharge of arrows. But lo, something

happened! The eyes of Arjuna and the others suddenly fell on Yudhishtira, their eldest brother. They found the son of Dharma all of a sudden remove his armour, leave aside his bow and arrow and get down from his chariot. With his hands humbly folded in devotion and piety, he began to walk straight eastward looking to the place where stood the grandfather Bhishma.

Seeing their brother proceed thus to the opposite camp in haste and without speech, Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva were shaken out of their wits. Each of them began to wonder in his own way what the son of Dharma was proposing to do. All of them in turn tried to dissuade him. But their effort was of no avail. Yudhishtira walked forward as if he heard nothing.

The brothers were puzzled and aggrieved. They were almost sure that the kind-hearted elder was going to seek peace at any cost. "No kingdom, no prosperity, no offer, nothing do I want. Peace is my one aim, and for its sake shall I sacrifice anything at my command, even this war altogether", these they thought, would be his words the next moment. "What a great tragedy", they wondered. "Is all our planning and campaigning, is all the valour and determination to be in vain, of no avail at all", each murmured to himself.

Arjuna turned to Krishna in an attempt to know how best could his brother's heart be resisted. But Krishna only smiled and kept quiet. He knew well what the thought of Yudhishtira could be. He was sure that

Yudhishtira was not one to be troubled and confused as the younger ones. He carried in him greater depth, deeper insight and bolder decision. It is only that he would always want to display the best notes of loyalty and goodness, even when placed in front of the worst cruelty. So Krishna said to Arjuna: “Dear one, be at peace. I know well what your brother proposes to do. May everything be well with him and bring goodness to all of you”.

Yudhishtira went straight to the grandfather and bending his head low, humbly submitted. “The course of life in this world is, for any one very queer indeed. Hardly is there anything which destiny cannot drive one to. As is the whole nature steeped in mystery, so too are the developments which face man at times. It is indeed a sheer conspiracy of destiny and will that has led me to this kind of a war. I have but one wish at this late juncture. Fight you must and will for Duryodhana, but bless you must myself, and my brothers. Fight I shall this cruel war, but only when guided and protected by you.”

आमन्त्रये त्वां दुर्धर्ष त्वया योत्स्यामहे सह ।

अनुजानीहि मां तात आशिषश्च प्रयोजय ॥

āmantraye tvām durdharṣa tvayā yotsyāmahe saha |
anujānihi mām tāta āśiṣaśca prayojaya ||

Mahabharata: Bhishmaparva: (43.37)

To these baffling words of baffling wisdom the grandfather replied:

यद्येवं नाभिगच्छेथा युधि मां पृथिवीपते ।

शपेयं त्वां महाराज पराभावाय भारत ॥

प्रीतोऽहं पुत्र युध्यस्व जयमाप्नुहि पाण्डव ।

यत्तेऽभिलषितं चान्यत् तदवाप्नुहि संयुगे ॥

त्रियतां च वरः पार्थ किमस्मत्तोऽभिकाङ्क्षसि ।

एवंगते महाराज न तवास्ति पराजयः ॥

अर्थस्य पुरुषो दासो दासस्वर्थो न कस्यचित् ।

इति सत्यं महाराज बद्धोऽस्म्यर्थेन कौरवैः ॥

अतस्त्वां क्लीववद्वाक्यं ब्रवीमि कुरुनन्दन ।

भृतोऽस्म्यर्थेन कौरव्य युद्धादन्यत् किमिच्छसि ॥

yadyevam nābhigacchethā yudhi mām pṛthivīpate |
śapeyam tvām mahārāja parābhāvāya bhārata ||

prīto'haṁ putra yudhyasva jayamāpnuhi pāṇḍava |
yatte'bhilaṣitaṁ cānyat tadavāpnuhi saṁyuge ||

vriyatām ca varaḥ pārtha kimasmatto'bhikāṅkṣasi |
evāṅgate mahārāja na tavāsti parājayah ||

arthasya puruṣo dāso dāsasvartho na kasyacit |
iti satyam mahārāja baddho'smyarthena kauravaiḥ ||

atastvām klīvavadvākyaṁ bravīmi kurunandana |
bhṛto'smyarthena kauravya yuddhādanyat kimicchasi ||

Dutiful Grandson

If you had not chosen to come to me and to seek my consent and blessings, perhaps my sentiment would have been hurt and I would have pronounced a curse on you for your defeat. But now that you have come as a dutiful grandson, I am immensely pleased. This is the noble way the innocent and the righteous should act even when facing the worst of ordeals and conflicts.

Adversities may try to tear one asunder. The severest of opposition may stare at him all around. Mutually conflicting duties may weigh upon his mind, trying to pull it hither and thither. A chain of doubts may dance on his intelligence, fear may envelop his nature. Yet, despite everything and all, the noble one of true discrimination should not lose heart and ignore the deep sense of loyalty and goodness.

The righteous may outwardly face persecution, be humbled piteously at times. But inwardly, right in the core of his being, he should not allow himself to slip from his real nature. To disconnect totally the present from its bearing upon the past – which indeed has moulded the present into what is before him and then to behave callously, utterly forgetting the loyalty and affiliations of the past is the most heinous moral crime of

any human mortal. It is the worst suicidal step one can afford to take in this world.

To think of what was in the past and then to relate it loyally to what is the present, to blend thus the loyalties of all fronts, without hurting or sacrificing any one of them in particular, and thereby to evolve the sweetest notes of harmony and understanding, is the last secret of successful human adventure on earth. It is the infallible natural path for achieving immortal success.

The behaviour of yours no doubt befits a true and worthy grandson of mine. You have indeed pleased me to the core. I am ready to give the benefit of any blessing. Fortified by my blessing, let your goodness prevail stronger and triumph against all odds. Truly the best reward for one's goodness is its own unhindered persistence, the ability to preserve it under all conditions. There is no force either here on the earth or in heavens above to stand up against the might and merit of goodness. Goodness is goodness indeed, and it will always bring the best in its wake, wherever it is and whatever tries to thwart it any time.

Fight for Them, But Wish for you

True to my loyalty to the Duryodhana family, I shall fight for them. But nevertheless I will at all times bless you and your brothers. Fight gallantly therefore, dear son, and win too in the end.

As for me, my plight is strange. It cannot be helped or avoided. There is a saying current in the world - man is always a servant of money, while money is never the servant of any one. This saying is true, no doubt, in respect to anyone, it is true of me too. I find more so on this occasion and especially in the context of this resolve of mine to fight against you.

By the fact of my life in the palace of Dhritaraashtra, by the fact of the eating, drinking and sleeping I did and am still doing in their hands, by the fact that they were and are the nourishers of my body. I am bound by the chord of *artha* (money, living resources), to the Kauravas. My body has eaten and thrived on the food of theirs. This forged a loyalty in me, and like any other loyalty of mine, I have to be, I am, true to it as well. I say this without shame or pride. An act or a step may at times prove very painful. Even then the wise and courageous will not spare it, but court it with the whole of their heart. That is the real heroism of the humble and the wary. It is true that the second object of human pursuit, namely *artha*, has bought me thus for the Kauravas and made me determined to fight for them. Fight apart, therefore, O Pandava, ask for anything from me that you desire. Let whatever be your heart's wishes, ask for them, and give all those shall I to you this instant.

Yudhishtira on hearing the grandfather submitted his demand:

मन्त्रयस्व महाबाहो हितैषी मम नित्यशः ।

युध्वस्व कौरवस्यार्थे ममैष सततं वरः ॥

mantrayasva mahābāho hitaiṣī mama nityaśaḥ |
yudhvasva kauravasyārthe mamaiṣa satataṁ varaḥ ||

Mahabharata: Bhishmaparva: (43.43)

‘Everyday, O great one of mighty hands, seek to will for my benefit; desire victory for me. Fight you do for Duryodhana. This is the boon I seek of you. This is my heart’s wish.’

To this Bhishma replied:

Fight I shall for another, but wish and will, I will for your sake. Whatever else you need in particular, ask for that as well from me.

Yudhishtira then desired to know how could the grandfather be defeated by them, as he was always unconquerable. He wanted to be told in particular of the secret means by which the invincible Bhishma could be overcome in war. Bhishma then replied:

“Surely, none in the battlefield can stand up against me. I don’t see any one powerful enough to give me battle and defeat me. Even the God of gods (Devendra) cannot put me to defeat. The time has not come for me to die either. So go now O king, come to me again.

Yudhishtira and the rest went back. The war began. First day was followed by the second. Each day was thus followed by the next. The events of some days were pleasing to Yudhishtira, but soon the picture changed and the king began to lose his spirits. His men died in large numbers and the whole army got reduced in its strength and hope. Everywhere flowed the stream of blood. Victory seemed to be nowhere or it looked too far removed and indefinite.

It was the ninth day and there was heavy killing and loss. At dusk, as usual, the war stopped and both the armies withdrew to their camps. Yudhishtira was terribly disheartened. He sat with his brothers and Krishna, and there was a thorough discussion among them about the plight they were in. Relating his doubts and fears about what was to follow, Yudhishtira said: 'As long as this invincible grandfather is erect with his bow and arrow, we cannot avoid death and defeat. I verily do not know what should be done by us. I wish to save our men, fight to the last and gain victory. But this does not seem to be possible when I think of the grandfather, the dispenser of death to his opponents.

Sri Krishna encouraged him with all promises and hopes. He said that for the sake of Arjuna and his brothers, he would himself, if necessary, take up the task of killing the grandfather. Moved by love, Krishna declared: "I will vindicate your cause and make you victorious, come what may. Even if I have to break my

promises, I will protect Arjuna and yourselves.” Finally, it was resolved that all of them should go to the grandfather and seek instruction about the means of putting him down. They all went to the camp of Bhishma. The grandfather greeted them all fondly: “Come dear ones; what is there which I may do, so that you will be pleased? Even if what you seek is extremely hard to execute, come tell me, and I shall indeed do it for you.”

It was then that Yudhishtira spoke to his grand father.

Yudhishtira Seeks a Most Baffling Boon

“O knower of righteousness, how are we to gain victory over you? How can I gain back my kingdom? By what means can I avoid this terrible loss of people on my side? Please tell me yourself the secret means for bringing your downfall? How are we to bear you in battle? I don’t find even a small hole of weakness which we can exploit for defeating you. The stream of arrows discharged by your bow is so thick and continuous that your whole body remains veiled by it. Neither when you take the bow nor while you string it nor again when you fix the arrow nor while you pull the string to dispatch it are we able to spot your presence in the battle field. You are verily a terror of destruction to my army. You have already dispatched to the abode of Yama vast numbers of my people. I have to win you in the war. I have to get back my kingdom. May I know from yourself how these

ends can be accomplished? Be kind enough to instruct me on the means of destroying yourself.”

Bhishma heard his grandson with all love and care, and then proceeded to give him with compassion the instruction he so desperately sought:

Bhishma Reveals How to Kill Him

“True, even the Gods of heavens cannot fight and cow me down as long as I am armed and I remain upright on the chariot. While my bow and weapons are in my hands, none indeed can dislodge me from the chariot. But the moment I lay the bow and arrows down, the heroes of war can defeat me. I shall, O King, tell you of a vow I undertook long back.

I will not wish to fight with one who has laid his weapons down, one who has fallen, one devoid of his armour and flag staff, one who is running in escape, one who is in discomfiture, one who says, “I am yours”, one who is a woman, one who is a eunuch, one who bears the name of woman, one disabled or not fully limbed, one who is the only son to his parents, one who is of low character. This is my resolve. On seeing one who looks inauspicious, surely I will not fight.

Dear king, is there not in your army the son of Drupada, a victorious fighter, who ever loves to fight and win? He was born a woman but became a man. Let your brother Arjuna keep him, Shikhandi, in front. Protected well by

his armour, let him then shoot sharp and powerful darts at me. I will never think of aiming my arrows at Shikhandi, whose smell is inauspicious, especially as he was born a woman. Just at that critical juncture, making timely use of this loophole of mine, let Arjuna hit me with his penetrating arrows. Let there be no delay. I find none else than the mighty Krishna and the clever Arjuna to vanquish me in war. Therefore, let Arjuna keep another in front and then fight to dislodge me from my chariot. By this means will you, O king, win the war. O high-souled son of Kunti, if you but do the way I have instructed, no doubt will you vanquish all those who fight for Dhritaraashtra.

This is the scene I wish to present to you as a striking instance to illustrate the amazing notes of harmony and determination the human mind, in a state of dedicated action, is capable of rising to. I personally cherish this scene the perplexing background of indispensable loyalties, challenges and duties.

I love to ponder over its abstruse implications. I find no words to amply relate what mind and understanding really feel about the way in which both the adorable grandfather and the righteous grandson came to express freely, without any reservations, the deepest notes of human goodness and mutual concern in the most irksome background of their own indispensable loyalties and ideals.

I am happy that this country even in the earliest of times did produce men and women who could think so deeply and elevate their insight so well that they succeeded in finding a clear way by which the best of human feelings can be blended with the highest of man's reason, the most imperative needs and urges of ours can be fused with even the hardest of our ideals, and thereby we can rise safely to a magnificent note of abiding harmony and true wisdom. Had it not been for this superb note of harmony and wisdom, I would surely have found my life a constant ache and a confusing challenge. I am happy that my body was born in this holy land and my mind and nature have inherited this graceful culture, which evidently holds within it all the power and scope to accept, assimilate and absorb even the most painful trials and contradictions, which either the individual or the collective life, or both together, may impose on us while living upon this wide earth.

Dear souls, life in the world is not always a joke. I agree that we should make it one. Only when one grows in one's understanding and at last realizes the whole of our life to be a veritable drama, alluring and complex in every respect, can one hope to maintain the right sense of judgement, the requisite degree of courage and realism, to express outwardly, without any fear or apprehension, what one's intrinsic innocence and all that it dictates prompt one to from time to time.

Think of the spiritual soul, which is totally dissimilar to the body, incarnating in the body. It is unconditioned and blissful at all times. Yet why does it choose to be present in the body and thereby undergo seeming limitations and troubles? Think, likewise, of the so-called God, who is all-full and hence has no need for anything at all. Why should He have chosen to cause this troublesome menace called creation and to perpetuate it in this way? Are not these two instances self-contradictory? You too, in the same way, may have to move and act while alive here, facing at times situations and events which, met with reason, may disprove themselves. This paradox of the world and our life in it cannot be altogether avoided or cured.

Whatever be the contradictory note one may face during his life, the wise man cannot forsake his innate goodness and its sublime inspiration. The only way then will be to let the external life and actions be what they are, while, inside and beneath them all, to struggle oneself hard to let the sweet echo of the heart and its tunes be heard and preserved.

There is truly nothing which Nature and Destiny cannot drive one to. The instance of the grandfather and the grandson, as we find it here, is one typical in this regard. We should not grow timid and ask nature and Destiny to alter its course. Instead we should be determined to preserve our own goodness and loyalty, nevertheless keeping always in tune with both Nature and Destiny.

The real human drama starts when one's goodness and loyalties begin to clash with the circumstances one finds oneself in, with the demands of those that are around one. It tends to progress as and when this clash grows in this tempo and intensity. Ultimately it will end with triumph when goodness wins the better of the two.

Our life will not be worth living if it turns to be poor in the matter of sound virtues and feelings. Let the most benign feelings adorn our mind at all times and the best of insight grace our intelligence. Only when these are amply present, we can pursue our life without any cause for alarm or remorse. In fact, only then will our life grow rich, radiant and joyful.



Other Books (in English) by Poojya Swamiji

Title	Description
Brahma Vidya Abhyasa	An illuminating exposition of the profound truths of Vedanta. The technique to perceive the Ultimate Reality presented with unique clarity and openness.
Quietitude of the Mind	Supreme Wisdom about human mind and its ultimate "Quietitude" - based on selected verses from Yogavaasishtha Ramayana (Upasama Prakarana).
Vedantic Way of Living	Vedantic Wisdom and the Right Way of Living. A lucid, comprehensive presentation of the different paths leading to Man's supreme Goal.
Secret of Self-Realization	Divine key to direct experience of the Self
My Beloved Baba	The story of Baba Gangadhara Paramahansa - Swamiji's Gurudev. An exceptionally open narration revealing great Truths from the spiritual life and pursuit of a Paramahansa. The narration depicts Baba's growth under his Guru and also Swamiji's spiritual Unfoldment in the association with Baba.
Song of the Soul	A poetic vision of the culture that led to the genesis of Bhagavadgeeta.
Be what you are	Correspondence - Swamiji's reply to seekers' queries on Various aspects of life and saadhana.

Words that illumine (Vol 1 & 2)	Collection of inspiring words and aphorisms for daily Contemplation.
Sannyaasa – An Inner Pilgrimage	Clarification of various doubts about sannyaasa and its Relevance in the Modern Age.
Aatmaanubhooti (Self-Experience)	Sanskrit shlokas on Self-realization composed by Swamiji (with English Translation)
Essential Concepts of Bhagavadgeeta (Volume 1, 2, 3, 4)	A Novel exposition of the important messages of Bhagavadgeeta, emphasizing their relationship to Practical Saadhana.
Vicharasetu – The Path of Introspection	Monthly English Journal on Brahmavidya, containing Swamiji's articles, talks & Correspondence.
Divinizing Every Moment	A very rich collection of Poojya Swamiji's correspondence with seekers, highlighting various important aspects of a seeker's life and pursuit.
Nityasamarpanam	A collection of shlokas and hymns chanted during daily prayers & satsangs in the Ashram.
Prabhaata-rashmih Volume 1 & 2	A unique collection of daily morning guidance given by Poojya Swamiji to the seekers and visitors at the Ashram.
Genesis & Relevance of Temple Worship	A succinct introduction to the genesis of temple worship culminating in the enquiry of the Ultimate Truth.





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Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha is a Sage who has truly fulfilled that rare and ancient ideal - the quest of jivanmukti (liberation while yet living). As a sincere seeker of Truth comes in contact with this self-realized Master, he finds a spark of divinity and wisdom kindled within him. The path of spiritual life unfolds before him, revealing all its beauty, simplicity and charm - gradually leading him on towards the realization of his own innate perfection.

Entering into Sanyasa at the young age of 23 years, Swamiji established Narayanasrama Thapovanam in Trichur, Kerala and since then for the past three decades, he has travelled extensively all over India, Malaysia, Singapore, the United States and Canada, becoming well-known for his compelling and incisive presentation of the Gita, the Upanishads, Srimad Bhagvatham, the Yoga Vasishtha and other Vedantic literature.

In recent years, Swamiji has initiated an endeavour to regenerate and integrate society in the light for our ancient culture and age old heritage.

Religion started from man, not from God. It is for man, not for God. It has therefore to end with man. For that it must conform to the practical needs of man's own life here and succeed in fulfilling his intrinsic aspiration and urges, whatever they are.

from this book