30. One God : basic truth of all faiths

ALL religions, all scriptures, all spiritual teachings point only to one truth--the Unity of Dignity. You may profess whatever faith you like. But you should not disparage another's beliefs. It is a travesty of devotion.

The propaganda, indulged in by some propagators of Christianity, casting aspersions on other faiths, does great harm to the personality of Jesus.

Oh man! Through good deeds and sacrifice

Foster the feeling of Love

Get rid of evil traits

And lead a worthy life.

Embodiments of Love! There is nothing more precious in the world than Time. You should not waste even a single minute of it. Men today tend to waste their time in selfish pursuits instead of devoting it to selfless service. They are eager to receive help from others, but have no desire to render help.

There are two types of human beings--the degraded and the sublime. The degraded are those who seek or receive things from others and not only forget to repay the obligation, but even try to harm those who have helped them. The sublime are those whose natural trait is to go to the help of others. If they give a word they will try to honour it whatever the difficulties and obstacles. They will not go back on their pledges, regardless of what others may say or do.

Journey to the Diane

The Bharatiya Culture which laid emphasis on the four Purusharthas (the basic aims of life--Dharma, Artha, *Kama rind Moksha),* looked upon life as a journey to the Divine---the attainment *of Moksha (*Liberation). But how can men caught up in the quest for wealth and sensuous pleasures develop the desire for *Moksha?* Man today makes no attempt to discover his true nature or his real destiny. Forgetting the great truths given to the world by Bharatiya sages and seers, men are leading utterly meaningless lives, unaware of the potentiality of the human to become the Divine.

There is, for instance, the simple gesture of folding hands when one greets another in offering *"Namaskar."* What is the inner significance of this gesture? For one thing, the coming together of the two palms is a demonstration of the unity that subsumes the multiplicity. For another, it represents the offering of the five sense organs and the five organs of action to the Lord as an act of surrender. The Muslims use the term Salaam as form of greeting. What does the word mean? "Sa" refers to "Sat", the Lord who is the embodiment of Truth, Awareness mad Bliss *(Sat-Chith-*Ananda); "*La*" means "*layam*" (mergence). Salaam means merging in the Supreme who is also the embodiment of Truth and Bliss. The Christians also have similar expressions for indicating submission to the Divine.

The Basic Truth

All faiths have emphasized one common factor-- that there is only One God and Truth is His form. There are no differences between Hindus, Muslims and Christians on this basic concept.

All religions, all scriptures, all spiritual teachings point only to one truth---the unity of Divinity. Instead of realising this, men are lost in wrong paths.

Jesus sacrificed his life for the regeneration and welfare of mankind. Today there are some who exaggerate the so-called differences between different faiths and, for their own selfish purposes, exploit these differences and thereby bring a bad name to the great founders of these religions, who were spiritual giants. No prophet or messiah asked his followers to hate other religions or the followers of other faiths. Every religion has declared that God is One and that the Divine dwells in every being, Jesus also proclaimed the truth that the One Spirit resides in all beings. When Jesus was addressing the dews, an ethereal voice declared: "All lives are one, my dear Son. Be alike to everyone." When Jesus was being crucified, the same ethereal voice declared that the human body is only a vesture for the Spirit. The body is subject to constant change. But the indwelling Spirit is immoral. This was the truth proclaimed by Vedanta when it said: "The body is a temple in which the Eternal Spirit resides as the Indweller." The inner meaning of this is that wherever you may go, the Eternal Spirit remains with you. You must regard the body as the temple of the Spirit; bear in mind that Divinity is ever within you. Only when you realise this truth can you begin to experience the Divine.

Do not decry other religious faiths

Whether in Hinduism or Buddhism, Jainism or Sikhism, Christainity or Islam, Divinity is One and ONE ONLY. Those who profess great love for their particular religion are indulging in make-believe when they assume that their religion is superior to that of others. Hindus regard Hinduism as the greatest religion. Wherein lies its greatness? If you declare that the God of all religions is One, why claim superiority for Hinduism and decry other religions? Does that bespeak your love for Hinduism? This applies also to those professing Christianity. They say: "We are Christians. We believe in the unique divinity of Jesus. There is no other divine Saviour." One may claim that Jesus is Divine. But is he entitled to deride other religions? No religion should allow decrying of other faiths. It is not a religion at all that cavils at other religions. It is a form of arrogance. The great saints who worshipped Chest or Rama or Krishna or Allah were inspired by their profound teachings. But how many of the followers of these faiths live up to these teachings today? If the teachings of the Founder of a religion are not followed, can it be called a religion? Those who, in the name of religion, further their selfish interests are bringing discredit on the founder of the religion.

The first thing to be learnt is that THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD. Men may be different in form and name and colour and their country and historical circumstances may vary. But, God has no such differences. Hence, you should not cavil at any religion or attack it or deride it. You may profess whatever faith you like. But, you should not disparage another's beliefs. It is a travesty of devotion. Sri Krishna says in the Gita that the mark of a true devotee is absence of illwill towards anyone *(Adweshtaa Sarva-boothaanaam).* We must respect the divine that is in every creature.

Religious intolerance

It is a characteristic of the *Kali Age* that one religion is pitted against another. This only reveals the small-mindedness of the followers and is not the fault of the founders. It stems from envious intolerance and egoistic conceit. These afflictions prevent one from understanding his own religion, while condemning that of others.

No one should cast aspersions on the deities or founders of other faiths. All of them are worthy of worship. It is narrow-minded pettiness to say Jesus is great and Rama or Krishna is small or vice versa. Such misguided propaganda is puerile and demeaning. It is not an index of true devotion. It is a kind of mental aberration.

We are all aware of the kind of selfless service which birds, animals and trees are rendering to man. But we see many men who out of selfishness are not only ungrateful to their community, their parents and their *Gurus,* but even to God. Such persons can never come to anything good. They do not realise the truth of the saying, "As you sow, so shall you reap." If you have good thoughts and do good deeds, they multiply like good seeds sown in a well-manured field. But if you fill your heart with bad feelings, bad thoughts will multiply many-fold.

The meaning of true devotion

You must make continuous effort to cultivate your heart on right lines. *Karma Yoga* and *Jnana Yoga* are considered important for this purpose. But these disciplines are not easy to practise. *Bhakti Yoga,* the path of devotion, is superior to these. The devotee seeks to enjoy the bliss of continuous contemplation of the Diane and does not even desire *Moksha* mergence in the Divine.

Devotion means giving up all other desires and dedicating all actions and thoughts to God. When you offer every act of yours to God, it becomes worship. Everything you do must be done as an offering to God. The body has been described as the temple of God. You must fill yourself with the feeling that God is in you, beside you, around you, and with you wherever you go. When you love God with this consciousness, the love results in Self-realisation.

There are two forms of Love. One binds you to God. The other binds you to the world. The mind is responsible for either of these states. It is like a lock. If you turn the key to the right, the lock opens. If you turn the key to the left, it gets locked. The heart is the key to the lock of the mind. If you turn the key towards the world, you have attachment (bondage). You must see that desire and hatred do not get lodged in the mind. Bear no ill-will towards anyone. Avoid the company of those who are evil-minded. By cultivating the company of the good, you can raise yourself, because your bad qualities get diluted by association with the good, like sewage water when it enters the sea.

Good company takes one near to God

In the Ramayana, we see that by his association with Hanuman, Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana, was transformed into a devotee of the Lord. On the other hand, Kaikeyi, because of the influences of the evil-minded Manthara, brought infamy and widowhood upon herself and estranged herself from her noble son Bharata.

In the Mahabharata, we have the example of Dharmaraja, who had to endure many difficulties and humiliations because of indulgence in gambling with dice during a brief association with the wicked Kauravas. Association with the evil-minded can lead to endless troubles. Pay any price to avoid the company of the bad. Pay any price to acquire the company of the good. The company of the good takes you near to God. *Sadhana* makes you dear to the Lord. When you are near and dear you become one with God. When you have realised God, you have secured everything. Without God, everything else is valueless.

There are many who are deeply devoted to Jesus. Their duty is to glorify the great message of Jesus. The most important message of Jesus is the establishment of "Peace on Earth and goodwill

among men." Without peace, mankind cannot achieve progress in any sphere---material, spiritual or moral.

Jesus's vital message to mankind

In the *Treta Yuga,* Sri Rama came to establish the reign of *Sathya and Dharma* (Truth and Righteousness). In the *Dwapara Yuga,* Sri Krishna came with the mission to promote Prema and S*hanthi* (Love and Peace). In the *Kali Yuga* {the present yuga, *Sathya Dharma Shanthi* and *Prema* are the purposes of the Divine Mission. Hence you must make these four the guiding principles of your 1ife. When you adhere to these four principles, *Ahimsa* (Non-violence) issues as a natural result. There is no use in merely invoking the name of Jesus and praying to Him without regard to His most vital message: "God is in everyone. Do not revile anyone. Do not cause harm to anyone." This was Jesus's greatest message.

At present there is a growing tendency among propagators of the Christian faith to cast aspersions on other religions. Money is being spent lavishly to spread Christianity. None of you should have any part in such activities. This type of propaganda does great harm to the personality of Jesus, Jesus was a supremely pure and sacred person. To forget Jesus's teachings and to profess love for Him is no love at all. You must all remember: "God is One. Love is God. Live in Love." Only by this means can humanity, despite the many divisions that exist at present, be unified. Absorb the teachings of all the great seers and prophets. Do not despise anyone. Everyone is entitled to accept what is good from any source. Differences of creed and caste are irrelevant. There is only one caste, the caste of humanity. There is only one religion, the religion of Love. There is only one language, the language of the heart. There is only one God, He is omnipresent.

Develop a broad outlook

No quarter should be given for propaganda which sets up one religion against another. All the diverse communities in the nation should be united. Mankind should become one family. The world will then become a paradise. If differences are allowed to grow, the nation will disintegrate. It is said that atom bombs will reduce the world to ashes. But those who are promoting religious bigotry and hatred are doing worse damage than what the atom bombs can do. They are destroying the love and compassion in human hearts. They are breaking up mankind into fragments. There is no greater sin than this.

What the world needs today is the redeeming and unifying force of love---love which continually expands and embraces more and more people. By giving up narrow ideas regarding one's religion, nation or caste, by developing a broad outlook and cultivating the company of the good, you can elevate your 1ife and make it meaningful and satisfying. Many of you have come from distant countries at great expense. You must make good use of your stay here by cultivating good company, imbibing good thoughts, developing a large-hearted attitude towards all, taking to heart the wise words of elders and trying to put into practice at least some of their teachings. Otherwise, you will have wasted both life and money.

I wish you all happiness.

Christmas Day Discourse at Brindavan, on 25-12-1985.

The word Dharma, which is really bound up with an infinite variety of meanings, is being inadequately described by one word, duty, in modem age. Duty is something which is connected with an individual, a predicament, or with a particular time or country. On the other hand, Dharma is eternal, the same for everyone, everywhere. It expresses the significance of the inner Atma. The birth place of Dharma is the heart. What emanates from the heart as a pure idea, when translated into action will be called Dharma.

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