36. Love: Sacrifice :Unity

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! There is a Creator for this marvellous and beautiful cosmos, consisting of moving and unmoving objects. He is Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent. He has been worshipped as God by many names and in many forms by various people.

Adored by Muslims as Allah,

As Jehovah by Christians,

As the Lotus-eyed Lord by Vaishnavites,

As Sambhu by Saivites,

The One who confers health and wealth,

Revere Him as the one Supreme Omni-Self

Unity, fellow-feeling and devotion are essential for every human being. To promote these sacred qualities in mankind, some great souls sought to establish different religions. Religion is not a restrictive concept. Religion is intended to develop the human personality and indicate the basic guide-lines for right living. Religion brings out the humanness in man and enables him to live in harmony with his fellow-men. It provides the link between the individual and the Divine. It demonstrates the unity that underlies the diversity in the world.

Love, Sacrifice, Service and Righteousness are the four limbs of Religion. Religion brings out the divine and sublime feelings in man and makes him serve society It evokes all that is great, blissful and good in men and demonstrates the unity of mankind.

It is supremely unfortunate that Religion, which has such high and sacred objectives, is construed and practised in a narrow way and propagated as a narrow creed.

Religion is like an undercurrent that sustains the whole of humanity. The founders of religions, with a view to spreading the subtle secrets of religious faith, laid down certain rules of conduct and conveyed their message to the people.

What the religions teach

Buddhism declared that Truth and Non-violence are the basic requisites', for getting rid of delusions and achieving purity in life.

Christianity proclaimed that all are children of God and should have fraternal feelings towards each other. Jesus declared: "All are one, be alike to everyone."

According to Islam, all are members of one family in spiritual terms. It regarded prayer as the best means of ensuring peace and security in society.

Emperor Manu declared: *"Thyajeth deham Kulasyaarthe; Kulam janapadaschaarthe"* (One must be prepared to sacrifice his body for his community and his community for the sake of the nation). Manu's *Dharmasastra* laid down that the welfare of society is most important.

The Upanishads declared: *"Sahasraakshas-sahasrapaad"* (The Divine has a myriad eyes and a myriad feet). All eyes are God's; all feet are His; all hands are His. This was the message of the *Upanishads.* In this manner, the *Upanishads* emphasized the oneness of humanity.

For man, it is the collective concept that is fundamental and not individualism. No one can live in this world all by himself. He has to cultivate the sense of community if he wishes to live in peace and happiness.

"Sahanaa vavathu; sahanau bhunakthu; sahaviryam karavaavahai" (Let us live together; let us struggle together; let us grow together in joy and harmony). This was the teaching of the *Vedas.*

The greatness of unity and purity

It is evident that in this way all religions propagated unity for promoting the well-being of society. The welfare of the world is bound up with the well-being of society. Self-Realisation and Self-knowledge can be got only through social involvement. Unfortunately, society today is riddled with strife, chaos and conflict.

All religions preached the greatness of spiritual purity. All religions called upon people to adhere to the path of Truth. They also taught that good qualities are essential for man. Thus, when the essence of all religions is one and the same, when all the scriptures proclaim the same truth, when the goal of all human efforts is one, where is the basis for any differences? The paths are varied, but the destination is one and the same.

It is a sign of man's degradation that in spite of these truths, he indulges in conflicts and agitations on account of religious differences. When there is a downpour, the water that comes down is pure. The rain falls on mountains, plains, rivers, the sea and so on. According to the region through which the rain water passes, its name and form undergo changes. Because of these variations, it should not be thought that the water itself is different.

Based on the teachings of the founders of different faiths, having regard to the requirements of the time and circumstance of particular countries, and keeping in view the specific needs of the people concerned, certain rules and regulations were laid down. On this account, one faith should not be considered superior and another inferior. Man's primary duty is to bear in mind these sacred truths and practise them in his life.

Truth, beauty and goodness

Truth is a fundamental principle. All religions have declared that no one should break his plighted word. That man should honour his pledges, that he should regard his words as his life-breath, that keeping his promises is the greatest treasure--this was the primary teaching of the great Law-giver, Emperor Manu (author of the *Dharmasastra).*

Plato was the foremost among the disciples of Socrates. Aristotle was a disciple of Plato. Alexander was a pupil of Aristotle. Plato commended a system of polity based on morality, righteousness, mutual forbearance as conducive to the well-being of society. He attached the greatest importance to Truth, Beauty and Goodness as the basic virtues. In the *Vedas* these three qualities have been described as *Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram.* Thus, though different words are used, their essential purport is the same. Spiritual discipline consists in recognizing the unity underlying the apparent diversity and realising divinity.

Love should not be confined to human beings

Bharatiya culture has always upheld the supremacy of faith in God. *Bharatiya* culture was based on the view that there is nothing in the world which is not permeated by the Divine. From a stone to a diamond, from a blade of grass to a blooming lotus, from an ant to an elephant, everything

was regarded as a manifestation of the Divine. *Bharatiya* culture upheld the view that love should not be confined to human beings, but should be extended to all beings and objects in creation. Ignoramuses who have not understood this great truth speak disparagingly *of Bharatiyas* as people who worship stones, trees, serpents and the like. In the eyes of *Bharatiyas,* every object is a creation of God. *"Sarvam khalu idam Brahma"* (All this is *Brahma), "Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat"* (The cosmos is permeated by Vishnu)--these *Vedantic* declarations proclaim the same truth. You cannot find in any other country a universal, all-embracing sacred declaration of this kind. This contains the broad concept of social justice. You cannot see in any other country such a sacred view.

Although all religions have preached this truth of oneness and *samathvam* (equality), selfish persons, for their own ends, have interpreted them in narrow terms and promoted strife and discord between different people. One who is merely well-versed in the scriptures cannot be called a *Pandita* (a person with knowledge and wisdom). Even a master of the *Vedas, sastras and puranas* cannot be esteemed a *Pandita.* Scholarship alone does not make a man a *pandita.* Mastery of language does not confer this title. *"Pandithaah samadarsinah" (Pandits* are those who see all with an equal eye), says the *Gita.* Only the person who has this vision of equality can be esteemed a *pandita.* Hence, we should look upon all religions with *Samadrishti* (equal respect). No religion should be crtiticised or reviled. One should imbibe the sweet essence in all religions.

The essence of all religions is the principle of Oneness, the principle of Love. When you cultivate this principle of love, there is no room for hatred.

Conflicts are caused due to selfishness

Today religion is regarded as the cause for all the conflict, violence and bitterness in the world. But, *matham* (religion) is not the cause. *Mathulu* (Selfish minds) are responsible for all the conflict. Are there not conflicts in countries with only one religion? People in Iran and Iraq profess the same Islamic faith. What is the reason for the conflict between them? What is the reason for conflicts between countries which profess Christianity?

In Bharat, all are *Bharatiyas.* But why is there discord amongst them? When we examine this question deeply, we find that religions are not the real reason for these conflicts. Only selfish minds are the cause. Wearing the garb of religion, these selfish persons are inciting conflicts among the people.

Embodiments of Divine Love! If you desire to secure genuine peace in the world, you should not have any antipathy towards religion. You must hold *neethi* (morality) as superior to your *jaathi* (community). You must cherish good feelings as more important than religious beliefs. *Mamatha* (mutual regard), *samatha* (equalmindedness) and *kshamatha* (forbearance) are basic qualities necessary for every human being. Only the person with these three qualities can be regarded as a true man. It is essential that everyone should cultivate these three sacred qualities.

Try to live harmoniously

How did differences arise within each religion? After the passing of the founders of these religions, the followers violated the teachings of the founders and quarrelled among themselves on account of their selfish interests. With the passage of time, schisms developed in each religion

and separate sects were formed. This is the result of individual, selfish motives and not the fault of the original founders.

People must first of all get rid of self-interest and self-centredness. They must develop love, forbearance and compassion. They must try to live harmoniously. Only then can we claim to be lovers of peace in the nation and of the well-being of the world. Service should be the guiding principle. There should be no room for any kind of differences in rendering service. When you wish to serve society, you must be prepared to sacrifice your individual and communal interests. Such sacrifice alone will sublimate one's life. The *Veda* has emphatically declared that immortality can be attained only through *thyaga* (sacrifice) and not by any other means.

Christmas in Prashaanthi Nilayam

To propagate this message of equal mindedness, the army of Sai devotees must prepare themselves. Today, in Prashaanthi Nilayam members belonging to a variety of faiths have come together. They speak different languages. They belong to diverse traditions. But all of them have a single belief, a single ideal--that is Love.

The Christmas festival is celebrated in many countries with a lot of fanfare, merriment and riotous festivities. You should note one thing. Nowhere in the world is Christmas celebrated in the manner in which it is done in Prashaanthi Nilayam. People belonging to different countries, different faiths and different cultures, coming together to adore God and celebrating this festival in such a holy atmosphere cannot be found anywhere else. This should spread to all countries.

Christmas is celebrated in America, Germany, Italy and other countries. But in what manner? By sumptuous eating, drinking and dancing and wasting time. Here also you indulge in drink. But what is it you are drinking? You are drinking Pure Divine Love. It is this Love that you must offer to the world.

Don't entertain religious difference of any kind. Put into practice the message you receive here and share the bliss of your experience with others. Preaching to others is not enough.

Everyone should develop devotion and dedication. Life without devotion is worthless. If one does not show his gratitude to the Creator, of what avail is his life? Should you not show some gratitude to the Lord who has provided such infinite benefits through Nature and the elements? Gratitude should be the life-breath of a man.

The founders of religions experienced these truths and propagated them as ideals for mankind. You must wholeheartedly live up to these teachings. Mere reading of the Bible or reciting the Quran, repeating the *Bhagavad Gita* or chanting the *Granth Saheb* is not meritorious. The basic teachings in each of these texts have to be put into practice in daily life.

Discharging your debt is a pious obligation

Socrates used to gather young men around him and expound to them how to enquire into what is transient and what is permanent. He told them that only those who have devotion and dedication are entitled to wield power. A ruler should adhere to truth and show his gratitude to God. Puffed up with ego, he should not forget the Almighty. Those who did not relish Socrates's teachings, brought charges against him. When he was sentenced to death, he chose to die by drinking the cup of hemlock from the hands of his disciples. Before his death, he told his disciples that no one should die leaving an undischarged debt behind him. He told a disciple that he owed a cock to a friend and asked him to discharge that obligation.

Prophet Mohammed, likewise, told his disciples before his passing that the money he owed to a camel driver should be paid before his end came. The discharging of one's debts is regarded as a pious obligation for every Bharatiya. Harischandra sacrificed everything for the sake of honouring his plighted word.

It will be seen that all religions have emphasised the greatness of truth, sacrifice and unity. Learn to live in love and harmony with all the members of your society. This is the basic teaching of Christianity and Islam. Guru Nanak favoured community prayers in preference to individual prayer in isolation. When all people join in unison to pray to God, their prayers will melt the heart of God. In a large gathering there must be at least one who prays with a pure heart. That prayer will reach God. Hence, devotees should take part in community bhajans. They should participate in community service and involve themselves in the life of the community. This is the noblest path.

Cultivate love. Love is the form of the Divine and God can be realised only through love. Of all the myriad names given to God, the one which is most to be cherished *is Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Being-Awareness-Bliss). *Sat* represents Truth. *Chit* represents *Jnana* (wisdom). Where *Sat* and *Chit* are *present, Ananda* (Bliss) is bound to be present. As God is Truth, He has to be realised through Truth. As God is *Jnana,* He has to be realised through *Jnana Marga* (the path of Knowledge). As He is *Ananda* (Bliss), He has to be realised through bliss. Follow the path of Love and achieve the goal of Unity. Banish all differences. This is the supreme message for you today.

Do not give room for religious differences

Embodiments of Divine Love! Wherever you may be, in whatever country, do not give room for religious differences. Do not give up religion. Get rid of differences based on religion. Adhere to your faith and your traditions. When differences between religions are given up, love will develop in you. When love grows, you can have a direct vision of God. Without love, verbal prayers are of no avail. Realise that the love that is present in everyone is common to all. It is love that has brought you all together. It is the cord of love that has bound all of you. It is the unifier, the motivator and the bringer of joy to all. Therefore, develop love.

Christmas message at Poornachandra Auditorium on 25-12-1990.

The Sun is teaching us that when one is oneself, there will be no exhaustion or elation, no disgust or pride. The task of Surya is not something imposed from outside and taken up under compulsion. That is why it is performed systematically and smoothly. He is also exhorting mankind to use the time that He creates and allots, fully and fruitfully; not merely for living comfortably and safely, but for living a moral and elevating life, worthy of the destiny that is man's. Now you can realise why the Gita was first taught by the Lord to the Sun. He is the great Karma yogi, the great Nishkaama Karma Yogi.

BABA