

Develop broad-mindedness and live in bliss

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Onam

Prasanthi Nilayam

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*The Lord shines resplendently in the universe;
so also the universe shines in the Lord.
The relationship between the Lord and
the universe is intimate and inseparable.
What else is to be conveyed to you?
(Telugu poem)*

Embodiments of Love!

The people of Kerala celebrate the Onam festival today. Onam is very sacred, holy, and divine. Several interpretations are given to the Onam festival. People celebrate the Onam festival by taking an oil bath and wearing new clothes. They also cook a variety of special dishes and partake of them. Thus, all members of the family enjoy the festival, feasting and wearing new clothes. Some people also visit temples on this occasion. Of all the temples in Kerala, the temple of the Bala (child) Krishna (Guruvayur) is very dear and important to them. Many people also do *parayana* (reverential reading) of the *Ramayana* on this day. All these sacred activities are the result of their faith and devotion to God. They celebrate the Onam festival by contemplating on God, visiting temples and by undertaking sacred activities.

In ancient times, Emperor Bali ruled the kingdom of Kerala. He treated his subjects as his own children and did a lot of service to them. The people, on their part, also loved and respected Emperor Bali. They led a happy and peaceful life, reposing their faith and

hope in the emperor. Emperor Bali performed several *yajnas* (sacrifices) and other *Vedic* rituals during his reign. Once, he commenced a great *yajna*. On that occasion, he announced his resolve to the people that whoever asked for anything from him would be granted to them without any hesitation from him.

Having heard of this promise, Lord Vishnu assumed the form of Vamana (a dwarfish brahmin boy) and came to the *yagasala* (the *pandal* where the *yajna* was being performed), holding an umbrella made of coconut leaves. Ratnavali, the daughter of Emperor Bali, was enchanted by the divine effulgence, radiance, and aura surrounding the young boy. She thought to herself, "Aha! Who is this brilliant young boy radiating divine effulgence? What a great wonder! How nice it would be if I had a son like him!" Thus, while everyone in the *yagasala* was spellbound on seeing this divine child, Vamana entered the *yagasala* and went near the altar.

On seeing Vamana, Emperor Bali stood up and extended a reverent welcome to him and seated him in a proper seat and enquired, "Sir! May I know on what purpose you visited us? What can I do for you?"

The young Vamana replied, "Oh Emperor Bali! I just need three foot step length of land. I don't need anything more."

Emperor Bali was taken aback and spontaneously agreed to His request saying, “Oh! Is that all? All right, take it.”

Vamana expanded in His stature and with one foot reached out over the entire skies. When he set his second step, the entire earth was transcended. He then asked Bali, “Where do I put my third step?”

Emperor Bali replied, “Swami! You asked for just three foot steps of land. But you covered the entire sky and earth with just two steps. All my domain is already exhausted. Please bless me by putting your third step on my head.” Vamana then placed his foot on Emperor Bali's head and sent him down to the netherworld (*patala*).

You may have a doubt in this context as to how Bali could be pushed down to the netherworld by Vamana simply by placing his foot on Bali's head. When the entire sky and earth could be covered with one step each, you can imagine how powerful and gigantic Vamana's steps were! The third step was equally powerful and gigantic. Its impact could therefore push Emperor Bali down to the netherworld.

There are other reasons too! Emperor Bali was no doubt a great devotee with humility. However, there was an element of ego in him. God will tolerate anything but not anger and ego. He does not appreciate these qualities. What is this ego? What for is this ego? Is it for physical beauty or strength of the senses or intellectual acumen or wealth? None of these is permanent. Ego breeds several other evil qualities. God has gifted every human being with such sacred and noble qualities as *sathya* (truth), *dharma* (righteousness), *santhi* (peace), *prema* (love), and *ahimsa* (nonviolence). Develop these qualities. These are the pancha pranas (five vital airs) for a human being.

Anger, jealousy, hatred, etc. are evil qualities befitting an animal. How can a person with

such animal qualities be called a human being? A human being is one who has good qualities. Follow truth. Truth is God. Cultivate love. Love is God. Live in love. Unfortunately, today, people are not making efforts to manifest sacred and noble qualities that are inherent in them. Ignoring their innate nature, they lead a life with qualities acquired from outside.

The human body is like an iron safe. The *Atma* residing inside this iron safe is like a precious diamond. You are supposed to give value to the precious diamond-studded ornaments inside, not to the outer iron safe. There are invaluable ornaments like *sathya*, *dharma*, *santhi*, *prema*, and *ahimsa* inside the human body. The physical body, which is made up of the five elements, is bound to perish one day or the other.

The body, made up of five elements,
is weak and is bound to disintegrate.
Though a hundred years of life-span is prescribed,
one cannot take it for granted.
One may leave his mortal coil at any time,
be it in childhood, youth, or old age.
Death is certain.
Hence, before the body perishes,
make efforts to know your true nature.
(Telugu poem)

People repose their faith in such a frail and impermanent physical body. This body is like a puppet with nine holes in it, and it may collapse at any time with a mere sneeze. Reposing their faith in such a perishable body, people forget the invaluable ornaments stored in it. That is why they suffer mental agitation.

You go to a millionaire and enquire, “Sir! You have everything in this world; but, do you have peace?” He will immediately reply, “I have everything in this world, but not peace.” Wherever you see in this world today, there are only “pieces”, not “peace”. Peace is very much in your inner self. Hence, search for it by inward journey. That is your duty. Unfortunately, you forget this sacred duty and

desire for paltry and mean things. When you are able to manifest your own innate noble qualities, you can experience true and eternal peace.

Bereft of truth, righteousness, love, and peace,
the value of all your education is zero.

Bereft of truth, righteousness, love, and peace,
the sanctity of all your acts of charity and
kindness is zero.

Bereft of truth, righteousness, love, and peace,
the utility of all your positions of power is
zero.

Bereft of truth, righteousness, love, and peace,
the result of all your good deeds is zero.

(Telugu poem)

The five human values of *sathya*, *dharma*, *santhi*, *prema*, and *ahimsa* are the true and lasting property of a human being. Since time immemorial, the people of Kerala possessed such sacred qualities and are worshipping God.

What is the inner meaning of Vamana setting his foot on the head of Emperor Bali and pushing him down to the netherworld? The incident reveals the crushing of Bali's ego. Having realised this inner meaning, the people of Kerala shed their ego. That is why the State of Kerala has earned a good name as a land of peace, purity, and greenery everywhere.

Every human being has some desires. But, the people of Kerala do not have many desires. Their worldly desires are few. They always move with others amicably. Even if some differences crop up, they set them aside. They consider them as passing clouds. Truly, the people of Kerala are pure, selfless, and steady in mind. Others have to emulate their qualities. In spite of their busy schedule, they do not forget to put on *vibhuthi* on their forehead and visit the temple both in the morning and evening.

People say that Kerala is a communist state. I do not subscribe to that view. It is not "communist" but "come-you-next"! Their own sa-

cred feelings have taken them nearer to God. The people of Kerala go to the temples on this auspicious occasion of Onam and perform special *pujas* (worship). They go in large numbers to the Bala Krishna temple. They enjoy singing devotional songs. Due to the effect of modern age, of course, some change has come in their attitude. It was not so before. They always used to be pure and steady in their heart. They always wished and prayed for the welfare of all people. They never developed any desires that, they knew, were not pleasing to God. The people of Kerala are broad-minded and they pray for the welfare of all people in the world (*Loka samastha sukhino bhavantu*). They are really good and noble.

When Lord Vamana pushed Emperor Bali down to the netherworld, the people felt very unhappy thinking, "Oh God! Our emperor is no longer with us; who will look after us from now on?" Emperor Bali then made a promise to his people that he would visit them every year on this day. That auspicious day of Emperor Bali's visit to his kingdom every year is called Onam. He would visit his people on this day and bless them. Goodness will always yield good results.

Do not develop obstinacy. Develop a sense of discrimination and enquire into things objectively. If you behave foolishly, you will earn a bad name for yourself. Study well. Perform well in your educational career, but along with this, develop good character and conduct. Character is real life; character is real education. Hence, develop good character. Students try to imitate one another. Mimicking others out of a false sense of values is bad.

Dear students! You must move in good company to enable you to develop good character:

*Satsangatwe nissangatwam,
Nissangatwe nirmohatwam,
Nirmohatwe nischalatattwam,
Nischalatattwe jivanmukti.*
(Sanskrit verse)

Good company leads to detachment;
Detachment makes one free from delusion;
Freedom from delusion leads to
steadiness of mind;
Steadiness of mind confers liberation.

“Tell me your company, I shall tell you what you are.” Hence, first and foremost, move in good company. Then only can you become a good individual. You need not acquire goodness from somewhere. It is inherent in your nature. We have only to develop it. We have to make efforts to develop such goodness, just as a small sapling is nourished and nurtured to become a big tree. You must earn a good name to your parents, society, and the country.

The country of Bharat (India) has another name: Hindu. It stands for the following qualities:

H – Humility
I – Individuality
N – Nationality
D – Devotion
U – Unity

Only when you conduct yourselves in keeping with these ideals do deserve to be called real human beings. Having been born as human beings, it is a great sin to behave like animals. Whenever animal qualities raise their ugly heads, remind yourself, “I am not an animal; I am a human being.” You are a human being. Hence, develop human values.

Unfortunately, today human values are very deficient in human beings. Wherever you look, animal qualities are rampant. Wherever you go and whomever you come across, there is only one desire for every individual: money, money, and more money! Nowadays, everything is related with money only. Why is this craze for money?

Money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows. Hence, cultivate moral values. Then only will you become real human beings. The people of Kerala are fostering moral

values well. Of course, they also have a desire for acquiring wealth. But, compared to others, their desire is less. Cultivate good nature, lead a good life, and earn a good name for yourself. From goodness, one has to travel to Godness (*Madhavatwa*).

First and foremost, ensure that the food you consume is good and *sathwic* (pure). Such food ensures good “head” (mind). Only when the “head” (mind) is good will God manifest before you. Thus, only when the food you consume is *sathwic* will you be able to realise God. Nowadays, wherever you look, pollution is increasing. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, the work we do — are all polluted.

The *sadhana* (spiritual exercise) we have to undertake to cleanse this polluted atmosphere is *Bhagawath prarthana* (prayer to God). It is only when we are able to remove this pollution and make your hearts pure that you deserve to be called real human beings. Divinity can be attained only by purity. And, that purity can be achieved by unity. Unity, purity, and Divinity are interrelated. Always remember the intimate relationship between these three.

The country of Bharat will prosper only when such noble and sacred feelings manifest in you. The land of Bharat has earned a great name as *punya bhumi* (the land of merit), *thyaga bhumi* (the land of sacrifice), and *yoga bhumi* (the land of spiritual practice), since ancient times. Unfortunately, today it is turning out to be a *bhoga bhumi* (the land of worldly pleasures).

What we need most today is a spirit of sacrifice. Then the question arises as to what is thyaga. Thyaga is not going to the forest, leaving behind one's wife and children and property. What is to be sacrificed is the result of fruit of desires. That is the real sacrifice. You have to renounce indiscriminate desires. Then only will your heart become pure like a piece of white cloth. God desires only such a

pure and sacred heart. God does not desire anything from you. He has no desires at all! It is only you who have desires. If you develop sacred desires, God will be happy. Only then will your family, society, and the country experience peace and happiness.

First and foremost, peace should reign in your own house. Then, that peace should be radiated to the society. When the society becomes good, the country will prosper. If peace is to be established in the country, the individual should experience peace in the first instance. World peace is possible only when peace is established at the individual level. If there is no peace in the individual himself, how can there be peace in the world?

Dear students!

All of you must desire and work for establishing peace in the country. The greatness of Bharat is beyond words. It has been striving since ancient times to establish peace in the world. However, due to fascination for western ways, knowledge of one's own religion and culture has declined. Peace has broken into pieces! You may learn any language. There is nothing wrong in it. But do not seek foreign habits at the cost of your own heritage. You must establish peace in your heart.

You must always be happy and blissful. Sweet smile should dance on your lips. You should not put up a "castor oil face" under any circumstances. You must always be smiling. When others see you, they should also feel happy. Thus, you should always lead a happy and blissful life with a sweet smile on your face. You should be happy and at the same time make others happy.

The people of Bharat led such blissful life with such noble qualities. There is, however, no dearth of such people even today. May be they are not wealthy economically. But there is no narrowness in their minds. When you develop broad-mindedness, you can achieve any great task.

You must all realise the truth that this festival of Onam is observed for developing such broad-mindedness. You must experience bliss at the individual level and in the family and then share it with the society. Then all people will be happy.

Happiness is union with God. You must realise such happiness. May all people be happy! May you all live like members of one family, sharing your love and happiness with one another! You must all live in unity, wishing each other lovingly, "Hello! Hello!" Do not become separate, saying "goodbye". You must become "good boys". You must develop such sacred feelings. Time is very important. Time waste is life waste. Hence, do not waste your time.

There is still some programme to be covered. I will not inconvenience you by giving a lengthy discourse.