

Onam, 12 September 2008

Develop Self-Confidence to Achieve God-Realisation

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*This land of Bharath gave birth to great people
who earned name and fame in different continents;
This land of Bharath is the battlefield from where
the foreign rulers were driven out and freedom won;
This land of Bharath had earned great reputation
for erudite scholarship;
This land of Bharath is a divine land, which produced
great intellectuals in the fields of art, music, literature, and sciences;
Having been born in such a great land, oh boys and girls,
the responsibility to uphold the glory of this country is yours. (Telugu Poem)*

This Bharath is no ordinary country. It is so pleasing to God that He incarnated several times in this great land. The people of this country developed great love and devotion to God (*Bhagavadrathi*). This land gave birth to great warriors, scholars, and intellectuals. But such a great country is in a sad plight. However, we need not be disheartened.

No doubt, the world science has progressed by leaps and bounds in the modern age, but it has failed to realise Divinity. Devoid of self-confidence, any amount of education, scientific knowledge, and experiments are absolutely of no use. They are not only useless but a waste of time too. This is not the way to God-realisation. God-realisation is possible only through the control of senses and mind and by developing faith in God.

Self-confidence is the key to God-realisation. Hence, dear students! Develop self-confidence. Then you can achieve anything in life.

People now are crazy about science, but it is only illusory. Science teaches about transitory, impermanent, and unreal things only. It fails to teach true *Atma Tathwa* (Atmic Principle). Scientists are still engaged in unraveling the mysteries of the universe without concentrating on the realisation of the *Atma Tathwa*. These experiments are an exercise in futility. Science may explore a few mysteries in the physical world and contribute to a better living in the secular world. It may make some inventions that would help amass great wealth, but it would miserably fail in developing noble qualities.

What is the use of acquiring wealth, ignoring morality? *Money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows.* Morality is possible only through spirituality.

There was a galaxy of scientists who made great inventions, but they failed to control their body and mind. Why should people pursue such scientific knowledge that would spoil their brains? Instead, one should develop one's brain, cultivate a positive outlook, and engage oneself in service to the country and society. The education you pursue must contribute to the welfare of the society. Then only can you earn name and fame and develop morality and integrity.

Develop morality. It is only then that you can realise Truth. Strive to uphold truth. Truth is the father and mother to the world. When truth and righteousness join together, peace is born. From peace, comes love. Where there is love, there is no scope for hatred. There will be no place at all for evil qualities like anger and jealousy.

It is only because people lost the noble quality of love that even brothers and sisters hate one another these days. Hence, first and foremost, develop love. There is nothing in this world that you cannot achieve by love. *Love is God, live in love.* Love is your life. Even an ant cannot live without love. It makes friendship with other ants while moving about. The insects too love one another.

Only the human being has lost this noble quality of love today. No doubt, a person has love inherently but is showering it on wealth and on certain individuals only. There is no use in developing such individualised love. One has to develop love for society as a whole. It is only when there is society that an individual can exist. One can live as a member of society. By living in society, one can contribute to its welfare. No other method would work.

Emperor Bali was a great renunciator. He earned great name and fame for his noble quality of charity. He used to readily give away whatever was asked by others. The people of Kerala are most fortunate to have had Bali as their emperor.

Once, Bali was performing a *yajna*. Several scholars attended that *yajna*. The *Vamana Avatar* too came to see that *yajna*. While He was approaching the *yajna vedika*, people started wondering, "This boy is too young! What has He got to do with the *yajna*? This is an occasion in which great *Vedic* scholars are expected to participate. How dare this young lad venture into this *yajna*!"

But the daughter of Emperor Bali did not take Him so lightly. She was attracted and charmed by His captivating beauty and scholarly look. Emperor Bali received the great Vamana and enquired, "Swami! What brought you here? What can I do for you?"

Vamana replied that he did not need anything like money or grains and that he would be content to have just three footstep length of land.

Bali was surprised at Vamana's request, since even to bury a dead body six feet length of land is required. He therefore requested Vamana to ask for something more.

But Vamana replied, "If you give Me three step lengths of land, that would be enough."

Emperor Bali immediately promised to give Him three feet land as requested. In fact, Vamana's request has to be understood from the spiritual angle. It may appear to be a trivial request from the worldly point of view. Vamana then occupied the entire Earth with one foot. Similarly, He occupied the entire sky with the second foot. Now, there is no space available to set the third footstep. He asked Emperor Bali where He could set His third step, so that He may leave the place immediately.

Emperor Bali was nonplussed at the developments and offered his head saying, "Swami! I have now only my head. Kindly set your foot on my head." So saying, he removed the crown and offered his head.

Lord Vamana then set His foot on Emperor Bali's head and pushed him down to the nether world. Vamana did so only with a view to crush the ego of Emperor Bali. In fact, Emperor Bali was a man of righteousness and great charitable disposition. He was proud of these qualities and developed ego. Vamana therefore decided to crush his ego.

Emperor Bali's subjects were greatly distressed that they had lost a great emperor. However, Emperor Bali promised to visit their land once in a year. This festival of Onam is held every year to commemorate that great day.

On this day, the people of Kerala take a good head bath, cook a variety of tasty dishes, and feast on them. Notable among the dishes is the banana pudding. Before partaking of this pudding, they light a sacred lamp in their shrines and offer it to God with prayers. The people of Kerala firmly believe that Emperor Bali would visit them on Onam day and give his *darshan*. Therefore, they offer their prayers with a pure and sacred heart. This tradition is being continued in Kerala till this day. In fact, they eagerly wait for this great festival.

When the king loves his subjects so intensely, so too his subjects. It is said, *Yatha Raja Thatha Praja* (as is the king, so are the subjects). The people of Kerala loved Emperor Bali, and he too loved them intensely. The festival of Onam reflects the bond of intimate love between Emperor Bali and his subjects.

What does the name Bali signify? It signifies the great quality of total sacrifice. When Vamana asked for three feet land, Bali kept his promise and offered himself in the end, in total surrender to the Lord. That is why he has become immortal.

It is said, *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaike Amrutatthwamanasu* (immortality is not attained through action, progeny, or wealth; it is attained only by sacrifice).

What do the three feet indicate? Surrender at the Lotus Feet of the Lord physically, mentally, and spiritually. Emperor Bali, in total surrender to the Lord, offered his head to Vamana so that He may set His foot on it. Once Vamana set His foot over Bali's head, he was sanctified and liberated. In order that people may remember this great sacrifice and surrender, Emperor Bali would visit their land once in a year on this day. The people too have not forgotten their emperor till this day.

Kerala is a land of plenty. There is no dearth of food grains. There is no dearth of water. In fact, the monsoon rains begin in Kerala. Kerala is a sacred land. It is a land of righteousness and sacrifice. The noble quality of charity had its origin in Kerala. People outside are also full of praise for Kerala. Prayers to God began in Kerala. Kerala gave birth to several great scholars. It is only because the land is so sacred that Lord Vamana incarnated in that place.

Vamana was three feet tall, and He asked for three feet land from Emperor Bali. He covered the entire Earth and sky with His two feet. Such was the magnificence of His power.

God is described as *Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan* (Brahman is subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the vastest). The *Vamanavatar* had come only for granting liberation to Emperor Bali. Among the *Avatars* of Vishnu, the *Vamanavatar* is the first in human form.

While the *Vamanavatar* dressed in the traditional attire of a dhoti was entering the Yajnasala (ritual place), the gaze of all the people there was fixed on Him. Everyone was captivated by the beauty and grace of the resplendent young boy.

He took Emperor Bali along with Him to His Divine Abode. This is the great merit earned by Emperor Bali. The Onam festival is the day on which the *Vamanavatar* granted liberation to Emperor Bali.

The people of Kerala celebrate Onam on a grand scale, with single-minded devotion. All of them unite to celebrate this festival irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. It is their good fortune to come over here in large numbers and celebrate Onam festival in the divine presence of Swami.

The devotees of Kerala whenever they come here pray, “Swami! Please visit Kerala.”

I tell them, “I will come; I will come.” I never said no to them. Not only to them, I say yes to all those who invite Me. Surely, I will visit them one day and show them the glory and power of Divinity.

There are great scholars in Kerala. Kerala is no ordinary State. It is a land where God had incarnated as *Vamanavatar*.

The people of Kerala are most fortunate, for their hearts are filled with love and devotion to God. There is none among them who do not contemplate on God. They may not express their devotion outwardly, but in their heart of hearts they are greatly devoted.

People from outside refer to Kerala as a communist state. No, no; it is not communist ... but ‘come you next’. There are very young children participating in the *bal vikas* programmes. How beautiful are their faces radiating bliss and devotion! Their love toward Swami is overflowing. They are full of love! Their hearts are pure and will become mature in due course.

Today, the *bal vikas* children of Kerala are going to stage a playlet on Savitri. Who is Savitri? People generally remember her as the wife of Sathyavantha. She was a chaste woman who took a firm resolve to bring her dead husband back to life. She relentlessly pursued her resolve with Lord Yama. Lord Yama offered to grant any request put forward by her, but she refused. Her firm reply was, “I do not want anything. Give me my husband back with life.”

Unable to withstand her pressure, Lord Yama acceded to her request and brought her husband back to life. For six days, Sathyavantha’s dead body was lying. At last, he came back to life as a result of the boon granted by Lord Yama to Savitri. Thus, Savitri proved herself to be a great woman of chastity who brought her dead husband back to life with her noble qualities.

Thus, women possess great power of persuasion. Their power can work wonders, even bring the dead back to life. Can you find parallels to Savitri in any other country? It is only in Bharath that such wonders take place, since it is a land of chaste women.

*This land of Bharat has given birth to many noble women like
Savitri, who brought her dead husband back to life;
Chandramati, who extinguished wild fire with the power of truth;
Sita, who proved her chastity by coming out of blazing fire unscathed; and
Damayanti, who reduced an evil-minded hunter to ashes with the power of her chastity.*

(Telugu Poem)

In the Ramayana also, when Sri Rama put Sita to the test of fire after vanquishing Ravana, the God of Fire returned Sita to Rama testifying to her character thus: “Sita is a noble woman of chastity. You should not trouble her like this.” Thus, the land of Bharath is the birthplace of several women of chastity.

People of other countries referred to this country by several names. Even now, when Indians go abroad, they introduce themselves saying, “I am from Delhi; I am from Kolkata; I am from Bengaluru”, etc., instead of replying “I am from Bharath.” These are actually cities and regions that form part of India. Hence, it would be appropriate to say that you are from India. Wherever you go, you must be proud to refer to yourself as *Bharatheeyas*.

The name ‘Bharatha’ has great significance. ‘Bha’ refers to Divinity and ‘ratha’ refers to one who loves God. Thus, *Bharatheeyas* are people who love God. The country of Bharath has acquired its name on account of such people inhabiting it.

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The present generation do not realise the significance of Bharath. They very casually mention that they belong to Puttaparthi in the Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh State in India. Where is Puttaparthi? Where is Anantapur? All these are parts in the country of Bharath only. The *Bharatheeyas* are most fortunate people. It is the people of Kerala who imbibed the true spirit of Bharath. They are blessed. Today, they are putting up the play of Savitri. We have to learn a lot from this play.

You have seen how the devotees of Kerala staged beautiful dramas during the last two days. Yesterday, they enacted the 'Sita Rama Kalyana' (the celestial wedding of Sri Rama and Sita) in all its glory and splendour. The day before they put up a beautiful show of Krishna Leelas. The music, action and dialogues are wonderful. Their dresses are also good. The lady devotees of Sri Sathya Sai Organisation in Kerala did great service in putting up this show. It is only because of their hard work and enthusiasm that these playlets appeared so natural and captivating.

Whatever they do, the men and women of Sri Sathya Sai Organisation of Kerala conduct on a grand scale. I wish and bless that the devotees of Kerala must keep up this spirit in all their service activities in future also. I am happy that you all realised the importance and significance of the festival of Onam. Now you go ahead with your programme of staging the playlet of Savitri..