

Fundamental Principles of Indian Culture

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Embodiments of Love!

The *Atma* is present in the body of each human. One who realizes and lives out the truth that the two – the *Atma* which is everywhere and the *Atma* within himself – are one and the same, is a real spiritual practitioner. Whoever he may be – a householder, a recluse, a renunciant or a celibate, when he realizes the truth that the divinity in humanity is one, God shall always be with him and protect him. Bharath is a holy land. The wind that blows here has truth in it; the dust that rises is pervaded with righteousness; the waters that flow are suffused with love. Every individual born in this land has the quality of forbearance. A country having such sacred being, aims, wisdom and stature is not to be found all over the world. That is why the ancestors saluted this land by acclaiming justice, embracing honesty and enthroning righteousness. But the state of affairs in Bharath today are bizarre in contrast with the sanctity it had enjoyed in the past. Even today there are thousands in India who are aware of this truth. However, how many among them could attain Divinity? Man can attain sanctity only when he actually experiences the oneness of *Atma*.

The Glory that is Bharath

You cannot find in India a tongue that does not praise God or a hand that does not perform acts of charity. The hands of every Indian are those that give. The heart of every Indian is one that delights in God's names. Indeed, those who are unable to appreciate the glorious legacy of Bharath can only be called fools. When Vivekananda was in America, he declared,

“God's hands, feet, eyes, heads, mouth and ears are everywhere. There is no place in the land of Bharath where God's presence is not felt. His footsteps are heard wherever one goes. The melody of God is heard wherever one pays heed to. The joy of God is felt in every heart. I must return to Bharath. Earlier, I had shown a little indifference. Now I shall go back and proclaim emphatically that every atom in Bharath is suffused with divinity. I shall sprinkle her dust on my head. I shall feel the love that stirs in every drop of river Ganges”.

Bharath is the land which is filled with Divine nature, and glows and grows with it. Bharath is the birthplace of truth and righteousness. It is the home of peace and non-violence. In fact, there is nothing that is not available in Bharath. The Vedas proclaim, “*Yanna Bharathe Tanna, Bharatha*”. That which is not present in India is not present elsewhere. It is as if the whole world is bundled together and placed in Bharath. Unable to realize the mighty power and potential of their land, Indians visit foreign countries, and feel weighed down with inferiority at what they see there. Where there is self-restraint, there will be no place for violence. Bharath proved this time and again. Many covet such self-control which is natural to Indians.

People undertake spiritual practices for inner happiness. People consider the nine types of devotion to God as spiritual practices, namely, *Sravanam* (listening), *Kirtanam* (singing), *Vishnusmaranam* (contemplating on Vishnu), *Padasevanam*

(serving His Lotus Feet), *Vandanam* (salutation), *Archanam* (worship), *Dasyam* (servitude), *Sneham* (friendship), *Atmanivedanam* (Self-surrender). However, Indian culture did not consider these as real spiritual practices. It sought the eternal and ultimate Reality, which is but one. Truth is one wherever one searches for it. It is described that Brahman has the appearance of Truth and is replete with Truth. Truth shines resplendently at all times. Truth is all-pervasive at all times.

The hearts of Indians are suffused with *Kshama* (forbearance). India encountered many setbacks and sufferings since the beginning of history. But Indians were not perturbed. They extolled, "*Forbearance is truth, forbearance is righteousness, forbearance is the teaching of the Vedas, forbearance is non-violence, forbearance is compassion, forbearance is sacrifice, forbearance confers happiness and heavenly bliss. In fact, it is everything in all the worlds.*" (Telugu Poem) Forbearance is their life-breath. They inhale and exhale forbearance. Forbearance is the greatest strength of Bharath. This is the reason for its stability despite so many sufferings and losses. No amount of difficulties can unsettle a person of forbearance. He who has no forbearance will face unprecedented difficulties. One who believes in forbearance remains unmoved and untouched in the face of difficulties. The *Bharathiyas* are filled with such forbearance. Another form of forbearance is love. Love is also synonymous with peace. Thus, forbearance, love, peace – all mean the same. *Manava* (human) is referred to as love by Upanishads. *Bharathiya* is one who possesses love as his nature. Indians today give up Indian culture and run after worldly, materialistic and transient things which cause misery. If you ask what is the power of forbearance, it is too great to put in words. It cannot be measured by mind and speech.

Such is the sacred culture of Bharath which people of other countries extolled. As India disseminated this culture to other countries, they too found happiness. *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu* (May all the people of the world be happy!). Whoever keeps this principle in mind will always be happy. The most influential aspect of Indian culture is to see divinity everywhere. Unable to understand such sacred principles of Indian culture students are hankering after various material acquisitions. This is folly. Indian culture has many subtle ideas and words. If you ask what is the fastest thing, the scientists of today would say it is the light or suchlike. But Indian culture would not settle for this. The fastest and quickest thing is human mind, it says. What is the mightiest thing in the world? It cheerfully responds, mother is the mightiest of all. Nothing is greater than mother in this world. Mothers' might is nation's might. That is why India is addressed as *Bharath Matha* (Mother India). We call it motherland and not fatherland. Only mother has such power. If you ask who speaks to you with affection and courtesy in a foreign land, it is the mother tongue. Wherever one goes, words in mother tongue sound nearest and dearest. So the speediest thing is not some airplane but the mind. The mind has its presence everywhere. It is a tool for bondage as well as liberation. Mind can take you right up to salvation. What else can be faster than mind then? Such similes are innumerable in Indian tradition. Many more are there that students should know.

Understand the Nature of Love

There is nothing greater than Love. It is forgiveness and peace. You should understand the distinguishing characteristics of love. Love is never sad. It is always cheerful and knows not what sorrow means. It does not hurt others nor is hurt by others. Love is the blessed thing

that would get through any situation without causing hurt or getting hurt. That is love in the form of communal coexistence. You say God is angry with me. In fact, God has no anger. He is trying till date to know what anger is like. It is always love and love alone for him. God has no hatred. He even searched in darkness but could not find it. For, there is no place where love is not present. Love has no hatred or jealousy. Love alone is match for Love. Love is Love. It is infinite, immortal and has nothing similar to it. It has no death. It is wrong to think that love is not visible. Big mistake! Unable to see love within ourselves we search all over. How can one find it outside? For instance, if you want to see this kerchief, look for it where it is lying. You cannot find it where it is not there. On the other hand, love is everywhere. There is no place or thing without love. So how can one say he cannot see love? How can such love get angry? When something is against our wish, we consider it as anger. There is nothing in this world that is against God's wish. So how can he get angry? Just not possible. He is by your side always.

So, without trying to comprehend the nature of love, it is a mistake to think that love is present elsewhere. Indian culture is all Love. How is culture defined? It is defined as the process of refinement. This kerchief is a product of culture. Where did it come from basically? From cotton. Cotton is separated from seed, yarn is spun out of it, mounted on a loom and woven into a fabric. Only after performing so many processes of refinement that cotton takes the form of cloth. Similarly take a silver plate. Initially it is just metal. The metal is given to a silversmith who melts it down in a furnace. The molten silver is then poured into a mould to set to the shape of a plate. After going through this difficult process

that the silver plate becomes usable. So, if such extensive refinement is required to make silver into a plate, then how much refinement is needed to transform an ordinary man into a divine person! No one makes any effort to undergo the process of refinement. Man wants to become God instantly. Yes, he can if only he has the required faith. You should have total faith. How can a person who has no faith, but pretends to have, ever find love? God is the personification of love. He is all love. It is right to match love with love. You have to engage love with love only. That is the real refinement process required.

Love is your God

Many people undertake enquiries about God in today's world. They even indulge in spreading 'Message'. Such 'Message' is resulting in 'Miss-Age'. What is this message? If one really seeks God he need not search for him. Wherever he sees, God is found there. Like the child-devotee Prahlada told his father,

*"Have no doubt, O king of demons
That God may be here
but not there God is omnipresent
Wherever you look for him, He would be there."*

If one fills his mind with doubts and wants to find God, is it possible? God is the form of truth. If you look for him by means of truth, he appears at once. If one studies how noble, sacred, holy and glorious Indian culture is, it reveals itself to him. Studies are made, but in 'reverse' direction. Once upon a time several scientists embarked on an exploring mission to find God. After much efforts they were told in a church "O poor fellow! You are looking around everywhere for God. First understand who you are. Conquer yourself. You will find that God is within you." Ignoring this fact, you go to Japan, America or

Germany to discover God. No need to go anywhere. You have to move hardly half an inch to reach into your inner space. He will appear to you there. If you develop outward vision and want to see the indweller, how can He be seen? First and foremost, develop inner vision then you can see him with your own eyes.

Embodiments of Love!

Love is your God. Love is everything for you. Beget love through love. How do you visualise Love? The Gopikas prayed to Krishna as follows:

*“Play sweet music with your divine lips
on your divine flute,
Make the shower of love fall and flow
in this loveless barren land,
Sow seeds of love and make them sprout,
and ardent love flourish there.”*

The nature of Love was best revealed in Dwapara Yuga. The Gopikas saw Krishna everywhere. They were very much attached to Krishna’s form. When one visualizes God in a form and contemplates on it, the form manifests before him. Initially they too did not recognize Krishna’s real nature. They thought, “Oh! That naughty son of Yashoda, who indulges in silly acts like stealing butter from one house and dropping it in another.” Why should Krishna indulge in ‘cheating’? You may consider it as ‘cheating’. Not at all. There is something mysterious about it. What exactly is butter? When milk is churned in different vessels and the essence is extracted it is in the form of butter. Similarly, to bring out God, who resides in all forms of life, such churning has to be carried out. There is divinity in such unity. Consider a simple illustration: Take milk and heat it on a stove. When it boils over, sprinkle a little water into the milk. Immediately, it recedes to the bottom of the vessel. If you ask the milk why it

subsided, it would say “I made friendship with water all this while. After coming in contact with fire, the bond broke and water left me. I could not stay alone so I rose from the vessel to follow my fellow into the fire.” See what intricacies exist in simple relationships! These are the secrets which help to discover divinity. Coming to Krishna’s acts of stealing butter, many call him a thief. This is a mistaken perception. If he were to be a thief, why would he leave traces of butter sticking all over his face? Yashoda herself had this doubt, and asked, “O Krishna! You smell butter, the whole village is agog, and there are complaints galore. You are so small. How can you cause such trouble, my dear? What is all this? Is there no butter in our house? Wont I give you as much as you want? Why should you take butter from other’s houses?” Krishna replied, “Mother! It is not that we do not have butter in our house. Butter represents heart. The butter inside the hearts of those people is very sacred. Our own butter may not taste as good. Their butter is very pure and has sacred aroma.” Thus, when mother Yashoda pleaded with Krishna not to go out but enjoy the butter available at home, he said no to her, as he found something special about the butter in Gopikas’ houses. He assured her, “I am not stealing. I am taking it away right in their presence.” That is why devotees sing “*Bada Chitta Chora, Brindavana Sanchara*”. They call Krishna *Chitta Chora* (the thief of hearts). When called so Krishna used to feel very happy. Actually if you call someone a thief he would get into a fight with you. But Krishna enjoyed when he was addressed as thief of hearts. And even more when you merrily sing such songs. So God indeed is the thief of hearts. He is the indweller of everybody’s heart and conscience. *Chitta* is the butter hidden in the hearts. Krishna is the one who steals such hearts. In divine tales even names have mystery in them. The word Krishna

is derived from the Sanskrit root words which variously mean, 'one who enjoys', 'one who makes others happy', 'one who cultivates', etc. These names have much inner significance such as 'the one who cultivates the fields of hearts'. Similarly, he adds the curd of love to set the milk of your heart into curds. Curds are added to curdle milk. Through love alone you can get God whose form is love. God is captured by love alone. See, what yogic mysteries are available in the culture of Bharath!

Culture is the Essence of Spirituality

Students! You are undergoing the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality. There is no difference between spirituality and culture. Culture is contained in spirituality. That which refines is culture. We have gold with us. It is given to goldsmith who melts it in fire, administers hammer strokes, cuts designs into it and finally turns it into a bangle. How much refinement process is needed to make a bangle! Similarly, we bring home paddy harvested from the fields and store in the house. Do we eat it straightaway? We first remove the husk, add water and boil it. Once it is cooked well, we partake of it. You can never make use of something as soon as it comes into being. You have to refine it and then enjoy its use.

Students! You cannot master all knowledge as soon as you are born. Gradually, you learn to recognize alphabet, spell words, form sentences and then to write. Is it not? That is how culture is. Once Ravana felt very angry. He could not control himself. He went to Lord Shiva and said, "O Lord, how biased you are! How narrow-minded you are! You endowed ladies with such beauty, charm and exquisiteness and created man like a shapeless log of wood. What is the reason for this? Then Lord Shiva laughed and said "O madcap! You are drawing such

comparisons only because you don't know what beauty means. Tell me, where in women is the elegance of man? Where is the elegance of peacock's feather in the peahen? Where is the grandeur of the humped back of bull, in the cow?" Hearing this Ravana shut his mouth. Therefore, God bestows beauty where it is required and to those that require it. Beauty is related to the heart. If your heart is pure, you will look beautiful in the eyes of all and give happiness to all. If your heart is impure, only profane things will attract you. I had mentioned earlier while speaking on *Ramayana* that, once upon a time Soorpanakha who deemed herself most beautiful, approached Rama saying, "Rama! Does Sita possess the beauty that I do? She looks emaciated. Look how beautiful I am. Rama and Lakshmana laughed within themselves at this. Everyone considers himself/herself good looking but may appear ugly to others. So, they did not want to argue with her. They told her "We don't match your good looks. Please find someone who is as beautiful as you are." It is easy to criticize but very difficult to analyze. But in this world many criticise divinity in many ways.

Embodiments of Love!

Every aspect of Indian culture radiates beauty and joy. There is beauty in joy and joy in beauty. Beauty is joy and joy is the nectar of life. Some great books define the nature of God in particular ways. You must read everything about Indian culture with reverence and interest. Indian culture does not differentiate one faith from another. All faiths are one. All forms are one. For instance everyone pays homage to the dead body when someone passes away. Why do they do that? If you ask Mohammadans they would say "Sir, the soul which had permeated this body was precious and beautiful. Since such soul had lived in this body, we salute it."

Similarly, Christians would say, "We had ignored when the beautiful soul was present in the body. Today since the soul has left, we honor this body." They perform various funeral rites religiously. Since every religion has the belief of treating human body with respect, we too must do it. What does human body represent? *Deho Devalaya Proktho Jeevo Deva Sanathana* (body is the temple and the eternal indweller is God). This body is indeed a sacred temple. We should realize the divinity within.

The Purpose of Summer Course

It is in order to teach you such ancient ideals of Indian culture that we started these summer classes. The idea is also to wean you away from wrong practices in day-to-day life, inculcate good habits, initiate refinement, and to make this refinement the goal of your life. To develop refinement is a great act. Student is not the one who merely studies. Studies

should be complimented with refinement. Education is useless without refinement. So, it is to protect you from the mindless activities, frivolous sights and meaningless chatter, which you indulge in at home during holidays, and to give you an experience of culture and thus changing your minds for the better, this course is designed.

Guru Nanak first started the practice of community singing. When many voices join together and pray as a single voice, it is called community *bhajan*. He started this and it spread throughout the nation. Such holy persons took birth in India and taught many such good things. How delightful is the sound when so many sing together in unison. That is nothing but unity in diversity. We must do the same and enjoy real happiness. *Bhajans* may also be sung by getting together family members or a small group of people, and derive happiness from it.

