

4. Develop Self-Confidence To Gain Success In Life

Forbearance is the real beauty in this sacred land of Bharat (India).

Of all rituals, adherence to truth is the greatest penance.

The nectarine feeling in this country is the feeling of love toward one's mother.

Character is valued far higher than the very life itself.

People have forgotten the basic principles of this great culture and are imitating western culture.

Alas! The *Bharatiyas* (Indians) are not aware of the greatness of their cultural heritage just as a mighty elephant is not aware of its own strength.

(Telugu poem)

The elephant, unable to realise its innate strength, meekly submits to the commands of the mahout, who works for a paltry sum of a few rupees. It gets up and sits down as per the commands of the mahout on account of the training it received from him. Similarly the *Bharatiyas* (Indians) today are blindly following western culture, forgetting their own rich and sacred culture. The culture of Bharat (India) is very sacred, strong, and ancient. It is eternal, and a beacon light that guides all the countries of the world. How then can the *Bharatiyas* forget their own great culture? The culture of Bharat enjoins all people to revere and respect *their* mother and father as God. It exhorts, "Mother is God; father is God (*Matrudevo bhava and pitrudevo bhava*). Not only this; it also exhorts, "Teacher is God and guest is God (*Acharyadevo bhava and atithidevo bhava*). If you tend to ignore the words of your own mother, whom else will you revere and respect?"

Embodiments of Love!

As we go on talking for hours together, we tend to forget what we really intend to communicate. So many deviations and distortions creep into our speech. Today, the entire world is filled with negative feelings. Whoever you come across, whatever you see, negativity is widespread. All are reflections of your inner thoughts and feelings. But beyond all these, there is one entity called *Atma*, that is the embodiment of the divine Self. There is only one *Atma*, which dwells in every individual, nay every living being. The *Bhagavad Gita* declared, "The eternal *Atma* in all beings is a part of My Being (*Mamaivamso jeevaloke jeevabhutah Sanatanah*)." There is no scope at all for any doubt or duality in this aspect. "The *Atma* or Brahman is one without a second (*Ekameva adwiteeyam Brahma*)." That is why it is said, "A man with dual mind is half blind."

Divinity is described in the *Vedas* as "The Cosmic Being has thousands of heads, eyes, and feet (*Sahasra seersha purushah sahasraakshah sahasra paad*)." The import of this statement is that the one Divinity expresses itself through millions of individuals and that all are divine. We tend to forget this great truth and consider each individual as separate from the other.

Develop faith in the Atma Principle

The strife and conflicts between human beings started the moment humanity forgot its fundamental unity. It is time that this trend is reversed and that the fundamental unity among humans is re-established. Along with the

unity, there should be purity. Where unity and purity go together, there is Divinity. The combination of unity, purity, and Divinity will result in realisation of the *Atma* Principle (*Atma Thathwa*). The *Upanishads*, especially the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, dealt at length with this *Atma* Principle. If only one develops faith in this *Atma* Principle, one will succeed in all his endeavours.

The *Atma* Principle, or divine consciousness, permeates the entire universe. Not a blade of grass can move without this divine consciousness. Everything in this universe is the reflection of that *Atma* Principle or divine consciousness. The same *Atma* Principle dwells in all human beings regardless of religion, caste, creed, and nationality. This is true even in the case of *Avatars*.

The *Avatars* of Rama, Krishna, etc. may be different in names and forms; but the *Atma* Principle in them is only one. They all lived in their human vestures till the completion of their *Avataric* mission, and once their task was completed, they disappeared. Hence, the physical bodies are not permanent. In fact, nothing in this ephemeral world is permanent, not even the great *Avatars*. *Atma* is the only entity that is eternal. It is beyond birth and death. It is changeless. There is a beginning and end for everything else in this universe, except *Atma*. Hence, one has to develop firm faith in this *Atma* Principle.

Unfortunately, today we tend to forget this true and eternal *Atma* Principle and develop faith in the ephemeral world. We weave a web of imagination around the pleasures that this transient world would offer. Ultimately, we land ourselves in sorrow and difficulties. The *Atma* Principle is the only entity that is true, eternal, and changeless. Everything else undergoes change from time to time. Even in the case of the human body, it passes through different stages like childhood, adolescence, youth, and old age, but the individual remains the same through all these changes.

Today, people adapt themselves to continuous changes in time, situations, and environment. One who changes oneself thus is not a human being in the real sense. Who is a real human being? One who does not undergo a change; one whose faith in the *Atma* Principle (Self) is firm and steady. That is self-confidence. One who develops that self-confidence can find a place for himself permanently in the history of the world.

Respect the commands of mother and follow them sincerely

You all know about Abraham Lincoln, the past President of the United States of America. He was a perfect example of such self-confidence. He came from a very poor family and could not afford to have a decent dress and books. He was so poor that he had to study under streetlights. His mother used to support him with the meagre amount of money she earned by mending old and worn-out clothes. One day his classmates, who were rich and wearing fine suits, boots, and hats, made fun of him and heckled him, saying that he did not deserve to walk along with them on that poor attire and that he may walk on the footpath. He came home crying and poured out his agony to his mother, explaining how he was insulted and humiliated. His mother consoled him saying, “My dear son! Do not get affected by praise or blame. Understand the situation at home. Your father cannot afford spending money on your education. Develop self-confidence. That is your property.”

These words made a lasting impression on the tender heart of Lincoln. He acquired self-confidence and self-respect, with the constant support and encouragement of his mother. He even did some odd jobs and earned some money to support himself. The good name he earned for himself in the society commanded the respect and love of his fellowmen for him.

In due course, his friends and well-wishers advised him to contest the elections. They assured him of their support and votes. On their advice, he ran for election and won. He became President of America. Thus, Abraham Lincoln, the son of a poor artisan, with little spare money even to pursue primary education, became the President of America by sheer hard work and self-confidence infused by his mother. People cannot reach great heights without self-confidence. Not even the nine forms of devotion — listening, singing, contemplating on Vishnu, serving His lotus feet, salutation, worship, servitude, friendship, and self-surrender (*sravanam, kirtanam, Vishnusmaranam, padasevanam, vandanam, archanam, dasyam, sneham, Atmanivedanam*) — can help.

Any amount of spiritual exercise without self-confidence will be of little use. Hence, I wish that all of you should develop self-confidence. Face your examinations with self-confidence. Without self-confidence, not even your friends can help. Do not forget to follow your mother's advice, for "Mother is God (*Matrudevo bhava*).” She will always protect you, wherever you are. One who respects the commands of their mother and follows them sincerely will come up in life, as in the case of Abraham Lincoln.

Unfortunately, people today do not give due respect and recognition to their mothers. They do not hesitate even to denigrate her before others, when they are holding high positions. Whenever some guests or officer colleagues visit their houses and ask about the mother, they reply that she is a servant. This type of behaviour is totally against the *vedic* injunctions, which exhort people to treat the mother as God, verily. She is, in fact, the living divinity. She is the first guru to a human being. She is the only person who selflessly works for and wishes for the welfare of her children. Those who disregard the advice of their mother will never be successful in their life. Even in foreign countries, people like Abraham Lincoln attained high positions by obeying the commands of their mothers and by developing self-confidence.

We consider foreigners as great, but not all the foreigners can be considered great. Only those who respect their mothers and follow their advice are great. If you ignore the advice of your mother, you are sure to face difficulties in life. Follow her advice wholeheartedly. Develop the quality of implicit obedience to the wishes of your mother, without a second thought. Only then will your life be peaceful.

Sustain the rich spiritual legacy of Bharat

The women of Bharat (India) earned great name and fame for their sterling quality of chastity. They are not to be treated lightly. A few examples of such noble women are always worth remembering and emulated. Savithri could bring her deceased husband back to life, by the power of her chastity. Sita was a great woman who entered the fire to prove her chastity and came out unscathed. There were several such examples in this country of Bharat, which shone as a beacon light to the entire world. Bharat is a holy and sacred land.

How fortunate you are to be born in this great land of Bharat! Therefore, you must sanctify your lives by following the rich and sacred culture of this country. Bharat is a holy land where the qualities of magnanimity and sacrifice flourished. The spiritual outlook of Bharat is unparalleled. In fact, it is this spiritual outlook that sustained this country since times immemorial and took it to great heights. The people of this country are enjoying peace and bliss even today, while the whole world is passing through difficult times. It is for this reason that people from all other countries visit this country and find solace here. We have to sustain this rich legacy of spirituality.

Develop self-confidence to become successful in life

Whenever a student is asked what they are doing, they reply that they are concentrating on their studies.

But the real meaning of concentration is fixing one's mind on a particular object. Contemplation is the next step. The final step is meditation. Thus, concentration, contemplation, and meditation are the three steps in spiritual practice. Meditation is not simply silent sitting, closing one's eyes. Maintaining an unwavering and steady mind is meditation. People think concentration is a great exercise, but it is the first step in spiritual practice, the others being contemplation and meditation. Concentration is like the primary school education. Contemplation is the high school education and meditation is the college level education. Only after one reaches the college level is one eligible to acquire a degree. All our ancient sages reached up to this stage and meditated upon Divinity. When one reaches the stage of meditation, there is no scope for any wavering and one's faith in Divinity becomes steady. You have to attain that stage. You may study a number of books and pass your examination in the school or college, but only one who reaches the meditation stage passes the test prescribed by God.

Dear students!

Do not be proud of your achievement in getting a first class or a rank. It is not the marks that count. You should see that you do not get remarks, which is the result of your losing self-confidence. Hence, develop self-confidence to become a real success in life.

(Bhagawan sang the *bhajan*, "*Bhajan Bina...*" and continued His discourse.)

Embodiments of Love!

Constantly meditate upon a name and form of God that is to your liking. It does not matter which name and form you select for your repetition (*namasmarana*). All names and forms belong to the one God. God is the embodiment of divine *Atma* (*Atmaswarupa*). He takes upon different forms and is worshipped by various names. It is only God who can fulfil the desires of devotees. It is He who grants you powers and positions. Without Him, you cannot achieve any position. All are zeros only! With God's grace, one can become a hero!

Prasanthi Nilayam, 2009-02-21