

OM SAI RAM!
Welcome to this Question and Answer Session,

Q. 318, “TRUTH - DHARMA - TRANSFORMATION”

May 4, 2024

*This text excerpt is taken from Prof. Anil Kumar’s book “Sathyopanishad,
Vol. 2”, pages 291-295*

Swami! Our ancients gave top priority to satya, truth. It is not so now. Is satya so very important?

Bhagawan: It is remarked that of all the values of life, *satya*, truth, is the highest, *Satyannasti paro dharmah*. All have truth as the basis. God is truth. The entire creation came into existence from that truth and will ultimately merge in truth.

Satyamunand undi sarvambu srstince
Satyamunanage sarva srsti
Satyamahimaleni sthalamedi kanugonna.
S’uddha sattva madiye cudarayya
(Telugu poem)

So, understand that God is truth and that truth is God. So, live in truth. Truth is the foundation of righteous conduct and the route to peace, which will make our life one of love.

Why is the history of Harischandra remembered till this day? Because he adhered to truth at any cost even sacrificing his wife, son and kingdom.

Those were the days when Prahlada was king. One day he saw a beautiful female figure leaving the palace. He asked her, “May I know who you are?” She replied, “I am your Character.” Prahlada kept quiet. Next day he saw another beautiful woman was coming out of the palace and when asked who she was, she replied, “I am your Kingdom – *Rajyalaksmi*”. He remained silent. Next day he saw another woman of matchless beauty coming out of the palace. He asked, “Mother, would you let me know who you are?” She said, “I am your reputation – *Yas as*.” He didn’t prevent her from leaving.

Next day he saw still another grand and majestic form, the like of whom he had never seen in his lifetime, coming out of the palace. He gently and reverentially asked her, “Mother! May I know who you are?” She replied, “I am Truth.” Then Prahlada fell at her feet and pleaded with her not to leave the palace. She finally agreed to go back into the palace and not to step out. Then what happened? The other angels, Character,

Kingdom and Reputation followed her one after another back into the palace. It only means all will follow you if you have truth!

Swami! We do not have a precise idea of what dharma is and we are not able to conduct ourselves according to the little knowledge we have. Scholars expound on dharma in a variety of ways. They designate one thing as dharma in one context and quite another in a different context. This adds to our confusion. Swami! Kindly explain dharma to us.

Bhagawan: What our elders and scholars had taught about *dharma* needs to be understood correctly. You should not hastily conclude that their views are contradictory.

Take for example the dictum, *satyannasti paro dharmah*. What is to be chiefly noted here? The dictum means, 'There is no *dharma* higher than *satyam*', and more too. The deeper meaning is, "The foundation of *dharma* is *satyam*."

Now consider another dictum, *ahimsa paramo dharmah*. What does this mean? Earlier it is *satyam* which is said to be the foundation of *dharma*. Now, *ahimsa*, absence from violence, is called the highest *dharma*. Now *ahimsa* does not mean only refraining from violence. Harming none through word, deed or thought is true *ahimsa*. Here it is seen that *satyam* has been touched upon obliquely. *Satyam* knows neither fear nor wrath. *Satyagraha* is not a happy compound word. Where there is *satyam*, wrath does not exist. *Satyam* does not inflict pain. One who is rooted in *satyam* cannot undertake violence. Rather he considers *ahimsa* as his *dharma*.

It is also said, *vedokhilo dharmamulam*. The Vedas, which describe how to do *yajnas*, *yagas* and other rituals, treat their performance as *dharma*. It is our duty to perform the deeds enjoined on us by the Vedas. Here, you have to consider *dharma* from the perspective of duty. You have to perform your duty, fulfil your obligations. Therefore, it is said, *kartavyam yoga ucyate*.

In the verse from Gita, *svadharme nidhanam sreyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahah*, you have to realise that 'svadharme' refers to 'atmadharma'. On the other hand, the *dharmas* of the four castes and of the four stages of life are matters of birth. The population of the world is a mixture of black, white, yellow and brown hues and these are to be found in all countries.

The *dharmas* of the four states of life, *brahmacarya*, *grihastya*, *vanaprastha* and *sanyasa*, are to be viewed as four kinds of steps, four processes of *sadhana* to reach Brahman, after performing the deeds enjoined as one's duty.

Thus, *dharma* is very subtle. The life force of *satyam* resides in utterance, as does that of *dharma* in practice of action.

Swami! Transformation of man, how does this come about?

Bhagawan: Actually, transformation of man is transformation of the mind. You wrongly tend to call it 'transformation of the heart'. The heart is not the physical heart located in the left side of the chest. The spiritual heart is quite different and is all-pervasive. This is existence or awareness and is not subject to change. Transformation of the mind is truly important, for only the one endowed with mind is to be called Man. An individual passes away, but his mind survives. That is why it is said,

***Maneva manusyanam
Karanam bandhamoksayoh***

The mind alone is the cause of bondage or release of men. When the mind reaches out, as it does in the *pravrttimarga*, it gets saturated with desires, ideas and worldly concerns. But when it is withdrawn in the *nivrttimarga*, all these are subdued. This state is called *amanaskam*, disinterestedness' and facilitates the experience of peace and joy. This is what is meant by transformation of the mind. Then alone is the transformation of men possible.

Swami! How are we to comprehend the three-fold path, karma, bhakti and jnana?

Bhagawan: You study your own wristwatches. Every watch has three hands – the second, the minute and the hour hand, hasn't it? The second hand should go round sixty times for the minute hand to move one place. Then the minute hand should go round sixty times for the hour hand to move to the next place. Here the second hand is *karma marga*, path of selfless action. The minute hand is *bhakti marga*, the path of devotion, while the hour hand is *jnana marga*, the path of wisdom.

I will give you another example. Most of you travel by train as you go home for vacation. You have three ways of reaching your destination. You can board a train, an express train that takes you to your place straight. You can also get into a train where the coach in which you are seated will be connected to another train at a railway junction. It is a through carriage and so you do not have to get down anywhere in between the change. Then there is another way. You catch a train and travel some distance, get down at a junction and board another train to reach your place. This is a passenger train.

These three ways of journey hold good in the spiritual path as well. The path of selfless service, *karma marga*, is travel by a passenger train. The path of devotion, *bhakti marga* is travel by a through-carriage where the carriage will be connected without you having to get down to another train. Finally, the path of wisdom, *jnana marga*, is an express train that takes you straight to your destination.

Swami clarifies more of our questions in the next session.

Thank you for your time.

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