

Uphold The Dignity and Honour of Bharat Matha (Mother India)

The Lord of Kailasa has manifested His Divine form in front of your eyes with the crescent moon adorning His head, the cool water of the Ganga flowing between the matted locks, with His radiant eye in the middle of the forehead and the purple neck gleaming like the sheen of a blackberry. He wears serpent bracelets and a snake belt, His entire body is smeared with Vibhuti, His forehead is adorned with a Kumkum dot, his ruddy lips glow with the juice of the betel, diamond-studded gold earrings dangle from His ears and His whole swarthy body glows with divine effulgence.
(Telugu poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Everyday you have been listening to various speakers dwelling on the principle of Easwara (Divinity). Many people imagine that Easwara has a form with matted locks of hair and snakes adorning Him as ornaments. But, this is not the true form of Easwara. Though He is all-pervasive, devotees, out of their imagination, attribute a form to Him with various types of ornaments.

There is a temperamental weakness among Bharatiyas to bring down the various forms of God they adore and the idols they worship to the level of beggars. Truly speaking, there are no beggars and there cannot be a beggar in this sacred land of Bharat. To consider somebody inferior to you and imagine that they expect money from you is a sign of weakness. It is because of such narrow-minded feeling that people from other countries consider India to be a poor country and that it is full of beggars. This is totally a misconception. Bharat has never been a poor country. Just because people are economically backward, they cannot be considered beggars. There are no beggars in this world. If someone seeks financial help or asks for food, they are treated as beggars. In fact, we are responsible for making somebody a beggar. We consider them to be inferior to us and ill-treat them.

Bharat is a land of plenty and prosperity. You must realise that there are no beggars in this country and must conduct yourself accordingly. Some people bring down even God to the level of a beggar. When their desires are fulfilled they eulogise God. They pray, "Oh God, I will offer You cash or in kind if You fulfil my desires."

God is not poor and hence, people created by Him cannot also be poor. It is man who makes beggars out of his fellowmen and ill-treats them. Such low and mean practices should be given up. Some people think that Lord Venkateswara is in need of money. They think He would do their work and fulfil their desires for the sake of money. In this manner, they bring Him down to the level of a beggar. It is a grave mistake. God is not a beggar. You should consider Him as your father and mother. Cultivate love for God and your fellowmen. Never consider someone a beggar and ill-treat him. Extend help to those who are in distress. Develop love for God and fear of sin. Just because someone approaches you for help, do not consider him to be weak and inferior. Do not humiliate him. Your innate divinity will manifest before you when you develop love and respect towards all. Treat everybody as your brothers and sisters. Never consider anybody a beggar. It is a great mistake to think that you are the giver and someone else is the beneficiary.

There are some businessmen who try to get their work done by offering bribe to those in power. Offering or accepting bribe is also a great sin. Asking for bribe is the same as begging for alms. We should not give room to such mean practices. Since ancient times, Bharat has upheld moral and ethical values and has set an ideal to the rest of the world. Unfortunately, such values are forgotten today. Feed the hungry with love but do not look down upon them as beggars. Begging

should not be entertained or encouraged in this country. People may come to you and ask for food. It does not mean that they are beggars. You do not become superior to them just because you serve them food. Speak to them lovingly and satiate their hunger. But, never insult them. Bharatians are putting their own country to disrepute by making their fellowmen beggars. Bharat is not a poor country. Otherwise, how do we explain the invasion of so many foreign rulers in the past? Many foreign kings invaded this land and plundered the wealth of our country. The question of being rich or poor arises because one compares himself with another. If someone comes to your doorstep saying, *Bhavati Bhiksham Dehi* (mother, give alms), do not treat him like a beggar. Treat him like another human being and empathise with him. His coming to you and asking for food does not make him inferior to you. Just because he has no money to feed himself, he does not become a pauper and you a millionaire. If you want to uphold the reputation of the country, respect your fellowmen. First and foremost, develop love for your motherland. Feel proud that you are a Bharatiya. Realise that you are born in a sacred land which is the birthplace of many noble souls. Yesterday you heard the ladies extolling Bharat as the land of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. You should always keep in mind the glory and grandeur of Bharat and conduct yourself accordingly. Only then are you eligible to be called a Bharatiya. Your actions should match your words. Merely extolling the glory of Bharat and conducting yourself in a mean manner is futile.

Forbearance is the real quality in this sacred land of Bharat.

The nectarous feeling in this country is the feeling towards one's mother.

(Telugu poem)

Consider Bharat as your own mother. Develop love and reverence towards her and uphold her dignity and honour. If you think your mother is poor, how can you consider yourself to be rich? Since ancient times, Bharat has conferred the wealth of

knowledge to all through the sacred scriptures and epics. How can such a country be considered poor? Your physical mother may be poor but not your motherland. This sacred land has attained the reputation of being the greatest among all nations. You should not show disrespect to such a great country by considering it poor and weak. The morality and integrity that we find in Bharat cannot be found in any other country. Bharat is like a treasure chest of gold. Having been born in such a land, where is the need to go in search of gold and silver? But, unfortunately, people show disrespect and disregard to such a land of gold. The educated should take a vow to revive the ancient glory of Bharat. But, sadly, even the educated are not able to realise the greatness of Bharat.

Today if we find beggars in the streets, it is because we have encouraged them by giving money. You should never give money to beggars. If they are in need of food or clothes, you can certainly give them. But do not encourage the practice of begging.

Bharat has earned great name and fame among all nations. But people in position and power are bringing disrepute to the country by their corrupt practices. Nobody should indulge in the bad practice of giving or receiving bribe. Even the Government should be cautioned in this regard. They should find ways and means to stop this practice of bribing and begging. Beggars should not be given money. They should be provided with opportunities to become self-reliant. Extend all your help and cooperation to the less fortunate ones and help them to come up in life. It is not possible for all to be equal in this world. There is bound to be inequality.

Today, people out of their selfishness and self-interest have brought down even God to the level of a beggar. When you go to a temple, the priest brings a plate before you expecting a few coins as Dakshina. People keep Dakshina (offering) in the plate and receive Prasadam from the priest. This practice of asking for Dakshina also amounts to asking for alms. Let us not

resort to such begging. Let us become rich in our thought, word and deed. You may die for want of money, but never beg for money. The educated should teach a lesson to those who spend their time begging in the streets. When you come across a beggar, you should tell him, "My dear, you are the son of Bharat Matha. Your mother is not poor, she is rich in all respects. Since ancient times, she has been taking care of all nations. Being her son, it is not proper on your part to resort to begging."

Do not keep coins in your pocket for giving to beggars. You may derive some satisfaction by doling out a few coins to beggars, but, in the process you are also bringing disrepute to your motherland. You should uphold the prestige and honour of your motherland. You should become an ideal and worthy son of Bharat. Be convinced that you are born to uphold the honour of your motherland. Otherwise, what is the use of your birth as her son?

You must have heard our students sing Ramakatha in which there is an incident wherein Lava and Kusha find their mother Sita in a sorrowful mood and then trying to console her. They ask her, "Mother, please let us know the cause of your sorrow. Of what use is our life if we are unable to wipe your tears? Do not underestimate us just because we are children. In fact, we are more powerful than Lord Rama. Hence, Oh mother! Do not shed tears. If you shed tears, the whole country will be ruined. Being your worthy sons, is it not our duty to remove your suffering and sorrow? We are ready to meet your interests and give you happiness even at the cost of our lives." Unfortunately, today we do not find such ideal sons as Lava and Kusha. Today, people have become weak-minded. They lack the spirit of sacrifice. Even the so-called great and rich people have not given up mean-mindedness. I feel it is they who are making beggars of their fellow human beings. One should never say 'no' when it comes to helping others.

Once, a rich person went to a Guru and requested him to grant him wisdom. His pockets were stuffed with

bundles of currency notes. As he was seated there, the Guru sent one of his disciples to a businessman's shop to get a five rupee note. After some time, the disciple returned saying that the shop was closed. The Guru sent him to another shop and again the disciple returned empty-handed. This went on for some time. But, the rich man who was a witness to these happenings did not offer a five rupee note from his pocket. Then, the Guru chided him, saying "Your pockets are full of currency notes, yet you did not have the heart to part with a five rupee note when I needed it most. How do you expect to attain wisdom without cultivating the spirit of sacrifice?" Immediately the businessman took out a five rupee note and offered it to the Guru. The Guru did not accept the note, saying one should perform acts of charity out of love and not out of compulsion.

When someone comes to your doorstep begging for food, you should invite him wholeheartedly into your verandah, give a sumptuous meal and satisfy him. Everyone has an equal share in all that is available in this world. Today, people lack the spirit of sacrifice. They are experts in giving lectures on sacrifice but are not prepared to part with even a paisa from their pockets when it comes to practising what they preach. What is the use of preaching when you cannot translate it into action? *Manasyekam Vachasyekam Karmanyekam Mahatmanam* (Those whose thoughts, words and deeds are in perfect harmony are noble ones). You need not borrow money in order to serve others. Share with your fellowmen whatever you have. This is how you should uphold the honour and dignity of Bharatiyas. Today, the reputation of the country has come down on account of people who have stooped to the level of beggars. It is because of the educated people that beggars are on the increase. What is the purpose of education? Is it to produce beggars? I am not in favour of such education.

One may acquire a high academic qualification such as M.A. and B.A. and attain exalted position,

One may amass wealth, perform acts of charity and attain

name and fame,

One may have physical strength and enjoy a long and healthy life,

One may be a great scholar studying and preaching the Vedas,

But none can equal a true devotee of the Lord.

(Telugu poem)

People lack strength and have become weak-minded because they lack devotion for God. They do not have love for their motherland. Consequently, they are bringing bad name to the country. You will be called a true and worthy son of Bharat only when you uphold the dignity and honour of Bharat Matha (Mother India). You may be a great scholar, but your scholarship is of no value if it is not used for protecting the honour of your country. If you go through the biographies of noble men like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore, all of them exhorted people to give up mean-mindedness. You should proclaim with pride, "I am the son of Bharat." The boy who spoke earlier made a mention of this. If you want to be called a true son of Bharat, you should lead a life of sacrifice. If need arises you should be prepared even to forego your meal in order to feed the hungry.

The spirit of sacrifice demonstrated by Bharata in the Ramayana is unparalleled. When Rama went to the forest, Bharata was to be crowned as king. But he went to the forest to entreat Rama to come back to Ayodhya and ascend the throne. Lakshmana who was with Rama in the forest, observed the arrival of Bharata and his entourage from a distance. He became furious with the misconceived notion that Bharata was coming to wage a battle with Rama. In an angry tone, he said, "Mother Kaikeyi has sent us to the forest. Now, her son does not want us to live in peace even in the forest. That is why he is coming here with his army. If You permit me, I will teach him a fitting lesson." Reacting to Lakshmana's outburst, Rama said, "Lakshmana, I think you have developed a desire for the throne of Ayodhya. Better, you go to Ayodhya

and rule the kingdom. I will keep Bharata with Me in the forest. Bharata is one of sacrifice and character. His spirit of sacrifice is matchless. You have misunderstood his noble intention."

Meanwhile Bharata came there and fell at the feet of Rama. "My dear, how are the parents?" This was the first question that Rama asked Bharata. He did not enquire about His own mother Kausalya, but He asked about the well-being of Kaikeyi. On hearing the name of Kaikeyi, Bharata became furious. "It is because of that wicked woman you are forced to live in forest. The very mention of her name fills me with disgust. Please don't mention her name." Rama put His hand on his shoulders and pacified him, saying, "Bharata, Mother Kaikeyi is a noble woman. It is because of her that My Name is glorified and spread far and wide. Do not go by the outward behaviour and talk ill of her. Her heart is filled with noble intentions." After speaking to Bharata in this manner, Rama went straight to Mother Kaikeyi, fell at her feet and said, "Mother, by your blessings, I am fine here. Do not worry about Me. Let Bharata be crowned as the king of Ayodhya. Teach him the codes of governance. After the completion of 14 years, I will come back to Ayodhya and see all of you. It is My duty to uphold the promise made by My father. It is not enough if one listens to the command of one's parents. One should strictly adhere to the rules and regulations laid down by the government and strive for the welfare and happiness of fellowmen. Only then can one be called an ideal citizen."

As denizens of the land of Rama's reign, we should lead our lives in accordance with His model. Rama's words made an indelible impression on the mind of Lakshmana. He fell at the feet of Rama and repented for his outburst. He said, "Brother, when I saw Bharata and his army from a distance, I was seething with anger. Now my mind rests in peace having known the truth and listening to Your soothing words." Rama advised him not to be carried away by the outward scenario but to turn inward and strive for

experiencing bliss. When Bharata started pleading with Rama to return to Ayodhya, Rama affectionately drew him close and said, "Bharata, no doubt your intentions are noble, but you should bear in mind the command of our father. You must follow your mother's advice. That is the only way you can please Me. Share your love with not only your friends and relatives but with one and all. Remember that Thyaga (sacrifice) alone can bestow on you true Bhoga (pleasure)."

Sage Vasishtha shed tears of joy listening to the words of Lord Rama. He said, "Rama, You are forced to live in the forest for no fault of Yours. But, You have forgotten the injustice done to You. You are seeing only the good in others. We are really moved by Your magnanimity. However, we request You to establish Ramarajya (kingdom of Rama) in Ayodhya and give joy to all." Rama smilingly replied, "Now it is Bharatarajya, not Ramarajya. Henceforth, it shall be called Bharatadesa (the land of Bharata)."

It is because of such noble men of sacrifice that Bharat has progressed and attained exalted position. No other country can match Bharat in terms of dignity, honour and reputation. People of ancient Bharat led a life of sacrifice for the welfare of the country. There is no greater sacrifice than sacrificing for one's own nation. Greatness does not lie in performing acts of charity by spending crores of rupees. Your thoughts, words and deeds should be suffused with love. You should make efforts to alleviate the suffering of your fellowmen. Love all as you love yourself. This is your Dharma. Dharma does not mean performing acts of charity alone. You should fill your heart with righteous feelings and give up selfishness and greed. Always keep the welfare of society in mind. Do not consider your fellowmen as 'others'. Share your love with all. Live in amity and develop unity. Only through love can you win the hearts of others and transform them. Hence, the need of the hour is to cultivate love and share it with others. Develop love for God and compassion towards

those less fortunate than you. This is the essence of education. Serve your parents and make them happy. What is the use of sharing your love with others when you are not concerned about the suffering of your mother at home? Your foremost duty is to love your parents and serve them. Then you can share your love with others. This was the teaching of Lord Rama to Bharata. He told him, "Bharata, there is no point in filling the treasury with money. You will earn a good name and win the heart of your subjects only when you utilise the money for the welfare of people."

Lakshmana and Satrughna were the sons of mother Sumitra. Lakshmana followed Rama while Satrughna was always with Bharata. They served their elder brothers with utmost love and devotion. During times of difficulties, they stood by their elder brothers, gave them good counsel and supported them in all respects. That was the purpose for which they were born to Sumitra. All this was a part of God's master-plan. Rama exhorted Bharata to give up hatred towards his mother and love her wholeheartedly. He told him that it was all destined to happen and she was not to be blamed. Since Rama did not relent and after His resolve not to return to Ayodhya, Bharata prayed to Him to give at least His Padukas (sandals) to be enthroned as His proxy.

The name of Sumitra does not find a place of prominence that it deserves in the Ramayana. She was a paragon of virtues and, true to her name, she was a good friend of all. The sacrifice made by Sumitra was greater compared to the sacrifice made by Kausalya. Some of the virtues of Sumitra were not to be found even in Kausalya and Kaikeyi. Before leaving for the forest, Rama sought the blessings of Kausalya. Then He went to the residence of Sumitra. Rama prostrated before her and said, "Mother, I am very happy to obey father's command and go to the forest, but I feel sad to leave you and go. I pray to you to shower your love and blessings on Me. I do not require anything else." So saying, He offered His salutations to her again and

again, took leave of her and left for the forest. Among the three queens, Sumitra was the noblest. Even Sage Vasishtha and Sage Visvamisra extolled her noble qualities. We should accept others' greatness and not indulge in self glorification. In order to glorify others' greatness, sometimes we need to be modest and self effacing.

Students!

Never belittle others. Develop broad-mindedness and treat everybody with respect. Consider others as your own brothers. If a hungry person comes to you, welcome him with open arms and give him a sumptuous meal. Never consider someone a beggar or a poor person. Having been born in this sacred land of Bharat, one cannot be a beggar or a poor person. All are rich. When you consider someone a beggar, it is only the defect in your feeling that is reflected outside. When Lord Rama lifted Siva's bow, Sita's joy knew no bounds. Her prayers were answered. Rama, being the embodiment of love and righteousness, had the power to lift, not just one bow of Lord Siva, but ten such bows. The four brothers, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata Satrugna and their consorts had perfect unity and harmony among themselves. They were like different parts of the orange fruit. One day Sumitra peeled out the skin of an orange fruit. As she took out each part, she was saying, "This is Rama, this is Lakshmana ...". She considered each part of the fruit to represent the four brothers and their wives. She was very happy to have such virtuous daughters-in-law like Sita, Urmila, Mandavi and Srutakeerthi. The daughters-in-law also served their mothers-in-law

with utmost love and care.

The four brothers and their wives always had a common mind. That is why the fame of Ramarajya spread far and wide. Having been born in this sacred land of Bharat, you should live like a true Bharatiya. Your heart should be filled with sweetness. Do not avoid those who need your help, on the contrary you should always wait for an opportunity to serve. This Thyaga Bhava (spirit of sacrifice) can alone confer on you true Bhoga (happiness).

Today we are celebrating the sacred festival of Vijayadasami. People perform various rituals during the nine days of Navaratri festival. We should hope and pray that every day of our life should be as sacred as these nine days.

Let us all move together, let us all grow together,

Let us all stay united and share our knowledge,

Let us live together with friendship and without disharmony.

(Telugu poem)

Live in unity, make proper use of your intelligence and give happiness to your parents. When you lead your lives in this manner, every day will be a day of festivity and celebration. The whole world will rejoice. I wish that you put into practice all that you have learnt during these nine days. Be always cheerful. Never put on a face as if in deep misery. I am happy that our boys never put on a long face; they are always cheerful. From now onwards, forget all differences and share your love with one and all. Serve all.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "Rama Rama Rama Sita ..."