



## DHARMA KATHA

### How to deal with evil people and yet retain our righteousness



**A Devotee once asked Sri Ramakrishna,** "Sir, if a wicked man is about to do harm, or actually does so, should we keep quiet then?"

Sri Ramakrishna answered "A man living in society should not harm anybody in anticipation of harm likely to be done to him. But he should not get harmed either. Thus he should keep the capacity to protect himself and also with convincing actions make the evil-minded people careful about him.

Listen to a story. Some cowherd boys used to tend their cows in a meadow where a terrible poisonous snake lived. Everyone was on the alert for fear of it. One day a Sadhu was going along the meadow. The boys ran to him and said 'Revered sir, please don't go that way. A venomous snake lives over there. "What of it, my good children?" said the brahmachari. "I am not afraid of the snake. I know some mantras." So saying, he continued on his way along the meadow.

But the cowherd boys, being afraid, did not accompany him. In the mean time the snake moved swiftly toward him with upraised hood. As soon as it came near, he recited a mantra, and the snake lay at his feet like an earthworm. The Sadhu said: 'Look here. Why do you go about doing harm? Come, I will give you a holy word. By repeating it you will learn to love God. Ultimately you will realize Him and so get rid of your violent nature.'

Saying this, he taught the snake a holy word and initiated him into spiritual life. The snake bowed before the teacher and said, 'Revered sir, how shall I practise spiritual discipline?' "Repeat that sacred word", said the teacher, "And do no harm to anybody." As he was about to depart, the Sadhu said, "I shall see you again."

Some days passed and the cowherd boys noticed that the snake would not bite.

They threw stones at it. Still it showed no anger; it behaved as if it were an earthworm. One day one of the boys came close to it, caught it by the tail, and, whirling it round and round, dashed it again and again on the ground and threw it away. The snake vomited blood and became unconscious. It was stunned. It could not move. So, thinking it dead, the boys went their way.

"Late at night the snake regained consciousness. Slowly and with great difficulty it dragged itself into its hole; its bones were broken and it could scarcely move. Many days passed. The snake became a mere skeleton covered with a skin. Now and then, at night, it would come out in search of food. For fear of the boys it would not leave its hole during the day-time. Since receiving the sacred word from the teacher, it had given up doing harm to others. It maintained its life on dirt, leaves, or the fruit that dropped from the trees.

About a year later the Sadhu came that way again and asked after the snake. The cowherd boys told him that it was dead. But he couldn't believe them. He knew that the snake would not die before attaining the fruit of the holy word with which it had been initiated. He found his way to the place and, searching here and there, called it by the name he had given it. Hearing the teacher's voice, it came out of its hole and bowed before him with great reverence.

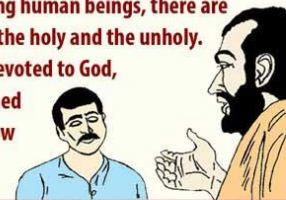
"How are you?" asked the Sadhu. "I am well, sir", replied the snake. "But", the teacher asked, "why are you so thin?" The snake replied: "Revered sir, you ordered me not to harm anybody. So I have been living only on leaves and fruit. Perhaps that has made me thinner." The snake had developed the quality of sattva; it could not be angry with anyone. It had totally forgotten that the cowherd boys had almost killed it.

The Sadhu said, "It can't be mere want of food that has reduced you to this state. There must be some other reason. Think a little." Then the snake remembered that the boys had dashed it against the ground. It said, "Yes, revered sir, now I remember. The boys one day dashed me violently against the ground. They are ignorant, after all. They didn't realize what a great change had come over me."

The Sadhu exclaimed: "What a shame! You are such a fool! You don't know how to protect yourself. I asked you not to bite, but I didn't forbid you to hiss. Why didn't you scare them by hissing? So you must hiss at wicked people. You must frighten them lest they should do you harm. But avoid injecting your venom into them. One must not injure others."

**"In this creation of God there is a variety of things: Men, Animals, Trees, Plants. Among the animals some are good, some bad. There are ferocious animals like the tiger. Some trees bear fruit sweet as nectar, and others bear fruit that is poisonous. Likewise, among human beings, there are the good and the wicked, the holy and the unholy.**

**There are some who are devoted to God, and others who are attached to the world. We must know how to deal with these."**





## Agnishikha

### India as a Jnanabhoomi

We saw in the last issue that India was one of the most literate nations in the world till the beginning of the 19th century. But under the pressure of Christian missionaries British rule destroyed the Indigenous system of education in India. As the Indian schools closed down and the government and missionaries could not match the extensity and workability of the Indian schools, illiteracy increased. As per the Downward Filtration Method advocated by Macaulay, the children of 'forward castes' alone got preference in admissions. Thus the gap between 'forward castes' and 'backward castes' increased. All the 'backward castes' that had already lost their economic status due to industrial and land policy of British then lost their self dignity and social status too with loss of education.

The curriculum was such that those who went to these 'modern' schools got confused or worse - got ashamed of their culture and tradition. Macaulay even gloated in one his letters in 1836 that within 30 years there would not be a single Hindu in India. He had imagined (and so had designed Downward Filtration method) that once the 'forward caste' students get converted they would convert the backward caste. But the 'forward caste' did not convert though got thoroughly confused and anglicized. And it goes to the credit of the 'backwards castes' that in spite of economical and educational backwardness induced by British they did not convert.

But the missionaries in India were still not satisfied with the ruin of Indian system of education. According to them East India company's and later British Government's schools were godless and Bible was not yet made compulsory in the schools. They wanted all the schools to be handed over to them.

Over the years, the missionaries found that many company officials and Indian groups like Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj had started the schools as per the new system. They felt threatened and so agitated for full control of education. Indian Education Commission was appointed in 1882 to decide whether

a) Should government withdraw from direct educational enterprise in favor of missionaries?

b) What be the policy of Government in religious education-teaching of Bible?

The commission felt that along with Christians other Hindu groups may also demand religious education in their schools. The commission therefore reiterated the necessity of keeping all government schools secular. It said that of course in missionary schools the students could be given full lessons in Christianity and even in government schools as undeclared policy it could be

done. But to keep off Hindus from teaching their religion the policy was overtly to be secular. Thus a country where education always had been spiritual in aim was made secular by British and the ideal of secularism in education was followed more to keep off the religious knowledge of Hindus being taught in the schools. Unfortunately, the same things continue even now.

After 80 years of introducing Downward Filtration Method when the Foreign Church sponsored Christian missionaries found that conversions were not proceeding at pace intended then the policy was changed. It was then decided to focus the efforts of conversion through education on the tribal and 'backward castes'. But even in most of the regions they found these people more proud of their religious traditions and culture. And thus in spite of these efforts the % of converted Christians has not gone beyond 5% in India. But did the quality of education improve? In India, people revere Christ as they revere God in all forms and names but they dislike the exclusive approach of Church which considers all forms or names of God other than Jesus Christ as false or even as devils.

But unfortunately, this Macaulay education which was started by British continued even after independence. So, even today a child in India does not get knowledge of his culture, his Dharma in the schools.

Can we say that at least we got a good system of education? Even that is not so. As the British government had set the aim of producing at cheap rates the servants for running its empire in India the curriculum followed in the schools was such that it did not contribute to the economic and industrial development of India.

Outcome of British system of education was quite clear in Sargent Report of 1944 as written by John Sergeant, 'A great deal too much importance is attached to examinations. . . . themselves put a premium on book learning of a narrow kind at the expense of original thinking and real scholarship . . . . I have no hesitations in insisting that the foreign system of education at present prevailing in India has to a large extent corrupted India's mentality. . . . its effect has been to imprison those associated with it at present inexplicable servitude of foreign mindedness.'

India which was a Jnanabhoomi which had the oldest Universities of the world, where people came from all over the world to acquire material as well as spiritual knowledge has to regain back her position. If even today our education bars us from knowing our culture properly then we have to learn it by self-efforts, by going to the original texts if available, by going to our community elders, by contemplating and then we have to work to pass on that knowledge to coming generations. Even today the world wants our cultural, spiritual knowledge. We have to again re-establish Bharat as Jnanabhoomi.

(Reference : 1. "Beautiful Tree" by Dharmapal; 2. 'A Student's History of Education in India' – By Syed Nurullah and J. P. Naik 3. Education in India – By K. S. Vakil)



## Utsarati Iti Utsavah: That Which Elevates is Festival HINDU NEW YEAR



**India is a land of Unity in Diversity.** The unity is in the common vision of Oneness that all Indian share. The same Bhava, same attitude and the expression of that one vision is in various beautiful regional forms. Even in the context of New Year the unity is in the approach. When the trees are flowering and whole nature is expressing its happiness in tender leaves and flowers, then is celebrated the New Year in Indian tradition. In celebrations lot of diversity is there and yet the commonalities are worshipping God, offering respects to elders and of course sweets and new clothes. Since ancient times, several lunisolar, lunar and solar calendars are used in India. Each Vanavasi community also has its own calendar.

In many places the first month of the Hindu calendar in that region is Chaitra. This day falls somewhere between Mid-March to Mid-April for most following various calendars. That is from starting of the spring season till when the spring is at its zenith the beginning of the New Year is celebrated. But there are also some regions and communities like Gujratis, Marwaris who celebrate the New Year from the day after Deepavali. The Hindu New Year's day or Hindu Nav Varsh is celebrated by different names in different parts of India. Let's see some of them. Due to immense diversity all cannot be seen:



(also called Brahmadvaj), is hoisted in every house to show the Rama's victory over Ravana.

**UGADI :** Ugadi is celebrated in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The name Ugadi is derived from the name "Yuga Adi", which means 'the beginning of a new age'. Houses are given a thorough cleaning, people don new clothes and special dishes are prepared, with six flavours.

**RONGALI BIHU :** Rongali Bihu or Bohag Bihu, is celebrated in Assam. The first day of the bihu (last day of the previous year) is called Goru bihu or Cow bihu, where the cows are washed, smeared with ground turmeric, patted with dighalati/makhiyati, worshipped and given new ropes. This is followed by Manuh (Human in Assamese) Bihu on April 15, which is the Assamese New Year Day. The third day is Gosai (Gods) bihu when people worship God.

**VISHU :** Vishu is a New Year day celebrated in Kerala and as Bisu in the Karnataka region (Mangalore & Udupi districts), usually on 14th or 15th April. Vishu include the tradition of giving money by elders to younger ones as blessings called Vishukkaineetam. The most important event is the Vishukkani, which literally means "the first thing seen on the day of Vishu after waking up". The Vishukkani consists of a ritual arrangement of auspicious articles to signify prosperity, including rice, fruits and vegetables, betel leaves, arecanut, metal mirror, holy texts and coins, usually in the prayer room of the house. This is arranged the night before Vishu and is the first sight seen on Vishu.

**GUDI PADWA :** Gudi Padwa is New Year's Day in Maharashtra. Courtyards of houses are cleaned and Rangolis are drawn on doorsteps. Lord Brahma is worshipped on this day and the gudi, Brahma's flag



**PUTHANDU :** Puthandu, also known as Varuda pirappu, is celebrated in Tamil Nadu, on the first day of the Tamil month Chithirai, which falls on 14 April. Women draw rangoli patterns called kolams. A lamp called a kuttuvilaku is placed on the center of the kolam, to eradicate darkness. A ritual called kanni takes place. Kanni means 'auspicious sight'. People watch jewellery, fruits, vegetables, flowers, nuts, rice etc., as it is a belief among Tamil people that it brings prosperity.



**HINDU NEW YEAR (Contd.....)**

**CHEIRAوبا** : Cheiraوبا is celebrated in Manipur. Sajibu Cheiraوبا is an annual religious celebration in which certain rites and rituals are observed with a traditional devotion. The name 'Cheiraوبا' is a combination of two words which have two different meanings – 'Chahi' (year) and 'laوبا' (declaration). So, overall 'Cheiraوبا' means the announcement of the coming year. The younger ones pay obeisance to the Elders and seek their blessings.

**AARAN** : "Aaran" is a festival of Adis to celebrate the beginning of Agriculture activities in March every year. It is celebrated to appease the goddess "Kine Nane" who is regarded as the goddess of fertility and good harvest.

**NYOKUM YULLO** : As per Lunar calendar months the Nyishi New Year falls on the appearance of new moon of February (Liwkiw). During this time the plants start blooming. The peach tree plants are the first plants to blossom indicating the start of agriculture. therefore, Nyokum Yullo festival is celebrated prior to start of any ground activities for cultivation so as to appease the nature gods and goddesses.

**NAVREH** : Navreh is the lunar New Year which is celebrated in Kashmir. This coincides with the first day of the Chaitra (spring) Navratras & falls on the same day as Ugadi.

**MAHA VISHUVA SANKRANTI OR PANA SANKRANTI** : Mahavishuva Sankranti, is celebrated as Oriya New Year. On this day, religious people offer delicious Pana – a sweet drink made of different types of fruits, water, milk, bela, curd and sugar or jaggery - to the Tulsi Plant, Lord Shiva and Shalagram and their deities in various Temples of the state. People also drink Pana with great enjoyment. This day is also a celebration of Hanuman Jayanti.

**BAISAKHI** : Baisakhi Festival, also called Vaisakhi, holds great importance for the Sikh community and people of Punjab and Haryana. Baisakhi falls on 13 or 14 April, which is the first day of the second month of the year according to the Nanakshahi Calendar. Baisakhi commemorates the day when the Sikh Guru eliminated caste differences and founded Khalsa Panth. The Sikh New Year as per the Sikh Nanakshahi Calendar falls on 14 March every year, with the beginning of Chet. However, according to the Bikrami calendar, Baisakhi marks the Punjabi New year.



**CHAITRA PRATIPADA** : It is celebrated in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh with the beginning of the Hindu New Year.

**JUDE-SHEETAL** : Juir Sheetal, also known as Pahil Baisakh or Baisakhi or Maithili New Year is the celebration of the first day of the Maithili new year in Mithila region of India and Nepal. This day is also called Hanumat Dhvajadanam, the day Hanuman's flag (and hence Mithila's flag) is to be flown.

It is also celebrated as Naba Barsha in Bengal, Bisu Parba in Tulu region in Karnataka, Shialsei festival of Santals, Chaitti and Basoa in the state of Himachal Pradesh, Reh of Idu Mishmis and Mopin of Galos in Arunachal Pradesh and of course many more. On the Hindu Nav Varsh, let's pray to Ishwara to give us knowledge and strength to serve others.

### **Dharma Beej Quiz**

This is a quiz based on the last two issues of Dharmabeej. The first three participants who answer all the questions correctly will be suitably awarded and their name and photo given in the next issue of Dharmabeej.

You can send your replies with name, address and photo by email [dharmabeej@gmail.com](mailto:dharmabeej@gmail.com) or to Dharmabeej, Vivekanandapuram, Kanyakumari 629702.

#### **QUESTIONS :**

01. What is the secret of the vitality of our culture ?
02. As per our Upanishads, what are the three essential disciplines of acquiring inner strength, happy and purposeful life and spiritual progress ?
03. What is the significance of Makar Sankranti in our Hindu culture ?
04. Why was Bhagini Nivedita amazed at the inclusive approach of Hindu Dharma ?
05. Which language has influenced the traditional Japanese calligraphy ?

#### **ANSWERS TO THE LAST QUIZ :**

01. What was the biggest victory of Hindu Dharma ?  
Ans : The biggest victory of Hindu Dharma was the participation of Swami Vivekananda in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.
02. Why should we read out scriptures regularly ?  
Ans : Regular reading of our scriptures with full concentration will purify the mind and the purified mind has full concentration to succeed in life and also to realize the God.
03. What was the percentage of school going children in 1822 and what was the percentage when British left India ?  
Ans : In 1822, the percentage of school going children was 72% and it was 17% when British left India.
04. What was Swami Vivekananda's rousing call to India ?  
Ans : Swami Vivekananda gave the rousing call to India, "Wake up Bharat! Enlighten the world."
05. Which are the traditional Japanese dance forms influenced by Ramayana ?  
Ans : Ramayana has influenced the traditional Japanese dance forms of 'Bugaku' and 'Gigaku'.