

## **Parent Meeting**

### ***The Purpose***

The main purpose of teaching the Vedic culture and scriptures is to bring about “reason based bhakti”. When someone understands the significance of what is being taught, he or she is more likely to accept it and implement it in life. Bhakti is a necessity just like water is a necessity. However, no one, in this modern era, has explained the significance of bhakti in a meaningful, logical, and rational way. Our traditional approach is to make use of our God given intellect to get closer to God. The general understanding of bhakti is so varied that one does not even know what bhakti is. A person praying daily is considered a bhakta, a person who regularly goes to temple is considered a bhakta, one who performs yagna is considered a bhakta, one who tells Puranic stories is also considered a bhakta, even those who do karmakand (rituals) are also considered bhakta. Please understand that we are not against prayers, going to temple, performing yagna, telling puranic stories or doing karmakand. These are necessary and integral part of bhakti, but by themselves do not cover the vast field of bhakti. In the last thousand years so much dust has fallen on our understanding of our scriptures that we do not even know what is right, what is proper, and what is truth. In a broad sense bhakti is an individual understanding of the relationship between Jiv, Jagat and Jagdish. When one starts inquiring about who he is, how does he fit in this creation, who sustains this creation, what is his relationship to others and what is the meaning of life, then one can be at the beginning stage of bhakti.

### ***God's Two gifts***

There are two great gifts that God has given to us, human beings. These are intellect (budhhi) and free will (swatantra ichchha). Intellect is not just for day to day earning for a living, but it is to be used for our spiritual growth also. We, who are part of Vedic Dharma, believe in the Laws of Karma and the Transmigration of the Jivatma. Do we ever think about our next life? I know I am coming back, but do I make plans for it like I make plans for the next day in my worldly life. The intellect must be used for inquiries into spirituality also. The main thing we ignore is that our faith must be anchored in the intellect. Once through reason, one can start understanding the basics, then faith can start. Eventually faith will take over, but it has to have foundation in the intellect. The best example that can be given for faith is that of a kite. As long as the kite is anchored in the hand with the string, it can soar as high as the length of the string. Similarly, faith anchored in the intellect will soar high.

The second free gift is that of free will. God does not want us to be tied to Him. You all have seen in the malls how a small child is tethered to an adult via a lease. Now if the adult say, “This child loves me, see she is never far away from me.” We would laugh and say, “Please release her from the lease and see how far away she will run.” Similarly, God does not bind us, but gives us the space to do what we want to do. The only thing we have to be aware of is the Law of Karma and then have the freedom to do. Through our experiences and the knowledge of Law of Karma, we start acquiring wisdom. Wisdom will eventually lead us to God, but someone has to gently guide us to recognize this reality. That someone can be a guru, a friend, a teacher, a parent, even an inanimate object. Ravindranath Tagore, a great saint, was awakened by the reflection of the moon in various pools of water.

## ***Today's Avidyaa***

Today there is rampant avidyaa, false education or wrong information. One of them is our identification with our body and its faculties. Another is that the other is different than me. There is egoism associated with what is mine. We have become accustomed to our strata in society and created class warfares. We have become materialistic. We have been brainwashed into believing there are experts out there and their word is correct. There are religious organizations and we identify ourselves with them. Religious organizations throughout the world have used forceful ways to sway people into submission or change their beliefs for the organizations' benefits.

As a consequence, atheism is on the rise, people have moved away from God, even basic values are being lost. Human beings are becoming less humane. Self-centeredness is evident; it is me that matters the most.

## ***What has been covered in class***

To counter avidyaa, we have started with the topic of "Who am I?" We have tried to explain the concept of Aatman and the relation of Aatman and Brahman. The aim is to have a long range vision and not be lost in this life only.

The second topic we covered was "Trikaal Sandhyaa" that explain the concept of indwelling God. God is within each one of us and he is my active partner who does so many things for me without me asking for them. We have to acknowledge God three times a day and this will create a tighter bond with God.

The third topic was "Bodh Vachanaani", in which explained principles and behaviors used to live a successful life and also work towards the next life.

The fourth topic was "Krutaganata", gratitude. The importance of gratitude my life and the changes it brings in me by moving me closer to God.

The fifth one was on Diwali and the significance of celebrations. The meaning behind each celebration helps us examine ourselves and determine how we can improve. What changes must be brought in my life so I can be a better human being.

The fifth topic was "Mandir", a Vedic temple. What was the concept behind the mandir that our Rishis gave us? Mandirs are important and with the right services can bring about the bhav or feeling of brotherhood and sisterhood under the fatherhood of God.

## ***Future topics***

Indian scientists and their contributions

Reincarnation

Anatomy of Action

Arti and its importance

Symbols or icons like swastika, kalash

Panchayatan pooja – its significance and meaning

Topics on Hinduism in western schools

Etc.