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Have We Ever Experienced True Freedom?

Past Mid-night, 14 August 2006, Amritapuri.

"Seeing the impressive cultural presentations staged by these children (students of Amrita University) Amma forgot everything. It is the proof to the fact that we have not lost our culture. Amma bows down to all of you.

It has been 59 years since India achieved her independence. All over India this occasion is being celebrated. It is a festival for us. But a festival which has become essentially external. Amma prays that these celebrations become an expression of the bliss felt when one experiences complete freedom within.



Children, on this occasion, it would be good if we were to ask ourselves a question: 'Before we attained independence in 1947 or even after, have we ever experienced true freedom?'

Today, other than the parades and the hoisting of the flags, the Independence Day celebrations have lost their Indian flavour, the unique touch of Indian culture. People often celebrate Independence Day by getting drunk and dancing in the streets and having parties.

External independence is definitely of great value, but it is dependent on time and place. Therefore we should understand when, where and how to use it. If we don't have this awareness, then external independence can lead us to danger. We have to follow a middle path for everything. For example, food is essential to sustain the body, but if we overeat we will become ill. Likewise we need to control our thoughts also. Uncontrolled thoughts may lead to mental illness. Therefore freedom from unnecessary thoughts is very important.

There are no schools of thought or philosophies that have not been explored in India. However our greatest misfortune is that we have failed to make practical use of this knowledge. And therefore even though we attained independence on the 15th of August 1947, our minds and intellects are still enslaved and in chains.

At times we still blame the invaders who once ruled over us. That is meaningless. Our greatest fault is that we ourselves have failed to respect our own culture. Rectifying this mistake and putting into practice the words of the Rishis in our daily lives, we should take advantage of modern education and make material progress.

But what is our state today? We have forgotten our duty towards our country and have become selfish and overindulgent.

India has given three great teachings to the world:

'If we protect dharma, dharma will protect us. It will protect the whole world.' This is the first teaching.

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'Whatever action we undertake, it should be done for the benefit of the whole world. It should be done as an offering to God.' That is the second teaching. This mental attitude of selfless offering should be underlying all our actions.

'Everything is an expression of the one Atman. No one is separate from us. God pervades all of creation.' This is the third teaching.

If we are able to imbibe these teachings in our lives, it will bring about an end to all wars. Peace and contentment will spread throughout the world. We will be able to experience supreme peace and bliss in our lives. We will become a source of light to all others."

- excerpts from Amma's speech in Amritapuri after cultural performances by the students of Amrita University on the eve of India's 60th Independence Day. {news}



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