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Meaning: Forbearance, tolerance and patience.

Tolerance is the permanent law of nature. "Tolerance is a law of nature stamped on the heart of all men." Nothing could be truer than this statement; tolerance is, indeed, a permanent law of nature. But it is not something, which has to be externally imposed, as the human desire for tolerance is limitless. Just as truth and honesty are virtues, so is tolerance a virtue. And just as no one ever needs to ask for how long one should remain truthful and honest, so should one think of tolerance as having an eternal value. Tolerance, which we sometimes use in place of respect and mercy, generosity and forbearance, is the most essential element of moral systems. It also is a very important source of spiritual discipline, and a celestial virtue of perfected men and women. In our Holy Scripture – *Ra:mayana*, *Si:tha De:vi* was the very embodiment of tolerance and forbearance.

The way of tolerance / forbearance should be unquestioningly adopted at all times, as it possesses superior merit. Tolerance is not an act of compulsion. It is a positive principle of life, expressing the noble side of a man's character. The existence of tolerant human beings in a society is just like the blooming of flowers in a garden and hence it is a virtue, which has been extolled by Lord *Sri Krishna*

in the *Bhagavad Gi:tha*. The adoption of a policy of tolerance in the midst of controversy and in the face opposition is not a negative step. It is undoubtedly a positive course of action.

*Sri Swamiji* has taught us that the habit of tolerance prevents a man from wasting his time, talent and energy on unnecessary matters. When negatively affected by another's unpalatable behavior, our mental equilibrium is upset, whereas when emotionally untouched by such behavior, our mind will fully retain its equilibrium and, without wasting a single moment, we will continue to carry out our duties in the normal way. The policy of tolerance, fortitude or forbearance enhances our efficacy, while intolerant behavior reduces it. Under the lines of tolerance, the merits of spiritual souls attain a new depth and extend to infinity.

As mentioned before, tolerance is a disposition, an inner quality of character; a willing, not a forced, consent that others should hold and express 'opinions until they are convinced by reason and Scripture that they are wrong. Toleration is the behavior in which that disposition finds expression. Divergence of views plays an important role in the development of the human psyche. It is only after running the intellectual gauntlet that a developed personality emerges. Nobody in this world is perfect. If a man is endowed with some good qualities, he may be lacking in others.

This is one of the reasons for differences cropping up between people. But, for life as a whole, this disparateness is actually a great blessing: the good points of one man may compensate for the shortcomings of another, just as one set of talents in one man may complement a different set in another. If we as people could only learn to tolerate others' differences, this very forbearance would become a great enabling factor in collective human development.

A man who is intolerant is not a human being in the full sense of the expression. To become enraged at antagonism is said to be a clear sign of weakness. Of course, there are many who do not want to recognize the principle of tolerance as being eternal, for, in conditions of adversity; the temptation to retaliate becomes too strong. The feelings of anger, which accompany negative reaction, must somehow be vented, and those who think and act in this way are keen to retain the illusion that, in hitting back, they are not doing anything unlawful. Such thinking is quite wrong. In reality, when a man is enraged at anything, which goes against his will, tolerance as a priority becomes paramount. *Gandhiji* had to practice forbearance several times in his quest for attaining freedom for our country. Many men strive to become supermen. But the true superman is one who, in really trying situations, can demonstrate his super-tolerance. Just any act of antagonism does not give us the license to be intolerant. Rather, such occasions call for greater tolerance

than in normal circumstances. In everyday matter, where there is none of the stress and strain of opposition, no one has difficulty in being tolerant. It is only in extraordinary situations, fraught with conflict, that the truly tolerant man will prove his mettle. Intolerance is one of the greatest challenges we face in the 21st century. Intolerance is both an ethnic and political problem. It is a rejection of the differences between individuals and between cultures. When intolerance becomes organized or institutionalized, it destroys democratic principles and poses a threat to world peace as we witness in our world today and as history has demonstrated to us.

One of the stark realities of life is that divergence of views does exist between man and man, and that it impinges at all levels. Be it at the level of a family or a society, a community or a country, differences are bound to exist everywhere. Clearly, incivility in word and deed leads to intolerance. Yet the two must not be confused. People can debate passionately, even to the point of insulting each other, yet not be intolerant when the debate is over. Often, such collision is characteristic of intellectual polemics; it may be distasteful and it may lead to unwelcome consequences, but in and of itself it is not identical to intolerance. It is perhaps best to discuss the negative before the positive, i.e., the nature of intolerance before proceeding with an analysis of tolerance. There are many reasons for intolerance--fear, pride, diffidence,

over-confidence or, more charitably, genuine devotion to principle. But whatever the motive, intolerance usually leads to enmity--to raw, and often baseless hatred.

There is a distinction between tolerance and indifference. It is important for explaining the spiritual disruption that occurs when we strive to become tolerant. Indeed, the difficulty of tolerance can be understood in terms of the difficulty of the middle path between indifference and dogmatism. Indifference is easy and satisfying because it sets us free, as it were, from the difficult human task of judging. Likewise, dogmatism is easy and satisfying because it follows from a seamless synthesis. When we develop forbearance and tolerance, we develop composure in the face of adversity, a sense of being unperturbed, for it is a voluntary acceptance of hardship in pursuit of higher spiritual aim. It enables us to discard our negative thoughts and emotion and does not let us give in to our negative impulses when faced with a negative situation.

Good reasons for tolerance are plural. They include: respect for autonomy; a general commitment to pacifism; concern for other virtues such as kindness and generosity; pedagogical concerns; a desire for reciprocity; and a sense of modesty about one's ability to judge the beliefs and actions of others. There are great positive powers within each of us and the power of emotion is the highest. This emotional power can bring about

enlightenment if we learn to direct this force properly. When we do not allow the mind to be dissipated and agitated by senses and ego resulting in hatred and intolerance, we can find that center of love within. When that spark is ignited it becomes a burning desire to reside always in Union with Divinity.

*Jai Srimannarayana!*

### ***Greatest Purusha:rttha***

'O King! *Janame:jaya!* The anger which takes over you is not good. Listen to this now', saying so, sage *Vaisampa:yana* brought out the history of our great ancestors describing all the incidents exactly as they had occurred. This history is the *Maha:bha:ratham*.

At the end of his discourse wherein he covered more than a lakh *slo:kas*, the sage eagerly asked the King, 'O King! You have sincerely listened to the history called *Bha:ratham*, can you tell us what have you understood from it? Which is the greatest amongst the *Purusha:rtthas?* Is it *Dharma?*' The King plainly replied, 'No!' The sage was pleased thinking that the King had in fact seriously grasped whatever was preached. The sage further asked, 'Is *Ka:ma* the essence then? Or do you think that *Arttha* or *Mo:ksha* are the essence?' The King said, 'Revered Sir! None of these!' The sage suddenly felt that the entire narration of the sacred *Bha:ratham* had gone waste. Still, the disheartened sage asked, 'So, what is your conclusion?' The answer was - '**Whatever the A:cha:rya says, my highest duty is to follow it.**', this was the kind of reverence which the King possessed for his *A:cha:rya*. Let us learn from such great ancestors of ours!

*Jai Srimannarayana !*