CHAPTER VI

ETHICAL LIFE

The ethical life constitutes a principled way of living based on moral and ethical standards and sound value systems. This requires a clear-cut understanding of the good qualities which have to be pursued by one and bad qualities which are to be shunned.

The ethical and moral quality of individual life determines the overall social values. Thus the social dharma has its strong foundation in the individual’s conduct and character.

The Ethical life demands efforts by one to be satvic by overcoming rajas and tamas. To lead a blemishless and fulfilling life, one shall follow the righteous code of conduct and set an example for others to follow.

6.1. Triguna

Vedanta Desika describes the Triguna of Satva (tranquility), Rajas (passion) and tamas (inertia) and advises one to follow the path of Satva, giving up rajas and tamas.

6.1.1 Satva

Satva Guna brings well-being to all. Other Gunas destroy one’s conduct. 213

213 Godha Stuti
One shall attain Satva by overcoming tamas and rajas.

**Rajasā tamasā ca dustasatve**

Gahane cetasi māmake mukundaḥ

Ucītam mrgyāvihāramicchan

Bhavathīmadṛta pāduke! Pādābhyaṁ. 214

One shall give up rajas and tamas and be sātvik. 215.

Tena nirmalasatvena vinirvṛta rajastamāḥ!
Jagati śāntamohiva dharmocchāsavati babhau!!

One shall make the world filled with satva, which is devoid of all negative qualities.

**Niśkāma krodha lobhānnapitita kukanādambha darpābhimānam**

**Nirdhūtersyabhyaśīya mada vihṛtijahanmatsarastam bhajādyam!**

**Adya śvo vā vidadhyaśāpi caramayuge viśvamakṣudra satvam**

**Velatita prasarpan madhu mathanadayā dattaseko vivekaḥ!!** 216

6.1.2 Rajas

One who is filled with Rajo Guna has to be shunned and is not to be associated with.

One shall get rid of Rajo Guna

**Viśvam cite vigata rajasi vyañjayantim aṣeṣam**

**Vakṣyasyantar bahirapi param śuddhimakṣepanīyam** 217

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214 Paduka Sahasram 264
215 Yadavabhudayam i-29
216 Sankalpa Suryodayam viii-15
217 Hamsha Sandesam i-30

116
Rajo Guṇa is demonic. 218

6.1.3 Tamas

One shall come out of tamo Guṇab.

Lebhe mahattara padānuguṇam prasādam 219

A duryūtta is filled by tamas.

Tamasvabhāva malinam vṛityālokojhitāśrayam!
Dandaśam mitrena rājīna ca dṛṣṭadosānvayam viduḥ! 220
Tamo Guṇa is demonic. 221

6.2 Good qualities

Good qualities represent those which basically conform to the moral and ethical principles and value systems as perceived by the society. A good society is made up of people with good qualities. By associating with good people, one imbibes and absorbs these socially good qualities.

Together, norms and values make up the moral code of a culture—the symbolic system in terms of which behavior takes on the quality of being “good” or “bad,” “right” or “wrong”. Therefore, in order to decide whether any specific act is “normal” or “deviant,” it is necessary to know more than only what a person did. One also must know who the person is (that is, the person’s social identity) and the social and cultural context of the act.

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218 Sankalpa Suryodayam vii
219 Godha Stuti 10
220 Subhasita Nivi iv-10
221 Sankalpa Suryodayam vii
For sociologists, then, normal behavior is behavior that conforms to the rules or norms of the group in which it occurs. Deviant behavior is behavior that fails to conform to the rules or norms of the group in question.\textsuperscript{222}

There is, again, the moral law. Whatever be the source of this law, there is a clear distinction between it and the natural law. The moral law as a law is to determine men’s actions. But it does not by itself determine them.

The moral law implies an “ought”, that we ought to follow the law in our actions. More often, however, we do not obey the moral law than we do, although we feel that we ought to follow it. And when we follow it we do so out of reverence for it. In that case only the idea of the moral law, not the law itself, determines our actions.\textsuperscript{223}

Ethics, as is well known, is the study of moral consciousness, which is the consciousness of moral value.\textsuperscript{224}

Ethics is mainly prescriptive because it describes and analyzes moral consciousness only to find out the law and ideal that function therein.\textsuperscript{225}

\textit{Vedanta Desika} eulogises \textit{maha puru\sh{a}\b} (great men). Association with those with good qualities brings well-being for those who are so associated.

\textsuperscript{223} A.C. Das, “An Introduction to the study of society” Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi: 1972 P.37
\textsuperscript{224} ibid P.18
\textsuperscript{225} ibid P.19
They follow the path of dharma. They are the dharma setus and śuddha satvās. by their sinless deeds, they smell fragrantly. By being associated with them, one’s śreyas increases. They have pure mind and are worshipped even by Gods.

Sannyogena śiśṭānāṁ varṇādānāṁ swasuthrathaḥ

Pravruthimcha nivruthimcha na bhindhyāṭsādhuśabdhabhavath 226

Good qualities are one’s armour.

Sambadhnantya tanutram sucariitamāśanam pakkaṇam nirdiśantyā. 227

One shall not deviate from the righteous path with the body, mind or speech. 228

6.2.1 Karuṇā

Karuṇā denotes kindness and compassion. One has to be kind and considerate towards fellow human beings. karuṇā is a very important quality needed for societal transformation.

Vedānta Deśika inspires one to be compassionate and kind.

one shall be compassionate and kind.

Sākṣāt kṣamāṁ karuṇayā kamalāmivānāyām 229

6.2.2 Kṣamā

Kṣamā represents patience. Without patience, one may get angry losing his temper. This may lead to undesirable consequences even for a trivial matter.

226 Subhasita Nivi vi-2
227 Garuda Pancasat 12
228 Srimad Rahasyatrayasra xxvi
229 Godha Stuti 1
Vedānta Deśika inspires one to be patient even under trying circumstances.

One shall have patience.

\textit{Ahnāya viśva janani kṣamayā bhavatyā} \textsuperscript{230}

Nothing else is as sharp as patience.\textsuperscript{231}

Patience is sharper than the snake, \textit{abhicāra} sacrifice, fire, poison, arrow and \textit{śastra}.

\textit{Na śāpi nābhicaraṇam na vahnir na viṣam tathā}

\textit{Nāstrāṇi na ca śastrāṇi yathā Tikṣatamā kṣamā} \textsuperscript{232}

\textit{Ahāryeṇa kadāpyanyairasamḥāryeṇa kenacit}

\textit{Titikṣakavacenaiva sarvam jayati samvṛtaḥ}. \textsuperscript{233}

6.2.3 Anasūyā

Non-envying is an important good quality. One should not be envious of the growth and position of others as it destroys a person’s core personality.

Vedānta Deśika highlights the importance of not being jealous of others.

One shall develop jealouslessness.

\textit{Vimalāśaya venkateśa janmā}

\textit{Ramanīyā ranapungava prasādāt}

\textsuperscript{230} Bhu Stuti 13
\textsuperscript{231} Yadavabhadayam xxii-32
\textsuperscript{232} Sankalpa Suryodayam viii-79
\textsuperscript{233} ibid viii-80
anasyubhiradarena bhavya

Paramartha stuti ranvaham prapanaih. 234

6.2.4 Sama cittah

One shall remain tranquil and maintain the mental equilibrium in case of pains or pleasures. This quality of being like lotus leaf in water is most desirable from the societal point of view. One need not get bogged down by the downfall or feel elated by the uprising trends.

Vedanta Deśika encourages one to maintain equanimity by not getting swayed by the fortunes or failures of life.

He keeps up tranquility of mind both in the case of fortunes and adversaries.

Pumsah kasya cidastane dvijendraḥ sūrisevite

Gunavatpakṣapatepi madhye tiṣṭati mānabrth

Chakorānādaram devaścakravākasya cādaram

Vivasvān nābhishandhatte viśwametatprakaśayan 235

One’s mind shall not get swayed.

Viṣayarase viraktah vikāra jananairapi na khalu vikriyamānāḥ

Jīvan mukta sadṛśāḥ achuta dṛṣyante pāvanās tava bhaktāḥ 236

234 Paramartha Stuti
235 Subhasita Nivi vii-1,2
236 Acuta Satakam 47
6.2.5 Chastity

Chastity is a major value system which expects one to be true and faithful to one’s spouse. Absence of chastity leads to destruction of the family system besides spoiling the social order.

Vedānta Deśika gives the place of pride for a chaste woman. A chaste woman shall ever be mentally united with the thoughts of her husband even though she may be physically separated from him.

Sītā is a gem (ratnam).

chaste woman weeps about the separation of her beloved husband.

śūnya dṛṣṭih śvasitamadhirikam militam vaktrapadman

Dhārākāram nayanāsalilam sānu bandho vilapāḥ

Eittam dainyam kimapi vidhinā durnivāreṇa nītā

Sā me sītā tanutaratanustapyate nūnamantaḥ. ²³⁷

A chaste woman worries and is without any jewels devoid of her husband.

Aṅgaimāryatkisalyasamairujjitākalpapuspaiḥ

Gāḍāśīṣṭām vapuṣi vimale bimbitābhirlatābhīḥ

Santāpośnaśpasanaparūṣacchayā;yā kincit dīnām

Bandibhūtām nīṣicargarṣhe nandanasyeva lakṣmīṃ. ²³⁸

²³⁷ Hamsa Sandesam ii-23
²³⁸ Hamsa Sandesam ii-21
She always remembers her husband.

_Cetoṣṭimāsāyati bahiiḥ sārvabhāe nirodhe_

_Mayyekasmin praṇiḥitadhiyam mānmathaṇāgamena_

_Abyasyantimitarajuṣo bhāvanāyāḥ prakarṣāt_

_Svāntenāntarvilayamṛdunā nirvikalpam samādhim._

She craves to get the message from her husband.

_Paśyanti sā raghupatīvadāḥṣṭvāmaśeṣaḥavadhātam_

_Pratyāśoāsādadhigatarucib prāktanīvendulekha_

_Matsandeṣe tadanu sumukhi sāvadhānā bhavitrī_

_Kim na strinām janayati mudam kāntavārtāgamopi._

6.2.6 Vivekaḥ (discrimination)

One shall have the power of discrimination so as to lead a life of fulfillment. Objectivity is the real tool to acquire true knowledge.

_Vedānta Deśika_ inspires one to develop the power of objective discrimination.

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[^239]: ibid ii-22
[^240]: ibid ii-30
Though the power of discrimination one shall attain the enlightened stage of *satva*.

*Nīkāmakrodha lobhannipatitakuhanādambha darpābhimānam

Nirdhūtersyābyāsuyāmavadviḥṛti jahanmatsarastambhajādyam !
Adya śvo vā vidadhyaḍapi caramayuge viśvamakṣudrasatvam

*Velāt itaprasarpanmadhumathanadayā dattaseko vivekaḥ !!* 241

6.2.7 Modesty

Modesty and simplicity are virtues that make one to command respect from all sections of society. Irrespective of the glorious achievements made, following humility makes a person still greater.

*Vedānta Deśika* advises one to be humble and simple inspite of his attainments.

*Vedānta Deśika* not only preaches modesty but also practices it extensively. Though he is reverentially addressed as *kavi tārkika simham*, he compares his poetry to that of the blabberings of a child.

Ākarnayiṣyati yatha vībhudheśswaraste

*Preyānasou prthuka jalpitavanmaduktim.* 242

*Mugdhaśarairakila dhārini modamanā

Mātaḥ stanandhayadhiyam Mayi vartayethāḥ* 243

241 Sankalpa Suryodayam viii-15
242 Devanayaka Pancasat 4
243 Bhu Stuti 3

124
One shall be modest about one’s attainments.

_Aham tvalpastadvadyadiha bahu jalpåmi tadapi_

_Tvadåyattam rangakṣitiramaṇnapādåvani! Viduh_ 244

Despite leading a pure and perfect life, _Vedånta Deśika_ considers himself as a sinner, pleading the mercy of the _Padukå_ for cleansing them.

_Avadhimanadhisgacchan pāparāśirmadityah_
_Samajani padarakṣe savadhistvan mahimna_

6.2.8 Fame

One shall aspire to be famous and well-known at least in his domain. Such people command great respect. A human life is really worthy only when a person attains fame through righteousness in thought, speech and action. Such people set example to others to emulate, leading to social emancipation and well-being.

One shall have all-pervasive fame.

_Asamplâvita sapta bdhi ratri lokhitamopaḥ_

_Adiksåtasudhåliptryasya kårtihì sa khim prahub_ 245

Those who are famous shall be respected wherever they are.

_Dvå nu khalu mahitānåm kalpyate tåratanyam_ 246

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244 Paduka Sahasram 10
245 Yadavabudayam xxii-42
246 Paduka Sahasram 157
6.2.9 Broad-mindedness

One shall be large-hearted and shall rise above petty barriers of caste, creed or colour, race or religion. This is an essential quality for effective social upliftment and harmony.

One shall be broad-minded like the area of a mountain.

*Nīḥ saṃānena maṇena suśamanānasaiḥ samāḥ
Somasīmāsamāsannasānumāṃ sānumānasau* \(^{247}\)

6.3 Bad qualities

Bad qualities represent those qualities which are to be shunned by one and all. These bring down the reputation of the mighty, learned or wealthy and leads to one’s utter downfall and degradation.

6.3.1 *Lobhaḥ* (Miserliness)

Miserliness represents a mean and petty state of mind which portrays a bad image of one. This is viewed as the entry gate to hell in the *Bhagavat Gītā*.

*Vedānta Deśika* condemns *Lobhaḥ*

A miser always accumulates wealth (*artha*) for his own selfish needs but in the process brings only *anartha* to himself.

*Vadānyāśca kadāryāśca grhitasthiralobhataḥ
svānarthāṁsaṁcinoṭyarthāṁparānarthairayojayaṁ.* \(^{248}\)

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\(^{247}\) *Yadavabhudayam* vi-92

\(^{248}\) *Subhasita* Nivi x- 9

126
One shall be freed from \textit{Lobha}^\textsuperscript{249}

A greedy person shall, even if the entire world is converted into gold and given to him, lend the same out to others for interest desiring to multiply that wealth.

\textit{Dravi\=naparin\=ama r\=upam jagadidamavibhya dattamapye\=sa}\textit{h!}
\textit{Baddhnan kusitakuhana\=m bahugunayitumihate bh\=uya\=h !}^\textsuperscript{250}

Miserly men are always petty-minded; they always cling to their wealth without spending. They seldom enjoy \textit{dharma, k\=ama or mok\=sa}; They consider money as the only \textit{puru\=s\=arth}\=a and always suffer.

\textit{Api c\=atra ati cidadhigatakusida vr\=ttayah krcchra labdhadhanamudita}

\textit{Krupanatara m\=anasah kikatah puru\=sah !}
\textit{Na dharmamanu\=artante na k\=amam na\=unarbhavam}

\textit{Arthamekamupa\=\=sriya dukkhamevopabhunjate !!}^\textsuperscript{251}

6.3.2 \textit{As\=uy\=a (jealousness)}

Jealousness is an evil which destroys one’s character. Being envious of others’ attainments and positions makes one indulge in undesirable activities harming others.

\textit{Ved\=anta De\=sika deplores jealousy.}

One shall get rid of jealousy.

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\textsuperscript{249} Sankalpa Suryodayam viii-15
\textsuperscript{250} ibid viii-40
\textsuperscript{251} ibid vi-42
Anasūyubhirādeṇa Bhāvyā paramārtha stutirvanvaham prapannaiḥ

One shall be freed from Asūya

One shall be devoid of jealouness.

Vyaṅktum kṣamāśadatasī vigatābhyaśūyāḥ

Santab sprāṇantu sadayairhydayaiḥ stuthim te.

6.3.3 Ahamkara (ego)

Ego is a major impediment in one’s life, which has to be shed. Ego stands in the way of realizing the Self. It becomes a major social barrier when an egoistic person becomes the leader and is in charge of societal welfare.

Vedānta Deśika urges one to shed his ego.

One shall give up ego.

Ahāryo vividhairbhogair ākarshan vibudhānapī

aparichinna mūlosau sasāraḥ sarvadubkhākruth

6.3.4 Krodha (anger)

Anger is the internal enemy which destroys one however mighty he may be.

Vedānta Deśika cautions against the internal foe of anger.

One shall be freed from Krodha.
6.3.5 Kāmaḥ (Desire)

Desire holds the sway in the materialistic world. Unless it follows the path of dharma, it has to be condemned. Being ever attached towards the sensory and materialistic pursuits and continuously driven by passion, man commits sins and mistakes

Vedānta Deśika warns one against the perils of sensory allurements which are not in the path of dharma.

One shall be freed from Kāmaḥ ²⁵⁷

Vedānta Deśika endorses that a man travels all over and fights to acquire wealth.

Due to endless passion for wealth one travels in ten directions, crosses oceans and engages in war.

Atanti harito daśasthaputyanti viśvambharām
Patanti dhaninām catān paraparicchadam bibhrati!
Taranti jaladhim plavaissamaramārabhante mudhā
Duranta na dhana dohalagrahila cetaso dehināḥ!! ²⁵⁸

6.3.6 Ungratefulness

One who forgets the help and assistance offered by others has to be condemned. Such ungrateful men are to be shunned.

Vedānta Deśika criticises those who are ungrateful.

One shall not be ungrateful. Those who forget the help of others would be destroyed.

²⁵⁷ ibid viii-15
²⁵⁸ ibid iv-52
Krupanäb sudhiyäb krupäsahäyam
śaranam tväm ranapungava prapannäb

6.3.7 Imposters/Cheats
Imposters are those who mislead others intentionally by their disguised appearance with a view to lure others. They trap others by their external look, but have an implicit criminal motive. Many gullibles fall prey to them. Intelligent people with proper discrimination should avoid them at all times.

Vedänta Deśika cautions people against imposters. He repeatedly criticises those who behave like a crane and deceive others. They mislead the people by their external appearance but are not pure internally. This shows the real social concern of Vedanta Deśika.

Dvijasya sitapaksasya kaverapi nirasyate
Na hamsa eti sājātyam gatiśabdita vyṛttibhib

Vedänta Deśika describes vividly with satire the nature of a new rich man.

Navadhanamaksibäb kṣudronatapraḳrṭib kramām
Narakiganaṇā lekhyārūḍhim na kim pratipatsyate

One who says that he has renounced all sensory enjoyments (Bhogas) but in reality does not follow it is to be shunned by all.

259 Paramartha Stuti 6
260 Subhasita Nivi iv-7
261 Sankalpa Suryodayam vi- 44
Api nirmuktabhogene svāntaḥ sthaviśayekṣaya!

Asadbhāvāya jāyeta jīhmaṇe sahāśikā! 262

The gifts received from one devoid of good character and conduct would bring only anartha.

Avyavasthita vrītānmaabhinna śṛti caṣṣuṣām!

Adharmārjita bhogānāmāsirapyhitocita !! 263

Chalinam satkathānarham svātmopahatajātikam!

Na nigruṇāti yah kāle sopī saḥhyairnigrbyate !! 264

Even an intelligent one who has good qualities will not be celebrated if his conduct is bad.

gunajālapракarṣepi dhīvarthvepi janmataḥ

sarvatirthāvagāhepi nicavruthinā ṣasyathe 265

Vedānta Deśika deplores those dubious mutts which extract money from the disciples by quoting various reasons.

Vedānta Deśika severely condemns those duplicate ascetics who are attracted towards money by mentioning various means like Bhikṣā for eating, daksīṇā for protecting the disciples, clothes, permanent place for residence, purchase of books.

Bhikṣeti śīṣyajana raksana daksīneti
śāditi sāsvata mathopadhi kalpaneti!

262 Subhasita Nivi v-7
263 ibid iv-8
264 ibid iii-8
265 ibid iv-1
Grantopasangrahana mūlyamiti bruvānāḥ

Sanyāsinopi dadhate satatam dhanāyām !! 266

Deplorable is the vairāgya (dispassion) of the kaliyuga sanyāsis who bear the external symbols of kāṣāya (saffron robe) and danda (sanctified stick).

Aho na khalu kāṣāya danda mātra saranānām kaliyuga sanyāsinām
nairapeksyam 267

6.3.8 Vices

One shall not indulge in the pursuit of the deplorable vices, which bring discredit to him. Once attracted towards them, it will be difficult for him to extricate therefrom.

The following are considered as seven vices:

- Sensory passion
- Gambling
- Drinking
- Hunting
- Cruel speech
- Cruel punishment
- Gossip

Hri śyanti vyasane śu saptasu mudhārabdeśu matpreksitāḥ
Prārabdhanna parityajanti ca muhuḥ pratyūhāvātyahatāḥ !

Nānādūkha bhayānkepi na jahatyartho pumarthe ratim

266 Sankalpa Suryodayam v-27
267 ibid v

132
Mohasyābhīnīvēśa yeakārgaham kośādhikāre sthitah!! 268

One who disrespects the guest has to be condemned.

Durbrāhmaṇīva kimiti nāma abhyāgatamathitim adhikṣipasi269

6.3.9 Foul speech

One shall not resort to foul speech, which is condemnable. Many a time this results in social disharmony and even in serious riots in some cases.

One shall not indulge in foul speech in the form of harshness, exaggeration and gossip.

Paruṣātivāda parivāda paiśuna prabhṛti prabhūta pataniya paṅkila 270

Scandal—mongering greatly harms the social order. 271

6.4 Parikṣā (Testing)

A person may possess many good qualities but also some bad qualities. Hence he has to be tested in order to determine his core personality.

One's true nature has to be determined only after proper process of testing as at times he may be misrepresented intentionally through dubious means.

One shall understand the true nature of a person after careful testing as in the world people can even show Suvarṇa gold as durvarṇam.
Suvarnamapi durvarnam yuktyā darśayitum kwacit

Vyanaktiśuddhim sahasā śucirekab swatiknaśnyatāb

One shall not only see but also hear before one concludes the reality.

Kākānāṁ kokilānāṁ ca simābhedāb kathām bhavet

Yadi viśvasṛjā sākṣam na krta karnaśaskuli

272 ibid Xii-3
273 ibid Xii-1
6.5 Summary
This Chapter has elaborately prescribed the ethical code of conduct for individual and social well-being.

Cultural life constitutes the vibrant expression of social life, which is covered in the ensuing Chapter.