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Spirituality And Society

The respect commanded by a community depends on its moral values. Moral bankruptcy leads to social degeneration. A community inspired by ethical mores survives forever. I exhort the brave sons of Bharath to remember the strength and value of morality.

Embodiments of Prema!

There is a widespread misconception that spiritual values have no place in modern society. It is erroneously supposed that spirituality is incompatible with secular society. Krishna removes this misconception in *sankhya yoga*. Many fallaciously imagine that spirituality is only concerned with salvation. Spirituality is, in fact, the backbone of society and is indispensable for social progress and solidarity.
Its importance for and relevance to society, cannot be exaggerated.

_Easwara_ manifests Himself among individuals who aggregate together to constitute a community. Every individual is an aspect of _Easwara_. Likewise, society too has emerged from _Easwara_. An individual has form, but society has no such definable form. In the same manner, the world is visible, but _Easwara_ is invisible. Though He is invisible, His existence becomes indisputable because there cannot be creation without a creator. Just as a fabric cannot come into existence without thread and a pot without mud, so also the universe cannot come into existence without the primordial substance of _Brahman_.

_Brahman_ is the basis, the substance, the prime mover and also the “enjoyer” of the universe. Krishna exhorted Arjuna to comprehend the omnipresent and immanent essence of _Brahman_, the Godhead.

It is emphasized that we should not reject _swadharma_ or our own _dharma_. But what is this _swadharma_? The _Bhagavad Gita_ contains an elaborated and lucid exposition of the concept of _swadharma_. Krishna enlightens Arjuna on the meaning and significance of _swadharma_. _Swadharma_ is mainly concerned with individual attributes. _Vishwa dharma_ is higher than _swadharma_. _Vishwa dharma_ is universally applicable _dharma_. _Vishwa dharma_ is the cosmic _dharma_ of _Brahman_. _Easwara dharma_ emerges from _vishwa dharma_. _Samajika dharma_ or the _dharma_ of society emerges from _Easwara dharma_, the _dharma_ of God. _Vyakti dharma_ or individual _dharma_ emerges from _samajika dharma_, and this _vyakti dharma_ is synonymous with _swadharma_.

It is said “*samathvam yogamuchyate*”. The sentence is vibrant with thought and meaning. The word _samathva_ may be roughly interpreted as equanimity. The popular meaning of _swadharma_ is the code of conduct or scale of values adopted by any particular caste, community, creed or religion. But this is not the correct interpretation and it is not acceptable to all groups of people. There are no universal and absolute norms of morality. Ethical relativity is an inescapable social phenomenon. Morality depends on the time, the place and the spirit of the age.

Differences are obvious in our mundane world. There are all sorts of people in the world. There are men, women and children of different age groups. There are infants, adolescents, young men and women and old men and women. The _dharma_ of women cannot be the same as the _dharma_ of men. There is, in nature, an inherent inequality. Thus, it becomes ridiculous to adopt a single ethical code for the entire mankind. Each individual has his own _dharma_, but it need not militate against the _dharma_ of others.

In the _Bhagavad Gita_, Arjuna finds himself on the horns of a spiritual dilemma. He is worried about
Swadharma or individual dharma is transcended by a person who recognises and realises the immanence of Easwara. “Easwara sarva bhutanam”. The moment you comprehend the truth of this cardinal aphorism, you realise Easwara dharma, the theocentric order in nature. Thus, swadharma is lower than Easwara dharma and vishwa dharma. When you recognise the divinity of every human being, you realise Easwara dharma. You will be subject to the dualities of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, good and evil as long as you identify yourself with the perishable and mutable physical body.

Arjuna was afflicted with weakness of mind and heart. Krishna chastised Arjuna for his moral and spiritual cowardice. As long as you are weak and timid, you cannot achieve anything in life. Sentimentality and body consciousness should be avoided. As long as you think from the point of view of the perishable body, you cannot overcome your spiritual pusillanimity. When you think from the point of view of the immortal Atma, you will have no feelings of weakness and timidity. By these exhortations, Krishna galvanised Arjuna into activity on the battlefield.

The world is a stage. We are all actors in the world drama. But all our actions are motivated by the Will of God, who controls our immortal souls and perishable bodies. And we must play the game without displaying any sort of weakness or timidity.

The duties, dichotomies, and relativities of the world do not affect the immortal Atma. The coexistence and juxtaposition of good and evil should be acknowledged. From the point of view of the Atma, good and evil are only phenomenal and not absolute.

Deha (the physical body) is composed of the five primordial elements of earth, air, water, fire and ether. Sooner or later, the deha will perish. But the dehi or the inner Atma has neither birth nor death. It is indestructible, imperishable and immortal. And this dehi is one with Brahman. Atma and Brahman are essentially identical. The identification of the Atma with Brahman is the summum-bonum of spirituality. Spirituality and equanimity go together. Social justice and spirituality are closely related. Spirituality is conducive to social justice and egalitarianism.

The realisation of the Atma is impeded by envy, malice, and jealousy which are caused by attachment to
the perishable physical body. All people do not derive the same benefit from the Gita. It all depends on the deservedness and purity of the individual. Ultimately, the individual is responsible for everything that he does. Human beings may not be able to even imagine the sublime bliss of spirituality as long as they prefer to wallow in the mire of slothfulness.

The Bhagavad Gita that we read today has been embellished and beautified by Vyasa’s poetic genius. One need not memorise all its slokas to achieve the inner tranquillity of spirituality. A single sloka from the Gita is enough to transform our lives. Steadfastness (sraddha) is necessary for acquiring the knowledge of spirituality. The Bhagavad Gita exhorts us to become fitting instruments of God. It should be repeatedly read for intellectual illumination and spiritual enlightenment.

Liberation is the goal of all theists. The Atma manifests itself in a body. It must realise its divinity through devotion and finally merge with the ultimate source from which it has evolved. But very often man forgets his divine nature by yielding to the temptations of power and pelf.

An individual’s response to good and evil in the world depends on his karma, which is a correct measure of his gunas (qualities). Karma is the key to liberation. But man forgets his real destiny by his attachment to his corporeal body. Once, Indra was born as a pig on account of a curse. He forgot his past glory, married a sow, and raised a family of little pigs. He felt supremely happy and forgot his divinity. Narada took pity on him and made him realise his real destiny. Human beings also forget their divinity and attach themselves to sensual pleasures.

Krishna’s exposition of the Gita benefited Arjuna, Sanjaya, Vyasa, and Hanuman. The same Gita fell on the deaf ears of Dhritharashtra. His attachment to his cruel sons blinded him to the justice due to the Pandavas.

Every sloka in the Gita is important. There are seven hundred slokas in all. A matchbox may contain as many as fifty sticks. But, a single match is enough to light a lamp, for dispelling the darkness in a place. Similarly, a single sloka from the Gita is enough to bring the light of wisdom and dispel the darkness of ignorance. But, without sraddha or perseverance, the Bhagavad Gita will remain a sealed book. There is no liberation and spiritual enlightenment for the slothful.

God is not confined to any single place. He is not only transcendental, but also immanent and omnipresent. Krishna told Arjuna, “You are not the killer in the real sense. You think that you are going to kill your enemies. Killing is only phenomenal. You are instrumental in this process of destruction, purification and the resurrection of dharma. You would not be unnecessarily perturbed if you were to remember that the corporeal body is transient and the incorporeal Atma is immortal.” Real Yoga is the attainment of equanimity and control over the sensory organs which screen the ultimate reality. Weakness is death and strength is immortality.
Krishna’s exposition of the Bhagavad Gita was necessarily brief. But, Vyasa elaborated the Song Celestial by his own illuminating comments for the benefit of posterity.

For instance, the words, “Samatvam yogam uchyate” or ‘equal-mindedness is called yoga’, were expanded into twelve verses by Vyasa; the phrase “Kshudram hridaya-daurbalyam” or ‘detestable is weakness of the heart’ was elaborated into twenty-two verses; the verse “anityam asukham lokam imam praapya bhajasva maam” which means ‘having got this transitory, miserable world, worship Me’ was made into seven verses; and the aphorism, “nayamatma balahinena labhyah” or ‘this Atma cannot be attained by the weak’ was explained in nine different verses.

Hanuman, who was on the flag of Arjuna’s chariot, overheard the Gita and expounded it in twenty-one verses in the Paisachi language.

The truth is one but its manifestations are many. The most essential prerequisite for a sadhaka (spiritual seeker) is infinite patience and perseverance. The Bhagavad Gita contains the quintessence of all scriptures. It should be studied assiduously by every spiritual aspirant. It should also be regarded as a book of great practical value in our daily lives. It has given solace to many and it will help your spiritual progress.