

Satsang

Vol. II No. 24

May 1, 1975

Twice Monthly

KARMA (RIGHT ACTION)

...Vasant

KARMA (Right Action) is the fourth aspect of the Fivefold Path. Work is worship. Right action culminates into knowledge which is the goal of human existence. To perform right action (KARMA), to refrain from wrong action (AKARMA), to be alive to the personal or specific acts to be performed in the light of illumination gained by surrendering our will to the Guru, this VIKARMA comprises all KARMA. Scriptures or revealed knowledge is the only authoritative source to refer which of the actions could be termed as KARMA and which AKARMA. For VIKARMA the enlightened intellect tempered with the spirit of surrender alone will be the guide.

We sometimes hear people uttering that "God is the doer of all actions". But it is not aptly put. God is the creator of the universe and man is endowed with free will to use his discrimination for his actions. Man is the choicest creation of the Almighty and He has endowed him with mind and intellect to discriminate between good and bad. The choice to act is left to man. SATYA DHARMA (Eternal Principles of Religion) was bequeathed to him at the time of creation to guide his actions. Thus, man is the maker of his own fate as his actions blossom into fate. No one ever rests for a moment without action. PRAKRUTI (nature) gives rise to GUNAS (qualities) which force man to action. SATYA DHARMA does not treat flesh as the enemy of spirit. SATYA DHARMA does not recognize the Divine right of kings, but it does confer the Divine right on man to be the arbiter of his actions. Any act that you perform is like a seed which must blossom and yield fruit. You have the choice to stick to correct action to ensure that the fruit is not bitter. It is no use blaming fate for our misery, as it is the culmination of our own actions for which we must squarely shoulder the responsibility. Thus, you cannot take refuge in the maxim that God is the doer of all things and go on committing sins, i.e. actions forbidden by SATYA DHARMA. God is not partial and you have to work out the result of your bad deeds. SATYA DHARMA says "repent and ye shall be forgiven". Repentance is intense good KARMA.

If you restrain the sense organs but keep brooding in the mind about sense objects, it is nothing short of hypocrisy. If you perform your allotted task with reduced sense of attachment, you have found the master key that will open all doors to the Divine.

Man is endowed with intellect to tame his free will to perform right action. Free will guided by intellect discriminates between a right action or otherwise. Judicious exercise of this discriminatory faculty adds up to your KRIYAMANA, result of action that is being performed. Hence we can say whatever be the past, you can certainly make or mar the future. And hence SATYA DHARMA lays great stress on KARMA or right action. Desires feed the ego and the soiled intellect tilts the balance in favour of tainted discrimination resulting in untoward action. Such action superimposes on the intellect and the vicious cycle moves. KARMA is the place where you have to touch if you wish to untie the knot and clear your way to the Divine. KARMA or right action is the push button which sets into motion the cleansing device which removes ignorance. For this mechanism to operate, you have to sublimate the mind and purge it of desires. Desires will not leave easily and hence, you are asked to perform the action with nonattachment to the fruit thereof. For this, you have to exercise control over sense organs with the cooperation of ennobled intellect.

AGNIHOTRA (purification of the atmosphere through the agency of fire), DAAN (sharing your assets in a spirit of humility) and TAPA (self-discipline) help you a good deal in achieving control over the sense organs and enkindle the spirit of detachment in you. Attachment or aversion of the senses to their respective sense objects is natural but you have to learn to minimise the sway. Then alone will you master the secret of not clinging to the fruits of your action and be free.

KARMA is thus by far the most important aspect which anyone on this path of Bliss must scrupulously guard. The mechanism of KARMA set into motion will work irrespective of whether you are a theist, an atheist or an agnostic. An athiest, a non-believer, is equally bound by the law of KARMA or right action and he has to conform to this KARMA phenomena without the intermediary of Omniscient Power. It needs an iron will indeed for an athiest to believe in performance of right action for the grace aspect of Divinity is out of bounds for his way of thinking. A materialist, a moralist, an atheist all have to bow to this undefiable law of KARMA and set up rules of behaviour for man; for though rational, man is predominantly a social animal. He is human albeit Divine. Hence, recourse to SATYA DHARMA for reference of right action can be availed of by any category of persons. SATYA DHARMA will lift you up by the various processes of built-in mechanism, while the nonbeliever has to strive hard, pitted against the uncertainty of the span of life.

I hope the above explanation will suffice to prove why the commandments in the Sermon on the Mount are not a fragile or breakable commodity to be dispensed with as thou wilt. There is no escape from it and it is axiomatic to conform our behaviour to the pattern of the code employed therein. It is given to the discrimination of man to choose to become a friend or foe unto himself. He not only has to discriminate but he has to act.

SATYA DHARMA specifies the do's and don'ts to guide you in your relations with society. You have a responsibility towards society since you are born into it and the very act of discharging this responsibility righteously as laid down by SATYA DHARMA ennobles you and society both. Each one of your actions should bear witness to the fact that you are a traveller on the Divine Path. The human body is vouchsafed to your care as a means to recognize the Ultimate Reality and both success and setbacks in matters temporal

should be utilized as opportunities to cleanse the mind of the dross of attachment. For this, a general purpose code strengthens the spirit of surrender to Divine Will and you become a more fitting receptacle to attract Grace.

"Be thou perfect as my Father in Heaven is perfect."

Since the goal of spiritual path is perfection, observance of your duty becomes a unilateral act; for duty is twice blessed, it blesseth you as well as society.

KARMA is your companion till the last breath and the result of KARMA alone succeeds when the body is no more.

KARMAS enumerated below are merely for our guidance and the list can never be claimed to be exhaustive.

AHIMSA (Nonviolence)

AHIMSA is abstaining from any action which is likely to inflict pain, misery, grief or discomfiture on others. AHIMSA has the widest connotation covering your thought, word and deed. You are to refrain from taking law into your own hands. Faith in Almighty who is omniscient will enable you to rest in peace despite provocation. Your cheerfulness in suffering pain, your composure despite provocation will stop all attacks and there will be no residue of ill will. It is the other party who will be exhausted and not you. Such behaviour will enkindle the flame of love and benevolence in your heart which will again work up the alchemy which dissolves the dross and vulgar. So, such an incident is turned into an opportunity for you to exercise control over senses and the consequent refinement of intellect.

SATYA (Truth)

Speech is the medium for translating thought into action. Hence, there should be no discord between your thought and speech so that the action that follows also is nearer truth. A liar needs a good retentive memory while truth carries no such burden. If you practice uttering truth only, its irrepressible strength pervades your personality and becomes a potent weapon to persuade people to your point of view. Truth is an end in itself and suffers from compromise. Whosoever is in the habit of uttering untruth should first learn to minimize the occasions. You are working under a delusion if you believe that occasional doses of untruth are necessary in day to day life. Fearlessness is a big asset in life and the habit of speaking truth is the golden means to acquire that asset. Speech laden with truth is easily recognised. Truth disciplines the mind and lightens your burden. If you fall into the habit of speaking truth you will find that you possess a powerful weapon in dealing with society which makes every essay of speech a joy. A moment of firm decision to speak only the truth will be a cherished treasure for you whatever be your age. Occasional lapses into untruth forced by habit need not despair you. If parents inculcate the habit of truthful speech in their children and stand firm before them as an ideal to be imitated they will thereby help reduce much misery from their future life when the children grow up. Your resolve to speak the truth and the knowledge that you speak nothing but the truth will by itself be a big achievement in your dealings with others.

You then have to discourage the company of people who are given to speaking untruth. It is not so difficult and with a little practice on your part, people who come near you will be more inclined to speak the truth.

Since duty is to be performed unilaterally, there is no excuse for anyone to fall back into the habit of untruth once he makes a resolve to speak the truth and hear no untruth. Some are used to speaking truth with a lot of admixture of untruth. It may appear quixotic for them that a person would progress in the mundane world by refusing to utter untruth. If you observe them a bit closely you will realize that you can turn the same argument against them. A little practice will enable you to grasp the fuller meaning of AHIMSA. Love and AHIMSA are synonymous.

ASTEYA (Thou Shalt Not Steal)

Material possessions are means to an end. The end is knowledge about Ultimate Reality and the path to be trodden is the Fivefold Path. The practice of TAPA (Self-discipline) inculcates non-attachment and results in extrication of yourself from the ensnarements of body and mind.

With this background, it should not be difficult for you to avoid casting a longing eye on anybody's possessions. The desire to dispossess somebody of his possessions for your own use or pleasure is itself tantamount to theft. Practice of ASTEYA (Non-stealing) in society would uphold the dignity of labour and would destroy the reflected glory of riches unaccompanied by the practice of SATYA DHARMA. Much of the tension would be eliminated if a good many people in society practice ASTEYA. You can imagine that robbing a poor person of his possessions may deprive him of his livelihood but where is the harm if the rich are dispossessed by taking the law into your own hands or if you cast a longing glance at their possessions? Duty is to be performed unilaterally because you are not performing the act to please anyone else but only to help yourself. So anything that is contrary to this is going to set up a chain reaction from which you cannot remain aloof. You are to employ perspicacity and reason out how this act will rebound on yourself. Is it going to nourish your ego? Is it going to fatten your desires? Is it all necessary?

ASTEYA means refusal to covet other people's possessions, dignity of labour, sense of non-attachment.

BRAHMACHARYA (Continenence)

BRAHMACHARYA does not mean mere control over sexual desire. BRAHMACHARYA is redemption from the slavery of passions. Man sometimes becomes a plaything in the hands of passion and makes it impossible for peace to knock at his door. If you cannot ignore sinful thought at least try to resist it and guard yourself from the action thereof. Self-control is BRAHMACHARYA. Control over thought, word and deed is BRAHMACHARYA. Control over the sense organs is BRAHMACHARYA. Control over sexual desire is BRAHMACHARYA. Such a control bestows many virtues. Good health and humility are some of them. Any age is good enough to practice BRAHMACHARYA. But, if you start young, you are extremely fortunate. BRAHMACHARYA could be practiced after marriage except when the couple desires to have a child. You have to learn to restrict your sexual desire to your marriage partner in view of the marriage vows. Straying away from this vow even in thought or word is lack of BRAHMACHARYA. But, if you find it hard to curb the highly volatile mind, at least take note of the situation and guard yourself from translating the thought into action. If you succeed once, you then try to avoid the situations which

lead to such desires and slowly you will have mastered the art. The disciplined life after practicing AGNIHOTRA will be a good material aid. Freedom from lust is a royal battle won. This victory is never single and brings in its train innumerable laurels. Every thought and impulse that emanates from you should be made a captive of the discrimination endowed to you by the Almighty and it should bear the stamp of your approval for further release. For control over lust you must always be alert that reason is not chained down to non-essentials in life and words are not uttered for gratification of vanity. The attitude of "too much of this worldliness" should not be allowed to sully reason. Self-control and true humility are interchangeable terms. The workshop of the devil, the idle mind, is yet another foe you have to wrestle with. If you do not attempt to fill it with something uplifting it will unabashedly go after something degrading and if allowed to stay there a little longer, it will carry you a great deal further. BRAHMACHARYA is control in thought, word and deed.

APARIGRAHA

APARIGRAHA implies reduction in material perquisites with due deliberation. It is TAPA in action. Once you are determined to get away, one by one, from the various entanglements that make your body and mind captive and your discretion is backed by action, APARIGRAHA takes root.

APARIGRAHA means refusal to accept any service or gift from anybody if you feel you would not be able to do something in return. APARIGRAHA carries the seeds of detachment from sense objects. If you find the detachment difficult to practice, APARIGRAHA is the physical aid. But, remember detachment and a long face go ill together. APARIGRAHA should be deemed a privilege and not something born out of incapacity.

KSHAMA (Thou Shalt Forgive)

If you retaliate when you are wronged, you may be forgiven but if you pardon the wrongdoer despite your ability for retaliation, it will make you a pilgrim on the Divine Path.

DHRUTI

To remain unruffled of mind, despite provocation is DHRUTI.

ARJAVAM

To remain peaceful and contented despite the dualities of pain or pleasure is ARJAVAM.

SHOUCHAM (Cleanliness)

Cleanliness is next to Godliness. Let the body be clean to the extent permissible by circumstances and let the mind be pure. This purity of mind results from AGNIHOTRA.

SANTOSHA

To bear adversity or prosperity alike without any dent in the composure is SANTOSHA.

ASTIKYA

Indelible faith in SATYA DHARMA, the Eternal Principles of Religion is ASTIKYA.

Nobility of mind, gratitude, restraint in speech and patience are also some of the KARMAS prescribed.

Sanskrit language, which has the potential to supply in innumerable proportion a large vocabulary for all technical terms of the physical and metaphysical sciences, has no separate word to denote exclusively the idea conveyed by "right" in English. The word used is ADHIKARA which means right as well as duty. Right and duty are two sides of the same coin. Duty is inherent in right.

"Thou hast a right to perform action but never to the fruit thereof." (Bhagavadgeeta)

The above enunciation puts in a nutshell the potency of KARMA as well as its place in the hierarchy of life. The latter part of the doctrine which states that you have no right to the fruit of KARMA is not a statement of volition but of the limitation of the human frame. It is not left to your choice to claim or disclaim the fruit of KARMA for it is not given unto you to judge the merit thereof. If you conform your mental faculty to this fact yours will be the reward. Thus, you can see that it is futile for anybody to indulge in wrong actions and seek refuge under the delusion that God is the doer of everything. God is the creator of the universe and has endowed man with the faculty of discrimination. If he chooses to utilize this precious gift from the Almighty and performs wrong actions, Almighty is not the doer but man himself. If it were otherwise, where is the necessity for anyone to talk or write about SATYA DHARMA? What will be the propriety of human free will.

KARMA performed judiciously with the knowledge that it will make or mar your future is the exercise of free will. Such an essay of free will at once will attract Grace from the Almighty and make your onward journey on the Divine Path a joy for you and a benefit for society. The intellect freed from delusion, untossed by conflicting opinions, will guide the discriminatory faculty for right action and it will also teach you to leave what is in no case within your jurisdiction, that is, fruit of your action. All KARMA which you perform should have as its immediate goal the steady wisdom which pleaseth not at receiving nor vexeth at evil.

SATYA DHARMA does not advocate abdication of KARMA but the abdication of desire for the fruit thereof. The Avatars, the Messengers of God, are all engaged in performing KARMA, perhaps with more intensity, although there appears to be no necessity for them for such action. Even if the ignorant indulge in KARMA so do the wise; but the wise remain unattached. This is the secret of KARMA enjoined by Eternal Principles of Religion (SATYA DHARMA).

Let us inculcate the habit of performing right action enjoined by SATYA DHARMA. Let us strive to make ourselves a worthier instrument for His Grace to flow. Let our free will always abide in His Grace.

Excerpts from SATSANG Correspondence

"I am back from New York now and had a learning experience there. As you know Master plans these experiences for us; all for our own purification. I met with a few people there; three of those visits were very rewarding. We will be in communication with them, I am sure, in the future. I saw specifically from that visit how Master's Grace is manifesting in people on all levels. This makes me so happy that it is beyond words. ...The Divine purpose of the Fivefold Path and Agni-hotra is very special, more than I had ever realized. ...Love, Love, Love and more Love eternally, this is Shree's way.

Love, J."

Buddha, the Blessed One, who came to reiterate the Eternal Principles of Religion (SATYA DHARMA) gives the following advice:

"Bhikkus, all men and women should contemplate upon these five things:

1. Some day I shall become old and this cannot be avoided.
2. Disease may come any day and this cannot be avoided.
3. Death will come some day and this cannot be avoided.
4. Things that are dear to me are subject to the law of change and decay and this cannot be avoided.
5. Whatever deeds I have done have made me what I am. Whatever good or bad deeds I may do I shall be heir to them.

"By contemplating upon old age the pride of youth can be reduced."

"By contemplating upon disease, the pride of health can be reduced."

"By contemplating upon death the pride of life can be reduced."

"By contemplating upon the law of change and decay to which things we hold dear are subject, the passion for possessing things can be reduced.

"By contemplating upon the fact that our deeds make us what we are, evil thought, word and deed can be reduced.

"By contemplating on these five things the pride and passion are reduced and one starts walking on the Path of Nirvana."

(From Anguttara Nikaya)

Practice AGNIHOTRA for purification of the atmosphere.
Practice DAAN (Sharing of assets in a spirit of humility) for generating non-attachment.
Perform TAPA (Self-discipline, austerities, purification) for fruition of thy affirmations.
Perform KARMA (Meritorious deeds) for self-purification.
Perform SWADHYAYA (Self-study) for liberation.

This is the Fivefold Path. Start the spiritual discipline today. The span of life will not be extended. What is given unto you is to utilize wisely every moment of your existence. Let us engage ourselves in meritorious deeds without expectation of reward in the form of name or fame. We live only in the present moment. The past is no more. The future is yet to be. Do not waste the precious moments in trivia.

A link will be given to you by the Divine Will when you start practicing the above. You will be a more righteous Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, whatever be your formal religious label.

Editor: Vasant V. Paranjpe
Publisher: Sally Hobart Kocak for Fivefold Path, Inc.
Parama Dham (House of Almighty Father)
RFD #1, Box 121-C
Madison, Virginia 22727
U. S. A.

Published on the first and third Thursday of each month.

All SATSANG correspondence should be directed to SATSANG Editor
Agnihotra Press, Inc.
P. O. Box 13
Randallstown, Maryland 21133

Reproduction by permission only.
