

INDIAN RELIGION IN THE PRAGMATIC WORLD

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ABSTRACT

There lies a tremendous spiritual energy within us which is dormant at present but waiting to be tapped. There is a need to re-invent ourselves to draw best out of us. True religion helps us to understand the world and ourselves. The world is nothing but a concrete objective projection of one's subjective feelings and thoughts. The development of the inner personality is the path indicated in all scriptures. Religion prescribes certain eternal values of life for man to practice and live up to. Religion enables the faithful only to face life with a greater liveliness that lends a psychological balance and a spiritual poise to the individual. The external world-of-objects remains the same, only the experiences provided by it are different in the different individuals.

So then, if we can control, train, and culture our minds, in a way that they can only react positively to all sets of objects and under all sets of circumstances, then our reactions world all be positive. Happiness and peace is his, who has thus trained his mind to react "positively" to the world outside.

KEYWORDS: Mental Anguish, Harmony and Poise, Self Mastery, Despair Amid Abundance, Meditation and Life

INTRODUCTION

To keep any organization dynamic, healthy, and productive the managerial personnel must have certain special personality traits and capacities. They should be the source of creative ideas. They should be conscious of the desires, aspirations, needs, and problems of their community, and should have the ability to dispassionately look at, understand and evaluate events and people not only from the material point of view, but from the psychological and spiritual points of view as well. They must have an insight into the deeper aspects of human motivation in order to harness all the potentialities of the employees, both for the individual's growth and the growth of the organization. Above all, they must know the technique of right action through which they can prevent dissipation and disintegration of their own personalities. If we view business enterprise in the perspective of *Vedanta*, the practice of management will acquire a new complexion it will no longer be a purely objective exercise to achieve external results.

It will concern itself equally with the subjective aspect of individuals. What a business career does for a manager will be as important as what he does for the business. Will he emerge as a positive, wholesome, harmonious individual with a sense of growing toward his own total fulfillment? As a whole, will managers be able to create a healthy and wholesome community, of which the manager himself will be a satisfied member? Questions such as these will increasingly determine business policy and management practice. Successful manager needs knowledge of the inner equipment in its totality. He needs to know how insignificant material success is in terms of eternity. Organizations thrive in the lap of society and are sustained by their linkages with it and as such welfare of society must be a prominent goal to every entrepreneur.

Religion is not a bundle of superstitions but a complete guide of enriched living through which one can make this world a better and happier place to live in. Life is a series of experiences. The experiencer comes in contact with the world

of objects and ekes out for himself pleasure or pain, joy or sorrow, success or failure. His reactions are dependent upon the quality and texture of his mind-and-intellect equipment. There is an infinite variety in the texture and composition of the equipment varying, as they do, from individual to individual. Each individual looks at the world in and through the medium of his own inner equipment and gains the particular vision envisaged by it. Thus, the same world provides different and distinct visions as the equipment of the individual projects them.

Analyzing a few examples, we find that to the scientist, the world appears to be a field of magnificent phenomena of the discovered and the undiscovered, of great power and potentialities; to a peasant in a remote village, the same world is insignificant with nothing spectacular about it. Again, to a poet, the world is a manifestation of nature in luxurious and extravagant beauty and he sees in it everywhere an expression of divinity. The wealth of beauty fills his heart with ecstatic joy and yet we do not see what he sees and experiences. The same world is viewed by a pessimist as an inferno of misfortunes and tragedies. To him, everything in the world is repugnant and distressing. Hence, the objects remaining the same, the experiences differ from man to man and the reactions gained by them depend upon the constitution of their inner equipment.

The world, therefore, has no precise and clear-cut definition. The pattern changes like a kaleidoscope according to individual vision. As for instance, a man wearing blue glasses sees the world blue and on changing them to green, he sees the world green. Realizing this truth, the religious masters advised man to reform and reconstruct his inner instruments of experience so that the world is interpreted by him in its true perspective. "Master the mind and you master the world" was their slogan. Nevertheless man, in his innocence, still believes in the development and beautification of the external world more than the rehabilitation of his inner personality; consequently, there have arisen three types of workers who have sincerely served mankind, making this world a better place to live in. They are the economists, the politicians and the scientists.

The economists provided more wealth and material prosperity for the people. The politicians dealt with the people and improved the pattern of mutual and co-operative living. The scientist harnessed and tamed nature for man to enjoy it. These are undoubtedly great services; but man, seated amidst this luxurious world, projects his own world of sufferings and sorrows. It is like a rich and sumptuous dinner lay before a patient suffering from indigestion and nausea; the same food, which he would have normally eaten with gluttonous delight, appears repellent and painfully even a sight.

True religion helps us to understand the world and ourselves. The world is nothing but a concrete objective projection of one's subjective feelings and thoughts. The development of the inner personality is the path indicated in all scriptures. Religion prescribes certain eternal values of life for man to practice and live up to. These eternal values common to all and are the 'Laws of nature' governing man and his relationship with the world. The most fundamental of these eternal values are the three disciplines, namely *Brahmacarya* (Self-control); *Ahimsa* (Non-injury) and *Satyam* (Truthfulness), which are prescribed for regulation of our physical, mental and intellectual personalities respectively.

Method: Harmony and Poise

Today, in the outer world of bitter competition and immoral strife, each one of us is compelled to battle constantly with things and beings. Deep within ourselves also, we have become helpless slaves to our own uncontrollable desires and undisciplined thoughts. Thus, modern man comes to shreds and is torn asunder between the two forces: the objective tensions and the subjective confusions.

The external threats and challenges are bound to reach us time and again and none can escape them. Hence, the success and joy in one's life are measured by the extent of control one has over the inner subjective confusions. In our

experiences in life, we fall into detestable and distressing environments and circumstances, which provoke and enrage us, and we despair for a solution. Such heart-burning protests and indignation weaken our inner personality and this weakness leads strength and might to the external challenges and become ineffective. After carefully analyzing our weaknesses, the masters in the religious fields advise us to grow in strength and gain mastery over situations in life by living in harmony with them. The life of harmony can be lived by rising above ego and expanding our mind to accept and keep in view the entirety of mankind and the vastness and wholeness of the universal problems. When this total and consummate perception is developed and maintained, man's individual problems sink into insignificant and absurdity.

But, when man views his problems from a purely egocentric and individual angle without this vision of totality, problems assume exaggerated and enormous proportions and crush him. Such a man is like a musician in the orchestra who chooses to play on his own without falling in line with the general rhythm and melody of the entire chorus of the orchestra. Hence, to live a life of harmony is to recognize oneself, at every moment, to be a member of the entire humanity living in a composite universe and merge one's life with the resonant cadence of the whole and bring about a fascinating melody of harmonious existence. The principle of living in harmony with the external world does not mean to avoid the challenges confronting us. The apparent harmony detected by the humble and impotent adapters to challenging situations is worse than the dullness of death, while the harmony envisaged by our religious masters is the dynamic silence, which is the architect to of all creations. This art of practicing harmony is to be applied in the din and roar of the market place while we are heaving and sweating with exertion upon the narrow path of uncertain in the life. Our lives of harmony with the ampler scheme of the cosmos bring to our heart an inward peace and pose through which we win over every difficult problem and challenges. Religion helps us to get 'Poise in personality'. Let us follow her precepts, gain self mastery and lead humanity to success and eternal glory and peace.

Method: Self Mastery

As long as a person is alive, he or she comes into contact with different things and beings and circumstances, or at least with his or her own thoughts and ideas. If one is efficient in meeting his own world – if he has crystal clear understanding, ready dexterity, decisiveness, and firm will, he cannot be overpowered by circumstances, and we don't surrender to the life's situations and become shattered personalities.

Method: Despair Amid Abundance

A tragedy seems to be confronting much of the world today. Young people loaded with plenty of data feel sorrow and desperation in the outer world. They try to run away from an inner sense of dejection by loudly proclaiming the glories of their age and of the civilization of their times. The organs standard of living, the efficiency of financial transactions, the nobility of governments, and the glories of war that uphold the blessings of peace! Whenever you turn, from morning till night, you hear pedantic acclamations of the present age- through the radio, the press, through journals and books, on the screen, in theatres, on public platforms, in houses of parliament, at international conferences, and even from the pulpit. But, despite all these exaggerated glorifications, it is indeed a fact that every intelligent person with sensitive observation would readily conclude that there is obviously more unhappiness today than ever before. Unless one is blind, one cannot mistake the sorrows etched on the face of humanity in our times. The moment we take an honest look, we see desperation and tears.

Science and scientific inventions or the utility and efficiency of new methods of mechanical production or of modern systems of transport cannot be decried. Certainly science has discovered means and methods by which the drudgery of life has been almost lifted from our day-to-day existence. The necessities of life, even luxury goods, have been

brought within the reach of the lower middle class. As a social being, the individual has to a large extent been redeemed from the slaveries of barbarous ages. A sort of primary literacy has come to bless more than half of humanity. The barriers of tribes have been broken asunder, and even the walls of national patriotism have been at many points broken down in order to enhance international brotherhood and friendship. The people of one region of the globe wander to another for education, earning their livelihood almost at the antipodes of their birthplace, and their last remains rest in peace in yet a different quarter of the world. Thus, many people have become natives of the globe, beyond the fold of caste and creed, national prestige, or the dignities of blood-groups.

Yet, a superficial review of modern man in his "Brave New World" would provide melancholy reading. The pleasing surface of his world is like the painted beauty of a prostitute in the shaded streets at dusk, which under closer observation reveals the abhorrence that often lies beneath it. What causes this painful illness in our life, which seems to be at best an ugly paradox when viewed against the glorious achievements of our era and its civilization? The cause certainly cannot be any maladjustment in the outer world or any change in the behavior or construction of the world. The world of things remains more or less the same; and if there is any change in it, it is only for the better, because the human being with his advanced intellect has learned to tame wild nature. If the cause of our pain is not in the outer world – which we have successfully improved, in which we have harnessed into service even the inert mineral world and have tickled un-manifest energies into manifestation, in which we have pressed every known energy and force to serve as loyal slaves – then we must inquire for the cause of sorrow in our own inner being. Deep within ourselves, we have grown more barbarous than the barbarians. We have become unconsciously cruel, selfish and arrogant, and we often behave sadistically and hysterically. We have grown vulgar in our thoughts, low in our values, and shattered in our capacity to tackle our personal lives and its problems.

In short, the age has failed because we have lost our mastery over ourselves. We have ignored our own inner monstrosities. We have developed the faculties of seeing with fleshy eyes and engaging all our abilities in setting right the things we have seen. We have left our subtler perceptions undeveloped, and naturally, like a long-neglected garden, our inner world has grown into a jungle. We live in the outer world, but prompted from our own within. Our character and personality determine the experiences that we gain in the outer world. Unfortunately, this fundamental factor has been overlooked; and, as a result, in spite of prosperity, education and scholarship, and mastery over the outer world, the children of the modern age seem to make of the world outside a ground of sorrow and unhappiness. Their technological knowledge and efficient commerce provide them with a cross on which to hang their own individual peace. Their government and politics serve as two pillars across which runs the beam of national vanity; and along its length lie the dead carcasses of personal freedom, love, tolerance, and goodness. The vultures of deluded estimation feast upon this sad engine of death, self-created.

If the wondrous philosophy of materialism has given us scientific progress on the one hand, it has also given us a glass of firewater with which to gulp down our sorrows. If it has given us modern government, it also has given us the unavoidable tragedy of marching to death to the tune of a national band twice in every generation! If materialism has saved us from our wars with nature, it had led us into the necessity of strangling, plundering and looting our own fathers and children once in every quarter of a century. By the time the last generation returns home, disabled in body, perverted in mind, and confused in intellect, their irresponsible offspring, growing into the bloom of youth, have already been conscripted and forced to parade on the training grounds, armed to their teeth by the witches of science! Ridiculous is the paradox of this age.

Individually, no one in this generation glorifies any of the above or sanctions war or compliments immorality or gives his or her assent to hatred, lust or murder. On the individual level, each admits that the atrocities committed nationally and communally are absurd and despicable, yet the very same criminalities become heroic and meritorious at the national level. In short, materialism has come to decay and death, convicted by its own law. We are now living through an age of agony that has become fired of its own self-created problems.

The age is slowly sinking into a hopeless sense of utter despair, because it finds no way to regain its balance. The present age has given us a long period of sorrow and we have become addicted to misery. Like an opium addict, the melancholy human being has come to believe that life without misery is putrefying death. He dreads bliss and peace. Misery and agitation have become natural to him; and modern man, though he sadly mourns his plight, dares not walk the path of self-mastery, but makes a new Bible of sorrow, an Upanishad sighs, and a Koran of wretchedness.

It is a realistic picture of the world we live in and the civilization we have built out of the spoils of our own confused intellect. The edifice of life stands bereft of the cement of love, haunted by the ghosts of despair and the devils of misery. Inside the chambers of this edifice, to sing the song of God has become the greatest blasphemy that one can perpetrate. One can find little hope that a new generation of evolved human beings, stable in their inward tranquility, unshaken in their peace, divine in their noble perfections, can ever come to people the world as the children of these desperate fathers and mothers.

RESULTS

Meditation and Life

A human being cannot rest contented without knowing. Thus, from the dawn of history we have been seeking to know, to understand, to investigate, and to discover objects outside, as well as the world within. Knowledge of the world outside, constituted of things and beings perceived by our sense, forms the subject matter of science, while the inquiries pursued and the discoveries made in the world within, when codified into a systematic science of life, become philosophy.

Having discovered and understood the limitless number of objects and beings, science in her maturity turned her gaze toward an inquiry into the fundamental unit of matter. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, scientists discovered that the unit of matter was the atom and that there was something like ninety-two different elements in the world. In the twentieth century, the atom was discovered to be divisible, and the ultimate factor of matter was realized as energy.

Just as science has sought to discover the nature and behavior of things of the world, philosophy has been struggling, from the beginning of time, inner world within man. Therefore, to claim that philosophers are daydreamers, ineffectual poets, or utopian scholars would be to declare an ignorance of philosophy. Philosophers are striving to extend the kingdom of knowledge as much as the scientists are. The aim of the philosopher is as divine as that of the scientist; both are working to bring a greater happiness to mankind. The only essential difference between philosophers and scientists is the difference in their fields of inquiry.

Few of us can remain for a single moment without the mind and intellect roaming in clusters of thoughts. The question is: How can we control and regulate the production and flow of our thoughts? Only when we have developed a steady hold on our thoughts, and when we have gained mastery in controlling and directing their flow, can we say that we become full-fledged human beings – or that we are capable of meditation. The animal world, too, has a mind and intellect, though not fully developed.

The human being is different from and superior to animals only through his capacity to integrate and develop, through conscious effort, both his mind and intellect. Once integrated, the vacillating mind comes under full control of the discriminating intellect. When the mind gets thus chastened, the clarity and brilliance of that individual's intellect also come about. Thus each serves the other. The cultivation of this control leads to the development of a fuller personality, and this marks the beginning of mediation.

DISCUSSIONS

The Cure for Mental Anguish

The suffering of the present age, if diagnosed properly, will be found to be the result of man's own inward shattering. In his psychological weakness and intellectual impotence, he is incapacitated to control his passions and resist the suicidal temptations to strive to fulfill his sensuous impulses. Shattered between the wild forces of his uncontrolled personality, he becomes an inefficient instrument who cannot react to external challenges or intelligently digest his experiences in life. He finds no foothold for his personality. This aimless tossing is the misery that characterizes our age. If we train ourselves to live a life of self-mastery, that way of life is called religion. The technique is called the good life or the divine life, and the noble values of life pursued constitute philosophy. When we watch the world from this noble temple of religion, through every scripture-window in its walls, we see man being thwarted because he lacks self-mastery.

An individual who has mastered himself is a living institution in this world. The world exists to serve him. He alone is the inheritor of life. The self-mastered person is free from slavery to circumstances; no more does he come under the lashes of failures or sorrows. He, in his self-mastery, becomes the king-of-kings, ever enjoying a peace and tranquility deep within him, which is impervious to even the greatest upheaval in the outer scheme of things.

If these techniques were mastered to whatever degree possible, by all the members of a generation, we could truly enjoy the godly blessing of the scientific age in which we live. Materialism is certainly acceptable and can be a blessing to us. The comforts of the scientific age, a life made easier by the use of machines, the profits gained by harnessing natural forces – all are ours by heritage. To decry them is to insult the intelligence of humanity. But when technology becomes our master and persecutes us, we must protest. Religion is to be practiced not only in temples, prayer rooms, or hermitages. Religion, if it is to bless us with its joy, must be lived in the office, at home, and in the government chambers.

In every walk of life and at all moments, by self training we can become stronger individuals and master over ourselves and the outer world. This diligent method of living is the true religion which changes an individual from the sorrows of a biped into the joys and perfections of a God-man. Similarly, even through the experience of the world outside is gained through the body; the experiencer is, in fact, our mind-and-intellect equipment. A better vision of the external world is possible only when the imperfections of vision are removed. The imperfections of our experiences in the world outside can be fundamentally in the face of all circumstances. Therefore, all techniques of self improvement must be directed toward the disciplining and strengthening of the psychological and intellectual entities in us.

CONCLUSIONS

Religion promises no magical changes in the nature of the sense-objects or in the pattern of their arrangements under various circumstances. The world will remain the same and the nature of circumstances will continue to function according to the Eternal law. Religion enables the faithful only to face life with a greater liveliness that lends a psychological balance and a spiritual poise to the individual. The external world-of-objects remains the same, only the experiences provided by it are different in the different individuals. Also the same object can give different experiences to the same mind on different occasions.

But the common factor in all experience is that we must have our minds reacting with the world-of-objects. We find that the world-of-objects remain, function, and play their follies according to a law over which we have absolutely no control. But objects must come in contact with our mind in order to produce the reaction, which alone is the seed of our experience. So then, if we can control, train, and culture our minds, in a way that they can only react positively to all sets of objects and under all sets of circumstances, then our reactions would all be positive. Happiness and peace is his, who has thus trained his mind to react “positively” to the world outside. The outer world remaining the same, in this very world of imperfections and sorrows, we shall have an unbroken experience of sweet solace and full contentment. We shall gain in ourselves a capacity to remain also and in a safe island within and watch the fierce storms of passions that madly blast about us. We shall learn to witness in a glorious sense of inner freedom and detachment the very tears and sobs in us, and if we be but true followers of religion, we can gain through its practices a mental equipment which can keep a steady poise and balance under all circumstances.

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APPENDICES

Author's Sketch

Author, Dr. Vidhu Gaur, born in 1981, holds Doctorate Degree in English Literature, Post Graduate Diploma in Communication Management, and Degree of Master of Business Administration. She is a certified Soft Skill Trainer and a Member of Indian Society of Training & Development. She is currently an Assistant Professor at Alliance University, Bangalore (India). She has both critical and creative writings to her credit published in esteemed journals and leading newspapers. She has published more than two dozens of Research Papers and Presented Papers in more than one dozen National and International Conferences in India including prestigious institutes like IIM Bangalore and IIT Delhi. She is on the editorial board of many International Refereed online and National Journals. Her main areas of interest and specialization include: English Literature, Communication, Soft Skills, and Personal Effectiveness. As a professional speaker and corporate trainer she has motivated and educated hundreds of students of both academic and management fields and people of industry in various states of India.

