

## Live With Problems

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When this topic was given to me 2 - 3 days back, I was wondering what kind of problems we should talk about because, in life, everyone seems to be having a certain amount of problems, whether it is at home, at office, in society, with the wife, the husband, or one's own children. Even Arjuna had a problem on the battlefield - he was our representative then! Who does not have problems? Don't think that *Sannyasis* are all living in great joy - they also have problems.

Now, when we look at the problem as a problem, it can never be solved. Great people have often said that problems are to be seen as opportunities to grow. The knife becomes sharper only when it is rubbed against a rough surface.

There is a story usually told in Balaviharas which shows that problems are only opportunities to grow. It is said that in a temple which is on a height, with five steps leading to it made of marble and inside the idol is also made of marble. Devotees go there every day to worship. One day, the steps started thinking, "Hey, we are also made up of marble just like the idol; is it not unfortunate that we are being stepped on by people while that idol marble is worshipped? What is it that we have done that we are suffering like this? It's unfair that the idol is worshipped while we are not."

On hearing this, the idol said to them, "There is a reason. Remember 10 - 15 years ago, when this temple was being built, the *shilpi* or sculptor or workers collected all the marble and started working on all of us? I remember distinctly that when they were working on you to give the shape of the *vighraha* (idol), you started complaining of being hurt by the instruments. Then the *shilpi* thought that you are useless and took another piece. Similarly, 4 - 5 of them were removed. When my turn came, I allowed them to work on me because I knew that I was being shaped up for a higher purpose. Finally, I became what I am now only because I bore all that pain. You people complained of pain and hurt at that time and therefore you are what you are."

It is then that those steps realized that they themselves were responsible for what they are today. The idol continued in humility, "I am grateful to you because you help the devotees to come to me."

In this world - *karma jagat* - everyone will have problems - 6000 years ago Arjuna was complaining of the same thing which you and I today complain. Lord Krishna tells him,

*Na Karmanaamanaarambhaat  
Naishkarmyam Purushoshnute  
Na Cha Sannyasanaadeva  
Siddhim Samadhi Gacchati*

*"By not starting any action you cannot achieve anything nor can you gain anything by giving up action."*

Only a right attitude while working can give you peace. Let us look at problems as opportunities to grow. Then our whole attitude will change. I used to tell the parents that children are specially made by the Lord to help them to develop patience!

We will divide problems into three aspects - physical, psychological and spiritual. All of us face physical problems at some point of time - sickness, disease, old age, hearing problems, etc. Sometimes, I feel people who have a hearing problem are lucky - less complaints to hear (!) and therefore less problems.

I remember once we were having a "*Dharma Sevak*" Course in Mumbai. There was one person who did not have eyesight, but he was very intelligent. He used to listen to everything and grasp a lot. When Gurudev came during that Course, this blind person went to Him and said, I have been enjoying this Course.

Gurudev told him, "You are lucky that you are not disturbed by seeing the things of the outside world."

That person was so happy! "Is that so?" he asked.

You may feel that you are deprived of certain things, but if you have the right spirit, it is no longer a problem. Sometimes, the Lord gives us physical problems so that we remember Him. If you believe in the Law of *Karma*, you understand that it is a result of my own past actions, so you handle it better. Blaming others or cursing your fate doesn't solve the problem. In fact, others also feel bad about it. So, an intelligent person is one who does not have anything to complain about.

So, as far as physical problems are concerned, don't complain -

- Have the attitude that they are there because of my own past actions.
- The Lord is testing me.
- Look for solutions, otherwise live with them.

Now, let us move onto the psychological level - these problems are a little more subtle than physical problems. Today's Management Scientists would say "Emotional sickness ruins a person much more than physical sickness." Today, managing money matters are not so much a problem as managing emotions.

Our Pujya Gurudev started talking about this fifty years ago through His *Gita Jnana Yajnas* as to how to handle our mind - 'The Art of Man Making' He called it. In this context, I must tell you - once I went to a house where a picture was kept on a table which had 100 pieces put together - a puzzle. I tried to lift the picture and the whole thing came apart. I thought nobody had seen it, but a seven year old boy shouted at me and said, "I spent 2 hours putting it together and you have spoilt it all. Fix it for me or else my mom will not give you *Bhiksha*! I struggled for one hour and managed to complete it. The boy brought the original picture, compared it and okayed it.

Then he disturbed all the pieces and I shouted at him, "I spent so much time doing it and you disturbed it."

He said, "Now do it from the backside." I asked him how that was possible, but he insisted I do it.

I took more time in doing it. Finally when I completed it and turned it around, the picture did not make any sense although the pieces were in the right slots. So, the lesson is when you have a picture in front of you, to assemble the puzzle is a very easy job - not a problem; when you don't have a picture of what it should be, you may assemble it, but it

won't make any sense. The Lord has given us a picture - you may call it as the scripture or a Guru. If you have even a glimpse of the picture, then you slowly assemble the pieces. Any scripture which gives you the purpose of your life or if you have attended a camp where you have been told that this is the purpose of your life, then you can integrate yourself, but when we live an aimless life with no momentum, no purpose, no vision, then you live, but when you look back at 60 - 70, life is full of regrets.

So, problems will be there in everyone's life. As Gurudev used to say, the Ganges water comes down from the mountains, the Himalayan heights, and its final destination is the Bay of Bengal. During its journey it faces all kinds of obstacles - small stones, big stones, etc. If it is a small stone going over it; if it is a boulder, pushing it. At some places when a mountain comes in its way, it even goes backwards - towards its source, ultimately reaching the sea. Similarly, if we have a direction in life provided by the scriptures or the Acharyas; if we are inspired by that very goal, then in spite of all the obstacles that you will have in life, you will move ahead. Unless you have a great vision or goal, problems will stop you and stopped water, stagnated water is dirty water.

Next is the spiritual personality - here also there are problems, but then they are to be faced with a greater awareness, with proper values - like *Satyam*, *Ahimsa*, *Asteya*, selfless work, self - control, devotion to the Lord, etc. The problem of a spiritual person is "Why am I not having love for the Lord?" He looks at other *Sadhaks* and thinks "I don't have that kind of steadfastness in meditation." That can be overcome by higher ideals, more compassion for all and more practice of meditation.

Thus, face the world with a heart full of emotions and strength, with a higher vision - as Vedanta would say "*Uttishthat, Jagrat*" Get up, wake up; arise and awake till you reach the goal - never stop.

Have the highest inspiring goal, then no problem will stop you.