

# Intelligent Living

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## What is life?

Life is beauty expressing as activity. In fact, life can be considered synonymous with activity. Where activity halts, death enters. In active life alone, we can either progress or deteriorate. Life is dynamic like the mighty flow of a river; it cannot be imagined without movement. It has to go on and on. Complete cessation from activities is impossible as long as life exists. The moment we say that life ceases to have a movement, it becomes like a stagnant pool of water, and can no more be called life. A stagnant pool of water stinks, decays and soon gets putrefied. It is the flow, which maintains and carries purity. Cessation of the flow results in decay and death.

The joy of being expresses in action. Each one of us existing in this world has to work, has to act. No one can escape from work. As Gurudev puts it so succinctly, "Work you must." From womb to tomb, each one of us is bound to act in this world. It is the *choiceless* choice that has been given to us as our birthright as human beings.

Life is a series of experiences. The experiencer comes into contact with this beautiful world outside and experiences pleasure and pain, joys and sorrows, failures and successes. The individual's experiences and reactions are dependent on the quality and texture of his mind and intellect. There is an infinite variety in the quality and texture of this equipment called the mind and intellect, varying from one individual to the other. Each individual looks out into the world, experiences the world through the medium of his inner equipment, gains his own unique vision of the world, and based on that vision creates a pattern of living that he is comfortable with. He then starts living based on his own individual vision and pattern.

Each one of us engages in different kinds of activities based on our vision of the world. All of us get involved in different activities for many different reasons. Some of us might get involved in activities with a view to better our existing life style, to enjoy more comforts and luxuries. Some of us act in order to feel the sense of achievement and accomplishment. Some of us act because of a desire to prove our existence to the world. Whatever the motivation for getting involved in activities – to gain comforts and luxuries, to feel a sense of achievement, to prove our existence, the underlying motive is to gain happiness and contentment.

Activities can be of two types – constructive or destructive. Constructive activities are those which contribute to the evolution of the individual. Destructive activities are those which lead to the downfall of the individual. Act we must, we have no choice in the matter, but how we act is in our hands. Each one of us is born with a set of *samskaras*<sup>1</sup> which are pushing us to act in various fields. What we do and how we do what we do results in the creation of a new set of *vasanas*<sup>2</sup>, new *samskaras*, new *vikaras*<sup>3</sup>. The whole cycle is a vicious one. Whatever we are now is a result of the past. The present is nothing but a result of the past. Our actions in the present

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<sup>1</sup> Tendencies, habitual reactions formed by one's past

<sup>2</sup> Subtle impressions

<sup>3</sup> Negative tendencies, deformation

are performed with certain expectations of the future in mind, but at the same time they are propelled by our inner *vasanas*, which are a product of the past. These inner *vasanas* are very strong impressions formed through the ages, through many lives. These *vasanas* are so strong that they tickle the mind, which propels the organs of action into acting in the world outside.

### **What prompts us to act?**

The force that drives the mind to push the sense organs into the whirlpool of sense objects is the intellect, where all desires originate. These desires, gurgling up as a fault in the intellect and poisoning the entire personality, are themselves the manifestations of the ultimate source of all conditioning and motivating urges, deep in the unconscious in every human called *vasanas*. Another term for *vasanas* is the causal body because they are the determining factor in the make-up of our mind and intellect. This pattern created by the *vasanas* is so strong that it dictates to the mind and intellect what kind of desires it has to have and what kind of behavior patterns it has to develop.

The propelling force behind the whole gamut of human actions, the cycle of desires, thoughts and the resulting actions, all these originate from those inner tendencies called *vasanas*. The word *vasana* in Sanskrit literally means fragrance. Each individual has *vasanas* that are specific and peculiar to him and they define his personality or individuality, his "personality fragrance" as Gurudev puts it. An individual is nothing but the gross expression of his subtle *vasanas*. Each one's *pravritti*<sup>4</sup> is determined by his *svabhava*<sup>5</sup>. At any given moment in time our actions are all determined by our inner nature or the thoughts that we are entertaining at that moment. Our thoughts form certain, distinct patterns conditioned by and based on the thoughts that we had entertained in the past.

When we observe each individual facing his own life and the different challenges involved in it, we can see a great deal of difference between each individual when compared to other individuals. There maybe a real hefty *pahalwan*<sup>6</sup>, a big robust man who runs away from a frightening situation, whereas a lean thin person may face the same situation with courage and valor. The only difference between the two is the difference in attitude in approaching the situations presented by life. Life, in its multifarious manifestations, can bring forth *pressure-able* moments for some, while for some it can be pleasurable. For some it can be an engulfing ocean, sucking them deep into its fathomless depth, while others enjoy surfing graciously on its surface their whole life, enjoying every wave and current. The first category of people take life too seriously and get either anxious about life or start running away from it. The second category embraces it joyfully. For a few it is a risk, for a few it is a burden, for a few it is misery. What one calls a risk maybe perceived and embraced by another as an opportunity. Some feel elated, some feel depressed, some feel their existence is meaningless, while some feel that every moment is pregnant with meaning. It all depends on each person's individual make-up, his individual attitude. For a few it is a reality - to be and for some it is a dream - not to be. Maybe the question is, as Hamlet says, "To be or not to be!"

### **Where do all these different patterns of living spring forth from?**

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<sup>4</sup> Impetus towards action

<sup>5</sup> Inner nature

<sup>6</sup> Body builder

So many different patterns, so many different attitudes! Where do they come from? When we look at a CD, we find that it has different tracks. When we record music or anything else on the CD, it gets encoded on a particular track, and when we play the CD only that music or whatever has been stored on that particular track can be heard. If we look at a collection of CDs, all the CDs might be made of the same material, have the same size and shape, but the difference is the encoded message on each CD. It is made of a synthetic material, but whatever is encoded on it makes it, "Wow! What a great CD!" or "Shh! What a lousy CD!" One could have beautiful music with poetic lyrics, another could have a soothing and peaceful symphony, and another could have loud rap music. Similarly each individual's mind and intellect is unique because of his own *vasanas* that are created by his own unique reactions and responses to situations in the past. We are all given the same equipment – body, mind and intellect, but each individual has his own blueprint that makes him unique and determines the quality of his thoughts and actions. When our *vasanas* are dynamic, our thoughts and actions are dynamic and productive, but when they are dull and inert, our thoughts and actions are lifeless and unproductive.

When the nature of the individual's tendency is to speculate and gamble, he entertains thoughts related to speculation and gambling. These thoughts drive him helplessly towards places where these tendencies can be expressed like casinos or race courses. Each individual's tendencies, *samskaras* or *vikaras*, his *vasanas* are the prime motivators behind his desire-prompted actions. These deep burning *vasanas* express forth as thoughts, thoughts once initiated, express as actions. As long as these tendencies exist, they create mental agitations, discontent and compel each individual to act, whipping him out into the world of action. The end result of this desire-prompted activity is always exhaustion, fatigue, depression, distress and dejection.

All our actions are nothing but attempts of our inner impressions to find completeness and fulfillment from the outside world. It is only a few great *mahatmas*<sup>7</sup> who realize and detach completely from activities or their results. They are wise. We the otherwise, in a complete state of delusion are unconsciously victimized by our own mental impressions. We are, as if, whipped into action in the outside world and the outside world seemingly takes us over, enslaving us. In this *bhava sagara*<sup>8</sup> there are so many things we feel that we have to possess, in order to feel complete. If those particular objects, those particular relationships, that particular space is not available, we feel that we are not complete. Rather, there is a sense of complete loss. We are bound by our innumerable attachments to objects, people and places, just as Gulliver was tied down by the Lilliputians. Actions performed in this state of bondage have a tendency to create new tendencies, new impressions, new *vasanas*, which again procreate impulses to act more vigorously, foolishly in the world.

The cause of *vasanas* therefore can be ascertained as ego-centric thoughts leading to sensuous, senseless actions. When these actions start expressing out into this world, they create more impressions, more *vasanas*. From those *vasanas* spring forth more and more actions, again and again, an endless vicious circle. The chain of sorrow continues, binding us to this world, creating a very complex situation. *Vasanas*, which are generated because our ego-centric thoughts, ego-centric contacts, ego-centric sense of gratification from the world outside, make us more and more

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<sup>7</sup> Great souls

<sup>8</sup> Ocean of the world

extrovert, seeking, begging, clinging to the joys of the world outside. The more these kinds of urges, thoughts, motivating factors in an individual grow, the more his desires grow. The more the desires, the more the agitations. The more the agitations, the more the mind is restless. The more restless the mind, that much more is the devastating effect on the personality. Such a person cannot have a composed, complete, integrated personality. At any given moment of time, he is a shattered person because there is no unification of his personality. This vicious cycle never ends, but continues as we transmigrate from one *yonī*<sup>9</sup> to the other, from one body to the next.

### **Categories of Karma (Action)**

Actions or *karma* as they are called in Vedanta can be classified into three categories.

The total *vasanas* gathered by an individual through different kinds of senseless activities in different births get accumulated at a subtle, unmanifest level. This accumulation of the unmanifest impressions is the first category of *karma* called *sancita*<sup>10</sup> *karma*. We are nothing but the result of different patterns of *karanas*<sup>11</sup>. Different kinds of causes yield different kinds of results, different kinds of patterns, different kinds of effects. Each one of our actions in the past expresses as a unique reaction in the present. This bundle of unexpressed, unmanifest reactions or impressions in our bosom is called *sancita karma*. And those *sancita karmas* which have already started expressing in the present moment are known as *prarabdha*<sup>12</sup>. *Sancita karma*, accumulations of the past become the *karana* of the present and express as *prarabdha* in the present.

To get clearer picture of these concepts, let us take an example. Supposing we sow mango seeds, we cannot expect them to grow into *neem* trees. It has been said in the Bible, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap," what we have already sown in the past is what we shall reap in the present. But then if we want to analyze and determine which action of the past is resulting as this situation that we are facing in the present, it is very hard to understand. A farmer has a big orchard and he plants different kinds of seeds – coconuts, guavas, mangos, *neem*. Each seed grows up to yield its own kind of fruit in its own sweet time. Nature cannot be forced to give results according to our own demands. Nature gives forth its results in its own pre-set patterns and seasons. Similarly, each one of our actions expressing forth as reactions in the present, expresses in its own time when it is ready to be fructified. Some actions give their reactions immediately; some may have a delayed reaction after a long period of time.

In order to face these different reactions, each one of us creates his own pseudo world out of the world that already exists. The world of objects, the world outside, the whole *prapanca*<sup>13</sup> remains the same, but we create a pseudo world according to the situations that we are facing in our lives. We start enjoying or suffering the phenomenal world according to our own mental make-up. As long as the perception of duality exists, as long as the concepts of *labha-hani*<sup>14</sup>, *sukha-dukha*<sup>15</sup>, *sita-usna*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Birth

<sup>10</sup> Accumulated

<sup>11</sup> Causes

<sup>12</sup> Principle of destiny

<sup>13</sup> World of phenomena

<sup>14</sup> Profit-loss

exist, *prarabdha* exists. We also observe that all of us experience different joys and sorrows. So definitely all of us must have different causes for these reactions that we are all facing. Suddenly if all the *prarabdha* is wiped out, then there cannot be any experiences of duality. It is only because of the *vasanas* that we are what we are, we are experiencing what we are experiencing, we are expressing as we are expressing. It is because of this *prarabdha* that we are pushed to take this body. Today whatever we are doing, however we are acting, wherever we are moving, it is because of this powerful force called *prarabdha*.

If the theory of *karma* is only understood as the theory of *prarabdha*, then it is half-understood. The theory of *karma* has to be understood in the light of the theory of *prarabdha* plus the theory of *purusartha*<sup>17</sup>. What comes to us is our *prarabdha*, what we make of what comes to us is *purusartha*. What comes to us cannot be altered, cannot be changed, cannot be manipulated, but definitely what we make of what is already existing, what is already expressing, that is in our hands with *purusartha*. Joining both the theory of *prarabdha* and the theory of *purusartha* forms a complete structure called the theory of *karma*.

This being said, if we understand and perceive the theory of *prarabdha* to be one of despondency, failure, good for nothingness, then we have misunderstood the theory of *prarabdha*. *Prarabdha* express as either *sukha*<sup>18</sup> or *dukha*<sup>19</sup>. It should not lead to negative thinking which leads to despondency, "What to do? That is my *prarabdha*. I do not have any good luck." This is a misuse of the concept of *prarabdha*. *Prarabdha* does not and should not carry a negative meaning alone. It includes both positive and negative experiences. Our tendency is to try and blame some one else for any negative experiences, and take credit for the positive ones. The theory of *karma* states very clearly that both good and bad experiences are nothing but a reaction to the past, which fructifies as *prarabdha* in the present.

The law of *karma* also emphasizes that life is not an end in itself, but it is one of the little incidents on the surface of eternal existence. Each one of us has a different style from the other and destiny is experienced differently by each one. As per the other religions, which do not believe in reincarnation, there is a permanent heaven or hell. Had this been true, all of us should have a great similarity like cookies cut from the same mould, and have the same kind of experiences in life, which is not the case. Each one is unique, specific and particular, so different from the other. Each one experiences life in different formats, different styles, and expresses in different ways.

When we try to do a more in-depth analysis into the cause of these differences between individual experiences, we find that life is nothing but a series of births or incarnations. We must have had many experiences in our past lives and can assume that there are many more to come in future lives. From birth to death, death to birth the cycle goes on. We do not appreciate it, accept it, adapt to it, understand it because we are trying to see life through a microscope when it should be seen through a telescope. We think of life as a certain of period of time, spent intelligently or unintelligently between the womb and the tomb. Supposing we are standing a

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<sup>15</sup> Joy-sorrow

<sup>16</sup> Cold-heat

<sup>17</sup> Self-effort

<sup>18</sup> Joy

<sup>19</sup> Sorrow

mere 1-1½ " away from a painting, all we will be able to see is the texture of a small part of the canvas, but to really enjoy the painting, we have to distance ourselves from it so that we can focus on the entirety of the painting. Life has to be viewed and understood in the same way. If it is viewed from a very close perspective, it appears to be just a chaos, but when we are able to step back in the highest state of detachment and dispassion, then we are able to get a larger view of the painting and perceive the wholeness of life.

Understanding the largeness and wholeness of life, we now to proceed on to the third category of *karma* called *agami*, that which is not yet fructified, which is yet to come, which is yet to express itself. All those *vasanas* which are to mature in the future, yield their results in the future, which might result as a reaction, could be categorized as *agami*. We need not worry about *sancita* and *agami* that which have been accumulated and could express as *prarabdha* or that which is yet to be expressed, but what matters is how we are handling that which is already expressing in our lives. In the so-called secular world also, this is the focus of all the management courses. If we learn the art of managing this *prarabdha* intelligently that is what makes a *purusha*<sup>20</sup> a *mahapurusha*<sup>21</sup>, an *atma*<sup>22</sup> a *mahatma*. We have to understand that *prarabdha* is experienced as *purusartha* expressing as *karma*.

### ***Karma and Vikarma*<sup>23</sup> (*Nisiddha*<sup>24</sup> *Karma*)**

Actions can again be classified into two categories from a broader perspective – those which have to be done, mandatory actions called *karma*, and those which are not to be performed, which should be avoided at all costs called *vikarma*.

As mentioned earlier when we were discussing constructive and negative tendencies, actions can also be viewed as constructive and negative. From this standpoint, *karma* is the constructive actions that are ordained by the scriptures, and *vikarma* is the destructive actions that are forbidden by the scriptures. The constructive activities can be further classified into three categories:

1. *Nitya karma*: Daily obligatory activities which have to be performed regularly.
2. *Naimittika karma*: Obligatory activities performed on special occasions.
3. *Kamyā karma*: Actions performed with a purpose, for fulfilling a desire or focusing through work to get a specific result or a reward.

Here let me clarify that sometimes *vikarma* is also called *nisiddha karma*, those kinds of *karmas* that are forbidden by scriptural injunctions, by the *mahatmas*, by great people, by elders. That is why they are called *nisiddha karmas* or actions which have to be abstained from. Life is expressing through continuous activity as *prarabdha*, the intelligence is in understanding which category the actions belong to – *vikarma*, *sukarma*<sup>25</sup>, *nitya karma*, *naimittika karma* or *kamyā karma*. Understanding each activity thus and performing the activity with the clarity of understanding, will lead to a lot of benefits, which we will discuss later.

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<sup>20</sup> Man

<sup>21</sup> Great man

<sup>22</sup> Soul

<sup>23</sup> Negative actions

<sup>24</sup> Forbidden

<sup>25</sup> Positive actions

Let us now discuss what are *nisiddha*, *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kamya karma*. Forbidden actions that are supposed to be avoided in all circumstances and situations, that should not be pursued at all, which at any given point of time lead to a destructive result are called *nisiddha karma*. It is very important that even before we start applying our intelligence and clarity to living an intelligent life, it is a must to stop the pursuit of all the kinds of negative activities that we are already performing. The first step for any spiritual seeker would be to stop doing *nisiddha karma*. It is necessary for the true *sadhaka*<sup>26</sup>, trying to live an intelligent life, trying to contribute the best to society or the world around and also putting forth an effort for self-development to realize that spirituality starts, his growth in the material world starts when he ceases to perform *nisiddha karma*.

### **Nitya Karma**

*Nitya karma* is that which has to be performed as a mandatory duty. It has to be performed; there is no choice or scope of escaping the *karma* that falls in this category. By performing these kinds of actions no merit is gained, but the treacherous result of the non-performance of these mandatory actions is the incurring of *pratyavaya dosa*<sup>27</sup>. Let us take an example. It is mandatory that as soon as we wake up early in the morning that we perform the daily routine of brushing our teeth and taking a bath before we start any other activity. Supposing some so-called intelligent fellow was to ask, "What if I don't take a bath?" If not for yourself, at least for the sake of society, take a bath so that you are more approachable! What happens if you don't brush your teeth? Don't worry, you will not be a human repellant, but you won't need a dentist because you will lose your teeth very soon! *Pratyavaya dosa* is an immediate and instantaneous result of the non-performance of the daily activities, which are mandatory.

Now going subtler and deeper into life according to each situation, each kind of circumstance, at different age levels, we have different kinds of responsibilities which have to be performed as duties. When a person is in *brahmacharya asrama*, his *svadharma*<sup>28</sup> is to, as it is said in Taittiriya Upanishad, *svadhyayapravacanabhyam na pramaditavyam*<sup>29</sup>, *svadhyaya* and *pravacan*, self-study and discussion of what has been studied is mandatory. Being a housewife, being a husband, being a child each one of us has got mandatory responsibilities that have to be performed, that have to be fulfilled. By not fulfilling these, we end up leading a miserable life. By performing the *nitya karmas*, our lives are more peaceful compared to the lives of those who do not perform their enjoined duties. What happens if we perform only a few of the *nitya karmas* and don't perform the rest? As has been said earlier, we end up paying a heavy price.

### **Naimittika Karma**

Next is *naimittika karma*. These are the special *karmas* which are again not optional, they have to be performed, but the only option is that they are not performed on a daily basis. The kinds of *karma* that we are talking about here are like special rituals, special *pujas*<sup>30</sup>, special *vratas*<sup>31</sup>, prayers, observance of special days like *sraddha*<sup>32</sup>,

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<sup>26</sup> Spiritual seeker

<sup>27</sup> Negative result of non-performance of duties

<sup>28</sup> One's own duty

<sup>29</sup> Never neglect the study and propagation of the Vedas

<sup>30</sup> Worship

which are not performed daily, but have to be performed on those special occasions. What happens if we don't perform them? Their non-performance also results in *pratyavaya dosa*. There is a special and specific science which explains why we should perform all the different kinds of *naimittika karma*.

### ***Kamya Karma***

The optional *karma*, which could be done, need not be done is *kamya karma*, work that is done with the desire for gaining a result or reward. There are two ways to handle a desire – one is to act on it immediately and the second is to defer action for the future. One results in instant gratification and the second in delayed gratification. In either case, the purpose of fulfilling the desires is to gain happiness, satisfaction and reducing agitations. This is the happiness equation as defined by Gurudev:

$$\text{Happiness} = \frac{\text{Number of desires fulfilled}}{\text{Number of desires entertained}}$$

We can increase the amount of happiness by either increasing the numerator or decreasing the denominator. By increasing the number of desires fulfilled, we can quieten the agitations which already exist in the mind because of those desires, but then the list of desires keeps growing as we keep fulfilling them. The wish list never ends! Though it appears very easy to immediately fulfill the desires and keep going, but the more difficult though not impossible, permanent measure for reducing the agitations in the mind and thereby reaching happiness, would be to lessen the number of desires entertained. When the number of desires is reduced, the mind is less agitated and more composed. The more composed the mind is, the more we are satisfied. This sense of satisfaction leads to a state of completeness and happiness. On the surface, it appears as though we reach the same state when we increase the number of desires fulfilled, but that is not really the case. The happiness and peace that is achieved by fulfilling desires is actually caused by the absence of agitations. It is not that we have reached the state of peace, but only the agitations have lessened. By decreasing the number of desires, we can grow to a state wherein we are peaceful at all times.

Going further into the discussion, we see that no sooner than certain desires are fulfilled, it mushrooms into plenty more desires. Increasing the number of desires fulfilled is the *marga*<sup>33</sup> of *preyas*<sup>34</sup>. Reducing the number of desires entertained is the *marga* of *sreyas*<sup>35</sup>. So there are two options for dealing with *kamya karma*. One option is to fulfill the desires and the second option is to restrict oneself by entertaining as few desires as possible. Restriction here does not mean suppression; rather it means an intelligent act of sublimation. You don't get identified with desires and start getting whipped out into the world working for them, but instead start reducing them so that you are not affected by them.

### **The Three *Gun*as<sup>36</sup>**

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<sup>31</sup> Fasts

<sup>32</sup> Ceremony performed for ancestors

<sup>33</sup> Path

<sup>34</sup> Pleasure

<sup>35</sup> Goodness

<sup>36</sup> Thought quality or texture

All four kinds of actions, *nisiddha* or *vikarma*, *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kamya karma* express according to the texture and quality of each person's thoughts. Each human being has three *gunas* – *sattva*<sup>37</sup>, *rajas*<sup>38</sup> and *tamas*<sup>39</sup>. These three *gunas* are the main reason why individuals differ from one another. It is because of the different textures of the *gunas* that predominantly rule over them. An individual cannot at any time exist without these three *gunas*. Their proportion keeps changing according to the age, according to the circumstances, according to the time of the day, according to different situations.

It is very difficult to find an appropriate equivalent word for *guna*. The term *guna* also means rope or that which binds. Looking into the deeper meaning, these three qualities bind an individual into the world as a *samsari*<sup>40</sup>. *Samsari* does not mean somebody holding on to a *sari*! It is pointing to some one who is searching for *saar*<sup>41</sup> in a place where there is no *saar*. We are bound by this world, so these three *gunas* can also be called the rope that binds us to the world. *Gunas* are the three different influences under which the human mind expresses into an endless variety at different moments, different circumstances, and different situations. These *gunas* are born of matter produced by nature; they generate the feeling of attachment, and can very easily delude us into chaining one's own self, becoming the greatest enemy of one's own self. Understanding these words in English, *sattva* stands for purity, effulgence, luminosity. *Tamas*, the exact opposite, stands for darkness, impurity. *Rajas* is somewhere in between the two, neither total purity nor total darkness, but a selfish, ego-centric, murky existence.

Our actions in the world outside are controlled by these three qualities. Therefore, we are advised to grow from *tamas* to *rajas*, dropping the *tamasik* way of expressing oneself, to a *rajasik* way wherein we are motivated, not dull, but still driven by self-interest. The *rajasik* person is a very self-centered ego-centric person who only believes in existing and achieving for himself, not as a part of the whole, but who considers himself as the whole. He could be called a holy person with a whole in his heart! A *sattvik* person is one who selflessly performs the *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kamya karmas*. His performance of *kamya karma* is not done with a selfish purpose, but for *atmano moksaya jagat hitaya ca*<sup>42</sup>. The only desire that he encourages is the desire to understand the self, and whatever activity he does is not born out of a selfish, ego-centric motive, but is done as a selfless service to humanity.

### **The Intelligent Way of Living**

The whole gamut if understood, *vasanas* express as thoughts, thoughts express as actions, actions express based on the nature and texture of the *gunas*. These actions expressing through the *gunas* were classified as *karma-vikarma*. *Karma* was again classified as *nitya*, *naimittika* and *kamya*. Now each individual who has his own unique tendencies has to specifically pinpoint his inner potential and express it in the most unique way from the heart. The existing impressions have to be purgated. The intelligent way of living a life of *svadharma* is by tapping this potential that is latent in each individual, so that life can be lived scientifically. Tapping these potential

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<sup>37</sup> State of purity, harmony, peace

<sup>38</sup> State of passionate action, agitation

<sup>39</sup> State of ignorance and inertia

<sup>40</sup> Worldly person

<sup>41</sup> Essence

<sup>42</sup> Self-realization and welfare of the world

aptitudes would mean that each individual has his own unique tendencies, unique patterns, which he has to discover for himself. Having discovered these unique patterns in himself, he has to start expressing them. While expressing his own unique patterns, he has to take care that he does not perform any *nisiddha karma* or *vikarma*, and that all his actions measure up to the highest standards of *sattvik* nature.

There should also be clarity of understanding regarding the nature and purpose of *nitya karma*, *naimittika karma* and *kamya karma*. When the Lord says in the seventh chapter of the Bhagavad Gita that He is the desire, what kind of desire is He talking about? The desire that is *dharma-aviruddhah*, not opposed to *dharma*<sup>43</sup>. If the inner *dharma*, the inner tendencies clash, that would be considered *adharmah*<sup>44</sup>. We have to pick up those tendencies which are born from within and intelligently live our lives so that they can be exhausted. Intelligent living is a method where actions born out of the inner tendencies are performed as a witness, with complete detachment from the sense of doer-ship and the sense of enjoyer-ship, *kartrtva bhoktrtva yogah sakshi bhootah*. When we are detached from the sense doer-ship and enjoyer-ship, we are elevated to the level of witness hood. The actions that are performed while staying in the state of witness hood exhaust the existing impressions and do not create any new ones.

Thus intelligently living life, we are exhausting the existing *vasanas*. As long as we exist at the *tamasik* level we would be considered laborers, slaves of our own tendencies. The moment we raise ourselves to *rajasik* level, we could be considered workers. A worker is the one who works selfishly for the achievement of his own ideals or motives. The third category, the persons of achievement whose actions are expressions of their *sattvik* nature, are extremely rare. Thus trying to rise to the *sattvik* level, performing the actions as responsibilities expressing as duties, purgating the existing *vasanas*, not creating another set of new *vasanas*, dexterity in action becomes efficiency.

Generating the dynamism to live that kind of life, conserving the existing energy, channeling the energy into the chosen field of endeavor enables us to lead the life of efficiency so that no further *vasanas* are created, analyzing each action, being aware of what is performed, completely witnessing it with detachment, performing duties without running away from them, being every moment alert of that moment, having a clarity of vision of the wholeness of life, all this would definitely lead to the exhaustion of the existing *vasanas*.

By exhausting the existing *vasanas* and taking care that no new *vasanas* are created, the heart becomes purer and subtler. The purer and subtler our heart is, we reach a state where the performance of our duties and responsibilities expresses only as perfection. In that state of perfection, steadiness of mind is achieved. That steadiness of mind enables us to make a concrete, concentrated effort to contemplate on the self, which culminates in meditation, where we effortlessly glide into a realization of our own true nature.

Thus understanding, living, performing our own responsibilities expressing as duties, we not only clear our heart of all kinds of *kalmasa*<sup>45</sup>, but grow to a status where self-

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<sup>43</sup> Righteous action

<sup>44</sup> Not *dharma*

<sup>45</sup> Impurity

realization is the next stepping stone. Intelligently performing our duties and responsibilities, we gain the greatest gift of all, as Adi Sankaracharya puts it in Bhaja Govindam, *niscalatattva*<sup>46</sup>. Whatever maybe the situation, such a person does not get de-focused; he stays completely focused, ready, unshaken, unshakeable. The one who understands the secret of intelligent living and discharges his duties and responsibilities perfectly can be called a true *karma yogi*<sup>47</sup> because as the Lord says in the second chapter, *yogah karmasu kausalam*<sup>48</sup>- skill in action is yoga. The life of such a person is worthwhile and supremely fulfilling.



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<sup>46</sup> Steadfastness

<sup>47</sup> One who follows the path of action

<sup>48</sup> Skill in action is *yoga*