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Combine Morals with Business

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12. Combine morals with business

THE world attracts man in multifarious ways, but it will not allow man's thoughts or intelligence to go beyond its own limits. Content with the satisfaction derived from the physical world, man does not consider what is in store for him in the future. He devotes all his energies, physical and mental, and all his resources to achieving material comforts, power, position and honour, but makes no attempt to show his gratitude to the society from which he derives all these comforts, wealth and position.

For right living, righteousness and character are essential. The divine is the life-breath of man. The fulfilment of life consists in dedicating all one's energies to these objectives. Man, however, does not have faith in the divine. Whether one believes in God or not, one can see from moment to moment evidence of the presence of Divinity wherever one turns. Without Divinity humanness will not blossom. A man's life shines amidst enormous vicissitudes only when he displays qualities like equanimity and compassion. Because man covers his mind in a cloak of ignorance, blinks his eyes with egoism, and closes his heart with the doors of pride, he forgets the Lord who created him and protects him.

Such a man is unable to listen to any teaching. He worships at the shrine of the sense organs. As his desires go on mounting, he is unable to listen to what is wholesome for him. He has no relish for the company of the good. He has no awareness of the transience of life. He does not realise that his life and all that he enjoys may pass away in a moment. He does not recognise the passing nature of both joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, success and failure. Obsessed with the acquisition of wealth and power, he does not realise the Divinity that is his essential nature. Immersed in ignorance, he wastes his life in the pursuit of impermanent things.

Thirst for wealth has no limit, it is insatiable

It is on the basis of this fact that Sri Shankaraachaarya declared in a famous verse in the *Bhaja Govindham*: "Oh! Man do not be proud of your wealth, progeny or youth. All these will be taken away in a moment by Time. Destroy this world of illusions and enter the seat of the Eternal." The *thrishna* (thirst) for wealth is folly! *Thrishna* has two meanings, "thirst and desire." It is natural for man to have desires and thirst. But there is a difference between desire and thirst. It is natural for men not to be content with what they have, but to desire for more and more goods and more and more comforts. But in seeking fulfilment of such desires, one should take care not to cause any harm or suffering to others. *Thrishna* is different from desire. It has no limit. It is insatiable.

One should earn his living by just means

Dharma (the code of righteousness) lays down for men a regulatory path. Like the effulgence of the rays of the Sun, *Dharma* illumines the paths which men should follow for the welfare and progress of society. Among the laws of *Dharma*, *Nyaayam* (justness) is most important. Rectitude means that one should earn his living by just means and be an example to others by just living. Justness consists in making no difference between oneself and others. Whatever may happen to Oneself or one's relations, whatever difficulties one may have to face, one should not swerve from the path of rectitude. Justness is like the mariner's compass. In whatever way you put it, the needle will point only towards the North. Similarly, justness reveals the Divinity in man and makes him enjoy the bliss of the Divine. Hence, the ideal human life should be one in which rectitude forms the basis for every action.

Today, whatever prosperity one enjoys, whatever comforts one secures, all of them are derived from society. Some rules of Dharma have been laid down for ensuring that the wealth that is earned from society is devoted to the benefit of society. In the process of acquiring wealth one may be guilty of some lapses. It is to make amends for such lapses that one must practise charity.

Life consists of a constant interchange of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, heat and cold. Happiness is an interval between two pains. The sour rind that covers an orange protects the sweet juice inside. We must look upon pain, anxiety and sorrow as the protecting cover for the peace and bliss that is experienced later. It is a mistake to seek an unending series of pleasures and comforts in life. Real happiness cannot be found that way. Without experiencing difficulties and troubles one cannot know the value of peace and pleasure.

People suffer because they set no limits to desires

Man thinks that the more he has of worldly goods the happier he would be. But, as desires grow, disappointments and troubles also increase. There should be a limit to our desires, attachments and ambitions. The world is suffering from numerous troubles because people set no limits on their desires. Nature has prescribed limits for everything--for the temperature of the body, the capacity of the eye to tolerate light or for the ear to listen to sound. When these limits are crossed, harm is caused to the organs concerned.

Life itself is like a limited company. All actions in it should be governed by the limits applicable to each of them. When desires are controlled, genuine happiness is experienced. Even in practising charity, limits should be observed. One's gifts should not exceed one's financial capacity. Nor should they be below one's capacity. In the former case, one will face financial troubles. In the latter, one will be withholding from those in need what is due to them. Charity is not limited to money alone. One must share one's physical, mental and spiritual resources with those in need in society. It is through such sharing and sacrifice that the awareness of the Spirit (*Aathma jnaana*) is achieved. Charity should not be indiscriminate. Help should be rendered according to the needs of the case. The hungry must be fed, the naked must be clothed.

Although one may know how much good can be derived through *thyaaga* (sacrifice), one does not make any sacrifice. One may aspire for wealth, but one should only seek what one is entitled or competent to get. A bank cashier handles lakhs of Rupees every day. But he is entitled only to his salary. He should not desire for more money than what he can earn legitimately. Excessive wealth carries with it many dangers. Human values are forgotten by the affluent. As long as there is wealth the evils resulting from it are not realised. It is only when it is lost that one begins to realise one's follies. It is better to be forewarned and learn to lead a righteous and upright life from the beginning. Wealth may come and go. Morality is what one should cultivate. What is morality? It is right conduct in accordance with time and place.

Businessmen are responsible for to-day's corruption

What is the root-cause of all the disorder, chaos, crime, falsehood and violence that prevail in the country today? It is the behaviour of people contrary to the dignity of human nature that is responsible for the present situation. All the education that one receives has no relation to human values. Whether it be in the sphere of political behaviour or social conduct, economic activity or spiritual pursuits, all one's actions are based upon the tendencies of the mind. No change in any form of activity is possible unless the mind is changed. That is why the *Vedhas* (ancient scriptures of spiritual wisdom) proclaimed that the mind is the cause of the bondage and the

liberation of men. One who wants to change others must first change himself. The heart is like a lock and the mind is like a key. If you turn the key to the right, you open the heart to God; if you turn it to the left, you turn it towards attachment to worldly things.

There is no use blaming the government for all the evils prevailing today. The people are responsible for the injustice, the wickedness, the falsehood and the corruption prevalent in the country. The people cannot disown their responsibility for the actions of a government which has been placed in power by their votes. Whether a government is good or bad depends on the people themselves. There is widespread talk in the country about corruption. Many come and ask me: Swaami! when will corruption end in this country? Who is responsible for this corruption? Is it the government? No. It is the businessmen who are directly responsible for this corruption.

Engage in business with faith in the Divine

For their own selfish reasons and private gain businessmen have been financing those in power and making them more and more powerful. If you businessmen live up to your fight principles, all this corruption can be ended in a moment. It is true that there is no one who does not desire wealth. An old Telugu proverb says that even a dying person will get up if he sees somebody offering money. It is not surprising if, when bribes are offered, officials do not refuse them. It is for businessmen to set a limit to their business and their profits and utilise their abilities for the promotion of public good. It may be difficult to combine business with morality. Therefore, the first requisite is to install morality in the heart and, with faith in the Divine, engage oneself in business. If this is done the nation will benefit from the business man's efforts and he will be serving society.

Today everyone talks only about what he wants. He says: I want this, I want that. If he loses anything he bemoans his loss. The whole of life is spent in acquisition and losing and there is no peace of mind. Businessmen have to understand the basis of human relations and cultivate harmony and understanding. Unless such a broad-minded approach is developed, businessmen will not experience the bliss of the Divine.

How long can the pleasure derived from education, wealth, health or position last? Like the lamp that sheds its light on all alike, you must cultivate love towards all.

Purify yourself by engaging in service to society

Love lives by giving and forgiving. Self lives by getting and forgetting. Everybody seeks Liberation. Everyone wants immortality. But how is immortality to be got? Removal of immorality is the only way to immortality. If we are filled with hatred, envy, pride and other evil qualities, how can we hope to achieve immortality? You must cultivate good thoughts and do good actions. You must engage yourself in service to society. By this process you purify yourself. You cannot reach the Divine unless you are pure. The unchanging, eternal, ever pure, blissful Supreme is the goal. By your steady pursuit of Saadhana (spiritual effort), you must strive to reach that goal. While remaining in the world of business, you must keep this high goal in view and carry on your business, whatever it may be.

Do not regard all your various possessions, houses, vehicles, wealth, etc., as permanent. There have been great emperors in the past who ruled over vast empires. When they passed away, what did they take with them? Posterity does not care even to remember their names.

What you cannot take with you does not really belong to you, You are filled with fear, like the ticketless traveller who gets into the train. In the journey of life, if you want to travel without fear

you must have the ticket of a good conscience. If you adhere to right conduct, you will have no need to fear any one.

Seek peace of mind through good deeds

The great conqueror, Alexander, when he was approaching his end, called all his warriors and told them that when he died, his body should be taken to the grave with his two hands held upwards. On seeing the funeral procession with hands of the emperor held up, the people asked why the emperor was being carried in that manner. They were told that the great emperor, who had amassed immense wealth wanted to show that when he was leaving the world he was going empty handed, taking nothing with him. The lesson of this episode is that we should seek not unlimited worldly possessions but contentment and peace of mind through good deeds. All that we accumulate is really not our property. It belongs to the people..

If conditions in Bhaarath are to be improved; it is only businessmen who can do this. Businessmen can even reform the government. Businessmen can promote the world's progress. They can also ruin the world economy. By their own right conduct, businessmen should try to set right the administration.

Bhaarath is the land of our birth. It is a *Thyaaga bhuumi*, sacred land (devoted to sacrifice), *Karmabhuum* (devoted to right action) and *Yoga bhuumi* (devoted to the practice of *yoga*). We are trying to convert such a sacred country to *Bhoga bhuumi* (a land of luxury and pleasure). All the sources of *Bhoga* (pleasure) are in fact the causes of *Roga* (disease).

This is the biggest mistake we are committing. Our willingness to sacrifice constitutes real *yoga*. Of the four *Purusharthas*--the objectives of life, (*Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kaama*, *Moksha*)--the ignorant man confines himself to *Artha* (Wealth) and *Kaama* (worldly desires). The *Jnani* (wise man) seeks only *Dharma* (virtue) and *Moksha* (Liberation). However, every person should seek all the four *Purusharthas*. This should be done by. associating *Artha* (the acquisition of wealth) with *Dharma* (virtue), and *Kaama* (satisfaction of desire) with *Moksha* (Liberation).

The four avenues for utilisation of one's earnings

You must earn wealth by adhering to *Dharma* (Right action). Utilise the wealth for right ends. Our ancients laid down four avenues for the utilisation of wealth or earnings. One fourth should be used for personal use and for supporting the family. Another fourth should be used for charitable and religious purposes. A third quarter should be spent on other living things like animals, birds, etc. The remaining fourth should be offered for supporting the State. It is only when one's wealth is utilised in this manner will it be really beneficial and meaningful.

Today many persons give money for charitable purposes. But the reason for their action is to reduce the burden of taxes in one way or another. You all know how large temples are being built at Benares, Prayaag, Delhi, and other places. There are Birla Mandhirs (places of worship) at many pilgrim centres. They are quite impressive and attractive.

They are built in marble and are additions to the nation's architectural achievements. Crores are spent on them. It is, no doubt, good to build temples. But the real temple is one's own body. Without purifying one's self, what use is there in building temples? Temples built at the cost of crores of rupees are not properly maintained. Swarms of beggars ruin the surroundings of the temples.

Service to society is everyone's primary duty

How much better would it be if the crores of rupees spent on erecting temples are used for improving the condition of the poor, the destitute and the helpless? Institutions for helping the indigent unfortunates are more useful than edifices for worshipping some deities. To give a helping hand to the helpless is real service. Love towards one's fellow beings is the best spiritual discipline. Misuse of money is a great evil. Wealth must be used only for good purposes. Money is capable of leading man to any place, good or bad. Hence he should take care to see that wealth does not lead him to bad ways, or bring a bad name to this great country.

By limiting their desires and reducing the amenities required for comfortable living, the wealthy should devote themselves to the service of the poor and the forlorn. Seek to derive happiness from service to your fellowmen. Happiness is union with God. The Sathya Sai Organisations should not be content with conducting *bhajans* (group singing of devotional songs). Their motto should be *Seva* (selfless service) all the time. They should take up every form of activity and give it a spiritual meaning. It is only those who are imbued with the spirit of selfless service that are fit to become leaders of the nation.

Service to society is everyone's primary duty. Businessmen should develop a moral approach, use right means for earning wealth and utilise it for the benefit of society.

I may have caused some But without minding it, you uneasiness to all of you. should all take to heart what I have said and try to practise what I have said. Thereby you will be achieving real happiness. I bless you all.

Discourse at a meeting organised by the Indian Merchants

Chamber, attended by several thousand businessmen at

Brabourne Stadium, Bombay, 14 May 1984

Why should you have fear or sorrow, with the Lord installed in the altar of your heart?

Do you not know He is there, guarding you and guiding you? He is in all beings, at all times.

Endeavour to remember this fact whatever you may be doing, whoever you may be contacting, in whatever manner. You will succeed in this, provided you do not give up the recitation of His Name.

Sri Sathya Sai