

The Mystery of Morality - Part 1

Date: March 26, 2015

Author: Vaijayanti mala devi dasi

Hare Krishna Prabhujis and Matajis,

Please accept my humble obeisances! All glories to Srila Prabhupada and Srila Gurudev!

In the material world, we are faced with perplexities at each and every step. We are all subject to confusion, loss of composure, inability to take decisions in so many junctures of our life. Mostly the dilemma is not to choose between the good and the evil, but to choose between two evils or between two virtues. Then it becomes all the more difficult to choose the lesser evil and the greater virtue according to the situation. Of course the scriptures give us the guidance, but the scriptural injunctions are dynamic and are full of subtle nuances and implications, that we require the guidance of a representative of the Lord to come to the correct conclusion. That is why it is famously said (verse spoken by Yudhishtira Maharaja in the Mahabharata, Vana-parva (313.117).

*tarko 'pratishtah shrutayo vibhinnaa
naasaav munir yasya matam na bhinnam
dharmasya tattvam nihitam guhaayaam
mahaajano yena gatah sa panthaah*

"Dry arguments are inconclusive. A great personality whose opinion does not differ from others is not considered a great sage. Simply by studying the Vedas, which are variegated, one cannot come to the right path by which religious principles are understood. The solid truth of religious principles is hidden in the heart of an unadulterated, self-realized person. Consequently, as the shastras confirm, one should accept whatever progressive path the mahajanas advocate."

Srila Prabhupada in his purport to Srimad Bhagavad Gita 2.7 writes, "*By nature's own way, the complete system of material activities is a source of perplexity for everyone. **In every step there is perplexity, and therefore it behooves one to approach a bona fide spiritual master who can give one proper guidance for executing the purpose of life.** All Vedic literatures advise us to approach a bona fide spiritual master to get free from the perplexities of life, which happen without our desire. They are like a forest fire that somehow blazes without being set by anyone. Similarly, the world situation is such that perplexities of life automatically appear, without our wanting such confusion. No one wants fire, and yet it takes place, and we become perplexed. The Vedic wisdom therefore advises that in order to solve the perplexities of life and to understand the science of the solution, one must approach a spiritual master who is in the disciplic succession. A person with a bona fide spiritual master is supposed to know everything. One should not, therefore, remain in material perplexities but should approach a spiritual master.*"

In the very beginning of the Mahabharat war, Arjuna was subject to this kind of a dilemma on whether it is right on his part to fight and kill his relatives in the opposite side or to withdraw from the fight. There is another interesting incident that took place on the 17th day of the war, just prior to the slaying of Karna by Arjuna. This particular episode has some great lessons that are valid even today.

Krishna willing, we shall see the same in the next offering.

Thank you very much,
Yours in service of Srila Prabhupada and Srila Gurudev,
Vaijayanti mala devi dasi,
Abu Dhabi.

The Mystery of Morality - Part 2

Date: March 27, 2015

Author: Vaijayanti mala devi dasi

Hare Krishna Prabhujis and Matajis,

Please accept my humble obeisances! All glories to Srila Prabhupada and Srila Gurudev!

This is in continuation of the previous offering titled, "Mystery of Morality". In the last offering we were referring to the interesting incident that took place on the 17th day of the war, just prior to the slaying of Karna by Arjuna. We shall see the same here.

Karna and Yudhishtira enter into a duel. Karna defeats Yudhishtira very badly and in fact the Pandava suffers serious injuries. He is carried back to the camp and is made to rest and recover there. Arjuna after fighting valiantly with the Samsaptakas approaches Bhimasena and enquires about Yudhishtira. Bhimasena tells him about how the King was badly injured fighting Karna. Arjuna then requests Bhimasena to head back to the camp and check on the older brother's health. Bhimasena refuses to do this. He says that he will never return from the battlefield leaving a fight in-between. He instructs Arjuna to check on Yudhishtira and calmly assures him that the Samsaptakas will be taken care of!

Heeding to Bhimasena's advise, Arjuna returns to the camp with Lord Krishna and approaches Yudhishtira. Being very weak on account of the injuries and seeing Arjuna near him, Yudhishtira mistakenly assumes that Karna has been killed and Arjuna has returned to give him that news. Insult and injury by Karna makes Yudhishtira's anger towards him very acute. Arjuna replies that he had arrived there only to check on him and that he will return back and kill Karna. This news disappoints Yudhishtira a lot and he resorts to berating Arjuna. Yudhishtira vents out all his frustration at Arjuna and accuses him of deserting Bhimasena and returning from the battlefield.

In the heat of the moment, Yudhishtira asks Arjuna to "**give up the Gandiva**" and says that he will ask Bhimasena or Lord Krishna to kill Karna. This statement makes Arjuna extremely furious. He draws his sword and rushes towards his brother. Krishna stops him and asks him the reason for drawing the sword. Arjuna replies that he has a secret vow that anyone who asks him to give up his bow shall be slain by him. In those days, Kshatriyas had the habit of making a secret vow at the time of completion of their training and they were expected to keep the vow at any cost. Arjuna tells Krishna that he had to stick to his vow at any cost and hence he would kill Yudhishtira. Krishna tells him that he is making a mistake with such senseless insistence and reminds him of his bigger Dharma – that of winning the war. Herein the Lord tells Arjuna that it is sinful on his part to kill his brother and he chastises Arjuna saying that he has not understood the subtle course of morality.

The Lord proceeds to say, "O son of Pandu, I shall now tell you the mystery connected with morality, Listen to it, O Dhananjaya! One who speaks truth is righteous. There is nothing higher than truth. Behold, however, truth as practiced is exceedingly difficult to be understood as regards its essential attributes. There are certain occasions when we cannot tell the truth and we may even speak falsehood and in those occasions, falsehood would become truth and truth would become falsehood. He is a fool that practices truth without knowing the difference between truth and falsehood. One is said to be conversant with morality when one is able to distinguish between truth and falsehood. What wonder then in this that a man of wisdom, by committing even a cruel act, may obtain great merit like Valaka by the slaughter of the blind beast? What wonder, again, is that a person, who even after speaking the truth, earns great sin like Kausika?" Then the Lord proceeds to narrate the stories of Valaka and Kausika.

Krishna willing, we shall see the stories of Valaka and Kausika in the ensuing offering.

Thank you very much,
Yours in service of Srila Prabhupada and Srila Gurudev,
Vaijayanti mala devi dasi,
Abu dhabi.

The Mystery of Morality - Part 3

Date: March 28, 2015

Author: Vaijayanti mala devi dasi

Hare Krishna Prabhujis and Matajis,

Please accept my humble obeisances! All glories to Srila Prabhupada and Srila Gurudev!

This is in continuation of the previous offering titled, "**The Mystery of Morality**". In the last offering we saw Lord Krishna starts narrating the stories of Valaka and Kausika to Arjuna.

Lord Vasudeva said, "There was a certain hunter of animals, O Bharata, of the name of Valaka. He was devoted to the duties of his own order and always speaking the truth and never harbouring malice, he used also to support his parents and others that depended upon him. One day, searching for animals even with perseverance and care, he found none. At last he saw a beast of prey drinking water. Although he had never seen such an animal before, still he killed it immediately later to find that it is blind. After the slaughter of that blind beast, a floral shower fell from the skies upon the head of the hunter. A celestial car also, exceedingly delightful and resounding with the songs of Apsaras and the music of their instruments, came from heaven for taking away that hunter of animals. That beast of prey, having undergone ascetic austerities, had obtained a boon and had become the cause of the destruction of all creatures. Even though it is not correct to kill a blind animal, Valaka went to heaven for having slain that animal which had resolved to slay all creatures."

The Lord then goes on to narrate the story of Kausika. "There was an ascetic of the name of Kausika without much knowledge of the scriptures. He lived in a spot much away from a village, at a point where many rivers met. He made a vow, saying, 'I must always speak the truth.' He then became celebrated, O Dhananjaya, as a speaker of truth. At that time certain persons, from fear of robbers, entered that wood (where Kausika dwelt). A little later, the robbers, filled with rage, searched for them carefully. Approaching Kausika then, that speaker of truth, they asked him saying, 'O holy one, by which path have a multitude of men gone a little while before? Asked in the name of Truth, answer us. If you have seen them, tell us this'. Thus asked, Kausika told them the truth, saying, 'Those men have entered this wood crowded with many trees and creepers and plants'. Then those cruel men, finding out the

persons they sought, killed them all. In consequence of that great sin consisting in the words spoken, Kausika, ignorant of the subtleties of morality, fell into a grievous hell. Thus a foolish man, of little knowledge, unaware of the distinctions of morality, falls into painful hell by not asking persons of age for the solution of his doubts."

Having recited these stories to Arjuna, Krishna speaks the concluding words to Arjuna and we shall see the same in the next offering, Krishna willing.

Thank you very much,
Yours in service of Srila Prabhupada and Srila Gurudev,
Vaijayanti mala devi dasi,
Abu Dhabi.

Moderator's Note: Today is the auspicious occasion of Sri Rama Navami, the appearance day of Lord Sri Ram. Let us offer our prayer to Lord Ramacandra by meditating on the verse 5.19.4 of Srimad Bhagavatam

*yat tad vishuddhaanubhava-maatram ekam
sva tejasaa dhvasta-guna-vyavastham
pratyak prashaantam sudhiyopalambhanam
hy anaama-rupam niraham prapadye*

"The Lord, whose pure form [sac-cid-aananda-vigraha [Bs. 5.1]] is uncontaminated by the modes of material nature, can be perceived by pure consciousness. In the Vedanta He is described as being one without a second. Because of His spiritual potency, He is untouched by the contamination of material nature, and because He is not subjected to material vision, He is known as transcendental. He has no material activities, nor has He a material form or name. Only in pure consciousness, Krishna consciousness, can one perceive the transcendental form of the Lord. Let us be firmly fixed at the lotus feet of Lord Ramacandra, and let us offer our respectful obeisances unto those transcendental lotus feet."

The Mystery of Morality - Part 4

Date: March 29, 2015

Author: Vaijayanti mala devi dasi

Hare Krishna Prabhujis and Matajis,

Please accept my humble obeisances! All glories to Srila Prabhupada and Srila Gurudev!

This is in conclusion of the previous offering titled, "**The Mystery of Morality**". In the last offering we saw Lord Krishna narrating the stories of Valaka and Kausika to Arjuna. Let us see further.

Lord Krishna concluded by saying that, "Dharma protects and preserves the people. So it is the conclusion of the pandits that what maintains is Dharma. O Partha, I have narrated to you the signs and indications of Dharma. Hearing this, you decide whether Yudhishtira is to be slaughtered by you or not."

When Arjuna was still looking bewildered, Krishna tells Arjuna that the only way one can kill an elder is by insulting them. So, instead of killing Yudhishtira by his sword, Arjuna killed him by insulting Yudhishtira in order to keep his vow intact. However after a while, Arjuna felt bad that he insulted his brother. He then quickly took the sword out once again, this time only to behead his own head. Krishna stopped him from committing suicide and came up with another solution. As per dharma, self praising and boasting in public is a sin which is also equivalent to one's own death. So, Lord Krishna instructs Arjuna to boast about himself in public which would not just fulfill his desire to commit suicide, but also keep his vow intact.

We find from the above that human life is too complex to put in the strait jacket compartment of black and white. There are many grey areas which are difficult to comprehend and explain. As human life is complicated, so are the values that are supposed to guide our behaviour with the sense of right and wrong. Therefore Srila Prabhupada states that only expert religionists know perfectly well how to adjust religious principles in terms of time and place. All the great acharyas or religious preachers or reformers of the world executed their mission by adjustment of religious principles in terms of time and place. (*desha kaala vibhaaga vit*).

Ultimately, we have to be clear that it is not just law that wins. It is the law with love that wins. It is not justice that wins. It is justice with mercy that wins. It is not truth that wins. It is truth with compassion that wins and the Lord has shown us this through all of His pastimes. Hence our only duty lies in taking shelter of this Supreme personification of eternal dharma. In his wonderful purport to Srimad Bhagavatam verse 4.24.42, Srila Prabhupada quotes the below verse from Mahabharat which tells us about what is our dharma.

*ye ca veda-vido vipraa / ye caadhyaatma-vido janaah
te vadanti mahaatmaaanam / krishnam dharmam sanaatanam*

"The purport is that one who has studied the Vedas perfectly, who is a perfect vipra, or knower of the Vedas, who knows what spiritual life actually is, speaks about Krishna, the Supreme Person, as one's sanaatana-dharma."

Our beloved Gurudev H H Mahavishnu Goswami Maharaj always says that *by taking shelter of Lord Shri Krishna, by engaging in His loving devotional service, the Lord will give us the intelligence to act properly in all circumstances, even though material life is full of complexities.*

Thank you very much,
Yours in service of Srila Prabhupada and Srila Gurudev,
Vaijayanti mala devi dasi,

Abu Dhabi.