

Leadership

Pujya Swamiji conducted a camp at Rishikesh, for senior executives from the industry, in October 2012. The following is the summary of the camp.

Every one is a leader, starting from one's own family. So he/she should grow into a person who can be looked up to. There is a verse in the Bhagavad Gītā -

yadyadācarati śreṣṭhaḥ
tattadevetaro janāḥ |
sa yat pramāṇam kurute
lokastadanuvartate ||

Whatever is the conduct followed by a significant member of the society viz. a leader, is followed by the masses. People walk on the path shown by him.

Krishna is presented by Vyāsa as Bhagavān. Bhagavān is the supreme leader possessing the qualities of unlimited over lordship, dharma, fame, wealth, knowledge and dispassion. To realize one is a śreṣṭha and living up to it is the key. One becomes a śreṣṭha (leader) based on the choices one makes in life. The choices that we make depend on the clarity that we have. And the more one knows the lesser are the choices. In the Bhagavad Gītā Krishna says – vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ ekeha kuru nandana – which means in the world of

innumerable possibilities focus your intellect to make the right choices. Freedom to make a choice implies right knowledge and it better be right. But more often than not it is subject to error. Choices depend on free will. Free will makes one self conscious and self judgmental. Self judgment reduces self acceptance. Here the universal mistake is self non acceptability and self acceptability is the only goal of a self conscious being. This is the teaching of the Gītā.

Towards this end of self acceptability, the Gītā talks about 2 kinds of life styles – karma yoga and jñāna yoga. This leads us to the 4 pursuits - dharma, artha, kāma or mokṣa. Pursuit of dharma is universal and common to the other three. It is an end in itself unlike other cultures. The question of Arjuna in the 3rd chapter of the Gītā is how to balance the pursuit of mokṣa (self adequacy) with the other 3 pursuits.

Most of our problems are due to inappropriate attitude. Attitude towards children, power, money, spouse etc demands certain understanding. Attitudes can be changed. Just like the attitude transforms when a groom in the marriage realizes that the girl he is about to be married is actually his long lost sister! Attitudes are mostly picked up by cultural osmosis.

Every individual is endowed with icchā śakti (power to desire), kriyā śakti (power to act) and jñāna śakti (power to know). Desire (rāga) is a manifestation of icchā śakti. It can be to possess, own, experience and retain. Life is a pursuit of rāga and dveṣa (two fold kāma). One's emotional life also governed by these two. So they become the yard sticks for measuring my happiness. The capacity to manage these two is success. As the Gītā says – indriyasyendriyārthe rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau – potential for like and dislike exists in each sense object. Samattvaṁ yoga ucyate – equanimity (evenness of mind) is yoga. Samattvaṁ is defined as nityaṁ samacittatvam iṣṭāniṣṭhopapatthiṣu – maintaining equanimity in the wake of both desired and undesired results. Every action (karma) is a series of actions. Rāga and dveṣa are a manifestation of icchā śakti. A sameness of response to both is what constitutes a successful life. Because if success warrants fulfilling all desires, it will be eternally elusive. But if one is committed to equanimity then ambition need not be curtailed. Ambition inevitably brings in the possibility of greed and greed is fulfilling legitimate ambition but by adhārmic methods.

This raises the question of what is dharma and how to interpret it in different situations. Krishna says yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam. Kauśalam is not skill in action but commitment to dharma and the ability to interpret dharma. A human being becomes an adult by routine. Only to grow up i.e. become mature, one needs to work consciously. And conforming to dharma alone is growth. Dharma is the basis for

deciding from the matrix of available choices. But sometimes Dharma needs to be interpreted depending on the situation as in the difference between sāmānya (universal) and viśeṣa (specific to a situation) dharma. The proper interpretation of dharma is kuśalatā.

This understanding of dharma is based on certain background topics. And these bring about an attitudinal change. Human freedom is not doing what you feel like but not doing what one feels like doing. In karmaṇyevādhikāraṣte Bhagavān says the choice is only in the performance of action but not over the results. If we had control over the results then no one would have to face failure. Unpredictability is the nature of the future. Every action has 4 kinds of results – get more than what is expected, less than what is expected, equal to what it expected and completely different from what is expected. The results of action depend on the laws governing action. They laws influence the results either in my favor or against. One assumes one is a failure only when one assumes responsibility for the results of action. The result of action is Īśvara's domain. There is no necessity to load ourselves with more than what is necessary. And the key to my happiness is in my response.

Dharma is a manifestation. One can get hurt by words, looks, actions, conduct etc. Even robbing is derivative of Ahimsa. For a Hindu it is not God's dharma. Dharma itself is God. This knowledge is important because we have to manage people. And that is not possible without managing likes and dislikes. And that needs an

understanding of Īśvara. Karma yoga is not possible without Īśvara. Dharma is Īśvara. And conscience is Dharma.

Īśvara – Anything intelligently put together is sṛṣṭhi. Like even the human body, the components, their location, functions etc. And for every object intelligently put together there is a maker. The whole gamut of objects intelligently put together is what we call jagat. There is nothing one can boast about of having created. Even great discoveries like gravitation, Raman's effect etc. When a name is added to a discovery we honor ourselves by attaching the name! Any discovery is of an existing fact. Everything is given. If this is recognized, then the question as to who the sṛṣṭhi kartā is, is inevitable. This is what we call Īśvara. Any creation has an intelligent cause and a material cause. Like a pot, bread, golden chain etc. In general they are different. But with regard to the creation both are the same. This is where religions differ. One says material came out of nothing. If another says creation came out of something then the question as to who created the material arises.

This Īśvara is also imagined by people variously like he is located somewhere, is formless but is all pervasive etc. And questions like where is he located, if he is in heaven – who created heaven, whether he created it while staying in hell etc arise. Hence for us, space is Īśvara, time is Īśvara, Sun is Īśvara and so on. And Bhagavan is also not a matter for belief. A belief is a faith one has before knowledge and subject to verification and correction. One needs to

be objective and that is possible only after all that is there is taken into account. The honest answer should be in keeping with the realities of what he has created. The reality is, the world is just word and meaning like shirt and fabric i.e. there is no independent existence for shirt. In other words it is all knowledge and that is what Īśvara is. All things known and unknown is Īśvara. Hence Īśvara is to be understood and not to be believed. Appreciating Īśvara is only in terms of knowing and then having a proper attitude. Just like a dancer worshipping the stage before a performance. The law of karma, action and its results, means and ends are all Īśvara.

Dharma is order (Īśvara) and it is valuable only when one can live a life conforming to dharma. One has to live life in harmony with the whole that is Īśvara. When one does the right thing it brings satisfaction because there is harmony with the whole. This absence of alienation is what we are all seeking because each one of us wants to be connected. Also when one conforms to dharma there is no fear of failure because everything, including failure, is in order. Hence every karma phalam like ambition etc is prasāda. And the attitude is one of prasāda. It is purely a change in attitude. This is where the leadership should set an example by having that attitude and also making others see it that way. It is an advantage to be born in this culture as one grows with that attitude. Mother and father are associates of Īśvara and not sinners. Rāga-dveṣas don't determine my happiness. One should be an actor and not a reactor. This is one part of karma yoga.

Prasāda buddhi: This is more than glad acceptance of karma phala. Rāga and dveṣa become one's glories. The key to one's growth is not doing all that one feels like doing. Every organism has the instinct to survive. And so we need common norms for interaction. This is what is called dharma. The basic dharma that every living organism seeks is - I do not want to get hurt – ahimsā paramo dharmah. The human being is different in the sense that he also knows that others also don't want to get hurt. So I have a choice to restrain myself. No human being can plead ignorance to this knowledge. This is common sense. If one is not conforming to dharma then it is like a drunken driver on the wheels of a Ferrari whose brakes are not functioning! Conformance to dharma is the brake.

Contribution: Every one is a consumer beginning from childhood. But one needs to learn to be a contributor. For the child to be made to feel like a contributor takes a lot out of the parents like showing love, care etc. This self image is created by the parents looking into the eyes of the child and applauding. For this one needs inner leisure. And this desire to contribute is what carries into adult life. If one needs to be a contributor one needs to be conscious of it and seek help. One needs to consume less and contribute more. To live an intelligent life is to seek help when one needs it. This helplessness keeps piling up in a human being from childhood. Prayer is seeking help. One can pray for a person, cause or for oneself. Prayer is recognition of the numerous hidden variables. One's bigness

comes out when one contributes. And this needs inner leisure.

Inner leisure: Everyone has a sacred space inside. Tension builds up in the day to day interaction with the competitive world. Any competition involves rules and people don't follow rules. This tension keeps building up. This is where the space inside helps one relax. The attitude to be maintained is I am not responsible for the results of actions. Hence I am not responsible for my failures too. I just do what I need to do. Ambitions, desires etc are the results of icchā śakti. I am an actor all the way. Action is what I consciously do and there is no room for reaction. Reaction is mechanical. Anger, explosion, depression etc are reactions. We must have a space which doesn't allow me to express my reaction. Anything can be connected to anything else. The mind seems to run without a reason but it has its own. One needs to be aware of that. Chanting helps one get a hold of the mind. In chanting one is sure about the next occupation. The choices are reduced. The mind still can wander all over but I program myself by the power of auto suggestion – yato yato niścarati – as and when the mind moves away (bring it back). This is a spiritual gym. Because of the commitment, the mind moving away is brought back. In meditation I unload the external world, objectify my body, breathing, sense of touch and my mind. Then chanting is the means of access to the sacred space. From where all action takes place, all creativity is possible, decisions are uninhibited by one's fears and anxieties. Chant leads to that depth. The depth and chant are together. More I am familiar with

this depth the more likely I will command this inner leisure. Later I can contemplate on the meaning of this mantra. This leads to an understanding of the larger vision of Īśvara, of being pervaded by Īśvara and the laws.

Practical steps towards achieving one's goal – A person works on different things to achieve certain goals. In the process there are certain important factors to be taken care of like

1. Communication – example of stones in Thanjavur temple. Short term goal, long term goal, the method to achieve them, how they are the beneficiaries in the process which can involve sharing the profit etc. Communication is never accomplished through the house magazine alone. Others value what you value and so make it known, share attitudes, plan well, be thorough, communication in such a way that the last person feels he is the beneficiary, make clear it is for profit.
2. Participation – making every participant of the team feel significant.
3. Doing the painful/difficult things first
4. Doing what is to be done at a given time and place - svakarma which is nothing but svadharma.
5. Avoiding procrastination and making the postponement deliberate for valid reasons
6. Making sure others do not procrastinate

Attitude – Attitude towards anything including one's own body has to be in keeping with reality. We assume our body

belongs to us alone but one's body can be claimed by one's mother, father, wife, children, employer, state (when there is a war), vultures, fire, water, earth, amoeba etc. Each one of them has their own right upon the body. So one only is the custodian of this body and qualified to manage alone. That is why suicide is a crime as it causes so much sadness to many people. This body is only given to me temporarily and I am no more than a managing trustee. That I don't own anything makes me neither abuse nor disuse the body i.e. gives me the right attitude towards the body. One looks at the body as Bhagavān just like time, wealth, house etc. That is why the country even survived the economic meltdown. Indian attitude towards money is not to be a spend thrift. Nothing is seen as insentient. There is an attitude of reverence. This attitude expresses itself because of free will. But this free will is always under pressure until one learns to like what one does. What one has got to do is not open for any option anyway. Free will expresses itself freely when one reaches out to do something that one need not do. This is called pūrta karma. Here and in prayer, the free will is total. Prayer is karma and it is part of a plan. Every karma has a result and it is centered on free will.

Break the monotony by living in the present – Maintain an attitude that keeps you alive to whatever one faces without a sense of monotony is what everyone should aspire for. Monotony can be in work, facts one faces or in the way one looks at things, staple food etc. To break this, one needs certain freshness and this can happen only if one takes it one day at a time. The pile

up of internal garbage collected over years is inevitable. And so it is useful to make use of the tropical advantage i.e. make full use of the day. Each day is a new day. One can start the day with a backlog or afresh. In a backlog, old problems are carried forward. But it is possible to make it fresh. We generally take ourselves for granted. When you wake up just check up where you are and grant yourself a luxurious day. This way one doesn't get overwhelmed, lives within the threshold and there is no chance of break down. Waking and sleep gives a great clue to life. The pileup should not really let one sleep but one falls asleep and that is a wonder. Sleep is laya. Sleep is given for rejuvenation and one is not supposed to let it pileup. Start a new day afresh. Freshness is spontaneity and monotony is a killer.

Happiness and its connection to giving, compassion etc – Love and care are nothing but oneself. No one can say I have never experienced happiness. Neither can one say I don't want to be happy. Everyone wants and struggles to be happy. This happiness doesn't seem to be abiding experience. It seems to be few and far in between. Hence my commitment is to happiness and what it takes to be happy doesn't seem to be clear. Nothing around us like sun, moon, stars, etc are happiness. There is no object or place called happiness. Neither is there a time when one is happy. Though there is a 'happy hour'! One person said that there is happiness in the time one fulfils a desire and the next one arises. But that is not true. Happiness may not have anything to do with desire too. When one laughs no desire is fulfilled but still one becomes

happy. Even a joke is not required. Nothing can have 'happy' as an adjective. If happiness is the mind then there should be no mind when one is sad. Vedānta says 'I am happiness'. But everyone wants to be happy. One is not consoled when one is happy nor is one congratulated for being unhappy! Happiness is my nature. Hence I am estranged from being happy because of my own errors. When the wanting person is resolved, happiness shines through and the mind has no role in it. The ānanda of the fusion of the seeker and the sought like what is experienced when one closes one's eyes after going all the way to Badrinath and standing in front of the deity is happiness. That oneness is the real me non-different from happiness. The meaning of the word I is one limitless, timeless consciousness. This wholeness is in spite of all my limitations. If wholeness is my nature, my relating to everyone else becomes love, compassion, sympathy, care, giving etc. Any act of caring becomes a means to becoming big. Giving is the bridge to wholeness and bigness. Give until it hurts. Then giving does not hurt anymore.

Qualities of a leader – As a leader one should not be rude, harsh, authoritative, angry or scared. One needs to cultivate compassion i.e. deliberately force oneself to be compassionate. There is no other way other than faking and making it. One becomes compassionate by acting compassionately. The emotions which are a dynamic expression of one's love, compassion, sympathy etc., are to be cultivated deliberately by acting them out. The desire to prove is the problem and becoming aware of our true strength is the solution.

Processing anger – Emotions like anger do not require to be controlled but need to be processed. There is a cause for anger which is generally pointed out as external. The external cause is usually only a triggering point while it is really one's background. Background means one's ego and the subconscious. The cause cannot be in the conscious because one does not consciously get angry. Also if it were in the conscious it can be avoided. Anything that questions one's integrity, ability, skill etc can invoke anger. It is enough if we recognize that the cause of anger. Tradition says unfulfilled desire causes anger. Modern psychology recognizes the cause of anger is pain. The processing of anger implies 2 steps - one is dama and the other is śama. Dama is a certain control over external expression like violence towards oneself, properties, persons etc. This victimization should be avoided. Best method would be to convert one's home into a support system. The pact with fellow family members could be that no one victimizes anyone else. Like saying that I am angry and I will talk later. Others can also be empowered to point it out. This will really enrich a person's life at home as that is where there is communication. There is no expression of anger in terms of words, looks or action. The processing to overcome suppression is śama. This is done by screaming or writing it out and then destroying it. This writing can continue until it is processed. Emotions are like noodles. If one is processed the others also get taken care of. Watching the breathing is also one way.

Handling fear – Fear is managed by welcoming it. One needs to consciously welcome it by saying - I welcome fear and I am not afraid of fear. The result is magical. One has fear because of the unconscious caused by childhood, emotional inconsistency by parents etc. A child has enough occasions to be frightened. The event is not welcomed but the emotion is.

We started with yadyadācarati śreṣṭhaḥ. One should not be looked up to just by position but he should command and deserve that position for the attitudes, values, etc one stands for. Some become leaders by default and opportunism or by just being at the right place at the right time. Such a person destroys the whole structure. One should lead by example. A natural leader is one who doesn't lead but people follow him. The end should not justify the means, like a missionary! In communication what, how of the subject matter, are important. But the most important thing is the other person feels he or she is heard. Even if you know what the other person is going to say listen as though you don't know it. Make sure the person is heard and understood. Patience is very important. Let the other person know you are there for them. This is actually the job of a guru but a leader should have at least a small part of it. When the whole person undergoes a change he becomes a leader. One should realize one's importance in the scheme of things. The more one realizes one's importance the less flippant one will be. And this is a mark of a true leader.