

Graceful Acceptance¹

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The topic, graceful acceptance, is nothing but acceptance of the realities of life. To every situation that one confronts, both the individual, जीव and the Lord ईश्वर, contribute. जीव's contribution is in the form of पुरुषार्थ, appropriate self-effort. Appropriate self-effort includes देश and काल, time and place. Time is not only the time of the effort but the right duration over which the effort is made. ईश्वर's role is referred to as दैवम् or the grace of the देवता. This is what we call as destiny, fate, or luck. In other words, this is प्रारब्ध. Thus, both these factors, पुरुषार्थ and प्रारब्ध, are working in every situation.

Despite one's effort not every situation turns out to be favorable. There are unfavorable situations as well as favorable situations. We generally label the former as due to प्रारब्ध the दैवम् factor. We take the favorable situations as due to our effort. We require graceful acceptance of the unfavorable situations.

Is there someone who can have graceful acceptance of the unfavorable situations? The Bhagavad Gita says there is such a person and describes that person as a वीतरागभयक्रोधः (Chapt. 2.56), one who is free from craving, fear and anger. The Gita goes on further to describe this person as one who is totally resolved in ईश्वर, taking refuge in ईश्वर. In fact, मोक्ष is being comfortable with what is, being happy with what is. Graceful acceptance of the realities of life is being comfortable with what is.

The other aspect of graceful acceptance of any situation, favorable or unfavorable, is to act appropriately for the situation and not to react. When one acts one learns. When one reacts one is not learning. This is especially true for a human being. Humans grow by learning. A non-reacting behavior empowered by graceful acceptance is conducive for learning. The absence of graceful acceptance denies this privilege.

What precludes graceful acceptance is the expectation of ourselves to be all knowing. We obviously do not call all the shots and thus any situation has the potential to turn out to be less or opposite of what one's expectation is. This basic understanding is covered by one's pride that one should be all knowing. The wonder is, in spite of our limitations, we do succeed sometime. We do not fail in every situation. This is, in fact, the true miracle.

What is required in us is simply the appreciation of the fact that we are not all knowing and hence in spite of our best efforts, there will be situations when the outcome of our efforts will not be favorable. Similarly, someone else is also not all knowing and hence when we are the recipients of that person's actions, the outcome may not be favorable. Similarly,

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someone else is also not all knowing and hence when we are the recipients of that person's actions, the outcome may not be favorable. This is the reality of life. Therefore, the only agenda we have as a human being is to change our outlook to accept in humility both the favorable and unfavorable situations as the blessings of the Lord.

In graceful acceptance I negate what is unreal. I recognize the blessings of ईश्वर in all situations, ईश्वर is the self of all appearing in many costumes. Human journey, जीव यात्रा, is but to recognize this fact. Of course, no journey is without exertion. A great person said that pilgrimage is the royal way of putting up with obstacles. जीव यात्रा is a pilgrimage where one puts up with obstacles. In fact, this is the only agenda of ईश्वर. Situations which are unfavorable are nothing but ईश्वर's agenda to mold us to accept the realities of life.

Another aspect of graceful acceptance is how we deal with events, situations and people. No one can really fulfil my expectations in this world. As my demands are satisfied I find that I become more demanding. And when my expectations are not satisfied, I become angry. Anger etc. are not expressions of free will. They are the result of helplessness. A person is overcome by काम and क्रोध etc. There is a daily prayer, कामोऽकार्षीन्मन्युरकार्षीन्ममो नमः, it is काम that did it; it is मन्युः(anger) did it. Any unfulfilled desire translates into anger. The expression of anger is not deliberate. It just happens. That is why no one can deliberately get angry. One does not say I am going to get angry now and then gets angry.

An angry person deserves our compassion. If a person is angry towards me and I respond with anger, it is a one-step reaction. Instead, I can accept the situation gracefully and if at all I want to respond, I can do so with compassion. I give the benefit of doubt to the other person. Of course, I can give the benefit of doubt to myself as well. I accept what I am. This is the ultimate in graceful acceptance. I do not validate my anger as it is not my nature.

One has to develop a value to be free from impulses. I need to develop graceful acceptance. Initially I need to put up with situations, events and people. I need to have तितिक्षा, forbearance. I gradually grow into the value of graceful acceptance. Graceful acceptance leads one to ईश्वर. This is the pilgrimage one has to make in one's life. Go towards ईश्वर by graceful acceptance of His will. नाऽहं कर्ता हरिःकर्ता; I am not the doer; the Lord is. Subject yourself to His will. ईश्वर's agenda is also only to shape us and take us towards Him.

The only agenda we can have as a human being is to discover our true nature which is one of compassion. We are like the sandal wood that is covered with layers of dirt that hides its fragrance. We are covered with hurt and guilt. The dirt on the sandal wood is removed by rubbing it against a stone and the sandal wood exudes its natural fragrance. The stone that we need to use is प्रतिपक्षभावना, displaying a tendency that is opposite to anger, namely compassion. As situations rub against us, by graceful acceptance of them, our own inherent fragrance of compassion manifests. This alone is the agenda of the human birth.