

The Spiritual Scientist

An ezine for those who think!

Ignorance - Excuse or Consequence?

Question: The law of karma holds that our present sufferings are due to the wrong things that we did in the past. But why should we suffer now for doing what we didn't know was wrong?

Answer: Consider the following story:



Once a traveler, going through a forest, saw a light a short distance away. When he reached there, he found, to his pleasant surprise, a magnificent palace. As no one seemed to be around, he ventured inside. He found himself in an elegant hall with furniture, cushions, fans, and other luxuries. He also saw a dining table full of delicacies. Seeing no one around, he ate, relaxed on the sofa under the fan, and had a good time.

One doesn't have to be an expert moralist to figure out that the traveler was doing wrong. The amenities were not his to enjoy. Although the owner might not be immediately visible, it was the traveler's duty to find out about the owner and act according to whatever rules the owner might have formulated for visitors. The owner has every right to punish a trespasser.



Similarly the world we live in is like the palace: all our needs-air, water, heat, light, and so on-are provided for. So before using these gifts, every human being must inquire about the maker and the owner of the world-God-and the rules according to which he expects the inhabitants of the world to operate.

Actually the idea that the world - and everything in it - is meant for human exploitation and enjoyment has gained widespread currency only in recent times. Till a few hundred years ago, all cultures - whether in the East or the West - recognized that nature belonged to God and was meant to be cautiously used by humans in harmony with the will of God.



Just as a criminal who continues to be violent even in the jail is no longer offered any guidance for reformation, those people who have persistently acted in defiance of God's will in this and past lives are put in a situation where they get no opportunity to receive enlightening spiritual knowledge. Most of us, who have taken birth in the current dark age known as Kali-yuga, fall in this category.

Nonetheless, God being compassionate doesn't want us to suffer in ignorance. Therefore He descends to our material world from His own spiritual abode and delivers His message like the Bhagavad-gita to free us from ignorance and its attendant suffering. If we don't take it, whom can we blame?

