

THE SPIRITUAL SCIENTIST

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Is Work Worship?

Certainly work is worship, but the question is - whose worship?

The object of one's worship can be determined from the goal of one's work. Most people work for the sole purpose of earning money so as to enjoy to the fullest the bodily pleasures offered by the senses. For such people who do not give much importance to the Almighty God, their senses become almighty; their senses control and direct their lives. Just as a devoted worshiper constantly meditates on how to satisfy his object of worship, such people always think of how to satisfy their senses. Thus their senses are their objects of worship and their work is worship of their senses.

Even those who profess to be working not for themselves but for their families are also at more or less the same level; their families are extensions of their own selves. For example, parents shower great love and affection on their own son, but not on their neighbor's son or on an orphan on the street. Why? 'Because he is my son. Through him and his glory I experience pleasure.'

What is the result of such worship of the senses?

In a world with limited resources and unlimited wants, the desire for sense enjoyment (which is nothing but lust) leads to cut-throat competition. The media blitz which bombards practically everyone in the modern world tends to multiply lust disproportionately. As lust increases, it is bound to be unfulfilled due to limited ability to enjoy and finite resources with which to enjoy. Dissatisfied lust transforms into anger, which manifests itself in various forms of violence. The increasing violence that the world is experiencing is thus the end result of the worship of the senses. Hence if work is meant to worship the senses, such worship is tantamount to courting global disaster.

What about those people who want to 'be good and do good' - those who are relatively pious and charitable?

They are certainly at a higher level than those who are grossly materialistic. They do not seek much personal sense enjoyment. What is their object of worship? Their object of worship is subtler; their charity is motivated by the desire to be known as noble-hearted, magnanimous souls. Even if miniscule fraction of them give anonymous charity, still they feel gratification within, thinking, 'Just see what a great soul I am.' Even if they have some concern for those in need, their real goal in giving charity is egoistic aggrandizement. Thus their object of worship is their ego.

And what does such worship of the ego result in?

Suppose a wealthy person opens a hospital giving free medical care to the poor. A diseased drunkard from the slums goes there, avails of the free treatment and gets cured. He then starts drinking again and returns home to start

beating his wife again. This is no exaggeration. Most beggars use the alms they get for smoking and drinking; they have their sources for filling their bellies. The point here is not that the needy should not be helped but that most people who avail of charity continue with their self-destructive behavioral patterns. Therefore such worship of the ego fails to do any lasting benefit to anyone.

Hence the key question is: **who is the right object of worship?** By whose worship will the worshiper and everyone else be benefited? The world's most ancient philosophical masterpiece, the Bhagavad-gita, states:

yatah pravrttir bhutanam yena sarvam idam tatam
sva-karmana tam abhyarcya siddhim vindati manavah

'By worship of the Lord, who is the source of all beings and who is all-pervading, a man can attain perfection by performing his own work.' (Bhagavad-gita 18.46)

This verse states that God is the father of all living beings; He has created everyone. Not only has He created everyone, but being a responsible father, He has also provided for the needs of everyone. Heat, light, air, water, even food are all provided by God. Even if one may claim to be working to earn one's daily bread, where does one get the body and the intelligence with which one works? From God. Thus God in His position as the Universal Father has made complete arrangement for taking care of the needs of everyone. Therefore for cultured human beings - those who understand how much God has done for them and who feel grateful to Him, God is the specific and exclusive object of worship.

And what is the result of such worship of God?

In a family when the children love their father, then out of that love they tolerate their mutual differences and live peacefully. But when there is no strong love for the father, then their mutual differences lead to the breakup of the family. Similarly when one had devotion for the Supreme Father, one's love for God naturally results in love for all of His children. One therefore sees all living beings as one's brothers and learns to live peacefully with them in spite of any differences that might be there. But when God is relegated to the background as in the modern times, people see no common point among each other and thus quarrel, fight and even have wars over trifles. Srila Prabhupada would therefore assert that the first requirement for universal brotherhood is the acceptance of the Universal Father, God.

So how can one worship God through one's work?

For this the goal of one's work and indeed of one's life should be God. This is possible only when one has devotion to God. For such devotion to be steady and not just sentimental, one must understand the science of God. Like any other science the science of God has a theoretical aspect and a practical aspect. The theoretical aspect can be understood by studying under proficient spiritual scientists - wise saintly persons who have studied deeply and practiced diligently the principles of spirituality stated in the authorized textbooks of spirituality - the scriptures. And the practical aspect involves connecting one's consciousness with God through the simple and sublime process of mantra meditation i.e. the chanting of the Hare Krishna maha mantra or any other bona fide name of God.

An aspiring spiritual scientist i.e. one who wants to worship God through his work has a daily regulated program of spiritual practice or sadhana - ideally at the start of his working day in the morning. This spiritual practice creates a foundation of spiritual consciousness on which he can build the work of the rest of the day. Through mantra meditation and scriptural study, the spiritual scientist imbibes devotion to God. And when one works with that devotion, then and then alone does one's work become worship. This is actual yoga, which according to the Bhagavad-gita is '*the art of all work*'.

By this simple process, anyone - right from a scientist to a farmer, from a doctor to a street sweeper, from a scholar to a housewife - anyone can transform their ordinary mundane work into divine soul-uplifting worship. By such a

combination of worship and work, one will find lust transforming into love, greed into satisfaction, anger into tolerance and envy into respect. One will find one's work and indeed one's life becoming a joyful journey, in which one is peaceful and content at each moment and is simultaneously advancing at every moment towards the ultimate fulfillment of life.

In conclusion work become worship only when it is done in divine consciousness. One can have such divine consciousness possible only when one gives time for exclusive worship of God. Without such exclusive worship, work is simply fruitive activity, which results in bondage, suffering and the repetition of birth and death.

No Time?

'I live a very busy life. Though I would like to, I just can't see how I can spare time for exclusive worship of God. Is there any way out?'

'Do you worry - about your work, your family, your future?'

'Well, sometimes.'

'Sometimes?'

'Well, actually I am constantly worried - about practically everything.'

'Bhagavad-gita does not ask you for your work time but for your worry time.'

'What?'

'When you spare time for exclusive worship of God, God reciprocates by giving you faith and inner strength by which you can stay unshaken through the upheavals of life. Knowing that God is your best well-wishing friend, you no longer dissipate your energies in useless worrying. Rather you channelize your bodily, mental, intellectual and spiritual resources towards finding constructive solutions to the challenges facing you. Thus you become an integrated, creative and productive individual. Therefore stop worrying, start chanting.'

Join us next month for another session of thought-provoking discussion.

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Founder-Acharya: International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

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