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### SUPREME IRRESPONSIBILITY

Way back in 1951 I was a young man of 25, just out of college and a few months into my first job. I had no great interest in religion or GOD and had no taste for or understanding of philosophy or spiritualism.

One day I was reading the novel by the Chinese author Lin Yutang, titled *Two Leaves and a Bud*. All of a sudden, my attention was arrested by a sentence I came across in it which read, “*Do nothing and everything is done.*” (A Taoist aphorism)

I could not make head or tail of the import of the sentence, because I just could not see how anything could be done without somebody doing it. It was therefore quite a mystifying statement to me; nevertheless it has stuck in my mind all through the years that have gone by since then.

Every time I was faced with a difficult situation or problem and I did not know how to deal with it, I remembered the sentence and somehow, almost miraculously, the problem seemed to ease or get solved. Slowly and progressively the real import of the enigmatic statement also became clear to me.

The meaning of the statement, as I understand it now (2004), is that it is man’s ego which makes him think that he is the doer. *Aham Karomiti vrthabhimanam*. (It is sheer vanity to believe that “I” am the performer of actions.) The reality is that in all activities, man is merely the Divine’s instrument and that is how everything is “done”. If man can have this clear understanding in regard to all his actions, then, not only all that he does will be pure and unselfish, but also he will remain in a conscious state of “*actionlessness*”.

A state of “*actionlessness*” is not the same as inactivity or non-performance of actions. “Not by non-performance of actions does man attain the state of *actionlessness*.”(Gita: 3.4) because, “Verily, none can ever remain, even for a moment, without performing action; for everyone is impelled to act helplessly indeed, by the qualities (gunas) born of nature.”(Gita: 3.5) “All actions are performed, in all cases, merely by the modes (gunas) of Nature. He whose mind is deluded by ego thinks that he alone is the doer.” (Gita: 3.27)

Therefore it is man’s ego with its desires that drives him to activities with the aim of satisfying the desires; it is also the ego which makes him assert that he is the doer.

Then how does one get over the sense of the “doer” and achieve the state of *actionlessness*? What is the secret? Again the Gita says (4.20): “The person, who, abandoning all attachment to the fruits of action, ever contented, depending on nothing, though fully engaged in action, does not do anything.” “The knower of Truth, though engaged in all kinds of activities like seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, singing, breathing, etc., firmly believes that ‘I do nothing at all’, convinced that it is only the senses contacting these sense-objects.”(Gita: 5.8 & 9)

So, abolition of the ego together with being established in the Self is the condition for *actionlessness*. “The man who delights solely in and is fully satisfied

and content with the Self, for him there exists no work that needs to be done. For him, there is no personal interest whatever in what is done, or what is not done; nor does he depend upon any being for any object to be gained. Therefore, perform ever the work that is to be done without attachment; for, by performing action without attachment, man attains to the Supreme.” (Gita: 3.17,18 &19)

Again, “He who recognizes *inaction in action and action in inaction* is wise among men; he is a Yogi and a many-sided universal worker.” (Gita: 4.18) “One who is totally free from attachment, who is liberated, with his mind, heart and spirit firmly established in Self-knowledge, performs actions as a sacrifice; then all his actions are dissolved.” (Gita: 4.23) “He who, abandoning attachment, performs actions as offerings to Brahman, is not stained by sin, just as water clings not to the lotus leaf.” (Gita: 5.10)

Thus an attitude of complete impersonality and non-involvement while performing actions, in the firm belief that it is Divine who impels the action and offering to him all thoughts, feelings and action with its fruits, whether sweet, sour or bitter, is the real secret of “*doing nothing*”. The responsibility for all actions and their fruits is therefore that of the Divine.

We are all familiar with the art of “*Passing the buck*” or “*finding the scapegoat*”. In a manner of speaking, the principle behind “*doing nothing*” is *passing the buck to GOD*. Therefore, it is nothing short of supreme irresponsibility.

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