

Nectar of Governance

Dr. Vaishnavanghri Sevaka Das, Ph.D.

Director, Bhaktivedanta College of Vedic Education, ISKCON, Navi Mumbai, India

Part 5: Good governance includes punishment



Punishing people who don't abide by the rules or law is natural and authorized. Such punishment process is part and parcel of good governance. When a city is developed with all infrastructure for executing governance, a fully furnished prison house also will be built by the government. Why it is so? Certainly there will be some unruly elements that try to transgress the law of the state. Hence it is mandatory to create some infrastructure to bring transformation in the culprits by means of

punishment. Parents punishing their children is also a part of governance by them, though the modern society considers such an activity as traditional and outdated. However, Vedic approach never excluded punishment for governance, even in the matter of upbringing a child. The popular Chanakya quote says that the child may be pampered until he is five years old, but one has to use stick for another ten years. However, this approach is not forever. After the child turns 16 years he has to be treated like friend. It means punishment with a clear objective of transformation has always been the part of good governance.

Let's look at the nature's way of inflicting punishment on all living entities, including human beings. It is very important to note this phenomenon to understand the governance by nature on us. These punishments are given in three forms of heat, thus are called "Tāpatraya¹". "Tāpa²" means heat. Any type of punishment would cause heat in the punished person. Sometimes this heat is allowed to be generated voluntarily in one's body, thus is known as 'tapas' (austerity). It means any voluntary efforts to generate heat in the body or subject the body to heat is *tapas*, which purifies the human being. But, if the human being or for that matter any living entity transgress the rule or governing principles of the authorities, will be forcibly subjected to heat, known as "tāpa". These punishments, known as *tāpa*, are of three types. They are namely *adhyātmika*³, *adhibhautika*⁴ and *adhidaivika*⁵

¹ तापत्रय

² ताप

³ अध्यात्मिक

⁴ अधिभौतिक

⁵ अधिदैविक

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types. These punishments are to be seen as an opportunity for reformation or as an indication to the violation of rule, individually or collectively.

“*Adhyātmika*” *tāpa* is related to body and mind of an individual. Body is constantly subjected to various tribulations, which are nothing but *adhyātmika* miseries. Running a fan or air conditioner is just to mitigate an *adhyātmika* misery known as heat. Many such examples can be given in this matter. Similarly, a pain caused to one’s mind is also called *adhyātmika* misery. Modern man is always anxious about safety, health, job security, respect in the society and many more things. These are all pertaining to *adhyātmika* misery. In the modern world, people don’t die of hunger, but of eating. This is a clear example of violating governing principle of health in terms of regulated eating. Similarly, if one is not trained in scriptures properly or not associated with the people of wisdom, always get in to depression over very petty things.

Next type of misery is called “*adhibhautika*” *tāpa*, which is caused by other living entities. Pain caused by bed bugs, mosquitoes, boss at office all come under this trouble. Generally, we blame others for this misery, but we have also our role in this difficulty. If we don’t protect ourselves properly anyway mosquitoes would bite, and if we are not sharp enough to address any situation in the office obviously would be harassed by seniors. There is no limit to this type of *adhibhautika* misery in this world. It arises mainly due to our actions on mental platform. As soon as one starts working on intelligence platform all such troubles would vanish.

Now comes finally “*adhidaivika*” *tāpa*, which is inflicted on us by various *devatas* or controlling deities or nature. These miseries are experienced in the form of drought, earthquakes, floods, epidemic and pestilence. *Adhyātmika tāpa* is pertinent to only one individual on account of violation of rules by him, and can be termed as micro misery. *Adhibhautika tāpa* is inflicted on a group of people due to collected karma, and can be termed as macro misery. Whereas *adhidaivika* misery is inflicted on very large population of a particular land, may be country, thus can be termed as super macro misery. This misery generally indicates gross violation of governing principles of universal affairs by majority of people. Whenever it occurs, leaders of the society or country should take necessary steps to make corrections in the lives of subjects so as to prevent such calamities in future.

In Srimad Bhagavatam (4.21.22 and 25) Pruthu Maharaja, one of the incarnations of the Lord, gives an excellent picture of both governing person and the governed people as under:

***ahamdaṇḍa-dharorājāprajānāmihayojitaḥ
rakṣitāvṛttidaḥsveṣusetuṣusthāpitāpṛthak(SB 4.21.22)***

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*tatprajābhartr-piṇḍārthamsvārthamevānasūyavaḥ
kurutādhokṣaja-dhiyastarhi me 'nugrahaḥkṛtaḥ(SB 4.21.25)*

“By the grace of the Supreme Lord, I have been appointed the king of this planet, and I carry the scepter to rule the citizens, protect them from all danger, and give them employment according to their respective positions in the social order by Vedic injunction.” Here Pruthu Maharaja was clearly talking about good governance for sustainability and prosperity. However, he requested the citizens as under: “My dear citizens, for the welfare of your king after his death, you should execute your duties properly in terms of your positions of *varna* and *ashrama*, and should always think of the Supreme Personality of Godhead within you. By doing so, you will protect your own interests and you will bestow mercy upon your king”.

This actually means governance is a reciprocating process between the governing person and the governed subjects. Any lapse from either side leads to miseries to both parties. However, by strict adherence to their responsibilities the subjects not only protect their interests and avoid the punishments in terms of various *tāpa*, but also nourish the governance process and thereby the governing authority. Adequately nourished governing leader would then exercise the governance process more effectively. By this reciprocating governance, auspiciousness would prevail everywhere without any miseries. This is the message of Vedic literature for us.
