Nectar of Governance

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Part 9: Victory verses peace

Peace is the most talked about subject matter at any point of time in the world. Somebody may say that now-a-days people are more deprived of peace because of various social, economic and political problems. But, is it really true? However, one thing is clear that now-a-days lack of peace is being discussed as "stress" due to change in the work-culture. If someone works for a US company from India, obviously, one has to work in odd hours to suit the client's timings. Any unnatural working style would eventually lead to stressful condition to the body and mind. If we carefully analyze the word stress, in other words, lack of peace, it applies to mind only, not to intelligence. Stress is nothing but the status of mind. One should always remember the four quotients of our human existence, namely, body, mind, intelligence and consciousness. Anything at any point of time that goes against our expectation leads to the disturbed condition of mind, which we call as stress or lack of peace.

Another important point to be brought to the discussion is the difference between what we talk and what we endeavor. Though, generally people talk about peace, they try to obtain only pleasure. Sanskrit words for peace and pleasure are *shanti* and *sukha* respectively. Vedic mantras always end with "*Om shanti shanti shanti*". We don't come across any mantra that ends with "*Om sukha sukha sukha*". If someone is endeavoring only for *sukha* (pleasure), how can he expect *shanti* (peace)? Attempting to attain pleasure is the constant endeavor of all living entities, including human beings. If we carefully analyze all animals and birds, their attempt to derive pleasure is only at bodily platform or mental platform. How to judge this aspect? Animal kingdom only endeavors for eating, mating, sleeping and defending. These all activities are only towards pleasure as they pertain to body and mind only. When one goes beyond the flickering mind, which means into the intelligence state, then, one can expect some peace. Let's see the advice of Bhagavad-Gita regarding this situation:

nāsti buddhir ayuktasya na cāyuktasya bhāvanā

na cābhāvayataḥ śāntir   aśāntasya kutaḥ sukham

"One who is not connected to the Supreme Lord (in Krishna consciousness) can have neither transcendental knowledge nor a steady mind, without which there is no possibility of peace. And how can there be any happiness without peace?" (BG 2.66) This fundamental message of Bhagavad-Gita openly declared the advantage of peace over pleasure. So, anyone who is dwelling only on bodily and mental plane, like any animal, would end up only in stressful condition though he would talk about peace. As the above Vedic instruction from Bhagavad-Gita loudly pronounces the ultimate need of peace over pleasure, one has to move above the mind level. Some practitioners of meditation endeavor to 'blank the mind' artificially for some time during meditation hours. However, their efforts to calm the mind would get limited to only meditation period, but as soon as they come to the real world, they plunge into heavy disturbance. The key for the lock of peace is to move to intelligence level. However, mere material intelligence is also not of much use for the eternal peace. The intelligence that is nourished by higher consciousness, namely SQ (spiritual quotient) would bring the most cherished peace to any person.

But, for any good governance of a system, should one try for peace or victory? Ironically, though people talk about peace, they actually would endeavor for happiness. Hence, the dilemma between victory and peace would never arise in the mind. When Arjuna saw all his kinsmen, relatives and teachers on the other side as opponents in the battlefield, he thought of resigning from the warfare. He felt that peace is more desired than victory over them through ghastly battle. He said to the Supreme Lord Krishna (ref: BG 1.31) as follows:

na kāṅkṣe vijayaṁ kṛṣṇa na ca rājyaṁ sukhāni ca

 "My dear Krishna, not I can deserve any subsequent victory, kingdom or happiness." He was very clear in his understanding that his victory over these opponents would be possible only by their annihilation. Death of all those kinsmen would certainly make him totally distressed or without peace less. He preferred forgoing victory over peace. However, his thoughts were completely smashed by Lord Krishna, who instructed Bhagavad-Gita that finally made Arjuna not only very composed, but also victorious. If people think that by no action, they would be peaceful that would be only illusion. Arjuna was caught under illusion, which was removed by Bhagavad-Gita. The supreme knowledge known as Bhagavad-Gita propounds only action in Krishna consciousness, which would eventually results in great victory. Arjuna accepted the message of Bhagavad-Gita and emerged as victorious, which reinstated him in peace also. This clearly demonstrates that when there is choice of victory and peace to choose, one should quickly grab the opportunity for victory rather than peace.

A student who is not taking exam may be peaceful temporarily, but is totally deprived of victory. Can such a student be ultimately peaceful in life without acquiring educational qualification? Certainly not. But the same student, after a series of victories in all educational endeavors or challenges would certainly be situated in peace. This thoroughly concludes the importance of victory over peace. This has been actually demonstrated by Arjuna in Mahabharata.

For successful governance, the leader should push or encourage people under him towards achieving goals with defined results. When people are busy in achieving the targets, which make them eventually satisfied and contended, flickering mind goes to dormant state for all the people leaving the whole atmosphere peaceful. In this way, the leader ensures both victory and peacefulness for all the subordinates, thus maintaining vibrant governance system.

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