

**Making Modern Man Fit
to Tread the Spiritual
Path**

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*In the age of technological develop-
ment many people are not satisfied with
material success. They do not accept things
taken for granted by most of society and
have several curiosities. They adopted vari-
ous methods to view things correctly for
their satisfaction and adopt spiritual path.
The present research article is an attempt
to analyze this issue. It also gives sugges-
tions on some important aspects related
with this subject alongwith examples.*

This is the age, when wisdom is rare and junk information is termed as knowledge. Today false-hood is sold wrapped in attractive packaging of branded truth. This is the age of technological breakthrough which surrounds even the simplest of persons with abundance of material goods in the name of necessities which may be possessed only through materialistic means. Such environment may be conducive to material growth, but those who try to swim against the stream live under tremendous stress.

Behavioural scientists, perhaps, cannot attempt to find any solutions to reduce such stresses which are generated due to the individuals' endeavours for leading meaningful lives, ways to which pass through regions of spirituality, as these sciences are found on materialistic concepts and totally disregarding spiritual existence of human being.

What are the other characteristics of people who suffer due to such stresses? These are the people who, not being satisfied with material success crave for an existence more useful for the society as well as humanity. These are the people who move through various lanes and by lanes of their own truths or half truths refusing to choose the path treaded by most, which is the path of more and more material gains, fame, power, recognition etc. These are, also the people who have a strong urge to know the ultimate truth for realizing the ultimate in spiritual existence.

All such people do not accept things taken for granted by most in the society. They, therefore, question to know more and more. Such people have one thing in common. They all have the psychological frame which can transform them into potential seekers of ultimate truth.

It has been repeatedly emphasized that the path leading to knowledge of ultimate truth is very difficult and cannot be traversed without the guidance of an able teacher, a Guru. What the able teacher did? He helped the student in raising the "right questions",

he separated and exposed the untruth and half truths, from truths. He, at times, provided answers to some questions but, above all, he helped his students to learn how to survive against stresses developed due to external as well as internal distractions, contradictions and unwelcome desires and emotions.

When you coexist with others who do not accept you with your questioning, you wear out. If you wear out, you either stop questioning or lose the clarity and capacity to ask right questions. Questioning has its own discipline. Your question arises out of how you view a situation. A seven year old child would view a situation differently from a sixty five year old individual. Right question means a question raised after "True" understanding of situation. True understanding develops when the viewer is free from all conditioning and is completely detached.

Learning to View the Things Correctly

The accepted methods are:

- (i) Self studies (Svadyay) - Here, emphasis is on the right material for studies viz. Shastras, Upanishadas, explanations and interpretations of shastras from knowledgeable scholars etc.
- (ii) Manan - This is the stage when the reader (learner) tries to assimilate what he has read, by trying to understand the meaning, associating various contexts and forming concepts etc. 'Manan' can be said to be complete if one has all the contents of the book in his mind with his initial understanding of their meaning.
- (iii) Chintan - It is the stage when one endeavours to comprehend what he has read and tries to analyze the intents of the writer. He may accept, reject or be indifferent with the views expressed by the writer on the basis of his (learner's) existing knowledge. Acceptance would imply addition in learner's knowledge whereas rejection implies doubts creeping in. The learner may repeat the process of Adhyayan and Manan to become convinced of his final analysis.
- (iv) Seeking guidance of an able teacher or experiencing - Doubts have to be removed. Able teachers may help in removing doubts. The student may also resort to deeper studies, further studies, experiencing and observing the world around and asking questions to see if they could be answered better with the help of what he learned.
- (v) Abhyas and Experimentations - Knowledge gained vanishes with time unless it is put to use through right action which also includes inaction with true knowledge behind it.

Actions generate experiences which provide a feedback about the knowledge put in action. This may establish the knowledge in the mind. Sometimes due to changes in time and circumstances feedbacks of experiences and experimentations do not confirm the knowledge thereby paving way for necessary modifications and corrections in knowledge.

Rishis and Gurus of past had evolved two supplementary methods for facilitating the process and sharpening the knowledge. Those are:

- (i) Satsang - Company of seekers of truth
- (ii) Shastrartha - Disciplined discussion between seekers of truth.

The Sources of Knowledge:

So far books had been the biggest sources of knowledge. The difficulty is that the students always find it difficult to understand the true intent of the writer and comprehend correctly the time and circumstances which prompted the writer to give expression to his thoughts. The writers existed in past, hence no cross check is possible. The net result is that the student has to be contended with his own or others' interpretation of the books. Shastrartha made good the short - coming to quite a great extent. Today, when technology has made communication far more easy and quick, it is possible to convert Shastratha an ongoing process. Earlier there was no reaction time available because Shastratha had to be "live". One had to react immediately or the issue could have been lost with time. Today, one can react, after an hour, a few hours or within a few days.

Modern Sciences and Bhartiya Darshan:

Modern sciences stipulate that only experimental confirmations can establish the truth. Bhartiya Darshan accepts that sensory confirmation and is also a method through which truth can be found. This is the basic difference between Bhartiya Darshan and ways of western scientific methods. While western sciences say that sensory confirmation is the only way to know the truth, Bhartiya Darshan considers sensory confirmation as one of the methods to arrive at truth. Bhartiya Darshan puts mind, intellect and senses in the same category as that of material, which is devoid of universal intelligence and therefore has limitations, rendering it not adequate enough to arrive at the ultimate truth. Of course, human ego, mind, intellect and senses can provide workable truths or half truth but not the true knowledge. Workable truths are those which work only for some times and are never sustaining.

There is a great need that people who are well versed in the ways of western sciences and at the same time possess the scientific temperament of Bhartiya Darshan, come together on the same platform to exchange their experiences, and knowledge. It is expected that such exchanges would help the people who have trust in Bhartiya Darshan, in developing scientific attitude and at the same time make the people, completely relying on western scientific methods, understand the futility of "human ego" and great value of faith.

Bhagavad Geeta preaches 'Nasto vidhyte bhavo nabhavo vidhyte sth' (Shloka 16, Chapter 2) which means that there is no dearth of truth and there is no existence of untruth.

Once, when Benjamin Franklin (known for his famous experiment evidencing flow of electric charge) was financially broke, one of his well-to-do friends lent him some money. When Benjamin's financial condition improved he went to his friend to repay the loan. This friend refused to accept the money and asked Benjamin to safely keep it with himself till another person in need of some financial help approached him (Benjamin) and then, the money should be used to help the needy and, after that, if and when such a person came back to Benjamin for returning the money he should be told exactly what Benjamin's friend told him.

We must play such games which purify the giver as well as receiver. It need not always be money. It could be some help given at

the time of need. When the obliged person expresses his gratitude, it should not be accepted instead the obliged person should be asked that he could free himself from the burden of obligation by helping others. One feels touched when we come across such incidents. Feeling good and being touched is not enough. We must know that we learn much more from good actions rather than from mere thoughts thereof.

Meaningful "Seeing"

The lines of the couplet, which are being discussed here are,
"Jo darshan dekhyah chahiye,
Tau darpan manjat rahiye"

One may say that in this couplet Darsan means a glimpse of God. We may say that as God is the ultimate truth, therefore, "seeing" may mean seeing or understanding the ultimate or absolute truth.

Kabir, the famous poet said that if you want to see, keep on cleaning the mirror. In this couplet, Kabir appears to suggest that "seeing" is meaningful if it is seeing at oneself that is why a mirror is being referred to.

Practically how one sees himself? Doesn't he see himself through the eyes of others? When one interacts with his child, he sees himself as a father, when he interacts with his wife he sees himself as a husband. With continued interactions with his child or wife he forms his opinion about himself as to what kind of father or husband he is. It is only through others that one comes to know whether he is rich or poor, intelligent or fool, powerful or weak, good or bad, praiseworthy or disgraceful, respected or looked down upon... We classify, categorise or rate ourselves according to the opinions others have about us. Kabir could never have meant that "others" were acting like mirrors to us, because "cleaning others" could never be a possible task. Can we say with minimal confidence that what others opine about us is right? Normally, when people judge others, they do it subjectively and not objectively. Even in very rare cases when judgment is somewhat objective the truth behind a person is hardly recognized. This means that the method of seeing oneself through the eyes of others is grossly defective. In spite of the above, we are taught, right from the day one that we are, what others think about us. Can we say, we live our entire life relying on our self-images which are absolutely virtual without having an iota of reality behind them? We build our thoughts and take actions based on false understanding about ourselves and draw all conclusions based on highly questionable premises. Is it not shocking that we take all decision in matters of our lives relying on conclusions drawn on the basis of wrong premises?

Then, what is the right way of seeing? Is it by looking at a mirror and seeing a form, which is a bony structure with muscles and flesh covered with a skin? Now, perhaps, this method of seeing is a little better. When we see our face in a mirror we, at least, are clear that what we see is merely a form and the content is different from this form. One way of discovering truth is knowing what is not true. This is the beginning of a true search. One knows what he sees in a mirror is not true. He tries to think what could be true. His mind presents the very same images which are results of his interaction with outside world. He rejects them because they are caused by

subjective judgments of others. He continues his search and at some point realizes that his true content is covered under numerous layers of untrue images formed due to defective way of seeing things. When one repeals untrue images one by one, he actually is getting himself rid of defective ways of seeing things. Did Kabir call it "Cleaning the mirror"? We cannot be sure as to what Kabir had in mind when he wrote the above referred lines of his couplet. We can, however, say that finding our true nature, the essence of our existence, is not a matter of any kind of outward or external research but a matter of uncovering ourselves inwardly, unlearning what we have learnt from outside.

We have to stop looking outside if we want to know about ourselves. That would be our first step.

We have to begin unlearning what we have learnt about ourselves by looking outwardly. That would be our second step.

The second step may have to be repeated again and again till we identify the third step or further steps, if there are any. It may be meaningless to discuss more after second step because after that the search assumes a purely internal dimension about which we cannot discuss any more as our communications here have a purely external dimension.

How deep one can go and how well he is able to understand about his true existence is a purely individual affair. We can only say that when one crosses the first step and reaches the second step and begins the process of unlearning, his ego starts melting. He, then, realizes that he is not something special but simply a part of this vast universe. He feels the pain if his neighbour is hurt and he acts to help his neighbour, because in him he sees himself. Perhaps that is the beginning of the stage which saints describe as seeing God in every body.

Understanding the Essence behind Greeting:

Different cultures have different ways of greeting. Some methods of greeting emphasize equality and friendship, others emphasize affection or respect to the other. When we say "Namaste", we bow. Do we always have in mind whom we are bowing to or it is simply a conditioned act? If it is a conditioned act we are not genuine. If we are not genuine it amounts to deceiving oneself. We may be simply bowing and saying "Namaste" to a person for whom we have no respect at all or at times, we may even hate him. Then, why at all, we greet such a person by bowing to him?

At this point the game starts. The question is, whether the person whom we are bowing to does have something or does not have anything in him which is worth respecting? If we think deeply, we and the other person whom we are greeting, are the products of our upbringing, circumstances and conditioning and if we believe in Indian philosophy then, also of Sanchit Karma of earlier births. If we believe in the theory of Atma and Paramatma, each one of us has his "Self" (Atma, Soul) which is part of Supreme Self (Paramatma). In this case one can bow to the God of which the other person is a part.

However, if we do not believe in such theories we at least have one thing in common, that is, we exist at the same time, circumstances

and space. Over such meetings we may not always have a control. Such co-existence, we may call it coincidence, sometimes, indicates towards a strange commonality between us and other persons, which at all times is not easy to comprehend. If that be so our Namaste may be a gesture of respect towards something which is beyond our comprehension.

We find that when two illiterate villagers meet, they bow a little and say "Ram Ram". They remind themselves of their commonality granted to them by the same God.

'Trying to understand the essence behind greeting', is a simple game we may play mentally, whenever we greet anybody. Please, however, never hate yourself for bowing to a person whom you think you hate.

Spiritual Process:

Process is a kind of a stream with a flow of its own. It may change its course but only due to whatever constraints it may experience during its flow. A process differs from a project. A project is planned normally as a separate patch. For a project there are time schedules, bench-marks, targets, goals, successes, failures. It is forced to take a specified route and achieve some results. A project may be thought of as a disconnected piece deliberately fitted in a process. It is associated with at least some turbulence in a situation which could otherwise be described as a serene continuum.

When a seed is sown, it germinates; a plant comes into existence with roots, stem, branches, leaves, fruits, etc. till it ultimately dies. This is my concept of a process for a plant. However, when you uproot a young plant and replant it elsewhere, for me the process is disturbed because in such case conditions and environment of the plant change to which the plant has to readjust.

In modern times, we live life not as a process but as several patches of projects fitted into our lives. The moment a child is born, the parents undertake a project of admitting him into a "good" school, by the time he completes 10-12 years, there is new project for getting him admitted to a "good" institutions, next 4-6 years pass and a new project comes up for a "good" placement and so on and so forth. The entire life is full of targets, goals, achievements, success etc.

In a life span it may, at times, be necessary to adopt a project approach for accomplishing some task. A project approach, however, creates a disturbance in life's continuum or life's process. Disturbance, by nature, has a sense of violence or turbulence which leaves some scars deep down within us. Project approach causes at least some periods when our inside remains stunned or at least shell shocked. Human societies do their best to avoid wars, as wars have a damaging influence. Similarly, as individuals we should endeavor to avoid turbulence in the process of our life.

When I used the phrase "scars deep down within us", I did indicate towards undesirable influence on our spiritual existence. These undesirable influences become the cause of selfishness, greed, fear, anger, hatred, psychological stresses, sorrow, violence, egotism etc.

Now, what is a spiritual process? Whenever, with a peaceful

mind we pray to God, thanking God for all what He has given us and accept with genuine humility that we are nothing without his benevolences, it is a spiritual thought which leads to a spiritual process.

'Sadachar' and 'Durachar'

"Durachar tabhi sir uthata hai jab sadachar chup rahata hai"
This means bad conduct is activated only when good conduct is inactive.

It has been observed on many occasions that people do nothing except getting excited for a short time whenever some damages was caused to a simple and honest person by those who were powerful and ill-intentioned. I also found that any action or expression having truth, honesty and justice at the core of it, almost invariably, disturbed others whose only concern was their own selfish interests. I further observed that no one can afford even to live peacefully if he sticks to the principles of honesty, truth and uprightness. I found innumerable Sadacharies surviving fearfully even after surrendering what was rightfully due to them.

Today the criminals use their criminal capacity to earn on their own terms. They offer their services to the rich so much so that they are even major business partners in some cases. It is the combination of money, power and crime which works these days.

Is it possible to uproot Durachar in these circumstances? I am not raising a question from an armchair. I think, I have a possible solution. I do not know if my solution is a workable one. I only know that I have thought of "a right action". To me, it looks very simple. May be, you will also agree with me.

A Durachari is a Durachri because he has desires (Kamna). Desires are never fulfilled. If one gets "this", he desires "that" and it goes on. On my part I do not have any desires in this connection I only have a "purpose".

I feel right action is "empower the good". Let us say "the purpose" or "the objective" is "empower the good".

Achieving the objective is not within my might but taking a right action is well within my right. That is why the problem looks so simple to me.

Let us think why we are Sadacharies? We are considered educated people. Why did we study? Was it because we were afraid of facing disapprovals of our parents and teachers? Or, we studied because we wanted to "know"? Why did we not become thieves? Was it because we were afraid of being caught or was it because of our conviction that material objects give only momentary pleasure? Why we speak politely? Is it because of our concern for the feelings of others or it is because of our fear of being shouted back by the others?

If our Sadachar is purely on account of fear, we would be weak and fearful incapable of effecting a positive change in ourselves or on our surroundings. Fortunately, the picture is not that dismal. It is true that practice of good conduct in childhood is prompted by some fear of facing disapproval of or being scolded by elders, but later when one matures positive aspects do take over. We feel strong. We feel strong because we are honest or truthful or straight-forward or

unpretentious etc. Our "goodness needs strength of conviction which, in turn, "strengthens us".

Have you ever thought of the advantageous position you are in as against a Durachari? He has nothing to feel good about in himself. Durachari's strength is the fear he observes in Sadacharies.

"Empowering the Good" weakens "the Bad".

What is then, the "Right Action"?

(i) Let us repeat, any action could be right only if it is selfless. It is for a purpose, not for a desire.

(ii) Consider your goodness your strength, not weakness. Never think that you are deprived of something if you are simple, or honest or humble, or sacrificing. Such strength is never demonstrated by words. If you are convinced that your simplicity is your strength, it shows. Never bother about your strength being noticed by the majority surrounding you. Those who matter shall notice you.

(iii) Around us, we find people who demonstrate exceptionally good qualities through their selfless actions. Whenever we observe anybody performing an extraordinary act of selfless services, we must try to establish a bond with him even if it is momentary in nature. Such bonding leaves a lasting impression. I have personally experimented with developing such bonds, with no failure rates. An example will explain it. Suppose you observe a Rikshawala who has brought an unconscious injured person to a hospital and if you approach him and talk to him deeply appreciating his act then this act of yours will strengthen the goodness in him. Strength of Goodness in him shall, in turn, strengthen him as Sadachari.

We must try to make use of every opportunity to devote some time in speaking to people who have demonstrated any act of selfless service.

(iv) Never appreciate any action, howsoever good it may appear to be, if it is prompted by desire (Kamna) of the doer. If you do that you shall not be endorsing a right action.

All actions from "i" to "iv" are the part of a spiritual process which I have experimented with and have found them to be helpful in enhancing ones quality of life. I am sure you could also think of many Right Actions, in all likelihood, much more powerful than what I could think of.

Let us not be bothered about how powerful Durachar is, but let us be more concerned about the strength of Sadachar. Smallness of our action should not bother us. Spirituality is infinite in its scope. Looking from the reference of infinity, one or one zillion, both have similar sizes. It is the preparedness in the path of spirituality which matters. If we are prepared, only then, there are chances that one fine day the Lord may decide to pick us up for a final "Right Action" as he picked up Arjuna.