

Sustaining our efforts towards Self-evolution

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From the school education up to continuing education programs for the senior management of organizations, we are told repeatedly the importance of hard work. Hard work is the route to success, prosperity and progress in one's own life. Despite this repeated emphasis on hard work, if you ask many they have different things to say. Some feel that there is considerable uncertainty about the link between hard work and results. There are at times unknown variables and events that separate the two. Given this, many find it hard to put in the required efforts or even abandon their efforts mid-way looking for another way to continue in their journey of progress or evolution. Sometimes even after considerable time and efforts we are on the cross-roads or are back to square one. What is the clinching deal in our journey towards evolution?

Challenges of sustaining hard work

Hard work may be an important element in our making progress in life. However, under certain conditions it becomes difficult to sustain hard work:

- (a) **The outcome of the current efforts is not directly traceable.** When this is the truth of the reality in which we are required to make efforts then it is hard to make any meaningful correlation between efforts and outcome. A training program for preparing a sports person to bag the medal in national games event may have too many variables affecting the actual outcome eventually. Therefore, how can one relate the efforts put in the training program to the actual outcome if and when it happens? On what basis will one then continue to put efforts in the training program?
- (b) **The outcome of the efforts has a long gestation period.** Sometimes by its very nature the outcome of the efforts are likely to accrue over a much longer time frame. For instance, if we have a shoulder pain and somebody promises an oil massage treatment it is easy to assess the outcome as it happens almost immediately. Therefore on seeing the progress one can decide how much more effort to invest. On the other hand a personality improvement or a life style improvement program will require a longer time to monitor and see if desired changes have happened. What should be the governing principle to invest efforts on the program?
- (c) **The outcome of the efforts may be highly uncertain.** There are situations when there is no guarantee that the efforts will lead to planned outcomes. Proverbially speaking there could be many a slip between the cup and the lip. In such a situation how should one motivate oneself to continue putting efforts even when the results are yet to unfold? This must be the central question that a budding entrepreneur may face every day.

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There are several real life examples that might fit into any or all of the above three situations. A frequently encountered example is the dilemma one face with respect to joining a new academic program. Should we take the MBA degree offered by the local university? It may throw all the above three challenges.

Difficulty of travelling in the path of self-evolution

Another issue that is even more challenging is the efforts that each one of us needs to put in our spiritual journey. There is no easily observable direct relationship between what we do in our daily life and how we evolve spiritually. We do not even know where the destination is and whether the path we have taken is indeed the correct one. As we are told, it may take several *Janmas* to even reach the destination. Nothing known to mankind can have a greater gestation period than this. Honestly, for many of us this is the primary reason to keep off from making any efforts to spiritually progress.

Arjuna must have faced a similar dilemma. Therefore, during the conversation he had with Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad Gītā* he asked a question pertaining to this. Let us take a look at this question and Shri Krishna's answer by going through two *ślokas* from chapter 6 of *Gītā*.

Arjuna asked Shri Krishna what happens to that person (*kāṃ gatiṃ kṛṣṇa gacchati*) who did not succeed (*aprāpya*) in his efforts in mastering yoga and benefitting from it (*yogasamśiddhiṃ*)? To make it abundantly clear that it was not for want of focus and substantial efforts, Arjuna said that such a person indeed brought forth faith (*śraddhayopetaḥ*) and was fully mentally engaged in all efforts related to yoga (*yogāccalitamānasah*).

अयतिः श्रद्धयोपेतः योगाच्चलितमानसः ।

अप्राप्य योगसंसिद्धिं कां गतिं कृष्ण जच्छति ॥ 6.37

ayatiḥ śraddhayopetaḥ yogāccalitamānasah
aprāpya yogasamśiddhiṃ kāṃ gatiṃ kṛṣṇa gacchati

In other words, through this *śloka* Arjuna established that even after putting the required efforts in this life time, the person who earnestly tried to evolve himself did not succeed. The efforts appear to be fruitless and more importantly it is not clear what is the way forward. If this is the outcome for a serious person where is the case for us to invest in this journey of self-evolution? Arjuna sought clarification to this doubt that is lingering in his mind and in a way the answer will be useful not only for him but also to a host of people like us who are fence sitters in this journey.

Motivating our journey in self-evolution

Think about a new higher education choice that one has to make. He/she will have the all challenges outlined above and therefore may not be able to resolve the question – “Should I put in my efforts or not?” Quite often the advice given by some credible person related to the field will go a long way in our resolving the dilemma. We develop some belief in the wise

person's counsel and go ahead with our decision. Shri Krishna answers Arjuna with a reply which seems to have a similar utility.

In His reply Shri Krishna established a basic axiomatic statement pertaining to all such efforts that not only Arjuna but even others including us may make. First Krishna made a blanket assurance that neither in this world (meaning now) (*naiveha*) nor in the other world (meaning all the future trajectories that the soul is likely to take after it leaves the mortal body in this world during the current *Janma*) (*nāmutra*) the efforts made by such a person goes futile (*vināśastasya vidyate*). To make it even more categorical and strong Krishna proposed an axiom that whatsoever good efforts put in by any person (*kalyāṇakṛt-kaścit*) will never end up in a wasteful manner (*na hi durgatiṃ gacchati*). The use of the word *tāta*, meaning my dear son, clearly shows the emotional appeal or assurance that Shri Krishna wants to give on this issue.

पार्थ नैवेह नामुत्र विनाशस्तस्य विद्यते ।
न हि कल्याणकृत्कश्चिद् दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति ॥ 6.40

pārtha naiveha nāmutra vināśastasya vidyate
na hi kalyāṇakṛt-kaścit durgatiṃ tāta gacchati

This reply of Shri Krishna points to a significant issue that we must all reflect on. On matters where there are potential challenges and obstacles to the outcomes it is extremely hard to continue investing one's efforts with an analytical frame of mind. The analytical; mind will only accentuate our discomfort and accelerate our desire to abandon the efforts as cost – benefit analysis may appear loaded against the efforts. On the other hand, strong belief systems on matters such as the one Shri Krishna propounded will enable us to sustain our good efforts and help us take bouts of adverse outcomes or not outcomes with a sense of tolerance or accommodation.

Perhaps successful entrepreneurship ventures which typically have a risky, highly painful initial stages and great discoveries in science, philosophy or meta-science were all guided only by such strong belief system that as long as we put good efforts, it must eventually lead to overall good only. Perhaps this is what is meant by the proverbial uttering that “all is well that ends well”. The only thing is we may not even know in our journey of self-evolution is that when the end is likely to be. However, the assurance will take out pressure from even wanting to know the answer to this “when” question.

The other charm of this assurance is the beauty and simplicity of the message. One does not need complex analytical skill to understand what Shri Krishna communicated through this axiom. On the other hand what we may need is a simple and a graceful acceptance of this idea and a deep conviction that it is true. Once we develop this mental make-up we are on our way in our journey of self-evolution. Nothing can stop or distract us from this journey by rattling our brain needlessly with logic and reasoning.