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Spirituality not an isolated activity

Truth is not to be attained in isolation or abstraction. It is to be found in the middle of our everyday life, not in the middle of some special spiritual life.



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By Acharya Prashant

The distinction between spiritual life and worldly life is a false distinction. That which is called as Truth is not to be attained in isolation or abstraction. It is to be found in the middle of our everyday life, not in the middle of some special spiritual life.

Intelligent Spirituality

Intelligence is always spiritual. To be intelligent is to be able to tell apart the false from the true, and that alone is spirituality. There is just nothing more to it. What we usually refer to as intelligence in our day-to-day language is not really intelligence. It is just an application of intellect. Intelligence is like light; when it shines on something one can see what the thing is. If one is spiritual, one is bound to be intelligent. If one declines to be spiritual, one cannot be intelligent. One might be very clever, one might be an intellectual, but one really cannot be intelligent.

Spirituality is not an isolated activity. One does not

say that these are the things that one usually does, and the next thing one is engaged in, is spirituality. Be fully immersed in whatever you are doing; and the best part is that we are already doing a lot. So we don't need to do anything extra, neither do we need to suppress what is going on. Just see and acknowledge what is going on, nothing else is needed. That's why spirituality is so simple; one does not need great formulations or practices. Spirituality is basic honesty, knowing both the world and yourself.

Internal Conflict

We live in conflict. We live in sorrow. We live in an internal tension and we do not like that. That is why we call it suffering. And if we do not like that, then must we not go into what is going on? This is spirituality, this is intelligence, and this is how its practice can be done. Suffering can come only by getting deceived by the false, only by honouring something that does not deserve to be honoured. If one is fully alright, there is hardly any need for any spiritual practice. It is because we are unwell within that we need to do something about it. This treatment of the internal conflict or malaise is what spirituality is.

De Facto Mode of Life

Rise and fall, happiness and sadness, chasing one thing vs avoiding another thing, this is what we call as 'the normal run of life,' 'the normal ebb and flow of life'. It

is classically referred to as duality. This is what we have unfortunately labelled as normal. This might be normal because it is the norm, but it is not natural. Here Natural refers to that which is our essential being—Swabhav.

Living in contradictions, living in dualities, while feeling helpless in front of them, and adjusting/compromising, all this is our de facto mode of life; but none of that ever allows us to feel fully at rest or at peace. All of that keeps us on a boil. It doesn't really allow us to settle down within ourselves. We remain tense, alert, and afraid. Now, if this is what we get by living in the contradictory world of dualities, doesn't it behove the intelligent one to ask: "Can't there be life untouched by all this rubbish?" That is spirituality! When one asks, "Am I born to just wallow in this nonsense?" "Is it my fate to crib, cringe, yell and shriek?" And then, when we're fed up of yelling, we put up a fake laughter.

These honest questions need to be asked! We often don't ask them because if we ask the question, it becomes a responsibility to look not merely for an answer but actually a solution, and all that involves effort. This body does not quite love effort. It would rather have food and go to bed. To avoid that effort, which would be both physical and psychological, we just conveniently surrender at all the wrong places.

The Solution

Generally speaking, the solution is: honest observation and acknowledgement. Specifically, the solution is the mind of the person seeking the solution. One has to go into his own personal conditions and see what is going on, see what is going on around, and see what is going on within; and then see what kind of false associations are troubling him... See what is it in his life that does not need to be there and is needlessly present, and what is it that needs to be there but is not being valued; and from there what one gets is 'intelligent change'.

The solution is not merely introspection; it is much deeper than that. It requires honesty, detachment, neutrality, passivity. One has to be really sincere about self-observation, so that actual condition can be figured out. But man is born with a proclivity towards self-deception. We are all very adroit at just keeping truth at bay. We can convince ourselves of anything and then cook up proofs as well. And then be fully convinced that there is objective evidence for what we want to believe in. All such tendencies have to be guarded against.

Spirituality is about exerting yourself rightly. One cannot just be honest within and let his world continue as it is. It is incumbent upon the honest fellow to work rightly. The Truth is very much available; it is something very proximate, provided we are willing to live by it. Once we make it a thing of the skies, it becomes very easy to just escape it.

The author is a spiritual leader and the founder of Prashant Advait Foundation

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