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Live a Life of Selfless Services

English poet John Donne says. "No man is an island entire of itself; everyman is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind." This poetic utterance explores the idea of the inter-connectedness of people. People are not isolated islands. Every human being is a part of the larger whole, the whole humanity. We must therefore serve others in the spirit of selfless service. We are indebted to others for all that we possess, our means of livelihood, our education, our physical, intellectual and spiritual needs and, of course, for our having come into existence. It is our duty and obligation therefore to do our best to serve our fellow beings in the best way possible. Every one is linked to every one else in a spiritual bond. The need is to ruminate on the truth of this precept in a state of detachment. The same divine thread runs across all life; the same divine fire imparts pulsations to one and all. This is in keeping with the doctrine of advaitwad, non-dualism which our ancient rishis preached and practiced. Serving only one self at the cost of others is the lowest thing in the world. Mankind is lifted to the highest pedestal of life if people shun selfishness and serve others in a spirit of self-sacrifice. A life of selfless service is indeed a life worth living and worth enjoying. It is correct to say that the service of mankind is the service of the Creator since He lives in all.

An American gentleman, who always used the word 'we' even for himself, was asked the reason thereof. He replied, "God is always with me, so I am never alone." That was the secret of his good health and being always happy. Some poet has rightly said, "least alone while all alone."

The behaviour of this gentleman showed clearly that self-realization and Ishwara (God) are not dual identities, which means the self and God are but one while in practice they become two. This is in keeping with the doctrine of 'non-dualism' which Jagat Guru Shankaracharya preached at length to the world in the 8th century A.D. Those who do not know themselves, cannot know others well or the world at large.

A selfish man is internally with the mob and externally wants everything for himself. He cannot share happiness for the significant cause that he does not have any happiness to share. All his time and energy is spent in worrying about what he has or is likely to have. Such a man can never be at peace; he will keep seeking outward pleasures and engagements which can occupy him. In the crudest terms one can understand this as escape or defence mechanism. Such a man will be insecure and unhappy. Solitude will bite him and make him uneasy.

This clearly brings to the foreground two categories of people, one—those who practise the art of living in solitariness and the second—those who prefer living with the mob. Those who live with the mob forget all about the Self and become the persons of the mob and ultimately behave like the mob, losing their Self altogether. Those who do not know themselves cannot enjoy the mystery of solitude.

There are actually two kinds of life worth knowing—One is solitary life and the other is living in company. The problem of the day is of living a smooth life and living with others which is possible only by rounding up the angularities of one's idiosyncrasies. So the solution lies in learning how to live the life of a self-realised person or living with the whole. This, in the philosophical language, is living in solitariness.