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## Work is God's Gift—Cherish it

Work is one of the greatest gifts of God to mankind. It is imperative for us therefore to accord due respect and regard to work. Work is the elixir of life. Work is really a talisman which can shape our destiny in our favour. Work promotes our physical health; it fosters our general well-being. It nurtures optimism and denounces pessimism. Those who work with devotion and dedication bloom, blossom and prosper in life. On the other hand, those who shirk and shun work have only dejection, despair and despondency in their store. The entire structure of our civilization, art and culture, science and technology and, of course, every great monument of history is essentially based on the foundation of work. Right from the yore down to the present our seers and saints have been emphasising the value of work. Srikrishna in the Bhagwat Gita propounds the philosophy of work. 'Action is thy duty, reward is not thy concern' is an immortal message of God to mankind. Not only at the individual level, but also at the level of nations, it is work and work alone, which has made the difference. Japan whose economy was shattered to pieces in the second world war is now at the apex of progress and prosperity. It has been possible only on account of the persistent striving and strenuous effort on the part of its people. China is also a great example in point. There was a time when the people of China frittered their time and energy in the consumption of opium and lay idle because of intoxication. They were reduced to utter penury, helplessness and squalor. But once they made work and effort the principle of their lives following Communist Revolution China started making progress by leaps and bounds. Examples of such cases can be multiplied. We will do well to understand that work is God's great gift to mankind. Let us therefore work and cherish work.

A temple was being built in a place of pilgrimage. Three men sitting by the roadside near the half-built temple, were busy breaking and cutting large boulders into pieces. It was a hot scorching day and the three sweated heavily. A passer-by, on seeing them, out of curiosity went to the first one, and asked, "what are you doing?" "Don't you see what I am doing? Breaking stones and what else" said he. There was annoyance and irritation in his voice, and stress and strain characterised his demeanour. Breaking stones could not certainly be a source of joy.

The passer-by went silently to the second man and repeated his question, "What are you doing my friend?", and the reply was, "Earning my livelihood." He had simply stated a fact. He was not sad, he was not angry at his plight, but he was not happy either. It was perhaps a forced submission to a situation. There was a sense of utter helplessness in his words. How could earning livelihood be a thing of joy?

The traveller silently moved ahead. He went to the third man and asked him the same question. "What are you doing my worthy friend?" The man took a few seconds to answer as he had not heard the question because he was completely immersed in his work and was also humming a joyous song. The question was then repeated to which he answered with

a sparkle in his eyes, "Oh, don't you know', 'I am building a temple, a temple for my Lord." While uttering the words, perhaps he was already seeing his Lord in the sanctum sanctorum.

The work was the same, the working conditions were the same, the situation similar, and yet what a difference in the reactions to the same work?

One was carrying the burden of his existence. To the second one, the work he was doing was simply a drudgery. He had no alternative and he had to do it, whether he liked it or not. But the third one was different from the other two. For him the work was as sacred as the work of God. Every moment, every hour, every day, spent in the work was an offering to the Lord, as it inspired in him a sense of sanctity towards what he was doing, the work he was entrusted with.