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**Meaning of work in life: A Comprehensive Perspective from Ancient Indian
Spiritual Tradition**

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Meaning of work in life: A Comprehensive Perspective from Ancient Indian Spiritual Tradition

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Abstract

Work is part of our very existence. However, most people only understand material, empirical and social aspects of work while ignoring its spiritual and transcendental aspects. The result is the trap of 'work for incentive'. This work-incentive trap eventually corrupts not only the nature of work (work which yields more monetary incentives is sought after than work that fulfils or satisfies the soul) but also character of individuals who fall into that trap. A broader and comprehensive understanding of work can salvage mankind from the follies of material existence. In this paper, we examine the evolution of work ethic in India, embedded in its spiritual tradition, and provide a framework for managers to understand how people need to relate themselves to their work either as an employee of the organization or as a responsible citizen or as part of the role they play as member of a family. Such holistic understanding of work results in less occupational stress, improved personal well-being, and other positive work and societal outcomes.

1. Introduction

It is an undisputable fact that work is an essential feature of human existence, though the disputes over whether work essentially enables or degrades human life and whether work essentially frees or restricts human freedom, are unsettled philosophical questions. Existentially, work and rest complement each other in ordinary human condition. In a certain sense, work encompasses any physical movement and inclusive of play. Work is an essential part of every living organism. In order to stay alive and exist in a rhythm, every single organism works. In this way, an animal, a bird, a bee, even an amoeba works. However, we will limit our discussion of 'work' and 'meaning of work' to the context of human beings. Human beings enjoy certain special faculty of which the most distinct ones are 'power of reasoning' (rationality) and 'freedom of will' (choice). These faculties significantly influence the nature of work that human beings are engaged in as opposed to the nature of work other organisms are engaged in. In the latter case, work and activity are primarily manifestations of instincts. In the former, the nature of work can be greatly modified by *will* and *intelligence*.

Work as a concept as well as a practice has been evolving through the human civilization. In the primitive times, work was confined to activities performed to meet the basic needs and requirements of the individuals. People worked mainly to gather their living. Work then primarily involved physical activities. Things that are readily available in nature, which could satisfy basic requirements of human beings, soon became inadequate because of the increasing population and simultaneous increase in the circumference of their need. Hence, human beings resorted to productive work as a means of satisfaction of their increasing needs. Modern day society considers something as work when it is productive in some tangible economic sense and productive work is not limited to physical activities alone. In the process of societal evolution, work surpassed the physical and came to involve mental and vital parameters. As the concepts of life and living became finer and more and more organized, work in general gradually evolved to a new concept, where primarily, the work rendered by the human was commensurately rewarded by adequate material benefits that were necessary for ease and quality of

living. Slowly work was organized with specialties demarcated, professional standards introduced, and remuneration and incentives standardized. Every person doing some productive work (i.e. work which involved the services of the person working or the things made by him as useful to the prevailing society) was given some incentive. Hence, even in modern society, work remains to be the primary means to earn the necessities of life. Categorically, work is distinguished from rest and play. Play is an activity performed merely for entertainment and amusement. However, in modern societies, everything including play and entertainment is considered work as long as it is productive and yields tangible incentives to the actor.

As society developed, various layers of Institutions were created to educate, train, and qualify people for certain fields (of work) so that they would be adequately rewarded when they would fend for themselves. Unfortunately, education which was initially conceived as a tool for the overall development of individuals with utmost focus on character development now remains limited to a large extent to the skill development process. However, no society in the history of mankind has been able to provide a utopian perfect arrangement of division of work among its citizens for smooth functioning of society. Notwithstanding the social, political and economic arrangements of the societies, there are always advantaged and disadvantaged sections. In developing and underdeveloped countries there still exist a disadvantaged lot who collect their necessities, probably as street workers, rag pickers, beggars and so on. Bringing these disadvantaged lot to the main stream are still the burgeoning problems of 21st century. Many nation states still lack the vision, motivation, and plan to provide a proper platform for work and earning livelihoods for all their citizens. There is absence of necessary policies and inadequate implementation of inclusive developmental initiatives due to the corrupt structure of the society. Furthered to this is the absence of basic moral outlook of the citizens who also simply focus on work for furthering the self serving instincts at the cost of larger good.

Lastly, the adoption of capitalist structure of economy all over the world made work highly competitive, as the basic principle of work in capitalism is 'the more one works the more one acquires'. Eventually, greater acquisition is considered the means for satisfaction of material happiness. So the material, empirical and social aspects of work remained over emphasized across societal developments as the self serving (material fulfillment) instincts remain to be the goal of human life at the cost of self-realization.

However, the domain of spirituality remains to be least explored in academic literature, as many believe it is either intractable or impractical. In this paper, the author makes an attempt to a spiritual explanation of the meaning of work in human life by taking insight from the ancient Indian spiritual traditions.

2. Problem Area: Why people understand 'work' the way they understand it?

Work, Society, and Human follies

Work is a blessing, a gift, and an essential component of the creative force. Both physical and mental work keeps the vital life forces alive and elastic through a process of healthy use, exertion, and

relaxation. Almost always work was done when one involved the physical, mental, and vital parameters. Without work, life may be more disgruntled as there may not be an opportunity and occasion for creative manifestation of human intelligence. Work is that gift through which one can fully realize the entire process of life and its meaning as well it can help finding one's own realistic balance, in relation to the cosmos and world ways.

Society is an organized form of human living arrived by means of an implicit social contract between individuals where individuals transfer their extraordinary power to state and gain order and other rights and privileges (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau). Every society form primitive to modern has undergone the task of division of labour for the better distribution and smooth functioning of organized life. In ancient India, division of work was done on the basis of origin and decent of people though it was originally meant to be based on the nature and characteristics (constituting *gunas*) of individuals and not decent. Eventually the social system became rigid about the division based on origin of people. Modern society makes division of work more heterogeneous and based on skill, competence, and intelligence though division of decent/caste is still maintained serving certain other social functions like marriage.

Work forms part of a culture of every society taking into consideration the physical, environmental, societal demands. Hence, work culture differs from country to country, area to area of the same country, and involves a certain mindset which is acquired to an extent from the socio-physical environment and partly through personal experiences and social situations. A culture defines and explicates a lot of peripheral meaning to work. It defines the nature of work its citizens must involve themselves in, nature of work people need to avoid, it defines and projects what is considered more valuable work, it finds ways and means of avoiding and suppressing work which in some sense defeats human purposes. Many cultures may have certain uniform standards of work. For example, no culture advocates robbery (though it involves a lot of physical and mental activities) as 'work' even though some robbers may be doing some benevolent acts like taking care of the poor and needy.

So it is civil society which institutionalizes the nature and kind of work necessary and required for the proper functioning of the society. Some works are valued with high incentives depending on the knowledge, skill, and ability required in carrying out the work as well as its market value. For example, the work of a doctor is valued as very important for any society as psycho-physical health of the citizens is a pre condition of a good society. As science and technology keep diversifying and the subsequent changes in the market forces influence the nature of work that is valued more than others. Though majority hanker after the highly incentivized professions only few could make it and the rest find their place eventually in the scheme of distribution. This institutionalized scheme of distribution of work gives every citizen an opportunity for self actualization of the individual's potential and at the same time fulfillment of the requirements of the society and most importantly basic needs of the self.

There are various categories of division of work in our society, like professionals and non-professionals, employers and employees. One specific division is of special significance to our Indian society i.e. public sector employees and private sector employees. A careful look into this division reveals a sea of information about people's attitude to work and how people relate themselves to their work. This will be taken up in another research project.

Capitalism, the current prevalent economic system all over the world, supported by the scientific and technological advancements of the last three centuries brought in the concepts of 'efficiency', 'competition', and 'perfection' in work. Efficiency pays for itself: the more efficient ones are better productive hence, better incentivized. Competition is an essential element in capitalistic economy. More material accumulations are considered preconditions to better living. The problem of competition in work is manifold in developing countries like India due to the burgeoning population and inadequacy as well as unequal access to the necessary resources like education and health.

The state also provides many opportunities of employment. A vast majority prefers working for state run organizations mainly because of two reasons; guarantee for livelihood and security of job. However, the incentives structures of the state run organizations are inferior compared to the wealthy private organizations. Nevertheless, the inherent lapses in the bureaucratic governance provide other opportunities for money making by unfair means and corrupt practices. Quality and perfection is always causality in the state run organizations. In general this condition exists even today in the government offices, the game of passing the responsibility is played and nothing moves except time, and nothing breeds except corruption. The greedy and intelligent people such as politicians and government officers connive with each other to amass great fortunes by using the public money of the state exchequer, thus 'working efficiently' for their own ends. They spend huge and unaccounted money in the elections just to be in power, because as they do get it, they make thousand times more money. So, the rewards of the nature of work done are a greater incentive to work compared to the nature of work itself.

Corruption is like a contagious disease, spread wildly among innocent citizens and has become so deep rooted in the psychic of the people that it has come to be accepted as normal by the general mass, sometimes to the extent of people not even acknowledging its existence. Corruption may originate from necessity, from the greed for more and more possessions, from the need to improve one's living condition but once resorted to, it becomes an adept practice and it is a trap in which nations gets entangled. Any development and reform is bound to be slow in such trapped systems that breeds corruption and thereby poverty. The corrupt lot view their work purely from an angle for acquisition, and is a menace to those who refuse to comply with their requirements. Others view the material prosperity of the corrupt with jealousy and start falling into the trap as they feel foolish to be left out.

The opportunities for work in the post liberalized India has improved much with more and more multinational organizations expanding their business and creating job opportunities and scope for development. This, however, has not helped corruption to subside. Though liberalization has improved the economic and thereby living conditions of the people but has given rise to problems of different dimensions. Competition in the spirit of capitalism has engulfed the entire population. People are engrossed in cut throat competition for more and better material gains and benefits. Work is equated with achieving targets at any cost, getting a hike and/or promotion, getting ahead of others in the race etc. In fact, the ground work for this paper started with a question from a conference audience about 'how I am supposed to be ethical when I am simply asked to meet the target'.

Today's world is full of scams and frauds which costs a lot to the average citizens. Hardly anything happens to the bigger frauds as they have adequate money to buy their release and be free so that they

can get into their game again. In this scenario, where does the average man who is honest to his labour survive? An imperfect society creates many complications for its average citizens. The rich and affluent have their way out serving each other's interest. Working for common good is become a stage show. Even professionals who boast their status in society claiming doing public service only serve themselves.

The political, economic and social institutions each of whose performance closely dependent on the other are all entangled in the evils created by the evil nexus of each other. The strength of a political institution depends on its people's ability to control the mechanism of governance. But politics is turned to such a game of money and power greatly facilitated both by people's ignorance and self serving tendency. People fail to understand the leader who is giving them a television set or a laptop computer is not giving it from his hard earned money. It is the wealth of state exchequer which if utilized in proper manner could change the fate of the nation and their children's future in this country. A corrupt political institution corrupts its economic institution through prevalence of corruption, bribery and nepotism. So the fundamental human values of fairness, justice, equality all suffer making the social fabric of a society suffer.

3. Literature on Understanding work beyond means of livelihood

Work serves many other functions other than mere basic economic support of individual and/or family. For many, work is not meant only for simple fulfillment of necessities. Rather work stretches much beyond where people trying to find the meaning of their lives and their connectedness to the world. Professional workers value work as a total way of life (Orzack, 1959; Parker, 1965); as a way to express the inborn and hidden potentials, like divinely bestowed intelligence and creativity. For some, work provides something interesting to get engaged with, accomplish and contribute for a better world. Absence of such engagement leads to idleness and boredom. Interestingly, work helps keeping people occupied - an alternative to boredom and restlessness (Moarse and Weiss, 1955, P. 191). Some value working and the freedom to work, while others value comforts, economic rewards, and working conditions (Lyman, 1956) of a job. Nevertheless, lower skill workers and workers who earn the minimum are more likely to attach only economic security to work; whereas high skilled, professional and more valued workers (whose basic necessities are secured either by earning or by inheritance) may look beyond and look at work as a source of self expression, social good, and public service.

3.1. How Work relates to finding Meaning of Life

Over the ages, people have primarily worked for temporal and instrumental gains. The main purpose of work is undisputedly survival, without which life would be primitive and miserable. However, beyond this basic instinct of survival which human beings share with every other living organism, humanity has always encountered a few existential questions, including finding meaning of life, which is extended to finding meaning in what they do (work for) in life. Human beings have an 'intrinsic will' to find meaning of their life and may be of work.

Meaning of life, though has a significant subjective component to it as it concerns the 'limited self' and its experience, cannot be purely a personal discovery. Pure subjectivity suffers from the defect of finding meaning in any act, including the act of pure selfishness, which sometimes leads to heinous acts committed by the self. Finding meaning is more of finding a transcendental cause of life; a cause that extends beyond the ordinary survival, beyond the empirical world, and probably and most importantly, beyond the purely selfish interest. Many great spiritual thinkers and philosophers of India and world has pursued their enquiry into these existential questions of life and creation. Notable Greek philosopher Aristotle also pursues an inquiry about what is good life in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Even contemporary philosophers of our time like Peter Singer (1995) opine, true meaning of life is connected to building a better world.

It may be easy for ordinary humans to get entangled in the 'self-trap' where anything that does not directly or immediately benefit and satisfy the requirement of the self is ridiculed. Self is perceived as opposed to others and self interest is pursued as the primary goal. This very juxtaposition of self with others is flawed doctrine and cause of all problems in society. Finding meaning of life goes beyond the selfish instinctive survival where humans exercise their faculty of wisdom, intelligence, and intuition to discover their connectedness to the universe, role of their existence, and what is beyond their transitory existence.

Functional disciplines, like Management, believe in 'managing' and 'giving meaning to work' that in turn increases worker's satisfaction and thereby organizational productivity. The management approach is part of the truth but guided purely by instrumental ends. The philosophical question of meaning of life and how work relates to life is vast and holistic. 'How ought I live?' (Socrates), 'How are we to live?' (Singer) are fundamental questions and some variations of these questions that most humans encounter in every facets of their existence. The modern 'state' is made responsible not only for providing opportunities for livelihood but also for providing environment and mechanism for the development of an 'autonomous self concept' of its citizens, so that they continue their quest for meaning and goal of life beyond the ordinary survival instinct.

Humans are not *autometas* like automatic machines that are programmed to work in a certain fixed and predictable manner. They are highly complex machines with the power of 'free will' and a complete empirical explanation of which is beyond the purview of any or all of the academic disciplines together, for that matter. Life is a nice blend of intrinsic and temporal, subjective and objective, empirical and transcendental; so finding meaning is complex matter, pervasive throughout academic disciplines like philosophy, psychology, sociology, religion, and spirituality.

However, the domain of spirituality remains to be least explored in academic literature, as many believe it is either intractable or impractical. Some researchers, like Carrington (2010), tried to provide a spiritual paradigm for (academic) understanding and implementation of spiritual theories and practices. This paper attempts a spiritual explanation of the meaning of work in human life by taking insight from the ancient Indian spiritual traditions. The Indian spiritual tradition is vast and holistic. It provides explanation to almost all of mankind's existential questions. There has been problem with interpretation and explanation and even manipulation of meaning by certain special interest groups, who tried to keep

their interests secured over the ages. More so, this tradition has also been projected by most interpreters, as life negating. Though we admit that no interpretation is perfect and likely to be influenced by the 'bounded rationality' as well as 'social forces' of the particular time, we also accept such limitations in our paper, while trying to provide a transparent and unbiased interpretation of the concepts involved.

3.2. Literature

There have been various scholarly researches on the subject of how work relates to human life and how work adds meaning to life. Finding the meaning of one's work in life is an important existential concern than a simple management question or as projected in the management literature. Addressing such an existential concern can have profound implication for psycho-physical well being of humans (Wong and Fry, 1998) which in turn can much influence the way people live, work and relate to other things and beings in the universe. Pratt and Ashforth's (2003) research findings indicate meaningful work is as important as pay and security – and perhaps more. Management literature has taken a keen interest in finding or establishing or giving meaning to work as some studies (e.g. May et al., 2004) reports meaning in work is seen as a method to foster an employee's motivation and attachment to work whereas meaningless work is apathy and detachment from one's work. Hence, the so called productive work is a result of finding meaning in work which is mostly connected to the nature of material incentives and subjective experiences. The subjective experiences (and meaning) of work ranges from self-esteem, security, dignity, whereas the objective meaning of work focus on the importance and worthwhileness of work, and its contribution and purpose to society in general. Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) studied the distinction between the managerial research where meaningfulness of work is managed e.g. by leadership and organizational culture, and the literature/research in humanities where meaningfulness of work is considered inherent in the work itself. They studied the process of uncovering meaning in both 'managing meaning' and humans 'intrinsic will to meaning'. Our focus is solely the later i.e. the 'intrinsic will to meaning' which is broader and all inclusive of the existence of life in the cosmos. Managing meaning, on the other hand, is exploiting the basics present in human psychic or genes.

3.3. Research Perspective: Spiritual philosophy of ancient India and 'meaning of work'

Indian civilization is one of the oldest and vast. It has a very rich spiritual tradition that exhaustively explains and explicates the complete way of life for human beings. Unfortunately, these teachings have lost its significance in contemporary times because of various wrong reasons. Two reasons are prominent: (1) it is represented as life negating and therefore ridiculing the empirical (vyavaharika) existence. (2) it is wrongly interpreted by few special interest groups leading to social discrimination and disharmony in society.

The ancient Indian spiritual thinkers have not only taken pains to detail minute problems of human dignity and rights, social justice and equality, but also macro social issues of economics, politics, environment and society. They have proposed comprehensive outlook of life.

Spiritualism asserts the interconnectedness of the individual with the universal. Resort to spiritualism is probably the only option which can bring a holistic understanding of all existential questions about creation, life and work. A deeper and careful interpretation of the concepts can shed more light on not only the importance of the temporal nature of the world and human life but also the inseparable integration of both the temporal and the transcendental and subjective and objective. We will make a sincere attempt to understand the meaning of work intertwined in three highly rich spiritual concepts of 'Purusharthas' 'Niskama Karma' and 'Lokasangraha' and try find its relevance to our work and occupation.

(A) Purusarthas

Purusarthas literally mean the goal or more appropriately (as translated from artha) meaning of a human being. *Purusha* in Sanskrit means human (not man alone). Purusarthas or goal of human life is a predominating topic in all major ancient Indian scriptures like; *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, *Srimad Bagvat Geeta*, *Manusmrti*, etc.

Of all the creatures' human alone is able and capable to conceive a goal in life and act according to that goal. This is been recognized by philosophers of various traditions (Greek: Socrates, German: Kant, Spinoza). The concept of *Purusarthas* provides an excellent conceptualization of the types and kinds of goals and also their order and conglomeration in which they are pursued by individuals. Interestingly, this attempt to objective projection of life goals does not at all ridicule the individual subjective experiences. Rather, these subjective experiences enrich the broader objectives.

Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha

We must not ignore a few things in the concept of purusarthas: ascertaining a hierarchical order is important for explanation of their interrelation, and the final outcome. Sometimes it is written as *Kama, artha, dharma, Moksha*. *Kama* is the desire and mostly instinctive and therefore it keeps humans in the same plane as other organisms until and unless it is regulated by the principles of *dharma*. The sense of right and justice is inherent in the notion of *dharma* and these senses are unique to human beings. *Artha* is the means of satisfaction of all human desires. It is for *artha* (incentive) people work and while working they also try to find the artha (meaning) of life. Both *kama* and *artha* need to be regulated by the *dharma* to attain *moksha* i.e. the state of discriminative knowledge. We make a conscious attempt not to interpret *Moksha* as otherworldly.

Dharma is used in multiples sense. Two senses are more important to our discussion. Narrow sense it is an individual's obligation and duty by virtue of being human, by virtue of the position one occupies, and by virtue of the life history. In its wider sense, *dharma* is the order and harmony in the society, world

and cosmos. Other important sense of the use of work dharma is *dhr-dharati* meaning anything that bear, uphold, and maintain the universe. *Adharma* is destructive of the order and the universe or uproots. *Samanya dharma* is the duties common to entire mankind. Our duty to sustain our own self is a *samanya dharma* and it is much like the instinctive desires. *Visesa dharma* is due to one's position and life stations. A doctor's *visesa dharma* is to treat a patient, a father's *visesa dharma* is to upbringing his children. A shoulder's *visesa dharma* is to protect the territorial integrity of the country. The room for aspiration for '*artha*' proves the fact that life is not to be negated and *artha* is to be achieved to maintain the requirements of life. *Kama* in the narrow sense is the most basic biological requirements which humans share with any other organism. One predominant biological requirement is sex but it is often mistaken to be the only one. *Kama* is any desire due to the instinctive and biological nature. In the wider sense, *kama* includes the psychological desires which is inclusive of all sorts of human desires on and above the biological desires for food and sex. Desire for one's own *Moksha* (attain discriminative knowledge) to desire for a *sarvodaya samaj* (welfare society) is part of psychological desire.

Moksha literally means freedom from desires and thereby the consequences of the desires. The important question people try to address is, if *Moksha* is this worldly or other worldly. How to understand *Moksha* when one cannot experience it in this life? What is important is *Moksha* is a state of the self that produces discriminative knowledge; knowledge that frees the self from its attachment to things outside the self as it is a human tendency to seek for happiness from things outside. *Moksha* is a state of mind or attitude of individual's mind that frees and liberates from all the bondages of self interest. It is achievable here in this world and people who have achieved this state have worked only for the good of the society, nation and the world. It is a state of discriminative knowledge.

Artha and *kama* cannot be pursued to the exclusion of *dharma*. Poverty as long as it is removable either by individual or collective effort cannot be legitimized. Living in poverty of utter deficiency is against the order and harmony. Improving the conditions of living is as much the individual's responsibility as the responsibility of a welfare state. Eulogize riches is another extreme. *Artha* is amassed with a very specific purpose of maintaining and sustaining but not for the sake of simply amassing. Some people amass for the pleasure of it others amass it by denying themselves the moderate comforts of life. Both abundance and absence of *artha* is problematic and disturbs the order of not only society but also of the cosmos. *Manusmrti* categorically focuses that prosperity consists in and achievable by all three together (*dharma, artha, kama*). The aim is to earn the means of livelihood (*artha*) through right means (*dharma*) for fortification of rightly ordered desires (*kama*). In some sense the political (broader goal) and personal must coincide. Identification of this coherence is the important problem of our time. When people fail to orient their *samanya* and *Visesa dharma* (duties) to the greater goals of their existence they find all types of contradiction in their call for duty and requirements of morality.

(B) Niskama karma

Niskama literally means desire less karma. There are many interpretations of what desire less (bereft) mean? It stands to be considered as an inconsistent doctrine in principle as without desire there is no

reason why one would act. Practically, it is the desire and the propensity for satisfaction of this desire that instigates people to work. Therefore, it is beyond ordinary understanding how action can be desireless? The desire that is talked about here is the outcome of the instinctive inclination of the self which are mostly self directed and selfish. Negating desires would simply mean negating the pure selfish instincts in any work or activity and working or acting for the sake of common good and in accordance to *dharma*. There are two important things to keep in mind; (1) act we must as that is our very nature so act without the desire for results frees us from the bondages which are outcome of the desire (2) there is an outcome of every act – it is part of the law of nature. But when we desire a specific and particular outcome we try to condition our act to the outcome. But the act-outcome link is not a pure mechanical one where the outcomes can be predicted of the act. The actual outcome may be purely independent of the desired outcome. We must condition the act to nothing but its very nature of intrinsic good. Act you must hence act for the common good or in coherence with the common good and as per dharma or even the dictates of reason. Acting for the mere exclusion of the good of the self, if become a universal practice, is detrimental to the world order because each self's selfish desire may be conflicting with every other self's selfish desire.

(C) Lokasamgraha

Whether human authority is the ultimate justification for dharma? May not be but the goal is clear. It is for the good of all but at the same time not at the cost of anyone. This concept restores the principle of justice and equality of all and non discrimination (positive discrimination) of any disadvantaged section, group. As Sharma talks about survival of the weakest not survival of the fittest alone, should be the principle of our existence. The ordinary tendency is to support the mighty and powerful but the *rita* (cosmic order) is maintained by respecting the existence of each and all. Life in earth moves in a circle, where nothing is more important and nothing is irrelevant. It is our animal instincts that influences our thinking that everything else is nature is meant to serve our interest, and that which does not serve our interest is to be ridiculed and destroyed.

3.4. The karma Yogis

An ancient and vast civilization of India has documented a vast heritage of human living. As civilizations progresses it becomes more and more enquiring in nature be it scientific and technological or spiritual. The civilizations in India have reached many picks of which the spiritually enquiring one is the most significant and distinct contribution to the world. In a spiritually developed society, there always existed a breed of spiritually conscious people, who took great satisfaction from their work; they lived simply but also learnt to feel from their heart and soul the real meaning of work; they lived this awareness through their works. Hence work became a physical, mental, vital, psychic, emotional, social and spiritual parameter as well. They did work for the sake of work; they lived entirely for the sake of work; they did not multiply their material desires: they became Karma Yogis because they did not compete to accumulate material, or bother to compare their accumulation with others. Rather, they also gave what they could to those who were in need. They did not bother about their so called market value and

market efficiency, but kept performing and opened new and new horizons of awareness and fulfillment. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville is a great example. Working without true realization and spirit was not considered work. It is here that scientists, musicians, artists, educationists baked bread for the community for the sake of the common good. They earned their keep, helped each other to grow and then carried on study in their respective fields.

In The *Bhagwad Gita*, work or *Karma* is given a lot of emphasis and is also considered to be one form of *yoga*, potent to bring God realization. In *Bhagwad Gita* one *sloka* reads like this: "*Na hee Kaschit Kshanam api jatu tishaty akarmakart! Karyatee hee avasah karma sarvah parkrtijair gunaih*", meaning none can ever remain really action less even for a moment for everyone is helplessly driven to action by the three *gunas* (*Sattva, Raja and Tama*)". In other words, *Karma* is inherent in *Prakriti*, the creative force, a combination of three *gunas* (*sattva, rajas and tamas*) from which everything has emanated. All creations are therefore helplessly bound by *karma* as influenced by the constitution of their *gunas*. Vain is their wish and attempt to rid themselves of actions like eating, sleeping, beating of heart, breathing as all these are nothing but *karma*. From the atom to the universe, all are engaged in activities of innumerable types. It is impossible for beings to renounce *Karma* while being entangled in *Prakriti*. Whatever *karma* one does, it builds a cumulative effect in the subtle world, and the results of that particular individual is stored in a latent or "*apoorva*" state. When the time is ripe the fruits of one's own *karma* start to fructify, good for good and bad for bad. Hence, in the scriptures like the *Vedas* and *The Geeta* it is said that all that *Karma* which is born out of *rta* like right conduct, aspiration, intention and ethics, creates a certain *yagyan* and is upheld by the Lord of the universe. If we have no knowledge or idea about the lord then let us be satisfied with the fact that the universe is sustained and nurtured by the cosmic order.

One very good example for *yagyan* of this kind, can be taken from the cosmos itself. Every day, the sun beats upon the sea, rivers, lakes. It shines. In the process, water vapors are formed right in front of our eyes but we cannot see it. This is in the latent or *apoorva* state. However, when the result of the sun beating upon the water is near, we see clouds and then rain falls. The sun does its *karma* by shining, the water vapor is stored as a result and when the *yagyan* is ripe the rain falls. All this takes place through a process of *Karma Kaa Tapasya* which forms *yagyan*. Hence, if we do our *karma* born out of *rta* it is bound to take its own time, but we can be sure that it is sustained and upheld by the cosmos and the results are bound to come. This result is not the result that the doer expects but the result as it is the natural outcome of a process. Hence in the *Bagvad Gita* it is said, not to be impatient, but to have faith and do action for the sake of action as a *yoga*, not to wait for the fruits of the action. "*Karmanyey vaadikarastey maa phaleshu kadachana*" meaning the result surely does come.

What is more important in the doctrine of *Niskama karma* is it is not life negating nor it is negating desires and thereby negating the sorrows born out of the desires. Understanding *Niskama karma* is understanding the fact that goal of individual's life is in complete coherence with the goal of creation. It is due to the veil of selfish instincts of humans that majority do not realize this fact. What is even more worrying is that by not realizing this coherence and connection people entangle themselves in bad *karmas* creating and furthering an environment of negativity, suffering, and bondage. Since the

Individual is interconnected with the universal the impact of particular individual's karma taken in toto eventually creates karmic bondage of the nation and the universe.

4. Conclusion

The Indian spiritual philosophy is not life negating, though it has more to do with disciplining life. All our physical and psychological desires are valid but must be regulated to avoid disharmony in our social relationships, life and in the universe. It is required of individuals to make an assessment of their *dharma* in particular situations. Duties can be prioritized based on principles of justice and fairness not mere outcomes of the action. If utilitarian outcome is the only human value then a managers asked to meet their targets do so at any cost compromising justice and fairness and thereby disturbing the social and universal order.

In a different perspective, present day economic institutions also let loose of their *dharma* by not paying their employees adequately. As a result, the employees are always disgruntled and find ways and means to augment their income from the organization itself in shady ways, not discernible to the management. Here corruption is born. The author concludes by saying proper social mechanism along with individual's higher sense of justice and fairness will redress these issues amicably.

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