

# THE SPIRITUAL SCIENTIST

## A Cyber Magazine for Those Who Think

Vol 1 Issue 7

### An Infallible Justice

- *Why me! What did I do to deserve this?* The outraged cry that comes from a person who feels he has been unfairly singled out for suffering by cruel providence.
- *"Why do bad things happen to good people?"* The perplexing question that haunts the minds of many when they see pious people victimized by painful reverses in life.

#### THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

"The problem of evil" has been the bane of Western theologians and thinkers for centuries together. In simple terms, the problem is: Why does evil exist in the world despite the presence of an almighty God?

The Vedic scriptures give a clear understanding of the problem of evil. They explain that evil is not God's creation; evil comes upon us due to our own bad karma. When we succumb to our lower nature, we exploit the resources of mother nature in an unlawful way and / or cause suffering to other living beings just for the fulfillment of our base desires. By such actions, we fix up appointments with suffering in the future. (And all living beings share a remarkable memory quirk - they forget their own wrongdoings very quickly) So when our due suffering reaches us, we have conveniently forgotten the wrongs that we did in the past. And so the indignant outburst, "Why me?"

#### KARMA: NOT-SO-UNFAMILIAR

- John walks into his house and sees an ugly burn scar on the right hand of his father. Shocked, he cries out, "Father, what happened?"
- Mr. Adams calls his family physician early morning, "Doctor I am having a sever stomach upset." The doctor promptly asks, "What did you have for dinner last night?"
- Mr. Dull is having respiratory problems. After examining him, the doctor asks him, "At what age did you start smoking?"

These are simple, everyday incidents, but all of them involve implicit acceptance of the concept of karma. On seeing a particular effect, the person involved desires to know its cause. This is what the law of karma actually is: to every action there is a reaction. (Newton's third law, which deals with only the gross physical level, is a subset of this general law of karma) Thus karma is not a sentimental religious concept; its implicit acceptance forms the basis of practically everything done by everyone from every walk of life. Just try to imagine life without any cause-effect relationship! Chaos would reign supreme.

#### THE MYSTERY OF THE WORLD

Karma is a simple, logical and satisfactory explanation for suffering, but the problem is observations of the world around don't seem to confirm it. Corrupt politicians amass fortunes without being punished; criminal rogues live in style as underworld dons; shady businessmen, who earn millions illegally, are considered the success stories of the times. On the other hand, the upright crusaders of truth are sidelined; the innocent is punished and the honest languish in poverty. The question then begs itself: where is justice?

The renowned thinker Harold W Percival answers this question in his book *Thinking and Destiny*, "Law and justice do prevail in human affairs. But effect does not always immediately follow cause. Sowing is not immediately followed by harvesting. The results of an act or a thought may not appear until after a long, intervening period. The mystery of the world is created by the separation of cause and effect."

## REINCARNATION - THE BASIS OF AN INFALLIBLE JUSTICE

Reincarnation forms an integral part of the explanation of the Vedic scriptures for the seeming contradictions in karma. They assert the eternity of our existence; our life doesn't begin with birth or end with death. Each one of us is an irreducible, infinitesimal particle of anti-matter - spirit. It is this spark which animates the material body that we currently reside in. The body is merely an external covering like a dress. And just as we give up old and worn out clothes and accept new ones, the soul similarly gives up old and worn out bodies and accepts new ones at the time of death. This is what we call reincarnation.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of the greatest thinkers of USA, states in his journals, "The soul comes from without into the human body as into a temporary abode, and it goes out of it anew.. it passes into other habitations, for the soul is immortal."

The soul is the active principle in the body. He is the doer of all actions - good and bad and thus it is he who has to reap the fruits of his actions, either in the same life or in a subsequent life. So we can understand that an apparently pious person who is suffering greatly is reaping the effects of impious activities performed in this or previous lives. Conversely an impious person may enjoy temporary prosperity now due to his past pious credits. Of course, irrespective of their present condition, the nature of their present activities is certainly going to have its effect - the pious will reap benefits and the impious will suffer, in due course of time.

An analogy will make the workings of the law of karma clear.

In villages, food grains are often stored in huge vertical containers; fresh grains are poured in from the top and old stored grains are taken out from the top. A farmer may have produced poor quality grains of say brand Z for the past 4 years and stocked them in his container. This year he produces high quality grains of say brand A and stores them from the top. Yet he finds to his exasperation that from the bottom grains of brand Z come out. This is how "bad things happen to good people".

Thus the principles of reincarnation allow us to view life with a much broader perspective - not from the standpoint of one brief lifetime which is nothing more than a flash in time, but from the standpoint of eternity. With this broader vision, we can understand how each individual soul is alone responsible for his own karma. Understanding of this universal and infallible system of justice is the basis of lasting peace and real happiness.

The famous author W Somerset Maugham remarks in *The Razor's Edge*, "Has it occurred to you that transmigration is at once an explanation and a justification of the evil of the world? If the evils we suffer are the result of sins committed in our past lives, we can bear them with resignation and hope that if in this one we strive towards virtue our future lives will be less afflicted."

## WHY ARE THE IGNORANT NOT EXCUSED?

In the court of divine justice, a human being cannot claim innocence on the grounds of ignorance. The laws of nature are impartial and inescapable. Fire is going to burn anyone who puts his hand into it, even if he be an ignorant child. If a villager travels in a first class compartment of a local train with a second class ticket, his fine will not be waived on the grounds of ignorance. If he is using the services provided by the railways, it is his duty to be aware the rules that govern those services; the onus lies on him, not on the railways.

*Once a traveler going through a forest saw a light a short distance away. When he reached there, he found to his surprise that it was a magnificent palace. As no one seemed to be around he ventured inside. He found himself in an elegant hall with furniture, cushions, fans, and several other luxuries. He also saw a dining table full of a large number of delicacies. Seeing no one around he started eating it all, relaxing on the sofa under the fan and having a good time.*

One doesn't have to be an expert moralist to figure out that the traveler was not doing the right thing. Although all the facilities were there, he had not arranged for them; they were not his. So he had no right to enjoy them. Although the owner might not be immediately visible, it is his (the traveler's duty) to find out about the owner and act according to whatever rules the owner might have formulated for visitors. Else the owner has every right to punish a trespasser.

Similarly we are living in the world which is exactly like the palace; all our needs - air water, heat, light etc are provided for. So before availing of these gifts it is the duty of every human being to inquire about the Maker, the Owner of the world - God and the rules according to which He expects the inhabitants of the world to operate. Action without such basic common sense is simply inviting trouble.

It is like going in a private company and doing whatever one feels like - sitting on the PL's chair, using the Director's personal computer or barging into the CEO's cabin. Ignorance will hardly be entertained as an excuse for such behavior.

Similarly a human being who presumptuously exploits everything around him and harms others for his own selfish interests will certainly not be protected from the law of karma by the subterfuge of ignorance.

## GOOD WITHOUT GOD?

"I of course believe in karma. But I don't bother myself with doubtful sectarian religious concepts like God. I just believe in being good and doing good to others; living honestly and not harming others." How often have we heard this modern goodie-goodie philosophy? Lets see an analogy to understand what it actually boils down to.

*Once a gang of thieves robbed a bank and fled to the forest. In the forest, the leader of the thieves turned to the others and spoke with utmost gravity, "We should all be honest principled gentlemen. So let us not try to cheat each other, but share this money equally among ourselves!"*

Does this "honesty among thieves" carry any value? For the law they are all dishonest bank robbers; their mutual honesty has no legal standing whatsoever.

Similarly we have not created even one of the things in the world we reside in, not even the bodies we live in. All the things that we absolutely need for our survival - the air we breath, the water we drink, the food we eat, the solar heat and light that sustain us - are created by Mother Nature, who acts under the direction of our Father God. The Isopanisad, one of the most important Vedic texts, therefore asserts (mantra 1), "Everything animate and inanimate within the universe is owned and controlled by the Supreme Lord."

So when we neglect God, claim His property as our own and decide to be "good" among ourselves without even acknowledging God, how are we better than "the honest thieves"? In the eyes of the cosmic government, we are thieves and will be penalized by the inexorable law of karma.

Thus goodness without God will not save us from the clutches of karmic reactions. It is important to understand the definition of sin in this connection. Sin is generally thought to be any activity that harms others. But from the absolute standpoint, sin is the willful disobedience of the laws of God by disregarding His supreme proprietorship of everything. So even goodness without God is sinful.

## GO BEYOND KARMA

In order to get rid of suffering once and for all, we have to stop doing bad karma. And all karma which is not connected to God is bad karma - the difference is just a matter of degree.

The Bhagavad-Gita explains that the art of work is to "see action in inaction and inaction in action". We cannot become karma-free by giving up karma (activity) because we cannot give up all activity. Firstly we cannot stop doing activity forever; it is against our very nature as dynamic spiritual beings. And secondly even while being supposedly inactive, we are killing so many microbes just by our breathing, bodily movements, digestion etc. So inaction cannot free us from karma. This is what it means "to see action in inaction".

On the other hand when we are not in gross ignorance, we can understand that "Everything belongs to God, everything acts according to His laws, I depend completely on Him for my very existence and I am completely under the control of His laws." With such preliminary knowledge, we can begin to spiritualize our work - by working for God. Then karma cannot touch us. For example, a soldier may kill hundreds of enemy soldiers on the battlefield, but the law will not touch him because he is working for the government. Far from being punished he will be given an award of bravery. Similarly when we work for God, the divine government, far from giving us karmic reactions, will award and glorify us.

The spiritualization of our work is the subject matter of spiritual education - real education. Spiritual education is simple for the simple and complicated for the complicated. But suffice it to say that for all classes of people it begins with the association of genuine spiritual scientists, who have themselves become accomplished in this science and art. In the pathetic absence of spiritual education in the present social setup, *The Spiritual Scientist* is a humble attempt to provide this invaluable knowledge to all genuine seekers of truth.

*Join us next month for another session of spirituo-scientific exploration.*

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## The Spiritual Scientist

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**Dedicated to**

**His Divine Grace A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada,  
The Greatest Spiritual Scientist of the Modern Times**

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