



CHAITANYA CHARAN DAS

Thought and emotion

A satisfying, effective life requires the harmony of thought and emotion. When thought dominates emotion, one becomes unfeeling, hard-hearted and life becomes listless, boring. When emotion dominates thought, one becomes moody - violent or depressed - and life goes out of control.

Ideally, thought should be enlivened by emotion and emotion should be directed and regulated by thought. This blend is taught by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-gita. At the start of the Gita, Arjuna's emotions overpowered his thoughts, thus making him falter in his warrior dharma of protecting the citizens from atrocious rulers. Krishna's words of wisdom, teaching the difference between the temporary body and the eternal soul, stimulated Arjuna's rational faculty, thus helping him gain control over his emotions. But Krishna's guidance didn't stop there. His teaching of bhaktiyoga - the eternal loving relationship between the soul and God - ushered Arjuna into the world of divine emotions. There, Arjuna learnt, all activity is done not just as a duty, but as an expression of one's devotion to help enact god's will in this world for the good of all. That's why Krishna exhorts Arjuna to serve with his mind and his intelligence, that is, both his emotion and his thought.

Today, our educational system teaches us practically nothing about the philosophical aspect of life. Consequently, most people know no ultimate purpose of life; their thoughts remain caught in satisfying stray emotional urges created by advertisements and media. Thus they lead hurried yet dissatisfied lives, driven by irrational impulses and unquenchable desires. When these emotions go out of control, they transmogrify into irrational violence against others as in vandalism and murder or irrational violence against oneself as in suicide.

With the neglect of the religious aspect, the in-built self-restraint religious morality teaches has been done away with. No wonder we see so many people becoming victims of emotional hijackings.

Arjuna turned to Krishna to save himself from irrational emotions, so can we. If we feel our emotions are not out of control, by learning from Krishna, we can equip ourselves to face emotional turbulences. We need to bring rational thought in control of irrational emotion and need to let divine emotion enliven rational thought. Divine emotion is invoked by chanting the holy name of god like the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, for chanting reawakens our divine love for god. With the anchors of philosophy and meditation, we can sail through the stormy ocean of irrational emotions to the shores of eternal devotion.

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