

THE SPIRITUAL SCIENTIST

An Ezine for Those Who Think

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Guided Missiles

&

Misguided Men

September 11, 2001.

One of the darkest days in the history of the modern world. A group of misguided men guided a missile in the form of an airplane into one of the world's tallest buildings and brought it crashing down, causing the death of thousands of innocent people.

Martin Luther King, Jr, stated in his *From Strength to Love*, "The means by which we live have outdistanced the ends for which we live. Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men." Little did he know how prophetic his words would be in a literal sense several decades later.



A Comfortable State of Misery

In the modern times, we have achieved considerable ability to manipulate our external environment with the help of science and technology. Technological gadgets have helped make life comfortable and easy to a large extent, relieving us of many of the discomforts and inconveniences associated with a traditional way of life. The ads go so far as to claim that the world is now at your fingertips.

Yet have all these comforts made us more peaceful or happy?

- People of the past hardly ever complained of stress or depression, but these have become almost synonymous with a modern way of life. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared that mental disease will be the greatest health challenge of this century.
- With the rapid rise in promiscuity in modern times, the family, the basis of a steady and sustainable society, is breaking apart. A survey showed that two out of three marriages in the US end in divorce within three years of marriage. Marital rupture is traumatic for the spouses and devastating for their children. Statistics show that divorced people as well as children of divorced parents are more likely to succumb to

addictions than their married counterparts. Even if they don't succumb to addictions, the emotional trauma and the resulting mental stress that comes from ruptured relationships and broken hearts leave lifelong scars.

- Worldwide addictions are on the rise. WHO statistics indicate that tobacco alone kills nearly 10,000 people worldwide every day. There are around 1.1 billion smokers in the world (about one-third of the global population aged 15 and over). By 2020 it is predicted that tobacco use will cause over 12% of all deaths globally. This is more deaths worldwide than HIV, tuberculosis, maternal mortality, motor vehicle accidents, suicide and homicide combined. And smoking is a relatively mild form of addiction as compared to alcoholism and drug abuse.



And with the children of today's disturbed, ruptured and addicted generation being the leaders of tomorrow, the future of the world is quite frightening to even contemplate upon. The school massacres in Littleton and other places in US give us a glimpse of things to come.

So despite the bluff and the bravado of the comfortable life, most modern people find themselves in mental distress. They thus live in a comfortable state of misery. And the tragic irony is that most of this misery is self-inflicted. For example, no one needs to smoke to survive but still people smoke and bring disease and suffering upon themselves.

Thus modern society may have succeeded in guiding missiles but has failed utterly in guiding human beings. What is the cause of this unfortunate, indeed tragic, state of affairs - guided missiles and misguided men?

Spiritual Technology

Just as material technology enables us to control the world around us, spiritual technology helps us to control the world within us. The Vedic society was oriented to make people expert in spiritual technology so that they could protect themselves from lust, greed and anger. This was done through a harmonious combination of education, culture and devotion.

Education: In Vedic society, education did not mean just learning how to earn a living. It focused on acquiring spiritual knowledge, which gave the student a clear vision to see the deadly nature of the internal enemies. Vedic education also provided the student with the know how and the training to fight and conquer these enemies when they attacked. Overcoming lust, anger and greed did not however mean being condemned to live a dry life without any desires or ambitions. Vedic education enabled the student to utilize his desires and talents positively in pursuance of his enlightened self-interest so as to achieve lasting happiness.

Culture: Vedic culture was based on the implicit understanding that human happiness came not by external aggrandizement meant to satisfy one's lust, anger and greed, but by inner realization that gradually freed one from these internal enemies. Life in Vedic times was therefore not a rat race for wealth, but was arranged to enable one to utilize one's inherent material abilities in satisfying and productive service to society. Simultaneously the social environment provided abundant facilities and encouragement for one to develop oneself spiritually and thus find happiness within oneself.



Devotion: In Vedic society devotion to God was inculcated right from birth. Due to their firm devotion the people experienced sublime non-material satisfaction and that gave them inner spiritual strength. Being content within, they could resist the otherwise irresistible pushings of lust, greed and anger. (Modern studies in psychology have also started discovering the power of faith as the best insurance from self-destructive behavioral patterns) In the Vedic times, genuine devotion to God did much more than protect people from addictions; it made them honest, kind, considerate, loving and selfless and thus facilitated a peaceful and harmonious society.

Let us compare Vedic society with modern society.

Education: Modern education focuses mainly on the development of intellect (the ability to recollect and manipulate information) rather than the development of intelligence (the ability to discriminate between the right and the wrong, the beneficial and the harmful). It does not emphasize inculcating ethical, moral or spiritual values. Those educated in this way are able to control the world around them with material technology but fail miserably in controlling the world within them as they have no knowledge of spiritual technology. The result is tragic - a world with guided missiles and misguided men.

Culture: The heroes of modern society are the icons of lust - filmstars with sex appeal, anger - action heroes and greed - successful businessmen. The modern media with its undisguised promotion of a consumer culture and the entire society with its emphasis on material success fuels almost unlimitedly greed within people. Thus modern culture far from discouraging lust, greed and anger encourages them as the trappings of success.

Devotion: In the modern times, even those who profess to be believers do so mostly out of social custom or fear of the unknown. They have very little scientific understanding of God and are therefore not serious about their devotion. So when lust, greed and anger attack them, they can muster very little inner strength to fight with them and consequently they become easily victimized. This is all the more true for those who are openly atheistic and materialistic.

Modern society thus gives a free play to its worst enemies - lust, greed and anger. Is it then a surprise that the modern world is in a state of chaos?

Healing a Wounded World



An important principle in medicine is to treat the cause of the disease rather than its symptoms. The world is today plagued by a large variety of problems - poverty, starvation, violence, disease and pollution, to name a few. Social welfare workers are trying to deal with these problems - on a material level. These efforts are only a part of the solution; they fail to address the underlying cause. The problems confronting the world are symptoms of the real disease afflicting the social body - victimization by lust, greed and

anger. Intelligent attempts to heal the world need to therefore tackle this root cause of the disease. As long as an individual is not freed from slavery to the internal enemies, he cannot be peaceful or happy. And as long as the individual is not peaceful and happy, there is no question of a peaceful or happy world.

ISKCON is among the very few organizations in the world arming people with spiritual technology to enable them to fight with and conquer the internal enemies. ISKCON provides education, culture and devotion, which is based on the Vedic texts and is suitably adapted to the modern times. This empowers ISKCON devotees to protect themselves from the insidious influences of lust, greed and anger and live a pure life filled with peace and joy.

Consider for example the four principal activities of an individual misguided by lust, anger and greed - intoxication, gambling, illicit sex and meat eating. Intelligent people can easily recognize the harmful nature of these activities and can also understand that a world free from these activities would be a much better place. Most people unfortunately indulge in these activities either voluntarily with a bestial relish or involuntarily, being forced by lust, greed and anger. Serious ISKCON devotees however refrain from these activities as a basic regulative principle for spiritual advancement. That they are able to do so in a world that is slave to these activities is itself eloquent testimony of the protection through wisdom that ISKCON is offering.

ISKCON is of course working at a humanitarian level to mitigate suffering and distress; it runs the world's largest vegetarian food relief program - Food for Life. But the highest service that ISKCON offers to the people of the world is its tireless attempts to provide them protection from their internal enemies and to enable them to find peace and happiness within themselves.

