

POWER OF HABITS & ROLE OF CHARACTER IN A LEADER'S LIFE

Qualification to accept Leadership position on behalf of Guru parampara

The brāhmaṇas are the religious preceptors for all other castes, and the sannyāsīs are the spiritual masters for all the castes and orders of society. So also are the king and the public leaders who are responsible for the material welfare of all people. The progressive religionists and those who are responsible human beings or those who do not want to spoil their valuable human lives should refrain from all the principles of irreligiosity, especially illicit connection with women.

If a brāhmaṇa is not truthful, all his claims as a brāhmaṇa at once become null and void. If a sannyāsī is illicitly connected with women, all his claims as a sannyāsī at once become false. Similarly, if the king and the public leader are unnecessarily proud or habituated to drinking and smoking, certainly they become disqualified to discharge public welfare activities.

Truthfulness is the basic principle for all religions. The four leaders of the human society, namely the sannyāsīs, the brāhmaṇa, the king and the public leader, must be tested crucially by their character and qualification. Before one can be accepted as a spiritual or material master of society, he must be tested by the above-mentioned criteria of character. Such public leaders may be less qualified in academic qualifications, but it is necessary primarily that they be free from the contamination of the four disqualifications, namely gambling, drinking, prostitution and animal slaughter. [SB 1.17.42purport]

Personality Ethic VS Character Ethic

In the past 200 years of writing about success, much of the success literature of the past 50 years is superficial. It is filled with social image consciousness, techniques and quick fixes.

In stark contrast, almost all the literature in the first 150 years or so focused on what could be called the Character Ethic as the foundation of success—things like integrity, humility, Courage, Justice, Patience, Industry, Simplicity, Modesty, etc. The Character Ethic taught that there are basic principles of effective living, and that people can only experience true success and enduring happiness as they learn and integrate these principles into their basic character.

But shortly after World war I the basic view of success shifted from the Character Ethic to the Personality Ethic. Success became more a function of personality, of public image, of attitudes and behaviours, skills and techniques, that lubricate the processes of human interaction. This Personality Ethic essentially took two paths-- Human and Public relations techniques (PRT), and the other was Positive Mental Attitude (PMA).

The Personality Ethic approach is clearly manipulative, even deceptive, encouraging people to use techniques to get other people to like them, or to fake interest in the hobbies of others to get out of them what they wanted etc. Some of this literature acknowledge character as an ingredient of success, but tend to compartmentalize it rather than recognize it as foundational and catalytic. Reference to the Character Ethic became mostly lip service; the basic thrust was quick-fix influence techniques, power strategies, communication skills, and positive attitudes.

The Principle-centered Paradigm

The Character Ethic is based on the fundamental idea that there are PRINCIPLES that govern human effectiveness (like unchangeable law of gravitational pull), which form the real map – natural laws in the human dimension that are just as real, just as unchanging and as law of gravity in the physical dimension.

Principles are like lighthouses; they are like the northpole, which is not chosen by popular vote or by group discussion. They are natural laws of God, as given in the sacred Scriptures, that cannot be broken. We cannot break God's laws; we can only break ourselves against the law.

These principles are a part of most every major enduring religion, social philosophies and ethical systems. They are self-evident and can easily be validated by any individual. They seem to exist in all human beings, regardless of social conditioning.

Srila Prabhupada, the first exponent of Krishna consciousness movement in the Western world, who could answer questions of anyone from any religion in a logical scientific and reasonable manner, writes, "The principles of religion do not stand on some dogmas or man-made formulas, but they stand on four primary regulative observances, namely austerity, cleanliness, mercy and truthfulness. The mass of people must be taught to practice these principles from childhood....By pride, either artificial or real, the resultant action of austerity is spoiled; by too much affection for female association, cleanliness is spoiled; by too much addiction to intoxication, mercy is spoiled; and by too much lying propaganda, truthfulness is spoiled. The revival of bhāgavata-dharma can save human civilization from falling prey to evils of all description." [SB 1.17.25]

Need of a Leader with Character who gives Care and concern instead of Manipulation and Exploitation

- When people feel cared for and empowered, they tend to be much more effective in all areas of life. Without the loving protection of a Leader, systems and individuals may be stocked with resources, but the return will be mediocre or minimal.
- When an environment is filled with love, compassion and selflessness and the people's value system is based on hard work, dignity and integrity, productivity will be high. These qualities are contagious. When other citizens enter such an environment, they will automatically be positively influenced.
- The converse is also true : when an environment is based on manipulation and exploitation newcomers will not only be influenced by the atmosphere but will tend to enhance it with their own negative energies.

Protection and Insecurity

In the past as well as in the present, leaders who cannot protect their dependents will rarely have strong or serious followers. Many modern day corporations create a insecure atmosphere. They use employees for production and do not care for them in any human way. Employees often find themselves suddenly without jobs as their companies downsize or reconstruct. Of course, when employees are not cared for, they lose their sense of loyalty. They understand that they are not protected because their leaders do not value them. Keeping talent loyal to a corporation has become one of the greatest difficulties faced by many top companies in the Western world. It is a serious issue among the Fortune 500 companies in the US. Now CEOs are trying to find ways to train and keep the talent that has been recruited by their companies. They are trying to find out ways to protect their employees' interests, self esteem, creativity and the development of trust in the corporation's vision.

Character building

Compassion and Humility are the mothers of virtue, but Character, Competence and Courage are the fathers of virtue, particularly character. With Character one can buy what money cannot buy.

You can buy bed but not sleep ; You can buy a book but not brains
You can buy clothes but not beauty; You can buy medicine but not good health
You can buy people but not friends; You can buy reputation but not character.

No one should accept the position of authority over others unless his character is spotless.
We can develop a strong Character by studying others who have outstanding character.
Character is the ability to rise above the self-interest for the sake of others.
Character is who you are, when others are not watching.
Character is shaped by how we choose our everyday thoughts, words and actions.

Thoughts → words → actions → habits → character → culture

Many people have poor character because they lack courage. Another obstacle in building character is when we become caught up in temporary pleasure. We must become the change that we expect in others. We should be asking ourselves constantly, “What do I need to change about myself to help others change?”

We cannot be good LEADERS if we are not good FOLLOWERS
We cannot BUILD TEAMS unless we are ourselves STRONG TEAM PLAYERS
We cannot TEACH our kids SELF DISCIPLINE unless we are SELF DISCIPLINED
We cannot ENJOY A HAPPY MARRIAGE if we are not GOOD PARTNERS
We cannot have a STRONG NETWORK OF FRIENDS unless we are GOOD FRINDS OURSELVES.
We cannot develop a CLOSE COMMUNITY unless GOOD NEIGHBOURS.

Character has got to do with who we are as human beings and what shapes us. Character evolves as we grow and develop. Bhishma to Yudhishtir : ultimately, all things will be left behind. It is only DHARMA and our Character that follow us out of this life.

Power of Habits

Illicit sex and desire to impress others : By indulging in illicit sex, one loses.....

Shaucham (Cleanliness),
Dhyana (Concentration),
Dhrti (Determination)
Naishtiki shanti (Everlasting Peace),
Vichara shakti (power of enquiry),
Dharana shakti (power to grasp),
Viveka shakti (discrimination power),

and many other similar subtle qualities. Indulgence in internet pornography has degraded the minds of youth, weakened their character and made them essence-less in life.

Intoxication and False Pride: False pride arises due to high academic performance, wealthy background and pampering received in life, born in Brahman or aristocratic family, handsome body or hairstyle or holding a position and controlling others (naradeva abhimaanam). Such false pride, maddens mind, leads to slavery to senses, robs out good intelligence and it is simply an illusory thrill increasing our perils.

Gambling, Speculating and unnecessary Debating : leads to day dreaming; one forgets present opportunities; greedy for more and more; one may beg, borrow, steal or even murder. Also when one speculates without following Guru Parampara, one comes out with concoctions which one fanatically imposes on others; when others question his stand, he may consider that rebellion and become atrocious to impose self-made policies and bring trouble to oneself and others. Another type of speculation is diluting the KC philosophy due to sentimental and misplaced attachments. Eg Bharat Maharaja. One should be affectionate, but not attached; one should be detached, but not hard-hearted or indifferent.

Meat eating and Violence towards other creatures : leads to self-righteousness, “I am right; you are wrong” type of consciousness, making one an individual player and not a team player; by treating other living beings harshly and violently, one is left with a hard heart where bhakti can find no place. On the other hand by dealing with other living beings compassionately as a representative of Supreme Lord and Acaryas, one can bring the living beings to the right path of KC.

How to give up our Bad Habits and bring about a change in us?

Life is made of Choices; Choices decide our future; our Habits activate our Choices.

On Saying NO to bad habits :

Starve bad habits Eg avoid bad company in any shape or form that is unfavorable for Character, By Introspection and Self-correction, Supplement good habits that are favorable for Character. Stay away from tempting situations and association.

SP on how to cultivate good habits : *If one associates with bhaktas, then one's svabhāva, or nature, will change. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant to give people good association so that this change may take place, and we actually see that by this method people all over the world are gradually becoming devotees.*

As for saṁskāra, or reformation, this is possible by good association, for by good association one develops good habits, and habit becomes second nature. Therefore, bhakta-sane vāsa: let people have the chance to live with bhaktas. Then their habits will change. In the human form of life one has this chance, but as Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura sings, hari hari viphale janama goṅāinu: if one fails to take advantage of this opportunity, one's human life is wasted. We are therefore trying to save human society from degradation and actually elevate people to the higher nature.

As for kāma and karma—desires and activities—if one engages in devotional service, one develops a different nature than if one engages in activities of sense gratification, and of course the result is also different. According to the association of different natures, one receives a particular type of body. Kāraṇam guṇa-saṅgo 'sya sad-asad-yoni janmasu (Bg. 13.22). Therefore we should always seek good association, the association of devotees. Then our life will be successful. A man is known by his company.

How to Change your Attitude? By taking Responsibility : I am responsible for the habits I've picked up, for the careless indulgence, vfor picking up wrong company

How to Change your Thinking? By observing logically in every situation & being POSITIVE :

This habit is nectar in the beginning but poison at the end. How did I get into this habit? What can I do to defuse

this? I refuse to let this hook me! Now I will give up bad company...I will replace it with good company.
Be POSITIVE : I'll not let my mind overtake me to watch porn; NEGATIVE is : oh, I've no power to control my mind; it just drags me to bad habit of watching porn as I've been always used to doing it for so many years!

How to Change your Behavior? By True Assessment, Determination and Discipline :

Assessing my current situation by learning to discriminate between good, better, best, bad, worse from Sastras;
Cultivate determination by chanting Hare Krishna Japa attentively and follow a disciplined program to implement the good habit in life.

Role of Character in a Leader's Life

1) Character is formed by attaining Realisations

Character is formed by attaining Realizations and Realisation comes only by mercy of Krishna. To get actual taste one must have attitude of serving pure souls:

*śṛṅvataḥ śraddhayā nityam grṇataś ca sva-ceṣṭitam
kālena nātidīrghena bhagavān viśate hṛdi*

Persons who hear Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam regularly and are always taking the matter very seriously will have the Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifested in their hearts within a short time. [SB 2.8.4]

- Krishna sees our **eagerness to serve** & then He gives realization
- Gives easily only to one who is Serious, Sincere and without any ulterior motives
- PDS is **rare**, Krishna doesn't give it easily; it is given by Krishna when He is pleased with us
- PDS can't be gotten; it is a **gift attained by sincerity**

2) Character & Law of karma

- Law of karma – low doesn't mean weather I Believe or not/understand or not
- Weather chief marshal or a baby if puts hand in fire – same for all
- Low species do not create karma; only after 8.4 million species, we get human birth → free will to act
- free will has responsibility of our every action & words
- State law - If you have stolen money, you can escape by some hook or crook
But you can't get out of law of karma – demigods & Paramatma within are watching our actions
- Mayadevi is expansion of Krishna – she is very powerful
- Both spiritual & material advancement depends upon what Krishna sees not what people sees
- No one is exception : Law of karma is for everyone who is conditioned in this material world
- **How we respond** to different situations is very important
Anger – perpetuates to cycle of karma; Compassion – surrender unto Krishna
- We are responsible for our karmic reaction
- Those who surrenders unto Krishna – supreme liberations awaits him

3) Philosophy without Character (Greatest demons also speaks philosophy)

- Eg Hiranyakashapu (Satya yuga), Ravana (Treta yuga), Kamsa (Dvapara yuga), Hypocrisy (Kali yuga)
- Intellectually they have philosophy but no character (eg) Kamsa killing small babies – material life blinds us

- Once a lady(PhD) asked Prabhupad about effect of Indian sadhus on western culture
SP: what culture you have, Bible says don't kill cows & you are killing cows
Lady: let us discuss your philosophy
SP: philosophy without character has no meaning
- To misuse philosophy with bad character is destructive not only to our own spiritual advancement but also a challenge to faith of society

When will Philosophy lead to formation of Character?

- SP: don't read for intelligence, read for spiritual nourishment
- SP: wherever there is pure DS, there that place is non different than Goloka
- Temples – devotees should be pure vaishnavas not kamsa with tilak
- To understand philosophy means to transform our life with words, actions & mind
- How much knowledge you have, how many slokas you know is not important
- important is our conscious, our love for Krishna, how we apply what we have heard and understood
- We are distributing books – to transform world first we should have perfect vaishnava societies
- Krishna is accessible through his words & lives of His perfect devotees
- EX Prahlad M, Vrajvasis, Rantidev, Pandavas, Ambarish M, Dhruva M
- Even in tough testing situations they maintained their character & integrity of perfect vaishnavas
- In every situation they turned to Krishna.

4) What creates flaw in our Character

Hypocrisy

- Philosophy – if it is understood & propagated by people of no character then it is dangerous
- What keeps people away from religion is hypocrisy Eg Indra stealing horse, Ravana stealing Sita
- So many people in west grows up with their religion & hypocrisy – they saw Prabhupad with humility, character & philosophy, they rejected their religion & surrendered to SP

Improper Dealings

- Someone to Sp: how you identify your disciples?
SP: they are perfect ladies & gentlemen

False Pride

- Knowledge can make one proud; We should be servant of servant of servant
- Ex Gopiparandhana Prabhu – had lot of knowledge but he was always humble, servant of servant, never finding any fault in others, non envious
- Rupa & Sanatan were in assembly of greatest scholar but they were most humble
- If we are proud, our renunciation misses the purpose
- Krishna sees how much humble we are to serve him & to chant his holynome
- Arjuna, Parikshit M, Rupa & Sanatan were most humble one
- While preaching and distributing books one should have attitude of serving – I am servant not I am better than others – I want purify myself – I am instrument in SP's mission
- Recognize our position & source of our power otherwise punat mustik bhava
- Prabhupad considered himself a puppet

Justifying mistakes with Philosophy

- Vaishnava: who has no false ego & envy
- We may take philosophy of CC, SB as weapon to serve our ego, anger, greed
- False ego – one do not want to admit his faults; one uses philosophy to justify our mistakes
- Eg Kamsa speaking perfect philosophy to justify his mistakes of killing babies
- Lord Chaitanya – If someone is chanting holynome with envy in heart same mahamantra will destroy him

- We should chant & hear attentively with proper attitude
- SP say we should be sincere – we have to become humble to become sincere

- SP: from mode of goodness one can transfer to transcendental level
- only mode of goodness is not enough because there are even atheists who follows 4 regulative principles
- Our sadhana is airplane to vaikuntha – from goodness to pure goodness
- When we are stable on 4 regulative principles, morning program & chanting of holynome – then we can travel to spiritual world

How to get good character?

- By associating with devotees
- Attending regular SB class & morning program
- Association – Remembering our philosophy & living by philosophy
 - To go deeper in our lives/values/surrender
 - Helping each other to realize our weakness
 - To help each other in remembering Krishna
 - To make each other surrender
 - To absorb in Krishna & philosophy
 - To help to overcome challenges & obstacles
 - To get out of false ego
 - To enlighten each other

- *Realization will come when we live by what we hear*
- False ego – root cause of all our diseases
- Vaikuntha atmosphere – every devotee is better than me – I am servant
