

Virtues that Constitute Spiritual Wisdom for Professional Excellence

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By spiritual wisdom is generally meant the knowledge of the Soul. This knowledge is quite different from all other knowledge we are familiar with. **It is a knowledge, which has the effect of bringing about a unique expansion, elevation and subtlety in one's mind and vision.** The whole effect of spiritual wisdom is in the mind, intelligence and ego, the spiritual constituents of man. In fact, the mind, intelligence and ego alone are the spiritual constituents we can think of. All the rest would mean merely the material body and its parts.

Thus, for one who pursues spiritual wisdom, it will verily mean a wholesome change in his thoughts, outlooks and emotions displayed by the mind. Equally so, it would mean a fundamental change in the evaluation and perception of his intelligence. In other words, **spiritual pursuit will result in incorporation of a variety of virtues or excellences**, each of which will adorn the seeker's mind and intelligence and will be reflected in his behaviour and character.

This inner adornment is vibrant and functional, not an inactive stationary enrichment. Spiritual qualities, in other words, always enrich the mind and intelligence, to express in thoughts, feelings and emotions on the one hand and visions and perceptions on the other. Herein lies the distinction of spiritual wisdom.

The entire process of spiritual **sadhana** is meant to imbue the mind and intelligence with creative, sustaining, assimilative and expressional excellences, by dint of which one will be able to think, articulate and act more effectively. The benefits will be both proto-active (vibrant within) and inter-active.

Krishna proceeds to enumerate spiritual virtues or excellences one after another:

अमानित्वमदम्भित्वमहिंसाक्षान्तिरार्जवम् ।
आचार्योपासनं शौचं स्थैर्यमात्मविनिग्रहः ॥
(Bhagavad Gita 13.7)

Sublimation of pride, non-ostentation, non-hurting, tolerance or forgiveness, straight-forwardness, adoring and serving the Teacher, cleanliness of body and mind, stability and steadfastness, self-control –

All these are notes that should adorn the mind and intelligence, to be functionally excellent and effective. Else, life will prove victimizing to the seeker.

Amanitvam: Of thousands of people only a rare one thinks of seeking the supreme Reality. So, to be a seeker is itself a rare and great fortune, a blessing. Naturally such a one will merit respect and adoration, at least among the discreet. But should the earnest seeker be focused on such attention and responses? Or, his concern should be to preserve and strengthen his seeking and pursue it for fulfillment?

Respectability is a very important value – a standard for human conduct. In fact, this should be the watchword for any good man, not to speak of a seeker of Truth. Like truthfulness, loyalty and integrity, to be respectable in one's ways is the most desired pursuit. A truthful person will be respected. Naturally, to be truthful becomes a desired virtue. But to claim that "I am truthful, I am a rare seeker and therefore I should be valued and respected", will mean nurturing māna (pride).

Respect is something that others feel towards a person. Let them feel it in their own manner and degree. **The seeker should not expect any respect** from anyone, or persuade anyone about this. Instead, all his attention and watchfulness should be applied to pursue steadfastly the path of seeking virtues. He must find satisfaction and fulfillment in doing so. If others show respect and they find satisfaction in doing so, well, it is their wont. But the seeker's objective should be in adhering to his sadhana. The moment the mind starts looking for respect or recognition, it gets vitiated, constricted.

Adambhitvam (non-ostentation): By advocating adambhitvam, Krishna provides a clear safeguard and correction for the seekers. As the mind is driven to deeper levels of refinement and sublimation, it becomes more and more spiritually oriented and sublime. This instantly makes it

peaceful, cheerful, harmonious and creative. In fact, every virtue, quality or standard Krishna lists here goes to refine the mind and its working.

Dambhah implies a hidden note of the mind that yearns to show off in one way or another, one's spiritual or religious status. To be spiritual or religious is one thing, but to display or show off spirituality or religiosity in talks and acts, is dambha (ostentation).

Krishna thus goes into the very core of the inner personality and tries to remove from it adverse and unwelcome notes that hinder spiritual unfoldment and excellence. Like a clean plane mirror, the seeker's mind should be pure and blemish-free. The emphasis must be in cultivating true spiritual virtues and deriving the benefits of their enrichment. Svasamvedyamnatupara-pratyaksham – to be felt by oneself and not directly perceivable by others – is the watchword for spiritual sadhana.

Ahimsa is always listed as a top-ranking virtue. Himsa means violence. In its wider sense it means to hurt, harm or hinder others. In its worst, it aims to destroy another's life, i.e., intending to kill. Himsa can be by thoughts, words and deeds.

To nurture malicious thoughts about another is anti-spiritual. Such thoughts, though aimed at others, are self-destructing.

Spiritual life or sadhana should first mean purification and broadening of one's mind, so as to reflect the feelings and needs of others, nay, of the society at large.

Kshantih means forbearance, which implies not only tolerance, but accommodation as well. The society will always be an assorted group. The seeker, or even the Knower, has to live and move in such a complex society where he will be exposed to all kinds of treatment from various quarters. The ignorant, the deriding, the jealous, the negligent, the aggressive – all will come out with their own characteristic traits, whims and flairs. The spiritual seeker will have to give a place in his heart to every one. He has to appreciate each, remembering that everything is truly a creation of Nature. Large-heartedness, fellow-feeling, vast tolerance, forbearance and forgiveness alone will help him attain such a benevolent vision. At no time should the jnana-sadhaka feel deficient in tolerating and assimilating the situation he is in.

The next in Krishna's list is **arjava** (straight-forwardness). This one trait will look after everything else. Being influenced by false values, wrongly assessing deviousness or deception as virtues, there is a tendency on the part of elders to instill in the young and growing minds, knowingly or unknowingly, a measure of stealth or hiding tendency. They even feel that such a trait is necessary, as a note of decency or decorum. As a result, this undesirable note gets strengthened with every event or interaction in life. Thus, people find themselves inextricably enmeshed in hypocrisy, stealth and even deceit. In reality, the root cause for all this is lack of arjava.

Straight-forwardness (arjava) implies transparency and openness. It means being integrated or wholesome in one's thoughts, words and deeds. It is a great spiritual note.

Acaryopasanam: In spiritual life and seeking, the place and role of the Acarya, the Preceptor or Teacher, is paramount. Knowledge of the Self is the Knowledge of the one Subject that encompasses the whole universe. Except this Subject Self, everything we perceive or interact with is object. Thus, the Subject Self is entirely different from the myriad objects we see and think of.

To understand and realize the Subject may seem a paradox. How can one compare the Subject with any object or objectivity, with which alone the seeker is familiar? The Self, thus not being comprehensible by comparison to anything we know of, continues to be elusive. This fact makes it necessary for the seeker to look intensely for guidance and instruction from a realized Teacher who alone can take him to the threshold of the Self.

The Teacher virtually represents for him the embodiment of the Self and Self-wisdom. To be in close proximity of the Teacher and interact with him fondly and freely means a great deal for the seeker. **Guru's** looks, thoughts, words and vision reveal to him the Subject Self, and what its realization means.

Guru provides the necessary confidence, clarity and resoluteness for the seeker to proceed with his seeking and reach the goal safely. See how prudently Krishna evaluated and treated Arjuna's extreme grief and discomfiture. The tuition had its startling effect. Arjuna's grieving mind gave place to the enquiring intelligence. The tormented warrior suddenly turned out to be a determined seeker. What would have been Arjuna's plight if Krishna was not there to treat his tormented mind with the supreme wisdom of the Subject?

It is true, in the association of the Knower, even the worst affliction would turn into a felicity, a misfortune will be revealed as a timely fortune, and death would become festivity. The whole world of objects will be transformed when viewed from the standpoint of the Subject Self. It will shine as the transcendental spiritual splendour.

Another point of very great value for the seeker is the personality sublimation he gets by **servicing the Teacher fondly with humility and readiness.** The subtle deep adverse traits of the mind will be recognized and pointed out by the Teacher, and the seeker can sublimate them very effectively. This sadhana called ego-sublimation or self-effacement, in the presence of the Guru, is very rare indeed. Krishna says that to live in close proximity of the Teacher, serving him in all ways, is an important part of sadhana. It makes purification of the mind and enlightenment far more facile. Acarya-upasana is unparalleled by all means.

Saucam, cleanliness, is a very important part of spiritual life. Generally there is a feeling that ascetics, being given to wandering and indefinite life, are not clean and tidy, because

asceticism results from withdrawal from external dependance and a sense of self-denial. It also arises from the earnestness of spiritual quest and the understanding of the greatness of Self-knowledge. However, to deny the external comforts of life does not mean lack of cleanliness or order. Even while lying on the floor, wearing rags, carrying a water-pot and a stick, the spiritual aspirants can still be quite clean and hygienic in their ways. This fact should be known, appreciated and emulated.

Cleanliness is all-fold. **Like the body, the mind and intelligence also have to be clean.** This means purity. To be pure, innocent and honest is inevitable for spiritual life. While this goes hand in hand with spiritual life, it also renders the inner personality golden, sweet and endearing. The power that cleanliness and purity can bestow is inestimable.

Sthairyam is a very significant quality. It denotes stability. The seeker has to be poised, confident and stable. What is there to worry or be fascinated about? The mind has got ample capacity to assimilate and be enriched by any kind of inputs from the world – be they from people, places or events. Why should the seeker be unduly ruffled at any time?

It is the fervour of sthairyam that leads to the thought of ascetic life, resulting in a wandering mendicant life, unmindful of one's bodily and other needs. **Spirituality means Himalayan stability and poise**, confidence and unsinkability.

The last quality listed in this verse is **atma-vinigraha**. It signifies self-control. Senses, mind, intelligence and ego – none of them should prove to be a hindrance, trouble or torment. Sensory turbulence is very dangerous, even destructive. Mental turmoil is equally devastating. Intellectual disharmony can bring colossal unrest and decline to any extent. How many find it hard to tame their ego!

What is the reason? It is all lack of self-control and discipline. Yatamatva (self-discipline) is something Krishna has spoken about often. The whole spirituality rests upon self-discipline. The real sadhana consists in this self-disciplining, self-sublimating effort.

To walk the path of Self-knowledge or spiritual life is to be a repository of discipline, moderation, balance, harmony and integration. All these have to be understood and striven for by the seeker.

Understand that here Krishna, a very powerful Ruler, is the Teacher. Arjuna, another powerful Ruler, is the listener. Both have high social responsibility and status in life. So, discussions on Self-knowledge cannot be dismissed as unrelated triviality by anybody in any field of life. It is the most refined and effective wisdom, rendering human life beautiful, benevolent and creative.

May you all grow spiritually and be wholesome personalities, capable of excelling in every professional and social situation you find yourself.

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