

# **Svadharm**

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**Ana:** I wonder, how can your *sattvic* mind enjoy India so much while there is so much ugliness, poverty, suffering and injustice everywhere we look?

**Arlindo:** Hi, Ana. We all are, to different degrees, aware of the injustices happening all over the world. We also experience them sometimes, according to our own *karmas* in the field of life ruled by *Isvara's* precise system. This is all part of *Isvara's* play: good and evil – *dharma* and *adharma*. This is a lawful and intelligently designed universe in which all objects are subjected to the its rules. Pleasure and pain are the inevitable opposites of life. And as you probably heard Ramji say, you cannot win or lose in here, because life is a zero-sum game.

Yes, India is beautiful, but it is also ugly, the same way in the developed West where most people often have access to the commodities and comforts of life but are often afflicted with too much *rajas*. This apparent dualistic universe is a play in constant modification due to the five elements governed by *rajas* and *tamas* energies operating 24/7. Cultivating *sattva* is the key to developing the vision which will allow us to see through the pairs of opposites that *maya* presents to our senses.

And you say that James once said, “I want to make India great again – spiritually, socially and economically.” If James said so, he probably meant to say that by helping to bring the understanding of the scriptures to Indian society he is indirectly helping people to cancel their self-ignorance, and therefore he would be helping them to live a more just, *dharmic*, comfortable and happy lives. Spreading self-knowledge is the most efficient way to re-establish *dharma*. It is also the greatest expression of love one can offer to others – because the root cause of *adharmic* thoughts, actions and all suffering we find in the world are the wrong notions human *jivas* have about the nature of the self.

I am going to quote the *Gita* in order to make another important point:

“It is better to do a second-rate job on your own *dharma* than a first-rate job on someone else’s *dharma*.”

“Death following your own *dharma* is preferable to life following the *dharma* of others.”

“Following the *dharma* of others is fraught with danger.”

It means that pleasure and pain have their purpose in life. Whenever we see someone suffering we can be assured that suffering is serving its purpose in the process of evolution of that soul. Nobody is a victim here. Everyone is only reaping the fruits of their own actions. There is no room for mistakes in *Isvara's karmic-psychological* system.

To quote the *Gita* again:

“The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead.”

It means that the wise understand the big picture, and therefore they are not concerned with life or death – with pleasure or pain – they take all results as *prasad* from *Isvara*. The wise have given up the burden of *karma* by understanding that, in truth, all *karma* belongs to *Isvara* and that all beings are going to follow their relative nature.

And this brings us to another important issue, which is not simple or easy to be understood: *svadharma*.

*Svadharma* is our most essential secondary nature as a *jiva*. If one's apparent nature is that of a general leading an army, his duty is to fight – especially in an unfair and uninvited war. But if one's apparent nature is that of “doing good” to others, or that of a pacifist, his/her duty is to act in harmony with its cause: to re-establish justice in whatever way possible.

But if instead one's *svadharma* is self-knowledge and *moksa* (which is the highest *dharma* there is), then going around trying to save the world from suffering and injustice is but a waste of one's precious life. As Krishna says: “Doing the *dharma* of others is fraught with danger.”