

Sustaining Excellence through Spirituality¹

Swami Brahmaviharidas

It is important for all of us to understand that excellence can be attained, but it cannot be sustained without spirituality. Excellence is both attained and sustained through inner values. Whether you believe it or not, it is only spirituality that can breathe in purity and integrity into excellence. It is only spirituality that can bring the necessary stability and strength to excellence. It is so easy to be happy for a day; try being happy for life. It is so easy to smile for a minute; try laughing for a day. It is so difficult. Some of the easiest things that you know become the most difficult things to do in life, if you don't have a proper perspective.

We must remember that without ethics and values, excellence could make the best of us to the worst of us. Without ethics the best of us are the worst of us. The extreme example of this is the 9/11 terrorist attack. Effectively analyzed, it would be excellence in execution; everything synchronized, timed, planned! Imagine, without an army, without a weapon, without any expense, using American planes, planned on American soil, burning American fuel and killing American citizens. They were able to achieve what two world wars could not do to America. So technically, if you analyze it just from statistics and systems point of view, it was perhaps the greatest act of effective execution.

But without ethics, what is supposed to be the best act of execution and excellence has turned out to be a horror of humanity. Excellence alone could create disaster. I want to take you back in history. Even education without ethics is disastrous. During World War II the concentration camps that systematically exterminated

over 6 million Jews were built by professional engineers and skilled scientists, run by trained doctors and nurses. My request to all the teachers is to help the students to become more human. Their efforts should never produce skilled psychopaths, or learned monsters. Reading, writing and arithmetic (management) is important, only if they help us become more human.

Excellence should have the basis of spirituality, humanity and our values. Only then you can get more in life than you have ever dreamt of. My Guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj often says, "Education without ethics Destroys and education with ethics Protects". When you go out as best managers, there would be hundreds of people working under you. There would be factories and corporations searching for you to pick you up. You do not have to beg with your qualifications for a job. But don't be just satisfied with a job. Don't be satisfied with success. Don't be satisfied that you are good. Being good alone is not enough; be good for something or someone.

So the time has come to re-look at the world we see, reassess the measurement of success, achievement or excellence. And when we change the perspective, the same things become different.

The issue here is that of changing the perspective of life. It is not of a big or small man; it is about knowing the joy, contentment and satisfaction. If we have all our definitions clearly defined and aligned in our mind, then all our education and success will not hamper us. It will

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always turn out to make us much better human beings. If we look at life casually, sometimes the real things that give us joy or happiness are free of charge. With all our wealth, we can hire the best room in the best hotel, but the sleep we get is free of charge. Similarly, money can buy good food but not digestion; money can buy people, but not friends; we may wriggle our way into becoming the director of some big company, but the respect we earn is free of charge.

Due to your position, people will listen to you for what you say, but they won't respect you. Respect is not what you can get; it is something that you can give. All this can only be understood because it is part of inner world. We must accept that this inner world exists. But who cares? "I get my money, I get my respect. What is the point of improving my inner side? We don't get marks. And nobody realises if I am unhappy." Please don't fool yourselves. Everybody realises if you are unhappy. You can't hide it, just the way you can't hide an itch. Similarly you won't be able to hide unhappiness; you can only try to mask it.

Understanding the Inner Self

It is important to understand that when we are able to understand our inner side, we will be able to make ourselves much better, brighter and stronger to face the world. So first accept that there is an inner world. I would request the faculties to master the students not only in business jargons, but take them beyond it as well. Things that you cannot see are sometimes more important. You can see the building, but not the foundation. Similarly we can see the entire creation, but not the creator. Even science is based on concepts, which are invisible. Who has seen zero degree Kelvin? Even Lord Kelvin has not seen it. Even Faraday has not seen electricity.

What is mathematics? It is numbers. But what are numbers? Have you seen them? Have you seen zero, one or two? Because of these invisible concepts, the buildings stand and the bridges remain stable. Science is based on faith. Faith in these invisible concepts has brought change to the things that we see. Have faith. So your trust in these invisible concepts brings change in the outer world. Have faith in the world of values, ethics, emotions and spirituality. These will shape the life that you are going to live in the future. The inner world is more important than your outer world. Those people who have attained success and have ignored this inner world have ultimately suffered. You may succeed in the way the world sees, but you may not enjoy your success.

The inner values are not hidden. You can try and mask everything, but if you were a cheat, it would show up in the future. Get focus of small things and get rid of them. Ivor Kruger finished his graduation three years in advance. In a true sense, he was a leader in engineering. He started his own construction company. With the Matchstick Company, his wealth grew to 32 million dollars. He alone bailed out Germany and France. He gave them loans of 250 million dollars. He ended up shooting himself in France, the country that called him 'The Savior of the Nation'. He was always involved in frauds and embezzlement. His childhood friends today tell the world that he was a sneak and a cheat as a student. On his first trip to the USA, he hired the entire telegraphic system. Reporters reported that he was very busy. It brought him more publicity than anything else he could have done. Manipulative ideas ultimately spelt doom for him. He committed suicide.

Managers have the biggest risk. Engineers work through technology. Managers work through marketing and through people. They shape the perception and have access to the minds of

people. You need more ethics in your field than in any other field. Don't do reverse engineering. Be honest. It would help you to get greater share of happiness. If you don't have ethics, it is soon going to catch you up; you can't escape. And you will start suffering for what has happened before. So is the case in the spiritual field. If I do sadhana without being honest, then I will suffer myself.

A Shiv Bhakta did excellent tapas and pleased Lord Shiva. He came and granted the devotee three wishes, on the condition that whatever he would ask, his neighbour would get double. So he asked God to take away one eye, one limb and one leg. And both eyes, both limbs, both legs of his neighbour were also taken away. So his dishonesty made him lose much. As you go ahead in life, the life created around you will start dictating you, and you will become helpless.

Knowing yourself is as good as knowing the entire world. Until you master yourself, you won't be able to master your emotions and the world around you. Swami Chinmayanand said, "Put yourself in order, take care of your inner world, and create a micro world around you". You can decide it and nobody else can. Bhagwan Swaminarayan said, "He who sees the world around and not himself is a fool". Those who have mastered the inner world have attained more in life than anybody else. Our concept of excellence would be to become the world CEO and own a global corporation. Here was Lord Buddha, who gave up everything in the world and still influences the world today. He has become much bigger than all the emperors put together. Be somewhere and always feel that whatever you are doing is the best. Nothing can stop you. It is you who stop yourself.

When Buddha was asked to give one word that could save mankind, he said "Compassion", Confucius said "Cooperation", Bhagwan

Swaminarayan said "Bhakti - Love", Lord Rama replied "Righteousness", Krishna said "Faith". Love is one word, but can be expressed in many ways. So when love can be defined this way, why not spirituality is so many things? Focusing on your inner self changes your perspective.

In his book 'Ignited Minds', Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam has dedicated eight pages to the meeting that he had with Pramukh Swami Maharaj who talked about spirituality as the foundation of real progress. Once we were walking with Dr. Kalam, when we asked, "How is it that you are always energetic at this age"? He replied "I have learnt it from your Guru, Pramukh Swami Maharaj. I always ask myself what I can give? What can I give to make others happy?" Be a go-giver, not a go-getter. The media asked him about his opinions on the Nuclear Treaty. He said, "I am offering you a free partnership for life, in rebuilding the nation. Bring such media news that causes smiles on the face of the people. So that is the partnership I ask from you all. Thank You". He genuinely believes in the spirit of giving.

Always be happy to give. If you cannot give, at least forgive. We keep our hatred so strongly in our hearts that the guy whom we hate does not suffer; rather it is us who suffer most. A Jew got a cancerous lesion on his heart and the doctors could not believe it. He told that he was in the concentration camp, and he could not forgive Hitler. Later he died. So what Hitler could not do to him, he did to himself. He had survived the death camps but could not outlive his hatred. Forgiving is your own personal gymnasium. The idea of justice is an intellectual system that comes on to us. There are things more important than justice. Peace and happiness are more important than revenge and justice.

Sometimes in life, the solution that you analyse is totally different. Sometimes fairness is not the solution. It is not important for your own peace. When Akshardham was attacked, it was filled with blood. The terrorists were hardly 20 years of age. Swamiji said our only response should be to forgive. Two terrorists do not have the power to affect our culture of peace over 10,000 years old. Do not react for revenge. So the role of religion is to forgive. Uphold the roles that you play in your life. If you can help and if you don't, it is a sin.

The last idea I want to pass is that there is an inner world that controls your outer world. Be a strong person with full faith. Even Gandhiji said, "I would have been a lunatic long time ago, without my prayers". Believing in God ultimately balances things out in some way. You may not understand it, but accept it. Newton once created a model of our solar system, which moved in perfect motion and proportion. All the students were flabbergasted and asked him who created it. Newton said 'Nobody'. The students didn't believe him. He then explained that for this purely mechanical model if you

insist that there has to be a creator which is me, then why can't you accept that there is a creator behind this real universe that moves.

Lastly, there is a simple advice. The world is waiting for you. Go out and become the best professionals, but also the finest of human beings. Do not compete with your environment; complete it. Do not fly too high, that you lose focus on the family that raised you. Do not become too busy for the friends who made you. Do not become too wise for your teachers who taught you. Do not become too proud for helping people around you. Finally, do not become too big to forget God who protects you. For, it is this inner world of values, ethics and spirituality that will truly shape, support and sustain you.

Author's Profile

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