



Action Without Desire Of Outcomes, by Vinoba Bhave

To protect self-interest individuals exploit others, nations go to war, and businesses undercut each other, because people in those situations see a conflict between self-interest and the interest of others. But in reality there is no such conflict. ^ Everyone's interests are intertwined. Peace, prosperity and happiness are in the interest of all. ^ These are the universal gains, which are accomplished when personal gains are forgotten. When personal gains are pursued, universal gains are lost. If universal gains are lost where are the personal gains?^

When performed with love, action becomes its own reward. When action is performed without ulterior motives, when it is spontaneous, joyful and pure, our attention is present in the here and the now. There is no cunning, there is no calculation, there is no speculation, there is no planning, there is no past, there is no future, there is no worry, there is no burden. Our action flows without stress, without strain or pressure.

For example, if one cooks for the joy of cooking, and with full attention and presence of mind, then good cooking will be a natural outcome. Garden for the joy of gardening, without impatience and without anxiety, then fruit, flowers and vegetables will flow from the garden of their own accord. Those who are devoted to cooking or gardening will not feel satisfied if we say to them that they need not cook or garden, we will provide ready-made meals and pre-packed vegetables. A true cook or gardener will not feel happy, because in that way they have been deprived of their creativity and joyful work.^

A gardener, while gardening with love, identifies with the vegetable kingdom. Through gardening he or she attains oneness with the whole universe. That way gardening becomes a noble act, a spiritual act, a prayer and a play -- all life is a play; a divine drama. A child plays for the joy of playing; we act for the joy of acting. We should perform our actions as naturally as a bird sings. We need not expect recognition for acting according to our own nature. Gardening comes to a gardener as naturally as eating, drinking or sleeping. There is nothing special about it. There is no vanity in it.

["If there is nothing to achieve," I asked, "no goal, no out-come, then why would one act at all?"]

We cannot give up action. Action is in front of us and behind us. Even sitting still is action, and if we sit still for too long we will find even that uncomfortable. So we need not try to give up action. All we

can give up is the desire for an outcome.Â

Through work we express ourselves. Work manifests our imagination. Work is love made visible. Through work we establish relationships with people and material things. Thus work in itself is beautiful. It is the desire to impress others, desire for recognition, for fame and fortune, which makes work ugly. There is no need to desire any gains. All gains are by-products. The main product of work is work itself.

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