

LESSON 13

DHARMA - THREE PRINCIPLES

Dharma can be describes in various ways but here we will describe in three principles and if they are followed in life our life will be fulfilled. These three principles are:

- 1) **Non-Violence (Ahimsa)**
- 2) **Restraint (Sanyam)**
- 3) **Penance (Tapa)**

1) **Non-Violence (Ahimsa)**

Ahimsa is formed of two words: 1) A, and 2) Hinsa. Here the meaning of “A” is no, and “hinsa” mans to hurt or harm someone. Therefore, ahimsa means not to hurt or harm anyone (living being). We all know that we do not like to get hurt. So in similar way we must accept that no one else likes to get hurt too. Then, why should we hurt anyone? Just as our life is important to us so it is to other living creatures including even small insects and plants. Therefore, we do not have right to take a life or harm a life of anyone for any reason. Our religion teaches us that if we will take life of someone our life will be taken sometime too. So how can we do something which will hurt us as well as someone else too? Hinsa brings bad karmas and we will have to suffer their consequences.

Let us read about the event in the life of Emperor Sikandar. He wanted to conquer India so he attacked on India. He won some part of North India with very cruel war in which thousands of people were killed. After that he was moving south. On the way one day his soldiers came across a Jain monk who sitting in meditation on the side of the road. His soldiers shouted at him to get out of the sight. He neither got up nor did he reply to them. Soldiers got down from horses and went to him and asked him, do you know whom he is coming? Monk replied, “I have to know only myself (soul) and that is what I am doing it.” Soldiers told him they were the people of Emperor Sikandar. They further told him, if he did not leave the place Emperor Sikandar would be very upset and might even kill him. Monk said, “I am not afraid of dying.” While this conversation was going on Sikandar came and saw that his soldiers were not moving and were crowded in one place. He asked, what is going on? His soldiers informed him about this monk who distracted them and when asked to leave he is not leaving. Sikandar got upset and asked monk, why do not you leave? Monk replied, come here and I will answer. Sikandar was surprised by this because his presence was terrifying everybody and no one has ever disobeyed him. So with surprise he got down came to the monk and told him, do you know what happens to those who do not listen him? Monk said, His soldiers have told me that I could be killed. Monk continued, “Sikandar, think, think what do you really gain by killing people? Land! Wealth! Fame! But look at how many families have become orphans! Listen at their cry. When death comes nothing goes with us then what is use of causing all these violence? What did you really get? Look at yourself that you have to be protected by so many? On the other side look at me! I do not have to worry about anything. I am not afraid of death because what you could kill is my body but you can never kill my soul.” Sikandar had never heard about soul before. He curiously asked what this soul is. Monk said, in us there is something different than body and that is the most

precious thing. It is our soul. All these relatives, wealth, soldiers, land, kingdom and fame are temporary. You can not take any of those things with you but our soul is permanent. If you want to make someone rich make your soul richer. Richness of soul will bring us peace and that richness only will go with us when we die. By killing or torturing people our soul gets poor. Our passions are the cause of our cruelty. Remember, you will never be able to satisfy your passions and you will pass your life running after something which will be never ending and none of those things will go with you when you die. Then why should we do this? What is use of this? Sikandar was puzzled and was lost in thought. Monk continued, "It is still not late. Stop killing and cruelty from now on. Be kind to people and be helpful to them." Sikandar woke up from his lost mind and bowed down to monk. He realized how wrong he had done. He decided right then that he would not take sword in hand any more. He accepted the principle of Ahimsa in his life. He left from there to go back home.

So, if Emperor Sikandar can adopt the principle of Ahimsa in his life then how about us?

We all can also follow the principle of Ahimsa.

The principle of Ahimsa would also provide us peace and we will not be afraid of anything in this world.

2) Restraint (Sanyam)

Sanyam means to observe self-control, self-discipline or restraint in the life. We must not behave whatever way we want because our behavior could be wrong and hurt someone else as well as us too. We should principles of self-control in our life. Self-control could be in various forms, like how we interact with others, how and what we eat, how and what we see, etc. Before we do something we must analyze that is it right to do? Is it not going to hurt anyone's feelings or harm them in any way? If we realize that our action was going to hurt someone, we will control such action and avoid harm to others as well as to our soul. This means we will not jump on doing things but will think about them first. In short by self-control not only we create harmony around us but also with our soul. By observing sanyam we stop accumulating bad karmas and get rid of older karmas.

So far we talked about external self-control but we should not overlook self-control of our passions. The pure soul is free from passions, while our current soul is full of passions. So whenever passions arise in us we should not blindly follow them because they would never be satisfied but would cause more passions. Rather we should remind ourselves that to be in passion is not to be with true nature of the soul. Tell ourselves that we rather be with our true nature of the soul. When that thought will come in us we will give up our passions. Developing this control may take time but if we persist then in due time we will see change in us and things we do. This self-control is nothing but sanyam.

3) Tapa

Tapa means to give up something voluntarily. Most commonly tapa is associated with food but it should not be restricted to food only. Upwas, Ayambil, Ekasana, etc., are some tapa where we give up food completely, give up food with spices or we eat limited way. Sometime even though we can eat more but decide that this is enough and stop right there then that is also considered tapa. These are some of external tapa, which can be observed by others. Then there are other kinds of tapa which may not be observed by others because they are done silently by us. They are also called internal tapa. Some of the internal tapa are repenting for harmful activities done by self (Prayaschit), adopting humbleness by giving up egoistic nature (Vinay), Self inspection of the soul to see how impure it still is (Svadhya), and performing Meditation (Dhyan), etc. . The internal tapa also can be extended to simple restraint from anger, ego, deception or greed in our daily life. By adopting tapa we are getting control on our physical as well as mental faculties. They help us remove undesirable habits, passions and by doing so our behavior will become purer and will ultimately lead us to spiritual uplift.