

LESSON 23

WHO IS RIGHT?

How many times have we come across situations where we argue among ourselves and hurt others? Have you ever thought that someone else or other person can be or may be is right? If we try to understand someone else's viewpoint then many problems we face in our life might be resolved.

HERE IS A LITTLE STORY

One evening Anil asked his sister, Rita, to get him a coke at dinner. Rita only gave him half a glass as a joke. Anil was very angry and threw a fit. He shouted that the glass was half empty. The word empty annoyed Rita, and she screamed back, "No glass is half full." Soon they started fighting. Their mother heard this and asked, "What is going on?" Anil and Rita told her why they were screaming. Their mother said, "Both of you are right." They were surprised. She explained, "To Anil the glass is half empty because he wants more. For Rita the glass is half full, as she has filled only half glass." Hearing this, both of them were very happy. They now realized that how things may look different or wrong in some respect but for other person it could be right.

There is another popular story to explain this.

Once upon a time, there lived six blind men in a village. One day the villagers told them, "Hey, there is an elephant in the village today."

They had no idea what an elephant is. They decided, "Even though we would not be able to see it, let us go and feel it anyway." All of them went where the elephant was. Every one of them touched the elephant.

"Hey, the elephant is a pillar," said the first man who touched his leg.

"Oh no! it is like a rope," said the second man who touched the tail.

"Oh, no! It is like a thick branch of a tree," said the third man who touched the trunk of the elephant.

"It is like a big hand fan" said the fourth man who touched the ear of the elephant.

"It is like a huge wall," said the fifth man who touched the belly of the elephant.

"It is like a solid pipe," Said the sixth man who touched the tusk of the elephant.

They began to argue about the elephant and every one of them insisted that he was right. It looked like they were getting agitated. A wise man was passing by and he saw this. He stopped and asked them, "What is the matter?" They said, "We cannot agree to what the elephant is like." Each one of them told what he thought the elephant was like. The wise man calmly explained to them, "All of you are right. The reason every one of you is

telling it differently because each one of you touched the different part of the elephant. So, actually the elephant has all those features what you all said."

"Oh!" everyone said. There was no more fight. They felt happy that they were all right.

The moral of the story is that there may be some truth to what someone says. Sometimes we can see that truth and sometimes not because they may have different perspective which we may not realize or agree too. So, rather than arguing like the blind men, we should say, "Maybe you have your reasons." This way we don't get in arguments.

Accepting the fact that other people could have different opinions depending upon their thinking or convictions make us more tolerant for others and bridges harmony among people who think differently. Therefore, when we can not agree we should agree to disagree and avoid any quarrels, animosity and hatred. Tirthankara Mahavira said that every thing could be seen from seven different aspects and there is truth in every aspect. This thinking of Tirthankara Mahavira's is called Anekantvad or multiplicity of viewpoints. When we accept this style of thinking, we become tolerant of other views and our life is much happier. This lets different people with different beliefs live in harmony together and with respect for one other.

So the next time when your friend or someone says something that you do not agree with then be a little more tolerant. Instead of telling him, "You do not know anything," give him a chance to tell his side of the story. You may be surprised to find that he might be right too!

Questions:

- 1) Why did Anil and Rita fight?
- 2) What did Anil and Rita's mother tell them?
- 3) What does Anekantvad mean?
- 4) How does Anekantvad help us?