

## **Benevolence – The Ultimate Social Act**

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In the Bhagavad-Gita, before the battle of kurukshetra, arjuna asks Krishna to drive their chariot into the open space between two armies. Arjuna becomes appalled at the idea of who he must fight and refuses to do battle. Krishna's reply to arjuna inhabits the rest of the text. It deals with the whole nature of action, meaning, and man's purpose on earth. In the end, Krishna changes arjuna's mind.

In the purely physical sphere of action, arjuna is, indeed, no longer a free agent. The act of war is upon him, it has evolved out of his previous actions. At any given moment in time; we are what we are; and we have to accept the consequences of being ourselves. Only through this acceptance can we begin to evolve further. We may select the battleground. We can not avoid the battle.

Arjuna is bound to act, but he is still free to make his choice between two different ways of performing the action. In general, man almost always acts out of fear or desire. That is to say, he is attached to a certain result and afraid he will not attain it. Action binds us to the world of appearances; to the veiled illusions of life. But there is a way to act that is freed from fear and desire. Man can choose to offer his actions as a sacrament of devotion towards his life purpose, his given nature. Then all work becomes equally vital and important. The result loses all significance and value. When we act in this manner, it leads us to the knowledge of what is behind the action itself, behind all life and towards a greater integration. The need for action will eventually fall away from us as we realize our true nature, which is divine.

It follows then that any action done in the spirit of non-attachment creates a process of spiritual growth. There will be acts that are absolutely wrong but "evil" does not exist. We are called upon, like arjuna, to do our best so that the better of us can be required. Take care, do not judge or measure the acts of another for we cannot know with certainty what right action might be for them. This can only pull us into fear and desire yet again.

There is an underlying solidarity between the warrior and the pacifist if each one follows, without compromise, the path upon which he finds himself. We can ultimately only help others to live their unique life purpose by doing what we ourselves believe to be right. This is the one supremely social act. – swami prabhavananda song of god

Social action is uniquely human and our only vehicle for influencing our world and the world of spirit. Be cautious not to become tangled in a web of attachment, focused on results

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whether they seem righteous or mundane. Brought to the brink of war, the warrior pacifist cannot bear to witness; cannot bear to act. We must stand naked as we are and choose life. We must stand open, available and ready to act; not for anyone's sake; but simply because this is what we were made for.

True benevolence emerges with the choice to devote our actions to what is right. There is a level of kindness and grace that informs our capacity to decide. When we loosen the bonds of attachment, we free the creative forces that express reality. The original divine purpose of each and every being can be included in the outcome when the past; which manifests as fear and desire; no longer inhibits the process of growth that is the very nature of life itself.

If we were to assess the condition of the world today, it would seem that our competition for resources and our attachment to results has sent us spinning into chaos, and decline. global environmental crisis generate more and more destruction. The drama of human tragedy is every where. There are places where the need for relief is too great to appease the suffering or repair the damage.

It would be natural to give up, to resign ourselves to desolation when faced by the magnitude of the task at hand. It is precisely in these moments when ultimate social acts have the greatest impact. The healer stands ready to act; without regard for outcome; but simply as a vehicle for benevolence to exist. We may not have the resources to feed and shelter the destitute, or repair our fragile ecosystems. But right action inspires the change we wish to see.

It would be an interesting social experiment to see what creative forces we could unleash by committing to our own right action moment by moment. Do not stop to weigh and measure, to strategize what you do. Simply ask yourself, "what is the right thing to do right now?" and do not compromise. Teach those around you to do the same. And then pay attention to what happens. We can not solve the problems that create desperation but we can heal the turbulence that perpetuates it, one act at a time.