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Wisdom to Attain Happiness in Vedic Culture Perspective

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Abstract---This paper discusses about wisdom to attain happiness. Happiness is experienced when the soul attained peace, while peace can be attained when people have wisdom. Wisdom is often understood by different perspectives. Therefore, in this paper, it is explained from the perspective of the Vedic culture perspective, namely of the scripture Srimad-Bhagavatam (Vedanta Sutra), which is the highest source of knowledge. This paper can be used as a reference especially for students and teachers who want to go deeper into character education, since self-realization – which is the foundation of character education – is also a part of wisdom. There are two topics discussed in this paper, namely (a) wisdom influenced by the three modes of material nature and (b) the real wisdom to attain real happiness. The real wisdom referred to here is the wisdom that begins from self-realization. Theoretically, this paper will be able to contribute to the world of education especially in the field of character education, so that it can contribute to the successfulness of the national education. On the other hand, this paper is also useful for solving practical problems that occur in the world of education in particular, and also in broader life in general.

Keywords---education, happiness, self-realization, Vedic culture, wisdom.

Introduction

The Age of Kali causes bad influences to the progress of human society because the Age of Kali offers opulence and enjoyment that causes people to forget their

real goal of life and even forget their real identity. This is a very unfortunate situation since by forgetting their real identity people will act by their own whims, disregard rules and regulations as human being, and they will disobey the principles of *dharma* which they supposed to follow.

When people disobey the principles of *dharma* as prescribed in the *Vedas*, they will meet a chaotic life, disputes, and then ended up in quarrel. In this world, people are not meant to quarrel and fight. They have to educate themselves in order to realize the meaning of life and realize their goal of life. Teachings about self-realization and knowledge about the goal of life are available in the Vedic scriptures. If people do not understand their real identity, they will act only for gratifying their senses. They consider sense of gratification as the real goal of life then they enter more and more into the darkness of material consciousness. Material consciousness is controlled by the three modes of material nature or *tri guna*, which consists of *sattvam* (goodness), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (ignorance), which influence every soul acting in material consciousness. These modes of nature create attachment in material life. These attachments are very strong and they put the soul under the control of those material modes in this life and then provide other material bodies in the next life.

Material consciousness put the soul in material activities that causes the wandering of the soul from one body to another and from one planet to other planet. The influence of those modes of material nature also causes the soul to experience the real problem of life which put them in sufferings that consists of *janma* (birth), *mrtyu* (death), *jara* (old age) and *vyadi* (disease). When the soul is still in material consciousness, they will always be put in those real problem of life, since as long as the soul get a material body they will experience birth, death, old age and disease (Prabhupada,1970).

If the soul is always in material consciousness which caused by the false ego, and falsely identify themselves, they will never attain the consciousness that can enable them to attain an understanding of wisdom. Wisdom can be understood when the soul begins to be situated in self-realization. In order to be situated in self-realization, they have to understand that they are not this material body and that they are spirit soul. The soul is part and parcel of the Supreme God and the constitutional position of the soul is an eternal servant of God. When they understand their real identity and their constitutional position, then they have attained self-realization (Yulianti, 2019).

Constitutionally, the soul naturally wants to serve and always desire to be happy, because the soul is part and parcel of the Supreme God and so the soul have the same qualities of God although different in quantities. Qualities of the soul are: *sat* (eternal), *cit* (full of knowledge or ocean of knowledge) and *ananda* (full of bliss or ocean of bliss). The soul will experience bliss or happiness when they serve God, since God Himself is the source of happiness. The souls who have attained self-realization always act under the principles of *dharma*, thus they direct their realization to wisdom. *Dharma* referred here is *dharma* that comes directly from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and by following those principles, one will direct their goal of life toward attaining God. The principles of *Dharma* are: *satya* (truthfulness), *daya* (compassion or non-violence), *tapa* (austerity) and *saucam*

(purity). When one acts on the basis of the principles of *dharma*, his actions will be freed from sinful activities, thus divine qualities will manifest on him and he will attain the real wisdom and understanding.

In divine consciousness, the soul uses their mind and intelligence for devotional activities to God, thus they are freed from unwanted things caused by the illusion of the modes of the material nature. Material illusion offers enjoyment for the soul by forgetting his relationship with God, since illusion will never be able to occur if the soul is established in his relationship with God. Illusion is like darkness and God is like the sun. When the sun rises, all darkness will disappear, therefore if the soul has attained divine consciousness, the material consciousness will disappear, since darkness will never be able to manifest together with the appearance of the sun.

The bad influences of Kali Yuga causes everyone to act without following the principles of *dharma*, thus all their actions direct them to degradation. In this age of Kali, the natural resources like water, soil, air, sky, mind, intelligence and ego are polluted, thus everyone is drown in the ocean of sins. Generally, people have very little desire to attain spiritual consciousness; instead, they tend to chase material opulence which makes them more and more attached to material enjoyment which is the root cause of sinful life. Drown in the ocean of sins, they become further and further away from good and divine qualities. Thus, it will be difficult for them to understand the real wisdom. There are two topics discussed in this paper, namely (a) wisdom influenced by the three modes of material nature and (b) the real wisdom to attain real happiness. The real wisdom referred to here is the wisdom that begins from self-realization, thus self-realization – which is the foundation of character education – is also a part of wisdom (Peter, 2015; Suastra, 2017).

Discussion

Wisdom Influenced by the Three Modes of Material Nature

Wisdom has a broad and varieties of meaning and also many opinions which arise from different realizations. Different realizations are arising from the association with the modes of material nature: *sattvam* (the mode of goodness), *rajas* (the mode of passion) and *tamas* (the mode of ignorance). Those three modes of material nature influence people's actions, words and thoughts in their activities in this world. Those three modes of material nature is one of the primary energy of God. It is described in Vedic scriptures that God has three primary energies: internal energy (*antaranga sakti*), marginal energy (*thatasta sakti*) and external energy (*bahiranga sakti*). *Bahiranga sakti* or the external energy of God consists of the three modes of nature, *sattvam*, *rajas* and *tamas* (Prabhupāda, 1999).

All of the creation of material nature is under the control of the modes of material nature, including the description about the meaning of wisdom put forward by different experts that wisdom is a skill to solve the basic problems related to behavior and the meaning of life and wisdom is a combination of intelligence and character. Intelligence referred to here is the knowledge about cognitive,

motivational and emotional aspects in behavior and the meaning of life (Korthagen et al., 2006; Robinson & Sexton, 1994).

Wisdom is a balance between individual person understanding about themselves (intra-personal), about other person (inter-personal) and about the different aspects of their life (extra-personal). The core element of wisdom is practical intelligence directed toward behavior and helping the individual person to attain their personal objectives. This practical intelligence can be attained only through practical experiences of the individual person, not from knowledge received from books or from hearing other person experiences (Steinberg & Jordan, 2005).



Figure 1. Souls bewildered by the three modes of material nature (*sattvam*, *rajas*, *tamas*) under the influence of false ego think that they are the doer of every actions, which actually controlled by the three modes of material nature (Prabhupāda, 1999)

Besides, people often labeled certain person as wise when that person is beneficial for them, having the qualities of sincere, generous, humble, faithful, positive thinking, cheerful, responsible, emphatic (put himself in other's position, always put forward best solution for both sides when there is conflict, not forcing their opinions and will, always trying to understand others), calm, without anxiety, without fear, not bearing malice, solving problems one step at a time, not interfering other's business, forgetting past, good listener, grateful, and other good qualities. When those good qualities are still under the control of the three

modes of material nature, even in the mode of *sattvam*, this wisdom will not lead to real happiness.

Wisdom is very rarely seen nowadays. Wise person in society are very rare since so many criteria have to be fulfilled for someone to become a wise person. However, even if someone has all of the above criteria, the wisdom he has will not lead him to real happiness, since happiness under the control of the three modes of material nature is always influenced by material duality. As explained in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*:

Actually, pure happiness cannot be had within this material world. If we wish to enjoy something, we must suffer for something else. On the whole, suffering is the nature of this material world, and whatever enjoyment we are trying to achieve is simply illusion (Prabhupada,1970).

Material world is created from the external energy of God which consists of duality. It means that it is not possible to attain happiness without experiencing suffering. Duality means happiness and suffering, pleasure and lamentation, etc., which always present in life under the material consciousness (Yulianti, 2020).

The Real Wisdom to Attain the Real Happiness

Definition of wisdom according to the perspective of *Vedanta Sutra* is pointing toward self-realization, understanding about our real identity, and also understanding about our real constitutional position. Self-realization is one of the real goals of human life, aside from the other goal of life which is to reestablishes our relationship with God. Self-realization is a condition in which one understands his real identity that he is not this material body but spirit soul, a part and parcel of the Super Soul, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and his constitutional position (the soul) is the eternal servant of God. Thus, everyone should direct their activities toward devotional service to God. At that point only, one is said to be a real wise person, and then he will be able to attain the complete happiness.

The individual soul who do not develop their relationship with the Supreme God is in a weak position in front of the laws of the material nature, thus they can easily be put under the material illusion and gradually forgetting their relationship with God and then begin to act to run after enjoyment of the material senses. More and more attached to material sense enjoyment, the individual soul wander from one body to another to search after that enjoyment, thus they become more and more drown in the ocean of sin and put into the darkness of life in this material world. Caused by ignorance, the individual soul do not know that this material world is a place of suffering, and there is danger at every step. Only because of ignorance does the less intelligence try to adjust themselves by doing fruitive activities, thinking that kind of activities will bring them happiness. They do not know that there is no material body in this universe that is free from suffering. The sufferings of life, *janma* (birth), *mṛtyu* (death), *jara* (old age) and *vyadi* (disease) are experienced everywhere in this material world. But those who understand their real constitutional position as eternal servant of God will

understand the position of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (Laceulle & Baars, 2014; Kantor & Ludiková, 2014).

The foundation of wisdom is called the principles of *dharma*, or the pillars of *dharma*, since without having these principles of *dharma* one cannot attain wisdom. Those principles of *dharma* are as follow.

- *Satya* (truthfulness).
Truthfulness is very important in building good character in which divine qualities will develop as the foundation to lead one to become a wise person.
- *Daya* (compassion).
Compassion is one of the divine qualities that can lead one to an understanding of the real wisdom, since compassion or non-violence toward other living being is a symptom of a good hearted person. Wisdom is not only in relationship between human but also to have compassion toward all living being and perform loving service to God.
- *Tapa* (austerity).
Austerity means actions in accordance with the direction of the holy scriptures. Austerity will enable someone to avoid bad qualities and then he can develop divine qualities as desired by God, since austerity means someone acts in accordance with the desire of God.
- *Saucam* (purity).
Purity is a condition in which one is free from the attachments of material desire which is the root cause of material existence. Material desires causes sufferings and leads one further away from the divine qualities which are the foundation toward wisdom.

These principles of *dharma* will lead someone to the devotional service to God, thus one's mind becomes fixed, and cannot be distracted by the flowery language of the scriptures and fixed in the trance of self-realization, thus can be said that he has attained the spiritual consciousness. A person who has attained spiritual consciousness is free from fear, attains purification of life, development of spiritual knowledge, charity, self-control, the performance of sacrifice. Besides, they also study the *Vedas*, perform austerity and simplicity, free from violent behavior, truthful, free from anger, perform renunciation, peaceful, free from fault finding, having compassion toward every living being, free from greed, gentle, meek and determined, strong, having forgiveness and perseverance, clean, free from envy and never demand to be respected. This is the character of a person in spiritual consciousness (Prabhupada, 1975).

A person who is not lamenting in the midst of three kinds of sufferings, not overly happy in the midst of joy, and free from the attachment of fear and anger, is called a soul fixed in his mind. A person in full consciousness of God is peaceful since he/she accepts sufferings as the mercy of God. If a person understands that God is the only personality who enjoys all the good result of sacrifices and penances, that God is the proprietor of all the universal manifestation and that God is the true friend of all the living being, only at that time they attain the real wisdom. God consciousness is a peaceful state, self-manifested, and can only be attained in relationship with God (Travis & Shear, 2010; Tamang, 2016).

When the senses are not engaged in the service of God, even only one sense engages in sense of gratification, it is enough to distract someone from the path of spiritual progress. A person whose senses are controlled from the attachment to the objects of the senses certainly has a fixed consciousness. Sense of gratification can only be controlled by being in God Consciousness, or by engaging all the senses in the loving devotional service to God. As enemies will be defeated by more powerful forces, similarly, the senses can be controlled not by human effort, but by engaging the senses in the devotional service of God.



Figure 2. The individual soul is the passenger on the chariot; intelligence is the charioteer, the mind is the driving instrument, and the senses are the horses (Prabhupada, 1975)

As long as one has a material body, there will always be desire for sense of gratification. A person in God consciousness never feels lack of anything, because God fulfills everything he needs. Therefore, a person in God consciousness is like an ocean which always full in itself. Desires may come to him as the rivers goes to the ocean, but he is fixed in his activities, not agitated at the least by the desire for sense of gratification. That is the proof of a person who is conscious of God and has no desire anymore for material sense of gratification, although he still has desires. Since he is satisfied in his devotional service to God, he is fixed, like the ocean, thus he enjoys completely the result of such wisdom (Oishi & Gilbert, 2016; Mogilner & Norton, 2016).

Those who work with the desire to enjoy the result of the work, those who try to attain liberation, and those who look after the mystic power, all of them are less happy since their desires are not fulfilled. But, those in God consciousness are blissful in the service of God, and he has no desire to be fulfilled. Actually, the liberation from the so called material attachment is not wanted by those in God consciousness. A person in God consciousness is without material desire, thus they become wise and can attain the real happiness.

Only those who have abandoned all the desires for sense of gratification, free from material desires, abandoned all desire for proprietorship and free from false ego can attain the real wisdom. Free from desire means not desiring something for the gratification of the senses. In other words, the desire to attain God consciousness means to be free from material desire. Those who are fixed in that stage of perfection know that God is the proprietor of everything, so everything has to be

used to satisfy God. Those who are free from material desire certainly know that everything is the property of God. The understanding about God consciousness is the basic principles of real wisdom to attain the complete happiness (Bangen et al., 2013; Palich & Bagby, 1995).

Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, some conclusions can be presented as follows: Wisdom under the influence of the three modes of material nature (*sattvam*, *rajas*, and *tamas*) will never lead to real happiness, because that kind of wisdom is not the real wisdom thus it can only lead to false happiness (illusion), as described in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* that actually the real happiness cannot be attained in this material world. In this world, if we want to enjoy something, we have to suffer for something else. On the whole, suffering is the nature of this material world, and whatever enjoyment we are trying to achieve is simply illusion

The definition of real wisdom to attain the real happiness is directed toward self-realization, an understanding about our real identity, and also an understanding about the constitutional position of the soul. Self-realization is one of the real goal of human life, aside from other goal of life which is to reestablish our relationship with God. Self-realization is a condition in which one understands his real identity that he is not this material body but spirit soul, a part and parcel of the Super Soul, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and his constitutional position (the soul) is eternal servant of God.

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