



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

1.30 DHARMIC EXCELLENCE

A commitment to dharmic excellence leads us to do our work to the best of our ability in accord with our Divine nature, and prompts us to reflect on what we are doing and why.

A friend recently wrote to us with a challenge that we, and many others we know, have also faced in our work careers. For her, work is her worship – she dedicates her work to God and puts forth her very best effort, and she is quite talented in doing so. The impact of her work affects the quality of life for many people. Yet she faces within her organisation many obstacles to having her own work, and the work of her entire team, be the best it can be.

She told us that when she has raised the issue among her colleagues, “No one seems terribly bothered.” They tell her, “Don’t upset the apple cart. You’ll just be the odd person. You’re doing well, so be satisfied with that.” However, she remains dissatisfied and knows they can all do much better, especially when it comes to genuinely serving the people. She asked us, “How do I make others understand?”

It is in the face of struggles such as these that we like to bring forth a perspective we call “dharmic excellence”. Excellence literally means “to rise” – rising to the level of the eminently good, being “first class” – a concept recognisable in cultures throughout the world. And “dharma” is a Sanskrit word that, in its most expanded sense, means being true to one’s essential Divine nature, while acting in the spirit of harmony and unity with people and nature, knowing that all things and events are part of an indivisible whole.

When we look at dharma from an individual level, it reminds us that everything has its own expression of its Divine origin and nature, and has its own purpose, its own role to play, and its own responsibility in harmony with all.

Our friend reflects the quest that we find throughout humanity for doing excellent work motivated by “dharma”. And her difficulty with her situation is a reflection of her feeling that she is not able to exercise her role in alignment with her true Divine nature, and that she and her team are not actively treating others in the spirit of harmony and unity. Thus, she feels out of alignment with dharma, and with the ability to rise to the level of “dharmic excellence”.

A spiritual commitment to dharmic excellence leads us to do our best no matter what the outcome may be. Victor Kanu, a former ambassador to the U.K. from Sierra Leone in Africa who has co-founded a school based on human values in Zambia for village boys and girls, told us an inspiring story along these lines:

A big inspiration for us has been the story of the “Scorpion and the Sage”: A sage was seated on the bank of a small river when he noticed a scorpion being carried away by the current. Four times he jumped into the water to save it from drowning. The scorpion stung the sage each time he tried to save it. Observing all this was another man seated not far away from the sage. He asked him, “Why do you want to save the scorpion who keeps stinging you? You should have let it drown.” The sage replied, “It is the nature of a scorpion to sting. It is my nature to love and help those who sting and hate me.”

A commitment to dharmic excellence also leads us to reflect on what we’re doing and why. As a starting point, ask yourself:

What does it mean to me to...

- *Work in alignment with my Divine nature?*
- *Stay in tune with my spiritual roots (with what gives me a true perspective on the meaning of life) and work from that basis?*
- *Distinguish between my ego (which can at times seem noble but still comes from ego...) and my Divine assignment in life (my dharma)?*
- *Do my best and offer the fruits to God, and be unattached to the results?*
- *Be firm, confident and respectful in following my inner guidance –not allowing personal desires, and the emotions related to them, rule the day?*

As an overall question, ask yourself: *What does it mean to me to follow dharma and strive for excellence in my work?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: The Basics*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of “spirituality and human values for leadership and work”, visit our website: www.globaldharma.org