

Start with Meditation

The fourth concept of Sanatan Dharma is Asteya.

Asteya means you should take only what you deserve and consider everyone else equally deserving. So do not take anything extra – all that you accumulate extra is theft. You steal from the universe and you deprive other people. So do not keep anything more than what should be equally available to everyone else.

The grosser form of greed and its dangers is told in this story from the Shankaracharya:

HH: *Once four businessmen set out on the business trip and they were carrying fire-arms for protection. They met a Mahatma on their way. He warned them not to go that way as there was danger. They did not listen to him and said that they were well-equipped to face any danger. As they went further, they found a brick of gold lying on the ground. Rejoiced at their find, they wrapped it in a piece of cloth with the idea of dividing it among themselves. As night fell two of them went to a neighbouring village to bring some food, two staying behind, When they had gone, those staying behind felt tempted to have the brick to themselves and conspired to shoot the other two when they returned with food. On the other hand, those who had gone to the village had a hearty meal in an eating shop. While returning with food for the other two, they also succumbed to the temptation of having the brick for themselves and conspired to do away with the other two. Therefore they mixed poison with the food they were taking for them. When they returned with the food the other two shot them dead. But they were hungry and so devoured the food brought for them. They fell asleep, never to wake again. Next morning the same Mahatma passed there on his way to the river for his daily bath. He found the four lying dead and the brick of gold wrapped in cloth. He threw it into the river so that it might not do further mischief. (The Record 1972 p14)*

We can see from this tale that it is not the brick of gold or wealth that is the problem. It is the identification and false imagination of how a brick of gold will bring happiness and change our lives.

One has only to read a daily newspaper to realise the havoc that is created in the material world by those who take more than their share and deprive others in the process. Because this kind of behaviour is so excessive and awful there is a danger that we consider this kind of danger as only belonging to a few and we don't apply this concept to ourselves. True, it is unlikely that any of us following the teaching will suffer from the grosser aspects of the kind of theft described above.

However, it is important to awaken and to hone our conscience because conscience tells us what is required of one in relation to the Param-Atman. It speaks directly, when needed, to tell us what right and specific action must be taken in relation to the requirements of the Universal Self. Man is potentially a transmitter of higher influences, that is his right function, as is seen in the posture of the turner in the ceremony of the Mukabeleh.

Pause

Attitudes caused by attachment can have small beginnings that later may lead to more serious consequences. So we need to be aware that small seeds can turn into prickly plants. This is kindly pointed out in another story.

HH: *A rich man used to go to a Mahatma, but he used to talk to him about his household affairs only. The Mahatma asked him the reason, and he replied that it was so because his household people loved him very much; therefore they were always uppermost in his mind. The Mahatma went to his house one day and gave a sewing needle to his wife. He said to her "Your husband seems to be planning to take all his things with him when he goes into the next world. Tell him to carry this needle also if he can for my sake. I shall need it there for sewing my torn garments". When she told this to her husband he understood the truth about the worldly belongings.*
(The Record 1972 p11)

In a similar vein, Dr roles discussed temptation in relation to aim :

Now in connection with aim, this is rather important if we could only understand it. The question is: "What do we make a god of, each of us?" For some people money is god, for others, social success, reputation or popularity – all kinds of gods people make.....I mention this making something into a god because what motivates some people throughout their whole lives is some obsession of that sort; and until one discovers that, it is difficult to realise that the only way of escape and to be Self-realised is to substitute for that obsession (whatever it is) some great impersonal source of energy, source of consciousness, like the Param-Atman. It is the only way to get rid of false gods; and what Param-Atman demands, as he told Moses, "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me". One would get on much more quickly if one had that point of view.
(Voyage of Discovery p3&4)

Elsewhere he adds:

So 'giving up' means to give up other gods and the essence of this is giving up the sense of ownership. We come into the world with nothing, and we can take nothing with us .

On page 10 and 11 in the 1971 Audience the Shankaracharya makes two important comments in relation to Sanatan Dharma. First he tells us:

Sanatan Dharma is the natural Dharma which encompasses everything Eternal and given by the Absolute. Since it is natural, it is directly related to the nature of mankind. That is why any individual, whatever his background may be, always knows in his heart what is good and what is bad.

Secondly he tells us (according to Hindu tradition) that it takes many many lives to earn a human form and then adds:

This is the only form which has the possibility of transformation. So man must become vigilant to note that this is the most valuable chance in this great cycle, the only chance when he can respond to good deeds, the call of the inner man or the Laws of Nature enshrined in Sanatan Dharma. If he does not respond to this the miserable journey is long.

In Mr Ouspensky's novel 'The Strange Life of Ivan Osokin', the Magician tells Osokin that *now* is his opportunity, and if he does not take it, he may not find the Magician next time.

This makes us realise how fortunate we are to come under the umbrella of the Realised Man, the Shankaracharya Santanand Saraswati, and the importance of following the concepts of Sanatan Dharma.