

Nimbarka Philosophy in Daily Life

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Nimbarka Philosophy goes back 5000 years and it would be a major undertaking to explain it in a short paper and that too by a lay person. Instead this paper merely tries to point out how the eternal truth can be a way to guide our actions in our daily life. As technology facilitates communication and many other details of daily life people may be misled that perhaps the underlying rules that govern the universe may need to be updated as well. In fact the opposite is true. Even though the details of our circumstances have changed since the time of Acharya Nimbarka, what he taught is just as relevant today as it was then. All material progress has not changed the spiritual laws that govern the universe.

One who is of use to others is a good Vaishnava. This is a really simple idea and one can live ones entire life based on it. Acharya Nimbarka was given that name because he delayed sunset so that he could serve his ascetic guest a meal. There was this tremendous urge to serve or “Seva”. The word “Seva” means service but the spirit under which it is delivered is very important. The need to perform Seva has not changed and it is just as relevant today as it was more than 5000 years at the time of Acharya Nimbarka.

To provide Seva one has to be grounded in the reality that the world is under the protection of Lord Krishna. This includes both the person doing the Seva and the person receiving the benefit of the Seva. No person is fundamentally being saved by the Seva. Omnipotent Lord Krishna could personally take care of any and all needs of the recipient of the Seva. Thus the Seva really exists more for the benefit of the person performing the Seva. Thus any feeling of superiority of the person providing the Seva is false.

Nimbarka philosophy teaches dualism and non-dualism. Each person is Jiva and therefore a part of God. Being a part of God or Isvara who is infinite and has infinite power the Jiva is pure

and perfect. In non-dualism there is no difference between the worshipper Jiva and the worshipped Isvara. In Nimbarka Philosophy there is a difference between Jiva and Isvara. Only Isvara has the power of creation whereas Jiva does not. Isvara is all powerful and capable of everything. Work is merely an opportunity to participate in the divine play.

In the Bhagavat Gita Lord Krishna says, “Those who meditate on me and worship me exclusively and those who are devoted to me I will see to it that they get what they do not have and can protect whatever they have got.” Clearly, the way is to seek the protection of Lord Krishna. He is the source of infinite source of tenderness, beauty and bliss.

Yet in modern life we see mankind seeking refuge from uncertainties of life in various and ever more complicated man made constructs to reduce risk. We see these institutions fail over and over again. The world just went through a global financial crisis and it proved again that the very large financial institutions namely banks were just as fragile as the people who were relying on them for security.

When we give up the attachment to results and work then the stress associated with work goes away. Stress in the work place is so common place that today one assumes that it is a natural part of work. That is very far from the truth. The stress actually originates in the attempt to control the fruit of work. The Bhagavat Gita is very clear on this point that the fruit does not belong to us and is not our right. This is not a negative philosophy though, where we may or may not get what we need. In fact, the opposite is true, Lord Krishna, the very source of tenderness, beauty and bliss by his grace all our needs are met.

Work can be considered another avenue of worship and the work should be done in a manner that we become worthy of His grace. This is a very different way of thinking than the usual seeking and achieving world which can be a mere rat race. Someone seeking the grace of Lord Krishna may work just as many hours as someone in a rat race. The person in the rat race is trying to control what is fundamentally beyond human control. Such a person is therefore under a lot of stress. By contrast one seeking the grace of Lord Krishna through good actions is very calm and at peace.

In summary, applying Nimbarka Philosophy in daily life is simple. One has to seek to be of service and perform this service as Seva. In this way one becomes of use to people around us.

Further the service is performed knowing that it is merely divine play or Maya. The all powerful Lord Krishna could take care of whatever we are trying to do. We are doing Seva merely to be worthy of His grace. Further, Lord Krishna who is all powerful and by His grace we are going to be protected. Therefore after doing our work with dedication we can sleep in peace that we have taken refuge in one who is the very personification of tenderness, beauty and bliss. There can be a lot of work a lot of service or Seva but no stress. Daily life can become filled with bliss in this manner.