

Lesson 8: Charity

- 1) Shloka: Karaagre Vasate Lakshmi The front parts of the hands (the fingertips) are ascribed to Goddess Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, the middle part (the palm proper) to Goddess Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, and the root (the part of hand near the wrist) to Govinda (God).
- Karamuule Saraswati
- Karamadhye Tu Govinda
- Prabhaate Kara Darshanam

2) Discussion:

- ❖ Main thought: Giving is not giving if you want something back.
- ❖ When charity is given as one of the steps of a Vedic ritual, it is called *dakshina*. Giving in any other circumstance is called *dana*.
 - Dana includes the attitude with one gives.
 - Upanishads explain the proper attitude of Dana as
 - Give with an attitude of worship
 - Give liberally, generously
 - Give with humility
 - Give with a friendly attitude
 - Give with thankfulness that you are in a position to do so
- ❖ According to the Gita the gift given with the attitude that giving is duty, to one who cannot return it, at the proper place and at the proper time and to a proper person is considered *sattvic* – purifying, peaceful.
- ❖ Whether the recipient can return the favor does not determine whether one gives *dana*. If one gives only to someone who can return the favor, the gift is more like an investment, and not like charity.

3) Story: *The Diary* by Christopher Barnes

THE DIARY

By Christopher Barnes

Louise's mother was very surprised to receive a letter from a local solicitor inviting her with her daughter to attend at the firm's office. The letter explained that Louise was a beneficiary in the Will of Mrs. Hilda Oldfield who had lived in the old house next door to them. In later years, the house had declined from its former pristine days and the front door brass no longer shone with daily cleaning.

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The old woman's death had left Louise feeling sad because she was deprived of two things. Not only was she fond of Mrs. Oldfield, but she was also concerned about her other friend, Mrs. Oldfield's Dalmatian dog, known as Mr. Spotted Dog. Or Spog to his friends.

She had known Mrs. Oldfield all her life and had always called her Auntie Hilda. They had shared many things and had grown into close friends in spite of the great age gap between them, or possibly, it was this that drew them together. One of the many things, which had drawn them together, was the dog. Spog used to bring his lead to Louise when she visited every day after school. He would look up at her with big brown eyes and with his head cocked on one side excitedly anticipating his walk.

Over the years as the friendship of Hilda and Louise grew, they learned to help each other. Thus, Louise would take Spog for a walk and do the shopping for her Auntie Hilda when she became crippled with arthritis. Hilda was a retired schoolteacher and would help Louise with her homework although Louise did not realize it until later; Hilda also helped her by talking about her memories and her belief in being kind to everybody.

Louise thought that perhaps she was too kind to the dog. He has a little too much of a middle age spread, but she did not like to point out to his mistress. So when she took the dog for their daily walk she used to ensure he had a good run by throwing a ball for him to fetch.

The basic problem Louise decided was that Spog was too fond of expensive food. Louise thought he was given such good and plentiful food because Hilda loved him so much. One day Louise was very worried because when she had looked into the kitchen cupboards there were a few tins of dog food left, but very little for Auntie Hilda to eat.

Louise had volunteered to do the washing up after they had finished their tea together and as she was putting the cups away, she noticed the lack of food. It was late in the evening and she knew that Hilda could not afford to eat in a restaurant. When she went back into the living room, she had casually asked Hilda whether she was being taken out for dinner that evening.

Louise thought that Hilda had looked embarrassed when she replied that she would find something to eat soon. After that, Louise started to keep a careful watch on the quantity of food the old woman ate and was concerned to find that whilst in her opinion she was still tending to spoil Spog. Hilda was neglecting to eat properly herself. Louise thought that the old woman was short of money, so she decided to think of a way of helping her adopted Aunt.

The solution came to her when she was asked to baby sit on a regular basis for some friends of her parents and she conceived a plan, which she put into operation immediately. She started spending some of the money she was earning on buying tins of "slog" food, as she called it, and surreptitiously placing the additional tins with the other dog food. Fortunately, Hilda did not

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appear to notice the additions to the stock. Louise used to return home with a smile on her face: she was happy that she had found a way of helping her friend.

Louise and her Mother and several other people went to the solicitor's office to hear the contents of the Will. Louise was rather overawed by the solemnity of the occasion and by the strangeness of the room. Everybody sat round a table and the solicitor, who was a kindly old gentleman, began to read Hilda's Will.

"This is the last Will and Testament of Mrs. Hilda Constance Oldfield," he droned. Louise's mind drifted off as the Will was read out, since she did not really understand all the strange words until she heard her own name mentioned. Her attention jumped back into the room, and she wondered if she had missed anything of importance.

"And to my friend, Louise," the solicitor was reading in a monotonous voice. "Who has helped me so much; I leave all the money in my current account at the bank and my dog, Spog, since I know she will look after him with love and care."

Louise could have shouted for joy and felt like jumping up to give the solicitor a hug. She managed with difficulty to restrain herself, but she could not stop a muffled squeal of delight. The solicitor looked up, smiled at her gently, and continued reading the Will. Louise attention drifted off again and she began looking forward to having a dog of her own.

When the time came for them to leave the office, the solicitor gave a check to Louise's mother and told her where they could fetch Spog.

"Can we go and get Spog now, Mummy," said Louise bursting with excitement. To her delight, her mother agreed and they left the office with an ear-to-ear smile. She was thinking about how happy Spog would be when he saw her and that he would try to wag off his tail.

The solicitor also smiled to himself as the door closed and he picked up the diary he had quickly cast his eyes over that morning. He read again the entry which had then caught his eye.

It read, "Louise has again smuggled in some dog food. I know that she is doing this because she thinks I don't eat properly. I do wish I could put on more weight so that she does not have to worry about me. I must remember never to tell her that if I do get heavier the arthritic pain in my legs will increase."

Questions for class discussion:

1. What were Louise's concerns?
2. Why did Louise smuggle in the dog food?
3. Why was Mrs. Oldfield secretive about her eating habits?
4. What made the solicitor smile when he read the diary entry?

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5. What name would you give this story?
6. How did you feel when you heard the story?
7. Did it remind you of anything in your own life?

4) Scrapbook page for Charity

Name: _____

Lesson 8 Homework

1. What kind of an attitude should you have when you give?

2. Why should you give without expecting something in return?
