



SUCCESS AS A KEY DRIVER ?

Teaching from the Bhagavad Gita

from Cédric Ullrich

The pursuit of success and happiness became the main quests in our century. We look for social recognition and power. Our societies changed dramatically the last centuries. Most of the people in developed countries do cover their primary needs (safe place to sleep, enough food). The magic of the live and the divine was replaced by the pragmatism and formal sciences. Our life is ruled by the governance of numbers and quantity. The era of survival fight in a hostile nature was replaced into an era where the biggest risk we face is to die from boredom. *“The revolution of Everyday life”* written in 1967 by *Raoul Vaneigem* does describe with a certain irony that evolution. And what a better remedy against boredom and senselessness as fulling the gap with a quest for success!? *Pierre Bourdieu* would say that we are pawns on a chess board, trying to get „more“ success/happiness/money as a game.

But what is “success”? And what purpose should we follow on a personal scale but also for larger organizations including governments and companies to have a fulfilled life.

Maybe you heard the story from *Mark Albion* about the rich business taking vacation in a beautiful island meeting a fisher coming in with a large bucket full of fish! “The fisherman looks at the businessman with a wide grin across his face and explains that he fishes for about three hours every day. The businessman then asks him why he returned so quickly. “Don’t worry”, says the fisherman, “there’s still plenty of fish out there”. Dumbfounded, the businessman asks the fisherman why he didn’t continue catching more fish. The fisherman patiently explains that what he caught is all he needs. **I’ll spend the rest of the day playing with my family, talking with my friends and maybe drinking a little wine. After that I’ll relax on the beach.** Now the rich businessman figures he needs to teach this peasant fisherman a thing or two. So, he explains to him that he should stay out all day and catch more fish. Then he could save up the extra money he makes and buy and even bigger boats to catch even more fish. Then he could keep reinvesting his profits in even more boats and hire many other fishermen to work for him. If he works really hard, in 20 or 30 years he’ll be a very rich man indeed. The businessman feels pleased that he’s helped teach this simple fellow how to become rich. Then the fisherman looks at the businessman with a puzzled look on his face and asks what he’ll do after he becomes very rich. The businessman responds quickly **You can spend time with your family, talk with your friends, and maybe drink a little wine. Or you could just relax on the beach.”**

Success as target and life philosophy is a senseless quest... As Viktor E. Frankl wrote "success like happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side-effect of one's dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product on one's surrender to a person other than oneself. Happiness must happen, and the same holds for success: you have to let it happen but not caring about it."

Exactly on the same line, the "**Bhagavad Gita**" is a scripture that is part of the Hindu epic "**Mahabharata**" and presents a synthesis of Hindu ideas about the yogic paths to enlightenment, liberation, release... Already the approach of the scripture is remarkable, as the term „yoga“ in a broader sense describes as well the path and the state of being. One of the paths to spirituality is Bhakti yoga, what we can translate as the power of dedication. In that sense the Gita is very modern, as the dedication target is seen as secondary. What does matter is finding someone/something you can dedicate to. What is the cause greater than yourself you want to dedicate to: family, framework of values, emancipation of the human nature, fighting against poverty or environmental destruction, ...? As human being, company, social organization, we do need that cause in order to self-realize ourselves and to let success/happiness enter into our lives. But one can be done only by realizing one's nature. One of the other paths described in the Gita is Karma Yoga which is unselfish action. Acting selflessly is recognizing our deeper nature, that we are all linked. Understanding our nature as a complex ecosystem within an ecosystem. Seeing our ego only as a vital function to survive in our ecosystem but being able to grow beyond the border of that ego. Success as well as happiness can only be shared.

All paths complement each other. Without this understanding, and by seeing ourselves as one-man-show or superior group, dedication can be a destructive tool. Dubious dogmas and even great texts have resulted in human atrocities. We just have to look at the history of all religions worldwide. Even the Gita inspired fully different causes and was the favourite book for both Gandhi and Heinrich Himmler considered as the main architect of the holocaust.

If you merely look for success, you might fall very deep if you don't reach it or even fall deeper if that purpose reveals to be at the end senseless. The biggest quest in our life is finding the purpose why we are here. We do need a drastic change in our approach to the world as an individual and new guideline as companies. Instead of economic growth and profit, once sustainable growing or sustaining is provided:

- dedication to a greater cause should be leading all our actions;
- sharing and partnership instead of competition should connect us.

Then success and happiness will silently enter in our life without us being aware about it.