Choose the Fragrance You Will Leave Behind

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Some years ago, when conducting a programme in Tamil Nadu, I stayed in a village called Velayudhapalayam. My home was opposite a hill. I was told that Jain monks lived and meditated in these hill caves over 1,000 years ago.

One afternoon, I climbed up, with a few volunteers, to a beautiful cave located like a bird’s perch in the rocks. The inside was filthy, strewn with bottles and graffiti – the usual ‘KP loves SR’ type of stuff – so we cleaned up the place. There were rough indentations in the rock floor, which perhaps served as beds for the monks. When I sat down on one bed, my body began to pulsate powerfully. I decided to spend the night there. That is when I realised that the subtle body of the monk who had been there centuries ago was still incredibly alive.

Now, these monks led quiet, isolated lives and had done nothing of consequence in the outside world. But they had left behind such a profound imprint that I could tell everything about their lives and their spiritual practices. The great rulers of those times are long forgotten. But these simple monks are as alive today as they were yesterday! This is the nature of energy work; it is nearly imperishable.

Whatever you do with your body, mind, or energy leaves a certain residue. When you gather a huge volume of impressions, these slowly shape themselves into tendencies. These tendencies have been traditionally described as vasanas. ‘Vasana’ literally means ‘smell’. Depending upon the type of smell you emit, you attract certain kinds of life situations to yourself. Vasanas are generated by a vast accumulation of impressions caused by your physical, mental, emotional and energy actions.

It is possible for us to choose not to be victims of our vasanas or puppets of our pasts. We can choose the fragrance we leave behind for the world. Any conscious thought, emotion or action has the potential to endure. Action on the energy level can endure for millennia. We can decide the nature of our bequest to the planet. This is what the anonymous Jain monks of Velayudhapalayam did. Aware that every action has a consequence, they chose to live consciously and attained a certain kind of immortality that others of their time never did.

With a little inner work, we are capable of rewriting our karmic software entirely.

The most fundamental step is to realize that we are global citizens. Unless this primary identity is established in everyone, human intelligence and capability will work against us. Those in positions of power need to realize that they can leave behind enduring beneficial legacies to the world, if they lead lives of greater responsibility and awareness.

Today, we have technologies at our disposal that could either create phenomenal wellbeing, or destroy the planet several times over. If the ignorant are empowered, they could sabotage humanity entirely. It does not take a nuclear holocaust. We are capable of gassing ourselves without any nuclear assistance, as we know from the current predicament in our capital city.

But, when those in positions of power realise the enormous consequences of their thoughts and actions, and invest in inner sadhana, it could be the dawn of a great possibility. We could now turn not merely into the architects of our own destiny but collaborators in the collective destiny of the human race.

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