

Analysis of Gurcharan Das's The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma

Patel Devarsh Dipakbhai

Research Scholar

Department of English,

Gujarat University

Dr. Swati S Kapadia

Research Supervisor

Gujarat University

Introduction:-

Gurcharan Das book *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma* is a work in the 'spiritual but not religious'.

This book is an extended essay on dharma (a term that can be translated as 'right action' or 'duty'), which Gurcharan Das defines as the virtue that allows us to be good in spirit, even when it is difficult to be good in practice. He points out how in many ways, the notion of dharma has been undermined by modernity, which has made us believe that happiness and goodness are two separate things.

Keywords:- Spiritual, Dharma Essay, Critical, Spirit

Gurcharan Das begins by pointing out how our contemporary society has devalued the idea of duty:

"To sacrifice one's time and energy for others, to work hard at a job, to make sacrifices and do without luxuries"these have come to seem like burdens. Yet this was not always so. For most

of human history there was no separation between happiness and virtue. To be happy meant to live virtuously."

"The problem with contemporary capitalism," writes Das, "is that the pursuit of self-interest all too often tramples upon those virtues we hold dear." Even in Adam Smith's time, he writes, "the market

Gurcharan Das's *The Difficulty of Being Good* (originally published in India as *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma*) is a book that explores the importance of one's actions in how they affect the world and how they can help to make it a better place. In the process, it also reveals how difficult it is to be good, especially in today's society where many people are more concerned with achieving success and maintaining relationships at any cost.

Gurcharan Das book *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma* is a treasure trove of information on Indian philosophy and its intersection with social life. It's a fascinating read that covers everything from the role of dharma in family life to how it plays into conceptions of caste.

We all have a sense of right and wrong, and in most cases, we can agree on what it means to be good. But the subtleties of dharma are often overlooked; this is the topic that Gurcharan Das explores in his book *The Difficulty of Being Good*. Das believes that the role of dharma is rarely thought about deeply; instead, people tend to focus on the prescriptions and proscriptions of dharma rather than its inner nature.

Das writes, "The difficulty of being good is embedded in our nature and our culture." It's a struggle to be good when we're surrounded by temptation and opportunities for wrongdoing. It's difficult to weigh our own actions against the actions of others when those actions may seem inconsequential at the time. And in dharma, it's not always clear which path will lead us to good karma.

Das writes from his own experiences as a business leader and from stories collected from people around India who recognize the difficulties inherent in being a good person. Some people believe that it's impossible to be truly truthful and genuine because we are products of biases formed by our culture; others believe that the right thing to do is unquestionably clear. Das takes these arguments into account but believes that

Gurcharan Das's book *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma* is an exploration of dharma, or duty and morality, as seen through the lens of his own life experiences. It's at once a memoir, a guide to ethical living, and a treatise on the nature of dharma itself. Das weaves together his personal observations with the stories and teachings of great philosophers and moralists throughout history. His style is conversational, and he often incorporates anecdotes from his own life to illustrate points he's making. We highly recommend this book for anyone who wants to live a life that resonates with meaning and purpose.

Gurcharan Das's book, *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma*, is a fascinating dive into Indian philosophy that seeks to explain how one can be good at all. He explores the notion of dharma, which is often translated as "duty," but doesn't quite mean the same thing. Instead, it's about actions that are in harmony with a universal order and the nature of things. Dharma guides us to do what's best for everyone involved—not just ourselves but others, too.

The author begins by explaining that this idea of universal order may be difficult for Westerners to grasp, since our culture is rooted in a different set of values that emphasizes individual achievement over harmony. We're taught from an early age to be good students and to be competitive in sports and other extracurricular activities. This competitive spirit is likely to carry over into our careers and adult relationships, where we're trying to outdo our peers in the workplace or acting like we're better than they are. But the essence of dharma is that there isn't a competition among people; it's about refining oneself so one can help others reach their full potentials as well.

Gurcharan Das's *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma* is an entertaining read for anyone who wants to know more about Hinduism. Written by a high-level corporate executive, this book isn't about religion in the sense of dogmatic beliefs or rituals. Instead, it's about how to live a good life through dharma, a set of ethical principles that can be applied to any circumstance. Das explores different aspects of dharma in each chapter, with examples from his own life and from ancient Hindu texts and stories. This makes the book interesting and easy to relate to, while still containing a lot of detail and history. By the end, you'll gain a better understanding not only of dharma but also of Hinduism as a whole. For example, I had never heard where "Hindu" came from before reading this book; Das explains that it comes from Sindhu, which was one of the names given to the Indus River because it was so long, like all the places along its course.

Known for his wide-ranging interests and knowledge—he has written on politics, economics, and many other topics—Das uses his expertise to write about dharma with clarity and skill.

The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma is a treatise on the "art of living," or the art of dharma. Dharma is about living a life that is in accord with a natural sense of duty, as opposed to living a life that's decided by convenience or impulse. The book discusses moral dilemmas and how we should live our lives in accordance with our duties and obligations to others, rather than being influenced by what society expects from us. Gurcharan Das uses his own personal experiences as an example while also sharing stories from ancient Indian history as he strives to make his points. Das' writing is witty and engaging, and he even describes himself as "a writer who happens to be Hindu." He's not trying to preach Hinduism or any other religion, but instead is sharing his perspective on how the modern world can be more connected with its roots. This book is interesting for anyone who wants to learn more about dharma and why it's important in modern societies.

Gurcharan Das' recent book, *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma*, is an introduction to the Hindu concept of dharma, which has been translated as duty, but is better

understood as a sense of right action and responsibility for one's self and others. Das uses his own life as a lens through which to introduce the reader to the eternal struggle that each person encounters in balancing the ethical and the expedient. Das traces the origins of this dilemma back to India's ancient holy texts, some written more than 3,000 years ago, and examines how it applies practically to modern day dilemmas.

In this book, Gurcharan Das offers an analysis of what it means to be a good person and offers some insight into different ways we can approach living ethically. He provides plenty of examples from his own life as well as others, showing that being good is not always easy or straightforward, but it is possible with some consideration. This book walks us through situations where we may feel pressure to act in ways that conflict with our sense of right and wrong—when we are offered money in exchange for information that could help build a case against someone; when we are asked to favor someone else over someone we know who deserves the opportunity more; or when a friend asks us to keep their

In this practical analysis of the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata*, Das focuses on each of the epic's main characters and the qualities that most define them, connecting these to contemporary historical analogues. His overall goal, to show the applicability of this classical text to our modern lives via the common questions that humans generally ask regarding dharma (“being good”), is best seen through the very concrete examples of the problems (the “difficulty”) that characters – both real and fictional – encounter. In connecting the status of Karna to quota systems in post-independence India, Arjuna's despair in the Bhagavad Gita to America's wars in Iraq, and Krishna's guile and trickery to the difficulty of fighting a “just war”, Das is able to paint a colorful picture of the tortured authors who were behind the bloody and belligerent epic as it has come down to us today. In addition to directly citing numerous passages from the epic supported by traditional scholarship, Das cites Shakespeare's *Henry V* on warfare, de Tocqueville on social mobility in 19th century America, and Darwin on ethics, thus creating a complex study of the internal and interpersonal conflicts that define human life. The wide-ranging nature of this book somewhat complicates the identity of its audience, though the author's vivid narrations of the epic's scenes and characters and his practical connections make

this book accessible to a general audience and a lively companion to a study of the epic on any level.

Conclusion

With his thorough knowledge of classical Hindu texts, Das gives us a way to understand and analyze our own lives by showing us how we can use Dharma to make choices about what is right and what is wrong. Through a series of stories that are entertaining and thought-provoking, we learn how certain characters make decisions based on their Dharma. These examples allow the reader to examine their own lives and discover how, just like these characters, they can use Dharma to live lives that are morally upright.

The Difficulty of Being Good is Gurcharan Das's attempt to recover the ancient Indian concept of dharma. It's a broad term, but in the book, Das makes the case that it connotes a set of values that are universal: benevolence, justice and generosity. These values allow us to live with integrity, to accept our inevitable shortcomings and to make amends without prejudice.

References

Gurucharan Das (n.d. a). Biography. Retrieved from <http://gurcharandas.org/biography>

Gurucharan Das (n.d. b). The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://gurcharandas.org/biography>

Batabyal, Amitrajeet. (2011). Gurcharan Das: The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma. *Journal of Agricultural & Environmental Ethics*. 25. 10.1007/s10806-011-9321-7.