

Ultimately, nothing in and of itself has inherent meaning or significance—other than the meaning or significance we assign to it. This is the big secret, the cosmic joke that takes many of us so long to get—the absolute meaninglessness of the things we take so seriously.

Still, while knowing that ultimately nothing matters, we must live as though it does. We play our own appropriate part, our own karmic role during this lifetime. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, when Arjuna told Lord Krishna that he didn't want to go to war against his own cousins and uncles, Krishna replied: *You can never untangle the circumstances that brought you to this moment. Now it is the dharma of a warrior to fight for a righteous cause.*

We do whatever we can do to inject harmony into the present situation, which would be acting 'for a righteous cause' (not to be confused with *self-righteous*, which is an aspect of ego). In this sense, it is the dharma of a spiritual warrior to fight for the righteous cause of liberation and enlightenment of all.

Ordinarily we inject our own meaning and significance into the conditions and situations of life. Understanding this will save you more trouble than you can imagine. It will be the miraculous solution to many problems. Nothing outside of us has its own meaning, other than the meaning we assign it. We are the only source of meaning in our life. Contemplate this, observe this, and you will come to see the truth of it. The understanding of this one principle alone can make all the difference in life.

We often give our own meaning to something just for play, or to make life more interesting. For example, I have enjoyed sports for most of my life. I played sports as a youth and in high school and originally went to college on a basketball scholarship. These days I still enjoy watching games on tv. For a large percentage of the population, sports are of no interest or relevance, and I am well aware that sports events are ultimately meaningless in the grand scheme of things. Yet, as a harmless hobby, I choose to give meaning and significance to them.

We all have our hobbies and interests, bestowing meaning and significance on whatever we enjoy. We can create and enjoy our life any way we want, as long as we maintain dharma, a Sanskrit word that my Webster's defines as: *a: the basic principles of cosmic or individual existence: divine law; b: conformity to one's duty*

*and nature. We'll discuss dharma further in future lessons; for now, the essence of dharma is contained within the golden rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

We each choose for ourselves which things will have meaning and significance in our life. For me, the evolution of the soul and personal transformation in this lifetime have a powerful significance; to another these things might have little meaning or significance at all, and some people might go all their lives without giving a single thought to spiritual growth.

Our own primary relationship will have great meaning and significance for each of us, yet to another it might be a simple matter of detail. What's important and exciting to us just doesn't have the same significance for another. So, ultimately, nothing has inherent and innate meaning; yet we can bestow meanings on certain things to make our lives more interesting, enjoyable, and rewarding.

These are the key words: *interesting, enjoyable, and rewarding*. Unfortunately, we expend a great deal of energy giving *negative* meanings to words, situations, and events. The negative significance we give certain things causes immense suffering and pain within us. Yet we blame the things themselves, rather than recognizing that the meanings we assign to them are the actual cause of our pain.

When the situations of life cause pain and suffering, we can interpret those situations in a more positive way and to give them more expansive meanings. It is possible to see and experience the same situation in a new way simply by redefining it, or by describing it in a more positive way. It is only a matter of ignorance if we remain angry or resentful toward things themselves or other people. If we blame anyone or anything outside ourselves for our own negative experience, we simply lack the understanding of how things work.

In the *Samvitprakasha* it is written: *Because this entire visible world does not differ from the act of vision, and vision is not different from the seer, the universe is nothing but the seer itself.*

It is extremely important to take responsibility for how we see things. However we see it, is how it will be for us. Whether any experience is pleasant or unpleasant depends on how we see it, for our vision creates the reality of our experience.

Ordinarily, personal situations seem filled with great meaning. This is fine if it allows life to be more interesting, enjoyable, and rewarding. If situations cause us emotional pain, then the less attention we give them, the freer we will be—and the more freedom we will grant to others. Otherwise we get entangled in egotistical melodramas.