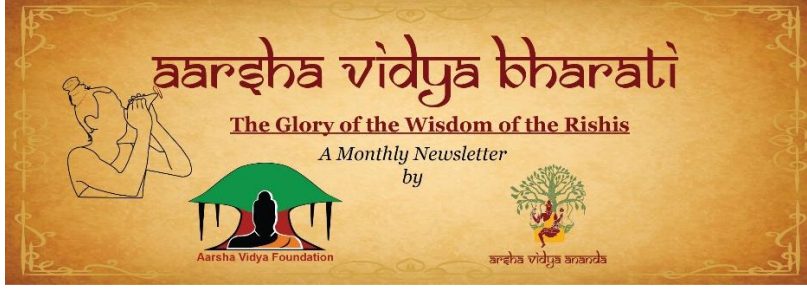

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A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



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Value of values

Adambhitvam

By Naveen N., Pune

Chapter XIII of the Bhagavad Gita starts with Arjuna asking Krishna a set of questions, one among them was 'What is *jñāna*?' As a reply to this question, Lord Krishna enumerates twenty qualities or virtues of the mind, which He calls as '*jñāna*' or Knowledge. One of these twenty virtues or values is *adambhitvam*.

Simply translated *adambhitvam* means absence of pretence. It means being free from hypocrisy, posturing and self-glorification.



Dambha means pretense, an attempt to make something that is not the case appear true. *Dambhitva* arises in us because at some level we do not accept ourselves as we are; we are not happy with who we are. And so instead of making the effort to understand and accept ourselves and try to become a better person, we simply choose to pose as one who we aren't.

We get to see this in many Bollywood movies. Typically, the poor 'hero' needs to make a great impression with the rich 'heroine', so he arrives in a Ferrari and dresses in an Armani suit, which he has apparently borrowed or stolen, and poses as a highly educated, rich gentleman. This is clearly an expression of *dambha* or pretense, albeit of a gross nature. He is clearly posing himself as being someone he is not and misrepresenting the facts.

One may confuse *adambhitvam* with another virtue that Lord Krishna enumerates viz. *Amānitvam*. *Amānitvam* means humility and absence of

conceit. It is not demanding respect, even when respect could be due. It is expressed in relation to one's real virtues, accomplishments or possessions. Whereas *dambha* is faking to have virtues, possessions or accomplishments when one clearly knows that he or she doesn't have them.

As a student of Vedanta, it is not as much the gross expression of *dambha* but its subtle expression that I find to be a greater threat to spiritual progress. A mind committed to falsely representing its feelings, attitudes or intentions is always in conflict. With such a mind, we cannot be the easy-going, simple, peaceful person that we need to be to take to the study of Vedanta. We can never let our guard down to new people, conversations, experiences, perspectives; always living under the fear that someone will find out and expose the truth about us.

Vedanta reveals that essentially we lack nothing. To discover and go closer to this understanding requires us to prepare a mind which accepts itself as it is, with all its limitations and hence the deliberate practice of *adambhitvam* or unpretentiousness is prescribed. It requires practicing honesty in our day-to-day interactions with others and ourselves. Practicing this value frees us of internal conflict and stress, allowing our minds to be fully available to whatever the present moment has to offer. *adambhitvam* frees us from who we are not, that which is not real, hence it is rightly called as *jñāna* by Lord Krishna.