



The Spirit Of Gift, by Satish Kumar

We have learned much from the native Americans, the Australian Aboriginals, the indigenous people of India (adivasis) and the Bushmen of Africa. We have been guided by Jesus Christ, the Buddha, Mohammed and Mahavir. We have been inspired by Valmiki, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Jane Austen and many other writers. We have benefited from the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King.Â

They were not motivated by fame, fortune or power. Â Buddha claimed no copyright on his teachings, and Shakespeare received no royalty cheques. We have been enchanted by music, paintings, architecture and crafts of many cultures, from time immemorial. We have received a treasure house of traditions as a free gift. In return we offer our work, our creativity, our arts and crafts, our agriculture and architecture as gifts to society to present and future generations.Â

When we are motivated by this spirit then work is not a burden. It is not a duty. It is not a responsibility. We are not even the doers of our work. Work flows through us and not from us. We do not own our intellect, our creativity, or our skills. We have received them as a gift and grace. We pass them on as a gift and grace; it is like a river which keeps flowing. All the tributaries make the river great. We are the tributaries adding to the great river of time and culture; the river of humanity.Â

If tributaries stop flowing into the river, if they become individualistic and egotistical, if they put terms and conditions before they join the rivers, they will dry and the rivers will dry too. To keep the rivers flowing all tributaries have to join in with joy and without conditions. In the same way, all individual arts, crafts and other creative activities make up the river of humanity. We need not hold back, we need not block the flow. This is unconditional union. This is the great principle of Â 'dana' (offering). This is how society and civilizations are replenished.

When we write a poem we make a gift. When we paint a picture or build a beautiful house we make a gift. When we grow flowers and cook food we make a gift. When all these activities are performed as sacred acts, they nourish society. When we are unselfconscious, unacquisitive, and act without desire for recognition or reward, when our work emerges from a pure heart like that of a child, our actions become a gift.

--Satish Kumar, in _You Are, Therefore I am_

