

In Search of Certainty



Heraclitus, a Pre-Socratic philosopher of ancient Greece, famously said "you cannot step into the same river twice" implying that everything is constantly flowing like the waters of a river, in movement always, intrinsic to the process of evolution. Following this law of nature, life too is in constant flow, travelling like the river through beautiful fields of bliss and the rocky mountain of obstacles alike. We never know what we meet next in this flow of life- both moments of peace and certainty, and chaos and uncertainty. In times of uncertainty thus, we find ourselves surrounded by the unfamiliar waters of the unknown, when everything that we have built in the material realm of our lives - the very structures that have offered us safety and security - threaten to collapse. We stand bare, facing the uncomfortable truth about the fragility of the perishable foundation of our lives. The Buddha reminds us "All conditioned things are impermanent, when one sees this truth, one turns away from suffering" (*Dhammapada* V.227). If all things are impermanent and uncertain, what then can be our fortress of certainty in uncertain times? That which stands the test of life?

Ancient philosophers direct us inward in search of the answer to find another truth. In the midst of all uncertainties of life, the one thing that remains certain-is ourselves, calling us to look for the eternal and imperishable not outside but within ourselves. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna tells Arjuna "The individual soul is unbreakable and insoluble, can neither be burned nor dried. He is everlasting, all-pervading, unchangeable.." pointing thus to our eternal selves beyond our perishable personalities. The source of 'certainty' thus lives within us; however this elusive truth struggles to manifest it's potent power in times when needed the most. The challenge is, most times we do not see ourselves as an eternal essence which carries the spark of the 'constancy' within us; for all our lives, we build our identity on the transient nature of our personalities and our possessions. Hence we stumble and fall with fear, vulnerabilities and insecurity of our human condition at the slightest wind that rocks our boat. In recognizing our own eternal, invincible essence, we can touch within us a place of calm and confidence in the



face of uncertainty. And in rooting ourselves to this elevated consciousness we stand firm to summon all our inner strength and find stability. Stability and strength however, are outcomes of our inner life; of what we have sown in times of peace and certainty - the fruits of the labor of our inner work through the practice of our spiritual path.

The key however remains that we are committed to nourishing our inner fire constantly, even in times of calm, so that it fuels us with strength when needed. As philosophers, our true defence is our virtues of courage, fortitude, resilience, clarity and calmness that we forge with devotion and perseverance on the path of life, well before a crisis strikes. When we carefully build our lives on the foundations of our higher eternal self, cemented with timeless human values, we stand on solid ground of certainty, unwavering and stable. As Marcus Aurelius reminds us—
“Never let the future disturb you. You will meet it, if you have to, with the same weapons of reason which today arm you against the present.” And we remember that the light of certainty which we seek amidst the dark uncertainties around us, is already within ourselves.