

Sin

Bhakta: “What does the word "sin" mean to you?”

Advaitadas:

“In my view, sin exists on different levels —

The highest level of sin is **hate, violence, cruelty** and **betrayal**.

Subtle sins are **hypocrisy, opportunism, populism, deceit** and **corruption**.

Moral sins are chopping the 4 legs of the bull dharma¹ -
Drinking, animal-slaughter, gambling and **illicit sex**.

Devotionally, the Vaishnavas say the only sin is to **forget Krishna** and the only virtue is to remember Him. All other rules and prohibitions are subservient to that.

Then there is ritualistic sins — for instance, **eating grains that are not offered**, is described in Bhagavad Gita (3.13) as a sin (*bhunjate te tvagham pāpam ya pacanty ātmakāranāt*). For a Vaiṣṇava it is also a ritualistic sin not to observe Ekādaśī- and Janmāṣṭamī-fasts.

Bhakta - This is a list of what sins are. But I meant what is the concept you hold of sin?

Advaitadas — “In Holland the word sin spells 'zonde' which is a synonym for 'a waste'. Sinning is a waste of time, money, energy and piety.”

Bhakta — “Does it mean separation from God?”

Advaitadas - No. Forgetting God is separation, though in fact there is never separation. The jīva is the spark, Bhagavān the fire.

Bhakta - Missing the mark of perfection?

Advaitadas - Yes of course. A sinner is not perfect.

Bhakta - Does sinning imply judgement or guilt?

¹ *abhyarthitas tadā tasmai sthānāni kalaye dadau; dyūtaṁ pānam striyaḥ sūnā yatrādharmas catur-vidhaḥ* (Ś.B. 1.17.38) “Thus requested by the personified age of Kali (quarrel), the king gave him four places of vice as residence — (wherever there is) dice, liquor, women (other than one’s wife) and slaughter.”

Advaitadas — “Yes. A person who feels no guilt is either an animal or an unscrupulous demon like Hitler or Saddam. Guilt is civilisation. Having said that, one should also not be wholly torn apart by guilt either. There is the golden middle-way one must take. Not extremes.”

Bhakta — “If you sin, what does that mean to you?”

Advaitadas — “It means I have not reached perfection yet.”

Bhakta — “I had a guilt and fear based relationship with God in Christianity - I am certainly not going to go that way again.”

Advaitadas — “No need to do that. In our understanding, the jiva is responsible for its own actions. *nādatte kasyacit pāpam* (Bhagavad Gitā 5.15). The law broken is really the law of nature. When nature is exploited, she will react. That is called *karma*, giving and taking. Although sometimes *śāstra* says that Kṛṣṇa punishes the sinners, the actual meaning is that nature punishes the sinners by taking back from them what they have unduely taken from her. Sin is an imbalance of action, taking more than one is willing to pay.”

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