

## The great end of life is not knowledge but action

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Knowledge is an essential pre-requisite, a sine –qua non, without which no meaningful action is possible. Knowledge enriches the quality of life, which is why people dedicate entire lives to the pursuit and attainment of knowledge. Knowledge has been equated with enlightenment, a certain broadening of vision, which has always been valued and venerated. Sometimes the level of knowledge is also highly specialized as in the fields of science and medicine.

We tend to be judged mainly by our actions, in which case action becomes an end in itself. The relationship between knowledge and action can also be taken to be that between the means and end or cause and effect. Any pioneering research in the field of science or medicine, that can be classified as specialized knowledge, when put into practice or acted upon becomes a boon for mankind. But as Arthur Koestler has said everything cannot be explained by cause and effect'. Things can be "a-causal" or without a cause. People do act at times only from instinct or gut feeling with no prior knowledge to guide them.

Action is usually of two types – with motive attached to the results, and selfless actions. Prompted by no motives. In the Gita there is mention of Nishkama karma-i.e., action without any attachment to its fruits. With increasing materialism such concepts are nowadays regarded as anachronistic and come in the ridicule!

An American humorist once said, "No one should be allowed to play the violin until he has mastered it". In most cases knowledge is an essential pre-requisite to action. Action backed by knowledge can pack in a punch. Action does not have to mean physical activity all the time. Even sedentary desk jobs profit from formally or informally acquired knowledge. Our educational system too is based on this premise that it must impart knowledge and simultaneously equip the individual with the means of earning a livelihood.

Though more often than not knowledge aids action, it is possible that knowledge can actually hamper action. Too high a level of knowledge or too specialized a degree of information can actually throw a spanner into the works. If one is equipped with all the details about a planned action including the pros and cons, the cons may influence the person to abandon the project without a decent try. Similarly, too specialized a degree of knowledge can bolt out generalities and impart a blinkered view of things.

From time immemorial man has chanted 'Work is Worship and work is art' and in the end it is action that speaks louder than everything else. Knowledge is

not always easy to measure or gauge, neither does knowledge leave a trail of glory behind it, unless it is manifested in some kind of action. Action does however, imprint the image of a person in the memories of others so that in the ultimate analysis when balance sheets are drawn, action decide that it has been a life worth living.