

The Essentiality Of A Contented Life

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Abstract

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन |
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि || 2-47 ||

“You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourselves the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.”

This shlok of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is a lighthouse for every human being. All of us have this notion in our subconscious mind irrespective of the caste and creed; but consciously one loves to forget this and attach oneself with his or her actions and with the outcome of those actions. One is not always rewarded with success and happiness in life rather many times one has to face failure which results in unhappiness, anguish, pain, suffering, discomfort. This seems to be difficult, if not unachievable, for common man to be steadfast and to be equipoised. The present paper is a polite attempt to explore the ways by which one can reduce distress and performs his or her duties rationally, expecting less and accepting the outcome. One may not reach the position as described in chapter of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita (shlok 2-48)

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय |
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ||2- 48||

But at least one should search certain ways to become to be satisfied and happy, enjoying true happiness, which may be possible if one reduces the gap between the expectations and reality.

Keywords: duty, satisfaction, sorrow, distress, happiness

According to the Advance learner dictionary contentment means feeling of happiness and satisfaction. This indicates that one who is contented is happy. Plato said “The greatest wealth is to live content with little.” Usually, it is said that be happy with what you have. John Stuart Mill, wrote, “I have learned to seek my happiness by limiting my desires, rather than in attempting to satisfy them.” Why the scriptures, seers, man of letters emphasized on contentment. Is contentment really affects the life? When, human beings, capable of exhausting resources and gaining maximum on this earth and from this earth should limit their desires ? Why one should expect less and accept outcome? Is it possible to be happy and contented all the time? It is the purpose of this paper to contribute to the understanding of such a desirable and yet difficult, if not unattainable, concept.

Nearly everyone, from Aristotle to Freud, agrees that we all seek happiness, and that we seek it as an end, not as means. Everyone always wishes to be happy no matter one is rich or poor, strong or weak, educated or uneducated, of any race, age, country, religion or gender. People, though, want to be happy and satisfied, but hardly seems to be. Even those who apparently have everything they wanted and yet cannot say to be completely happy.

This world is teleological. Every life has a purpose that purpose cannot be trivial one or only pertains to the very trivial pleasures of day-to-day life. Unfortunately, people forget to find and fulfill real purpose rather indulges in seeking happiness in temporary and unimportant things. Mind never satiates and always in search of more and more pleasure. To quote a funny line ye dil always mange more.

When an object is desired and until it is fulfilled, there is a state of deprivation, imbalance dissatisfaction, and discontentment. When a desired object is attained the desiring mind comes temporarily to rest but the mind soon gets fed up and starts agitating for something else. Why this unrest occurs? Human mind longs for true and permanent happiness, calm and satisfaction but search permanent happiness and contentment in temporary things and fleeting success. It is true that all human beings are not saints but definitely try to be saintly. Here it should be noteworthy that the word saint is not at all related to any religion rather related to the quality of limiting worldly needs and desires and quest for ultimate happiness and truth. They search permanent happiness within oneself instead of searching it outside and live in this material world like a lotus that grows out of mud and blooms above the muddy water, without any attachment with it and enjoys its short span of life to the fullest. Human beings, standing amidst the temptations of celestial pleasures and worldly affluence, basically strive for upliftment. Though Upliftment is, sometimes, mistakenly merged with temporary achievements – money, power, status, success, longevity, prosperity, affinity, and suppose these transitory

accomplishments as real upliftment. This illusion is the cause of discontentment and distress. . In life's race the real purpose of life and pursuits of achieving that purpose seems to be lost somewhere and people start craving for material pleasures, fame, money. In Katha Upanishad there is a story of Nachiketa . Yama, the God of death offered everything, except God, to Nachiketa to test him. All objects come under the *eshanas*. There are three of them: *vitteshana*, *putreshana* and *lokeshana* the desire for gold, the desire for progeny and the desire for fame; these are dominating desires in life and man strives to achieve them. But this story also presents the Nachiketa's views which showcases the real picture of these desires. Nachiketa, rejecting the temptations by Yama, said

श्रोभावा मर्त्यस्य यदन्तकैतत् सर्वेन्द्रियाणां जरयति तेजः ।
अपि सर्वं जीवितमल्पमेव तवैव वाहास्तव नृत्यगीते॥ २ (26)

“I understand your intention. But ephemeral are all these pleasures! They wear out our senses; we become feeble and old after their enjoyment. Even longest life is nothing before eternity; and all the happiness—because it has a beginning—shall have an end also!”

न वित्तेन तर्पणीयोमनुष्यो लप्स्यामहेवित्तमद्राक्ष्म चेत्त्वा ।
जीविष्यामोयावदीशिष्यसि त्वं वरस्तुमेवरणीयः स एव ॥ २ (27)

“No man can find eternal contentment with these, and yet you want me to be satisfied with them.” This is what Yayati declared after a hundred years of enjoyment: “Wants have no limit; when one is satisfied, another one comes up, and then a third one, and so on.” Thus, no wealth of the world can keep anybody contented.

साई इतना दीजिये, जा मे कुटुम समाया
मैं भी भूखा न रहूँ, साधु ना भूखा जाया॥

Being contented doesn't mean being stagnant. One should definitely chase one's dreams but should not be bogged down by them. Our mind, heart and senses should not be too preoccupied by the outcome of our actions. It doesn't mean just staying where one is. One must always strive to touch to the highest level, but these levels are not the prerequisite condition of successful and happy life. Happiness of any being doesn't depend on them. One can be happy and contented in minimum. Contented beings can only enjoy the gifts of nature and the blessed state of pure happiness. Discontentment is lust for money, material pleasure, fame, prestige and power. Jealously, comparison, restlessness, depression, and aggression are the major factors of discontentment. The result is rivalry, bitterness, greed, covetousness and jealousy. Cut throat competition crops up everywhere be it career, family or academic levels. No one is satisfied with what they have. Self-sufficiency has taken the backseat. Most of us focus too much on the result, instead of concentrating on tasks. People, usually, ruminate unsatisfied longings desires and failures, looked at those through magnifying glass and making their life miserable and world a stressful place. The machine age has plagued us with daily needs, wishes and regular anxiety. Everyone is in the race to achieve their ambition. Failure to do so roll down the dice of our happiness and abate our contentment. The result is in stress, perturbed mental and physical state and health. This condition develops when there is a gap between the desire and reality. Stress is the process that occurs in response to events that disrupt, or threaten to disrupt, our physical or psychological functioning. As stress begins to take its toll on the body and mind, a variety of symptoms can result that can be classified in five clusters- physical, cognitive, affective, behavioral, motivational. A persistent, negative, state of mind is accompanied by Hypertension, migraine, asthma, peptic ulcers, hyperthyroidism, diabetes, cognitive impairments, difficulties in decision –making, anxiety, tension, anger, apathy, oversensitivity, violent outbursts, interpersonal conflicts, aggressive behavior, social withdrawal, impulsivity, feeling of failure, distress, disappointment, discontentment, a sense of reduced effectiveness, decreased motivation and morale level, loss of zeal, poor work performance, and the like.

People, usually, establish the direct relation between the happiness and materialistic elements. It is undeniable and unarguable that materialistic and worldly things give temporary satisfaction but one cannot always get what one aspires or desires. One can only try to fulfill one's aspirations. Being rewarded for actions is most of the time beyond control, but performing them sincerely, to the best of our ability, is well within our means.

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Lord Krishna said Arjuna to perform his karma or duty without worrying about its fruit and the same He preached as karma yoga in Shrimad Bhagwad Geeta.

This is ideally right that one should perform his actions detachedly but is it so easy for a common man to be so unconditional? Could it be possible to accept and welcome adversity and prosperity both with open hands? Could the

response of common man be same for joy and sorrow, success and failure, for life and death? Does this mean that one should abstain oneself from action?

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नेष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्रुते
न च सन्न्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति॥४॥

“One does not attain freedom from the bondage of karma by merely abstaining from work. No one attains perfection by merely giving up the tasks in hands.”

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत्।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणेः॥५॥

“Since all men have doubtlessly sprung from nature, no one can at any time live even for a moment without action.” No men can remain actionless even for a moment. Everyone is driven to action-helplessly indeed-by the forces of nature. Action is essential. There is no escape from action. But the action should be selfless action. This stage of selfless action is probably difficult to achieve but at least people can try to maintain balance and lessen distress and discontentment. With a positive attitude towards life we can experience pleasant and happy feelings.

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(Arjuna, perform your duties established in yoga, renouncing attachment, and be even-minded in success and failure; evenness of mind is called Yoga.)

He further said that action with a selfish motive is inferior. The purpose behind this seems to make human beings mentally strong unaffected, if not completely but to some extent, by rises and falls, losses and gains, and vicissitudes of life. As this is written in GITA, it is expected from the followers that they should follow and practice its teachings to make their life simple performing selfless actions, understanding that the efforts are in our hands, not the results, if the results are/are not to our expectations, they should be accepted as the will of God. In this way, human beings are able to accept fame and infamy, success and failure, pleasure and pain, as God’s will. If there is constant struggling to eliminate negative situations, unhappiness then distress cannot be eliminated. But if people learn to accept everything that comes in their way, without giving up their best efforts, people will have surrendered to the will of God. John Milton in his long epic poem, “Paradise Lost” writes “I may assert eternal providence, /And Justify the ways of God to men.”(Bk-1 line, 26) . He intended that one should submit to God’s will and should accept success and failure, losses and gains, joys and sorrows as will of God. This doesn’t mean that one should not try for betterment and to make one’s life more meaningful but one should not live complaining and regretting. Anyone who claims to be an atheist, at least consider these teachings and preaching as stress relaxation therapies.

Our existence can be made easier and more meaningful by being realistic and accepting life for its richness instead of disapproving its shortcomings and wallowing in misfortunes. One should realize that life is a precious but fleeting gift, which once spent can never be regained. Positive thinking, positive emotions and prosocial behaviors help counteract stress and negative feeling and promote optimal health, peace and well-being.

People should be conscious of the importance of physical and mental well-being and should value of taking active steps to ensure it and promote health and wellness. Discontented self cannot ensure physical and mental well-being. People differ in their resistance to stress and negative situations. Some may interpret an event as stressful, whereas others simply take it in stride. People can reduce their stress and discontentment level by making little changes in their overall pattern of decisions and behaviors that determine health and quality of life. The following steps may prove helpful in managing distress and improving well-being:

- Abraham Lincoln said “Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” Happiness is from within; it is not a matter of externals.
- Think about the purpose of life.
- Think and act cheerfully, and you will feel cheerful.
- Adjusting your perspective using positive self-talks.
- Focus on something positive to occupy your mind.
- Stay rational
- See your work in terms of progress, not perfection
- Do not be a part of blame culture.
- Don’t take things personally.

- Avoid feelings of unequal work/ rewards
- Rationally choose between rewards and peace of mind
- Prioritizing tasks
- Time management
- Setting and chasing realistic goals
- Share with mentor
- Maintaining physical fitness
- Meditation/ pranayam
- Take responsibility
- Learn from the experiences of parents / experienced
- Learn to accept changes
- Be empathetic
- Constructive use of energy
- Make time to relax
- Spend time with family
- Do not focus too much on trivial things
- Take things easily
- Holidays are important
- Recall happy moments
- Spend time in old age homes/ orphanages/ with deprived sections of society that cultivates the feeling of fulfillment
- Spend time with nature
- Cherish your hobbies
- Count what you have
- Healthy eating habits
- Proper sleep and rest
- Give and accept support
- Watch comedy shows
- Read good books
- Listen to music
- Write and purgate negative thoughts
- Develop a sense of purpose
- Speak 5 lines every morning: - I am the best / I can do it/ God is always with me/ I am a winner/ today is my best day.
- Thank God for what you have.

One should try to unfold the world of happiness, real satisfaction like a child. Childhood is actually the most actualized period of life as child enjoys unconditional happiness. Maturity, ironically, gives birth to confusions, expectations, dissatisfaction and a calculated happiness. Life is not only the name of aspirations, failure, sorrow, conflicts, rather life is a blessing. But man's need, greed and deed carried him away from the realization that living beings are the manifestations of God's creativity especially human beings therefore human's ultimate fulfillment lies in manifesting our energy creatively. One must accept the fact that everything is not meant for everyone. "संतोषः परमो धर्मः" I read somewhere beautiful and meaningful lines that contented life is always better than successful life. "संतुष्ट जीवन सफल जीवन से सदैव श्रेष्ठ होता है क्योंकि सफलता सदैव दूसरों के द्वारा आंकलित होती है जबकि संतुष्टि स्वयं के मन और मस्तिष्क द्वारा"। यदि मन अजित-अजेय, पराजय भी फिर जय है।

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