

Dissatisfaction Leads to Perfection

By Satyanarayana Dasa

I have never met anybody in my life who was fully satisfied with his or her situation, environment, condition, position, relations, health, wealth, or possessions. The poor are hankering to be rich, and the rich want to be richer. An overweight person wants to lose weight, and a thin person wants to gain a few pounds. Married couples think that it is better to remain single, and single people are dying to find a partner. The East looks towards the West, and the West is enamored by the East. People in villages dream to come and live in the cities (especially in India), and city dwellers cherish the simple and calm village life.

Deep dissatisfaction with life and the conditions of everyday experience are universal among mankind. These are not the characteristics of a particular age, race, or civilization. Nor is it a defect of any individual person, although some people seem more content, or rather less dissatisfied, than others.

Why Dissatisfaction Exists

The root cause of dissatisfaction lies in the very design of human beings, and this dissatisfaction exists for a reason. The reason is to spur the individual to attain the ultimate purpose of human life, that is, emancipation from the cycle of birth and death. This dissatisfaction does not appear to exist in the other species of life. The myriad creatures of the world seem completely content if their basic needs of food and shelter are satisfied.

It is only we humans who are never satisfied. No matter how good our situations may be and no matter what things we possess, we eventually become bored and begin seeking change. (Companies capitalize handsomely on this flaw by producing new models of their products every year, leading consumers to believe that their latest creations will bring them the permanent happiness they are seeking.)

Searching for a Solution

Very few people are acutely conscious of this innate unhappiness. Most people are caught in the rut of regular duties and never stop to think about it. Those who are conscious of this dissatisfaction try to find a solution for it. Such people can be divided into two groups. The first group, the larger one, includes those who are not concerned about the ultimate cause of this problem. They are consumed by the problem itself, and look only to redress their own dissatisfaction. They are not concerned about others.

The people in the second group spend their lives in a prolonged endeavor to find the remedy for this problem, though they keep the welfare of others in mind. This group can be further divided into two. The first consists of people who take to fields of science and technology and devote their lives to research and finding solutions to alleviate the problems of humanity. This group has been more active in the last few centuries and has made commendable efforts to make humanity happy, peaceful, and free from disease.

The second group of people includes those who look for the solution in the realm of metaphysics. These pioneers have been, for the most part, founders of religions and of philosophies, and their search has usually been connected to an experience of or contact with something that they call God. They have unanimously maintained that in the experience of union or relation with God lies the only assuagement of human unrest. This group was very prominent in the past and has held ground for a long time. But as science and technology have progressed, religion and philosophy have taken a back seat. In the past few decades, however, a new trend is setting in. Scientists, religionists, and philosophers have begun a dialogue.

Science or Religion?

In search of answers to life's mysteries, modern scientists have investigated the depths of our world. Because they have been unable to find satisfying conclusions through minute analysis and deconstruction, however, they have been forced to explore realms of life that seem unscientific or metaphysical. Science and religion are no longer seen as absolutely exclusive fields. There is now a trend towards synthesis. Science, by nature, is analytical, while religion is synthetical. But it seems that science cannot completely ignore the principles and experience of religionists. Otherwise, it will fail in its mission: to give peace and satisfaction to humanity.

The Vedic scriptures discuss very explicitly the cause of dissatisfaction, and tender a permanent solution for it. They categorically state that without realizing the supreme Absolute — call it God, Brahman or Allah — no human being can attain complete satisfaction. This, indeed, is the purpose of human life. Unless people attain this goal, they can never be satisfied. The human body is designed only for that. All other activities are at the animalistic level. They do not make one worthy of being called a human being.

Human beings, therefore, will always remain dissatisfied if they do not act towards the purpose for which they have been granted the human body. No amount of technological advancement will keep them satisfied. They can choose different professions or jobs, but dissatisfaction will not leave them. They can travel to any part of the globe or go to the moon, but they cannot get rid of this unhappiness. Even material advancement in different fields is the outcome of dissatisfaction. But, unfortunately, material progress cannot give lasting peace and happiness. The satisfaction one experiences from material objects, material relations, material knowledge, material possessions, etc., is ephemeral. It sublimates like a ball of camphor, leaving some impressions behind.

The True Solution

The Gita clearly mentions the path and process to end this dissatisfaction. It states that a person who has faith in God, is devoted to Him, and has control over his senses attains true knowledge. Having attained true knowledge, such a person attains supreme peace without delay. On the other hand, one who is ignorant of the Absolute, one who is faithless and doubtful, is lost. Such a person is neither happy in this life nor after death.