

Total Satisfaction

Many of the world religions suggest to us that our original state was one of total satisfaction. Why is our present state not the same? In the Vedic tradition they say that the wheel of *samsāra* has only two spokes—*rāga-dveṣa*, like and dislike. In other words, instead of being content with what we had, we started to like one thing and dislike another. This means that if we get what we like we're happy, if we get what we don't like, we're unhappy. Sometimes they say it is because of desire, which means the same thing. It means we want things to be other than they are.

In the Judaic-Christian tradition, they picture man as being in ideal circumstances, having everything he could ask for including work to do. But then, he was warned that under no circumstances should he start liking one thing and disliking another when the Lord saw all things as good. The reason is he would end up considering some things good and some things evil, and that would create tremendous dissatisfaction within him. All religions say that our goal is to return to the state of total satisfaction. Does it mean that the world changes? Rather the suggestion is that our attitude to the world has to return to what it was originally.

Most psychologists say that the human being is driven by his desire for happiness and the desire to avoid pain. But that doesn't seem to bring us happiness. Indeed, we can work and work and work towards a goal, suffer greatly for it, there is a moment of joy when the goal is attained, and then it quickly fades as some other desire enters our mind. Or we could have a relatively long period when things are going well for us. We feel well satisfied with life, but then our circumstances can change—health can go, prosperity can go, and we enter into a long period where it is impossible for us to find the joy that we once had.

What then is the cure? The cure has to begin with the recognition that the problem is not with the world. The problem is with our attitude to it. The world is constantly changing. It is incapable of remaining the same and giving us permanent happiness—or from another point of view, permanent unhappiness. Happiness or unhappiness depending upon worldly things will inevitably come and go.

The great teachers, including Lord Kṛṣṇa, wanted us to have a different approach. Each one says it in a different way, but in essence it is

to stop focusing on how we feel. Stop focusing on what we think will make us happy and recognize that we are not the center of the universe. We are part of the universe and as part of the universe our focus should be not on what we think we want or don't want, but rather on what we are here for, what our duty is in this world.

Each one of us is here to fulfill a purpose in the grand scheme of things. If our focus is on doing our duty and leaving the results to God, then we return to a state of satisfaction, because as long as our intent is on doing our duty, we are satisfied, no matter what our outer circumstances may be.