

Developing the right perspective of life¹

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I have worked for thirty years occupying various positions in several organizations. Yet I suffer from a feeling of hollowness... I have retired from services two years back. After my retirement I fell empty and at times even get a sense of being a defeated person in life... I am quite wealthy and materially very well endowed in life. Despite this I feel something missing in my life... These are some of the comments that some of us have come across during the last several years. These comments raise certain fundamental questions about some of the ideas we have about life. Why does a materially rich person still feel missing something in life? Will retirement suddenly take away all the valuable things about you to make you feel empty? In all these cases one can perhaps come to the conclusion that they have developed wrong perspectives of life and have been pursuing wrong objectives. Some turn of events in their life (often very late) led them to a state of confusion or made them realize that what they thought will make them happy indeed did not.

Yukta: An integrated perspective of life

Think about the frequently heard terms such as “happiness”, “peace of mind”, and “fulfillment”. What do we understand by these terms and more importantly how do we attain these in our life? Let us look at Bhagavad Gita for some ideas on these aspects of one’s life. Lord Krishna highlights to Arjuna the value of being a *yukta* by linking it with fulfillment and peace of mind. According to Shri Krishna, a person who is not a *yukta* will not get peace of mind.

नास्तिबुद्धिरयुक्तस्य न चायुक्तस्य भावना ।

न चाभावयतः शान्तिः अशान्तस्य कुतः सुखम् ॥ 2.66

*nāsti-buddhiḥ-ayuktasya na ca ayuktasya bhāvanā
na cābhāvayataḥ śāntiḥ aśāntasya kutaḥ sukham*

A person without being a *yukta* neither has the right intellectual faculty (*buddhiḥ*) nor develops a right attitude to life (*bhāvanā*). With a bad or a wrong attitude the person will never get a sense of fulfillment (*śāntiḥ*) in what he does and therefore will never be guaranteed of peace of mind (*sukham*). Therefore, the secret to have fulfillment and peace of mind is being a *yukta*.

What does it mean to be a *yukta*? *Yukta* derives from the root युजिर् (*yujir*) which means to connect. The engineering term yoke (which is a type of joint) is also derived from this root. One who is well connected with the laws of nature and dharma is in simple terms a *yukta*. Essentially what it means is that for such a person the thoughts, action and understanding

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of various aspects of life are not in conflict with the laws of nature and dharma. Such a person will be a truly integrated personality with no conflicts in the mind, and action. He will be in a much better position to take the results that come his way. Therefore, it causes no mental stress on him. Such people develop right perspectives to life and they do not let the events around them toss their mood one way or the other. With a right attitude to life they will be able to connect themselves easily with the all encompassing governing principle behind one's life and benefit from this divine guidance they get while facing multitude of events in their day-to-day life.

By contrast a person who does not develop this perspective of life will be *ayuktaḥ*. Ignorantly, such people develop a wrong or bad attitude to life and behave in a manner that is not rhythmic with the laws of nature and dharma. The attitude influences the *buddhi* and lets it malfunction leading such a person to commit one blunder or the other until the final climax. In the end he realizes happiness does not lie in what he pursued but elsewhere. For example, one may come to the conclusion that happiness lies in assimilating wealth. Convinced of this perspective he will use his intellectual capabilities to amass wealth by all means. His behaviour and attitude are all tuned to this understanding. All that is required is one stroke of an event in his family that will challenge this perspective. For instance, all the wealth that he amassed so far may not be able to save the most beloved person to him who is dying of a disease in an untimely age. Similarly, some others develop an idea that holding on to power is the ultimate source of happiness and peace of mind and they engage in all activities to achieve this objective. Again some turn of events may challenge this perspective. Great warriors such as Alexander the Great, and emperor Ashoka are shining examples of this.

Reset our priorities

Many of us suffer from this so called lack of perspective of life. We are too pre-occupied with earning money, acquiring power and positions, amassing wealth, getting the attention of people in power and positions, making our presence felt at important places and so on. We are so engaged in life that thinking about the need to be well connected with the laws of nature and *dharma* has no priority or time. We avoid facing this reality or postpone it to sometime in the future. As we grow old, this imperfection manifests more and more and challenges our own understanding of peace and sense of fulfillment.

It is better to develop a sense of inquiry about these aspects of our life as early as one can. It is important to develop what Lord Krishna describes in great detail in chapter 2 of *Gītā* as *yoga buddhi* to eventually become a *yukta*. It provides a better agenda for our life. It lets us introspect and help develop a purpose to our life. More importantly it enables us to discover the true meaning of terms such as fulfillment and peace of mind and provides us an opportunity to experience them in some way or the other.