

A sensible approach to discovering peace of mind¹

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On an average we all have developed a lot of attachment to many things in life. This list starts from very simple items such as the pen we use to bigger things such as the house and the gadgets we own, the relationships we enjoy with others around us and the mental feelings that we have on several matters. In all these cases, the moment these objects and entities that give us the sense of attachment is either disturbed or taken off, it quickly develops into anger, aversion and aggression. Otherwise, how can we explain apparently silly behavior of ours such as getting upset and angry that somebody took away “our pen” or used it without asking our permission? The list of things for which we get upset and angry is much longer than the list of things with which we develop attachment. Interestingly, these issues happen not only in the office, but also in home and even in a temple or a spiritual discourse programme that we went to discover some peace of mind. An infinite series of such small happenings on a day to day basis indeed determines the extent to which one can attain peace of mind.

We all know that this is not what we want in life. The questions that run in most of our minds are: Why is peace of mind evading us? What is the way out? and Where do we lay our hands to get out of the clutches of these aspects pertaining to our life? Lord Krishna provides some help to address these questions. *rāga* and *dveṣa* are the two frequently used terms by all spiritual masters of various affiliations in this country from time immemorial to today. Therefore, it is not surprising that Lord Krishna also makes a reference to this in a discussion on how to discover peace of mind.

***Rāga* and *Dveṣa*: Two sides of the same coin**

Rāga is the mental force that is primarily related to a deep sense of attachment to things that the sense organs and the mind can reach out to in the external world. These include physical objects (such as gadgets, immovable properties, car etc.), ideas that can be cognizable in the mental plane (feelings of honour, trust etc., relationships, status in the society, ideas of oneself and others etc.). Since the mental force is one of attachment, the possibility of not attaining this or even a simple feeling that one is not likely to get it can invariably generate another mental force of anger, aversion and aggression. This complementary mental force is called *dveṣa*. That is why these two are always referred as two sides of the same coin.

A simple example will help us understand this better. One has great attachment to his material possession (such as a car, which he bought on a loan). If for some reason, he is not able to pay the EMI, the very thought of losing the car can develop considerable amount of negative mental energy in him which will manifest in his office, his home and his neighbourhood. Similarly, somebody is very dear to me and anything that happens to this

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person affects me so much that I start developing similar negative mental energy. Viewed from this perspective, these two mental forces are the biggest villains to our peace of mind. Therefore, we need to tame these villains. Lord Krishna offers a perspective to achieve this.

Keeping ourselves out of the purview of *Rāga* and *Dveṣa*

Lord Krishna says that when we engage our sense organs and mind in various aspects of the world (*viṣayān-indriyaiścāran*), we should keep ourselves out of the purview (*viyuktaḥ*) of *rāga* and *dveṣa*. By doing so we will be able to retain control of the mind within ourselves (*ātmavaśyaiḥ*) and will eventually attain peace of mind (*prasādam-adhigacchati*).

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् ।

आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥ 2.64.

raga-dveṣa-viyuktaistu viṣayān-indriyaiścāran
ātmavaśyair-vidheyātma prasādam-adhigacchati

Further, Lord Krishna suggests that by this method (*prasāde*) the feeling of all sadness (*sarva-duḥkhānām*) will be overcome, the mind will be at peace (*prasanna-cetasah*) and the *buddhi* will be steady (*buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate*). Clearly, a steady frame of mind is the foundation for one to experience peace of mind in life.

प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते ।

प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते ॥ 2.65.

prasāde sarva-duḥkhānām hānirasya upajāyate
prasanna-cetaso hyāśu buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate

If we go by this advice, it appears that restoring our peace of mind is a simple one step process, viz., keep ourselves out of the purview of *rāga* and *dveṣa*. This is easier said than done and requires a critical understanding of what causes this and methods to overcome it. As we have seen already the whole problem starts with attachment that we develop. Therefore, the only way to rectify is to do something about attachment. The first step in this process is to develop an unambiguous notion about attachment.

Joy of making sense objects irrelevant to us

Many think that using an expensive car or a high value gadget or having a bigger house etc. are some of the ways to get attached. This is too simplistic an assumption. Attachment is not about having any of the above. It is about the relationship that we develop with each such thing that we relate to in our life. If we are able to make all these things *irrelevant* to our mind then the very roots of attachment are burnt completely in this process. Making irrelevant essentially means that the presence or absence of them cannot agitate one's

mind one way or the other. On the other hand, when we make these *relevant* to us then the agitations of the mind belong to either happiness (when we get or possess them) or anger and aversion (when we lose them or expect a possibility of losing them). In such a state of mind we are said to have developed attachment towards the objects and entities around us.

Once we develop this habit of making all sense objects irrelevant to us, we begin to consume them without any agitations in the mind. For example, one may have a feature rich mobile for some time and replacing it with a no frills simple mobile phone will not make any “mental” difference to that person. He would not have been overjoyed at the time he got a brand new high-tech mobile nor would have been engulfed with sadness when it was taken away from him. If we carefully read *ayodhyā khānda* in Ramayana we can understand this aspect. The chain of events beginning from announcing Rama’s *paṭṭābhishekam* to Rama’s conversation with Bharata (Chapter 98 to 116) and counseling him to go back to *Ayodhyā* and rule the country is the highest demonstration of this idea.

Such a person will be able to effortlessly switch his/her lifestyle from that of a very rich person to a very ordinary person without any mental discomfort. He/she will be able to transform from a position of a CEO to that of a temple committee president post his retirement, when all his power and positions have eroded after retirement. He/she will be able to go back to the roots and relive his life with a lot of meaning. Such a person will also be able adapt to changing requirements and situations in his personal, professional and social life on several dimensions. While he/she may also face the pluses and minuses of the life, there will be greater acceptance of the unfolding reality. Only out of such an evolution of the self, the peace of mind becomes a real possibility.

This is a matter of developing a mental habit. The best way to acquire this is by subjecting oneself to several experiments of testing the notion of relevance. We can start with simple ideas and objects in life and slowly conquer the world over time. If we have the willingness to perform this journey, Lord Krishna will shower his divine blessings on us and lead us through this journey.