Contentment

Yajnaśiṣṭāśinaḥ santaḥ mucyante sarvakilbiṣaiḥ
Bhunjate te tvaghaṃ pāpāḥ ye pacantyātmakāraṇāt (Bhagavad Gita 3-13)

Meaning: Those pious people, who consume only the food that has been offered in sacrifice (yagna) are freed from all sin. On the contrary, those who cook only for their own enjoyment, consume nothing but sin- preaches Lord Srikrishna in Bhagavad Gita.

'It is enough if my hunger pangs are abated. I alone should enjoy all the wealth earned by me through my efforts. It would be wonderful if I could lay hands on properties of others' – such thought process no doubt highlights one's self-centredness but more importantly one must realize that such thoughts in themselves are terribly sinful.

To save the person from such sin, Vedas have clearly mandated: 'Share at least a little of your belongings with others. Give away in charity at least a little of the wealth earned by you. Spend at least a certain percentage of your earnings in Yagnas (sacrifice-rituals), homas(fire ceremony), worships and other righteous (dharmic) activities'. Our various traditional texts and our Scriptures repeatedly enforce the same mandate. Our learned elders have always goaded us towards such participation, haven't they?

What is it that bestows a person with contentment? Let us try to understand.

'Every human must prosper. Every living entity must live happily. Living in agreement with others in society, wealth must be enjoyed by one and all'- were the noble thoughts with which the Supreme Lord created this universe. ***Hence it is evident that the wealth which we enjoy in reality belongs to Him and not to us!*** With this understanding, we must aptly pray,

'O dear Lord! Everything that I own truly belongs to You. Purely with Your blessings, Your support and using the energy bestowed by You, I am earning this wealth and enjoying it. Truly the original investment is solely Yours. It is critical to be aware of this truth every minute! The knowledge, 'You are the Lord. I am merely Your servant'- should eternally shine in one's memory.

Since our belongings inherently belong to the Supreme Lord, we must utilize for our personal needs only as much wealth as necessary. In this lies our true well-being. We must learn to utilize only those earnings earned through righteous efforts. This, when put into

practice, is classified as a Yagna (sacrifice). The Lord is ever-pleased with the person who diligently abides by this Yagna.

A little of our wealth earned through our righteous endeavours must necessarily be set aside for the completion of the five sacrifices (panca yagna). What are the five sacrifices and how are we to perform them? Let us understand.

Unfailingly worship the deities every day. This is known as ***Deva-yagna***. This is the first among the five sacrifices (panca yagna). Secondly, worship your parents every single day. In case they have departed to other planes, offer stipulated water-oblations (tarpana) to them. Worship them sincerely on their death anniversaries. This worship to fore-fathers is known as ***Pitr-yagna***.

Act in a way that doesn't hurt the feelings of your elders. Revere them. Worship and revere your Spiritual-Guru. Abide by His commands. This is known as ***Rishi-yagna***. Reaching out to the aid of fellow humans who are in trouble and helping them financially to the best of your abilities is ***Manushya-yagna***. Lastly, developing compassion towards all forms of life and offering them protection with feelings of love and respect is known as ***Bhoota-yagna***. Through abidance to these five Yagnas, express your gratitude to all forms of life. ***Adherence to these practices, which are considered the best, causes a positive transformation in the person and more importantly, elevate him/her to the highest levels.***

Those who lead their lives in abidance with these above-mentioned principles rid their mind of all impurities. Their body turns holy. Highest wisdom dawns on them. Their entire life turns auspicious.

In the holy text Srimad-Bhagavatam, Maharishi Vyasa teaches, 'Never desire anything in excess of your real needs. He who craves for more than his needs is equivalent of a thief. He will become a sinner. From this, we must learn to accumulate only as much wealth as is necessary to lead a comfortable life, taking into account our present as well as our future needs. Only that wealth is your own. Learn to mentally offer even that wealth to the Lord and enjoy it as His blessing to you. Such thought process rewards one with merit. 'Use the remaining wealth for righteous, meritorious deeds'- mandate our scriptures.

Perfectly following this rule fills our life with happiness and above all, contentment. He who is contented is rich- goes the saying. Only he who is content truly loves the universe. He reaches out seeking the well-being of others in society.

If contentment is to become a way of life, then certain disciplines must unavoidably be practiced. Let us learn these disciplines which, eons back Maharishi Jaigīṣavya taught Muni Dēvala. He said,

'Treating praise and insult alike, one must remain unaffected. One should not divulge details of his good deeds to others. Even if others abuse or utter improper words due to their hastiness, he must not seek to retaliate. He must learn to be content with his earnings. He must not lament for those objects distanced from him. He must conquer anger and must diligently tread the righteous path. He who abides by these disciplines enjoys real happiness. He will undoubtedly obtain the highest supreme bliss (Brahmananda)'.

One must therefore aspire only for that amount of wealth which will enable him to perfectly complete righteous activities. Remember- wealth does not guarantee happiness. It is adherence to righteousness (dharma) that guarantees happiness. Adherence to righteousness alone guarantees ever-lasting mental peace! Realizing the value of life, utilize every second for valuable deeds. Firmly imprinting this lesson in your mind, resolutely adhere to it. You will be rewarded with contentment.

With the grace of primordial Guru Datta, may all of you be blessed with feelings of equanimity! May the comforts of this world and the next be showered upon you!